Be at Home in the Word:
An Artist’s Take on Art, Artists, and Pedagogy:
Philosophy and the Arts in Education

Jorge Lucero
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA


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Figure 1. My review-copy of the book Art, artists, and pedagogy as an object to live alongside of.

Rather than thinking of this in terms of sense-making—that is as an act of understanding—I take inspiration from Hannah Arendt’s existential (re)definition of understanding as the lifelong task of reconciling ourselves to reality and trying to be at home in the word.¹ [emphasis added] (Biesta, 2017, p. 39)

This is a good book. It should be archived in your collection and you should come back to it often. Actually, there’s no other way to be with it. You must come back to it repeatedly. You must read it sequentially sometimes and you should also read it from its last chapter to its introduction. Occasionally, read the chapters out of order; skim the table of contents and read according to your preferences and curiosity; or be counterintuitive and read the parts that

¹ Biesta’s use of the “be at home in the world” idea is printed as “be at home in the word” once in his book Letting Art Teach (2017), a fortuitous typo—I presume—that I retain and use here for poetic effect.
contrast your taste, interests, and familiarity. Read the essays aloud when you’re alone and read them in silence with others. Underline and markup whatever resonates with you.

Annotate the margins with your questions. Leave bookmarks and sticky notes in it. Leave it on your bookshelf, nightstand, or in your bag—ignoring it for months while you busy yourself with the tasks of being grown-up alongside/with the world—then be surprised by the fact that it exists and you own it. Take photos of its pages. Draw in it. Lend it to others. Post about it. The book is now in paperback and reasonably priced for an academic book, so it can even be assigned as a class text. Use the excuse of “teaching through” the text to hear differing things that others might have to say about it. Have a creative response to the book through your art, your teaching, and the working out of your own philosophies. Put all the creative responses that this book triggers back into the world.

Art, artists, and pedagogy: Philosophy and the arts in education is a book that takes key thoughts from the Dutch educational scholar Gert Biesta and butts those moments up against a variety of arts scholars’ interpretations of certain bits of Continental philosophy (a little over half of them concentrating heavily on the works of Deleuze and Guattari), specific arts-based case studies, philosophical interviews and conversations, some ruminations on pedagogy and methodology, and—of course—the authors’ own theorizing. I read the book cover to cover over an eight-month period because I was invited by the editors of the International Journal of Education & the Arts (IJEA) to construct a response to it. In all probability I may eventually have bought this book even without the invitation to review it. However, without the task to dutifully examine it on behalf of others, my actual reading of it would have occurred in the same organic and extended manner I suggest in my opening paragraph for your reading of it. I would have read it slowly, incompletely, and in bursts over a lifetime, occasionally finding “moments of exhilaration” (Goulish, 2000, p. 45) that resonated with my ever-changing situationality and then possibly—maybe—I would have a variety of creative responses to my encounter with the text(s).

The way I’m proposing that one might live alongside/with this book is not unlike what Gert Biesta describes in his own review of the book, which also serves as the concluding chapter within the book. Biesta draws an analogy between his reading of the chapters and the way that he “walks the museum” (p. 147), learning to be more patient, more observant to what may have been previously overlooked, and “getting better” at critical reflection through an emergent practice and sincere repetition. As a teacher who frequently assigns museum-going to my students, I’ve identified this means of critical reflection as a saunter or a “[a] walk along slowly and aimlessly... mus[ing] ... leisurely” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 960) that opens up the possibilities of engagement, mostly because of the purposeful lack of measurable objectives. The time spent and the sincerity of the visitors’ presence near those objects/texts can be
enough for them/us to have a generative experience and more importantly to continue accumulating the incremental components of ones’ personal maturation and education.

The echo between how I think you might use this book and Biesta’s idea of a slow, leisurely, bemused and perhaps “aimless” walk through a collection of—say—painted portraits, is something I had already begun to identify about halfway through reading the book. Sitting in coach, in the sky between Salt Lake City and Chicago, without a notebook to jot down my thoughts, I used the blank inside covers of Art, Artists, and Pedagogy to work through an idea about how I might explain the reading of this book or the study of theory—in general—to my students (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Some of my notes on the inside cover of my copy of Art, artists, and pedagogy.*
I’ve transcribed some of those notes here:

Here’s a lesson on how to read theory. Be exposed to it. Sometimes repeatedly. Theory is like theatre, you behold it. It is beheld. Even when it is totally prescribed and rehearsed it is still dynamic. It is still a generator of a shared energy in a specific moment in time and both the theatreticians and its audience need to be present together in an agreement to not be distracted, not be preoccupied, and exercise a disciplined version of “paying/giving attention”. Much of what the theatretician presents will be lost, not registered or comprehended by their audience, but even the exhilarating moments that do stand out to them are dependent on all the things and expressions they didn’t notice. Perhaps, upon encountering the production again, something different will be noticed. Perhaps that event will jive with the previous encounter or a totally unrelated production. Perhaps the audience member will only notice what they noticed prior, but this time because they are slightly older—because they have a few more experiences—the thing they recognize now looks slightly different. And this is how you move beyond knowing about theory to understanding the material of the work you do (working through theory), even if that work looks nothing like the theory/theatre that inspired it.

The blurring between theatre and theory brings me to this last part of my review and also to a gesture that can only be beheld. I’m a slow reader, but when I have a deadline I figure out a way to enact the “saunter”—with all of its leisureliness—within the compressed time of the deadline. I read with a pencil in my hand and I read aloud, speaking/performing the words of the authors I’m reading as a means to be near the text and behold it at the same time. The aloud-reading, my note-taking, and my surgical underlining of “moments of exhilaration” within the text are also a creative response and I understand them as artworks in and of themselves. In my encounters with any text that requires my critical reflection and engenders my creative response I’ve taken my cues—as you may have noticed—from author and performer Matthew Goulish (2000) who taught me that critical doesn’t necessarily mean criticizing and therefore critical is also not separate from generative. In fact a criticality that aims to “look and look again” (p. 82) almost always leads to generativity.

Goulish (2000) calls these encounters, “moments of exhilaration” (p. 45), found out of re-spect (the looking and looking again) that is “an effort to bring our own imperfections into

2 In this case it took me 8 months, which may seem like a lot, but remember a book like this takes me a lifetime to be alongside/with.
sympathetic vibration with these moments, and thus effect a creative change in ourselves” (p. 45). I found many moments of exhilaration in Art, Artists and Pedagogy and as a reviewer of the book I feel compelled by the formality of academic publishing traditions to isolate a few of these moments in order to speak to the nature of the whole book. This is an impossible task since—as I and Biesta have noted—this book is a corridor of difference and no single chapter or pull-quote can speak to the whole collection in any manner that is faithful to the experience of being alongside/with it. In lieu of that less-messy gesture I’ve chosen to show you one moment of exhilaration of each of the book’s 15 chapters. Each moment of exhilaration presented here is both a shout out to the particular author of that chapter and a moment from which I hope the readers of this review might understand why I started by saying that this book is a good book, that you should own and slowly live alongside/with like you do with all the other texts in your study collection.
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This small example of the concept of territory serves to show how Deleuze and Guattari (1987) ask educators to think with and deploy new concepts, and to constantly exercise their imaginations in coming to terms with a philosophy which is always in flux. What is especially valuable for teachers and researchers is the idea that Deleuzian scholars are determined to remove and deny the constant reiteration of binaries in education. For example, labelling children as successful or failing, correct or incorrect: in art – ‘a good likeness’ or ‘not a good likeness’; in music – ‘in time’ or ‘not in time’; in drama – ‘remembered your words’ or ‘forgot your words’; in dance – ‘the correct step’ or the ‘incorrect step’. Instead, the application of Deleuzian concepts to arts education allows for a connected middle ground to emerge, around the ‘and ... and ... and’, instead of the ‘either ... or’.

Another problem faced by arts educators and the various curricula are the strict definitions and hierarchies produced for the students’ detriment. For example: at the launch of the Task Group on Assessment and The National Curriculum in 1988, a dance teacher asked Professor Paul Black: ‘How can you judge a dancer by moving to the floor in the terms of the National Curriculum?’ The purpose was simply to reiterate sets up an anomaly and conjunctive synthesis within the same substantive difference or philosophical position. To acknowledge difference something with which arts educators are starting to engage far more elaborates on philosophical ideas taken from Dewey, Levinas, Foucault, Derrida and Heidegger. His work has been widely read and valued but rarely seeking a philosophical means to stem the tide of global standards capitalisation of education.

What does this book have to offer by way of insight into the role of arts in education? Art, Artists and Pedagogy is not a literal ‘how to teach’ but the ideas presented here are to encourage the educator to question and to reinvent pedagogy along philosophical lines. The book is not a philosophy in that the concepts do not remain in a space of pure philosophy; it applied to arts education. Different theoretical framings by each of the chapter authors, what they see as productive and critical in the context of the twenty-first century arts education. Above all, this book consistently works with different but overlapping frameworks and without embracing what is tired and gone before.

Gert Biesta, in Chapter Two, reflects on the absurdity of education in an endless cycle of measurement and competition. Biesta produces an account of the arts that avoids the pitfalls of individual expression and creativity. ‘Creativity’, Biesta shows how the arts have been instrumentalised – to the extent that some other attributes, be they mathematical skill or other are Biesta continues by maintaining that the view of art as a place to ‘express...

Figure 3. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 1, Naughton and Cole, (p. 2)
have too little consideration for the integrity of what we encounter, our intentions and ambitions will result in the destruction of what we encounter, the destruction of what offers resistance. At one end of the spectrum we thus end up in the destruction of the very world in which we seek to exist.

But the opposite scenario is also conceivable. This is where the frustration of encountering resistance leads us to withdrawal. We abandon our initiatives and ambitions because we feel that it is too difficult, not worth the effort, too frustrating, and so on, to pursue them. If the first response runs the risk of destroying the world, the second response runs the risk of destroying ourselves, destroying our very existence in the world, our existence as subject. We literally disappear from the world.

To exist in the world, to exist as subject, thus means that we try to stay away from these two extremes, although they are always on the horizon if we try to exist in the world. It means that we try to stay in the middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction. Existing in this middle ground can be described as dialogue – as being in dialogue – as long as we do not think of dialogue as conversation but see it as an existential ‘form’, a way of existing in the world – not withdrawing from it – without putting ourselves in the centre of the world but leaving space for the world itself to exist as well – hence existing with the world. Dialogue is not a dispute or a contest where there is always, in the end, a winner. Dialogue – trying to be in dialogue, trying to exist in dialogue – is precisely where winning is not an option; it rather is an ongoing, lifelong challenge. It is the challenge to exist with what and who is other; it is the challenge to exist as subject in the world.

The middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction is therefore a thoroughly worldly space. It is also, then, a thoroughly educational space, not because there may be all kinds of things one can learn there, but because it is a space that teaches you something that is fundamental about human existence, namely that you are not alone.

Art, dialogue and education: a ‘grown-up’ existence

There are, of course, many definitions of ‘art’ and many discussions about why such definitions are either essential or not, but definitions of art are explicitly

ration of what it might mean to exist in and with the world, not to master or domesticate – which would ultimately produce physical reality one is encountering – but to come into dialogue to stay in dialogue. Encountering the reality of pain and suffering, bodies, including one’s own body, encountering resistances, meet limits and limitations, and out of this find forms that make existing-in-dialogue possible. ‘Doing’ of art.

Viewed in this way, art itself appears as the ongoing attempt at figuring out, to be – here – now.

Existing as subject, existing in and with the world, simply follow our desires, not simply do what we want. ‘Measurement’ of our desires, bringing our desires into dialogue, offers resistance to our desires. Here we encounter understood educational distinction between what we call ‘grown-up’ ways of being and the point I wish to make in and with the world means that we try to exist in dialogue.

There are several caveats here. It is first of all distinguished between the ‘infantile’ and the ‘grown-up’ in developmental terms, that is, as a trajectory from the infantile towards the ‘grown-up’. This distinction should be understood as two different ways of being – the ‘infantile’ refers to a way of being that is totally dependent on the desires as they present themselves to us – and the ‘grown-up’ refers to a way of being that is totally dependent on the desires as they present themselves to us. And the question of how do our desires come from, and our own desires and how many of them are fully in control, remains open question. Nonetheless, the desires we try to do something with them.

If the ‘infantile’ refers to ways of being that are totally dependent on the ‘grown-up’ refers to a way of being where we try to control our thinking and our doing, to the question of which desires we ought to have, which of our desires are desirable.

Figure 4. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 2, Biesta, (p. 16)
there are material and non-human rhythms that are effective and applicable to the modes of transformation that are being advocated in this chapter. In the painting of Michel Leiris, there is a definite non-human, unworldly quality to the work, which points to going beyond the boundaries of the ‘familial-human’ in the creative process. There are boundless artistic opportunities to be had in extending and explicating material and non-human complexes as they appear in the world, and to extending the logic that this generates; and this expanded practice could involve, for example, the processes that lie in creatively interpreting the work of an artist, or in performing a drama based around the dynamics of a bridge. The Deleuzian approach would be to extend and deepen arts-practice in a material, processual, metaphorical way without making it clichéd, banal or obvious.

Teachers recognising themselves as artists involved with complex and ongoing pedagogic processes. It can always be problematic to add to the pedagogic load of a teacher, or to try and artificially extend the burden of their job by constantly updating their roles with new identities and new features given the latest research or trend in the field (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004).

However, one could say that the connection between Deleuze’s (2003) philosophical analysis of the paintings of Bacon and his real pedagogic action takes an artist’s sensitivity to make sure that such representative thinking is avoided. Rather than merely taking the paintings as a blueprint for action, or translating them literally to interpreters of the body as ‘meat’ and ‘the body without organs’, the higher level of the teacher is to articulate and see these bodily changes in the world. For example, these changes can be found in an analysis of old age, film, literature and real life, and could be further imbued with the ‘meat’ and power taken from Deleuze’s (2003) theory on Bacon and connect outer, observational changes in the body with inner, spiritual feelings of being in the world (or the loss of being in the world).

Transforming assessment practices into those of the ‘meat’ and the body without organs is an important way to concentrate on alternative, ongoing, inter-related complex changes over time, and therefore has a transformation (Cole & Hager, 2010) for learning function. Such a model will look back

Figure 5. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 3, Cole, (p. 28)
Waldorf (2002) provide notable exceptions, their research continues a theme of attempting to identify and, again, unlock the interactions that artists have with students, teachers, administrative processes and the curriculum. Brown identifies some of the multiple roles of instructor, facilitator, communicator, model and activist that artists are assumed to play, commenting on Rabkin’s view of artists needing to demonstrate a hybrid identity (Rabkin et al., 2011). Adopting this perspective, it may be presumed that the best artists for the school environment are those who are somewhat multidisciplinary and who are willing (and expected) to adapt their practice to the various contexts in which they find themselves. Brown’s focus has been slightly different in studying the nexus of “artist intention and realised practice” (Brown, 2014, p. 24) with children in non-school settings. But here I take Brown’s work as a point of departure and refer to this nexus of intention and practice to look to a school-based residency programme in which artists are not necessarily expected to teach, facilitate or instruct, but to be. With such licence, we might consider the work of the artist (in their doing and being) as interruption as well as distraction (Barad, 2007) in the school environment, guided by an ethics of positive entanglement and possibility. Drawing on the insights of feminist philosophy and science (Braidotti, 2002; Barad, 2003, 2007), we might re-imagine how artists assign themselves an alternative function in the school space, that is not about being an external independent entity, either assimilating or distancing themselves from established norms of institutionalised and standardised teaching and learning. Rather, we might reconfigure the artists’ contribution as a necessary interruption, that disrupts the always already shifting relations that exist in the school environment to co-generate new knowledge. These are artists who tap into the opportunities and spaces for change that educational communities are being called to aspire to. (Harris, 2016; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). As yet, I’m uncertain how much, if any, of the artist (and of the school) might best be realised or evidenced here, but I contemplate these ideas here having been intrigued, in new experiences, by the ways teachers and students often find it difficult not only to understand, but also to envisage their willingness and capacity to engage and be present to each other and to an artist around.

Figure 6. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 4, Hunter, (p. 34)
the denotation of the concept from a system which recreates itself following a prescribed linear process in Kant, to an ever-changing phenomenon in Deleuze and Guattari’s reading.

It is from Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) that Deleuze and Guattari derive their principle thought on the concept. For Spinoza, God has supremacy, but there is no distinction between God and attributes. Attributes can be read as the means whereby we observe something, which might be a sense of place, a feeling, a visual depiction presented by another object. The importance of this premise is that if God has created all things, seeing God in what is presented in his creation means that we remove any hierarchy; we respond to his 'attributes'. In this two-way interaction of recognition of God in nature, we recognise that we have an influence in how to respond to what has been termed 'expression' through the attributes.

From expression, it may not be that the plane of immanence alone produces the concept, but the pre-defined concept may also produce a plane of immanence or that our previous understanding of a concept limits how we respond. Just as we may recognise God in things that are attributes of God, so we may say that recognising the 'attributes' removes any hierarchy to arrive at a point where the experience of being and pre-determined concepts are not to be placed above one another.

This points to what we allow philosophy to become, prescribing how we respond (Naughton, 2012). The implication for the arts is that we may create a concept, a way of seeing the world, excluded by a philosophical concept. Let us take, for example, the concept that now we configure ‘art’ puts us back to what our own concept of art. In turn, this in turn will prescribe what we do in art and perceive in art.

Tackling the concept, and in particular the implications of the ‘expression’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s reading, this has implications for challenging the current hierarchies in the visual arts. For example, music for example our concept is most commonly a hierarchy of sound, dynamics and tempo. These elements are then notions of structure and musical notation. However, if we take the concept of hierarchy, this order can be changed and in fact, this breaking of hierarchy (e.g. of the music, without the hierarchy (e.g. of the music, without the hierarchy, e.g. of the music, without the hierarchy, e.g. of the music, without the hierarchy)), the regularity of compositional structure, and other elements can change the hierarchy and not colour. Use of non-Western and non-European sounds, such as film music, is fundamental to create a curriculum document.

**Figure 7.** A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 5, Naughton, (p. 49)
Figure 8. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 6, Lines, (p. 59)
The main insight I wish to highlight about the existence of human subjectivity is that, in a broader degree, our subjectivity is an active and in the sense of being literally subject to the world. The latter depends entirely on how others respond to our actions. This line of thought brings Biesta to the idea of the subject as an active agent. The subject is not just another entity, but the active agent in the world. In his later work, this idea evolves into corporeality. At the most fundamental level of our existence, we are not just subjects that enter into relations with others and the world, but subjects that are corporeal. This means that, contrary to the still fairly abstract notion of the subject as an individual (self, or I) and the mind, corporeality implies that our actions are not just our own actions, but also the actions of those around us. Applied to education, it suggests focusing more on strengthening the relationships, on developing skills, and on engaging in all sorts of bodily activity. Too much emphasis on the path to grown-up-ness may be detrimental to the mutual interconnectedness that is already given with and in the group of the various others swarm across the stage in permanent interaction. An important goal for education is to make this dynamic tension a substantial aspect of the child’s learning and development activities.

Regarding the relationship between bodies, Lyotard’s view resembles that of Nancy. He also focuses on the dynamic relationship between the individual and the group: but for Lyotard, ‘intercorporeity’ not only involves the sharing of our material bodies, but also and at the same time, the sharing of felt corporeality. Learning to share feelings is therefore at least as important in education and child-rearing as cognitive learning. And this is certainly not just a matter of talking about it – perhaps not at all a matter of talking about it, as it should be part and parcel of ‘physical education’.

The philosophical concept that I introduce here by way of conclusion is to understand intercorporeity in the art of dance as bodily connectedness in motion, in material and affective respects. This concept is relevant to the educational task in practice. It is in any case an argument in favour of giving the art of dance a more prominent role in education. And if we take a broader view, it is a recommendation to offer more physical education. Dancer and students often say: ‘I do not enjoy a few hours of gymnastics a week as a separate curriculum component, but physical education in a wider sense, as a counterbalance to the dominance of learning cerebral skills at school. What matters is to dance and move together, in a non-competitive way. To talk less and to do more, to feel and to experience more, together. The development of mind and body, of one’s subjectivity and intersubjectivity should go hand in hand. Because: the subject is subject to the world – to intercorporeity, which is to bodily connectedness in motion.

**References**


**Figure 9.** A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 7, de Vos, (p. 69)
through Mulgurry. All the forms of life. Mulgurry. materialise in the Niddeereie which embraces past, present and future. Through Mulgurry, Niddeereie can be understood as the coming into being of all the forms of life and of tracings, mark making, language and ideas, taking form simultaneously with Country. The creation of the world is the same process in which thinking through Country is materialised in Innubuqarraminbilum’s paintings, or the black marks on a white page, tracings through which we can come to know.

**Conclusion(s)**

The current Australian curriculum works from Western assumptions about knowledge and being that determine in advance what knowledge is and what the students can become due to its teachings (Biesta, 2017). In contrast, this chapter has positioned the Aboriginal practice of thinking through Country as a radical break from the Western mindset, instead placing the intricate and complicated processes of working with arts-based Aboriginal practices as being primary in understanding what knowledge is and how to work with it. In this context, the combined and entwined Aboriginal forces of painting, singing, dance, story-telling, craft-making, ritual and belief work together to introduce a new, more metaphysical framework into the educative frame. The example of the stoic-epistemological research narrative above, shows us some of the elaboration possible when enunciating such a framework through poetry, dance and song.

It is interesting that the English intellectual, Whitehead, offers a framework working with and including this type of practice in the curriculum, without ever come to Australia or having sought to understand the Aboriginal mindset in any way. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) flat ontology was influenced and designed to work with different cultures and histories, by deliberately destabilising the hegemony and prominence of modern Western thought. Whitehead’s framework is integrated in the material of science and in doing this potential frameworks...
The Anthropocene is but one imposed mode, in addition to being a racial discourse as to its consequences and whose responsibilities must shoulder its effects, where one is either for or against its anthropocentric bias (Tafvel, 2017). Incomposibility challenges and provides us with ‘parallel’ universes, antinomies, paradoxes that place us into proliferating Deleuzian logics of the ‘and’: our species is doomed, and there is no such thing as a fixed essentiality to our species, and a planetary conscious is necessary, and yet we must question the very unity of this as an illusion, and … and. The educational task of the artisan requires the positioning of incomposable abstractions, parallel fictions that work the smooth spaces that are already there to be explored, to provide those inroads into a postanthropological and postontological, as yet unthought, imaginary.

Why then is the concept of the cosmic artisan adequate to the event of the Anthropocene and the paradox of incomposibility? The above situateness of the Earth and our species within the needed backdrop is where what Deleuze and Guattari called a ‘world’ (We can modify ‘cosmic artisan for clearly the fancy of affairs pertains to both the macro and micro and in (call) interactions with our species) and be amoebic and not a prototroic and can differentiate between things and species, forms, types. Such cells can construct a cyborg organism or organism, possible; enzymes or proteins are also prototroic and for the blocks for new products. Biological culture and biotechnology and biotechnologies, neurobiology, Atletica—provides that new strange forms of life are in the works, new bioterror, new hybridized species, proto-organism.
Figure 12. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 10, Ewing and Saunders, (p. 99)
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Teaching is not just about having the theoretical knowledge base and practical skills, in fact it is about having the ability to evaluate who you are as a person and understand how your own identity shapes the quality of your practice (Palmer, 1990; journal, 25 September, 2014). In deference to my original view, I now understand that my endeavour to become a teacher must begin introspectively … and … over time I became aware that meaningful learning could only truly take place once teacher-student relationships based on positivity, trust, care, fairness, support and authenticity were formed (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2006; Bowman et al., 2001, in Arthur et al., 2012). I am now aware that my teacher identity is not a separate body of knowledge to acquire and be attuned to my own identity; rather my methodologies should be drawn from and remain faithful to my own identity.

In concluding her final reflections on the need for teaching and learning she states:

I have observed that some children are more confident expressing themselves in certain ways. By providing such pedagogies that offer multiple avenues for children to communicate, I believe this has contributed to children’s heightened sense of autonomy and agency in learning, and fostered greater awareness of the self (journal, 22 September, 2014).

Georgina’s capacity to go it alone in the studio, her art making, rather than being caught up in the power of her own mind as a relationship was instrumental in the opening up of the pedagogical relationship between herself and her young learners. Doy (2003) in her explanation of subjectivity draws a line between the fields of psychoanalysis and Marquis, where the relationship between self/subject and art is so obvious that it needs no other theorist to locate their work. 

Figure 13. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 11, Moss and Morrissey, (p. 111)
Coda: unthought futures

As outlined above, we are now facing a plethora of challenges in relation to the degradation of our planet, to which there has been inadequate, if any, political, economic, and by extension, educational response. Instead, we are witnessing a reconfiguration of conventional reference points and new and ever-more violent articulations of power in the face of continuous failures in social, political, and economic realms. As evidenced by recent American political events, such responses, or lack thereof, have re-ignited a powerful, if illusory, reliance upon past images of thought that are somehow reconstituted as the ideal. Likewise, in the field of education, postures defined by adaptation, maintenance, and ultimately symbolic or squalid mirroring our worldly anxieties and disconnections. Symptoms of this anxiety are growing in both frequency and impact, growing job precariousness, ever-increasing focus on quantity over quality, and the slippery corporatization of educational domains position schools among the many institutions that work to produce and maintain visions of the future guarded by the world as it is given, that is, a world defined by the limited purview of the past-present. At the same time, however, there remains a pressure to position education as that holy space of possibility, a space where hope is born and optimism prevails. This comforting narrative, however, does not adequately address the real, material conditions of our contemporary existence, thus leaving us with very little in which to believe.

In order to address this worldly precariousness and profound loss of belief it has enabled, the educational task must be capable of reimagining new and unthought images of the future, which in turn might provide a new belief for how pedagogical thought—short-circuiting the sensorium—might expectation that the world will repeat in the image new conditions for believing that something ‘else’ is possible for thought and action beyond the human—all-too-human—might be possible.

Note

1 Similarly in films such as Edge of Tomorrow (2014) and plunge their characters into video game or digital time, duration, but by what we might think of as the human existence—the Anthropocene—where the human is limits it has itself created (Wark, 2014).

References


Figure 14. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 12, Beier and Wallin, (p. 124)
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How do we take up the role of the teacher who says “do with me”? What is it to “emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity” (Deleuze, 1994, p.23)? It is to open up spaces for concept-creation through “counter-actualisation” (see Deleuze, 1990, pp.150–152), sometimes translated as “vice-diction” (see Deleuze, 1994, pp.189–191). Bogge offers a concise definition: “Vice-diction is the process whereby one identifies and engages the virtual events inherent within one’s present world, whereby one ‘counter-actualises’ the virtual” (2007, p.9). Virtuality consists in possibilities that continue to exist even once actualised. Counter-actualisation takes two forms: “the specification of adjunct fields”, or the exploration of existing connections to better understand them; and “the condensation of singularities”, or experimentation with new connections to transform existing ones (Deleuze, 1994, p.186). Both forms involve a moment of disequilibrium, an unsettling event, in which we sense the virtual and its possibilities, and, as Biesta would say, are able to “acknowledge the alterity and integrity of what and who is other” (Biesta, 2017, p.8). In section three we undertake a collective experiment in counter-actualisation.

Three

It is maybe the third or fourth visit by Adrian Smith, the dance teacher, to a Māori-medium early childhood centre taking part in the programme. The setting for the encounter is a sunken circular pit, amphitheatre-style, in diameter and slightly off-centre in the main room of the centre. The session begins with a settling period, its kaupapa (ritual) involving karakia (prayer), waiata (song), kōreno (talking and stories) and other ways of communing. This allows the tamariki (children) to get used to Adrian and him to get used to the rhythms of life in the centre: he is becoming less a manukiri (visitor) and more one of the

Figure 15. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 13, Roder and Sturm, (p. 130)
GB: There are two other concepts that are important in your thinking as well: the notions of weakness and reality. Again, can you explain what these concepts are about and what their relationship to the idea of unlearning is?

JB: I would begin with the triangulation of reality and weakness with illusion. This requires an arts perspective where many (including myself) often refer to art as a “making.” The identification of art with making follows on from the notion of poiesis (in Ancient Greek, to make, produce) that gave us poetics, artistic poetry. A number of art theorists and arts educators still insist on emphasizing the process of art making. They argue that to regard a work of art as an end-product would ignore aspects of learning, development, and creativity. Yet to identify art with making is not immune from backfiring on instrumentalist grounds. When art is entered into the realms of learning, development, and creativity, there is a good chance of reducing it to process as a measurable instrument.

As I have argued in Art's Way Out (Baldacchino, 2012, p.89), art cannot be misconstrued as an act of learning. This equivalence would essentialize art and learning as constructs of a foundational reality. More so, it upholds reality as a ground, as an a priori foundation, sustaining the myth that without a strong reality, there would be no meaning in the world.

Far from being equivalent to learning, reality may be understood from where the ground gives way to a horizon, as Lyotard has put it. On this horizon, we engage with the infinite diversity of the arts that the arts give. Through art’s hermeneutic power, we engage the arts and interpretively. This in turn provides us with an approach to what is called “strolling a weak reality”—that is, a reality that recedes in the background and occurs in the multiplicity of possibilities that make it.

Reality and illusion come in this triangulation. The need to recognize the paradox, more precisely, to recognize art’s dispositions that both confront but also run away from us. This is how the arts may be engaged, not only to engage in the dialectic between what is exalted and what is local.

In the arts, we talk about beauty. Though it never meets beauty strolling down the main street—only one comes across beautiful weather, highlights alongside beautiful things and beautiful people—there is always responding to beautiful objects. This is where...
Figure 17. A “moment of exhilaration” in chapter 15, Biesta, (p. 155)

References


About the author

Jorge Lucero is a Mexican-American artist who currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of the Art Education Program in the School of Art + Design at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Lucero has exhibited, performed, and published his work internationally. In addition to co-editing the journal *Visual Arts Research*, in 2016 he edited the compendium *Mere and Easy: Collage as a Critical Practice in Pedagogy*. Lucero completed the artist residency and exhibition *Teacher as Conceptual Artist* in 2018 at the Amsterdam University of the Arts and at Framer Framed gallery, Amsterdam.

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