

PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Special Issue: Student Being and Becoming

Amanda J. Fulford, Edge Hill University
Guest Editor

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In this issue...

AMANDA J. FULFORD: Introduction: Reflections
on Student Being and Becoming in the
Contemporary University

SEÁN HENRY: “Bringing to Presence That Which
Is Other”: Religious Discourses, Public Pedagogy,
and the University Classroom

JAIRO JIMÉNEZ: Finding Moments of Studying:
Being a Studier in the University

BENJAMIN SELZNICK / SEÁN MCCARTHY: Toward a
Theory of Social Innovation in Higher Education

LEWIS STOCKWELL / KAREN SMITH / PHILIP A. WOODS:
That Which Is Worthy of Love: A Philosophical
Framework for Reflection on Staff-Student
Partnerships for the Future University

JONATHAN TURCOTTE-SUMMERS: Be(com)ing
Antifascist: On Students’ Most Sacred Mission

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction: Reflections on Student Being and Becoming in the Contemporary University</i>	1
AMANDA J. FULFORD, EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY	
1. <i>“Bringing to Presence That Which Is Other”: Religious Discourses, Public Pedagogy, and the University Classroom</i>	11
SEÁN HENRY, MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY	
2. <i>Finding Moments of Studying: Being a Studier in the University</i>	31
JAIRO JIMÉNEZ, UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES	
3. <i>Toward a Theory of Social Innovation in Higher Education</i>	49
BENJAMIN SELZNICK & SEÁN MCCARTHY, JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY	
4. <i>That Which Is Worthy of Love: A Philosophical Framework for Reflection on Staff-Student Partnerships for the Future University</i>	71
LEWIS STOCKWELL, KAREN SMITH & PHILIP A. WOODS, UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE	
5. <i>Be(com)ing Antifascist: On Students’ Most Sacred Mission</i>	97
JONATHAN TURCOTTE-SUMMERS, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA	



Introduction: Reflections on Student Being and Becoming in the Contemporary University

AMANDA J. FULFORD
Edge Hill University

What is it to be a student in the contemporary university? How does one become a student, and is being a student simply the result of registering with a particular institution? What does (or should) a student do? Does she simply study, or how else is the “being” of a student expressed? Of course, these questions may seem simple to answer, at least on one level. They are questions that go to the heart of the motivations and practices of the academic’s work in lecturing and supporting students in higher education. They are also questions that, in some ways at least, are the concern of those with responsibility for managing, leading, funding and regulating higher education. But this edition seeks to move beyond such apparently obvious answers, and to consider again what might be at stake in the idea of student being and becoming.

This special edition, on the theme of “Student Being and Becoming” came about following the annual conference of the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society (PaTHES) on the same theme. This was held at Middlesex University, London, in 2018. The theme was selected at the previous year’s conference in Denmark, partly, at least, because there is much potential in bringing philosophy and theory to bear on matters relating to the student—and being and becoming a student—in the contemporary university. The student is the focus of much attention in the media, particularly at the time of putting together this special edition when the world is in the grip of a global pandemic that, at least for a period, is changing radically the nature of our universities and how our students can study in them. Teaching, learning and studying has largely gone online. Prospective students talk about whether

it will be possible to “be a student” in a socially distanced campus where gathering together for lectures and social events may not even be possible. For some, even the prospect of becoming a student in such strange times is difficult, leading some to consider postponing their plans to be a student, and to pursue other options. What is clear is that being, and becoming, a student may be a very different experience for some time to come. In the history of our universities, then, it seems that there have been few moments when it has been as urgent to think about what it means to be, and to become, a student.

There has, of course, been sustained philosophical thinking over the centuries about being and becoming (a pupil) across different aspects and phases of childhood and education. Most of this thinking and writing continues to be discussed among educators, on educational studies courses, and in programmes of initial teacher education. Much of this literature has become very familiar, from Plato's educational philosophy grounded in a vision of an ideal Republic, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's celebrated treatise on the nature of education,¹ to John Dewey's work on the child and the curriculum² and on democracy and education³ to Nel Noddings' contemporary work on an ethics of care and moral education.⁴ Central to much of this body of work is the figure of the child and that of the teacher, and of the relationship between them. Philosophy and theory has had much to say about the development, or the “becoming”, of the child. This is most clearly seen in, for example, Jean Piaget—the Swiss developmental psychologist's—work on epistemology and the cognitive development of children.⁵ More recently, there has been a burgeoning literature on the relevance of neuroscience to thinking about education. This was taken up in a 2008 special issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* titled “New Philosophies of Learning”.⁶ What this shows is that thinking about the child—and about the pupil—especially in relation to being and becoming in the context of education, has been an issue to which philosophers and theorists repeatedly return.

¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1762/2013).

² John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*. Joint edition with *The School and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902/1956).

³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1916/2012).

⁴ Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*. 2nd edition (New York: Teachers College Press, 2015).

⁵ Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

⁶ Ruth Cigman and Andrew Davis (Eds). “New Philosophies of Learning.” Special Issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42, nos. 3–4 (2008).

Discourses of Being and Becoming a Student: The Contemporary University Context

This special edition, however, is concerned not with being a pupil in a school or with the development of cognitive abilities, but rather with student being and becoming in the context of higher education. There is, again, a growing body of literature on the practical measures that a university might implement to support those entering, and progressing through, higher education to “become” and to “be” a student. In the main, this literature tends towards describing and analysing the *technical* aspects of what it means to be a student in the university. Some of this literature speaks to how academic staff can support students with developing independence (of thought, or approach to study), as this characteristic is often valorized as a mark of a higher education. The literature also turns its attention to how being a student (and also, to how to succeed in assessments) requires a comprehensive induction into the conventions expected in terms of academic writing. To be a student of theology, history, physics, or of economics, requires an understanding both of how to read and how to write in the discipline. Other literature is concerned with the development of that basic attribute of being a student in the university—the ability to think, read and write critically. Much of this literature is valuable on a practical level, as it supports pedagogical decision-making, curricular choices, and university investment in support packages—all of which feed into the (often spurious) measures of academic quality, student satisfaction and the student experience, and the league tables that inevitably follow.

Discussions about what it means to become, or be a student, in the university, are often framed around the thorny idea of a student’s “identity”. When a student enrolls on a university programme leading to a professional, vocational qualification (such as those typically seen in teaching or nursing), the literature points to the often-conflicted identities that students experience. As “*students*”, there is a desire to enjoy the full experience that this affords: managing financial independence (for those who may be leaving home for the first time); forging new friendships; partying and socialising. As “*trainee professionals*”, their identity—their “becoming”—is also bound up with discourses of professional ethics, codes of practice and the meeting of vocational standards. The importance of matters such as student identity—and of belonging—are strongly related to what it means to *be* a student in a given university, and to “belong” to the university community as alumni after graduation. Marketing campaigns boldly claim the particular attributes and skills of their students and graduates: employers can be confident that the graduates of “University X” are resilient, flexible, independent problem

solvers. This is what being a student at—and a graduate from—University X is all about: the demonstration of a set of skills, a body of knowledge or particular attributes. Yet in all these discussions, any more considered thinking about the “becoming” of the student is often given scant attention. Where it is, the notion of “becoming” is most often understood merely in terms of a transition into higher education, and so with the most practical of issues.⁷ What this focus of attention misses, however, is first, the ontological at the heart of what it means to be and become a student, and second, the perfectionist nature of being a student that is redolent of an ongoing process of being and becoming.

Perfectionism: Being and Becoming a Student

The idea of perfectionism is one that the American philosopher, Stanley Cavell⁸, finds in the work of the nineteenth century essayist, philosopher and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his celebrated volume on the idea of Emersonian perfectionism⁹, Cavell seeks to show that our being human is marked not by final perfectibility (that we should aim and reach perfection), but rather that, in repeatedly seeking to work towards a better version of ourselves, the “self” is always deferred. It is in this idea of perfectionism, then, that I find that Emerson’s ideas—especially as they are given expression in Cavell’s reading of them—offer rich lines of thought for the idea of being and becoming a student.

Cavell finds in Emerson an idea of perfectionism that is an orientation towards a better self that has no finality; it is always partial and on its way. One of the themes in Emerson’s perfectionism is the idea of journeying (through education or cultivation) to a further state of becoming of the self. This journeying is a necessary part of one’s becoming; it is in the constant losing of the self (the lack of settlement and leaving) that is its finding. These ideas of being and becoming human surely speak also to what it means to be and become a student. One becomes a student—at least in one sense—by enrolling on a programme of study in a particular institution. But Emerson’s ideas highlight that there is more at stake here: to be a student—in another sense—is to be

⁷ See, for example, Jade Sleeman, Catherine Lang and Eva Dakich. “International Students’ Transition to University: Connection and Disconnection in Online Group Work Interactions.” *Student Success* 10, no. 2 (2019): 35–45.

⁸ Stanley Cavell (1926–2018) was the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard.

⁹ Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

on a journey to *becoming* a student; it is to recognize that the student is always on a journey *towards* being a student of a subject, and a studier of a discipline. Such a journey requires an attitude and practice of openness to leaving and change. Branka Arsić, writing on Emerson, highlights the significance of this concept of leaving to his thought on the perfection of the self. Arsić writes of perfectionism that “To allow for change, to abandon the stationary, to overcome the fear of rupture, and to face interruption are all, in fact, modes of leaving where and what one is”.¹⁰ Emerson’s perfectionism is an “ontology of becoming”; it is “fundamentally ... an ontology of leaving”.¹¹

The idea of journeying towards in Emerson’s perfectionism should, however, not be seen in terms of some kind of developmental model. The perfectionist journey cannot be described with reference to particular delineated stages (especially the ones through which a student might progress in the course of a university education). The perfectionist journey rather requires that “A man should learn to detect and watch the gleam of light that flashes across his mind from within”.¹² It is this image, writes, Naoko Saito, that “symbolizes the sense of being and becoming in the path of perfection”.¹³ Emerson’s perfectionism critiques the tendency to see everything in terms of fixed ends, that is, teleologically. We might say that Emerson questions the idea that our being self-reliant, thinking individuals, happens once and for all, at a defined point in time. This, of course, has profound implications for how we might think of the being and becoming of the student. It moves us towards a position of seeing what it is to be a student in ways similar to those that Emerson envisaged for the development of the self. This is perhaps seen most evidently in his claim that: “Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth, that around every circle another can be drawn”.¹⁴ Just as a human self is, in perfectionist thought, constantly in a state of creation and transformation, so is the student. But to think of the student as being, *and yet always becoming*, a student does not mean that there should be no ends. Central to the very idea of studentship is a recognition of what one learns (in terms of reaching a *telos*), but also of what one still has to learn, and what there is to learn (multiple further *teloi*). Being a student, then, is not marked by temporal

¹⁰ Branka Arsić, *On Leaving: A Reading in Emerson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.

¹¹ Arsić, *On Leaving*, 5.

¹² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. William H. Gilman (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1841/2003), 267.

¹³ Naoko Saito, *The Gleam of Light: Moral Perfectionism and Education in Dewey and Emerson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁴ Emerson, *Selected Writings*, 312.

fixity, but rather by a movement towards multiple moments of perfectionism. Just as the being and becoming of the human self is a perfectionist endeavour, so is the being and becoming of the student. As Cavell writes: “this is not suggestive of ‘one unattained/attainable self that we repetitively never arrive at, but rather that ‘having’ ‘a’ self is a process of moving to, and from, nexts”.¹⁵

It is in these multiple moments of moving towards another “next” that we see the becoming of the student. Often, these moments are marked by a certain kind of exposure. The student finds herself in an unfamiliar position; grappling with a new idea or theorem; exploring new dimensions of a persistent problem, or even finding new ways of being with others in the community of the university. These moments of exposure sometimes open up different ways of thinking about those practices in the University that seem central to a student’s experience of higher education: the act of studying, for example, or the ways in which the student is in relationship with academic staff. At other times, being exposed affords a different form of becoming; it necessitates a radical rethinking of what it means to be a student in contemporary higher education. The contributions to this special edition illustrate both these sets of possibilities, and through their rich and critical engagement with the issues, expose *us* as readers to original philosophical and theoretical insights into the concepts of student being and becoming.

I wish to thank all those who, following the call for proposals to this special edition, took the time to contribute their ideas. The proposals received were original, varied and philosophically rich. It was unfortunate that, for reasons of space, practicality, and the coherence of the edition, a larger number of proposals could not have been accepted. I want also to thank the contributors to this volume who have worked tirelessly in developing their proposals into full draft papers, and for responding so positively, and with such care, to the feedback. I would also like to thank the support of the reviewers who took the time to assiduously read the papers and provide very helpful comments. The result of this process is a set of papers which break new ground in thinking about student being and becoming, and make a strong contribution to an underdeveloped area of research in the fields of philosophy and theory of education. Finally, I express my sincere thanks to Professor John Petrovic, as Editor of this Journal, for his very kind invitation to edit this special edition. His support throughout has been exemplary, and I hope that this resulting special edition makes a contribution to the excellent body of work that this Journal publishes.

¹⁵ Cavell, *Conditions*, 12.

Seán Henry’s paper is the first in this special edition, and is set against discussions about the involvement of religious institutions in public universities, and the implications of this for student being and becoming in the contemporary university. He starts with a focus on the ideas of religious language and of religious symbol, arguing that the open-ended quality to religious discourse is important in terms of highlighting the potential for engaging with religious discourse *pedagogically*. Such engagement, he posits, occasions the possibility of the student *becoming* somebody other than whom they were through an encounter with discourses that interrupt the totalities of their own experience. Put another way, a concern for the activism of public pedagogy is achieved when the poetry of religious discourses enables the possibility of the student “becoming” something or someone “new” in relation to those discourses. His paper suggests that religious discourses become sites of pedagogical possibility and becoming for the student through forms of resistance to “monolithic representations” that would otherwise streamline the contradictions, tensions, differences, and expansiveness of religion and its complexities. Student becoming, he concludes, is less a matter of assumed identity with religious institutions, and more a matter of providing spaces for students to relate to religious discourses in potentially interruptive, creative, and open-ended ways.

Jairo Jiménez’s paper is a richly evocative discussion of a concept central to education more generally, and to higher education in particular: studying. It moves away from standard theoretical and psychological discussions of what is at play in the act of studying, and towards a more poetic exploration. His paper presents and discusses three important and interrelated themes in thinking about studying: the nature of studying as a relation with others; the necessity of an attitude of studying, and the issue of love in studying. One of the key ideas that Jiménez introduces in this contribution is that the conception of being a student in the university—in terms of *future* expectancies and learning outcomes—fails to convey the primacy of the interwoven relations that happen during *present* moments of studying. He argues that studying emerges from a mutual shaping between actions and things that enter into play during those moments. To be a student, claims Jiménez, is not the initial or final outcome of studying, but it is something that happens in the middle of the activity. In this sense, the becoming of the student is contiguous with the act of studying such that becoming a student in the university is about making time and space to study.

Benjamin Selznick and Seán McCarthy’s paper starts from the claim that a necessary response to addressing complex global problems rests in the theoretic and practice of social innovation—in approaches to solving

intractable social issues on a local and global scale. They develop this argument by bringing together social innovation with Axel Honneth's concept of social freedom. They then introduce an expanded definition of the "prototype" as a mechanism that can be utilized to embed social innovation and social freedom throughout the contemporary curriculum in the university. They argue that social freedom, social innovation and prototyping are essential features of the becoming student, and encourage an understanding of the "student" as one progressing toward increasing awareness of their own individuation, equipped with those capacities necessary to engage meaningfully in processes of social innovation. Bringing conceptual themes and learning relations together, they advance the proposition that being "educated" and being "socially innovative" are complementary phenomena, and conclude with an imagined possibility for securing social freedom amidst present ecological fragility.

Lewis Stockwell, Karen Smith and Philip Wood's paper develops a philosophical understanding of student-staff partnerships in the university through a novel interpretation and development of Aristotle's friendship arguments. They begin by showing how student being and becoming currently takes place in a context where the neoliberal agendas of marketisation and consumerisation are having great impact, and where partnership is understood in more reductive, transactional ways. They then move to develop a typology of student-staff partnerships based on Aristotelean friendship arguments. This comprises four types of partnership, three of which are reflective of Aristotle's types of friendship. The fourth, they suggest, involves an intrinsically valued good that is rooted in, and emerges from, shared partnership activity. This, they suggest, moves beyond the individual outcomes that occur as a result of partnership. They argue that their typology provides a useful framework not only for thinking critically about student-staff partnerships, but also for discussions about student becoming and being in the university. Their typology also offers clarity in understanding the ethical motivation and purpose of the partnerships in the university, and they suggest that this clarity enables students to see how such partnerships contribute to a notion of the flourishing life. They conclude by arguing that, given student-staff partnerships are likely to remain—if not grow—in the contemporary university, they are likely to have a significant impact on the being and becoming of the student.

Jonathan Turcotte-Summers' paper is the final one in this special edition. In this timely paper, he begins by asking what should students be, and be becoming, in the university of the future? He begins with some critical reflections on the 1946 Charter of Grenoble, and explores the possibility of

conceptualizing students as both workers *and* workers-in-training called to engage in the very particular work of defending freedom from oppression. Turcotte-Summers initially addresses the relationship between oppression, freedom, and violence, and considers what it might mean to take involvement in anti-oppression work as a central component of student being and becoming, rather than merely as an extra-curricular activity, or secondary to the primary aim of studying. He then moves to discuss a particular configuration of desire that works to further oppression, namely fascism, and argues that this is something which students have a duty to oppose. Finally, he turns to examine the political philosophy of anti-fascism as the historically most effective antidote to fascism, and considers the specific role that students might be called to play in anti-fascist organizing. He concludes with a brief exploration of the role of place in determining how students should be—and be becoming—anti-fascist, especially in terms of commitments to indigenous knowledges and worldviews.

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1. “Bringing to Presence That Which Is Other”: Religious Discourses, Public Pedagogy, and the University Classroom

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Abstract: The relationship between religion and higher education is often characterized by anxieties around religion in the university classroom. These concerns frequently leverage around the assumption that religion is necessarily contentious for the public university, either because of the need to resist the exclusionary privileging of religions in public spaces, or because of sensitivities around the preservation of traditional religious orthodoxies in increasingly pluralist times. Interestingly, both approaches to the relationship between religion and university education rest on the assumption that religion is fundamentally immutable, incapable of contestation, re-interpretation, or change. With the view to moving past the limits of such perspectives, I suggest that religious language and symbol (as two features of religious discourse) are far more poetic, fluid, and open-ended than is often assumed, and that it is precisely this open-endedness that underscores the possibility of engaging pedagogically with religion in the context of the university classroom. In this regard, I trace the affinities between the open-endedness of religious discourses and the “publicness” of pedagogy, suggesting that both registers open up possibilities for new ways of existing and relating in the world that are at once activist, experimental, and demonstrative. I conclude by reflecting on how these affinities offer resources for recalibrating what we mean by student “becoming” at the interface between religion and the university

classroom. I forward the view that the poetry of religious discourses offers students the chance to “become” in ways that unpredictably expand and disrupt the limits of religious identity and tradition, and in this way undermine the inevitable alignment of religion with either exclusion or preservation in the context of university life. Student becoming, understood in these terms, becomes less a matter of forming students into a streamlined understanding of religious identity in the context of the university, and more a matter of providing spaces for students to relate to such identities in potentially interruptive and public-facing ways.

Keywords: religion, religious language, symbol, open-endedness, publicness, poetry

Introduction

In November 2012, the Loyola Institute was formally launched in the Republic of Ireland. The Institute, which emerged through financial and legal agreements between eight religious congregations and Trinity College Dublin, is part of the School of Religion and is dedicated to engaging “in critical reflection and scholarly research on the Christian faith, social justice and contemporary culture” in dialogue with “the intellectual resources of the Catholic tradition”.¹ The launch of the Institute was described as “a milestone in the institutional development of Catholic theology in Ireland”, and was understood by the provost of the university as “ideally placed to address religious, ethical and societal questions in an academic forum and public domain”.² The provost’s appeal to the “public domain” in framing the relationship between the Institute and the academic life of the university is noteworthy, particularly at a time when religious involvement in public institutions is seen as an increasing threat to the liberal ideals of many secular democracies.

Of course, the launch of the Loyola Institute was not without its opponents, with many of the university’s staff voicing criticism against the religious orientation of the Institute’s curriculum and infrastructure. An anonymous contributor to the university’s online student newspaper (*Trinity News*) gave the following account of staff concerns in this regard: “The overwhelming consensus was that the very concept of a faith-based degree ran contrary to

¹ “Loyola Institute is Launched at Trinity College Dublin” Accessed February 10, 2020. https://www.tcd.ie/news_events/articles/loyola-institute-is-launched-at-trinity-college-dublin/.

² “Loyola Institute”.

[the university’s] equal opportunities policy” and that “it posed a danger to academic freedom” that “would compromise the secular ethos of the university”.³ Significantly, questions around the Institute’s formation were not limited to the Church’s detractors. Indeed, Diarmuid Martin, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, also voiced reservations around the launch of the Institute. He emphasized the fact that the “vocation” of a Catholic theologian and of an Institute of Catholic theology is ultimately an “ecclesial vocation” that “cannot be independent of reference to the teaching authority of the Church”.⁴ Martin suggested that the Loyola Institute, unlike other theological faculties within state universities around the world, did “not fit into the recognized models for Catholic Theological Institutes’ on the grounds that it was incapable, given the university’s (lack of) relation to the teaching authority of the Church, of contributing to “the teaching of Catholic Theology within the ecclesial community”.⁵

For me, what is interesting in both responses to the Institute’s launch is the assumptions they betray with respect to the relationship between religion and university education. In both cases, religion is framed as necessarily contentious for the public university, either because of the need to resist the exclusionary privileging of religions in public spaces (as articulated by the anonymous contribution to *Trinity News*), or because of the need to be sensitive to the preservation of traditional religious orthodoxies (as articulated by Martin). Such debates have found echoes across the globe, from concerns around the inclusiveness of Catholic universities in the context of the United States (for LGBTQ students and staff, for example), to criticisms often aired against the privileging of evangelical Christianity in college consortia. While different in terms of how they relate to and prioritize religion, what both perspectives above have in common is the assumption that religions are somehow immutable in character, and because of this, lack the resources to sit (at least potentially) productively within the academic remit of public university classrooms. It is in response to this assumption that this paper arises. I suggest that religious language and symbol (as two features of religion) are far more fluid and open-ended than is often assumed, and that it is precisely this open-endedness that underscores the possibility and value of engaging *pedagogically* with such discourses in the university classroom

³ “The Intrigue of Loyola”. *Trinity News*, November 5, 2012. Accessed February 10, 2020. <http://trinitynews.ie/2012/11/the-intrigue-of-loyola/>.

⁴ “Statement on Loyola Institute TCD”. Archdiocese of Dublin, 2012. Accessed February 10, 2020. <https://www.dublindiocese.ie/13112012-statement-on-loyola-institute-tcd/>.

⁵ “Statement on Loyola Institute”.

(for example, through the study of sacred texts and prayers, reflections on the significance of religious symbols, engagement with encyclicals, exhortations, religious jurisprudence, etc.). In this regard, I trace the affinities between the open-endedness of religious discourses and the “publicness” of pedagogy, suggesting that both registers open up possibilities for new ways of existing with, and relating to, religion that expose religion’s potentially activist, experimental, and demonstrative qualities. In this sense, my turn to the publicness of pedagogy is motivated by an attentiveness to the value of prioritizing the pedagogical in university classrooms: it is in engaging with religious discourses in a pedagogical (rather than, say, deferent) sense that the capacity of religious language and symbol to enact an interruptive and public-facing (rather than an insular and unchanging) orientation arises. Ultimately, I argue that it is in engaging pedagogically with religious discourses out of a concern for public forms of human togetherness that opportunities open up for students to be and become in ways that can expand and disrupt the limits of religious traditions. It is through this kind of pedagogical engagement, I claim, that the inevitable alignment of religious discourses with either exclusion or preservation can be overcome in the university classroom.⁶

The Poetry of Religious Language and Symbol

Anna Strhan offers a compelling reading of religious language that helpfully troubles assumptions around religion’s apparent immutability and fixedness. Her focus is on the “poetic” quality to religious language, a quality that dissociates religious language from identity with dogma, and instead understands it in ways that are fluid and open to diverse insights and experiences. In conceptualising the poetic essence of religious language, Strhan begins by developing her understanding of poetry.⁷ Following Martin Heidegger, Strhan sees the poetic as a “raid on the inarticulate”, by which she means a “pure” language that gains its purity by being neither “an expression nor an activity” of human discourse.⁸ Rather than existing as, say, a reproduction of the

⁶ I am conscious that my discussion of religion is limited to religious discourses in this paper. I do not focus, for example, on more embodied and material accounts of religion, and how these might also occasion more spacious, public-facing conceptions of religion in the context of the university classroom. For reflections on the relationship between the materiality of religion and ritual, student becoming, and the publicness of pedagogy, see Henry (2019, 187–216).

⁷ Anna Strhan, “Religious Language as Poetry: Heidegger’s Challenge,” *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 6 (2011): 926–938.

⁸ Strhan, “Religious Language”, 926.

poet's intentions and/or experiences, poetry as pure language is that which is "never exhausted, never closed": the poetic word possesses a "hiddenness" that opens up boundless degrees of interpretation and insight by virtue of its poetic quality.⁹ Of central concern for Strhan in understanding the poetic is the manner in which poetic language resists adhering to "the misguided assumption that word and thing fit together in a definite relation that we can grasp".¹⁰ For Strhan, the "veiled" relation that exists between Saying (the act of utterance) and Being (the essence of what is uttered) is typified in poetry, a relation characterized by a mysteriousness exposed in "the strangeness of language" itself.¹¹ Crucially, it is in this very strangeness, this opacity, that an "opening" or clearing to "the wholly Other"¹² is revealed to the listener. In reaching the limits of language the essence of language itself is revealed, in all its uncontainability. This poetic move towards the wholly Other (this revelation of sorts) is what acts for Strhan as the basis for understanding religious language as an essentially poetic language.

Strhan opens her analysis of religious language by pointing towards the position the mysteriousness of the relation between Saying and Being holds within this language. Strhan is interested in exposing the degree to which religious language is poetically "pure", in the sense of being sensitive to the elusiveness of language itself, a sensitivity that opens up "a space for wonder" capable of bringing "to presence what cannot be brought to presence, the excess that remains beyond the limits" of what is listened to in its Saying.¹³ Significantly, Strhan initiates this part of her discussion by drawing attention to the resistance such an understanding of religious language often faces in religious and theological scholarship, arguing that the "intimacy between hiddenness and revelation"¹⁴ is one at odds with positivist discourses that seek to render language transparent, wholly representative, and thus easily defensible against others. She writes:

The most likely reason, I believe, for the neglect of Heidegger's views on language in the study of religious language has been because of the desire in theology to say something concrete about the relation between words and the Holy, to pin down the nature of religious language. Implicit has often been the desire to defend theological discourse against claims of meaninglessness stemming from the discourses of logical positivism.¹⁵

⁹ Strhan, "Religious Language", 927.

¹⁰ Strhan, "Religious Language", 928.

¹¹ Strhan, "Religious Language", 928.

¹² Strhan, "Religious Language", 926.

¹³ Strhan, "Religious Language", 931.

¹⁴ Strhan, "Religious Language", 932.

¹⁵ Strhan, "Religious Language", 930.

The tendency in more dogmatic religious and theological quarters to erode the open-endedness of religious language becomes a self-refuting exercise by supplanting the unsayable (with which much religious experience grapples) with a definitiveness that closes off its inexhaustibility, thereby making it “dull” and “used-up”.¹⁶

Strhan, in her efforts to rescue religious language from the limits of logical positivism, echoes in many respects the views of Emmanuel Levinas, particularly when he allies religious language with the poetic imagination:

What the multiple expressions of religious language have in common is the claim to be inexhaustible in reference to the world from which the signification of words, propositions and discourses is woven. How do we open to language the borders of the given reality in which we live? ... In the poetic imagination, the unheard can be heard, called out to and expressed ... metaphor can lead beyond the experiences which seem to have created it.¹⁷

Here, the language of religion (its metaphors, symbols, and tropes) sports a boundlessness that performs its own deconstruction, evading an immediacy that would otherwise silo the divine to which it gestures to a very particular (and limiting) type of conceptual thinking. In “God and Philosophy”, Levinas states that “God” is what bursts open the “omnipotence of the *logos*, of the *logos* of system and simultaneity”.¹⁸ God, in other words, is that which disrupts the totalising tendencies often tied to religious discourses by manifesting a “transcendence as signification, and signification as the signification of an order given to subjectivity before any statement: a pure one-for-the-other”.¹⁹ Put differently, the language of religion attends to that which is beyond our totality as human beings, and because of this becomes a “pure language in that it eludes us, while bringing to presence that which is Other as such”.²⁰

Returning to the motivations of this paper as a whole, then, do these insights on religious language offer us avenues for rethinking how we frame religion in educational research, in ways that avoid aligning such discourses with the uniformities of dogma while at the same time resisting the default assumption that engaging with such discourses in classroom is necessarily contentious for universities? I believe so, particularly when I reflect on what I see

¹⁶ Strhan, “Religious Language”, 930.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “Beyond the Verse” (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 86.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “Of God Who Comes to Mind” (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 78.

¹⁹ Levinas, “Of God”, 78.

²⁰ Strhan, “Religious Language”, 933.

to be the nascent open-endedness of religious language. Engaging with religious language is open-ended in the sense that it offers those who listen the chance to step outside the strictures of their own experiences and encounter something wholly different to themselves, that which is strange and opaque. Central to the "calling"²¹ of religious language is a kind of interruption of self: the absence of immediacy inherent to poetry pulls the listener of religious language beyond the experiences created by that language, inviting them into relationship with the fault lines of discourse, where all that is comprehensible and identifiable loses its representable transparency and familiarity. My appeal to religious language in educational discourse is motivated, then, by an attraction to its intrinsic fluidity, its poetic humility if you will, through which possibilities beyond what is currently the case can begin to open up.

So much for religious language, then, but what of religious symbols? In addition to this paper's foray into the open-endedness of religious language, I am also interested in exploring the limits (or otherwise) of religious symbolism, and the degree to which these might also elicit opportunities for bringing "into presence that which is Other". An example of a more poetic take on the significances of religious symbol can be found in the work of Paul Tillich, who begins his reflections by noting how every symbol "opens up a level of reality for which non-symbolic speaking is inadequate".²² On this meaning, the function of the symbol is to expose us to the "hiddenness" of experience: it points us to the fact that what presents itself to us in the world is not all that there is or, indeed, could ever be. About specifically *religious* symbols, Tillich makes a similar point, arguing that religious symbols "do exactly the same thing as all symbols do—namely, they open up a level of reality, which otherwise is not opened at all, which is hidden".²³ In articulating what this "hiddenness" is, Tillich turns to the "Holy": for Tillich, religious symbols expose us to the transcendent, rendering it incarnate, and in this way allowing us to overcome "the remoteness of the divine" in our lives.²⁴

In developing this further, I turn to Tillich's distinction between signs (in the form of letters on a page, or traffic signs, for instance) and symbols. He writes of how signs are similar to symbols in the sense that both "point beyond themselves to something else", but are different in that, unlike signs, symbols "although they are not the same as that which they symbolise" nonetheless

²¹ Strhan, "Religious Language", 931.

²² Paul Tillich, "Religious Symbols and Our Knowledge of God." *The Christian Scholar* 38, no. 3 (1955): 191.

²³ Tillich, "Religious Symbols", 192.

²⁴ Tillich, "Religious Symbols", 195.

“participate in its meaning and power”.²⁵ He continues: “... religious symbols are symbols of the Holy. As such they participate in the holiness of the Holy according to our basic definition of a symbol. But participation is not identity; they are not themselves the Holy”.²⁶ I refer to the fact that religious symbols participate in, *but are not identical to*, the divine, as it is in this lack of identity with the Holy that the scope for a more fluid, expansive, and poetic understanding of religious symbols arises. To my mind, the distinction that exists between, for example, the cross as a Christian symbol, and the “holiness” of the resurrection that it participates in through a person or community’s encounter with it, is not insignificant. Indeed, it is precisely through this “gap” that the truth of the resurrection becomes intelligible for Christians across contexts and sensitivities today, without at the same time losing its eternal holiness. Put differently, the “gap” between the cross and the resurrection preserves the ineffability of the transcendent, while at the same time allowing for the cross to *be* a cross, a material intersection of a vertical and horizontal line that is interpreted through, and situated within, the specificities of time, place, and their attendant legacies and traditions. Hence, religious symbols, without losing their divine significance, can be nonetheless reread and reimagined, added to or simplified in a plurality of ways, depending on the interpretations and contexts that inform the divine-human encounter set up by the symbol. In this vein, denying the plurality of religious symbols (say through attempts at preserving one particular account of a symbol’s significance over another) would appear to rest on an assumed identity between the symbol and the Holy that Tillich would reject. This has the effect of streamlining the multiplicities of the transcendent in terms of representation and in this way subverts the symbol’s performative function, that is its role in communicating the divine’s ineffability.

Indeed, against such representative strategies, queer theologian Linn Marie Tonstad argues that the task of the theologian is precisely to “shift”²⁷ those theological logics that have been conventionally used to justify social, cultural, economic, and political ills. Such shifting is in harmony with intellectual work that subverts attempts at “solidifying” theological categories, concepts, and symbols, reducing doctrine to dogma, and icon to idol.²⁸ Echoing Strhan’s perspectives on religious language, Tonstad makes the case that these

²⁵ Tillich, “Religious Symbols”, 189–190.

²⁶ Tillich, “Religious Symbols”, 192.

²⁷ Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018): 84.

²⁸ Tonstad, *Queer Theology*, 78.

“shifting” strategies are rooted in an appreciation for how all religious traditions (and their related discourses, practices, and symbol structures) are products of human finitude, and are therefore incapable of appealing to notions of “ultimacy or finality” in how they speak about or image the divine.²⁹ Thus, a more open-ended and fluid idea of the religious symbol is both conceivable and theologically sensitive: it creates new possibilities for understanding, experiencing, and preserving the otherness of the Holy precisely through the embeddedness of symbol within the diversities of traditions and contexts.

For me, this more spacious and poetic conception of religious language and symbol is significant as it gestures to the possibility of engaging with religious discourses in university classrooms in ways that allow such engagement to escape being inevitably aligned with either the preservation of religious orthodoxies, or the exclusion of perspectives and sensibilities that lie outside more orthodox frameworks. In this sense, I see the open-ended quality to religious discourse as important in terms of highlighting the potential for engaging with religious discourse *pedagogically*, that is, in a way that occasions the possibility of the student *becoming* somebody other to who they were through an encounter with discourses that interrupt the totalities of their own experience.³⁰ At its heart, the pedagogical potential that I identify in religious discourse resides in the capacity of its poetry to both cultivate and sustain the kinds of conditions and encounters needed to alter and transform our current selves and circumstances.³¹ I say “circumstances” quite deliberately, for the possibility of pedagogical change cannot occur in relation to an atomistic self, devoid of context, but instead always necessarily takes place in a way that can transformatively affect the traditions (including religious traditions) with which we find ourselves in relationship. On this meaning, the experience of engaging with the poetry of religious discourse in the university classroom resists falling into an invariable expression of religious deference (to respond to the anxieties of the *Trinity News* reporter above), but instead can also come to signal new possibilities for human subjectivity that can shift and expand the limits of religious traditions by “bringing to presence that which is Other”.

How though, can such a perspective speak to concerns around the “publicness” of the university? While the possibility of engaging pedagogically with religious discourse might be assured through a sensitivity to its

²⁹ Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2016): 217.

³⁰ Seán Henry, “Queering Religious Schooling: Teachings, Values, Rituals” (PhD diss., Maynooth University, 2019), 119.

³¹ Henry. “Queering”, 119.

poetry, is it possible to align this pedagogical potential to a view of the university classroom as a space committed to public forms of human togetherness? In what follows, I turn to Gert Biesta's work to claim that it is indeed possible to frame a poetic engagement with religious discourse as one attuned to the sensibilities and priorities of public pedagogy.

Public Pedagogy, Religion, and the University

Action, Freedom, and the Condition of Plurality

Gert Biesta draws extensively from the work of Hannah Arendt in developing his take on the "publicness" of pedagogy, so it is through his reading of her that I proceed. For Arendt, human beings can be understood as active beings, beings with the capacity to act in the world. Biesta notes how she draws a distinction between three modes of active life (labour, work, and action) and likens the last of these to the ability to take initiative, to begin something new, to give rise to something that previously did not exist. Biesta focuses on how Arendt compares the human being to an *initium*, that is both a "beginning" and a "beginner"³²: with speech and action, human beings are in the business of creating newness, calling "something into being which did not exist before".³³ He cites her in writing: "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world and this insertion is like a second birth".³⁴ Importantly, Arendt connects this understanding of action to freedom: our freedom as human beings is exercised, neither before nor after the creation of a new beginning, but is instead enacted *in* action itself.

For Biesta, the significance of this view of freedom as action in Arendt's work comes to the fore when we consider how, in the moment of acting, there will always be others "who respond to our initiatives and take up our beginnings".³⁵ To freely engender a new beginning relies on the responsiveness of others, for it is through the presence of others in our lives to begin with that our actions can be taken up in the world. Freedom as action, put differently, rests on our dependence upon others who escape the limits of our own

³² Hannah Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Penguin Books, 1962), 170.

³³ Arendt, *Between Past*, 151.

³⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 176–177.

³⁵ Gert Biesta, "Making Pedagogy Public: For the Public, of the Public, or in the Interest of Publicness?" in *Problematizing Public Pedagogy*, ed. Jake Burdick, Jennifer A. Sandlin, and Michael P. O'Malley (New York: Routledge, 2013), 19.

comprehension and experience (our totality, to use a Levinasian register). It is because of this that Biesta points to Arendt's claim that "to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act",³⁶ that is, the capacity to bring something new into the world, and, in doing so, become otherwise. Think of this paper for instance. It could only arise as something new into the world in light of my previous encounters with texts, ideas, and scholars who held perspectives and lived lives different to my own. The freedom I exercise in offering this paper to the world as a new beginning depends entirely on others informing and responding to its content, a relationality through which I can also emerge (or "become") as a subject in the world. In this way, Arendt's insistence upon the "impossibility" of remaining "the unique masters of what [we] do"³⁷ holds true: freedom as action (the condition of human becoming, if you like) is not a phenomenon of the will, determined by the choices of a private sovereign, but is instead something that is enacted in the flesh-and-blood realities of living with, and depending upon, others.

The import of this reading of freedom for understanding the public character of pedagogy emerges for Biesta in Arendt's reflections on the necessity of a "public realm"³⁸ as a condition for freedom as action to occur. Biesta quotes Arendt when he argues that the "public domain" is to be seen less as a physical location, and more as that which denotes a particular quality to human interaction:

The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be ... It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men [*sic*] exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.³⁹

The public domain, in other words, captures the dependence upon others that serves as a basis of freedom as action in our world. Read in these terms, the notion of "publicness" gestures to the fundamental condition of plurality inherent to human freedom: action becomes impossible without the difference intrinsic to human togetherness, for it is in this difference that new beginnings emerge. It is because of this that Biesta offers the idea of

³⁶ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 188.

³⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 244.

³⁸ Arendt, *Between Past*, 149.

³⁹ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 198-199.

a “citizenship of strangers”⁴⁰ as a helpful lens for thinking through what human togetherness demands of us. Sustaining the “public” quality of our relationships with others involves preserving and pursuing plurality, for it is only through an embrace of others’ “strangeness” to me that the freedom of human action is maintained, and the “newness” of our becoming enabled. The “citizenship of strangers” that acts as a foundation of Biesta’s appraisal of Arendt can be seen as valorizing a view of the public that rests on a “mode of human togetherness which is not after a common ground but rather articulates an interest in a common world”.⁴¹ Understanding “the public”, through this lens, becomes less about keeping intact an identitarian sense of sameness, and more about recognizing (and preserving) a mutual sense of dependence upon each other in the face of our inevitable and necessary differences. Given pedagogy’s investment in the beginning of something new (in freedom as action, it seems), Biesta sees Arendt’s work as highly appropriate for reflecting on what it means to speak about the public nature of pedagogy, understood in three modes. Below, I briefly outline these three modes before turning to how his thesis relates to my previous discussion around the poetry of religious language and symbol.

Public Pedagogy in Three Modes

Biesta critiques two conventional approaches to public pedagogy in educational thinking and practice: a pedagogy *for* the public, and a pedagogy *of* the public. Biesta characterizes a pedagogy *for* the public as a mode of instruction that sees the world “as a giant school”.⁴² Read in this way, a pedagogy for the public is invested in “educational agents” (such as teachers) instructing the citizenry on what to think, how to act, and what to be, with the view to upholding and sustaining a particular understanding of public life. A pedagogy for the public manifests itself in interventions that aim at students being “tolerant”, “law-abiding”, or “respectful”, for example, often in ways that are moralistic and/or in tune with the demands of the nation state.⁴³ A pedagogy *of* the public resists this former approach to public education in the sense that it conceives of the teacher as a facilitator, rather than instructor. A pedagogy of the public aims at the generation of critical consciousness, achieved through

⁴⁰ Gert Biesta, 2012, “Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere”, *Social and Cultural Geography* 13, no. 7 (2012): 690.

⁴¹ Biesta, “Becoming Public”, 690.

⁴² Biesta, “Becoming Public”, 691.

⁴³ Biesta, “Becoming Public”, 692.

what is learned as a result of the collective experience of students studying the world and its injustices together. Biesta is critical of both accounts of public pedagogy on the grounds of their elision of certain pluralities within the educational encounter, pluralities from which the “publicness” of education (in the Arendtian sense) derives and depends.

In terms of a pedagogy for the public, pluralities are eroded for Biesta in its erasure of those differences that fracture the limits of what might be deemed acceptably “public” for the nation state: instructing the citizenry to behave or to think in certain ways necessarily closes off possibilities that transgress what is expected of the public. With respect to a pedagogy of the public, Biesta acknowledges that room exists for a more pluralistic account of education to emerge, specifically in this pedagogy’s attention to resisting the privileged position of the teacher as an authoritarian voice. Its limits, though, present themselves in its tendency to frame the generation of critical consciousness in terms of what can be collectively *learned* by students: for Biesta, learning is not quite as open-ended as is often assumed, and can have the effect of closing down as much as it opens up. He writes:

... unlike what is often assumed, learning is not some kind of open and natural process that can go in any direction, but is actually a very particular and specific “regime” ... a regime, moreover, that demands a particular relation of the self to the self, that is a relation of awareness, reflection and conclusion.⁴⁴

As Biesta notes elsewhere,⁴⁵ a focus solely on learning can have the effect of closing down certain existential possibilities in education: if education is to be read solely in terms of what we can learn about our world, the world becomes reducible to what the student can determine and grasp. Biesta writes of how the reduction of education to learning:

... means that in a very fundamental sense my existence “occurs” before the existence of the world: I assume that I am there first in order then to start making sense of the world. It also means that I assume that the world exists for me, that is, that the world is in some way at my disposal as an object for me to make sense of and construct knowledge about.⁴⁶

Plurality is denied here through a conception of education that has, as its starting point, the centrality of a self that exists prior to the world: on this

⁴⁴ Biesta, “Becoming Public”, 692–693.

⁴⁵ Gert Biesta, “Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships”, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 34 (2015).

⁴⁶ Biesta, “Freeing Teaching”, 238.

meaning, the generation of critical consciousness in a pedagogy of the public depends upon a view of the world as “a giant adult education class in which educational agents perform the role of facilitator”.⁴⁷ For Biesta, plurality is lost here as such a view of public pedagogy is not sufficiently “interruptive” enough: a pedagogy of the public opens up possibilities for transformation, this is true, but only within the terms of what the student can comprehend, understand, and/or reflect upon.

Biesta’s response to the limits of both of these is to propose a third mode of public pedagogy, one understood as an “enactment of a concern for “publicness” or “publicity”, that is, a concern for the public quality of human togetherness and thus for the possibility of actors and events to become public”.⁴⁸ Returning to his reading of Arendt, Biesta’s proposal entails “keeping open the possibility of a space where freedom can appear”. A public pedagogy is one that exposes, sustains, and builds upon the pluralities upon which the generation of “newness” arises in our world, the basis from which a new kind of “becoming” can be enacted. Interpreted thus, the teacher (or, in the context of the university, the tutor, lecturer, or professor) becomes neither an instructor, nor a facilitator, but rather someone who “interrupts” the students’ world with the view to cultivating those encounters with difference through which the freedom to become otherwise can be enacted. In this third mode of public pedagogy, education becomes less instructive and learning-focused, and “more activist, more experimental, and more demonstrative”. Activist in the sense of creating real alternatives for human togetherness that reclaim opportunities for “public relationships-in-plurality”. Experimental in the sense of inventing new possibilities for being and becoming in the world. And demonstrative in the sense that such a pedagogy demonstrates, in its publicness, that alternatives are always possible, and that things can always be done differently. For me, if we are to frame university education as a site where this mode of public pedagogy is valorized and enacted, then it is with an orientation towards pluralistic forms of human togetherness that are at once activist, experimental, and demonstrative that the value and pedagogical significance of religious discourse as poetry needs to be assessed.

I see the accounts of religious language and symbol offered by Strhan and Tillich as speaking directly to Biesta’s concern for activism in its creation of the possibilities for new modes of human togetherness, of relationships-in-plurality. This is so through the resistance of religious discourses to the limits of logical positivism, an opacity and fluidity that allows for the

⁴⁷ Biesta, “Making Pedagogy Public”, 22.

⁴⁸ Biesta, “Becoming Public”, 693.

language and symbol structures of religion to be related to in ways that break, to quote Levinas, religion’s “closed circle of totality”.⁴⁹ On this meaning, engaging with religious discourses in the context of the university classroom side-steps the impulse to safeguard or preserve a sacrosanct sense of orthodoxy, and instead becomes invested in *actively* creating occasions to engage with religious texts and symbols with the view to opening these discourses (and, most significantly, those who engage with them) up to new kinds of relationship with religion, religious experience, and religious institutions. In other words, a concern for the activism of public pedagogy is achieved when the poetry of religious discourses enables the possibility of the student “becoming” something or someone “new” in relation to those discourses, whether that be through a maverick interpretation of a biblical verse on the part of the student, a reconfigured perspective on a symbol’s history and significance, an epiphanic moment of spiritual affection, an expression of religious disillusionment or apostasy, a reaching out to the religious other with friendship rather than suspicion, etc. The supposed homogeneity and immutability of religious discourses collapses in the pedagogical moment itself, fostering the potential for new modes of human (and non-human) becoming in and through the unexpected connections and affinities, dissonances and tensions, that the student might experience when the rigidities of logical positivism are disrupted. These potential relationships-in-plurality become, in other words, *experimental* possibilities for the student, possibilities with the scope to *demonstrate* the potential for subversion and reinvention as intrinsic to the nature and orientation of religious discourses themselves. Read in the way that I have proposed, religious discourses become sites of pedagogical possibility and becoming for the student, in and through their resistance to monolithic representations that would otherwise streamline the contradictions, tensions, differences, and expansiveness of religion and its complexities. I argue here that if we attend to the pluralities that inhere within the discourses of religion, its relationship with a concern for publicness in the university becomes far less contentious than is typically assumed: in fact, it opens up a space for such discourses to actively contribute to the very publicness that many hold dear in valorizing the university’s purpose. Religious discourses come to hold a “public-facing” orientation, if you like, towards which the work of public pedagogy is committed, and from which the dynamism of student becoming can begin.

⁴⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 171.

In drawing this paper to a close, I turn to developing more fully on how the affinities of religious discourses with the publicness of pedagogy offer resources for recalibrating what we mean by student becoming at the interface between religion and university education. I forward the view that the open-endedness of religious discourses offers students the chance to become in ways that unpredictably expand and disrupt the limits of religious identities, and in this way undermine the inevitable alignment of religion with either the exclusion of secular priorities or the preservation of religious orthodoxies in the context of university life.

Religious Identity, University Education, and Student Becoming

Scholarship at the interface between religion and education is often grounded in education's relationship to religious identity formation: education is seen as a site where the religious identities of students ought to be nourished and emboldened. This is particularly true of research into religious forms of schooling provision, where the religious school (across Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, for instance) is often tied to the preservation of a sense of religious affiliation and/or community belonging.⁵⁰ This emphasis has also found resonance in discussions around religion and higher education, where the importance of attending to students' religious identities (for instance, through on-campus prayer and Bible-study spaces and the like) is often cited.⁵¹ This focus on identity has its shortcomings, though, particularly if one is interested in creating opportunities in university classrooms for students to grow and "become" in ways that are responsive to the poetry of religion.

I gesture to the limits of identity on the grounds that identity invariably assumes identification with extant social, political, and religious structures, and in this way risks closing off pedagogical engagement with religious discourses from those modes of relating that lie outside what identity alone can capture or represent.⁵² This echoes the point I have made elsewhere: namely, that student becoming ought to involve entering into dialogue with different kinds of experiences that would otherwise escape the boundaries of how we

⁵⁰ Henry, "Queering Religious Schooling".

⁵¹ Damon Maryl and Freedon Oeur, "Religion and Higher Education: Current Knowledge and Directions for Future Research", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 2 (2009).

⁵² Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013).

understand ourselves in our already existing world.⁵³ In a paper interested in preserving the publicness of pedagogy, my hesitation towards identity as a frame for understanding student becoming in relation to religion arises out of a concern for creating possibilities for students to engage with religion in a manner that resists reproducing static and homogenous conceptions of religious adherence. In this sense, my difficulties with identity are rooted in Biesta’s conception of a “citizenship of strangers” detailed above: for me, it is by resisting the urge to understand a pedagogical engagement with religious discourses in terms of a commonality of identity or belonging that opportunities for untold, unpredictable, and pluralistic kinds of relationships and experiences can begin to emerge for students. In arguing for the need to recognize and respond to the pedagogical value of religious discourses in a way that is attentive to a concern for publicness, the dissociation of student becoming from religious identity becomes necessary for me, for it is through such dissociation that the fault lines of religious discourses can be interrupted, their poetry sustained, and opportunities for freedom as action enabled.

Let me concretize this claim by returning to the anonymous student’s anxieties around the Loyola Institute that were discussed at the beginning of this paper. Their worries centred largely around threats to academic freedom that the university’s alignment with the Institute might pose. The belief that the academic freedom of the university (and its attendant “secular ethos”) might be threatened by its connections with the Loyola Institute would appear to rest on the assumption that the scholarship taking place at the university (or at least in the Institute) needs to identify with the teachings and beliefs of the Catholic Church in order for this alignment to “make sense”. For me, this example demonstrates the potential limits of bracketing off conversations around religion and education within the terms of religious identity, for such a move risks reinscribing the very logic that progressive perspectives on university education would ordinarily seek to avoid: namely, that identification with the discourses of institutional religion can act as the only basis from which the value of academic scholarship (particularly scholarship occurring in religiously-affiliated contexts) can be judged. Indeed, anxieties around this potential seem to characterize a lot of the anonymous student’s concerns, but I wonder whether these concerns risk enacting their own fulfilment precisely through the strategy of granting identity with the Church monopoly in how the activities and scholarship of the university is to be understood? In terms of understanding the significance of student becoming within such conversations, the need for moving away from an assumed

⁵³ Henry, “Queering Religious Schooling”, 66.

identity with already existing religious structures is thus crucial for me, as it is through such a move that the poetry of religious discourses can be built upon in ways that avoid pigeon-holing who, or what, students can become through an engagement with religious texts, religious symbol systems, and so on. By reflecting on student becoming in a way that does not presume identity with religious structures as its starting point, we sustain the commitment that who or what students might become through a pedagogical engagement with religious discourses is theirs alone to claim, arising, not from deference to the pre-defined limits of religious identity, but instead from the pluralities and possibilities that inhere within the complexities of religious discourse as poetry.

In this paper, I have drawn attention to the affinities between the poetry of religious discourse, the publicness of pedagogy, and the university classroom. I did this with the view to creating spaces for students to become in ways that transcend the strictures of religion and the identitarian limits and exclusions often connected to these. Student becoming, understood in these terms, becomes less a matter of assumed identity with religious institutions, and more a matter of providing spaces for students to relate to religious discourses in potentially interruptive, creative, and open-ended ways. “Bringing to presence that which is Other” is, by way of conclusion, a helpfully productive, public-facing orientation for framing the complex terrain of student becoming at the interface between religion and the university classroom. This seems especially appropriate at a time where the influence of religious discourses continues to shape the contours and priorities of public life.

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2. Finding Moments of Studying: Being a Studier in the University

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Abstract: Though different ideas about study have been proposed recently, there is still some ambiguity in denoting what it means “to be a studier” and its importance for the university. This article proposes to address the relation among times, spaces, matters of concern and studying in the university. Initially, it aims to reconsider the temporality and spatiality of study, focusing on concrete experiences of studying with others. After articulating specific forms and expectations of activities and spaces in the university, it proposes to disturb—at least momentarily—the rhythm and direction of educational designs to find moments for studying. This introduces three important and interrelated themes that will be helpful in thinking about studying: the nature of studying as a relation with others; the necessity of an attitude of studying; and the issue of love in studying. These issues offer a way to understand the qualities of the activities of studying and reveal the importance of thinking about the university as a space and time that might offer possibilities for *moments of studying*.

Keywords: study, studying, moments, space, concern, love

Introduction

Educational practices in the university have changed in recent decades; as a result, times, spaces, resources and roles (among others) express the sum of relations within which learning and teaching activities are conceived. Meaning and identities, moreover, carry with them a new vocabulary that seems

in tune with an emphasis on knowledge production. Specifically, it is illustrative of the functional emphasis that lies at the heart of the university, its incorporation into a “knowledge capitalism” and its central role in the global knowledge economy.¹ Whereas the university’s transformation as an innovative institution highlights an orientation toward flexibility and excellence, the emergence of new forms of teaching and learning spotlights new conditions that thereby organize those activities, particularly, focusing on new ways of producing more efficient and effective processes of teaching and learning. Despite the prevalence of these issues, it will be contended that it remains worthwhile to think about studying in the university, and to discuss in particular what it means “to be a studier” in the university.

My starting point is particularly concerned with the emergence of a pattern that operates at different levels, and privileges the articulation of specific ways of saying, ways of doing, and ways of being in the university²—in particular those articulations related with forms of learning and study³. In my opinion, this happens at the cost of precluding the possibility of specifying an inherently indefinite idea of studying (without designed trajectories and end points). In this article, moreover, I want to argue that providing an idea of studying is not just a matter of signification—as an activity already pre-articulated by expectancies and past experiences—but of *concreteness* of present relations with others. With this, I partly diverge from those who see study/studying in terms of individual exercises of improvement. I believe that to be able to say something about studying, we need to turn toward concrete experiences of studying with others: *events that disturb functionalities and expectancies of activities and spaces and where something in common is shared and studied*.⁴ Therefore, providing a re-articulation of the idea of studying,

¹ Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein. “Towards the Idea of a World University”, *Interchange* 40 (2009):1–23. See also Gert Biesta, “How Useful Should the University Be? On the Rise of the Globa University and the Crisis in Higher Education”. *Qui Parle* 20 no.1 (2011): 35–47.

² Gert Biesta. 2010. “Learner, Student, Speaker: Why it Matters How we Call Those we Teach”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 42 nos. 5–6 (2010): 540–552.

³ For a detailed discussion of these issues, see especially, Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein, “The governmentalization of learning and the assemblage of a learning apparatus,” *Educational theory* 58, no. 4 (2008): 391–415; Tyson E. Lewis, *On study: Giorgio Agamben and educational potentiality* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Gert Biesta, “Against learning: Reclaiming a language for education in an age of learning,” *Nordisk Pedagogik* 25 (2005): 54–66.

⁴ The present analysis of study focuses on formal educational spaces and times of the university. One consequence of this is that certain activities of studying that might happen outside of this context are not discussed.

my aim is to address the relation between times, spaces, matters of concern⁵ and studying in the university.

A second point, then, will take us into the qualities of those events of studying. In doing so, I aim to present and discuss three important and interrelated themes that will be helpful in thinking about studying: the nature of studying as a relation with others; the necessity of an attitude of studying; and the issue of love in studying.⁶ One of the key ideas that I will introduce in this article is that the conception of being a student in the university in terms of future expectancies and learning outcomes fails to convey the primacy of the present interwoven relations that happen during present moments of studying. Accordingly, the happening of the events of studying are not bound by predetermination. Rather, studying emerges from a mutual shaping between actions and things that enter into play during those moments. While it is obvious that any kind of study activity is based on a relation, even the kind guided by particular purposes and ends, the distinguishing trait of those moments of studying is that they are enacted with a studying attitude. This attitude implies mainly hesitation and friendliness, the former to pause and contemplate the open-ended possibilities of what are we studying, making time to see and think. The latter is related to attentiveness and interest with those things, and other beings that are living and studying with us.

⁵ Although it is too early to engage with this issue, it is important to clarify, at least in general terms, the relation between studying and “matters of concern”. In my work, studying is intrinsically interwoven with matters and things that gather people around them. Now, when referring to “matters of concern”, what is of *concern* is not the future result of studying those matters (e.g. learning, producing, and understanding) but the actual relation that emerges with those matters. In that sense, what is of *concern* during studying is what makes possible the gathering, for instance, curiosity, interest, contemplation and attention. It is important to stress that, although the results of studying are significant as a way of learning and understanding and respond about those matters (and ourselves), they are not necessarily the main *concern* of *studying*. This distinction makes possible to ask questions not only related to the task-at-hand (e.g. what, why or how are we seeing and doing X), but also about the possibilities of the activity, such as “what if” we see or do X. More concretely, what I mean is that what gathers students around studying is not always a problematic situation—something to be resolved or that needs to be discussed—but sometimes they are concerned with something that draws their attention and invokes their curiosity. This analysis closely resembles Schildermans’ notion of “matters of study”, although not quite precisely. For an interesting and comprehensive discussion about “matters of concern”, “matters of care” and “matters of study”, see Schildermans 2018).

⁶ These themes are greatly inspired by, on one hand, Tyson Lewis’ ideas of “the common-being of friendship” (see Lewis 2013), and on the other hand by previous ideas on my work that highlight the importance of attitudes in order to understand the practices of studying.

Finally, the proposed view allows us to say something about “being a studier in the university”. It does so by distinguishing between the pre-conceived articulations of potentiality infused on the idea of study and students, and the knotting relations that emerge during the events of studying. As it will be argued, being a studier is not the starting or ending point of the activity, but something that happens during the activity, or rather, *at the middle* of the activity. It is therefore a matter of being-present-with-others. Accordingly, study takes place in *the event where something in common is shared and studied*. This is indeed why, in my opinion, studying cannot be designed, nor can a student be formed.⁷ However, my interest here is not to propose a different configuration of academic practices, instead, my proposal is toward thinking about the university as a space and time that offers possibilities for *moments of studying*.

1. The Design of Learning and Study in the University

Over the past decades there have been important transformations akin to the current framing of the contemporary university. Those transformations are highlighted by, for instance, the design of new spaces for learning (physical and digital), the increasing pervasiveness of social, political and economic interests that seek utility and applicability on what students learn and study, and the integration of new technologies in learning and study activities (e.g. digital resources, new devices, online collaborative networks and applications, personalization of study plans, online learning). Those features, therefore, might have produced particular changes in the organization of the practices, their materiality, and the orientation of the activities (e.g. resources, importance of goals and performance, definition of spaces and time for learning and studying, managerial habits and strategies).

Symptomatic here is the pragmatic consensus about what kind of education is needed and how its intrinsic elements must be adjusted. Interpreted in this way, education seems to be understood as an instrument destined to produce a picture of what the world should be like. Educational functionality,

⁷ To forestall possible misunderstandings, I must clarify that here “formation” refers to a development towards something outside of the individual, a particular shape or state that requires, for example, improving skills or adding new knowledge. A different and most interesting idea of formation is provided by Masschelein and Simons: for them, “formation has to do with the orientation of students to the world as it is made to exist in the subject matter, and this orientation primarily has to do with attention and interest for the world and, likewise, attention and interest for the self in relation to that world.” (Masschelein and Simons 2013, 44–45).

moreover, is defined relative to evidence of how effectively it supports that vision.⁸ In this way, policies, curricula, teaching, learning, assessment and environments must be relevant to achieve and support development agendas. I draw attention to this because what is to be learned is no longer attributed to momentary educational encounters or studying ventures. Instead, the relations between learning and teaching are increasingly systematically ordered in patterned ways. What is to be learned, then, is clearly designated by a diverse range of competencies that should be evidenced in the format of learning outcomes.⁹ This structure encompasses not only a particular form in which competencies and learning outcomes are packaged and presented, but also demonstrates the underlying assumption that learners can be formed.

Of particular interest here is the formula of “education and design” that maintains that educational practices can, and should, be designed. According to such approaches, any learning process, including learners, learning resources and knowledge, can be constructed from an initial to an end point. What is an “object of knowledge” and what it represents are already given; if not—in this model—it would be difficult to teach it and assess its appropriation. But what is going on, then, in a learning process where almost everything is designed with fixed representations and functions? In this respect Tyson Lewis provides an insightful description of the temporality of learning in contemporary education.¹⁰ According to Lewis, for learners, “time is experienced as ‘making progress toward x’”.¹¹ The experience of learning is oriented toward a future state; it is *developmental*. As he describes it, for the learner, educational time “is a kind of homogeneous clock time” absorbed by tests and deadlines, where the learner is disconnected from his understanding

⁸ See, for example, a recent book of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that examines the role of education in influencing global megatrends and its potential to reshape the future of the global world: OECD (2019). *Trends Shaping Education*. Paris. OECD Publishing [Online]. https://doi.org/10.1787/trends_edu-2019-en.

⁹ See, for a recent example, European Commission (2012). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0669&from=EN>. In this regard, consider also the analysis of Masschelein and Simons of EU learning policies in the European Space of Higher Education: Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons (2018).

¹⁰ Tyson Lewis, “Study Time: Heidegger and the Temporality of Education”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 51 no. 1 (2017): 230–247.

¹¹ Lewis, “Study Time”, 231.

of himself.¹² Present time is fragmented in things to do, points of performance in a developmental line where learners find themselves with objects of knowledge, not with the world itself. Thus, although there is a projection of his future, for Lewis this form of temporality “makes the learner forget a fundamental question of education: Who am I/How am I in the world?”¹³ In contrast, the temporality of study as described by Lewis resembles more the “getting lost or absorbed” to the point of losing all track of time. Evidently, there is a clear relationship between learning and studying. But this relation is asymmetrical. Far from being confined to expected outcomes, studying is related to present activities and things. As studying carries on, it continually moves in correspondence with people and things that gather during its activity. Along those movements, moreover, its activity might produce learning, but not necessarily. In those cases, however, what is learned is not something previously expected. Instead, it is something that takes the student by surprise, that it shakes him and moves him (not toward something, but around something). Thus, we might say that study is neither made, nor to be made, but it is *in the making*; it is something that happens during concrete educational experiences. This claim, then, proposes a critical quality of studying that can be described as an uncertainty that emerges when students move away from representations and expectations to meet directly *with* the world. Here students are not “learning from” or “taught into” something, but are exposed to something of concern which remains *indeterminate* as long studying activity keeps exerting enduring fascination. While affected by this fascination, students relate in a different way to things and meanings. This is because what is learned while studying is not what was expected, but what is revealed during gestures of exposure. These considerations are helpful to illustrate a distinction: while learning and studying are both interrelated educational activities, their temporality is completely different. While the former implies a process with one or more definitive tasks and goals to be obtained, the latter might be seen as a “pause” in that process, an encounter in the present with something that affects the student and ask for his attention. As such, the point is that we need to shift the focus of educational practices from the developmental lines of future expectancies toward present relations of studying with others.

¹² This kind of disconnection is nicely illustrated in MOOC environments. As explained by Vansieleghem (2018), in the process of networking and accumulation of competences, learner progress “is not something the learner has to manage him or herself, but is monitored and determined by computational operations that register every input as data to be processed in a system that informs the learner about possible future steps to be taken” (p. 79).

¹³ Lewis, “Study Time”, 236.

In addition to the temporality of studying and learning, is also important to consider the change in the connotation of educational spaces in the university. In other words, rather than attaching functions and expectations to designed spaces, universities might offer spaces where the presence of things and boundaries can continually be shaped by activities performed in them. Illustrating these ideas are Masschelein and Simons' proposition to recall the university as *universitas studii*.¹⁴ For them, it is precisely by gatherings in the original form of the European university that societal challenges can be turned "into objects/subjects of collective and public study ... through certain pedagogical practices and material devices".¹⁵ This proposition highlights two important issues. On the one hand, the primacy of the idea of gatherings over the space where they happen. For the present purpose, one could think that such gatherings might offer moments of contemplation, giving time to modes of being "such as 'hesitancy', 'releasement', 'shyness', 'waiting' or 'restrain'"¹⁶ that entail a different relation with matters of concern. On the other hand, it highlights the essentiality of some pedagogical practices during those gatherings. For Masschelein and Simons, to study (*studium*) refers to a practice related not with producing something, but with taking care of something. In that sense, the practices of study are not disinterested activities; on the contrary, they are "motivated by a concern, a form of curiosity (as care), and hence, a stepping back as slowing down exactly in order to relate again, to re-attach and re-compose".¹⁷

What is most disconcerting about the ideas of "designing spaces and times for study" for educators and researchers is that the "education and design model" works fine. In several cases there seems to be a perfect symmetry between learning design's activities and outcomes. Actually, the design of spaces and times seems to provide the best means to achieve the expected teaching and learning objectives and outcomes. However, an important consideration is whether the educational practices in the university should be understood only under a close economy of teaching and learning.¹⁸ Although

¹⁴ Jan Masschelein and Marteen Simons, "The University as Pedagogical Form: Public Study, Responsibility, Mondialisation", in *Past, Present, and Future Possibilities for Philosophy and History of Education*, ed. Stefan Ramaekers and Naomi Hodgson (Dordrecht: Springer, 2018), 47–61.

¹⁵ Masschelein and Simons, "The University as Pedagogical Form", 52.

¹⁶ Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Lingerings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Masschelein and Simons, "The University as Pedagogical Form", 54.

¹⁸ I cannot presently engage ongoing debates about how the practices in the university are conditioned by particular economies; however, for a comprehensive discussion of those issues, see Standish 2005.

there is an ample line of critical theory that approaches this issue and proposes theories and practices of study as an alternative to several problems of an educational model based on investments, competences and efficiencies, I will argue that the issue is not about proposing new designs or technologies to change or improve those practices. Rather, we need to offer possibilities to disturb the functionalities and expectancies of activities. My interest is not in studying in opposition to teaching and learning, but in the knotting relations that might happen among those practices. For instance, opening possibilities of studying *in the middle* of teaching and learning sessions, in other words, in making time for moments of studying while learning and teaching. This immediately enables to make sense of the idea of studying as an event, as an educational moment that disturbs the prefiguration, normative and expectancies of activities, and moves the participants to gather around something that is of interest for study. To study here is to relate with others, to share something and to be absorbed momentarily in matters that call our attention. I am, therefore, also saying that study can happen at any time and anywhere (even during teaching and learning designed sessions and spaces).

If the foregoing suffices to indicate, at least in general terms, why we need to re-bind the relations of studying in the university, the next section aims to reveal the ways in which studying might happen in the unfolding events of educational activities.

2. *The Rhythms of Studying*

In this section, my aim is to analyse the idea of studying. Furthermore, seeking different ways to look at events of studying, I begin introducing the work of Tyson Lewis on study.¹⁹ A crucial aspect of his work analyses the way in which the logic of learning understands the student's activity as a potentiality that must be constantly actualised. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben's work, Lewis explores the notion of study's potentiality, developing an interesting argument that disrupts the linearity of the logic of efficiency and achievement attributed to learning activities. Following Agamben's idea of study, for Lewis, this is an "interminable" and "rhythmic" activity that "interrupts any notion of educational 'growth' or educational 'realization' of latent possibilities".²⁰ Hence, instead of being forced to follow a determinate end, the

¹⁹ Tyson Lewis, *On Study: Giorgio Agamben and Educational Potentiality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013). See also Tyson Lewis, "The Fundamental Ontology of Study", *Educational Theory* 64, no. 2 (2014): 163–178.

²⁰ Lewis, "The Fundamental Ontology", 166.

student stands before open paths where he is free to wander, to explore the multiple possibilities of the world. In this manner, according to Lewis, studying offers a paradoxical freedom, “a freedom of indetermination”²¹. Inspired by the work of Simons and Masschelein,²² Lewis declares that “the student should be rethought of as the one who studies without determinate ends, without identifiable interests, and thus one who is open, exposed, and attentive to the world”.²³

Clearly, the indeterminate qualities of study in contrast with the specific purposes of learning might raise questions regarding whether they are diametrically opposed educational logics. As Lewis indicates, that is partly true, but not completely. In any event, it is because one has the knowledge to do something (be in potential) that one can experience the im-potentiality of study. In that way, we might opt to change the learning rhythm, no longer aiming for the completion of goals, but to engage in “perpetual tinkering”.²⁴ Disconnecting learning from ends and evaluations allows us to experience study, as described by Lewis, as a “projectless potentiality”. It may be asked, then, what are the conditions that make possible to change the rhythm of learning and teaching, suspending their formal structures and allowing teachers and students to wander?

Initially, what I suggest, following Ingold, is that rhythm is not just a movement, but a dynamic coupling of movements that unfolds within a “network of movements” of the environment.²⁵ In this regard, activity is rhythmically responsive to the actions of those entities that are around (human and non-human). I emphasize this point in order to reinforce the

²¹ For Lewis, the notion of “freedom” is remarkably important to develop his idea of study. In particular, the expression “freedom of indetermination” is extremely suggestive of a specific kind of “freedom”. As proposed in his work, this notion of freedom is not related with a freedom of choice, but it is a freedom of determinations, an opening to new possibilities: “the experience of a power released from any determinate project, a projectless potentiality” (Lewis 2013, 45). I believe, however, that a notion of “freedom” must also include the idea of unpredictability that arises when we exercise that kind of freedom with others (see Arendt 2000). My point here, is that freedom, in the context of study, is not only an exercise of self-autonomy, but is most importantly an experience of thinking and acting with others.

²² Simons and Masschelein, “Towards the Idea”.

²³ Lewis, *On Study*, 13.

²⁴ Tyson Lewis, “Response to Derek Ford’s Review of *On Study: Giorgio Agamben and Educational Potentiality*”, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 33, no. 1 (2014): 113–115.

²⁵ Tim Ingold, 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 60.

idea of educational activities as actions that happen with others. Now, as noted, education in the university entails normative activities focused on effective methods of learning and instruction. As a result, many activities presuppose or depend of orientations toward efficiency and success.²⁶ However, if such a structure might exert a causal effect on activities—leading activities toward expected behaviours and specific results—those actions and ends are also tied to the “contingent flow of events”²⁷ that emerge during educational activities. Educational activities, furthermore, are not linked just to the specific structures and normativity established in advance. They also intertwine with diverse sets of activity events prompted by people and things. It is possible, then, to disturb the rhythms of functional activities in the university. Perhaps it is the very idea of educational activity that has to be re-bound²⁸, away from the straight-line trajectories of educational designs. In that sense, we might consider the possibility of disturbing—distracting—the patterns of formation and movement of teachers and learners toward new paths. My argument here is that to be able to study, we need to disturb—at least momentarily—the rhythm and direction of educational designs. Simply stated,

²⁶ Łukasz Sułkowski, “The Culture of Control in the Contemporary University”, in *The Future of University Education*, ed. by Michał Izak, Monika Kostera and Michał Zawadzki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85–108.

²⁷ See the analysis of human existence as a relation between activities and arrangements by Schatzki (2002).

²⁸ I must clarify that my formulations of binding and re-binding relations presuppose the distinction proposed by Ingold of “relations of correspondence”. For Ingold, correspondence is the way in which persons and things respond to one another over time (2017). The sense in which correspondence is manifested is depicted by Ingold using the notion of *sympathy*. For him, in the relations of correspondence, the elements “possess an inner feel for one another” (2015, 23). In that event, *sympathy* emerges as a gathering of forces where elements shape to each other, “a form of feeling-knowing that operates in the interstices of things, in their interiority” (*ibid.* 24). Ingold claims that a relation of correspondence involves an important distinction in the way that entities relate to each other. Unlike common approaches that establish relation *between* elements, Ingold declares that correspondence happens *in-between*. In this regard, if *between* focuses on the connection of different elements, *in-between* reveals “a movement of generation and dissolution in a world of becoming where things are not yet given ... but on the way to being given” (2015, 147). For Ingold, moreover, correspondence is not a connection or interaction between points, but a binding of lines, joined not at the end but in the middle. Because, in this relation, ends are not given in advance but emerge in the action itself, they are moments along the way (2017). Furthermore, when referring to binding and re-binding relations I specifically focus not on connected objects but on what happens in the interplay of materials and forces that correspond to each other.

studying might emerge *in the middle* of normative activities when inspired by actions and attitudes of those individuals who actively express enthusiasm for a “matter of concern” while rendering passive the preconceived forms of the activity.

3. *An Attitude for Studying*

So long as our focus is on the individual identities (teachers, learners) engaging in negotiations in order to obtain a desirable result (teaching, learning, or even studying), it is quite impossible to pay attention to the generative fluxes of actions and things that might disturb the rhythms of educational activities. In this regard, I suggest redirecting our attention away from the normativity of the activities and towards the attitudes of those who gather around those activities. With this I mean to raise the issue of whether gestures, attitudes, and concerns have more important implications for studying than educational designs. I deal with this issue by adopting key ideas of prominent philosophers. Initially, I want to explore Jean-Luc Nancy’s ideas about relations of sharing and exposition²⁹ to articulate the events of studying with the ideas of study and becoming a student. Then, I will turn to Masschelein and Simons’ idea of amateurism.³⁰ Finally, drawing on Vlieghe and Zamojski’s formulation of educational love,³¹ I will describe studying as an event of falling in love for a thing and students as individuals who, at least momentarily, share a love for a matter of concern.³² In a sense, it is “common love” toward a thing what makes them students.

An important idea that I want to note here is that to be a student is not the initial or final outcome of studying, but it is something that happens in the middle of the activity. Traditionally, however, educational theories

²⁹ Nancy, Jean-Luc, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. by Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

³⁰ Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons. *In Defense of the School: A Public Issue* (Leuven: E-ducation, Culture & Society Publishers, 2013).

³¹ Joris Vlieghe, Joris, and Piotr Zamojski. 2019, “Out of Love for Some-Thing: An Ontological Exploration of the Roots of Teaching with Arendt, Badiou and Scheler”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 53, no. 3 (2019): 518–530.

³² It is worth bearing in mind that this section portrays an account of moments and attitudes where the figure of the teacher bears responsibility in the activities; however, it is important to stress that his presence is not necessary for the happening of study. For an exploration on the practices of studying in the university and present relations among students, space, and things see Jiménez (2020).

and practices have focused on the initial and ending points of the activities. Particularly, the student seems to oscillate between states of a pre-constituted identity and a potential state of the self (e.g. as someone ready to study that might become a student). Only lately have theorists begun to ask and think about the rhythms and temporality of studying beyond the identities and expectations imposed on the student. Despite these ideas, educational practice is still seeking new ways to design the times and spaces of study. My argument, however, drawing loosely on Nancy's ideas on community, is that the being of students could be regarded as an exposure in studying, an exposure to other students and matters of concern. Rather than making a distinction between diverse educational identities, my point is that the exposure *in studying* is a necessarily constitutive aspect for students. According to Nancy, "[t]o be exposed' means to be 'posed' in exteriority, having to do with an outside in the very intimacy of an inside".³³ Indeed, this exposure to others gives noteworthy importance to the fact that when studying *we are in relation with others* around something that becomes of concern. The significance of this idea lies in the importance between the binding and re-binding relations among students, things and the world. Rather than considering that studying gives shape to students and things, the "sharing" among those *in studying* reveals to us that students and things are participants of the sharing—they "share of themselves and share in the sharing of others".³⁴ However, it is also important to notice that this kind of sharing does not seek to produce a "common substance" that encloses and separates those *in studying* from the world. Rather for Nancy:

Being *in common* has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed. Being *in common* means, to the contrary, *no longer having, in any form, in any empirical or ideal place, such a substantial identity, and sharing this* (narcissistic) "lack of identity".³⁵

What is in common, while studying, is not a definite "substance" that gives a particular signification to those *in studying*; rather, what is common can be described as an attitude of generosity. Generosity is, then, not only giving something of what one possesses, but also of giving oneself. For Nancy, "[t]he generousness of generosity is neither its subject nor its essence. Rather,

³³ Nancy, *The Inoperative*, xxxvii.

³⁴ Todd May, *Reconsidering Difference: Nancy, Derrida, Levinas, and Deleuze* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

³⁵ Nancy, *The Inoperative*, xxxviii.

it remains its singularity, which is at the same time its event: generosity happens, it gives and is given in giving”.³⁶ What I mean with this, is that such gestures of exposure allow us to redirect our attention to the spontaneous and contingent relations that happen during studying. To study, then, is, in one hand, to submit oneself to the present relations with others, to that what is being given³⁷. On the other hand, study is also to offer our own singularity with the risk of being changed by the experience. Studying in this sense has nothing to do with objectives, results, or even critical approaches. My contention, then, is that this exposing-sharing is not a strategy to discuss or resolve a matter at hand, but is a gesture to relate with others. Stated differently, what is offered while studying is not a matter of capacity (knowledge or skills to study), but of attitude (being attentive) while studying with others. Thus conceived, studying emerges as an intricate tapestry of studying actions and materials that shows possibilities to binding and/or re-binding to some-thing that becomes of concern. Putting all these ideas together, I argue that study cannot be imposed, nor its results devised; the activity just happens. This idea, however, leaves us with an unresolved question. If the event of studying is not produced by any design, nor can be recognized by a definite substance, is it, then, a random event?

The answer, I believe, lies in the present activity of teaching and learning. Here, I want to draw attention in particular to Masschelein and Simons’ idea of amateurism of the teacher to present, and to defend the role of teacher to provoke moments of studying. First of all, Masschelein and Simons say that “[f]or the teacher, knowledge and methodology are important but so too are love and caring”.³⁸ This idea may sound rather abstract, but, importantly, enables the realization in teaching of a kind of attitude that might disturb the rhythms of the class. Such a gestural approach not only offers a way to counter the prevalent assumption that defines the relations between teacher and students as efficacious “professionally controlled evidence-based

³⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 55–56.

³⁷ To avoid misunderstandings, note that the “gestures of exposure” are not explained through the willingness of action, but of a disposition of “being attentive—or present”. For consideration underlying the idea of “relating to the present” as actions of exposure see (Masschelein 2010). Furthermore, the kind of submission expressed here—as actions of exposure—are caused by unfolding events that occur when students become attentive to the present—in contrast to those who are absent (not affected by the fascination of study).

³⁸ Masschelein and Simons, *In Defence*, 67.

practices”.³⁹ It suggests that the teacher is not only a professional (someone competent, skillful), but is “at least partly an amateur (someone who does it out of love). ... However, some definitions of the teacher contrast the idea of the *amateur* (as someone who is lacking abilities and knowledge) with the more prepared professional teacher.⁴⁰ The idea of the amateur here is not based on attributes of knowledge or skill; it rather refers to the positive gestures of care and attention. Hence, as an amateur, the teacher is not only knowledgeable about something, she also cares about and is actively engaged in it”.⁴¹ My point here is that these gestures of care and love are absolutely essential to provoke moments of studying. In that sense, studying is not a random event, but is the result of a change in the flow of action that disrupt the rhythmic structure and direction of teaching and learning activities. For Masschelein and Simons, this kind of love comes into play when the amateur teacher express her enthusiasm:

This is an enthusiasm that shows itself in the small actions or precise gestures, expressions of her knowledge, but also expressions of her concern for the job at hand and for her place in it. ... In this way, she succeeds in bringing students into contact with the subject matter and allows them to lose track of time; that is, she manages to take them out of ordinary time and bring them to a point in the present where their attention is demanded—a *presence in the present*, you might say.⁴²

There is nothing fanciful about these ideas, in fact, they simply disclose a particular way to teaching that make possible moments of studying. More precisely, objectives and expectations of the activity are interrupted by precise gestures of the teacher—*exposing-sharing* some-one/-thing that can become an object of study. When this happens, the pre-existing attributes of things and activities might be suspended, and what emerges are their indeterminate-ness. A studying activity that makes us pay attention, to relate in new ways to who we are as students and the world that emerges with us. Therefore, it could be argued that being a studier is an experience that only happens during the moments of studying. More explicitly, it involves two kind of movements. In the first, the teacher expresses a care and love in a certain way that

³⁹ Alan Bain and Lucia Zundans-Fraser, *The Self-Organizing University: Designing the Higher Education Organization for Quality Learning and Teaching* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017), 16.

⁴⁰ Walter Parker, “Professional vs. Amateur Teachers”, *American Secondary Education* 13, no. 1 (1983), 21–22.

⁴¹ Masschelein and Simons, *In Defence*, 67.

⁴² Masschelein and Simons, *In Defence*, 67–68.

demands attention—she exposes/share a concern. In the second, teacher and learners participate in the sharing re-binding their initial identities in terms of studying. Doing this opens new ways to relate with matters of concern. However, it is important to emphasize that the events of studying wove into their participants an after effect, that is, they make them “fall in love”.

To finish, in order to unravelling the interlaced effects of studying, we need to address the work of Vlieghe and Zamojski. For them, “the most important defining element of teaching is unconditional *love for the world*”.⁴³ Admittedly, there are several lines of research that propose affective qualities, dispositions, performances and competences to models of teaching and learning. However, the gist of their argument is their definition of “the uniqueness of the being of the teacher in terms of love for a subject matter”.⁴⁴ In other words, for them, is the falling in love, not for someone but for a thing, what defines “being-a-teacher”. Drawing on the work of Arendt, they point out that a key element that defines a teacher is her effort for “sharing a *common* world between the generations”, in other words, in “making newcomers interested”. The essence of Vlieghe and Zamojski’s argument is that those gestures imply a love for some-thing. For them, those demonstrations of sharing and interest show “that the teacher is in love with the world, and more exactly with a particular thing of this world. In her teaching, she displays that for her a particular subject matter *matters*”.⁴⁵ It follows that what is set in motion is a gesture of self-exposure of the teacher that can be responded to in several ways. In this sense, presenting a kind of love for some-thing, in my opinion, is not enough; what is needed is to “share” that love with others. My point is that educational love originates in moments of studying. During moments of teaching and learning, what is shared with anticipation is a “matter of concern”—something that is important for teacher and learners, and produces them, for instance, curiosity, interest, contemplation and attention. However, falling in love requires a double gesture of exposition; without this attitude is not possible to share the love with others: to be together exposed to the touch of love. With this I mean that matters of concern are what makes possible the gathering among teachers, learners and things, but falling in love with a particular thing only happens during the moments of studying.

⁴³ Vlieghe, Joris, and Piotr Zamojski, “Out of Love for Some-Thing: An Ontological Exploration of the Roots of Teaching with Arendt, Badiou and Scheler”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 53, no. 3 (2019): 518–530.

⁴⁴ Vlieghe and Zamojski, “Out of Love”, 520–521.

⁴⁵ Vlieghe and Zamojski, “Out of Love”, 523.

Conclusion

The previous ideas are mainly indications that explore the idea of studying in the university. I believe that, rather than formulate ideas and designs for the future of the university, educational research must observe present academic activities. A fundamental consideration here is that gatherings of teaching and learning are also opportunities for studying. As noted, more importantly than designs (physical and methodological) are the attitudes and gestures that happen during educational activities. However, to consider the possibilities for being and becoming a student in the future university, we must consider the university today.

Underlying the designs of times and spaces for teaching and learning in the university are, among other things, intentional functionalities, expectancies, and implicit attributes on things that result in particular forms and contents. In those times and spaces, students' actions get immersed in a temporality and spatiality bound by a process focused on producing knowledge and skills. Today, accordingly, it might be almost impossible not to think about the university independently of those specific forms and requirements. My point, however, is that beyond the construction of knowledge, definition of particular identities or the development of necessary skills, students in the university are required to care for the world they share with others. To be a student, then, implies not a need for something, but a responsibility. In this sense, to be a studier implies, most of all, attitudes and gestures to attend, contemplate and relate to things that matter. Furthermore, the issue, in my opinion, is not about becoming a student in the future university, but about making time and space in the university to study. Setting aside the many issues that might arise with that affirmation, I want only to point out that in present relations of care and concern for some-thing/some-one that the possibility to be a student emerges. Thus, being a student implies a *concrete* reality that cannot be designed but only provoked.

It is also important to realize the responsibility of the teacher to provoke moments of studying in the university. I think that further empirical research is necessary to explore the practices of teaching that pay attention to the different ways in which people and things relate around matters of concern. Perhaps, then, we can follow the traces laid by studying activities and say something else about what the university is about from a perspective of study. That kind of research, I think, might offer new ways of looking at the academic practices in the university and also new ways of thinking about the future university.

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3. Toward a Theory of Social Innovation in Higher Education

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Abstract: A necessary response to addressing complex global problems rests in the theoretic and practice of social innovation: approaches to solving intractable social issues on a local and global scale. The logic, language, and practices of social innovation can, in turn, motivate energies toward conceptualizing college students as social innovators: individuals capable of meaningfully and cooperatively responding to persistent and transdisciplinary problems including social inequities, environmental change, and public health crises. To provide a philosophical anchor needed to ultimately sustain these propositions, we unite social innovation with Honneth's concept of social freedom. We then introduce an expanded definition of the prototype as a mechanism that can be utilized to embed social innovation and social freedom throughout the contemporary collegiate academic curriculum. The subsequent section considers students in two interdependent forms of relation—student-student and student-faculty—within the dynamic context of postsecondary learning. We conclude by incorporating our ideas around an imagined possibility for securing social freedom amidst present ecological fragility and provide long-range considerations of our theory for the higher education enterprise.

Keywords: social innovation, social freedom, prototype, social relations, unlearning, Honneth

Toward a Theory of Social Innovation in Higher Education

The future of the university is, in many ways, the future of currently strained global democracies, societies, and environmental ecologies. We believe an imperative response to addressing the precarious present rests in the theoretic and practice of social innovation. Social innovation can, ideally, be expressed through cultivating among postsecondary learning collectives a profound empathy toward each other and the world around them, while also equipping all students with those skills and abilities needed to act meaningfully and pro-socially.

Across the postsecondary landscape, we see loose concurrence on the demand for social innovation expressed through the university and, ultimately, enacted by students and college graduates. While this demand provides an important starting point, we believe additional attention to this topic is currently needed—not so much to *unify* this arguably already overdetermined enterprise (i.e., to establish, once and for all, on a definition of social innovation) but rather to *sustain* this vital practice (i.e., to ground social innovation in underlying philosophical imperatives, expanded concepts, and reimagined relations).¹ Emerging from this trajectory, we are inspired to more fully and directly (re)consider the *who, why, what, and how* of social innovation and social innovators, aiming to establish an integrated theoretical foundation that can more durably guide the expansion of these processes and knowledge-bases toward more contexts, more modalities, and, crucially, more students.

Operating from this background, we present the following articulation. Addressing the theme of this special issue, we first aim to establish a central claim of our approach: that the university is the primary, and perhaps the only, social location with both the resources (e.g., human, financial, organizational) and mandate (e.g., from governments, parents, participants) to support social innovation as a direct and achievable learning outcome; to, in other words, develop *social innovators* who will engage such practices throughout their lives and careers. Second, to provide a sustainable philosophical anchor to this work, we introduce a central theme of Honneth's work as articulated in his work *Freedom's Right*—social freedom (i.e., intersubjective freedom).² We next more explicitly introduce the idea of social innovation, which seeks

¹ Roberto Mangabeira Unger, "Conclusion: The Task of the Social Innovation Movement", in *New Frontiers in Social Innovation Research*, ed. Alex Nicholls, Julie Simon, and Madeleine Gabriel (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 233–251.

² Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

to tether existing understandings and useful instances of conceptual friction to our introduced philosophical foundation. After uniting these ideas, we consider their potential power to inform our understandings regarding a key demand placed on modern higher education: developing social innovators.

To serve as a conceptual bridge between the broader plane (i.e., philosophical notions of social freedom; common understandings of social innovation) and enacted pedagogy, we introduce an expanded definition of the *prototype*. In our expansion, *prototype* becomes not simply an object or method, but moreover a space for expression, a point of transdisciplinary intersection, and an invitation to reimagine and re-express the practices of knowledge creation and dissemination. Drawing on this expansion, the subsequent section considers students in two interdependent forms of relation—student-student and student-faculty—as located within dynamic learning contexts. Bringing conceptual themes and learning relations together we advance the proposition that being *educated* and being *socially innovative* are complementary and intersubjective, not contradictory and individualized, phenomena. We conclude by incorporating our ideas around an imagined possibility for securing social freedom amidst present ecological fragility and consider the long-term contribution of our theoretic to the higher education enterprise.

Social Innovation, Innovators, and the Future University

Before attempting to demonstrate our philosophical anchors and subsequent influence on the processes and actions of education itself, we believe it is first necessary to establish the motivations underlying why universities are increasingly seeking conceptual and practical avenues that intentionally build students capacities to innovate; to, as Selznick and Mayhew define, prepare students to fully engage the process of “generat[ing] and execut[ing] of contextually beneficial new ideas”.³ At the macro-level, certainly, contemporary organizational theorists of postsecondary education have positioned universities as being one of four strands in what is termed a Quadruple Helix—a comprehensive social ecosystem comprised of University, Industry, Government, and “the media-based and culture-based public”.⁴ The working principles of this systems approach are straightforward: universities, with their

³ Benjamin Selznick and Matthew Mayhew, “Measuring Undergraduates’ Innovation Capacities”, *Research in Higher Education* 59, no. 6 (2018): 745.

⁴ Elias Carayannis and David F. J. Campbell, “‘Mode 3’ and the ‘Quadruple Helix’: Toward a 21st Century Fractal Innovation Ecosystem”, *International Journal of Technology Management* 46, nos. 3–4 (2009): 206.

faculty expertise, research laboratories, ability to attract grants, and intertwinement with regional development networks, are indispensable and synergistic partners in promoting knowledge discovery and potentially catalyzing all forms of innovation.

Though the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of social innovation receive little attention in these macro-level approaches, more problematic is that actual students—the future graduates who will become the actors in universities, industries, governments, and societies—are frequently overlooked if not wholly glossed over in these conceptualizations of the university, its social position, and its future. To that end, we position that universities' role in any broader ecosystem must not only encompass its contributions by way of committing human and financial resources to knowledge discovery, but also—and perhaps more importantly—its unique ability to develop social innovators, the human capital that propels social innovation.⁵

On this account, we encourage an understanding of the student as someone progressing toward increasing awareness of their own individuation (versus individualism), and someone who can be equipped with those capacities necessary to engage meaningfully in processes of social innovation at all access points within the quadruple helix. This is possible given students' current and future identities as alumni, as workers, as democratic actors, and as full cultural participants.

Supporting this position, in the next sections we sketch a model of social innovation that is premised on an understanding of social freedom: an educational experience where students work across disciplinary boundaries with faculty and off-campus partners to respond to specific problems and well as reimagine social relations. We do so by using design methods, focusing specifically on the role of prototyping as a way to investigate and demonstrate new approaches to problem-solving and improved intersubjective actions. Such a relational approach requires restructuring the problems, assessments, and support presented to students in the curriculum: the learning (and unlearning) methods educators can use; the institutional configurations of the contemporary university; and a movement toward a learning partnership model between faculty and students in which co-construction and participation in systems-level social innovation are central rather than peripheral to the student experience.

Grounding our rationale in the current precarious present, we believe that the COVID-19 pandemic—a simultaneous and interdependent crisis

⁵ Benjamin Selznick, “Higher Education for Undergraduate Innovation” (PhD diss., New York University, 2017).

of public health, social inequality, labor market collapse, and governmental mismanagement—places the need for universities to prioritize imprinting social innovation into the very foundation of what it means to be college educated in the 21st century into sharp and immediate relief. In fact, in a speculation we will return to at the end of our narrative, we believe that the greatest and most vocal demand for college serving as a social innovation engine will be sustained not from outside stakeholders (e.g., parents, employers, governments), faculty, or administrators; it will emerge from students no longer content with individualistic and atomized learning who demand a college education that prepares and actively engages them with the complexities of contemporary society.

Honneth and Social Freedom

To begin building toward a comprehensive theory of social innovation in higher education, we believe an essential cornerstone is a grounding of these ideas and practices in a philosophical perspective, especially given the challenge of generalizing social innovation concepts outside the specific contexts in which they operate.⁶ Here, we turned to Axel Honneth's *Freedom's Right*, a landmark volume rooted in critical social theories established by the Frankfurt School.⁷ Honneth's theory, we believe, provides a sufficiently robust account of the fundamental importance of intersubjective engagement in any encounter, and thus a useful foundation on which to build a theory of social innovation in higher education. In this section, we first briefly introduce Honneth's theoretical account; later, we more explicitly detail how this account can inform our approach to studying social innovation within the context of postsecondary education and how it can motivate the project of developing social innovators.

Establishing Social Freedom

In his work, Honneth introduces three forms of freedom: negative, reflexive, and social. As Honneth summarizes in an introductory chapter:

The first, negative conception of freedom assumes that a legally protected sphere in which subjects can act of their own unreflected preferences is a crucial part of individual freedom; by contrast, the second, reflexive idea claims that individual

⁶ Warren Nilsson, "Social Innovation as Institutional Work", in *Handbook of Inclusive Innovation*, ed. Gerard George, Ted Baker, Paul Tracey, and Joshi Havovi (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 284–304.

⁷ Honneth, *Freedom's Right*.

freedom depends on the performance of intellectual acts, which are nevertheless regarded as normal acts performed by every competent subject. Only the third, social idea of freedom takes account of additional social conditions, linking the realization of freedom to the condition that other accommodating subjects confirm my own aims...[an] intersubjective structure of freedom.⁸

Before expounding on social freedom, which we advance as essential to our understanding of social innovation, we briefly comment on the other two forms introduced by Honneth. The first, which Honneth terms negative freedom, is our freedom *from* interference by others and protected (if contested within) a system of laws and their subsequent enforcement. This form of freedom is more akin to a social contract. The second, which Honneth terms reflexive freedom, is the freedom we experience as intellectual beings capable of progressing toward self-realization and shared notions of how things ought to be (i.e., justice). While perhaps more complex and potentially holding greater intuitive appeal than negative freedom, reflexive freedom proves insufficient within Honneth's project. As he writes in this regard: "the decisive criterion for judging whether a given social order is just or not must be whether the members of society are given sufficient space and resources to perform such acts. On the whole, however, this conception of authenticity is not comprehensive enough to produce an independent era of justice".⁹ In short, Honneth proposes that the challenge to both these legalistic and more moralistic understandings of freedom is that each operates under the ultimately false premise that freedom is individually expressed and guaranteed rather than socially expressed and inter-subjectively assured.

Honneth then persuasively argues that not only are negative and reflexive freedom incomplete accounts, they are in fact, as Selznick and Schafer summarize, "both conceptually and historically derivative of [social freedom]".¹⁰ In one of his more succinct presentations of social freedom, Honneth writes:

[T]he "reality" of freedom is only given if we encounter each other in mutual recognition and can understand our own actions as a condition for the realization of our intentions as something that is entirely unforced and thus "free" because it is desired or strived for by others within social reality.¹¹

In this powerful account, Honneth boldly claims that any reality of freedom *begins* with social exchange and interaction. *Qua* Honneth, freedom is—and,

⁸ Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, 65.

⁹ Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, 39.

¹⁰ Benjamin Selznick and David Schafer, "Online Education and Axel Honneth's Social Freedom", *Thresholds in Education* 40, no. 1 (2018): 14.

¹¹ Honneth, *Freedom's Right*, 124.

in fact, can only truly be—located in the social rather than personal; established collectively rather than independently. As to the *why* of social freedom, Honneth devotes considerable attention to his premise and project of normative functionalism. Selznick and Schafer summarize that, on this view, “social institutions require, for their continued functioning, that all participants be able to view the norms they embody as legitimate—i.e., as intrinsically valuable and for which submitting to the institution holds worth”. As these authors continue: “In the absence of this basic condition for legitimation, social institutions will cease to function normally: i.e., social disturbances will arise in the form of protests, demonstrations, etc.”¹²

According to Honneth, social freedom is grounded in mutual recognition and fulfillment of others' aims: a fundamental relational imperative that both supersedes and guarantees negative and reflexive freedoms. It is unforced, or free, in that freedom emerges by realizing others' mutual aims and desires. Further, freedom is located in intersubjective relations that exist prior to and in excess of institutions: freedom can be articulated through but not determined by those institutions.

Set against this potentially unfamiliar and arguably radical understanding of freedom, the task of developing social innovators premised on social freedom is therefore a daunting one. Premised on Honneth, our project suggests that universities must prepare students to operate within institutions, to participate in them, to build them and to repair them; yet we must *also* educate them to understand that the ontological commitment to social freedom, especially in its expressions through social innovation, can place them at odds with those institutions. How is it possible to keep in view the maintenance and rebuilding of institutions while attending to (or even recognizing) the larger ontological commitment to an emergent, relational social freedom? In what follows, we explore how social innovation in theory and method maps onto and grounds Honneth's idea of social freedom in a fashion that deepens our understanding of social freedom and provides a practical way to institute Honneth's thinking in the future University.

Social Innovation and Social Freedom

The concept of social innovation can be considered a response to addressing persistent issues such as social inequities, environmental change, and public health crises that, through a function of historical entrenchment, perceived intractability, and/or lack of macro-institutional cooperation, require creative

¹² Selznick and Schafer, “Online Education”, 14.

and sustained attention. Broadly defined, then, social innovation is the search for finding “progressive solutions to a whole range of problems of exclusion, deprivation, alienation, lack of wellbeing, and also those actions that contribute positively and significant human progress and development”.¹³ Practically speaking, social innovation is best understood as operating within and indeed catalyzing a values-driven social economy: a distributed social network where the global and the local are intimately connected, consumption and production are blurred, and there is an emphasis on collaboration and repeated interactions.

Clearly, systems thinking underpins social innovation thinking, as does the role of technology to connect the local to the global. Unlike traditional profit-motivated innovation, which focuses on a clear deliverable (e.g., a novel product, process, or service) with a measurable outcome (profit), social innovation is concerned with relations and ongoing improvements at the micro and macro scales that may or may not have a profit motive. While many projects may be labeled as social innovation, the global effects produced by local actions are key to determining whether a project can be viewed as social innovation. Projects that do not attend to these broader implications, Unger calls “minimal social innovation”. In contrast, Unger proposes that a “maximal” approach is necessary to truly realize social innovation, one in which small, problem-solving initiatives “foreshadow, by persuasive example, the transformation of [institutional] arrangements and consciousness”. By this reckoning, social innovation is a practical intervention (the solving of locally felt problems) endeavoring toward a future-driven, relational imperative.

While it is important to consider social innovation as a stand-alone concept, we believe connecting its themes to Honneth’s premise of social freedom provides an integrated philosophical foundation on which to construct a more robust theory of social innovation in higher education—and to perhaps provide a practical context within which Honneth’s idea of social freedom might be operationalized. Moreover, we speculate that this foundation can productively ground practical educational contexts and practices aimed at developing social innovators through its emphasis on securing social freedom through an intersubjective relationality and its dynamic gesturing toward materializing an imagined and improved future.

¹³ Frank Moulaert, Diana MacCallum, Abid Mehmood, and Abdelillah Hamdouch, “General Introduction: The Return of Social Innovation as a Scientific Concept and a Social Practice”, in *The International Handbook on Social Innovation*, ed. Frank Moulaert, Diana MacCallum, Abid Mehmood, and Abdelillah Hamdouch (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 1–6.

Two perspectives further elaborate and extend our claims. First, only social freedom—in contrast to legal or moralistic freedom—is comprehensive enough to truly and meaningfully support global, interconnected approaches to social innovation. As Haugh and O’Carroll note: “Social innovation to instill empowerment responds to ... inequality, disadvantage, and social exclusion by developing new products, services, and programs that promote social inclusion and advocate for social change”.¹⁴ Considered in the context of Honneth, and in alignment with our theoretical propositions, the striving point for Haugh and O’Carroll is an “*emancipatory social innovation*” that synthesizes individual and communal encounters to secure social freedom for all members; not merely to change laws or promote individual intellectual progressions toward justice.¹⁵

Second, social freedom, through its relocation of freedom as emerging *from* the collective rather than *toward* the collective, inherently supports what we might consider a pedagogy of “collective unlearning” that is at the essence of sustained social innovation. This terminology brings together two insights from previous scholarship on these topics. As Battilana et al. describe in their recently developed framework: “Social innovators may...work to apply the notion of “unlearning”. As they surface their particular ways of relating to the world, social innovators not only can come to discard unhelpful mental models, but also can cultivate new openness to not knowing”.¹⁶ Yet, we position, one limitation in the Battilana et al. account is that it assumes such unlearning happens, or at least holds potential to happen, individually. However, we believe that such unlearning does not and cannot happen individually, only relationally. To buttress this claim, Selznick and Schafer offer that “Honneth’s recent social philosophy provides the philosophical resources needed to explain why approaches in higher education that emphasize individual achievement at the expense of intersubjective engagement may become socially problematic” and, we extend, might serve overall to limit the promise and practice of social innovation.¹⁷

¹⁴ Helen Haugh and Maggie O’Carroll, “Empowerment, Social Innovation and Social Change”, in *Handbook of Inclusive Innovation*, ed. Gerard George, Ted Baker, Paul Tracey, and Havovi Joshi (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 486.

¹⁵ Haugh and O’Carroll, “Empowerment”, 488.

¹⁶ Julie Battilana, Brittany Butler, Marissa Kimsey, Johanna Mair, Christopher Marquis, and Christian Seelos, “Problem, Person, and Pathway: A Framework for Social Innovators”, in *Handbook of Inclusive Innovation*, ed. Gerard George, Ted Baker, Paul Tracey, and Havovi Joshi (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 64.

¹⁷ Selznick and Schafer, “Online Education”, 17.

Taken collectively, we believe that developing social innovators through higher education must strive toward emancipatory actions and involve a process of collective unlearning; one in which freedom comes to be understood as individuated rather than individual; where Battilana et al.'s "unhelpful mental models" are challenged, engaged, and supported in their continuous (re)construction; and in which ensuring social freedom on a transnational scale is considered fundamental to what it means to be authentically educated to confront the demands of the 21st century.¹⁸ This reimagining of the purposes and practices of postsecondary education *itself* may necessitate forms of unlearning; a move from college as the place where students receive knowledge now for eventual use later to the space of continual and well-supported integration, idea experimentation, and rapid prototyping. In the next sections, we pivot toward conceptual and practical considerations for realizing this theoretic in the future University.

The Art of Unlearning: Prototyping as a Method for Enacting Social Innovation

While it is established that universities can, and do, contribute to social innovation initiatives—including what Unger would consider "maximal" forms that move beyond localized effects to become significant system-wide changes—an essential question remains: where is student learning best situated in the flow of social innovation activity? While inspirations and idea generation are certainly within the range of students' learning capacities, we suggest here that the practice of prototyping is a key method by which social innovation can be incorporated into student learning. Moreover, prototyping provides a tangible understanding and implementation of Honneth's concept of social freedom.

Much like "social innovation", "prototype" is another term that circulates widely but is not always used in a standardized manner. A commonly held definition for the word in some industries is that a prototype is a highly developed, close-to-finished version of a particular product or widget. However, in design discourse, prototypes have a much more provisional meaning and application. As Tom Coughlan et al. explains, "prototypes can be usefully thought of as "learning tools" and consequently may exist at any level of resolution—from very rough to highly refined—and may be used at any stage in the design process to explore, evolve, and/or communicate ideas".¹⁹ Whether quickly

¹⁸ Battilana, et al., "Problem, Person, and Pathway".

¹⁹ Peter Coughlan, Jane Fulton Suri, and Katherine Canales, "Prototypes as (Design) Tools for Behavioral and Organizational Change", *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 43, no. 1 (2007): 124.

assembling an actual object using cardboard, string, and glue, designing the workflow of a service using role play, or outlining a procedure using a sketch on paper, prototypes are manifested in some material form or performance. Even though the ultimate destination of a social innovation project might involve technologies and disciplinary expertise beyond the scope of the undergraduate classroom, prototyping as a mode of investigation into complex problems is available to students of any discipline with little training required.

On this definition, and as considered in our theoretic, prototyping is a shared activity. Invariably, social innovation concerns itself with intractable or “wicked” problems at various scales and, as such, definitions of issues can be slippery given the variables and stakeholders involved. By actively modeling end-states or possible futures, generating prototypes as a participatory practice allows for surfacing aspects of a problem in ways that other discursive modes such as critique do not. This does not mean that prototyping is absent of critique of actual conditions; rather, critique is sutured into the development of the provisional solution prototype. Building on Bruno Latour’s famous statement that “critique has run out of steam”, Edwards and Fenwick argue “good critique needs to be affirmative and experimental and not simply an unveiling of power relations and what is wrong. Critique needs to be working through practices and not simply about them”.²⁰ Prototyping is a method that allows communities of learners—which include but are not necessarily limited exclusively to students—to quickly generate possibilities and learn from the limitations of their designs: a “fail fast and often” approach that reduces the likelihood of over-investment in one particular pathway toward problem resolution.

A provisional, sketch-like approach that welcomes failure provides an instantiation of the collective unlearning, which we hold as an essence of sustained social innovation. As Battilana et al. note in their extension of unlearning into their own university teaching, educators can develop a “pedagogy to encourage social innovators to embrace a learning perspective, whereby they test their assumptions and update their emerging knowledge”.²¹ As a collective active learning strategy, prototyping aligns with such a pedagogy, holding the potential to help learners reconsider preconceived ideas or concepts about the problem at hand. As such, and connecting back to our philosophical anchor, prototyping can be regarded as a performative exercise of social freedom, where individual certainty cedes to collective exploration and design.

²⁰ Richard Edwards and Tara Fenwick, “Critique and Politics: A Sociomaterialist Intervention”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, nos. 13–14 (2014): 1387.

²¹ Battilana et al., “Problem, Person and Pathway”, 69.

In summary, we introduce prototyping as an essential component of our theoretic as it can powerfully and simultaneously spur student progressions toward an ontic of securing social freedom and the practice of social innovation. Prototyping can be uniquely transdisciplinary and the questions and/or challenges on which it can be brought to bear seemingly limitless. Furthermore, and unlike many traditional learning practices, it is inherently generative, collective, and unforced; a modality that truly centers students and their intersubjective freedoms at its core.

In this next section, we further move toward localizing social freedom, social innovation and now prototyping as increasingly essential features of the becoming student and their experiences. As each component centers and draws deeply on relations, we focus this next section on two fundamental relationships that are essential to the student identity—the student-faculty relationship and the student-student relationship—and their expression within constructed learning environments. In this iteration, we by no means endeavor proscription; we instead offer contextualized locations in which prototyping rooted in social freedom and social innovation might occur.

Developing Social Innovators and Fostering Emancipatory Social Innovation

It is through the language, practice and ethos of prototyping that we propose a bridge uniting our understandings of social freedom and social innovation into the space of *developing* social innovators. We position this bridging along both the conceptual and practical planes. Conceptually, prototyping offers possibilities for understanding student development through its dynamic unfolding in relational educational contexts. Through prototyping as *shared experience*, we may uncover a language for more accurately reflecting students' forms of societal and relational auditioning as they form and sustain shorter-term (e.g., a single class, a residential scenario) or longer-term (e.g., members of the university as students and alumni, assuming the identity and privileges of being college graduates etc.) communities. Through its orientation in making, doing, and addressing, prototyping supports actions of doing *for* and *with* others; of recognizing that intellectual contributions and creative ideas are best when they are shared with others in mutual recognition.²² Practically, as suggested, prototyping is a tool for exercising and developing, to use the terminology of Haugh and O'Carroll, *empowered* and *emancipatory*

²² Battilana et al., "Problem, Person and Pathway".
Nilsson, "Social Innovation".

social innovations; instilling a prototyping mentality promotive of socially meaningful collective unlearning.²³

Prototyping and the Classroom Experience: Interdependent Changes

We return to a version of our question asked above: How can learning environments and faculty—those empowered with privileges and responsibilities to create the conditions under which learning can occur—realize emancipatory social innovation? How might notions of social freedom be embedded into and transmitted via curricula? What does prototyping look, feel, and sound like in a college classroom? To address these questions, we first propose a few avenues for reconsidering the university curriculum and its core exchanges. Though interdependent, we initially discretize these along three dimensions of change—changing the nature of problems; changing learning methods; and changing institutional configurations—which can then truly uncover the essential change of the relationship between students and faculty and the emergence of learning partnerships. We then move to reconsider the student-student and student-faculty relationships which are at the core of collegiate learning.

Change the Nature of the Problems

Traditional classroom pedagogy relies on students mastering a set of content/tools that are assessed by performance on discrete assignments. Changing the nature of the problem focus from one that is discrete to one that is complex or even unsolvable can prompt students and instructors alike to change their approaches (largely because a single approach won't work). A “wicked problem” formulation is a popular version of this based on Rittel and Weber's definitional 1977 work. Wicked problems have several definitional properties including: no stopping point, no single definition, and unintended consequences.²⁴

Given their protean complexity, responses to wicked problems can scramble expected or predictable responses and learning pathways, thereby promoting unlearning. Wicked problems are the ideal testing ground for understanding the complexity of intractable social issues and finding a way to participate

²³ Haugh and O'Carroll, “Empowerment”.

²⁴ Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning”, *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 155–169.

in their transformation—in other words, the reciprocal relationship between what Unger would consider between maximal and minimal social innovation practices. They also, by their very nature, invite and can inspire prototyping by students and faculty across all academic disciplines; no one body of knowledge has total purchase on solutions to complex, socially embedded problems.

Change the Learning Methods

Conceptually, wicked problem formulation arose out of professional design practice in the 1970s. It is understandable, therefore, how design pedagogies are well-suited to confronting wicked problems. Methods such as design thinking are easily adapted across disciplines and present a rigorous yet approachable way to approach responding to complex problems.²⁵ Such methods suggest that particular dispositions or psychological approaches work best in design contexts, such as a “beginners’ mindset” where participants are encouraged to abandon preconceived ideas about the problem set and to approach the work with a knowing naivety. Central to such pedagogies is abandoning the idea of working on a final product, in the early stages at least. Instead, as described above, design thinking promotes focusing on the prototype as a central unit of analysis, as prototypes are faster, are focused on getting to better questions rather than final answers, and can reduce emotional and labor investment in product development.

Change Institutional Configurations

Developing social innovators will require exposure to collaborative forms of learning. Fostering collaborative learning, in turn, will require some tweaking to the traditional model of the classroom design, from single discipline and instructor to interdisciplinary and team-taught, and from a content to a problem focus. This may necessitate some imaginative institutional “hacking” of existing systems such as registration and instructor course load (e.g., having a collection of independent studies courses co-meet, reconfiguring assessment strategies to prioritize formative rather than summative approaches, focusing learning improvement resources on team-based courses, etc.) Not all courses can or should be structured in this way, but if the possibility does not exist, then it follows that no (or very few, at the hacked academic margins) will.

²⁵ Tim Brown, *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation* (New York: Harper Business, 2009).

Prototyping and the Student-Faculty Relationship: Learning Partnerships

More specifically, we believe that while these changes in the classroom relationship are benefitted from a shift from so-called “sage-on-the-stage” to more “guide-at-the-side” modalities, a fundamental shift in the relationship between student and faculty is demanded to foster fulfillment of progression toward enhanced understandings of social freedom and social innovation as we have presented. To this end, we further anchor this renewed relational understanding the work of Marcia Baxter Magolda who, drawing on self-authorship insights provided by Kegan²⁶, introduces what she calls *the learning partnership*.²⁷

Relational exchanges within the learning partnership build on three principles: validating learners’ capacity to know, situating learning in learners’ experience, and mutually constructing meaning.²⁸ To the first, it is essential that faculty members not only promote practices geared toward classroom engagement; instead, they must also provide respectful and authentic validation of all learners’ capacities. The second principle is, we believe, a core premise of promoting the development of social innovators; to work toward addressing common problems, students must bring their own experiences relative to these problems into the classroom. Furthermore, and perhaps counterintuitively, we believe this principle illuminates the possibility of collective unlearning when groups of learners can productively make meaning of those moments of dissonance between their own experiences, the experiences of others in the classroom, and the experiences of unknown others.

For his part, Kegan conceptualizes these learning experiences as instances of *differentiation* followed by periods of *integration*.²⁹ Incorporating these two theoretical strands, Selznick proposes the notion that validation and situated learning can influence the development of self-authored innovators through collegiate learning. As he writes:

Such developmental movement could be taking place, for example, as students are exposed to new opportunities for integrating their passions with strategies for

²⁶ Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

²⁷ Marcia Baxter Magolda, “Learning Partnerships Model: A Framework for Promoting Self-Authorship”, in *Learning Partnerships: Theory and Models of Practice to Educate for Self-Authorship*, ed. Marcia Baxter Magolda and Patricia King (Sterling VA: Stylus Publishing, 2004) 37–62.

²⁸ Magolda, “Learning Partnerships”, 42–43.

²⁹ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*.

realizing their ideas; come to learn that, inherently, there are no “right answers” in the realm of creativity and imagination; gain awareness of the ways in which they are already innovative; and potentially come to see themselves as being someone who can effectively collaborate with others regardless of previously held impressions of themselves, personality traits and/or background characteristics.³⁰

It is within the third principle—mutually constructed meaning—that we find a connection with Honneth’s own notions of freedom and, perhaps, a foundation for realizing such concepts through classroom expressions. In this practice, educators “connect their knowledge to that of participants to arrive at more complex understandings and decisions. This welcome[s] participants as equal partners in knowledge construction, help[s] them clarify their own perspectives (emphasizing autonomy), and help[s] them learn how to negotiate with others (emphasizing connection)”.³¹ It is this careful and consistent “blend of connection and autonomy inherent in mutually constructing meaning” that, when considered in the conceptual as well as practical context of the earlier principles introduced in our theoretic, can guide developing social innovators in heterodox and potentially transformative ways.

Prototyping and the Student-Student Relationship: Belonging and Mattering

In addition, student development is also spurred by the relationships and countless formal and informal exchanges between students. While certainly such exchanges can be captured under the heuristic of “peer effects”, we believe that this phrase is far too wide to meaningfully conceptualize these unique interactions—especially in their dimensions of social innovation and expressions of freedom. To shed further light on these spaces, we draw on a core concept within the student development paradigm to shape our perspectives: sense of belonging.

Operating from a paradigm aimed at ensuring that development occurs for *all* students, higher education scholars have focused recently on deeply understanding notions of students’ sense of belonging and those campus climates which can support belonging across diverse presentations of gender, race/ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and other identity patterns. Central to this presentation is the fundamental notion of mattering. Building on Schlossberg, Strayhorn describes: “Mattering is defined as feeling, right or wrong, that one matters, is valued or appreciated by others. Mattering

³⁰ Selznick, “Higher Education”, 111–112.

³¹ Magolda, “Learning Partnerships”, 43.

accents the relational aspect of sense of belonging—the social synergy that creates strong bonds through the distinctive contributions one makes to the whole”.³²

Sense of belonging, when intentionally operationalized through inclusive campus practices, may well be something of a campus-oriented *prototype* for encompassing expressions of social freedom and propulsion toward authentic engagement with social innovation. In this framing, for example, students can come to recognize that “our campus” is only a collection of “our actions”, and that a shared understanding of freedom is necessary not for “my” benefit, but that I instead derive freedom from shared, intersubjective expressions. Furthermore, a fundamental orientation toward connecting sense of belonging and social innovation may open the doors to maximally inclusive forms of innovation; those in which *all* students are encouraged to engage opportunities to benefit those contexts relevant to their background, skills, and identities.

To offer a brief section summary, we envision that the critical theoretic of social freedom, the emergent possibility for locating social innovation more centrally within the context of the university, and an active pedagogy of prototyping, can collect into a useful educational bricolage. This will support the progression of students beyond merely “raising awareness” about social innovation—a term that cleverly capitalizes on being utterly devoid of agency, urgency, or action—toward engineering and sustaining postsecondary educational spaces and climates that support truly developing social innovators. Through the avenues suggested, university shareholders (e.g., academic policy makers, faculty, students, governmental bodies, etc.) can meaningfully rally around reframing classroom spaces, valuing learning partnerships, and supporting students in recognizing that mattering and sense of belonging are vital not only on their campus, but within the societies in which they live and the global community of which we are all a part.

Conclusion

As universities enter and confront the pressing challenges of the 21st century, educational experiences which intentionally center social innovation will

³² Nancy Schlossberg. 1985. “Marginality and Mattering: A Life Span Approach”. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA, August 1985.
Terrell Strayhorn, *Sense of Belonging in College: A Fresh Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016): 43.

continue to capture postsecondary imaginations. Through the necessary creation of learning partnerships, collaborative unlearning, and prototyping, such visions can attach to what we have introduced as a philosophical underpinning—Honneth’s social freedom. This can occur not only in terms of operationalizing educational practice, but in helping the widest range of university and community participants secure enduring forms of social freedom.

Intriguingly, we speculate that perhaps one source of resistance to social innovation within higher education will come from the conservative and bureaucratic structures which continue to hold authority within the postsecondary enterprise. These can include administrators unwilling to engage in the “messy” realities of community learning partnerships; inflexible academic structures unable or unwilling to incorporate new ideas into extant course offerings; faculty and departmental incentive structures prioritizing contested notions of prestige at the expense of promoting inclusive, transdisciplinary excellence; co-curricular supports only provided to students pursuing the “right” (and, usually, more easily monetized) forms of innovation; and so on. In practice, then, while universities are quick to “talk the talk” of social innovation, they may be slower, if not structurally resistant to, “walking the walk”.

Drawing on the arguments and themes presented in this article, we believe that while certainly bending the arc of university life *can* occur in a more top-down fashion, true change, in all likelihood, must surge from a groundswell. We might consider a situation, for example, where disconnected pockets of faculty and students within a university seek to create a transdisciplinary course on perhaps the most pressing issue contemporary students will confront in their lifetime: climate change. A group of faculty members may propose a course but, because it does not fit into an existing curriculum structure and teaching pattern, see their request quickly denied. A small group of students desiring such a course, meanwhile, may also attempt to navigate a complex, unfamiliar university bureaucracy and be ignored or brushed aside.

At this juncture we believe this situation confronts only one answer: *protest*. *Qua* Honneth, this would be considered a position formed in response to perceived institutional illegitimacy; How can a University in 2020 *not* fully embrace a course that prototypes meaningful, transdisciplinary responses to global climate change? This would also, though, be a response position motivating action toward social freedom anchored in forms of caring and concern about each other and through mediated mobilization; a highly participatory form of democracy.³³

³³ Davis, Charles H. F. III. “Student Activism, Resource Mobilization, and New Tactical Repertoires in the “Digital Age.”” In *Student Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education*, edited by Demetri L. Morgan and Charles H. F. III Davis, 112–123. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Should students and faculty truly realize their agency to mutually secure each other's freedom, such agitation would be the necessary result. Rather than a small, uncoordinated nuisance, a larger-scale event (e.g., thousands of students and faculty protesting for a climate change course in the center of campus) would exert disruptive upward pressure on administrators, who would then be forced to either accommodate the request or provide an explicit rationale behind any denial.³⁴ While such a scenario could read as being hyperbolic, we believe students can, should and will be empowered to leverage critical insights in service of promoting social innovation and securing social freedom. In doing so they will surely demand more, not less, of all social institutions—colleges included.

Perhaps, then, creating the future university will require a deep reimagination of the purposes and practices of postsecondary education, which will itself necessitate moments of unlearning; a move from college as a site of preparation for the future to the location where more durable futures are prototyped. Essential to this reimagining, we believe, is an authentic, comprehensive commitment to centering within the postsecondary enterprise the development of social innovators; a phase shift from a high rhetoric, low exercise position to one in which the language of social innovation truly drives decision-making, curricular presentations, student-faculty exchanges, and collegiate learning. Along this reimagined plateau, students would have sufficient opportunities to pursue transdisciplinary, problem-based courses on defining generational issues such as global warming, public health, and structural economic racism; the development of innovators would not be sequestered to a narrow, personnel-driven corner of the University but instead expressed daily as a function of its institutional DNA; student-faculty-stakeholder partnerships would become the new normal rather than one-off pedagogical excursions. Most importantly, a future university operating on our theoretic could, and we believe *will*, be best positioned to develop the social innovators needed to navigate fragile societies, democracies, and ecologies through their present turbulence and into brighter, more equitable, and freer states of existence.

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³⁴ Thomas, Nancy. "Activism, Free Speech, and Power". In *Student Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education*, edited by Demetri L. Morgan and Charles H. F. III Davis, 21–40. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

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4. That Which Is Worthy of Love: A Philosophical Framework for Reflection on Staff-Student Partnerships for the Future University

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Abstract: In this article we develop a philosophical understanding of student-staff partnership through a novel interpretation and development of Aristotle’s friendship arguments. In contributing to an emerging critical field of study of student-staff partnership, we begin by explaining the current state of being a student in the neoliberal university. In light of the polylythic changes neo-liberalism impresses on student being and becoming, and how partnerships are proposed paradoxically as both a *counterculture* and *servicing* this agenda, we develop a typology of partnership that helps those working in, and proposing to work in partnership, to discuss their ethical basis. For Aristotle, “What is worthy of love?” in the relationship, is a salient question. Is it utility? Is it pleasure? Is it virtue and flourishing? In the typology we propose an additional form of partnership—where *creativity* is a central activity worthy of time, energy, and love. It is reasonable to suggest that student-staff partnerships are likely to remain, if not grow, in the future university, and are likely to have a significant impact on the being and becoming of the student. It is for this reason we develop the typology in order for participants, particularly students, to have clarity in understanding the ethical motivation and purpose of the partnership in the university. We see this clarity as enabling students to see how the partnership will contribute to their notion of the flourishing life.

Keywords: partnership, Aristotle, friendship, utility, pleasure, virtue

Introduction

Underpinning the discussion in this article is a concern that becoming and being a student in contemporary higher education takes place in a context where the neoliberal agendas of marketisation and consumerisation are having great impact on universities.¹ Our focus is the increasing attention to and growth of student-staff partnerships and how the various forms such partnerships can be examined, based on an appreciation of Aristotle's analysis of friendship.

The article begins by examining the context in which becoming and being a student presently takes place and which affect becoming and being a student in the future university. We then explain Aristotle's friendship arguments and present the three kinds of friendship he identified, before addressing the question of why his friendship arguments are relevant to student-staff partnerships. We argue that these arguments help in thinking critically about such partnerships in terms of their moral basis and the equalities and inequalities that characterize them. The pivotal section of the article then follows. In this we set out a typology of student-staff partnerships based on the Aristotelean friendship arguments. The typology comprises four types of partnership, three of which reflect Aristotle's types of friendship. The fourth is an additional type that involves an intrinsically valued good that is emergent from the shared partnership activity and is something more than the individual outcomes that occur as a result of the partnership.

We then proceed to explain how our typology can be a useful framework in thinking critically about student-staff partnerships and how this is important for student becoming and being in the future university. In the concluding section, we highlight two central points: first, the central argument of the article, which is that it is unethical to engage in a partnership and not have an understanding of what that partnerships aims to achieve; second, that the intention behind the development of our typology is to help in sustaining an ideal that students be supported in the pursuit of truth and reason, not only within their disciplinary practice, but within the relationships that are central to their practice and the wider practices of the university that may sit outside of their disciplines or schools.

¹ Stephen Ball, "Performativity, Commodification and Commitment: An I-Spy Guide to the Neoliberal University", *British Journal of Educational Studies* 60, no. 1 (2012): 17–28.

Being a Student in the University—The Context

Being a student in contemporary higher education is shaped by polyolithic neoliberal agendas of marketisation and consumerisation.² Such consumerist approaches commodify university learning and teaching;³ the student is portrayed as “consumer” or even the “sovereign consumer”, driven by narcissistic self-love⁴ and the lecturer as the “commodity producer” or “service provider”⁵ in a transactional relationship where higher education is the commodity that students feel they must possess.⁶ While students recognize this perception of themselves as consumers, this view does not fully reflect their understanding of their identity as higher education students, nor how they become and behave within higher education settings. Student identities, experiences and relationships within higher education are complicated and often contradictory.⁷

In an attempt to counter the consumerist discourse that pervades higher education, the concept of *partnership* is argued to be a lens through which to see *student being* in higher education differently,⁸ as a counter narrative to the traditional and neoliberal view of higher education,⁹ and as a pedagogically sound alternative to the rhetoric and framing of “student as consumers”.¹⁰ Such partnership involves a different way of seeing how students *become* and *be* students in higher education. In recent years, interest in the idea of partnerships between staff and students in higher education has grown

² Ball, “Performativity”.

³ Rajani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson, “Empowering Participants or Corroding Learning? Towards a Research Agenda on the Impact of Student Consumerism in Higher Education”. *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 3 (2015): 267–281.

⁴ Elizabeth Nixon, Richard Scullion, and Robert Hearn. “Her Majesty the Student: Marketised Higher Education and the Narcissistic (Dis) Satisfactions of the Student-Consumer”. *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 6 (2018): 927–943.

⁵ Naidoo and Jamieson, “Empowering”.

⁶ Nixon, Scullion, and Hearn, “Her Majesty”, 928.

⁷ Michael Tomlinson, “Student Perceptions of Themselves as ‘Consumers’ of Higher Education”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 34, no. 4 (2017): 450–467.

⁸ Mick Healey and Ruth Healey, “‘It Depends’: Exploring the Context-Dependent Nature of Students as Partners’ Practices and Policies”, *International Journal for Students as Partners* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1–10.

⁹ Kelly Matthews, Alexander Dwyer, Lorelei Hine, and Jarred Turner, “Conceptions of Students as Partners”, *Higher Education* 76, no. 6 (2018): 957–971.

¹⁰ Mick Healey, Abbi Flint, and Kathy Harrington, *Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (London: Advance HE, 2014).

in policy, practice and research. As Flint notes¹¹ there is now a plethora of books, journal articles, journal special issues, conferences, events, resources, frameworks, guidance and professional development opportunities to support practitioners who wish to enact partnership within their settings. Equally, the discourse of partnership also features in national policy and policy guidance, and within institutions (e.g., through student charters or learning and teaching strategies). While references to partnership proliferate, attempts to pin down its definition are difficult.

One frequently used definition of partnership is a “relationship in which all involved—students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students’ unions, and so on—are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together”.¹² This definition is broad and can incorporate the many different practices and activities that are defined as partnership. In order to categorize some of these different activities, a distinction is made between partnership practices that focus on governance and those on pedagogy, and in relation to pedagogic partnership practices specifically. Healey, Flint and Harrington’s Conceptual Model¹³ identifies four key areas where students can be partners in learning and teaching: learning, teaching and assessment; course-design and pedagogic consultancy; scholarship of teaching and learning; and subject-based research and inquiry.

The Conceptual Model is depicted as four overlapping circles which show their inter-relatedness. Each of the categories is introduced and examples from higher education practice of the enactment of partnership are provided. In the category, *learning, teaching and assessment*, Healey, Flint and Harrington suggest that students can be active partners in their own learning,¹⁴ also known as active learning; examples of active learning include internships and placements, community engagement, peer learning and instruction, and more flipped approaches to teaching and learning whereby students engage with materials prior to face-to-face meetings allowing for more discussion time in class. Assessment activities can also be presented with more emphasis on partnership through, for example, more opportunities to self- and peer-assess, formulate feedback, develop assessment criteria or choose assessment tasks. In relation to *course-design and pedagogic consultancy*, the authors show how students can be engaged in the development of curriculum design.¹⁵

¹¹ Abbi Flint, “Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: Opportunities for Embedding Student Engagement through Partnership”, *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–6.

¹² Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 12.

¹³ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 22–25.

¹⁴ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 36–41.

¹⁵ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 48–52.

They draw on Bovill and Bulley’s ladder of student participation in curriculum design as a useful model to explore practice and to demonstrate the different levels of participation that students have in decision making relating to curriculum (e.g., tutors making decisions based on student feedback, students having choice and influence in specific areas, or students controlling decision making). This category also makes reference to students engaging in pedagogic consultancy, where students work closely with academics to provide advice and guidance on learning and teaching, following activities such as student-led teaching observations, surveying or interviewing students on the program, participating in program meetings and providing feedback and recommendations to staff. There are close links between pedagogic consultancy and engagement in the *scholarship of teaching and learning*, which is a further category introduced by Healey, Flint and Harrington.¹⁶ In the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), staff usually engage in research and theorising around student learning, which is then disseminated and communicated more widely. SOTL projects can be and are conducted in collaboration with students in order to contribute to the development of learning and teaching. Finally, the Conceptual Model also includes a category on *subject-based research and inquiry*,¹⁷ which the authors argue can facilitate the connection between research and teaching. Here students can engage in the production of original knowledge within their discipline through authentic research (which may or may not be the students’ final, or capstone project) with students having different levels of autonomy in terms of choice of research topic, methods and approach to dissemination. Students can also participate in learning, throughout their programs, that use approaches that closely align to research and inquiry. These opportunities to partner can sit within the formal curriculum or outside of it, can involve all students or just some, and participation can be through election or selection.¹⁸ Equally, there can be different degrees of engagement within the examples of partnership and across the Conceptual Model categories, and at different levels—program, departmental, institutional, and national.¹⁹ As a “big tent” term, the practices, the relationships between partners, and the experiences of partnership will be very different and very much dependent on the context in

¹⁶ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 46–48.

¹⁷ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”, 41–45.

¹⁸ Cathy Bovill, “Breaking down Student-Staff Barriers: Moving towards Pedagogic Flexibility”, in *Pedagogic Frailty & Resilience in the University*, ed. Ian Kinchin and Naomi Winstone (Rotterdam: Sense, 2017), 151–161.

¹⁹ Healey, Flint and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”.

which they occur,²⁰ and this diversity makes partnership especially difficult to define.²¹

Rather than focusing solely on the practices, activities or products of partnership, it is argued that partnership should be seen as a process,²² as a way of doing things,²³ or as an ethos that is imbued with values which underpin the practice (and practices) of partnership.²⁴ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten emphasize, specifically, the principles of respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility for learning and teaching as fundamental for partnership working,²⁵ and Healey, Flint, and Harrison make reference to authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, challenge, community, and responsibility.²⁶ Partnership practices, then, are seen by some to be grounded in a set of beliefs and values, that can disrupt and transform current perceptions of higher education and the roles that staff and students play therein. The pervasiveness of the term “partnership”, and its use and meanings within everyday language,²⁷ however, mean that the term is open to hijack by senior managers and policy makers whose use can support rather than counter neoliberalist agendas²⁸ and can “stifle genuine partnership processes that are gathering momentum”.²⁹ Those engaged in partnership can have very different rationales, motivations and understandings of partnership and their engagement in it.³⁰

In this article we introduce a framework to facilitate the critical analysis of the rationales for types of partnership, so that those engaged in partnership

²⁰ Healey and Healey, “It Depends”, 6.

²¹ Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: A Guide for Faculty* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2014).

²² Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”.

²³ Abbi Flint, “Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: Opportunities for Embedding Student Engagement through Partnership”, *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–6.

²⁴ Joy Jarvis, Claire Dickerson, and Lewis Stockwell. 2013. “Student-Staff Partnership in Practice in Higher Education: The Impact on Learning and Teaching”. In *Procedia—Social and Behavioural Sciences*. 90—6th International Conference on University Learning and Teaching (INCULT) 90 no. 6: 220–225.

²⁵ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students*.

²⁶ Healey, Flint, and Harrington, “Engagement Through Partnership”.

²⁷ Karen Smith and Saskia Kersten, “Exploring Understandings of Partnership in Higher Education Using Methods from Corpus Linguistics” *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2018): 112–113.

²⁸ Healey and Healey, “It Depends”.

²⁹ Kelly Matthews, Alexander Dwyer, Stuart Russell, and Eimear Enright, “It Is a Complicated Thing: Leaders’ Conceptions of Students as Partners in the Neoliberal University”, *Studies in Higher Education* 4, no. 12 (2019): 2204.

³⁰ Flint, “Moving from the Fringe”.

practice can better articulate their reasons for that engagement. A critical examination of the different purposes of partnership will help, we argue, to better understand student being, including identity, intellectual, and moral development and belonging within higher education. In order to do this, we draw on Aristotle and his friendship arguments with the intention that when “work is situated within a surprising form of interpretive framing, such as an unexpected metaphor, it may catalyse a new set of insights”.³¹ Our approach is intended to challenge us to think differently about what it means to be and become a student in the future university.

Aristotle on Friendship

Aristotle engaged with a much wider notion of friendship than our contemporary common sense understanding of the term. By friendship, Aristotle means a state of liking or love. It is not simply affection; nor goodwill, which “seems to be a characteristic of friendship, but still it is not friendship”.³² Friendship in Aristotle’s writings is a translation of *philia* which can cover “all bonds of affection from the closest erotic and familial ties to political loyalties, humanitarian sympathies, business partnerships and even love for inanimate things”.³³

Two questions arise. One is about the central concern or focus of a relationship. Friendships can be focused on different areas of interest and activity. What is the central concern or focus that draws the person into such a relationship? This question applies to relationships in student-staff partnerships to the extent that each party enters or continues the partnership with some central concern or focus in mind. A second, ethical question, concerns the extent to which the concerns or foci of such a relationship are worthy of *philia* or love. Understanding the characteristics of these concerns can help in considering their worthiness as objects of *philia* or love. Aristotle identifies three such characteristics—utility, pleasure and virtue—which we explain below. Our proposition is that this Aristotelean analysis is useful in examining the ethical worthiness of relationships in student-staff partnerships.

³¹ Kelly Matthews, Alison Cook-Sather, Anita Acai, Sam L. Dvorakova, Peter Felten, Elizabeth Marquis, and Lucy Mercer-Mapstone, “Toward Theories of Partnership Praxis: An Analysis of Interpretive Framing in Literature on Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning”, *Higher Education Research and Development* 38, no. 2 (2019): 284.

³² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1167a.

³³ Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

Aristotle starts Book VIII (of the *Nicomachean Ethics*—NE hereafter) indicating that friendship is a virtue and requires the exercise of other virtues. This is an important feature of Aristotle's conception of friendships generally, but more specifically of those of the flourishing life. Aristotle explains that friendship "benefits the young by keeping them from making mistakes, and the old by caring for them and helping them to finish jobs they are unable to finish themselves because of their weakness. And it benefits those in their prime by helping them to do noble actions - 'two going together' - since with friends they are more capable of thinking and acting".³⁴ Examining such friendships raises a compelling ethical question. Is the object of the friendship *the good of the other* or *the good of oneself*?³⁵

There are two types of friendship in Aristotle's view that do not have the good of the other as their main concern; rather the main concern is the good to come from their interaction for themselves. The friendship may have a utility to it—in the case of a business friendship; or it may have pleasure as its central feature—for example, friends who play tennis together or are members of a book club. In fact, we might befriend someone because they make us laugh or they are pleasing to us. We do not so much care about them but what they can provide us. In both examples when the business or pleasure ends, so does the friendship.

Aristotle identifies three kinds of friendship; a virtuous friendship which has an intrinsically valued object of *philia* or love which contrasts with utility-based and pleasure-based friendships:³⁶

Utility

Philia based upon an external good, most likely when a service of some description is required by person *A* toward the service provider *B*. These are likely to be primarily contractual arrangements between a customer and client, for example.

Pleasure

Philia based upon a good that is produced and nurtured by an activity shared by both persons that brings pleasure for them both. It may also be that a person is friends with another because of pleasure that the latter's behaviour brings to the relationship. The relationship is likely to cease once the shared activity ends or that the behaviour is no longer valued.

Virtuous (Flourishing)

Philia based in the good of each other for their own sake. The relationship is a constituent part of a life well-lived. At the centre of the relationship is the good for each other which will be nourished by the virtuous interactions. Utility and pleasure are likely to be present as features of certain activities undertaken within the friendship, but such activities will ultimately contribute to the flourishing of each member of the friendship.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1155a.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1155b.

³⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1156a5–1157b.

Can the utility- and pleasure-based relationships truly be friendships? An instrumental relationship such as a business relationship may not be a friendship, though it may be that certain performances of “friend-like” behaviour is important in completing business transactions. Yet we would argue that a kind of friendship can form in relationships such as those in business, as well as those that yield pleasure. Although friendships for utility and pleasure are imperfect, they are still a significant feature of what it means to be us, as human beings. For example, we need business relationships in order to live the kinds of lives we live. Having relationships based upon utility or a shared pleasure, or on the basis that this or that person is good to have around because of the way they behave do feature as a part of being human. Aristotle’s analysis sensitizes us to the fact that they have an instrumentality at their core and that, if we want to be as ethical as possible in our everyday living, we need to examine carefully the true concern of our relationships.

The third type of friendship sets a high standard for examining the worthiness of friendships. It denotes a *perfect* friendship that is essential, for Aristotle, to living a good, *eudemon*, life. The ancient Greek term—*eudemonia*—bears a poorly translated resemblance in modern English to that of *flourishing*, *living well*, *doing well* and *well-being*.³⁷ *Eudemonia* is the “best, noblest and most pleasant thing in the world” and in striving to live a *eudemon* life we must exercise the soul, which is comprised of our moral virtues, in tandem with our reason.³⁸ We take this as the central Aristotelian feature of what it means to be and live well—namely, to exercise reason and moral virtue in the constant pursuit of a flourishing life. Sherman builds upon this idea of virtuous decision making.³⁹ *Prohairesis* is a “reasoned choice that is expressive of character and the overall ends of that character”. In order to live a *eudemon* life, our actions are aligned to our idea of a *eudemon* life—our thoughts and actions aim toward our evolving conception of what flourishing means to us (*NE* Book I). In the appreciation of our flourishing, we must, according to Aristotle, delight in it together and pursue it with friends as it enables our self-regulation toward the good life. Such friendships are likely, at times, also to share in utility and pleasure, but it is the good for each other that remains the central object worthy of love. For Aristotle, virtuous friendships provide our checks-and-balances and aid in having a sense of self-worth.

³⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010).

³⁸ Simon Blackburn, “Eudaimonia”, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Simon Blackburn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 127.

³⁹ Nancy Sherman, “Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47, no. 4 (1987): 589–613.

The “remarks and observations” that friends share about life are a “form of self-reflection”⁴⁰. Virtuous friendships from the Aristotelean perspective are, in their best sense, relationships in which people interact closely and support each other in developing toward their conception of a flourishing life. This conception is something that is cultivated, nurtured and checked-in by such relationships. We might say friendship in this sense is about learning, indeed mutual learning.

This notion of mutual learning involves nurturing the good in each other for its own sake. Spending time helping a friend reflect on the direction of their life and offering advice is not done for self-interested reasons. The members of the friendship are alike in their virtue. Though they are not the same people, nor are they aspiring to be the same people, they are alike in having shared virtues and overlaps in their conception of the good life. The friendship is likely to endure as long as each member of the friendship is good; transgressions are likely to occur and the friends will critique such transgressions and help the friend get back-on-track, but this is distinct from the very core of one’s morality being lastingly changed. Such a change is likely to result in there no longer being any shared features of the good central to their relationship. Aristotle holds to the view that goodness and virtue are essential in friendship: “only good people can be friends for the sake of the other person himself, because bad people do not enjoy each other’s company unless there is some benefit in it for them”.⁴¹ These *complete* friendships, according to Aristotle, are lasting and require time and familiarity,⁴² and a sharing of activity.⁴³ Aristotle describes them as rare,⁴⁴ a challenging observation to which we shall return. Friendship based on utility and pleasure is, according to Aristotle, lesser and, as they only superficially resemble complete friendship, such relationships are shallow.⁴⁵ Additionally, shallow friendships are likely to focus on what the other can do for the benefit of one’s own being.

The flourishing life appears to have strong sense of individualism about it, as the focus is on the individual’s flourishing. However, Aristotle does not accept that lives can flourish in isolation. Intertwining our lives and professions with others, in developing relationships toward a shared goal, or a goal that one cannot achieve alone, we have to realize such goals with the help of friends (in the wide sense that Aristotle originally engaged with, which could

⁴⁰ Laurence Thomas, “Friendship”, *Synthese* 72, no. 2 (1987): 232.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1157a.

⁴² Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1156b.

⁴³ Smith Pangle, *Aristotle*, 55.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1157b.

⁴⁵ Smith Pangle, *Aristotle*.

also include family members and relations). In fact, the idea of the *eudemon* life relies, according to MacIntyre,⁴⁶ on the shared values and mutual sense of the good that is generated through culture and passed down the generations of that culture. Friends enable us to gain external goods, e.g., material possessions, particular outcomes that need to be met or to enjoy pleasurable activities, but friends can also “help and aid” and act as virtuous agents distanced from, for example, particular situations in which one is particularly prejudiced.⁴⁷ This indicates that some of the elements of a flourishing life require a friend or friends.

Certain behaviours and virtues are valorized by a culture. For example, the culture of a university may, as we have seen, value student-staff partnerships and thereby influence how students see and construct their activity and identity as students.⁴⁸ Aristotle’s analysis draws attention to the importance of not passively accepting such cultural influence. The idea of *prohairesis* decision making suggests that students should raise their consciousness—and the quality of their reasoning—about the impact that decisions and relationships will have on their conception of their life within the university. Considering the ethical purpose of relationships, and the reasons for entering into student-staff partnerships, potentially provides a critical language to consider such partnerships. Drawing on Aristotle’s analysis as a frame will, we posit, help in enabling reflections and conversations about such partnerships to be meaningful and authentic.

The Relevance of Aristotle’s Friendship Arguments to Student-Staff Partnerships

In this section we address the question of why Aristotle’s friendship arguments are relevant to student-staff partnerships. These arguments help in thinking critically about such partnerships in terms of their moral basis and the equalities and inequalities that characterize them. This section provides a basis from which to understand how partnerships are likely to influence student being, and how examining critically the different concerns of partnerships might aid students in developing greater ethical awareness in their ongoing process of becoming in the university.

⁴⁶ MacIntyre, *A Short History*.

⁴⁷ Sherman, “Aristotle on Friendship”, 591–592.

Thinking Critically about the Objects and Moral Basis of Partnerships

Aristotle's friendship arguments bring to the fore the idea that friendship is a state, i.e. it is an ongoing condition or feature of a relationship. That ongoing process of interaction and connection with another is, moreover, animated by the concern or focus that defines the purpose of the relationship.

Staff members and students who work together in order to explore knowledge or create ideas and challenge thinking can be seen as being engaged in a partnership. Such an ongoing relationship can also be viewed as a professional friendship in the Aristotelian sense—a relationship enduring over a period of time which has a shared concern or focus which the participants value and evokes a feeling of *philia*. An example of such a concern could be a shared valuing of the feelings of love for a subject which is generated in the academics' and students' shared endeavour of teaching and learning about the subject. Other kinds of concern are possible, as we shall explain below. Such a partnership connects the participants over time around a shared intent. Seeing the student-staff partnership as a friendship in the Aristotelian sense encourages us to look for the type of concern or focus that is the purpose of that relationship and therefore where the liking or loving (the *philia*) is directed by staff and students.

Seeing partnership as an Aristotelean friendship thus provides a frame of enquiry for critically exploring student-staff partnerships. That frame of enquiry can be posed as a question for any student-staff partnership: What type of concern is the purpose of that relationship and the focus of staff and students' *philia*? Informed by Aristotle's reasoning about friendship, addressing this helps in clarifying the moral basis of partnerships. It raises issues about the kinds of concern and *philia* there may be in the current and future university and what these may reveal about that moral basis.

Essential to Aristotelean friendships is interaction that brings about some sort of good—something that is valued. Staff and students in higher education engaged together in exploring a subject area may be united in that endeavour through a common love of learning about that subject as an intrinsic good; or, the concern or focus of *philia* may be different. The concern or focus may differ between partnerships, and between staff members and amongst students in a partnership. For example, the concern could be a utilitarian gain (e.g., good results or contacts for future employment), the pleasure some activity generates (e.g., enjoyment of being with others in a learning group or the enjoyment that arises from jointly exploring a subject) and/or it may be an intrinsic gain (*eudemonia* or flourishing, where learning is valued in itself as a process that makes one a better human being).

A fundamental, moral question is raised by this way of thinking about partnerships. What truly deserves our love? Aristotle argues that what “is bad is not worthy of love nor should it be loved”.⁴⁸ Love of bad purposes and concerns leads to morally bad practice and ethical deterioration within the person. The choice of that which is worthy of love is therefore a matter of vital moral consequence. By participating in a partnership, participants are making a choice about the concern they are focusing on and, if they want to be as morally good as they can be, it is essential that they think critically and carefully about the shared purpose to which they are committing in a partnership. Aristotle’s ethical arguments will tend to steer the conscientious would-be partner away from the utility and pleasure-based objects of love and partnership; or at least encourage them to be measured and critically aware when participating in partnerships where utility and pleasure are predominant ends.

The issue of what concern a partnership is focused upon is relevant to higher education policy and practice, where partnerships are used in very different ways. Adopting a partnership approach between staff and students may be recommended with different purposes in mind—for example: to bring about improvements in performance data, but not always necessarily enhance the quality of the learning experience; to enhance the engagement of learners who are disengaged or alienated from their current practice or discipline, or to nurture the knowledge and values of a discipline.

Transparency about the purposes of partnerships is important if participants are to make choices about the object(s) to which they commit themselves. There might be good cause ethically, in some circumstances, to not enter into or continue participation in a partnership. An example could be where partnership descends into, or is based in, a solely self-interested transactional engagement, e.g. university policies stating that “we work in partnerships with students” where neither party believe in the ethics of the “partnership” being thrust upon them in that way because it lacks a genuine form of interest and goodwill in each other. We do accept that it may be more difficult, however, for students, without the transparency we argue for in this paper, to remove themselves from partnerships or hold policies and practices to account.

⁴⁸ Abbi Flint and Luke Millard, “‘Interactions with Purpose’: Exploring Staff Understandings of Student Engagement in a University with an Ethos of Staff-Student Partnership”, *International Journal for Students as Partners* 2, no. 2 (2018): 21–38.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1165b.

Thinking Critically about Equalities and Inequalities in Partnerships

Friendship involves equalities and inequalities which raise issues of power. Aristotle's friendship arguments highlight three aspects relating to inequality that are relevant to thinking critically about student-staff partnerships. First, friendships—especially those based on an object valued for its utility—can, and often do, take place across unequal social divides. Aristotle gives as a utilitarian example:

... that ... between a poor person and a rich, or an ignorant person and a learned one, since each of us is eager for whatever it is he happens to lack, and so gives something in return.⁵⁰

Second, friendships involve an equality of exchange of some feature (material gain, pleasure or virtue). For utility and pleasure-based friendships, “both sides get the same and wish the same to each other, or exchange one thing for another, such as pleasure for benefit”.⁵¹ There is most likely to be equality in flourishing or virtuous friendships, according to Aristotle, “the friendship of the good”.⁵² Third, there are friendships that occur across an enduring, socially embedded relationship of superiority and inferiority. Aristotle gives the example of that between father and son, and ruler and ruled.⁵³ In such a friendship, each:

should get more out of the friendship, but not more of the same thing. The superior person should get more honour, and the person in need more gain, since honour is the reward of virtue and beneficence, while gain is what ministers to need.⁵⁴

This introduces the concept of honour as a variable that can bring two people together. Certain partnerships may then bring honour to one party and it is that which they find worthy of love. It is important to be cautious, however, in ascribing too much ethical goodness to honour, as it is something that is given by others and depends on what the givers consider to be honourable:

[H]onour appears to depend more on those who honour than on the person honoured, whereas we surmise the good to be something of one's own that

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1159b.

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1158b.

⁵² Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1158a.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1161a–1161b.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1163b.

cannot easily be taken away. [Seekers of honour] seem to pursue honour in order to convince themselves of their goodness; at least, they seek to be honoured by people with practical wisdom, among those who are familiar with them, and for their virtue. So it is clear that, to these people at least, virtue is superior.⁵⁵

The implications of these three aspects of friendship equalities and inequalities are helpful in drawing attention to some of the complexities of power in student-staff partnerships. They raise the question of what equalities and inequalities are ethically desirable or acceptable. It might be argued that it is morally acceptable that academics mark students' assignments and guide Master's and doctoral students and thus have significant power, and that such inequality is integral to the many student-staff relationships. This view is also taken in the qualitative work of Murphy et al.⁵⁶ But, it does not follow that all exercising of unequal power is ethically good. For example, working with students in partnership so that module evaluation data are high could be seen to be a coercive act, forcing a utilitarian relationship not in the best interests of students.

It is important to probe and understand how power and (in)equality might play out. It is essential to understand that partnerships can be unequal, even when the object is one that is intrinsically valued for the flourishing it brings about. The question then becomes whether that inequality is ethically acceptable or not. What makes it ethically acceptable or unacceptable?

Typology of Partnership

In this section we set out a typology of student-staff partnership based on the Aristotelean friendship arguments and our discussion in this article to this point. The typology comprises four types of partnership. Three reflect Aristotle's types of friendship; the fourth is an additional type based on our reflections on the value of incorporating a form of partnership that involves an intrinsically valued good that is emergent from the shared partnership activity and is something more than the individual outcomes that occur as a result of the partnership. The purpose of the typology is to offer a description of types of partnership that can be used to aid critical analysis of partnership practice, including the ethical acceptability of any inequalities involved.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, 1095a-b.

⁵⁶ Rebecca Murphy, Sarah Nixon, Simon Brooman, and Damian Fearon, "I Am Wary of Giving Too Much Power to Students: Addressing the 'But' in the Principle of Staff-Student Partnership", *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1-16.

Utility-Based Partnership

Within a utility-based partnership, there is a clear understanding between those within the partnership about what they will gain from the experience. Partners will enter the partnership expecting to get something specific out of it. While what is gained from the partnership is likely to differ for the staff and students engaged, there is a clear, tangible and readily defined reason for being involved. A functional advantage of the utilitarian partnership is that it can embrace more people than the more demanding virtuous partnership; the advantage of the utility partnerships lies not in its qualitative (moral) character but more in its quantitative potential. Key features of a utility-based partnerships that are working well are likely to be a focus on what the partners can get out of the partnership (its usefulness and transactional character); clear expectations; outcomes-focused; time-boundedness; and a capacity to be scaled-up.

Pleasure-Based Partnership

In this partnership, as with the utility-based partnership, there is a state of mutual liking or love because of the benefit the partners receive through the partnership. In this case the benefit is some form of pleasure. Examples are: where both student and teacher experience enjoyment from the other's contribution to the process of teaching and learning, which might include a teacher's qualities such as "charisma, charm, wit, likeableness";⁵⁷ where rewards are experienced through the partnership, such as praise, respect, pride, honour, and feelings of delight and gratification in the student's work, or where pleasure is gained through the work being done as part of the partnership, or the process of working together itself. Again, as with the utility partnership, the good that each partner sees in the other is an instrumental one (the pleasure and good feelings they evoke) and it has a quantitative advantage in that instrumental partnerships are, in principle, possible in greater numbers than virtuous ones.

Some of the key features of pleasure-based partnerships include a focus on what pleasure (enjoyment) the partnership can bring; the experience of the process being as important as the outcome of the partnership; a strong focus on the relationships between the partners; and a potential to endure beyond the lifetime of the project because of the pleasure enjoyed. As with the utilitarian partnerships, there is not a deficiency in such partnerships, rather the

⁵⁷ David Carr, "Values, Virtues and Professional Development in Education and Teaching", *International Journal of Educational Research* 50, no. 3 (2011): 175.

worthiness of those partnerships does not aim to contribute to the flourishing of the other, or to contribute to the creation of something large than the self.

Virtue-Based Partnership

Virtuous partnerships contribute to or express “an intrinsic *telos*: the promotion of a good and flourishing human life (*eu zen*) and of a virtuous happiness (*eudaimonia*)”.⁵⁸ The common good may be described in terms that involve nurturing or enabling in others the capability to develop their faculties and removing social obstacles to people exercising free development as human beings.

In the virtuous partnership, the partners are in the state of mutual liking or love because of the good they see in each other and that they share with each other by mutually reinforcing the sustenance and development of virtue. The partnership is a community of morally good characters who raise each other up. Unlike the utility-based partnership, the benefits are not equated with the successful execution of “value-neutral—person-independent—skills and techniques”.⁵⁹ The love of the virtuous partners is for the good, the virtues that they foster in each other. Features of the virtue-based partnership include a focus on the virtues that partners bring to and develop in the partnership; seeking to develop those virtues; a tendency to be time-consuming to maintain; transformational in their effect; and being long term, enduring perhaps for a lifetime.

Creative-Based Partnerships

Aristotle’s friendship argument misses a significant feature of what it means to be and become in the university, not only for students, but also for staff. The creative-based partnership is a further, fourth type, that we posit to fill this gap. It addresses the question of what is worthy of love in a different way and extends the parameters of Aristotle’s discussion of friendship. The factor that brings and sustains partners into a state of mutual liking or love in this type is the creative change or outcomes that *emerge through the joint activities of the partners*. The good is an emergent outcome of the interaction and is not based on an instrumental exchange.

The object of the creative partnership is the contribution of the joint activity of partners to the greater good of others and the group or society. The joint

⁵⁸ Fred Dallmayer, *In Search of the Good Life* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 190.

⁵⁹ Carr, “Values”, 174.

practice of the creative partnership promotes a good and flourishing human life (*eu zen*) and virtuous happiness (*eudaimonia*) in the same way as virtue-based partnerships. The distinguishing feature of the creative-based partnership is that the outcomes are not additive—the simple adding of two areas of expertise together—but emergent. The sum of the joint working is greater than the parts. In this, it is akin to the notion of distributed leadership. Here we are referring to distributed leadership, characterized by “conjoint activity” in which people acting together experience synergy (evoking and releasing latent capacities and possibilities from each other) and reciprocity (influencing each other in way akin to a virtuous circle) and where there is reciprocal learning that generates and co-constructs “new knowledge and understanding” that is not only cognitive but embraces “emotional, social, aesthetic and ethical growth”.⁶⁰ Examples could include partnerships in the pursuit of knowledge and partnerships in aesthetic endeavours that produce art, buildings and spaces enhancing people’s sensibilities. In pedagogical partnerships there is a shared joy of discovering and advancing learning, not only for the partners but also—crucially—*for the contribution being made to the subject of study and the wider benefit of human learning*. To that extent, creative partnerships may be more applicable to Master’s and doctoral levels, and to collaborative learning between teachers.

Some of the key features of creative-based partnerships include a concern, like the virtue-based partnership, to promote a good and flourishing human life; a focus on the product that emerges from the joint activity; the valuing of outcomes which are greater than the sum of the parts of the partnership; and the importance of the wider benefits to society of the partnership. In its focus on contribution and creation, it is distinct, although incorporates, features of pleasure-based and virtue-based partnerships. Shared enjoyment in the creative process is likely to happen, and the good of each other in the process of creation is likely to be fostered as the good moves beyond the relationship and into something larger than one and the other’s being. We propose this to be a particular type of partnership that a student may participate in, in many disciplines, of the current and future university.

The Value of the Typology of Partnership for Student Becoming and Being in the Future University

In this section, we explain how our typology can be a useful framework in thinking critically about student-staff partnerships and how this is important

⁶⁰ Philip A. Woods and Amanda Roberts, *Collaborative School Leadership: A Critical Guide* (London: SAGE Publications, 2018), 84.

for student becoming and being in the future university. We see the typology as a way of developing conversations that can focus on the qualities of the relationships between student and staff, as well as ethical questions about the purposes of partnership—that which is worthy of love. Our view is that in the present and future university there needs to be honest and reflective conversations about the particular forms that student-staff partnerships take. We posit the typology as guidance for knowing and understanding the *philia* of the proposed student-staff relationship. We see such a framework as essential in enabling students and staff to decide where their relationship best sits within the types offered.

We take the view, as shown from the partnership literature, that being a student in higher education presently, and likely in the future, will continue to involve being in and identifying with student-staff partnerships. Partnerships are likely to continue as a central feature of the policies and practices that students are inducted into. Our typology aims to enable students and staff alike to reflect on the purpose of the type of relationship they are in or being asked to join. A lack of clarity concerning the purpose or the worthiness of any activity and its value for one's life can stifle or limit the process of one's becoming.

Imagine for a moment that you are a student invited to participate in a partnership project aimed at understanding student engagement. You are to be paid for your time across the semester-long project. You have an initial meeting with the convening academic—in this case they are a professor of learning and teaching. Initially, both you and the professor are focused on the utility of the partnership—you want the money, the professor wants data to be collected. Once you have collected your data, you then move into the data analysis phase of the project. It becomes energising and interesting, a more pleasure-based partnership. You and the professor start to tease out key themes of student engagement. You sit and have lunch one day, start talking about the project, and then the conversation moves onto likes and dislikes, next steps for you, and the career path of the professor. It is starting to become not just a transaction but is nurturing in your virtues and character for your ongoing development, and you can begin to see a wider, emerging value to knowledge from the partnership. The conversations and interactions for the remainder of the project ebb and flow between, what we describe here as, the four types of partnership. In the next year, the student chooses a module where the professor is their tutor. The relationship has changed: the student is now very much aware of both of the creative and utilitarian aspects of that relationship. The professor has a richer understanding of the learner. Open and frank discussions can be had between each other, where otherwise

they may have not been possible. Whilst lectures, seminars and tutorials focus on the tasks at hand, there is now a shared and deeper understanding of each other in the interest of the other and the self. As before, there is opportunity to focus conversations and for interactions to ebb and flow.

The partners will, no doubt, move between different nuances of *philia* during their time together. It stands to reason that the longer the time they spend with people invested in an activity, all being well, they will get to know each other better. They may move from a utility-based *philia* to a pleasure-based or virtue-based and creative-based *philia*, as indicated in the above example, across the project. One's being is not therefore fixed toward one *philia* only, but it forms and reforms as time continues. The partnership becomes a meaningful part of the working and studying lives of the partners even though the power dynamics change. Aspects of the partnership may come into tension—utility-based motivations with virtue-based benefits, for example. Awareness of the typology can help participants understand the nature of such tensions and to find a way to talk about them.

The positing of a typology does not force students and staff into particular ways of being. The ways of being are likely to already be established or the intention for the *philia* of the partnership already be present, although not verbalized. Establishing a clear understanding and explanation of the *philia* in a partnership, and what the student hopes the partnership would contribute to their being as a student, is crucial. A lack of such clarity can stifle or obscure the partnership's potential for contributing to the student's flourishing and becoming in the university. This is not say that one's notion of the flourishing life might sit within the neoliberal context readily, rather it is that student-staff partnership, informed by critical thinking through the typology, can help in questioning features of the neoliberal agenda. For example, if partners take time to reflect on the focus of the partnership that evokes *philia* and conclude that the partnership is only a utility-based "tick-box" exercise, that process may yet stimulate discussion of exactly what contribution the partnership makes to being a student—and perhaps how its focus might be widened to benefit the student's flourishing and becoming.

Similarly, if there is an opportunity to engage in a creative partnership but there are not funds available to pay the student, again, there is a good opportunity, by engaging with the typology, to enable the student to think about the short-term and long-term disadvantages and benefits. Time to reflect and to question the *philia* of the partnership, ensuring that the partnership is authentic, having a clear ethos, that there is trust,⁶¹ and it is not being

⁶¹ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students*.

usurped for other ends is what the typology can facilitate for the student. In not understanding, and not having the opportunity to understand, the ethical motivation for the partnership, it is unlikely that anything but a *post hoc* justification could be given for how the partnership contributes to the being and becoming of the student.

Student Being and Probaireisis

Being a student is complex. It involves, *inter alia*, excitement, joys, worries, changing identities, new experiences, new relationships, learning discipline(s) and practices, friendships, and navigating work-life and home-life. Being a student is made all the more challenging in a policy and practice context that often happens *to* students, instead of *with* them. Yet the university presently, and the future university, should require students to develop a sense of the kind of life they wish to lead. For us, the prime role of the university is to help each student to become a person who works in their own way towards their own conception of the flourishing life. Essential to this is the development of reason in such a way that enables the student to make choices characterized by *probaireisis*—that is, decision making that embraces a concern with ethics and becomes a habit of thinking embedded in the person’s character.

In pursuing their view of the good life—which will be partly made up of their own dreams and ideals—it is important to take stock and think about the importance of the flourishing life in being and becoming a student. Whilst competitive markets are at work in the fabric and administration of the present idea of the university, and likely to be in the future idea of the university, there remains a place for more noble aims: the pursuit of truth and the education of reason that is used to interrogate existing ideas and develop new thinking. Other modes of pedagogic relationship may lend themselves to mystifying and dehumanising the student, e.g. the student *as* consumer⁶² and the student *as* object.⁶³ However, we would argue that the kind of interaction required for engaging in any form of partnership ought to encourage and facilitate students making decisions characterized by *probaireisis*—making choices informed by critical reasoning that includes giving attention to ethical issues. This might be a concern for university administrators who are looking

⁶² Mike Neary and Joss Winn, “The Student as Producer: Reinventing the Student Experience in Higher Education”, in *The Future of Higher Education: Policy, Pedagogy and the Student Experience*, ed. Les Bell, Mike Neary, and Howard Stevenson (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 192–210.

⁶³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin, 1970).

for “quick wins” for large cultural problems or financial issues; however, the authentic use of the typology requires open and honest discussions in the creation and continuation of any form of partnership. In fact, discussion of openness and honesty moves us to an important notion of the university.

Concerns about threats to the idea of the university as an institution pursuing truth and the education of reason are long-standing. Davidson’s observation that ‘An institution perishes when it abandons the principles on which it was founded and built’,⁶⁴ resonates with much of current literature, just over one-hundred years later, on the undermining and destruction of higher education within democratic societies.⁶⁵ We are not suggesting that the typology of partnership is going to directly counter the neoliberal agenda, but it will, in Aristotelean style, support reasoned reflection on, and criticism of, the role that partnership is, ought, or ought not to, play a part of that culture. It may help in distinguishing from other partnerships those that promote—whether wittingly or unwittingly—the consumerist model of higher education and which hijack the more noble aims of partnership.⁶⁶ There are, as outlined above, certain functions within the typology that are likely to raise awareness of certain hijacking behaviours and should therefore enable the student to question whether they want to participate in such a partnership.

Conclusion

This article argues that it is unethical to engage in a partnership and not have an understanding of the purpose of that partnership that is intended to engage the commitment of partners. If an institution’s leaders suggest that partnership working will be the *modus operandi* for the institution, clarity is required about the definition of “partnership” at work and what that definition ethically entails. If a student is unaware of this framing of the relationship, it cannot, in our view, be called a partnership, as it does not meet the basic requirements of the student having a reasonable understanding of the *philia* central to that partnership. It is knowledge, reason and morality together that enable the student to formulate and strive toward their conception of

⁶⁴ Thomas Davidson, *Aristotle and Ancient Educational Ideals* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892), 159.

⁶⁵ David Watson, *The Question of Conscience: Higher Education and Personal Responsibility* (London: IOE Press, 2014).

Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012).

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs to the Humanities* (Princeton: University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶ Healy and Healey, “It Depends”.

the flourishing life. Clarity and *prohairesis* - choice-making characterized by critical reasoning that embraces ethical issues - are essential as the nature of higher education and the expectations of students and staff are changing.

This article has proposed a typology of partnerships: utility-based, pleasure-based, virtue-based and creative-based. The intention behind the development of this typology is to help in sustaining an ideal that students be supported in the pursuit of truth and reason, not only within their disciplinary practice, but within the relationships that are central to their practice and the wider practices of the university that may sit outside of their disciplines or schools. It would be bold for an institution to suggest that it does not wish its students, or staff, to seek truth and reason although we know that this view is rather contested in some notions of the modern, and likely future university.⁶⁷ Student becoming is a central feature of the university, but what that becoming looks like is, in this reading of an Aristotelean position, contingent on relationships and their *philia*. We posit the typology as a way of developing critical thinking toward this amorphous and pervasive concept of student-staff partnership and its practice.

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⁶⁷ Nicholas Maxwell, "The Scandal of the Irrationality of Academia", *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* 11, no. 1 (2019): 105–128.

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5. *Be(com)ing Antifascist: On Students' Most Sacred Mission*

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Abstract: What should students be, and be becoming, in the university of the future? In this paper, I take my cue from the 1946 Charter of Grenoble in exploring the possibility of conceptualizing students as both workers and workers-in-training called to engage in a very particular kind of work: that of defending freedom from oppression. First, I address the relationship between oppression, freedom, and violence, and consider what it might mean to understand involvement in anti-oppression work as a central component of student identity rather than merely an extra-curricular activity, or something that some students choose to do in addition to studying. Second, I discuss a particular configuration of desire that works to further oppression, namely fascism, which I argue that students have a duty to oppose. Finally, I examine the political philosophy of antifascism as the historically most effective antidote to fascism, and consider the specific role that students might be called to play in antifascist work. I conclude with a brief exploration of the place of place in determining how students should be—and be becoming—antifascist, especially in terms of commitments to Indigenous knowledges and world-views for those of us in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Keywords: student politics, fascism, antifascism, Anti-Oedipus, Charter of Grenoble

In looking ahead at possibilities for student being and becoming in the future university, I begin by looking back to April 1946. In the aftermath of the Second World War, some 134 delegates from student associations across

France assembled in the amphitheatre of Grenoble's faculty of medicine.¹ These young survivors of the war, the Occupation, the Holocaust, and the Resistance—some returning to their studies from imprisonment or exile—were gathered for the annual congress of the National Union of Students of France (UNEF), the first since the surrender of Nazi Germany. The meeting was initially intended to be held in Strasbourg, to celebrate its liberation from German annexation, but Grenoble had its own particular symbolism in that it was not far from Vercors, where much of the Resistance had been based.² In Grenoble, delegates to the congress set about rebuilding their country's student movement, and in doing so, almost inadvertently gave it an entirely new orientation that would only truly be apparent in retrospect and in light of its unforeseen consequences. They did this by adopting, on the third day of the week-long congress and with little fanfare, a declaration drafted by the Lyon contingent regarding the rights and responsibilities of the student.³ This declaration has since come to be known as simply the Charter of Grenoble, and furthermore as a founding document of contemporary student unionism—the first of its seven articles a bold and succinct pronouncement that “the student is a young intellectual worker.”⁴

The following six articles of the Charter then proceed to elaborate specific rights and responsibilities associated with each of the three facets of this declared student identity—that is, students as young people, as workers, and as intellectuals. And it does so “true to the example of the best among them, dead in the struggle of the French people for its freedom”.⁵ To begin with, articles 2 and 3 of the Charter address the student's role *as a young person*, as one who both *is* and is *still becoming* a person, with the latter article asserting their duty “to integrate themselves into the whole of the national and worldwide youth”.⁶ This duty may be read as a response to criticism that students sought to remain a privileged caste, “an elite in training, with its own separate interests”,⁷ as it had been in the traditional university.

¹ Alain Monchablon, “1946: Le Congrès de la Charte de Grenoble” [1946: The Congress of the Charter of Grenoble]. In *Naissance d'un Syndicalisme Étudiant*, ed. Robi Morder (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2006), 63–70.

² Jean-Yves Sabot, “Charte de Grenoble et Syndicalisme” [The Charter of Grenoble and Unionism]. In *Naissance d'un Syndicalisme Étudiant*, ed. Robi Morder (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2006), 71–83.

³ Monchablon, “1946”.

⁴ UNEF. “La Charte de Grenoble” [The Charter of Grenoble]. In *Naissance d'un Syndicalisme Étudiant*, ed. Robi Morder (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1946/2006), 127. All translations of the Charter of Grenoble are the author's.

⁵ UNEF, “La Charte”, 127.

⁶ UNEF, “La Charte”, 127.

⁷ Monchablon, “1946”, 70.

The rights and responsibilities of the student *as a worker* are taken up in articles 4 and 5. These are “the right to work and rest in the best conditions and in material independence, both personal and social, guaranteed by the free exercise of union rights,” and “the duty to acquire the best technical skill”.⁸ It is arguably in this assertion of students as workers, and this realignment of student unions with labor unions, that the Charter has had its most enduring and far-reaching impact. For example, framing students as workers legitimized forms of collective action like strikes, and led to demands for health insurance, social security, and stipends—the latter constituting “material compensation,” in the form of pre- or proto-wages, “for the labour they provide in seeking a qualification” (author’s translation).⁹

The impact of framing students as workers would continue to be felt decades later on the other side of the Atlantic, in the francophone Canadian province of Québec, where in 1978 students went on strike in response to the government’s failure to deliver on the stipends promised during its election campaign.¹⁰ In fact, student strikes continue to be fairly common occurrences in Québec, and student unions there remain a significant political force, benefitting from the legal rights afforded through the application of the Rand formula in the 1983 legislation governing their accreditation and financing. The province’s most recent student strike in 2019 demanded not just compensation, but full wages for all those required to complete internships as part of their course of study, as well as their recognition as workers under labor law. In addition to the Charter of Grenoble, this strike effort drew inspiration from the 1975 Wages for Students campaign in the United States, which had foreseen the coming wave of neoliberalism and established that it is actually universities, government, and banks that owe money to students—not the other way around—since they thrive on their unpaid labor.¹¹ Furthermore, the Wages for Students campaign suggested that the purpose of this labor is not primarily the development of technical skill, as stated in the Charter, but actually learning to make themselves labor, “[producing] the self as a subjugated and self-subjugating subject, a commodity that is particularly valuable to capital”.¹²

⁸ UNEF, “La Charte”, 127–128.

⁹ Sabot, “Charte de Grenoble”, 73.

¹⁰ “Les Grèves Q tudiantes au Québec: Quelques Jalons” [Student Strikes in Québec: Some Milestones], Radio-Canada, Last modified February 15, 2012, <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/549959/droits-greve-chrono>.

¹¹ George Caffentzis, Monty Neill, and John Willshire-Carrera, “Introduction to the Present Edition,” in *Wages for Students*, ed. Jakob Jakobsen, María Berrios, and Malav Kanuga (New York: Common Notions, 2016), 5–13.

¹² Turcotte-Summers, Jonathan, “Students as Workers and the 2019 Québec Student Strike,” *Activist History Review* (August 26 2019), <https://activisthistory.com/2019/08/26/students-as-workers-and-the-2019-quebec-student-strike/>.

Silvia Federici describes this as the “double exploitation” of being exploited in preparation for future exploitation.¹³ In the language of being and becoming, students are workers, and their work consists of becoming more exploitable workers.

Finally, in describing the rights and responsibilities of the student *as an intellectual*, articles 6 and 7 of the Charter invoke other tasks: “to seek, propagate, and defend truth, which implies the duty to share and advance culture and to reveal the direction of history”.¹⁴ However, these articles also proclaim that freedom is the primary condition for this search for truth, and that “the most sacred mission” of any intellectual “is to defend freedom from all oppression”.¹⁵ To be fair, the Charter’s authors remained implicated in plenty of oppression: for example, UNEF continued to be dominated by men, antisemitism was still endemic in the faculties of medicine, and the French colonial project carried on.¹⁶ But that does not necessarily undermine the moral and political value of these articles if we take them, and perhaps all seven articles of the Charter, to be more aspirational than descriptive of the state of affairs at the time.

What should students be, and be becoming, in the university of the future? In this paper, I will take my cue from the Charter of Grenoble in exploring the possibility of conceptualizing students as both workers and workers-in-training called to engage in a very particular kind of work: that of defending freedom from oppression. First, I will address the relationship between oppression, freedom, and violence, and consider what it might mean to take involvement in anti-oppression work as a central component of student identity rather than merely an extra-curricular activity, or something that some students choose to do in addition to studying. Second, I will discuss a particular configuration of desire that works to further oppression, namely fascism, which I argue that students have a duty to oppose. Finally, I will examine the political philosophy of antifascism as the historically most effective antidote to fascism, and consider the specific role that students might be called to play in antifascist organizing. I will conclude with a brief exploration of the place of place in determining how students should be—and be becoming—antifascist, especially in terms of commitments to Indigenous knowledges and worldviews for those of us in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

¹³ Jakob Jakobsen, María Berríos, and Malav Kanuga, *Wages for Students* (New York: Common Notion, 2016), 29–66.

¹⁴ UNEF, “La Charte”, 128.

¹⁵ UNEF, “La Charte”, 128.

¹⁶ Monchablon, “1946”.

At this point, I will move from referring to students in the third person to the first—at least when discussing students in the present tense, considering my current identification as a student. However, in referring to students in the future university, I will continue to use the third person, because I intend to complete my relation of studentship with the university in a relatively near future before that one, even though I will not necessarily cease to study. This is the nature of a seemingly paradoxical state of being motivated by the goal of becoming something else—although Gilles Deleuze, who argues that “there is no being beyond becoming”,¹⁷ further argues that there is no becoming beyond “becoming-other,” and would not likely conceive of becoming an accountant, a scientist, or a professor as becoming-other. Rather, this paper will suggest that students genuinely become-other by be(com)ing antifascist.

Defending Freedom from Oppression

There is a growing school of thought that suggests that the university has a responsibility to contribute to social and economic justice. Some might even go so far as to claim that, “when it can’t serve to dismantle systems of oppression, but only reinforces and perpetuates them, then the time will come for the academy itself to be dismantled, and new institutions created in its place”.¹⁸ This claim is consonant with as Noam Chomsky’s definition of anarchism as the tendency to place the burden of proof on hierarchical institutions to justify their authority, “[a]nd if they can’t ..., which is the usual case, then the authority ought to be dismantled and replaced by something more free and just”.¹⁹ However, the claim I wish to make here is not that the university itself has a moral obligation to contribute to the dismantling of systems of oppression. For the moment, I will set aside questions about the obligations of the university or whether it, as a heterogenous assemblage of actors with widely varying interests and objectives, has any singular moral obligation at all. Rather, it is the intellectuals who occupy the university who are tasked with carrying out the “most sacred mission” identified in the Charter of Grenoble. This is the tempered, though possibly still contentious, claim with which I would like to begin my discussion of possibilities for the student

¹⁷ Todd May, “When Is a Deleuzian Becoming?” *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2003): 143.

¹⁸ Jonathan Turcotte-Summers, “Egalitarianism, Safety, and Virtue in Education: A Response to Callan,” *Philosophical Inquiry in Education* 24, no. 1 (2016): 99.

¹⁹ “Noam Chomsky: The Kind of Anarchism I Believe in, and What’s Wrong with Libertarians,” AlterNet, Last modified May 28, 2013, <https://www.alternet.org/2013/05/noam-chomsky-kind-anarchism-i-believe-and-whats-wrong-libertarians/>

in the future university: if there is to be a future for the university at all, it must be one that encourages or at least allows students to be, and become more and more, anti-oppressive agents.

I understand oppression not as isolated incidents of interpersonal conflict but as serious, systemic, and institutionalized causes of demonstrable harm—that is, “lasting and unnecessary damage or injury”²⁰—that have historically targeted identifiable marginalized groups. This latter point, regarding historically marginalized groups, is what distinguishes my critical perspective on oppression from a more liberal one. According to this view, oppression is not synonymous with discrimination, and certainly not those forms of discrimination that aim to correct intergenerational inequities in power relations (e.g., recruitment practices like “affirmative action”), even if “any situation other than their former seems to [oppressors] like oppression”.²¹ I argue to the contrary that it is these intergenerational inequities themselves that constitute oppression. Furthermore, I contend that “many if not most students in the typical Western classroom face one or more forms” of such oppression, and that current liberal educational interventions “[do] not do enough to address these oppressions and help realize egalitarian norms”.²² Instead, what we must do is make our campuses into “more radical, liberatory, and genuinely democratic spaces”,²³ with democracy understood in its original sense of empowering us to rule ourselves, and not simply voting for those who would rule over us.

In causing harm, it may be said that oppression, even in its most subtle and seemingly benign manifestations, is always already a form of violence, broadly defined by Johan Galtung as being present when one is “influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations”.²⁴ According to Paulo Freire, “[a]ny situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence”.²⁵ This violence harms not only those who are directly denied the opportunity to participate fully in their own self-actualization, but also everyone who would benefit from their participation or from their realization of

²⁰ Turcotte-Summers, “Egalitarianism”, 95.

²¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1970/1996), 39.

²² Turcotte-Summers, “Egalitarianism”, 93.

²³ Turcotte-Summers, “Egalitarianism”, 94.

²⁴ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 168.

²⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 37.

self-actualization—which is, arguably, everyone. Furthermore, “[v]iolence is initiated by those who oppress ... not by those who are oppressed”.²⁶ In sum, acting in ways that reinforce or perpetuate oppression is inherently violence against the entire collective of which the oppressed are a part. And one of the ways this oppression causes harm is by unduly restricting freedom, as referenced in the last of the Charter of Grenoble’s seven articles. Of course, there are reasonable limits to freedom that are nonoppressive and altogether nonviolent, such as the obvious example of a parent exercising their justified authority and using physical force to restrain a young child from running into traffic. However, when it is genuine oppression that limits freedom, I contend that students have a moral obligation to intervene.

When the Charter refers to freedom as the primary condition of students’ search for truth, some might interpret this to mean academic freedom, the particular freedom we enjoy by virtue of our participation in the academy. Discussions of academic freedom typically revolve around that of faculty members, although Edward Shils describes the academic freedom of students as the freedom “to study the subjects and to pursue the courses of study that appeal to their intellectual and vocational interests in universities that they themselves have chosen to attend.” Furthermore, the academic freedom of students permits us “to form associations in accordance with [our] intellectual, political, and convivial interests”.²⁷ Shils goes on to explain that academic freedom includes a more general freedom, *intellectual* freedom, and that it is solely academic freedom that entails such institutional obligations as that “to perform certain duties in teaching, to act collegially with other academics, and to maintain and protect the internal order in which academic activities can be effectively performed. Intellectual freedom has traditionally entailed no institutional obligations”.²⁸ Instead, I posit that the corollary responsibilities of the intellectual freedom ensconced within academic freedom are para-institutional, and that the most significant one is to resist oppression.

However, restrictions not only on students’ academic or intellectual freedom but on *any* of their freedoms, or indeed on the freedoms of *anyone*, can directly or indirectly inhibit our academic work by, for example, impeding the transmission or collaborative development of knowledge. In addition, I argue that students’ search for truth is hindered by oppression in that it constitutes the epistemic and ontological violence of privileging some

²⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 37.

²⁷ Edward Shils, “Academic Freedom,” in *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* (Volume I), ed. Philip G. Altbach (New York: Garland, 1991), 3.

²⁸ Shils, “Academic Freedom”, 21.

knowledges, peoples, and ways of being over others in the context of the academy, limiting the access of those others to the academy or even rendering them altogether invisible to those allowed in. As a result, I interpret the obligation “to defend freedom from all oppression” to mean not only defending all student freedoms from oppression, but defending the freedoms of *all* from oppression. Furthermore, it is obvious that studentship is a temporally limited phase, and even from a perspective of pure self-interest, we as students should act to defend the freedoms of nonstudents because these will be ours too once the phase of studentship is complete.

As students, we find ourselves temporarily in a relatively advantageous position from which to oppose oppression, even as the pressures of the neoliberal university and the broader demands of capitalist society become increasingly oppressive. Philip Altbach suggests that the university remains “a particularly favorable environment for the development of organization and movements among students”.²⁹ Similarly, Manja Klemenčič, in her introduction to the special issue of *Studies in Higher Education* on the topic of “student power in a global perspective,” begins with “the assumption that ‘studentship,’ i.e., the state of being a student, can be highly conducive to ‘acting collectively in a public sphere’ to express interests, ideas, make demands on some authority, or hold that authority accountable”.³⁰ Indeed, she cites student strikes in Québec as merely another of history’s “ample lessons of organized students forming an influential oppositional force”.³¹ Klemenčič describes the distinctive temporal and spatial aspects of university life that encourage such phenomena:

Developmentally, studentship (as emerging adulthood) has been associated with higher levels of cognitive, emotional and practical maturity and also with nurturing idealist (and abstract) ideas (Jensen, 2008). Furthermore, academic institutions as distinct intellectual and social environments provide space for students to freely and critically exchange and develop their ideas and articulate political aspirations (Pinhero and Antonowicz, [2015]). The multiple and overlapping social networks that constitute university environments are fertile grounds for the cultivation and organization of student interests. Unburdened by care for family or full-time work, the “typical” student has the leisure of time and peace of mind to engage in political action if so inclined.³²

²⁹ Philip Altbach, “Student Politics: Activism and Culture,” in *International Handbook of Higher Education*, ed. James J.F. Forest and Philip G. Altbach (New York: Springer, 2007), 330.

³⁰ Manja Klemenčič, “Student Power in a Global Perspective and Contemporary Trends in Student Organising,” *Studies in Higher Education* 39, no. 3 (2014): 399.

³¹ Klemenčič, “Student Power”, 397.

³² Klemenčič, “Student Power”, 399.

Klemenčič may be overstating how much leisure the student today enjoys; in addition to the labor of schoolwork, more and more of us are compelled to perform increasing amounts of paid employment and unpaid care work. Nevertheless, beyond studentship as conducive to political action for the individual “studier” of a specific subject area, I contend that studentship should continue to be conceived in spite of neoliberal atomization as a more general state of being and becoming inseparable from that of the collectivity. In fact, conceiving it in such a way might be the first step in resisting this oppressive atomization. Alain Monchablon writes about how the Charter of Grenoble actually constituted a return to a tradition in which “the development of the intellectual youth took place not only through disciplinary knowledge, but also through a general self-development in and by the student movement”.³³ At the same time, as the inverse of this understanding of collective action as being central to the role of the intellectual, Aziz Choudry argues for the extraordinary learning and knowledge production that occurs organically in social movements.³⁴

Even if one conceives of students as workers, and as academics by virtue of the particular work we perform in and for the academy, one might question whether students are really the intellectuals the Charter says we are, especially in light of the tremendous changes that have taken place both inside and outside the academy. Since 1946, we have seen the massification and diversification of the student body, the commodification and devaluation of credentials, the introduction of consumer logics into student-teacher relations, and other significant shifts in the political economy of schooling—many of which can be attributed to the emergence of neoliberalism as the hegemonic global paradigm.³⁵ Linked to this are the pressures placed on young people to pursue ever increasing amounts of schooling, not because of any deep intellectual motivation, but simply to remain exploitable by capital. The freedom to choose the universities we attend, as cited by Shils in his definition of

³³ Monchablon, “1946”, 70.

³⁴ Aziz Choudry, *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements* (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

³⁵ James E Côté, and Anton L. Allahar, *Ivory Tower Blues: A University System in Crisis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).
Michael A Peters, *Neoliberalism and After? Education, Social Policy, and the Crisis of Western Capitalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
Henry A. Giroux, *Education and the Crisis of Public Values: Challenging the Assault on Teachers, Students, & Public Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).
David J. Blacker, *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2013).

academic freedom, is arguably in the age of neoliberal education as illusory a consumerist, market-based freedom as that to choose what kind of car to buy. So, while the Charter appealed in 1946 to young intellectual workers to integrate themselves into the mass of workers and youth, today those masses find themselves taking on unprecedented amounts of debt in order to become young intellectual workers themselves. Students—and other academics, for that matter—can thus hardly be described collectively as intellectuals in any traditional sense. Nevertheless, even if the vast majority of us are not expected to perform any *productive* intellectual function, we are expected to perform a *reproductive* one, consisting of the more and more creative reproduction of the dominant ideologies.³⁶ To differing degrees, these dominant ideologies legitimize various forms of oppression, such as colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and, of course, capitalism. The question thus becomes, how are students, as academic workers and workers-in-training, called by our commitment to our most sacred mission to direct our labor away from the mere reproduction of the *status quo* and toward tackling such oppression?

Oppression and Fascistic Desire

Students, beyond being solely intellectual agents, are also political and moral agents who may be conceived as having a specific obligation to act in opposition to all forms of oppression. This obligation is based on (1) the hindrance oppression represents to freedom, including but not limited to the form of freedom students enjoy in our work as academics, and (2) the fact that students occupy a temporal and spatial positioning that is uniquely suited to collective action against oppression as a social ill. I propose, building on the final articles of the Charter of Grenoble, to consider how performing, and learning to perform, the labor of opposing oppression might be central to what it means to be a student moving forward. However, with so many forms of oppression to tackle, it is likely less appropriate to elaborate a “hierarchy of oppressions,” or to try to determine which among them represent the most significant threat, than it is to identify the points at which various forms

³⁶ Herbert Gintis and Samuel Bowles, “Contradiction and Reproduction in Educational Theory,” in *Schooling and the National Interest*, ed. Roger Dale, Geoff Esland, Ross Fergusson, and Madeleine MacDonald (London: Falmer, 1982), 45–59.

Lesley Andres Bellamy, “Capital, Habitus, Field, and Practice: An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu,” in *Sociology of Education in Canada: Critical Perspectives on Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Lorna Erwin and David R. MacLennan (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 120–136.

converge and where they are most vulnerable to strategic attack. Fascism may be perceived as just such a confluence of intersectional oppressions.

Others discuss fascism as a particular form of government, compared especially to the ideal totalitarian types of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany; see, for example, the fourteen characteristics of fascist regimes identified by Laurence Britt,³⁷ popularly cited and once even included on a poster for sale in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.³⁸ Others describe fascism instead as an ideology, or as an ideological category; for instance, Roger Griffin, in his book on the subject, calls it "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism".³⁹ For her part, Natasha Lennard argues that "[f]ascism is not just a type of regime, nor is it an ideology for a would-be regime".⁴⁰ Instead, she writes about "everyday fascisms," and invokes Wilhelm Reich⁴¹ as well as Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze—that philosopher of "becoming"—in describing "the fascistic desire to dominate, oppress and obliterate the nameable 'other'",⁴² suggesting that this desire lives within us all. Reich claims that "there is today not a single individual who does not have the elements of fascist feeling and thinking in his [*sic*] structure".⁴³ Michel Foucault, in his preface to the English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, similarly addresses "the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us".⁴⁴

I am sympathetic to the interpretation of fascism as fascistic desire.⁴⁵ However, I am also concerned with fascism's material expression in relation

³⁷ "Fascism Anyone?", *Free Inquiry*, 23, no. 2 (Spring 2003), <https://secularhumanism.org/2003/03/fascism-anyone/>.

³⁸ "Did a Holocaust Museum Display a Poster Listing 'Early Warning Signs of Fascism'?", Snopes, Last modified March 1, 2017, <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/holocaust-museum-warning-signs-fascism>.

³⁹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991).

⁴⁰ Natasha Lennard, *Being Numerous: Essays on Non-Fascist Life* (New York: Verso, 2019), 23.

⁴¹ Copies of Reich's 1933 book *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* were thrown at police by Berlin students in the revolts of 1968 (Elkind 1971).

⁴² Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 14.

⁴³ Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 15.

⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), xiii.

⁴⁵ It is unfortunate that the chapter of Lennard's book titled "Policing Desire" is solely about *sexual* desire, rather than elaborating on the vital notion of *fascistic* desire that she brings up in chapter 1.

to oppression, and how its interpretation as a ubiquitous form of desire seemingly assumes its presence in equal measure in all peoples, whether oppressor or oppressed. Rutger Bregman contrasts the experience of six Tongan boys stranded on an island with William Golding's 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies*⁴⁶, typically read as an allegory about the evil lurking in the souls of everyone—"the darkness of man's [*sic*] heart"—but actually written "out of that sad self-knowledge"⁴⁷ of an unhappy British schoolmaster who deliberately pitted his students against one another and even admitted "I have always understood the Nazis ... because I am of that sort by nature".⁴⁸ Similarly, simply asserting that there is fascism in all of us appears to universalize a principally white, Western phenomenon. From an antiracist and anticolonial perspective, Zoé Samudzi laments the absence of Black thought in Natasha Lennard's book and in white antifascism generally, tying it "to persistent problems of de facto segregation".⁴⁹ Failing "to substantially acknowledge—let alone foreground—nonwhite communities' long-articulated narrations of our ideas and experiences",⁵⁰ and not recognizing that "American fascism is an evolution of state carceral forms that were founded on the settler genocide of Indigenous communities and the enslavement of black people",⁵¹ risks normalizing rather than combatting the oppression of non-white peoples.

How does the kind of fascistic desire invoked by Reich, Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault differ from simple, vulgar authoritarianism? I suggest that fascism be seen as authoritarian desire directed into intensifying longstanding forms of systemic oppression and, crucially, into appealing for the state to do likewise. Fascists may oppose state institutions (e.g., the university) when they sense that such institutions are no longer doing enough to advance those forms of oppression, but the fact remains that those forms could not have continued to exist without the historical complicity of state institutions, whether through

⁴⁶ William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (New York: Putnam, 1954).

⁴⁷ "The Real Lord of the Flies: What Happened When Six Boys Were Shipwrecked for 15 Months" *The Guardian*, Last modified May 9, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/may/09/the-real-lord-of-the-flies-what-happened-when-six-boys-were-shipwrecked-for-15-months>.

⁴⁸ *The Guardian*, "The Real Lord of the Flies".

⁴⁹ "Searching for Black Thought in White Antifascism," *Jewish Currents*, Last modified August 1, 2019, <https://jewishcurrents.org/searching-for-black-thought-in-white-antifascism/>.

⁵⁰ *Jewish Currents*, "Searching for Black Thought in White Antifascism," paragraph 4.

⁵¹ *Jewish Currents*, "Searching for Black Thought in White Antifascism," paragraph 7.

the use of force or the production of consent.⁵² Drawing on Đorđe Hristov's interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari,⁵³ one that deviates somewhat from Lennard's, I contend that fascism results from the social production of authoritarian desire that promotes an intensification of state-sanctioned oppression, and the *repression* or redirection of desire (authoritarian or otherwise) that does not. In other words, I understand fascism as involving both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses to yield desire than can be directed into ramping up state expressions of, for example, colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and capitalism. As Hristov explains:

Fascism represents a collapse of desiring-production into death, a mass revolutionary investment of desire that is emancipatory in nature, but that becomes blocked off by the mechanism of suppression of passions transforming them into a destructive State apparatus. Fascism reveals both sides of desire—its revolutionary form and its self-destructive, suicidal one, both of which become indistinguishable from each other.⁵⁴

In a lengthy footnote to this passage, he continues:

The term fascism for Deleuze and Guattari does not denote only the events of “classical fascism”, i.e. the fascism of the 20th century. Instead it signifies a “blocking off” of desire in its productive process by imposing on it specific social aims and goals. ... It is a love for power, a desire for power, but not power as productive capacity, but power which is “inherited” from the structures of the State. ... Fascism ... proceeds from “below”, from a mass investment of desire beyond the institutions of the State that, in its inability to become released, suddenly turns into a love for the State, and more precisely, the form of power the State creates.⁵⁵

I have attempted to show above that students are uniquely well-positioned to act collectively in confronting oppression. Students are similarly well-positioned to oppose the production of fascistic desire and encourage the development of what Hristov terms “emancipatory” or “revolutionary”

⁵² “Review of How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them”, *Marx & Philosophy Review of Books*, Last modified May 13, 2020, https://marxandphilosophy.org.uk/reviews/18021_how-fascism-works-the-politics-of-us-and-them-by-jason-stanley-reviewed-by-devin-zane-shaw.

⁵³ Đorđe Hristov, “Fascism in the Works of Deleuze and Guattari,” *Journal for Theoretical Practices* 8 (2016): 161–173.

⁵⁴ Hristov, “Fascism”, 163.

⁵⁵ Hristov, “Fascism”, 163–164.

desire, because we operate within a key institution of the ideological state apparatus. Furthermore, I have attempted to show that oppression represents a threat to freedom generally, and to our academic freedom in particular; that it constitutes epistemic and ontological violence that, among the other harms it causes, hinders the search for truth. We can now see how fascistic desire converges upon and nourishes oppressions supported by the state, and how it is necessary to act collectively in order to prevent such convergence and defend our freedom. This implies a responsibility to engage in the type of humanities education that Gayatri Spivak⁵⁶ calls “an uncoercive rearrangement of desires” in order to avoid the reproduction of ideologies from which emerge fascistic desire, and work instead toward the reproduction (and perhaps even new production) of ideologies from which emerge liberatory desire. This also implies a responsibility to act, in some cases, against the state and its institutions to undermine their support for oppressions and prevent their repression and redirection of that liberatory desire.

Students as Antifascists in the Liberal University

If students have a moral and political obligation to resist fascism, what form should this resistance take in the university of the future? With which traditions and ongoing currents of thought and organizing should we align ourselves moving forward? In his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault suggests that the book be considered “an Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life”.⁵⁷ Picking up on this, Natasha Lennard subtitles her own book *Essays on Non-Fascist Life*.⁵⁸ However, I contend that nonfascism is insufficient, in the same sense that Howard Zinn affirms *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train*.⁵⁹ Ibram X. Kendi argues that it is not enough to be “not racist,” which is the claim typically invoked as defense precisely by those engaged in perpetuating racism; a commitment to social justice compels us to be the opposite of “racist,” which is “antiracist.”⁶⁰ Similarly, we should not strive to be merely nonfascist, but following the example of *Anti-Oedipus*, we should instead strive to be *anti*-oppressive and *antifascist*. In fact, “anti-fascist” is the formulation Lennard employs throughout her book, starting with the title of chapter 1, “We, Anti-Fascists.”

⁵⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, nos. 2–3 (2004): 523–581.

⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, “Anti-Oedipus”, xiii.

⁵⁸ Lennard, *Being Numerous*.

⁵⁹ Howard Zinn, *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

⁶⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019).

But then again, just as Kendi asserts that no one is actually a “not racist,” declaring ourselves antifascist does not necessarily imply that we are entirely free of fascistic desire; rather, it signifies that we are willing to work to eliminate such desire simultaneously from our selves and our shared world. As Lennard writes, “[w]e cannot simply be anti-fascist; we must also practice and make better habits, forms of life. Rather than as a noun or adjective, anti-fascist as a gerund verb: a constant effort of anti-fascisting against the fascisms that even we ourselves uphold”.⁶¹ She concludes: “Toward anti-fascisting, even while we cannot anti-fascist be!”⁶² Put another way, considering how Alexander Reid Ross explains that “much of the development of fascism takes place more as a ‘process’ than an ‘outcome’”⁶³—as a creeping fascistization—so too should we understand “antifascist” as something that we must constantly be in the process of *becoming*.

Antifascism as a political philosophy developed in response to the fascism of Europe in the early 20th century. While it has over the years been most strongly associated with communism and anarchism, it may at times of imminent fascist danger appeal to a broader left-wing coalition that can include even liberals. However, our antifascism cannot be a liberal intervention. Riffing on Paul Virilio, Lennard argues that, just as the invention of the shipwreck is baked into the invention of the ship, fascism was made possible by the development of liberalism, which is actually a conservative ideology that “fails to address its own potential accidents and limitations”.⁶⁴ And among liberalism’s most significant limitations is that its “appeals to Truth will not break through to a fascist epistemology of power and domination”.⁶⁵ The peoples of Europe, including the authors of the Charter of Grenoble, witnessed a spectacular display of this limitation first-hand when they saw their so-called liberal democracies acquiesce to the Nazi regime. But considering our new understanding of fascism, this should not be surprising: fascistic desire is perfectly compatible with states deemed liberal or democratic so long as it can be adequately channelled into longstanding forms of oppression, and emancipatory desire sufficiently repressed or reconfigured. We cannot rely on liberal institutions, even universities, to protect us from fascism; caught between fascism and anti-fascism, liberalism is more likely to side with fascism, especially when fascists disingenuously hide behind liberal values like freedom of speech or even, yes,

⁶¹ Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 16–17.

⁶² Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 24.

⁶³ Alexander Reid Ross, *Against the Fascist Creep* (Chico: AK Press, 2017), 14.

⁶⁴ Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 4.

⁶⁵ Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 13.

academic freedom. It is with all this in mind that I argue Lennard's position is the most morally and politically justifiable one, despite—and perhaps even more so because of—how my definition of fascism differs from hers in its implication of the state:

I advocated, and continue to advocate, for a particular response to perceived fascism, one that has enjoyed successes throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I'm talking about the anti-fascism abbreviated as "Antifa"—a militant, no-tolerance approach ... that, while it is not new, has become newly empowered and utterable. As such, I am talking about that messy, instable, ever-oversimplified category: violence. Or, as I see it, counterviolence. ...

Antifa is not a group, nor a movement, nor even an identity. To state one's political position as antifascist after 1945 is close to empty ... But as a practice taken up by the pan-far left (socialist and anarchist alike), Antifa is an illiberal intervention that in resisting fascism does not rely on the state, the justice system or any liberal institution. It finds organization online, in the streets, on campuses—wherever fascism is to be found.⁶⁶

In contrast to the spectre of masked, black-clad boogeymen invoked by its opponents, antifa does not necessarily involve punching fascists in the face, but includes a wide range of activities from research to artistic production to care work. Nevertheless, in principle antifa does extend the right to self-defence, already well-enshrined in law at the individual level, to the collective level, and recognizes that the mere presence of fascism always already represents a threat to the safety and security of targeted persons and communities. This same logic of counterviolence is generally invoked in discussions of the moral and political legitimacy of Allied attacks against the Nazis in World War II. We may deplore violence, but only the most naïve pacifist would suggest it is never necessary, even in defending ourselves and our most marginalized and vulnerable communities from even greater violence at the hands of those who wish us harm. Now, who exactly has the right to determine when counterviolence is appropriate, and who has the right to carry it out, against whom, and under what specific conditions; these are interesting and important questions, but they are beyond the scope of this paper. Here, I simply aim to build on the above point that acting in ways that reinforce or perpetuate oppression constitutes violence, and that violence is always initiated by the oppressor, not by the oppressed. Consequently, the violence enacted by the oppressor and the counterviolence enacted by the oppressed should not be seen as morally equivalent. Put another way, the counterviolence enacted by

⁶⁶ Lennard, *Being Numerous*, 9.

the oppressed and their allies against the oppressor should not be understood as itself oppressive, but rather as anti-oppressive.

More broadly, however, antifa involves defending ourselves and our communities by wresting the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence away from a state that cannot be counted on to protect us from fascist aggression, but that instead enables fascism by promoting the development of fascistic desire over emancipatory desire, and maintaining the fertile field of oppressions into which such desire can be channelled. In the collective self-defense that is antifa, there is no shortage of roles to play aside from punching fascists, but antifa is generally understood as a three-way struggle against both fascists and the state that maintains the oppressive conditions for fascism to thrive. From this perspective, building on my arguments above, I suggest that we as students have a dual obligation (1) to take advantage of our privileged position within the ideological state apparatus to thwart the development of fascistic desire and to encourage instead the development of liberatory desire, and (2) to take advantage of our unique opportunity for mass organizing in order to challenge the repressive state apparatus and its exclusive right to violence, especially when that violence is directed toward the perpetuation of longstanding forms of oppression as well as the repression of liberatory desire.

Fascism is now on the ascent worldwide in a manner that was seemingly unimaginable to the liberal mind only a few short years ago. Fascistic desire is increasingly being expressed by the speakers invited onto our college campuses, by the groups of men marching in the streets, and by the politicians who come to power, even through electoral means. The results of this fascistic desire's convergence upon forms of oppression long maintained by the "liberal democracy" known as the United States are grotesque and abhorrent, exemplified by the mass detention of immigrants—including nearly 70,000 children in 2019⁶⁷—in centers widely characterized by Nazi historians and Holocaust survivors alike as concentration camps. "Never again," they said after the Second World War, and we nodded solemnly. Students in the university of the future, just as those of the past and present, will likely be summoned to fulfill their duty to defend freedom against all oppression and continue to resist the rise of fascism.

⁶⁷ "The U.S. has held a record 69,550 migrant children in government custody in 2019," NBC News, last modified November 12, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/u-s-has-held-record-69-550-migrant-children-government-n1080486>.

Conclusion: Being and Place

In this paper, I have attempted to articulate a vision for student being and becoming by tracing a trajectory from the 1946 Charter of Grenoble to the university of the future. I have suggested that we build on an understanding of students as both being already workers and being workers-in-training, and that a fundamental prerequisite for the work typically associated with studentship is that of combatting the violence of oppression, which we are both uniquely compelled and well-placed to do. I have proposed that fascism be conceived not as a particular ideology or political system, but as the production of authoritarian desire that is directed toward the intensification of state-sanctioned oppression, as well as the repression or redirection of desire that could otherwise potentially be liberatory. Consequently, I have argued that being a student in the university of the future should be conceived as be(com)ing antifascist. These students can do so by using their position within the ideological state apparatus to work against the development of authoritarian desire and its direction toward various forms of oppression, and to work toward the development of liberatory desire, first and foremost in themselves. At the same time, we can expect students to use their relatively advantageous positioning for collective political action to work in opposition to a repressive state apparatus that defends oppression and inhibits the expression of liberatory desire—even if students’ opposition requires them to contest the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and, in certain very specific cases, themselves employ counterviolence.

In addition to temporality—considering the university of the past, present, and future—it is essential that we examine the role of *place* in student being and becoming. We must consider not only where the university is situated in time, but also where it is located in physical space, and on this subject it is especially important that we follow Samudzi’s advice and turn to nonwhite thought. Place is central to the knowledge systems of many of the world’s Indigenous peoples;⁶⁸ some of their languages include no clear distinction between place and time, and others have no single word for either of them.⁶⁹ In any case, continuing for now with the settler-colonial sense of place, “indigenous” might be defined as *of a place*, and often refers to those who are

⁶⁸ Michael Marker, “There Is No Place of Nature; There Is Only the Nature of Place: Animate Landscapes as Methodology for Inquiry in the Coast Salish Territory”, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 31, no. 6 (2018): 453–464.

⁶⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 105.

displaced and replaced by settler-colonialism. This displacement—separating Indigenous peoples, even ontologically, let alone through physical force, from the lands that have sustained them for countless generations—may be understood as a key component of that extreme form of violence known as genocide. Those of us in colonial and post-colonial contexts seeking to theorize about being and becoming in a way that fulfills our mission of opposing oppression, or that goes even further in advancing the antifascist goal of Spivak's "uncoercive rearrangement of desires," will need to do better at centring the Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems of the place in which we find ourselves. A good place to start might be with Patrick Wolfe's assertion that, "[s]o far as Indigenous people are concerned, where they are *is* who they are".⁷⁰

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⁷⁰ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

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