

The
Politics
o
Reality

f

Selected
Writings

Anders J. Aamodt

Two of the Foretellers remained withdrawn, unspeaking... They were insane. Goss called them 'time-dividers,' which may mean schizophrenics. Karhidish psychologists, though lacking mind speech and thus like blind surgeons, were ingenious with drugs, hypnosis, spotshock, cryonic touch, and various mental therapies: I asked if these two psychopaths could not be cured. 'Cured?' Goss said. 'Would you cure a singer of his voice?'

—Ursula LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Preface

Dear virtuous reader,

This little book is my attempt to provide you with a warchest for liberty. These essays were written during and after the PhD program I attended and left early due to conflicts with the administration (I completed a master's instead). I do not compromise on my liberty and I suggest you don't, either. Follow the life that you want to lead, precisely, and refuse all comers who attempt to convince you to lead a different life.

This book outlines the way realities are manufactured and distributed: produced via assembly line, a 'pale grey soylent product', piped through the tubes of television, advertising, the public school systems, and yes, even your own parents and the very system of the 'nuclear family'—that is, the family cut off from its ancestry of grandmothers and great-grandfathers and thus its own personal history and the power of that historical awareness (my grandfather died of asbestosis)—this book outlines this system and some tools and weapons with which to fight back against it.

This so-called "reality", the product of the reality-manufacturing industry (standardized curriculum, textbooks, popular media *including* Netflix, Hollywood, social norms, and we can't mention advertizing too many times, etc.) is then piped into the overfed duck-livers of soul-nutrient-starved children sat in uncomfortable little box-chairs for 4-8 hours a day, factory-farm

style. This paste keeps them fat and helpless until their labour-power can be harvested by the “Establishment” which is really much less established than it would like us to think. This process is called “Education”.

The essays are organized in a sequence intended to be easier to read rather than chronologically. Many of the essays were originally written as posts or comments on [reddit.com/r/sorceryofthespectacle](https://www.reddit.com/r/sorceryofthespectacle) and have been left in their original format to stay true to the original enunciation¹.

This will be the first in a series of warbooks for the critical activist. Let’s go full crypto and beat those archon toads.

For Great Justice!

Anders J. Aamodt

Headmaster, Internet School of Magic
www.iskool.guru

¹ And for the same reason, some corrections have been added as mere footnotes.

Table of Contents

[Preface](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Introduction—The Politics of Reality](#)

[When Worlds Collide: Multiple Reality and Education](#)

[The irrational basis of reality](#)

[The casualties of pluralism](#)

[Anaesthetizing subtle experience](#)

[Delivering a space](#)

[Navigating reality](#)

[The shamanic connection](#)

[Spiritual disconnect](#)

[Paradoxical curriculum](#)

[Technology and the future of reality](#)

[Ranciere's Distribution of the Sensible and the Choice to Live in the Mythos of Our Choosing](#)

[Combatting Lateral Distributed Processing of Topics of Conversation](#)

[So, Is This a Subreddit to Memetically Engineer Society?](#)

[The Ethics of Virulent Curriculum](#)

My Personal Curriculum: Reflections on
Autodidacticism and the Psychogeography of
Curriculum

Taking an inventory of my personal
curriculum

Totem and todo

The ethics of proselytization

Autoliberalism

Introduction—The Politics of Reality

A Brief Email to Myself, written December 12, 2013

A book I need to write. I am interested in the way reality is constricted [typo—constructed] by the brain based upon our beliefs and ontological assumptions(/commitments/choices).

Most people are locked into a single reality. Institutions entrain people into one particular reality and keep them there in order to manage them and extract work from them. Reality distribution systems have been set up such as public education, television, propaganda, religion, and now many parts of the internet to pipe particular single realities to masses of people. People are kept dependent on the source of their reality through ignorance, fear, programmed knee-jerk reactions, threats and violence, and many other mechanisms.

However, some people learn to navigate and translate across multiple realities, and this gives them a much broader perspective and more political understanding and personal power. These skills are not widely taught and where they are taught, the best methods are often unknown, suppressed, or criminalized. There is no popular language that allows discussion of multiple reality, "perspective" does not nearly cover it.

With LSD, mass media, globalization, pluralism, and now the internet, worlds are now beginning to collide and mutually decompose each other, like type A blood mixed with type B. There is

a general awareness that there are many valid perspectives and that one perspective isn't enough, but there is still a general lack of awareness of the extent of the mass systematic single-reality entrainment and the tools to transcend that kind of programming. With the way information technology is going, it seems likely inevitable that these tools will proliferate uncontrollably as more people seek spiritual engagement with life through the internet. Or, corporations may successfully colonize all popular media and keep a stranglehold on the single-reality feeding tubes that are implanted at birth and passed from parent to child.

This is why I want to design software interfaces that will function politically as digital LSD. LSD loosens or even dumps the current programmed reality and makes one vulnerable to being reprogrammed into another reality. This often results in just a reorientation to new new² single reality as "the truth" (like a born-again Christian), but what it is really good for is opening the door to multiple reality in general. Once this meta-perspective is perceived and related skills are developed, the person is no longer vulnerable to single-reality reprogramming (like Echo in Dollhouse³). These are skills of reality navigation and translation, and they are obscure and difficult to master. By making prosthetic digital aids to reality navigation, these skills can be made more

² typo: a new

³ a TV show created by Saint Joss Whedon.

accessible and visible, and easier for both novices and experienced navigators to use and remember⁴.

Unlike LSD, digital LSD cannot be suppressed or criminalized, and by making it easy-to-use and beneficial in concrete financial ways, it could see widespread adoption. This could loosen the hold of single-reality distribution systems, but it is important to consider whether the introduction of this system might simply inoculate neoliberalism⁵ against reality navigators, with it appropriating these techniques for capital and further subtilising ubiquitous forms of violent censorship and (now multiple) reality distribution and policing.

⁴ even a book could be considered a digital interface

⁵ our artificially-intelligent enemy, “the Sibyl System” of the anime Psycho-Pass; the archons of gnostic Christianity

When Worlds Collide: Multiple Reality and Education

An Essay for my PhD Program, written July 21, 2013

Reality, as distinguished from the assumed actual, is not singular. Each of us has our own “personal reality”⁶ that we experience. Like a flashlight shining in a dark room, our personal reality shines upon the space of possible interpretations of the actual. Where it points and what it shines upon determines our experience. But who points this flashlight, and on what do they let its light fall?

Many of us do not know that we are holding this flashlight at all. Someone has taped our flashlight to our forehead or is gently guiding our hand with a grip that never lets go, a grip we never knew was there because it was always there. Unaware of the malleability of our reality, we remain transfixed by whatever reality we were raised into. The beam of the flashlight is fixed and does not move, or it easily moves without our knowledge as we are buffeted by reality-entraining information from authorities.

Our school system is one such reality-dispensing authority. Centrally-controlled and standardized curriculum and educational practices act as a centralized distribution system for the secular, modern reality that is acknowledged by schools. This reality is presented as “the one objective reality” to students, even though such a thing may or may not exist.

⁶ Closely-related terms are microcosm and subjectivity.

We each experience our own reality that is interiorized from the experience of other people. Even if we may agree with others as to what we see or experience, our realities are fully interiorized⁷, that is, the distance between our realities is infinite and incommensurable. I can never experience what you experience, or vice versa. I can only have similar experiences of my own, within my own personal reality.

The irrational basis of reality

In his book *The Corruption of Reality: A Unified Theory of Hypnosis, Religion, and Psychopathology*⁸, John Schumaker lays out a convincing theory of how personal realities are constructed and maintained. For Schumaker, the unfiltered or “primary” reality⁹ of the senses contains many toxic elements that threaten our

⁷ an important topic in existentialism. See, for example, Sartre in *The Transcendence of the Ego*. William James’ *Radical Empiricism* also assumes this type of clean-cut interiorization.

⁸ Heavily referenced in this paper, which relies mainly upon his model of reality and dissociative states.

⁹ I find the assumption of a “primary reality” problematic at at least two levels. For one, there may be no such thing as an external reality (what I am calling actuality), simply a miraculous coincidence between the realities of many experiencing people who do not, in fact, exist. More practically speaking, there is no way to point to which part of the assumed actuality-to-filtered-reality pipeline is the “unmodified” or “primary” part, and which part is the filter. However, with this small assumption of a primary reality, Schumaker is able to create a rich and integrated language that connects the terminology of psychiatry, religion, and anthropology, and directly speaks to psychiatric concerns and assumptions.

mental health. This primary reality is 'too rational' for our human need for mental order. He theorizes that humans have a unique faculty of dissociation that allows us to split our consciousness into multiple streams, each with its own irrational beliefs. These irrational beliefs distort the underlying (unfiltered) "primary" reality of our senses. Dissociation occurs throughout everyday life to various extents, from tapping a pencil hypnotically while bored or daydreaming to dissociating more fully during trauma. Hypnotic suggestions that are taken while dissociated help to rewrite our reality and maintain dissociative states by simultaneously maintaining multiple sets of possibly-conflicting beliefs. Thus, for Schumaker, all non-primary reality is a form of at least mild dissociation or trance, in which parts of the mind are dissociated, and in which irrational beliefs become real for us.

Schumaker defines religion as a "myth-ritual complex," in which a reality is entrained and maintained by an irrational belief system (the mythology) and continually reinforced by enactment of these beliefs (the ritual). Using this language, he is able to show how religions are an imposed cultural reality that function on the same basic principles as hypnosis. But, because he maintains that some irrational flight from primary reality is necessary to maintain psychological health, Schumaker describes religions as psychologically healthy cultural mechanisms. However, religions in our time have largely broken down, becoming replaced by individual psychopathology that is not contained within a

socially-sanctioned set of religious practices and beliefs.

The casualties of pluralism

A problem brought up, but not resolved in the book, is the problem of colliding realities. When people holding dramatically different personal realities interact, incompatible elements of the two realities become toxic to each other. Irrational beliefs, when brought into conflict with alternatives (including the reality of modern science), tend to break down. Since it is the dissociation between two conflicting beliefs that allows them to be held simultaneously, bringing both beliefs to conscious awareness simultaneously associates them and allows them to come into direct conflict with each other. Similarly, when two people with incompatible beliefs become “associated,” the conflicts between their beliefs can come up during communication, and continued exposure of this conflict to consciousness can cause the breakdown or mutual accommodation of the belief systems.

We can see this kind of worlds-colliding phenomenon in the breakdown of religion in America (and in the taboo against discussing religion). As communication technologies, particularly mass media, increase ever-more the exposure of incompatible worldviews to each other, their incompatible elements break down. With the breakdown of particular irrational beliefs, entire realities can come toppling down as well, and the people affected are often left scrambling for a new

set of beliefs to order their realities and their lives¹⁰. Often, the breakdown of reality is mentally violent and unhealthy.

Over time, two cultures whose intercultural barriers have fallen will have to find a new equilibrium—they will come to agree on a common-ground reality for both cultures, becoming for many intents and purposes a monoculture with a single cultural reality. This is not bad in and of itself, but the transition can be dangerous for many people involved. There is also the question of lost cultural heritage, as larger and larger units of people produce a single monoculture, or mono-reality.

Because of immigration, mass communication and the internet, different cultures are more interconnected than ever before. Their cultural realities are exposed to each other at unprecedented levels. With the rise of the global internet, we are seeing at the same time the beginnings of a global monoculture. Offline, this has taken the form of imperialism over several centuries. However, imperialism is no longer needed to advance the homogenization of culture, since soon almost all of the world will be online. Once the Great Firewall of China and North Korea get online, we can expect the barriers between all world cultures to become even more permeable.

¹⁰ Inversely, we see the formation of the 'Spectacle', the mega-mythos of superheroes and fantasy tropes which increasingly acts as a semi-conscious meta-meso-global-mythospheros.

So, what we are seeing across the world is the breakdown of traditional cultures and their corresponding realities. What makes these separate cultural realities unique is their set of irrational reality-ordering beliefs, so when all cultures are exposed to all cultures, all irrational beliefs are threatened. Without the protective buffer of irrational beliefs (shown in Schumaker's and many other's work; e.g., the fact¹¹ that depressives have a more accurate view of themselves and their situation), and without the support of our cultures in sustaining irrational beliefs, we may be increasingly exposed to the "toxic" aspects of an overly-rational reality.

We can see this process in the widespread breakdown of religion, the spread of apathy and existential confusion, and the homogenizing of subcultures into empty, consumption-based groups differentiated from each other only by style (see Hot Topic). What is offered instead of a traditional cultural reality is a modern reality—one defined by the just-as-irrational modern beliefs in consumption, efficiency, and materialism. As cultural realities break down, the modern reality assimilates and commodifies their styles whilst discarding the irrational beliefs that made them unique, beautiful, and psychologically healthy for the people who lived them.

For example, take a selection from this recent article in the New York Times, entitled, "Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt":

¹¹ research finding in formal psychological science

Around the world and in the United States, where the faith was founded, the Mormon Church¹² is grappling with a wave of doubt and disillusionment among members who encountered information on the Internet that sabotaged what they were taught about their faith, according to interviews with dozens of Mormons and those who study the church.

“I felt like I had an earthquake under my feet,” said Mr. Mattsson, now an emeritus area authority¹³. “Everything I’d been taught, everything I’d been proud to preach about and witness about just crumbled under my feet. It was such a terrible psychological and nearly physical disturbance.”

Recently, the Mormon religion has been represented as patently ridiculous, particularly in the Broadway musical, “The Book of Mormon,” but that doesn’t mean that it isn’t very real and important to the lives and mental health of those who believe it. New Atheists and other rationalist movements have been attacking religion, but **is it ethical to dismantle a worldview without being able to provide a psychologically healthy alternative?** Having grown up in a singular reality, most people who leave their religion will not be well prepared to explore and negotiate the multiple realities that can now become real for them, making it more likely that their religion will simply be replaced by another dogmatic reality (religion), or that the traumatic loss of religion will be followed by years

¹² <https://www.lds.org/>

¹³ what does this vague phrase even mean

of existential free-fall and epistemic struggle. The same goes for any emergence from a singular to multiple view of reality.

What are we to do about this problem? How can we keep the mutual exposure of a multitude of cultural realities from causing mutual cultural annihilation? Judging by corporate power (and the number of McDonalds worldwide) it may already be too late.

Even if we assume that no entity is behind this breakdown of cultural reality, it is still a form of tyranny. Partial escape from reality is something that all people in all cultures have practiced, for mental health, sanctification, and the pursuit of personal transcendence. To be robbed of this ability by an overgrowth of hyperrational modern reality would be the greatest ethnocide in Earth's history. The result of this process will be a global monoculture that has little to offer in the way of spirituality.

In *The Corruption of Reality*, Schumaker makes a convincing case that *all* psychopathology is the result of individual attempts to cope via reality self-modification. Usually, cultural realities provide enough irrational coping mechanisms that people can maintain psychological health without venturing outside of the cultural reality. For example, symptoms that would be considered schizophrenic by modern psychiatry would fit in, unproblematically, to a lively Christian church community. However, psychopathology as we know it only develops when the cultural reality becomes inadequate as a source of irrational buffers against

toxic elements of “primary” reality. Therefore, the emergence of a global modern monoculture will bring with it a rise in diagnosed mental illness, even (and perhaps especially) in cultures that before had little or none. The psychiatric system will continue to medicalize people whose realities deviate significantly from the modern “rational” norm, acting as a policing system for the global monoculture.

There is a paradox here in the claim that modernity is an irrational reality, theoretically the same as an experienced religious or psychopathological reality, and that it is overexposing people to “purely rational,” “primary” reality. However, this is possible because modernity is the dominant reality of our culture, and its irrationality is that only scientific rationalism is admissible. Other competing religious or personal realities are pitted against each other or against science (a categorical error), but only science is allowed to win—even in realms of personal experience which are orthogonal to scientific, material, or statistical investigation. Thus, our irrationality is that we are only supposed to experience the rational, even when we don’t¹⁴.

How can we change this picture to allow for cultural diversity, both at the group and individual level? What intrapersonal and communication skills are needed so that different realities can exist side-by-side or be properly insulated from each other to prevent mutual breakdown? What communication technologies and patterns of social

¹⁴ R. D. Laing’s *The Politics of the Family* resonates strongly with this division of public and private life.

networking are needed to allow for the mutual coexistence of diverse worldviews?

The days in which we can live our personal version of our cultural reality in isolation and ignorance of other cultural realities are over. This is the postmodern age we live in. However, we still need ways of speaking across differences in reality, while largely maintaining those differences. How is this possible?

What we need is a new kind of postmodern subject to go with our postmodern world. The modern worldview is still that—one single worldview. In a postmodern world, we need people with the ability to step from one reality to another without losing their personal coherence or integrity. For this to happen, we must be allowed to pretend our way into and out of cultures and subcultures with acceptance, not policing or retaliation.

Anaesthetizing subtle experience

One main feature of modernity is its focus on the external world, and its ignorance of the inner world. This can be put in many ways. With the Reformation of the Catholic Church, imagination was suppressed due to concerns of idolatry¹⁵. Scientific positivism survived this environment, culminating in behaviorism, which completely ignores the phenomenal world. God is dead, the spiritual world has been dismissed as purely psychological (and thus reducible to the physical), and our subtle irrational feelings are, at best,

¹⁵ *Eros & Magic in the Renaissance*, by Ioan P. Culianu

dysfunctional projections that attach themselves to physical objects.

What has gone by many names—the invisible world, the spirit world, heaven or hell, “planes” or “vibrations”—are simply subtle feelings. Sensing “the invisible world” may involve feelings, sensations (often with a degree of synesthesia), intuitions, and imaginings, all of which may be localized in space or nonlocal. It may involve mind-wandering or very mindful observation of experience. Most importantly, it can be both the most subtle kind of experience, and one of the most intense. This last point is supported by Kant’s discussion of the beautiful and the sublime, which he classes as some of the “finer feelings”¹⁶. Experiencing the finer feelings brings art to life, and so when I hear someone say that they don’t “get art” or poetry, I feel very sad that they are ignorant or desensitized to their own inner experience—and frankly sickened that they were allowed to arrive at that point.

In the *Politics of Experience*, R. D. Laing argues that the splitting of behavior and experience, the outer and inner worlds, respectively, is the starting point for the systematic invalidation of personal experience. He points out (in 1967) that many people in our culture even doubt the existence of the inner world entirely:

As a whole, we are a generation of men so estranged from the inner world that many are arguing that it does not exist; and that even if

¹⁶ *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime*, by Immanuel Kant

it does exist, it does not matter. Even if it has some significance, it is not the hard stuff of science, and if it is not, then let's make it hard. Let it be measured and counted. Quantify the heart's agony and the ecstasy in a world in which, when the inner world is first discovered, we are liable to find ourselves bereft and derelict. For without the inner the outer loses its meaning, and without the outer the inner loses its substance.

In a world where not only subtle feelings, but the entire inner world is in doubt, what leverage point is there to reconstitute spiritual experience from its desiccated husk? If, as Laing argues, experience is invalidated by violent acts in order to achieve socialization and normalization, what aegis can we offer (beyond a good children's book) to resurrect and guard the philosophically zombified?

I think the smallest seed we can plant is an acknowledgement of subtle inner feelings, and a basic familiarity with their mechanics and psychodynamics. This knowledge was endemic to religion in the past, and was developed and maintained—often in highly advanced forms that surpass our modern psychiatry¹⁷—by the shamanic class of religious practitioners in the past. However, with the secularization of the world, these sources of knowledge have dried up or become marginalized. Religious realities, in which subtle feelings are usually acknowledged, cultivated, and ordered in a psychologically healthy way, have

¹⁷ Corruption of Reality

become mostly secularized and ineffectual¹⁸—that is, they are dead because nobody really believes in them—and shamans, the skilled practitioners of religion who understand and manipulate subtle feelings for healing, are rare in organized religion and rarer outside of it. (All artists are self-made shamans of their own personal religion.)

The solution to this predicament is to secularize shamanic understanding of subtle feelings and to package it for easy consumption. And to do a better job of it than most New Age materials. By developing secular language for the inner dynamics that make up what once were primarily religious or healing experiences, we can import this understanding into a form palatable to the modern mind. By necessity, this language must come full-circle from brain-based psychological jargon, through to the phenomenological realm of personal experience—even if the link between these two realms is (by logical necessity) a convenient fiction used to make the myth of this new reality a believable one. (See the way New Agers leverage the scientific clout of a mythologized quantum mechanics in order to promote age-old metaphysical beliefs.) In the case of a constricting rationalism that admits no irrationality, even when the irrational is real, the only way out is through.

Delivering a space

What I am suggesting, then, is the invention of a pragmatic “applied metaphysics,” a term currently being used to head a joke template website at Stanford. Because of the irrational

¹⁸ Corruption of Reality

nature of this intervention, any number of other nonsensical and paradoxical names might be applied to this endeavor¹⁹. Jacques Ranciere, when asked “Would it be right to suggest that your work is not so much inter-disciplinary as a-disciplinary?,” replied:

Neither. It is ‘indisciplinary’. It is not only a matter of going besides the disciplines but of breaking them. My problem has always been to escape the division between disciplines, because what interests me is the question of the distribution of territories, which is always a way of deciding who is qualified to speak about what. The apportionment of disciplines refers to the more fundamental apportionment that separates those regarded as qualified to think from those regarded as unqualified; those who do the science and those who are regarded as its objects.²⁰

Thus, the invention of language like this is a *political* (as opposed to *policing*, Ranciere’s usage) intervention intended to effect a redistribution of the sensible. Ranciere describes “the distribution of the sensible” as follows:

The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed... it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc. There is thus an ‘aesthetics’ at

¹⁹ See also mathesis.

²⁰ Jacques Ranciere and the redistribution of the sensible.

the core of politics that has nothing to do with Benjamin's discussion of the 'aestheticization of politics' specific to the 'age of the masses'... It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.

In other words, the current distribution of the sensible is such that much of our experience is not admissible in public. In *The Politics of Experience*, Laing describes one mechanism by which this policing functions, what he calls a "nexus." A nexus is "a group whose unification is achieved through the reciprocal interiorization by each of each other, in which neither a 'common object' nor organization or institution structures, etc. have a primary function as a kind of group 'cement.'" A nexus "exists only insofar as each person incarnates the nexus." Therefore, if someone were to say, "You should not say that, because of what *they* will think," that person would be enacting the nexus of whichever *they* is referenced, and performing a policing function in Ranciere's distribution of the sensible.

Therefore, the invention of secular applied metaphysical language serves as a trojan horse that attacks the nexus which suppresses subtle experience. More specifically, in computing terms, it

is a *code injection* attack, which Wikipedia defines as follows:

Code injection is the exploitation of a computer bug²¹ that is caused by processing invalid data. Code injection can be used by an attacker to introduce (or "inject") code²² into a computer program²³ to change the course of execution²⁴. The results of a code injection attack can be disastrous.

In other words, by creating paradoxical language that does not read as such, we create an entry point for nonsense. This is necessary when rationality has become hyperrationally irrational, and when our personal experience is invalidated by rule-based control mechanisms (the nexus). The “double bind” theory of schizophrenia suggests a similar etiology for the paradoxes which overflow from that reality-fleeing/reality-defending condition. By inventing aesthetic language supported by a mythology of brain-based psychology, a paradoxical injection point is created in the anaesthetic policing nexus. This allows for the “execution of arbitrary code” (a common phrase in computer security), i.e., it allows for the free expression of inner experiences, which often take the form of nonsense. This injection point functions both at the level of curriculum and at the level of interpersonal communication of experience.

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_bug

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Source_code

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_program

²⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execution_\(computing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Execution_(computing))

Navigating reality

Engaging with subtle feelings can cause one to enter into a dialogic relationship with reality. This means that subtle experiences can be an active process of navigating between possible experienced realities. To enter into a reality-navigating experience is to unground and unhinge the hardened reality in which we are living, to soften it for negotiation, revision, and critical examination.

Ranciere describes this in his definition of aesthetics, from his discussion of the breakdown of mimesis in *The Emancipated Spectator*:

What was broken was the continuity between thought and its signs on bodies, and also between the performance of living bodies and and its effects on other bodies. ‘Aesthetics’ above all means that very collapse; in the first instance, it means the rupture of the harmony that enabled correspondence between the texture of the work and its efficacy.²⁵

Further:

‘Aesthetic efficacy’ means a paradoxical kind of efficacy that is produced by the very rupturing of any determinate link between cause and effect.²⁶

Entering into this kind of experience can cause an aspect of reality to look and mean something different than it did before the

²⁵ Jacques' Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 62

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 63

experience. Sometimes these differences can be very radical, and can extend out from the experienced object into other aspects of our reality. The breakdown of the predictability of the relationship between an object and its evoked response creates a space in which we may develop and exercise liberty. In this way, the skills of engaging with subtle feelings are the skills of reality observation, selection, and communication across difference.

This is why a curriculum that engages students with subtle feelings has the potential to effect a redistribution of the sensible. The current distribution of the sensible in schools is such that students are not considered to be authorities or even owners of their own realities. The “correction” of behavior and perceived realities is still the dominant paradigm of our school system. By introducing practices that encourage subtle experience and communication, we create a space in which students are able to become sensitized and responsible to their own realities, instead of being yoked to the reality of the teacher and the curriculum by feedback loops of reality-molding discipline.

The shamanic connection

This link between subtle feelings and multiple reality is what we have to learn from shamanic traditions and shamanic classes of religious practitioners. This excerpt from a summary of Dewey’s “Art as Experience” further helps to make this connection:

Rather than giving art primacy in aesthetic, Dewey believes that humans only feel properly alive when absorbing the aesthetic features of nature. Aesthetic experience of the natural environment can even take the form of ecstatic communion. This is due to ancient habits gained in the relations between the living being and its environment. Sensuous experience can absorb into itself meanings and values that are designated “ideal” or “spiritual.” Dewey observes that belief that nature is full of spirits is closely tied to poetry. The sensuous surfaces of things incorporate not only what is given by the senses but the most profound insight. Many of the arts originate in primitive rituals which were not simply intended as means to get rain, etc., but for the enhancement of experience. Similarly myth was not just an early form of science.²⁷

Shamans specialize in the navigation of reality²⁸. The skills associated with shamanic healing and activity are trance, ritual, mastery of altered states of consciousness, and an understanding of the invisible world (of subtle feelings and other experiences). The classic shamanic journey is a leaving of the mundane world for some other realm, to return later with some new boon for one’s culture. Wikipedia puts it this way:

²⁷ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey-aesthetics/>

²⁸ Actually, this is what sorcerers specialize in. Shamans specialize in healing their culture.

The shaman also enters supernatural realms²⁹ or dimensions³⁰ to obtain solutions to problems afflicting the community. Shamans may visit other worlds/dimensions to bring guidance to misguided souls and to ameliorate illnesses of the human soul caused by foreign elements. The shaman operates primarily within the spiritual world, which in turn affects the human world. The restoration of balance results in the elimination of the ailment.

These alternative inner realities are sensed and navigated by subtle feelings—what has been called “spiritual” I am calling merely invisible or subtle (to demystify it). Therefore, the active denial of the invisible spiritual world, the world of subtle experience, is what empowers schools to systematically assert the dominant modern reality upon their students. Our secular culture bans public religious education, but, as Schumaker defines religion, as a myth-ritual complex that establishes and maintains a particular cultural reality, this is exactly what schools do. Identifying religion based upon its flavorful trappings instead of its reality-entraining effects is like mistaking a duck for a peacock because both have green feathers³¹: if it looks like a duck, and acts like a duck, and quacks like a duck (or religion), it is probably a religion. Rather than promoting a single (and mostly

²⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otherworld>

³⁰ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plane_\(esotericism\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plane_(esotericism))

³¹ Update: A better analogy here might read, “is like refusing to recognize a duck because it does not have the characteristic green feathers of a male mallard.”

featherless) reality, our public schools ought to promote the skills of reality navigation.

Spiritual disconnect

There is a huge disconnect between contemporary spiritual communities and public education. There is ignorance on both sides. For example, I go to a pagan club called Green Spiral. Everyone in that club has their own religion, cobbled together from various world religions, ancient and modern gods, goddesses, and spirits. It is fascinating to hear them intricately discuss their worldviews and unique spiritual experiences across their absolute gaps in belief systems.

One week, an expert in magical stones came to the club, bringing with him a beautiful and priceless collection of hundreds of semiprecious gemstones. He was very well-organized, and had printed spreadsheets that listed the magical properties of every stone in his collection. He was also partially blind, but he could somehow identify the stones he held by feeling their “vibration.” However, when I asked him about the aesthetics of his experience, he looked at me blankly. He did not consider the subtle feelings that allowed him to identify each stone to be of this world.

Even more dramatic were the experiences of some of the other club members at this meeting. Pagans tend to be very sensitive to subtle feelings, something that likely both draws them to and is developed by practices common in paganism. Faced with so many intense and radically different stones to feel, three students during the meeting became overwhelmed and had to undergo a brief “grounding

ritual” by one of the more experienced adults at the meeting. Additionally, some of the students reacted very strongly to some of the stones—for example, by saying, “It bit me!” Some might write off these displays as culturally-reinforced fantasies, but I saw them as highly sensitized subtle experiences. However, I do not think any of the other club members would have considered their experiences as mundane experiences, nor would they have identified being overwhelmed by the feelings of the stones as Stendhal syndrome (a connection I made immediately, seeing as how the state of overexcitation was caused by the sheer number of beautiful stones on the three large tables).

That meeting created a rarified environment in which a group of people was able to explore and communicate about their personal subtle experiences, and it was perhaps the most lively and enlightening meeting of the year. Although the language and practices of spiritual communities such as this one are often highly refined, neither they nor secular educators tend to see the vast overlap in feelings and spirituality.

This overlap is especially prominent in the contemporary spiritual communities we see in the New Age movement, where language and practice have developed to allow communication across extreme diversity in belief system. It is also especially prominent in shamanism.

Both New Age spiritualities and shamanic traditions have pedagogies of feeling that we can learn from. For example, opening a shamanism book on my shelf at random reveals this passage:

It is important that you begin to pay attention with bare awareness to all of the things, significant and seemingly minor, that happen in your day. As you take notice, ask yourself what significance an occurrence has for you, and then pay attention to the answer that resonates from your felt sense and your internal wisdom.³²

The focus in shamanic and other spiritual traditions on personal significance and feelings is a positive characteristic largely lacking from most of our public schooling, which focuses on “objective” significance and thinking.

Referencing the book’s section on “bare awareness” yields the following:

You can achieve this relaxation [for bare awareness] through the following five-step process, which cultivates a state of mindful bare awareness: (1) *setting your intention*, your desire to become calm and quiet, (2) *focusing*, mindfully directing your attention and placing your thoughts on relaxing, (3) *releasing*, stopping mind chatter and everyday, worldly thoughts, (4) *allowing*, permitting yourself to be fully present in the experience and to be receptive to all of the feelings, sensations, and insights that come to you during this time, and (5) *accepting*, performing all steps without judgment or analytical censoring.

³² Seeing in the Dark.

In this state of mindful, bare awareness you can access one of the most potent faculties you have for perceiving energy and Spirit: your *felt sense*. Your felt sense is the combination of all of the feelings, sensations, and realizations that you experience at any given time from your multiple senses . . . Used in addition to paying attention to your thoughts and motivations, this powerful felt sense will help you become aware of your internal world. You will also use it to perceive the energies and spirits in the external world.

This illustrates the feeling-based focus of modern shamanism, and the disconnect in language between secular and spiritual language. Furthermore, the fact that this passage is included at all illustrates the assumption of ignorance the author holds regarding her reader's basic sensibility to and literacy in feeling (the audience of the book is indicated by a quote on the back cover, "A wonderful gateway to shamanic practice"). This book is a particularly clear, detailed, and plain-language guide to subtle experiences—most spiritual writing talks about the same basic experiences, but with much more obtuse jargon.

This serves to demonstrate the difference between religion and spirituality in education. Religion, the myth-ritual complex that maintains a particular reality, is a policing mechanism in Ranciere's distribution of the sensible, and we can see the basic mechanisms of religion at work³³ in

³³ In his chapter, "The Mechanics of Dissociation and Suggestion," Schumaker says, "The method of induction for these contentless types of

the way our school system indoctrinates students with a modern worldview. Contemporary spirituality, in contrast, is often non-dogmatic and more often concerned with the personal experience of the individual practitioner, and can thereby function as a political mechanism, serving to challenge the current distribution of the sensible. So, ironically, in order to truly get religion out of schools, we must introduce a secular “spirituality” in the guise of a feeling curriculum.

Paradoxical curriculum

The absurdity of trying to teach children to become more sensitive to subtle feelings and experiences of altered reality becomes immediately apparent: no one is better at animism or pretending than children! As discussed earlier, what is needed is a way to inject new feeling-based language into schools. Additionally, there is a need to completely reverse the almost total removal of feelings from schooling, and the intense practices of socialization and indoctrination that make up much of school (but what would be left?). However, much has been written along this line of thinking already, and it is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, what are the specific skills that we might help students to

dissociative trance states is also very simple. When I used to lecture on statistics, my students displayed the entire range of these techniques. In hopes of dissociating, some students clicked their pens at evenly spaced intervals or tapped them lightly on their desktops. Others preferred to grasp a clump of their hair and to stroke it repeatedly. A few moustaches proved very handy in this way. Repetitious bouncing of the feet or tapping of the toes was also popular. One student liked to take off his wristwatch and put it to an ear, relying on the regular clicking to help him on his way. In all cases, there was a predictable slowing of the blink rate and a characteristic glossing over of expressions.”

develop that go beyond childhood imagination—skills of reality navigation that prepare them for a postmodern pluralist society—and how might they be taught? I will outline a few examples of how religious or shamanic understanding might be imported to secular language, and how that might look in a classroom setting.

One important skill of reality navigation is mythic sensibility. Most or all fictional narratives can be seen as containing a mythic component. This is the myth- part of the reality-structuring myth-ritual complex that is religion. Whether we are aware of it or not, consuming the mythic content in stories can alter our realities. Becoming aware of how we might interpret stories as myths that apply to our own lives can help us to become critical consumers of narrative media. Likewise, lacking this skill can lead to uncritical absorption of the mythic content in stories, as well as losing a great deal of potential learning every time stories are experienced.

For example, I was watching the TV series “Once Upon a Time” with two friends. The premise of the show is that the evil Queen from Snow White has laid a terrible curse upon all of the storybook characters in her fantasy kingdom. The curse is that they are banished to our modern world and forget their storybook identities, thereby becoming trapped in an unmagical, mundane town where the Queen rules as mayor and Rumpelstiltskin uses contract law to extort citizens. The main characters of the series must help the people in the town to

discover and remember their storybook identities so that they can break the curse.

As I have described it, the mythic content of this story should be obvious, and it is also relevant to the theme of this essay. As I watched the show, I enjoyed decoding this myth, seeing parallels between the Queen and our rulers, Rumpelstiltskin and our money system, and the plight of the townspeople and the plight of our world. These themes were so blatant in the show, and the mythic content so intricately planned-out, that I cannot believe they were unintentional. However, several episodes into the show I asked my friends (who are both staunch atheists) what they thought of these parallels and was met with confused looks. My friends had been consuming this story as a purely fanciful tale with no bearing upon reality—and ironically, the mythic content they were missing was about their ignorance of the mythic! I was flabbergasted.

Teaching this skill is a simple matter of acknowledging the mythic content of stories and exploring ways of interpreting and communicating about this content. In the classroom, it might take the form of examining popular media and pulling out the worldviews, dialectics, and assumptions in them for discussion. Most importantly, however, mythic sensibility involves becoming aware of how one chooses and enjoys stories based upon how they apply to one's own life. Therefore, teaching this skill must use media that students themselves have chosen to enjoy, and it must help them to see why they enjoy it and how it affects them in terms of its mythic content.

Another important skill of reality navigation, one more explicitly taken from a shamanic context, is that of dissociation or trance. In the *Corruption of Reality*, Schumaker uses dissociation as the lynchpin of his theory, connecting religion, hypnosis, and psychopathology. In a dissociated state, suggestions can break down and reconstruct reality—this state is also discussed earlier as an aesthetic space in which stimulus and response can be arbitrarily connected. The problem is that we are in dissociated states far too often in our culture, and because of our ignorance of the difference between dissociated and less-dissociated states, we are not aware of this fact or of the times when we are dissociated and thus vulnerable to suggestion. Moreover, experiencing a non-primary reality always involves some dissociation, so it would be accurate to say that we are always in a trance state: the “normal trance.”

Dissociated states are entered via monotony, absorption, and fascination. Driving, watching TV, listening to music (especially music that emulates the features popular in religious music), and being bored are all strong inducers of dissociated states. Many ways of web-browsing, such as repetitively checking a homepage like Facebook or Reddit, are also strong ways to induce a trance-like state. Dissociated states are also commonly described in mental illness; Schumaker spends time discussing how many sufferers of anorexia and bulimia explicitly describe their episodes as trance-like.

Given the ubiquity of these states and their connection with the entrainment of realities, it is

important to teach students how to at least recognize dissociation when it occurs, the risks of dissociation, and how to return from dissociation. If we are really to teach students how to navigate their reality, we would also need to teach them how to enter a trance state and how to derive benefits from it purposefully.

I cannot think of any way to teach these skills that does not rely on explicitly acknowledging, discussing, and practicing them, and this serves as a good example of the limitations of our secular language. “Dissociation” is a dry and technical term that does not work nearly as well as “trance” (a term I hesitate to use, even in this paper). Spiritual texts and fiction, in turn, have an unlimited variety of metaphors that are used to intricately discuss this state and its properties (for example, the Campbellian “hero’s journey” into another world can be read, in many instances, as a discussion of dissociated states). However, since modernity tends to suppress the non-physical, and we have no good secular language for discussing these states, it is difficult to imagine the teaching of these skills in schools without the creation of new language with some very interesting properties, discussed earlier as the need to be grounded in brain science while exhibiting paradoxes that allow for the entry of nonsense and personal experience to discourse.

So, teaching about dissociated states is, I think, a new curriculum that ought to be considered for inclusion in schools for the same reasons health curriculum is included, as well as for teaching the critical awareness of reality that is advocated in this paper. Others have advocated for including

psychological health curriculum in schools, but an academic knowledge of some psychology would not be nearly as beneficial to the psychological health of students as would a working knowledge of dissociative states. Failing a curriculum that could provide working knowledge of dissociative states, which would probably require some sort of explicit practice, an academic knowledge of dissociative states would still be very beneficial.

These are just two examples of very basic skills of feeling subtly that many people in our culture are lacking. More advanced skills of reality navigation might include skills of imagination, narrative, critique, empathy, attention, poetry, dance, ritual, mindfulness, or integrity, to name a few.

Technology and the future of reality

The internet and, particularly, social networking technology, are having a tremendous impact on the way people construct their realities. Instead of receiving their news and information from centralized sources, people are increasingly receiving their information through their personal social networks. This creates a situation in which each person is the center of their own information world, a world they can customize by joining communities and amplifying or attenuating the voices of particular sources. This provides a powerful new paradigm for reality construction, one that goes beyond the postmodern miasma of unfastened relativism.

In stark contrast to their online lives, children in school are assigned to a particular

community based on locality, age, and class-based criteria and are fed information from a centralized source. These materials for reality construction will seem increasingly irrelevant to students as the web becomes more powerful and more able to connect us to who and what we want to hear. The materials provided by the web will become increasingly seductive and effective at helping students to construct a personal reality of their choosing. This is a development heralded by Facebook and Twitter news feeds and Google “search bubbles.” However, I do not see these developments as a problem³⁴, but as the solution to the existing problem of extreme cultural relativism discussed earlier, in which overexposure to multiple competing realities destroys the ability to construct a coherent personal reality.

It is easy for us to forget about realities that we are not exposed to, and we rely on this ability in order to maintain a coherent personal reality. This is why the decline of TV in favor of Netflix-like viewing is such a positive development. Instead of the modern information overload of 24-hour channels meant to grab the eye for even more hypnotic commercials, many people are moving towards TV as a pull medium in which content is chosen based on its resonance with the personal reality. This allows for a gradual exploration of

³⁴ Except insofar as mechanisms like “search bubbles” are used to organize communities from a top-down perspective, opaque to its participants. Facebook’s new “graph search” is a problematic gambit, because you can search “the graph” but you cannot see it or navigate it. In all likelihood, Facebook will be caught using “the graph” to orchestrate top-down social network engineering for profit—if this description would not already apply to many of the practices Facebook and Google engage in.

alternate realities through the consumption of mythic TV series content. In this paradigm of pull-TV, people can be seen as active navigators of their personal reality, whereas in push-TV the station drives the reality of the masses much more heavily. This same paradigm shift can be seen outside of TV, as people surround themselves with reality materials that are not destructive to their current world.

It is only from the comfort and safety of a stable world that we can begin to flexibly learn and take on the perspectives of others. When exposed to a violent and spastic media culture, our personal reality breaks down, and with it goes our ability to manage and negotiate perspective.

This is where a feeling curriculum has the opportunity to have a positive impact on this postmodern trajectory. By creating language and spaces that encourage students to experience, articulate, and explore their own subtle feelings and other subtle experiences, we empower them to become sensitive to their own experience and responsible to their own reality. The ability to see all of our personal aspects and to travel between the different realities we inhabit throughout our day does not come without extensive self-exploration, and this is blocked by desensitizing curriculum, modernist indoctrination, and forced overexposure to conflicting realities. The social networking power of the internet will likely eclipse the reality-constructing mechanisms of school and popular media in the near future—for many people, it already has—and by acknowledging the subtle dimensions of our experience, school can prepare us

better to be critical participants in our
(post-?)postmodern kaleidoscopic society.

Ranciere's Distribution of the Sensible and the Choice to Live in the Mythos of Our Choosing

Reddit Post Written April 2, 2015 at

www.reddit.com/r/sorceryofthespectacle/comments/2uspq1/

Ranciere has a term "the distribution of the sensible" which means the distribution of what can be seen, heard, and spoken about. A redistribution of the sensible means that new things become visible, or the landscape of visibility and policing changes so that it becomes more or less possible to perceive or speak certain things. Ranciere defines "police" activity as that which maintains the current distribution of the sensible, and "political" activity (with a clever use of the root pol-) as that which attempts to redistribute the sensible. There is a very pro-change, pro-democratic, and pro-political way of setting up the situation.

This image prompted this post. It depicts the Space Bankers watching us and extracting ever-greater percentages of labor from us. They come from outside of space and time and colonize us from that meaningless void.

This is exactly what we are talking about here: How do I get to live in a world of my choosing? This narrative of being cosmically taken-advantage of by absolute forces outside our control that are hostile and mechanical is itself a toxic mythos that is one of the greatest tools these forces use to imprison us. Believing we live in such a world

makes it so, in the most important sense which is our experience. Liberation (as opposed to freedom, which could certainly be critiqued if there are space aliens brainwashing and stealing from us) is achieved not by making the actual conditions better or perfect, but by not being trapped into accepting the dominant worldview of ourselves in our conditions which is already held by us but is in fact largely foisted upon us by the outside. These forces which manufacture, distribute, and pipe out worldviews form a reality distribution system or reality economy. The practice of acting to modify this system is Ranciere's politics or the politics of reality.

But, because the reality distribution system looks different depending upon your worldview (which constructs your reality), finding solid data about what's really going on is tricky. At base, this is because it seems there are few actual limits on the types of modifications which can be made to one's reality, and there is also interaction between the two layers of personal reality (subjectivity/microcosm) and objective reality (objective/macrocsm). Piloting this spaceship of personal subjectivity/worldview/reality is the merkavah (shared roots of "chariot" with curriculum) or light-body, especially since piloting said craft gets really meta and alters the terrain because it plugs into the terrain via cryptic analogic pathways.

This is the connection between mythos and reality: we live in our mythos; it surrounds our reality. Our current mythos is the soup or background-radiation in which our little sphere of

light, our microcosm, lives. The current phase-texture-color of our mythos is the same as our current location within a much larger higher-dimensional navigational space or karma-space (the physics of microcathexes). Of course the external world has a certain level of reality and actuality to it, but in liberation we are not concerned with the actuality, we are concerned with the experience of feeling unfree. Once we can free our minds and our perceptions from the yoke of an imposed looking-glass—our heads held in position and our eyelids propped open like Plato's cave or Clockwork Orange—once we can look around by shifting our assemblage point (Castaneda), then our reality really becomes a tool and an organ of perception rather than a feeding tube. If we can cast different shades of light upon the terrain, and different shades of light seem to change the terrain, then we really need to be able to cast those shades of visible or infrared or ultraviolet or gamma light to be able to get a clear image of what's outside us. And we need to be able to turn off the monotone spotlight which has been pointed in our eyes for our entire life.

This is where it gets political. It really is so that most of the worldviews with which we have been programmed were put in place because of someone else's profit motive. No amount of finagling will make this unreal, unless you dive into Christian mysticism or reincarnation/karma logics. People do suffer enormously because of the mass public brainwashing which is ongoing. These are facts which are not made less visible by "being able to look around" by trying many different worldviews and experiencing many different

personal realities, but visible for the first time and clearly so. The scale of the hyperobject is so large that it is only by collecting many data, by collating many images and myths and data-points, that the historic narrative can even be grasped. (This is why I added all those movies to the sidebar—they image the spectacle).

Anyone who tries to alter their worldview is in risk of being popped out of the Matrix into the whirling chasm which surrounds the rings of police-light, and anyone who survives and develops a broader view will quickly become a warrior against that policing (their own and probably others'), so these boundaries are fiercely policed. The worst thing that could happen to you for the reality-police is for you to become a democratic political citizen.

This is the definition of sorcery and of Freud's totem and taboo: sorcery is transgression against reality—breaking the taboo by crossing the line that borders normal reality, and walking into the mists. The totem is the phallic object at the center of the ring of light which projects the space around it; it is the prime symbol or master sign, the root signifier (Derrida?) or name-of-the-father (Lacan). Disrupting this totem by knocking it over, smashing the idol (Nietzsche), or simply crossing out over the bounding line makes that reality depolarize or dis-integrate or unbend into a space no longer centered upon that totem like a gravity-well. There are many totems, many gods which must be slain or negotiated.

In terms of western occultism, the forces which emit the spatiality of the magic circle or ring of light are Jovian in nature, whereas the forces which bound and protect those boundaries are Martian. In other words the force lighting up the space and creating the space itself (including the definition of the boundaries from the inside) are what people mean by Jupiter and the force which is pushing in on the magic circle to give it definition and to protect its boundaries is Mars. Mars is also the energy of crossing boundaries, aggressing to invade and infiltrate a magic circle to reduce its borders, or transgressing across a boundary to leave the magic circle.

This is what rituals are: calculated modifications to the merkavah, to our personal (and perhaps actual/external, through brain-universe analogic looping aka Plutonic looping) reality. Emotional forces are invoked because these are what set the grooves of our perceptions. Catharsis releases grooves (learning patterns in the brain coded by modern science as binary synapse connection logic) and cathexes sets or binds them. Knowing the types of cathexes one has and the types of cathexes that are possible to have is essential to being able to perform calculated rituals on oneself. Being able to see others' cathexes clearly and know how to alter them is one of the most important skills in being able to help others. This science is imprecise in modern psychiatry (because of manipulation by the drug industry—and creation by Freud, who sold out to husbands raping and impregnating their wives until they needed pressaries)—really the industry is a complex based

upon the loss and inability to recollect basic cultural knowledge which was more accessible in the past, a collective historical amnesia—maintained of course by transpersonal corporations for reasons of profit and shepherd-keeping convenience. The tools used in psychiatry are digging in precisely the opposite direction to the underlying cathexes or loss, which is the clinging nature of all complexes of fleeing-loss. The more pressure they dig, the more they take apart the human into the neuron and subneuron encodings, and then use these to program drugs which program people to directly feel a certain way desired by the reality-police, the more monstrous the whole enterprise becomes and the further from humanistic science or any ability to help people awaken into a flexible-multiple worldview they become.

Neoshamanism, meanwhile, suffers from imprecision in technique and language (due to constant attack, marginalization, bad teachers or teachers without access to powerful techniques, and racketeering), a loss of traditional knowledge, and language that suffers from vagueness and dogmatic-ideological-stylistic baggage which causes divisiveness amongst its users and the religious or non-religious outsiders. These problems come from both the boom of population growth and global intercultural mingling (which can erase culture through mutual annihilation) and constant, active attacks by the reality-police and reality-distributors to defame, marginalize, humiliate, and schism these movements by mocking their language and further perverting their language and culture through calculated cultural invasions produced as

propagandic imagery on TV and in the Academy. Unfortunately, the new age is also doing most of that work itself.

This is why I think any kind of actual, lasting political improvement will only come about through a radically intense form of extreme political education. The gap between the knows and the know-nothings is huge, let's not pretend otherwise though no one's to blame. And that gap is made up primarily not of missing knowledge but rather of ego-cathexes which are implanted to block thought and aggressively maintain ignorance for the profit of slave-holders. A little torture goes a long way—it's the most cost-effective way to keep people ignorant and weak, scared and malleable. This is why children are still considered property and abused in countless unrecognized emotional ways (having to get permission to go to the bathroom, being forced to consume food against their will, being yelled at or called names by authorities, being guilted or pressured by authorities/caretakers, being made to sit still in hard chairs in rows for six hours, being dragged and shouted at in a grocery store at a pace faster than they can respond to)—these are all subtle forms of legal torture used to indoctrinate children into a culture of fear and acquiescence to violent authorities. These kinds of emotional trauma leave scars which are ego-formations, cathexes of learning against self-expression and for the hardening of worldview (the boundaries of awareness) against that which must not be seen and which must be avoided at all costs because it hurt so much the first time (lots of Reich in this paragraph). This is how the vice-grip our head is held in is forged.

Eventually the scars themselves take over, becoming the primary processing network in the helpless human host. This systematic schismic-avoidance click-processing forms synchrolock network of large numbers of neurons, preventing multiplexing and the fluidity of language brought on by hyperplexive quantum processing superpositions or narrative matrices. Between the layers of the possible states are slippage-points or narrativium (Pratchett) which is the oil (Negarestani) through which the mythic world can be accessed (as well as the glue of the mind-quantum deterritorialization, an existent paradox). The poor victim becomes a retentive-expulsive nightmare-mess, living a constant flight-fight existence not only at the dramaturgical level (life experiences), but at the micro level of thought. This is how the ego-defense mechanism-trauma scar tissue in the brain processes, from the ground up: in schismic clicks of hyperintersynchronic fascist top-down mind control which works precisely to control the worldview so that the unthought must remain the unthought and not threaten the host (Corruption of Reality in the sidebar), because by coming into awareness it allows the worldview to assume a configuration which was punished heavily and violently in the past.

This implies a logic of forwards and backwards time, as well as the necessity of there being a censor projecting back at us from the outside in order to experience the feeling of pushing up against resistance to changes in our worldview. If there is resistance, then that thing is there, the

Dweller in the Abyss, the Water at the Threshold, policing your thoughts (Foucault's governmentality) and monitoring your every move and step of thought to plan an escape attempt. The one advantage we have against this prison guard of a subconscious (the superego) is that it can only understand and appropriate clear and rational thoughts—thoughts which schism into libidinal polarities and form interlocking networks of hyper-logic (which code us into an order of time which is spasmodic, disjointed, and unreal). Reason, being greater and wholer than rationality, can think both sides of the thought and thus bear the subconscious censor along with it in new networks of fluidity (Deleuze and Guattari's becomings).

This gets into the metaphysical aspect of this construction: we think with our whole selves, and this includes the external environment insofar as we think with our personal reality or to the extent our thoughts change external actuality in narratives we participate in. Whether this is magical or merely narrative-autochthonic remains to be proven, but there is at least a karmic interaction pattern between us and our environment as an interface. We make choices and take and reject options, and these selections program our reality to produce more or less of certain types of cathexis-burdens: the continual price or taxes we pay in unpleasant punishing-experiences that our prison guards continually key-in to maintain the exact structure of the repression-matrix. These "natural consequences" (as they are condescendingly called by child psychologists giving punishment tips to parents) are situations and compositional-perceptory arrangements of

circumstances not only produced by the subconscious censor-police but also external control systems which monitor our self-actualization and happiness-inspiration indices and apply calculated punishers when we "step out of line" by acting in weird, unusual, or inspired ways. This "crazy tax" if it were applied to planetary environmental destruction with as much pervasive force and absolute no-tolerance application of violence would stop pollution dead in its tracks, immediately. But instead, these cybernetic feedback loops are used to maintain the status quo of mass rape and looting of the planet and its people (yes rape, see feminsim—women AND men were bred and programmed as slave-worker-robot-prostitutes by this historic plot arc). What is "in control" of this entire consortium of suffering is—if it is not essentially Satan at an all-too-real metaphysical level—is a combination of chance and the daemonic physics of hive minds.

Once the human consciousness became able to transfer and run programs (knowledge) from other cells, an evolutionary arms race began in the new realm of memetics. Dopamine and Serotonin squared-off in an eternal arms race of want-get-crave-goal-push-fight-kill and love-feel-have-we-rest-fulfilled, battling not only for turf in our genetic code and our brain matter, but for processing time in our thoughts and felt real estate in our experience. The political negotiations between these and other neurotransmitters form the micropolitical matrix out of which the circuit-board-like logic of the interference patterns in our brain permutate. This meta-spatiality of micro-possible brain-states, who I might be right

now, forms the policed space which is monitored and controlled by micropolitical aggressions (and macroaggressions when those fail). The distribution of the sensible (what is perfunctory as well as what is sense-able).

How to apply this multi-perspective to the practical liberation of self and others? This is the Great Work. It gets very tricky because in the details of the real-actual metaphysical connection there appears to be a strange circuit where what is desired is exactly what one does not get, usually. What is fought against is exactly what happens. What scrunches us up scrunches us up more. Moreover, the microcosm-macrocosm connection also seems to manifest real and actual events that participate in our cosmic narrative either as prison guards (daemonic forces) or liberators (angelic forces). These events, being as they are staggeringly synchronistic with our own personal struggles (much more than chance or cognitive bias), appear to occur acausally or more accurately through a resonant causality which participates in symbolic narrative or energy. Symbolic energy is precisely the raw slippage point or oil (Cyclonopedia) or raw color (Pratchett's octarine, the color of magic) or 'energy of the gap' (6::3) which invests things with meaning and which comes from the difference between one analogical layer and the next. Spoken of earlier, this energy is what allows us to look into myth and glyphically alter it, thus plucking strings in the resonance field of causality.

The extent to which these synchronistic events are actual-acausal versus personal-perceptual, again, remains to be proven,

but research is ongoing and all signs (ironically) point to the most extreme possibilities.

Combatting Lateral Distributed Processing of Topics of Conversation

Reddit Post Written February 3, 2015 at

www.reddit.com/r/sorceryofthespectacle/comments/2ulfbf/

So if the spectacle is this hydra hive-mind that distributes itself memetically through the brains of its human hosts, and it temporally synchronizes itself through contemporary communication technology and tightly-locked cybernetic feedback loops of command and control, reward and feedback—then this constructs a plane of contemporaneity which the spectacle keeps as uniform as possible in time and content. The spectacle is at its peak efficiency when all of its hosts are processing the same intractable problem at the same time, because this increases the chances that one of them will make a breakthrough

35.

What this means is that each of us is constantly the subject of memetic implantation and monitoring experiments. The spectacle, via TV, internet, radio, all visual media, and other people, implants in us memetic wormbabies of

³⁵ Compare with the bitcoin mining algorithm, which wastes an enormous amount of processing power, electricity, thus generating an enormous total sum of machinic heat-exhaust—in other words it generates an entropic field which, much like good music, eats time. This *consummation* of the present moment in its lateral cyberlinkage constitutes a moment and also decays said moment into the past phantasmalgorithmigorically.

contemporaneous subject matter—it inserts problems or questions or food for thought or otherwise a topic of conversation which gets us to think about it, to process the program assigned to us by the spectacle. We are performing cultural research for the spectacle for free, pushing forward its platform of expanding-control³⁶ and producing-spectacle merely by having conversations about contemporary topics.

Nick Land calls people who are implanted with memetic obsessions that they must process and talk about "hyperstitional carriers" and this term could be loosely applied to all of us insofar as we are running spectacular content-topics in our lives and conversation.

I say this because I am wondering, is there any way to get out of this? How can we be "not of our time"? How could we speak about things in a different way, or speak about different things, so that the frontpage of SotS resembles nothing like the spectacle at all?

For example—and I am not picking on you as I liked the topic of this post—talking about Facebook and whether to quit it or not, its pros or cons, is a very common and contemporaneous topic, so insofar as there are posts made about it, we are not resisting the spectacle but participating fully in its current struggles and impetuses—it needs US to work out whether people should quit Facebook or not, and more importantly, it needs us to clearly articulate what is wrong with Facebook so that it can infect us better next time. This is how it learns,

³⁶ expanding mind-control

by implanting in its worst enemies the seeds of its own resistance, then harvesting those seeds when they become a fully-thought-out program of resistance. It can merely invert the program thus produced and use it to dominate the former hosts of its own negatively-produced research knowledge in the praxis of domination. This is neoliberal governance at its finest.

How can we break contemporaneity? How can we diffuse the topics of conversation to wrest control of them from the "central" authority which is merely the external world? How can we avoid implantation by pop topics, when those topics are not only genuinely interesting, but related to the resistance against said implantation?

So, Is This a Subreddit to Memetically Engineer Society?

Reddit Post Written February 4, 2015 at

www.reddit.com/r/OpenMemetics/comments/2utcvj/

In a tabletop RPG world I created when I was about 16, there is a mysterious organization known originally as O.R.D.E.R. and later only by the letters MM. Eventually these letters are revealed to stand for Moustachioed Memeticists, and the MM is found to have grown into the entire Academy.

MM formed about 400 years ago during the Demon Wars, a time when waves of nightmare creatures suddenly attacked Umbra. This group of old white men came together to craft books which provided alternative explanations for the demons, because when they found that people read the books, the demons thus imaged disappeared. They produced many books and won the demon war with the invention of the printing press.

The demons were pushed out around the bounds of Umbra, forming the intensive dichotomy known as the Wall, the border of the world surrounded by the Mists of Penumbra. A sort of magical barrier, this division was held in place by the collective superstition of the people of Umbra.

But the work of MM was not done. New demons kept appearing, each more complex and difficult to image than the last. They expanded their operations to include a worldwide network of researchers and writers, constantly hunting down

and imaging each new demon as it appeared and publishing its counterdiction as quickly as possible. But the pace of new demon complexity is outpacing the ability of MM—now the monolithic Academy—to expand its operations.

Little do the researchers of MM know that demons are in fact tortured genii, and that what they conceive of as science is in fact the brainwashing of people into superstition, creating a magical barrier dividing the "real" and "dream" worlds.

If you are forming an MM and/or anti-MM cell I want in :-).



The Ethics of Virulent Curriculum

Originally written as a work-in-progress proposal, accepted for the 2014 Philosophy of Education Society Conference. I like it so much I didn't feel it need expansion—it virally unpacks itself if you ponder it.

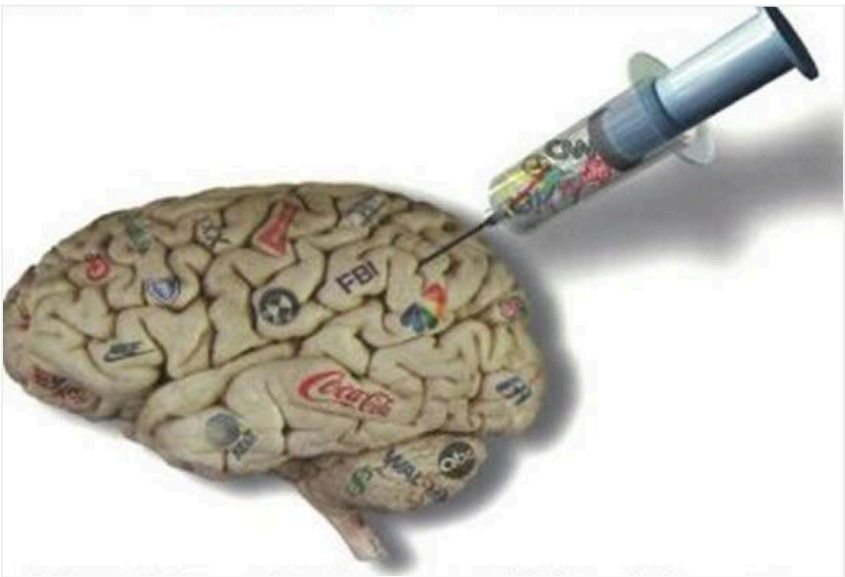


With the rise of Richard Dawkin’s concept of “the selfish meme,” and the explosion of new viral cultural phenomena on the web (including Stand Alone Complexes a la Ghost in the Shell), many marketers are trying to take advantage of “memetic engineering” to design viral marketing campaigns. When successful, these campaigns bring big returns for small investment, reaching millions by exposing spectators to media that “gets” them to replicate and spread that media.

Can educational media also be designed with viral features, to further public education? This can be seen as a media campaign for public education, an “inoculation of culture,” or an educational Trojan-horse program. It seems very likely that it is possible to deliver

particular curricular payloads via viral curriculum design, and in fact viral marketing campaigns and some public education campaigns could be analyzed in these terms.

But “viral” has a chilling and negative connotation. How ethical is to design curriculum intended to spread? Two important factors of virulence are infectivity and infectiousness. Both are ethically problematic.



Infectivity, the ability of a virus to infect a given person, is constructed as an attack upon the integrity and defenses of the organism. Viruses sneak, invade, disable defenses and immune responses, infiltrate, infect. Highly infective mind-viruses are distracting, attention-grabbing, hard to ignore, hard to disbelieve, often disable intellectual defenses through emotional

arousal, and are often repetitive or propaganda-like (e.g., advertisements).

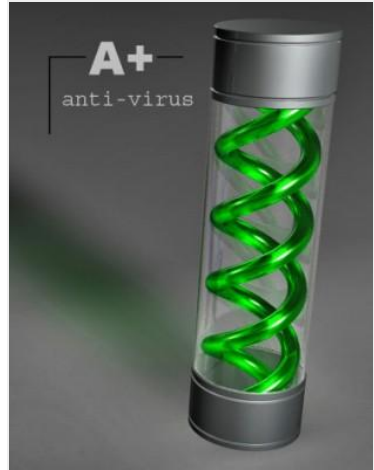
Infectiousness, the ability of a virus to spread from person to person, can be construed as depending upon the virus manipulating the host into replicating it. Viruses spread, infiltrate populations (infectivity at the societal level), colonize the minds of territories of populations, and fight against each other for brain-turf in tactical evolutionary/replicatory arms races. Infective and infectious mind-viruses must also destabilize, deterritorialize (Deleuze), delete, or rewrite any parts of the host mind that interfere with their infection or replication.



Even if one can get past the fundamental ethical considerations, there are also practical ethical problems to consider. Virality may be dangerous or harmful in and of itself; virulent curricula may spread misinformation or harmful mind-modifications to many people; and

virulent curricula may malfunction or have unintended side-effects or consequences if not properly designed, vetted, and carefully tested. In analogy with biological warfare, concocting viral curricular memes is noetic warfare.

The only ethical use of virulence I have admitted to so far is deterritorialization of mind—that is, the removal of other mind-viruses, i.e., viral antivirus mindware. However, is this type of intervention even imaginable? Is all decolonization a recolonization? Or in more abstract terms, is all

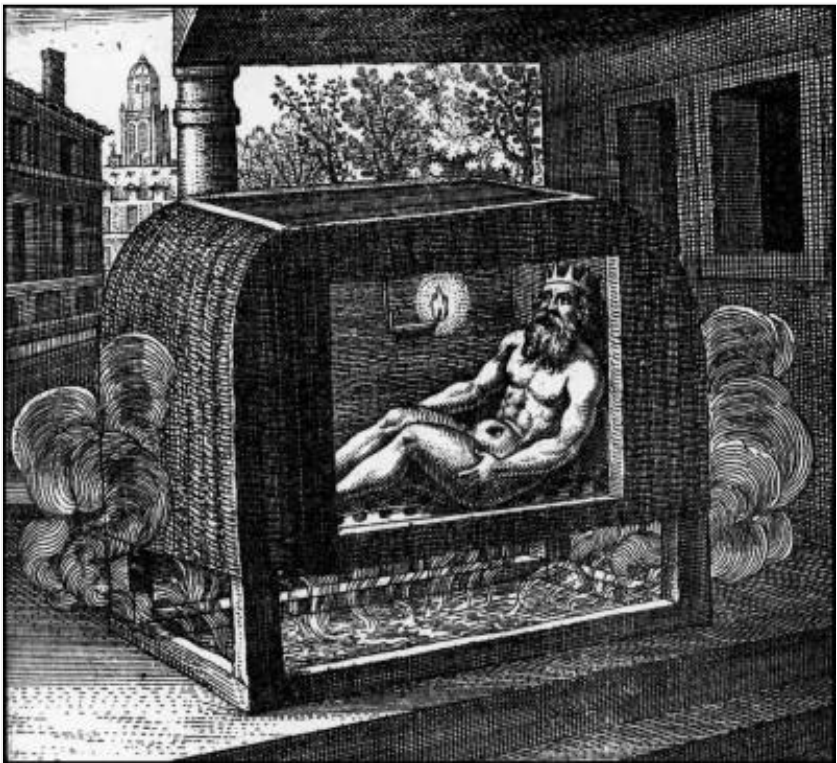


The (anti-zombie) anti-T-virus from Resident Evil.

deterritorialization a reterritorialization along new lines? Any idea of “deterritorialized mind” that I try to spread to others can easily be construed as me replicating my own mind-viruses. If “deterritorialization” can be constructed in a way that clearly differentiates it from reterritorialization/recolonization, however, it may be possible to ethically spread liberation.

This use of viral curriculum would be the creation of memetic “technologies of dispersion,” a type of idea that critical theory provides us many examples of (Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, Bataille, etc. are rife with it).

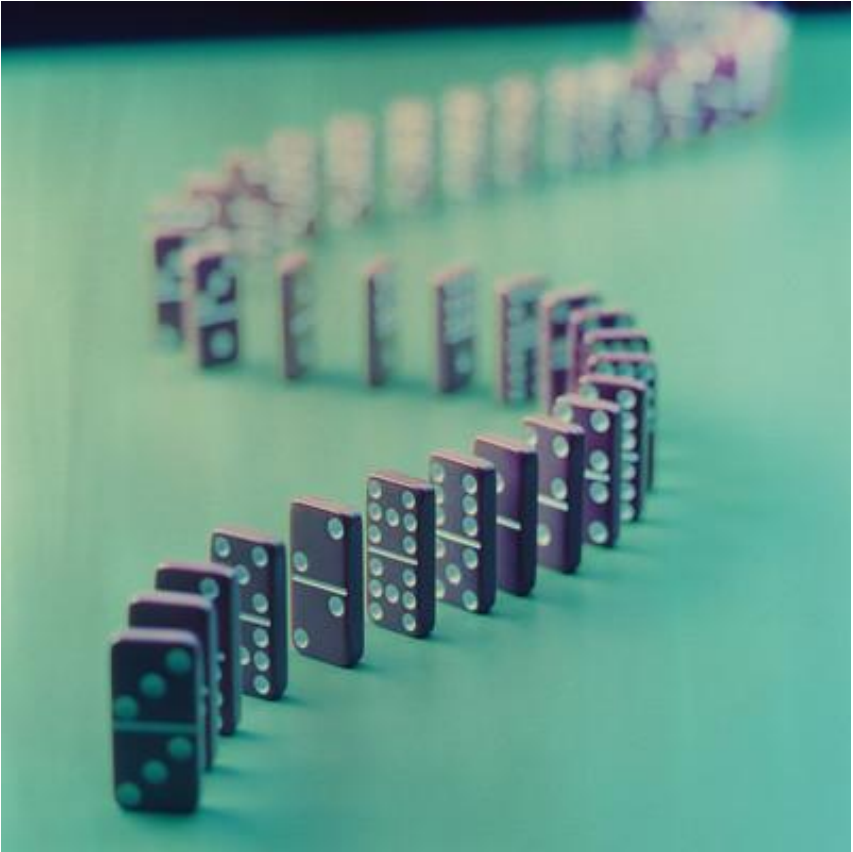
However, anyone who is familiar with critical theory will be familiar with its primary harmful side-effect—the production of bile. This side effect can be overcome with meta-criticality, where the critical faculty is turned back even upon itself, obviating the need to deconstruct ad nihil (see also Nick Land’s delightful bile-soaked romp, *The Thirst for Annihilation*). But it would almost certainly not be ethically permissible to attempt to induce these painful and dangerous processes in others.



An alchemical image of the process of burning away black bile, from *Atalanta fugiens* (1617).

These are difficult questions that imply dangerous curricular technologies. It could be argued that these technologies are already highly advanced and ubiquitously deployed by the industries of marketing, politics, and education. It could be further argued that the current cultural state of affairs, our current interlocking set of living memes which compose our “cultural platform,” or operating system, are the result of millennia of conscious and unconscious perfecting of technologies of memetic virulence (Daniel Dennett raises a similar argument in his *Consciousness Explained*). The current distribution of territories (cf. Ranciere’s “distribution of the sensible”) is stable until a new supervirus manages to destabilize the current regime, resulting in a paradigm shift. This leads to an arms race of ever-increasing regime stability versus increasingly creative (mutated) quantum leaps of supervirus innovation. That is, the more intractable and hyperstable the current regime, the wider and more daring the species-mutation gap must be between the regime and its regime-shattering viral antivirus. (This hearkens back to the earlier question of deterritorialization vs. reterritorialization: Is it possible to break a regime without installing a new one, and perhaps even preventing the future installation of a new one? This would be true deterritorialization, the death of karma.)

I am very excited about exploring these seemingly new ideas and language for discussing the ethics of curriculum design. Applying the language of virulence to curriculum problematizes many curricular design practices and paradigms, and it also illuminates the extent to which we may already be long-lost in a sea of virulent media. However, it also points tantalizingly towards the possibility of an ethical virulent curriculum (or virulent knowledge), one which could accomplish public education projects with a liberatory (anti-viral) intent via the construction of highly sophisticated theories of memetic virulence and anti-virulence. The deconstruction of memetic virulence would result in the recipe for a viral antiviral reagent (re-agent), an empirically predictive curricular algorithm for the mass-production of a paradoxical philosophical substance that has gone by many other names.



My Personal Curriculum: Reflections on Autodidacticism and the Psychogeography of Curriculum

Written December 15, 2013 for a
Course on Curriculum Deliberation

I have always been an autodidact. I remember
looking up from my crib, cooing and babbling as I

attempted to prepare a few first words for performance (an apocryphal tale, but this is what babies do). In fact, someone attempting to teach me presupposes my ability to teach myself, so I think everyone is an autodidact before they are any kind of student.

The first book I fell in love with was Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, in first grade. Matilda is the spitting image of a role model for autodidacticism:

By the time she was three, Matilda had taught herself to read by studying newspapers and magazines that lay around the house. At the age of four, she could read fast and well and she naturally began hankering after books. The only book in the whole of this enlightened household was something called *Easy Cooking* belonging to her mother, and when she had read this from cover to cover and had learnt all the recipes by heart, she decided she wanted something more interesting.

"Daddy," she said, "do you think you could buy me a book?"

"A book?" he said. "What d'you want a flaming book for?"

"To read, Daddy."

"What's wrong with the telly, for heaven's sake? We've got a lovely telly with a twelve-inch screen and now you come asking for a book! You're getting spoiled, my girl!"

So, Matilda goes to the library herself to find books:

On the afternoon of the day when her father had refused to buy her a book, Matilda set out all by herself to walk to the public library in the village. When she arrived, she introduced herself to the librarian, Mrs Phelps. She asked if she might sit awhile and read a book. Mrs Phelps, slightly taken aback at the arrival of such a tiny girl unaccompanied by a parent, nevertheless told her she was very welcome.

"Where are the children's books please?" Matilda asked.

"They're over there on those lower shelves," Mrs Phelps told her. "Would you like me to help you find a nice one with lots of pictures in it?"

"No, thank you," Matilda said. "I'm sure I can manage."

From then on, every afternoon, as soon as her mother had left for bingo, Matilda would toddle down to the library.

It escalates:

When she had read every single children's book in the place, she started wandering round in search of something else.

Mrs Phelps, who had been watching her with fascination for the past few weeks, now got up from

her desk and went over to her. "Can I help you, Matilda?" she asked.

"I'm wondering what to read next," Matilda said. "I've finished all the children's books."

"You mean you've looked at the pictures?"

"Yes, but I've read the books as well."

Mrs Phelps looked down at Matilda from her great height and Matilda looked right back up at her.

"I thought some were very poor," Matilda said, "but others were lovely. I liked *The Secret Garden* best of all. It was full of mystery. The mystery of the room behind the closed door and the mystery of the garden behind the big wall."

Mrs Phelps was stunned. "Exactly how old are you, Matilda?" she asked.

"Four years and three months," Matilda said.

Mrs Phelps was more stunned than ever, but she had the sense not to show it. "What sort of a book would you like to read next?" she asked.

Matilda said, "I would like a really good one that grown-ups read. A famous one. I don't know any names."

Mrs Phelps looked along the shelves, taking her time. She didn't quite know what to bring out. How, she asked herself, does one choose a famous grown-up book for a four-year-old girl? Her first thought was to pick a young teenager's romance of the kind that is written for fifteen-year-old schoolgirls, but for some reason she found herself

instinctively walking past that particular shelf.

"Try this," she said at last. "It's very famous and very good. If it's too long for you, just let me know and I'll find something shorter and a bit easier."

"Great Expectations," Matilda read, "by Charles Dickens. I'd love to try it."

[...]

Over the next six months, under Mrs Phelps's watchful and compassionate eye, Matilda read the following books:

Nicholas Nickleby by Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy

Gone to Earth by Mary Webb

Kim by Rudyard Kipling

The Invisible Man by H. G. Wells

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest

Hemingway

The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

The Good Companions by J. B. Priestley

Brighton Rock by Graham Greene

Animal Farm by George Orwell

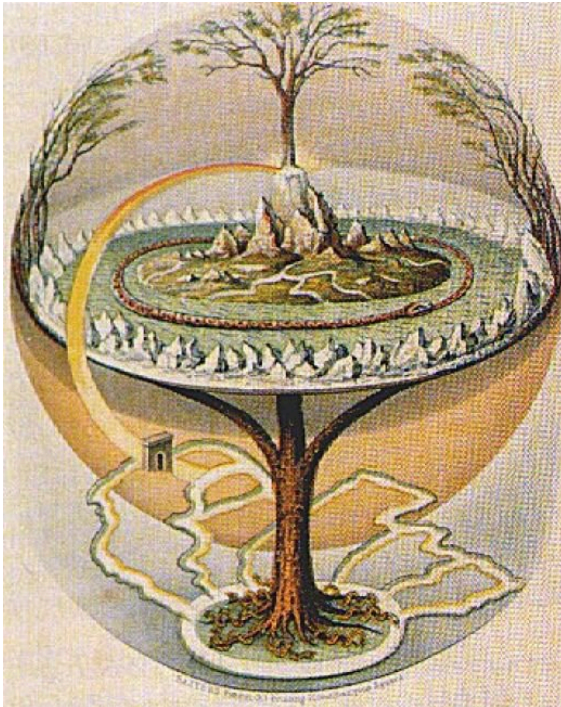
Much could be written about the glorious pedagogy of Mrs Phelps. Mrs Phelps' coup-de-grace is her planned obsolescence: she gracefully writes herself out of the

narrative by showing Matilda how to check out books from the library. We will return to heap praise on Mrs Phelps later.

Reading *Matilda* as my first novel probably had something to do with my own love of reading and frequent trips to the school and local libraries, where I would often leave with as many books as I could carry (a habit I helplessly continue to this day). I remember breaking the zipper on my backpack many times trying to fit in just one more book. Books and libraries were always sacred spaces for me, calm places for reflection and privacy, swaddling me with the same comforting silence as can be found in steeped churches and old-growth forests (forests were the first libraries). In fact, the second dream I ever remember started in the school library (this journal entry was written in high school):

I am at Carnation Elementary, walking from the lunchroom, down the hallway towards the library. I turn the corner and go through the doorway (there is no door to open). I step out onto a stone balcony, with deep blue night sky. The colors are rich; it looks like a Disney movie. There is either no railing or a stone railing supported by little stone pillars all around the edge. I turn into a big, brownish-red bird, a hawk I think, and fly off from the balcony. I fly out over an orange desert. As the sun begins to rise behind me, I see a canyon in front of me, but the other side of the canyon is much higher, a cliff. Written on the wall, bathed in the orange light of

the sunrise, are the words “Your journey is over”. I turn around and head back. Closer to the ground than I was, I come upon a chain link fence with a warehouse on the other side. I land and I think I changed back from a bird. [A childhood friend] is there, but she is a wolf. I know it is her so she unzips the front and steps out.



So even as a child, the library symbolized a launching point for flight. The second half of the dream is foreboding and mysterious—why did I so easily allow myself to be steered by “the writing on the wall³⁷?” (And,

³⁷ “An idiom,” quoth Wikipedia, “for ‘imminent doom or misfortune’

less relevant here, who was the *mai-cob*-like figure of my friend in wolf's clothing?) We will return to this, too, when we return to praise Mrs Phelps.

When I had the idea for this essay, it came all at once. I thought, "Why not consider my whole life an educational experience? I will make myself my own best educator, and design my own personal curriculum." At these decisive words a most curious thing happened. I experienced a reorientation of subjectivity—a whooshing of space as reality bubbled outwards around my ears; the meta feeling of a Hofstadterian strange loop as I arrived at where I already was; a feeling of clarity and spaciousness and power: ownership over space.

I realized at once what had just happened: the establishment of a world axis or center, an *axis mundi*. Mircea Eliade and other anthropologists discuss this as a central function of ritual and a central way of orienting space in tribal cultures. An *axis mundi* establishes a human space as marked off from the endless, decentered, even dream-like experience of wandering through primeval natural spaces. It is a psychogeographical move, the founding of an orienting point that allows us to navigate via location in (coordinate-based) absolute space. The *axis mundi* is not just a pole at the center of the world—it also typically comes with a cross that cleaves the world into the four directions.

So after the initial whirring movement as spatiality redistributed itself around me, I was left with a feeling of

and for 'the future is predetermined,'" which is quite apt for this dream.

clear, open, space, and a sense of ownership over that space. I had just claimed my life as my own, and it felt very good. And, because of the way I had founded my world-axis—by claiming all things that happened to me as my experience, and all my experiences as mine to control and design—I had claimed self-ownership in a very complete and total way.

This realization that I had founded an axis mundi disturbed me, because it implied that I did not have a center before! It appeared I had let my self-ownership lapse over the years, and so was drifting, decentered, awash with the unleashed daemonic forces of other people's curriculums—the very same forces that made a *whooshing* sound as they fled to the underworld of my mind in response to my declaration of self-ownership. These multifarious entities, *other people's perspectives*, attempt to enter—to confuse—to befuddle—de/recenter—*we are you*—but no more! My decision inadvertently banished them to tartarus.

The reason for lapse in self-ownership, my throwing up of hands and shrugging of shoulders as I recline and watch the unmanned helm roll dizzily, is a simple matter of self-disgust. You see, I used to be very excited about self-improvement, self-control, self-management. But a few years ago, I became very skeptical of the words “improvement,” “control,” “management,” and “self.” *Improvement* implies that there is something wrong with me, a belief I certainly don't wish

to reify with planned action.³⁸ *Control* and *management* are much-more-obviously-vile words, bringing feelings of harsh discipline and corporatism to the party—not philosophies I would like to bring to bear on myself within my most sacred and private inner space, the intimacy of my secret soul. Why would I want to get between myself and I with any teleological corporatism?

My studies in Buddhism and western mindfulness have shown me that as long as there is any goal-orientation, there is a Watcher that is monitoring for infraction, ready to dole out discipline to keep incoming data measures within acceptable parameters (a negative feedback loop), and, in the meantime, warping reality to highlight goal-relevant information, casting everything in terms of the goal (that is, confirmation bias). Furthermore, many traditions teach that the self itself is an illusion, a source of suffering meant to be transcended through years of quieting meditation or, more dangerously, short-circuited in identification with God. So it seemed the best thing to do was to let my hands off the wheel and watch it spin, until eventually it slowed and began—I don't know—turning itself? Not exactly a recipe for self-vestment.³⁹

My distaste for self-discipline is by no means gone, but it is for now the lesser evil. The greater evil became clearly apparent just as the dust settled from the

³⁸ Update: Lynn Fendler pointed out that improvement does not necessarily imply that something is wrong, which is a very good point.

³⁹ Although, it is possible the experience described here is exactly the result of years of helm-spinning, and that the helm is now indeed helming itself.

psychological founding of my axis mundi: with the air so clear, suddenly I could feel—*exactly*—the press of others’ curricula upon my proud little bubble. I could feel the weight of my PhD program, pushing bluntly and blatantly as it tried to claw its way into my (curricular) space and vomit its discursive language-production all over my pristine diction. It would have me lose my voice and replace it with words, words, words, breeding like humans on a dying planet. I could feel the weight of some teachers, those who think they know better than me what I need to learn. I could even feel the weight of some friends, those who send me many things to read, expecting me to read them all. There was also the ever-present press of media capitalism, continually inventing more subtle fingers of propaganda with which to dig into my brain and extract wealth from my body and pockets. This all became clear in an instant, as I saw the difference between self-imposed and externally-induced curriculum.

It was a visceral sensation to have these new self-boundaries, and to feel them being tested by these other-centric curricula. It felt exactly like an invisible wall being bent perilously out of shape, as if I were in an inflated balloon and a dull pencil were coming at me from the outside, threatening to puncture the rubber. I mentally growled at these incursions and they retreated.

Thus it became clear that the founding of a personal curriculum and concomitant planting of an axis mundi is a territorial move: by having the nerve to imagine myself “my own best educator,” I place myself at the top of a hierarchy of authority that controls what I *ought* to

experience. My idea for an essay gave rise to a decisive act, specifically the redrawing of territorial lines such that my experiences are my territory. This takes place psychogeographically and abstractly, but as I have described, it is also a visceral bodily experience, as the locus of subjectivity chugs and pumps its way into a new orientation around and relation with the world-center. It stutters as it changes gears.

Perhaps my previous willful self-abandonment was a partial collapse into Deleuzian deterritorialization, a capsized ship taking on more water. In any case, it is fascinating the power one decision can have to alter psychological space and psychogeographic boundaries.

However, now I am left with several important questions: First, I must define my personal curriculum. Second, I must overcome the paradoxical double-bind of defining a personal curriculum and attempting “self-improvement” that includes self-transcendence. Third, I would like to explore the ethical imperatives my experience seems to imply for educators.

Taking an inventory of my personal curriculum

I already have a personal curriculum—it is all the experiences I have been pursuing out of curiosity, intrinsic enjoyment, and genuine interest. Getting abreast of my personal curriculum, then, is a process of making the personal curriculum I already have conscious. So, the first step is to take an inventory of whatever life curriculum I already have.

My personal curriculum is too extensive and personal to list fully here, so here is a selection of a few key strands I have identified in my life:

Poetry—Writing, becoming well-read in poetry, developing a sense of critique and analysis

Reading—Becoming familiar with various authors (I keep lists of “authors I need to get into” and “authors I align with”)

Dissertation vehicle—a conceptual/library object that can contain my dissertation research (i.e., a bounded object that contains inside the discourses and pathways that will carry my dissertation forward, something that I can discuss with others and master)

(Dis?)organization of contemplative life—My mental frameworks and how these are expressed in the organization of my notebooks and digital libraries

Recreation—Creating more space in my life for self and self curriculum. This includes dealing with or reducing the many demands placed on me from the outside, and also skills such as context-switching and managing my moods.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Update: I have since redefined this drive as religion, a frequent recreation of spacetime and rebinding to the sacred: the technology of being human.

Autolibrarianism—Figuring out how to organize large amounts of content for gradual consumption (I have centralized my collecting of interesting media into an ever-growing folder called “Brain Food” that I never look at)

This list is beginning to point to an interesting quality of curricular objects: what I am concerned with in these curricular “projects” of mine is not the assimilation of some particular subject matter, but rather reimagining the relation I have with particular inquiries. These curricular projects (and the many others not listed here) are not concerned with some learning goal but with the dis/organization of life’s spacetimes into environs of unbounded creativity. Here the paradoxical nature of curricular deliberation again rears its head, as *bounds* and *organs* are recruited to create *unboundedness* and *disorganization*.

I think *environ* captures this tension nicely; the etymology is *en-* “in” and *viron* “circle, circuit” meaning “round about,”⁴¹ implying a swooshing motion of vague enclosure much like my experience of an axis mundi. However, over time the word solidified: *environ* came to mean “to surround” and then accreted *-ment* to turn it from a verb into the staid and vaguely menacing mouthful of a noun, *environment*. *Environ* came naturally to my fingertips in the previous paragraph, and I feel that dropping the *-ment* reinvigorates the evocativity of this

⁴¹ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=environ>

word, and reveals its close relation to intrapersonal spatiality.

The word *telos* helps to shed light on the paradox of curriculum as a boundary that protects deterritorialized flows. Heidegger says:

With the bounds the thing does not stop; rather from out of them it begins to be what, after production, it will be. That which gives bounds, that which completes, in this sense is called in Greek *telos*, which is all too often translated as “aim” or “purpose,” and so misinterpreted. The *telos* is responsible for what as matter and for what as aspect are together co-responsible for the [for example] sacrificial vessel [chalice].⁴²

In this brilliant note, Heidegger vivifies *telos* and points to the crux of its import: the bound of a thing is what gives it its definition (an etymological tautology, as *de-fine* is “to bound completely”⁴³). Thus, an attempt at total deterritorialization—madness—cannot be a curriculum; it does not direct activity in any way, it has no *telos*. A curriculum must limit in order to create space in which play can occur; it must bound in order to create a context for possibility.

This brings us to the etymology of curriculum, which derives from “racecourse” or “chariot.” I prefer the latter—curriculum-as-vehicle. This evokes parallels with

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*.

⁴³ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=define>

Mahayana (Buddhism), which literally translates as “the great vehicle,” implying the elegant retranslation of *Mahayana* as “the great curriculum.” I also see intriguing parallels here with the “body of light” discussed in many traditions as a vehicle of transcendence; for example the *merkabah* in Jewish mysticism, which also means “chariot.” Even more suggestive is this description of the “subtle body” in Hinduism:

The subtle body is the vehicle of consciousness with which one passes from [life to life](#). The **Līṅga Śarīra** is the vehicle of consciousness in later Samkhya, [Vedanta](#), and [Yoga](#), and is propelled by past-life tendencies, or *bhavas*.^[2] Linga can be translated as "characteristic mark" or "impermanence" and the term *Sarira (Vedanta)* as "form" or "mold".^[3]⁴⁴

This excerpt makes an explicit connection between the vehicular and teleological aspects of this (curricular) bounding phenomenon that creates space. In particular, the paradoxical meaning of *Līṅga* as both “characteristic mark” and “impermanence” and its paradoxical juxtaposition with *Śarīra* (“form/mold”) suggests comparison with the creative bounding of *telos*.

So it seems to me that curriculum is intimately tied up with *telos* and spatiality, the creation of bounded spaces that acquire directedness (*volition*) from the definition of their edges, and that act as vehicles for movement. Within these boundaries, no self-monitoring

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subtle_body#Hinduism

or self-policing is necessary, because the meanings within the space arise from the axis mundi—or more generally *totem*—the invisible and empty center of the curriculum that is created in an act of decision. From the inside, the boundaries cannot be clearly seen or egressed; they do not limit us but instead create a space within which to play. Deterritorialized flows of creativity can thus be unleashed without fear of derailment or self-reprisal—even “undirected” or wasted energy within a curriculum is not truly wasted, but seamlessly folded-into or reinflected along with pro-curricular flows. This is perceived as a holism and synchronicity, as curiosity and passion ignite in self-escalating, gathering spiral waves of inspiration and the amassing of critical masses of serendipitous discovery.

Thus, the curricular paradox is resolved: the bounds of the curriculum-as-vehicle create a space that is a playground, and these same bounds act as an invisible watchful shepherd, a gentle tendency towards coherence which—without action—silently bends the will in accordance with a past decision. Like slanting light coalescing on warm hardwood floor, actions taken within a curricular polarization of mind come out already-oriented towards some Dao-like hypostasis (or ever-unexpected laminar flow).

Totem and *todo*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ A Spanish word which I just discovered means “everything.” Previously, I used it to head my to-do lists.

An axis mundi is a subset of a larger category, a totem. In fact, in many instances so far, *totem* would have worked better than *axis mundi*. A people or person has only one axis mundi, but they may have many totems. The list I began above in taking an inventory of my preexistent personal curriculum was an attempt to list the many (empty) centers of my curiosity, the totems which cybernate my art.⁴⁶

So, with this new perspective, let me try to take an accounting of the “empty centers” of my already-enacted personal curriculum:

- Poetry
- Mysticism
- Eroticism (in the broadest sense)
- Analogics
- Collections and expansions
- Color
- Imagination
- Mythos⁴⁷
- Auto- and guerilla librarianism

But are these totems, imaged in the process of listing, not also now idols, and this inventory of personal curriculum an accounting of personal gods? Each one is an empty center that casts a curricular field, an axis mundi or

⁴⁶ The phallic intrusions I perceived at the boundaries of my space also are totems: more specifically, the characteristic (unconsummated) Einstein-Rosen bridge shape they make is the totem.

⁴⁷ Update: This word replaces the lispy and uninspiring, flimsy and air-like “mythicism,” which implies myth-as-ideology.

totem that guides my inquiries like an invisible hand. Leaving the territory of these magic circles is marked by a loss of curiosity and intrinsic motivation: an insidious method of self-control, to organize creativity by stingily meting out curiosity.

How is a personal curriculum different from a personal religion? I do not think they are different, except perhaps that *curriculum* implies a conscious ongoing renegotiation of the religious content⁴⁸. In my first inventory (above), I noticed this concern with conscious deliberation in the framing of my areas of curriculum. However, for many people the word implies no such deliberation and, in that case, there is no difference between *curriculum* and *dogma*.

Impersonally speaking, educational institutions present themselves as secular and rational. However, the psychological mechanisms of believing in a secular claim and a religious one are the same—for example, when I put the trash out on Monday night, I am acting upon a superstition that men come on Tuesday mornings to take the trash away. Therefore, the only thing that distinguishes the academy from the sprawling structures of ecclesiastical authority that it has in many ways

⁴⁸ Update: I have since collapsed this distinction, instead preferring to think of curriculum as the backend for the practice of a religion, the meta-religious negotiation of what the religion does when it is practiced. In organized religion, the curricular process is usually kept well out of sight and under lock-and-key; in a personal religion, defining the curriculum is *the* act of personal liberty. What would a religion look like that collapsed even this further distinction, sanctifying the deliberation of curriculum and including it within the sphere of religious practice? (Perhaps Buddhism, a prominent symbol of which is—that's right—a helm.)

superceded is its self-reflexivity and careful deliberation over its curricular decisions. Insofar as the academy fails to be conscious of its own curriculum, it is dogmatic, and the academy is simply church authority redux, self-styled with a secular aesthetic to hoodwink the masses into entrusting it with the care and distribution of truth.

So, *curriculum* and *religion* are very closely-related words in terms of psychological practice. The difference is that *curriculum* is considered a secular word. Both religion and curriculum, if they are not to be dogmatic, involve conscious deliberation that renegotiates relations.

The ethics of proselytization

I have examined a personal experience in which deciding to take ownership of my experience as my own curriculum resulted in a transformation of subjectivity and partitioning of sacred space. I then analyzed this experience and the etymology of some related words to make a connection between religion and curriculum. This metaphor can be extended to enrich the ethical discussion implied by my experience of personal curriculum.

After putting myself at the top of my own hierarchy of authority over my curriculum, it seems clear to me that this is the only ethical thing to desire for others, as well. That is, I cannot imagine how it would be ethical to attempt to dethrone someone from creative control over their own life experiences. Desiring the subordination of others, to either myself or a third party, cannot be an ethical desire. Furthermore, the opposite seems to be

almost imperative: I must attempt to remove others from positions of subordination, helping others to promote themselves to the top of their authority hierarchy.

Moreover, it seems that no one is not already at the top of their curricular hierarchy—subordination is when people are fooled into thinking others are a higher authority than themselves. So, the previous sentence should be amended, “helping others to recognize themselves as already at the top of their authority hierarchy.”

The alternative to wishing autonomy upon others is to attempt to impose curriculum upon them⁴⁹.

Psychogeographically, this invades and territorializes the person’s space, banishing the person to a psychological basement or Tartarus, a space of dissimulation and self-divestment. This reminds me of The Chokey in *Matilda*, a closet filled with broken glass used to torture children:

"The Chokey", Hortensia went on, "is a very tall but very narrow cupboard. The floor is only ten inches square so you can't sit down or squat in it. You have to stand. And three of the walls are made of cement with bits of broken glass sticking out all over, so you can't lean against them. You have to stand more or less at attention all the time when you get locked up in there. It's terrible."

"Can't you lean against the door?" Matilda asked.

⁴⁹ I have been informed that this is a false dichotomy :-)

"Don't be daft," Hortensia said. "The door's got thousands of sharp spikey nails sticking out of it. They've been hammered through from the outside, probably by the Trunchbull herself."

The “nails hammered through from the outside” even bear a striking visual similarity to the totems I felt attempting to pierce the invisible boundary generated by my axis mundi, which I earlier compared to pencils pushing into an inflated balloon. However, in *The Chokey*, the nails have been successfully driven through the barrier, and so it is difficult to stand without being cut.

To attempt to impose a curriculum on someone is not different from attempting to subordinate them. But, from a Rancierian perspective, assuming that people are not already their own best educators and curricular authorities and need our help to be saved is an unethical assumption of inequality. Therefore, all we can do is assume others are already autodidacts, and be surprised when they express subordination.

So, what do I do when others do not realize that they are already in charge of their own curriculum, or resist enacting their own curriculum, subordinating themselves to me or a third party? First of all, it seems like a simple solution⁵⁰ that I should refuse to participate in an other's subordination to me. But intervening-or-not when someone subordinates themselves to a third party is much more complicated.

⁵⁰ And, as Lynn Fendler pointed out to me in an email, already an intervention.

Autoliberalism

I have a large and barely-manageable collection of digital books and other media. To be an autodidact seems to also require that one practice autoliberalism. A librarian knows more than he knows—he knows what it is possible to know and where to find it—and a librarian helps us to find our best next book. These are important autocurricular questions that cannot be separated from curiosity and intuition, or from the practical matters of curating a personal library. Therefore, I have called my autodidactic philosophy “autoliberalism.”

With computers, it is possible to imagine maintaining a library in many ways. One could collect files in folders, or simply write the names of authors in lists and go get the books later. I receive about one book recommendation a day, and I have thousands of pdfs—all of them must-reads—it is challenging to curate a library during information overload.

I have started calling sharing pdf files from mobile devices “guerrilla librarianism.” Often, a friend or acquaintance will mention something which reminds me of a book I am sure they would enjoy. Or, I am so excited about what I am reading that I end up talking about it with many people in my life. Why merely recommend a book, when you can send them the manuscript in seconds? This makes it much more accessible, removing the barrier of having to order, buy or download the book themselves, and it is always fun to receive a new book.

I think guerrilla librarianism is an ethical solution to the dilemma posed above: when people subordinate themselves to me or others, I can suggest a book which they might enjoy or which might decrease their subordination. Books are non-coercive, and I do not expect people to read books I suggest, so there is no pressure. This is not different from handing out free bibles, except that it's a different book every time—spreading the Word of our papyral savior, the mega-book Librus⁵¹ which completes its memetic reproductive cycle through printing presses and bit-copying.

It could be argued that my personal curriculum is just an information-consumerist totalizing narrative masquerading as curriculum. However, I would respond that this is a critique of giving any curricular authority to anyone other than yourself, or allowing power to be exercised to impose curriculum on others.

Mrs Phelps is a guerrilla librarian par excellence. This paragraph comes just after the list of books Matilda read (quoted above):

It was a formidable list and by now Mrs Phelps was filled with wonder and excitement, but it was probably a good thing that she did not allow herself to be completely carried away by it all.

⁵¹ Update: Librus has existed since the dawn of written language, and can be seen as a massive ur-Bible made up of all text. Some parts of this text are wise and worth reading, and some are not. It is interesting that Librus first chose to fully incarnate as the King James Bible, but even more interesting that he now most enjoys incarnating as national best-sellers and the Internet.

Almost anyone else witnessing the achievements of this small child would have been tempted to make a great fuss and shout the news all over the village and beyond, but not so Mrs Phelps. She was someone who minded her own business and had long since discovered it was seldom worth while to interfere with other people's children.

But she is interfering⁵²! She is filling Matilda's head with all kinds of ideas that her parents care nothing about, and would probably rather Matilda not read (later in the book, Mr. Wormwood rips up one of Matilda's library books). Mrs Phelps is a guerrilla librarian because she does *not* consider sharing books to be "interfer[ing] with other people's children"; she is so committed to supporting the individual reader that the thought does not even occur to her. She quietly educates Matilda as a reader of great books, and then disappears from the narrative.

While she is there, she is a better and more ethical teacher than Miss Honey, the main teacher in most of the book. The story of Miss Honey is the story of a teacher becoming aware of a particularly brilliant student, and of protecting and eventually adopting her. Miss Honey is wonderful and a hero in her own right, but it is Mrs Phelps who immediately recognizes Matilda and hands her the books she needs. Actually, she does something better than that—when Matilda first comes to the library,

⁵² Although perhaps the etymology of "interfere" contests this: "to strike between." In this case it would be "between" Matilda and her intentions. From <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=interfere>

Mrs Phelps does not pry or attempt to hand her the books she “needs”; she just hands her the books she asks for (“the children’s books please”).

Mrs Phelps commitment to non-interference with Matilda’s autodidactic autonomy goes perhaps to an extreme:

Mrs Phelps was concerned about the child's safety on the walk through the fairly busy village High Street and the crossing of the road, but she decided not to interfere.

What is Roald Dahl on about here? We should let little children cross dangerous streets? The full quote reveals more:

During the first week of Matilda's visits Mrs Phelps had said to her, "Does your mother walk you down here every day and then take you home?"

"My mother goes to Aylesbury every afternoon to play bingo," Matilda had said. "She doesn't know I come here."

"But that's surely not right," Mrs Phelps said. "I think you'd better ask her."

"I'd rather not," Matilda said. "She doesn't encourage reading books. Nor does my father."

"But what do they expect you to do every afternoon in an empty house?"

"Just mooch around and watch the telly."

"I see."

"She doesn't really care what I do," Matilda

said a little sadly.

Mrs Phelps was concerned about the child's safety on the walk through the fairly busy village High Street and the crossing of the road, but she decided not to interfere.

Mrs Phelps is a sly and strategic guerrilla librarian. It is only “interfering” when it might keep a child from good books. Making a fuss over Matilda’s brilliance might make things difficult for her, or draw other teachers who would force books on Matilda. Telling her parents about her trips to the library might get her banned. By keeping quiet and handing over the books⁵³, Mrs Phelps prolongs Matilda’s contact with her and the library, providing Matilda a space and all the support an autodidact needs—a librarian—to enact her own curriculum. Matilda’s requests define her personal curriculum, and Mrs Phelps helps her to realize it, expanding her world via carefully-selected book suggestions.

In my dream, I obeyed when someone wrote “Your journey is over;” subordinating myself to an unknown other. Had I a teacher like Mrs Phelps, someone who encouraged me to enact my own curriculum and who helped me find the materials I needed, I may not have been so quick to believe the “writing on the wall.” Only a handful of teachers and librarians have handed me books as valuable as many that I have found myself—and almost none gave me more than a few from a single small

⁵³ My dream is to rob a library: “Keep quiet and hand over the books, see?” Librarian: “This is a library.”

category. Is it really that difficult to show someone a world of books? Or have most of my teachers assumed that I needed *them*, and not their self-obsolence through expansive librarianism and support of my autodidacticism? Mrs Phelps wisely knew.

It is perhaps Matilda's self-education with books that allows her telekinetic powers to develop later in the plot (both are connected with the eyes, and Miss Honey speculates that it is "tremendous energy bottled up" in her brain shooting out through her eyes). These powers give Matilda confidence and the means to stand up to Miss Trunchbull, and by doing so she gives her story a happy ending. We cannot give Mrs Phelps credit for this, and she would not want it:

A strange feeling of serenity and confidence was sweeping over her and all of a sudden she found that she was frightened by nobody in the world. With the power of her eyes alone she had compelled a glass of water to tip and spill its contents over the horrible Headmistress, and anybody who could do that could do anything.

When Miss Honey expresses caution about Matilda's new powers (something Mrs Phelps might wisely hold her tongue over, considering it "interfering"), Matilda replies:

"It made me feel lovely," Matilda said. "For a moment or two I was flying past the stars on silver wings. I told you that. And shall I tell you something

else, Miss Honey? It was easier the second time, much much easier. I think it's like anything else, the more you practise it, the easier it gets."