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Towards a Phenomenological Understanding of the Ontological Aspects of Teaching and Learning

In this essay, written for educators who might be unfamiliar with the more technical aspects of “existential-phenomenological” philosophy, I focus on diverse and alternative forms of meaning arising from the lived, embodied conscious experience of educators and students in the process of learning, in order to reacquaint practitioners with the forgotten and more original aspects of education. Through a modified phenomenological method, I attempt to show how teacher alienation might be transcended through an understanding of authentic education, by means of recovering the forgotten ontological aspects of learning and living, which might lead in a positive direction to the reassessment of the standards, practices, and values of contemporary education. It is my claim that this “existential” form of insight into the human and education holds the potential to enrich our current notions of teaching and learning and inspire authentic professional development in order to improve the quality of our teaching and teacher education programs.

This paper falls into the following divisions: (1) I begin with a brief overview of “alienation” in education and focus on the crisis in contemporary education, which might be traced to two sources: the “professionalization agenda” in teacher education and “high-stakes testing” in public education, both of which emerge from *social efficiency ideology*; (2) I move to consider how an authentic education might be conceived in terms of the phenomenological tradition in philosophy, specifically I focus on the philosophies of both Sartre and Heidegger,¹ concerned with the potential contribution their thought might make to education by focusing on the “existential” understanding of the human; and (3) In a speculative manner, I provide an analysis of how these philosophies might inspire renewed ways of thinking about education by those who teach children and those who educate teachers.

1. The Crisis in Contemporary Education

The current definitions of a good teacher, or “expert teacher” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) and ideal Democratic student are grounded in sets of pre-determined competencies established and bureaucratically imposed. As Pinar (2004) rightly observes, contemporary American education is deterministic, and “in its press for efficiency and standardization,” has the effect of reducing both teachers and students to “automata” (28). Ironically, by means of education, we have come to view teachers and students as “data,” “numbers,” “products,” and “things,” with mere *present-at-hand*

¹Sherman (2006) thoroughly and convincingly argues the irreconcilability of Heidegger and Sartre in *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity*. In brief, Sherman, reading Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* and *Jargon of Authenticity* interprets Heidegger’s fundamental ontology (from the perspective of “objectification” in metaphysics) as devolving into a form of “identity thinking” (which shares commonalities with both idealism and positivism) through which the misuse of language “hypostatizes” general categories of Being at an abstract remove from subjectivity and the authentic dialectic unfolding of the processes of history. Sherman situates Sartre outside the circle of existential-phenomenological thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Husserl, and Heidegger because Sartre embraces a form of human subjectivity that is “mediated” through and dependent on the dialectic encounter with the unfolding of history, and we find this notion expressed in Sartre’s *Search for a Method* and *The Critique of Dialectic Reason*. In education, as encountered in the various phenomenological (*reconceptualist*) movements in curriculum theory of the twentieth century, the difference between Heidegger and Sartre manifests in two forms of phenomenological research grounded in (1) the search for abstract, ontological “essences” (van Manen, 1990) and (2) the search to elucidate the radical subjectivity of the individual (Pinar & Grumet, 1976), seemingly at the expense of the “objective” empirical aspects of existence, which work to “dialectically” shape human subjectivity (see Willis, 1991). I am well aware of the differences between the varying phenomenological approaches, for the sake of this paper I sought not so much a reconciliation, or *rapprochement*, between Heidegger and Sartre, but rather a way to “winnow the chaff from the grain,” so to speak, separating that which is potentially useful from that which is useless (from the perspective of education) in their respective philosophies while attempting to tease out the common, or similar, albeit neither immutable nor invariant, existential-ontological “themes” as might be related to a re-conceived vision of contemporary education.

existence to be manipulated, used, and discarded when their instrumental value is exhausted (Heidegger, 1977). We have forgotten what it means to be truly human from the “philosophical” perspective of what might generally be referred to as *existential-phenomenological-ontology*, with its perennial concern for what it means for us to be authentic communal beings engaged in heuristic acts of learning about our world through demonstrating a solicitous concern and care for our Being and the Being of others within learning communities, which always transcend the predictable and sterile conditions of high-stakes accountability within today’s institutionalized education system. Teachers are increasingly becoming alienated from the curriculum (educational content and pedagogy), their students, and themselves with dire consequences to the overall view to authentic subject-hood and real education.

There is a crisis in contemporary democratic education: radical achievement gaps in the public schools, a shortage of highly trained and effective teachers, and the continued bureaucratization of the American university where market place values dominate (Pinar, 2004; Spring, 2000; Solomon & Solomon, 1994). While a detailed, systematic diagnosis of this problem is beyond the scope of this essay, I consider two problems inhibiting the drive toward effective education emerging from the recent educational reform that produced the high-stakes accountability atmosphere linked with the ratification of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002). First, the ineffectiveness of teacher reform emerging from the *professionalization agenda* for the training of effective teachers, which attempts to definitively establish what teachers should know and teach, and secondly, the detrimental effects of “high stakes” testing on students and their teachers, who upon entering a system of education are forced to teach an inauthentic curriculum. Reading Diamond (2008) and Zeichner (2009), it is possible to trace these problems to the *social efficiency model* in education, which represents the dominating ideological force in American education. Thus, a brief explication of its philosophy and educational methodology is provided in order to contrast this stultifying view of education with an alternative, more positive vision of authentic education inspired by phenomenology.

Spring (2000) writes that the “dominant public goals for education in the twentieth century are economic [...] and these goals include preparation for work, the control of labor, and economic development” (p. 5). Our contemporary educational, pedagogical, and ultimately, our overarching curricular goals are still grounded in the *social efficiency model* for education, stressing essential principles of utility and the student’s potential contribution, as functioning and flourishing democratic citizen, to the general economic growth of the country. The *social efficiency model* works off *product-process* logic for designing and implementing curriculum (as in the Tyler rational), it is teleological, i.e., goals, standards, and objectives, which comprise the definition of “good education” are determined in advance, and often times, at a proximal distance from the practical unfolding of learning in the classroom. For example, private foundations (Carnegie Corporation) and accrediting agencies (ETS – Education Testing Service) are “non-governmental professional organizations that establish standards and criteria for educational institutions” (Spring, 2000, 207). Since the *social efficiency model* works to implement programmed instruction, which is designed to assure that students achieve established sets of standardized objectives, it deals only “with a limited part of the child’s total functioning; it is not intended to give students a well-rounded education but to provide them with a set of specialized skills” (Schiro, 2009, 85). According to Pinar (1994) this model for education, which embodies the “factory model” in praxis, has turned the classroom into a highly unpleasant and unproductive environment for teachers and students, causing more than a few teachers to

retreat into the apparent safety of their own subjectivities. But in doing so, they have abdicated their professional authority and ethical responsibility for the curriculum they teach. They have been forced to abdicate this authority by the bureaucratic protocols that presumably hold them “accountable,” but which in fact, render them unable to teach (4).

Zeichner (2003), writing on recruiting, preparing, and retaining qualified teachers, addresses deficiencies associated with the *professionalization agenda*, which as stated, represents the “current incarnation of what has been referred to as the social efficiency tradition of reform in teacher education –

the quest to establish a profession of teaching through the articulation of a knowledge base for teachers based on educational research and professional judgment” (498). This agenda is propelled by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Commission on Teacher’s and America’s Future (NCTAF), the National Council of American Teacher Education (NCATE), and the Holmes Group and Partnership. The *professionalization agenda* pushes for universal standards that determine teacher excellent, and as a system, “addresses teachers’ abilities to display certain knowledge, dispositions, and perfections thought to be necessary for effective teaching” (498). Because the federal government, private foundations, and accrediting agencies are playing major roles in “nationalizing educational policies,” a yawning chasm exists between those who draft and push for the implementation of education standards, many of whom are not remotely involved with education, and the actual lived sphere of the curriculum (Spring, 2001, 201).

The *professionalization agenda* bases the validity of educational standards on the decisions of panels of experts and scholars, there is a “failure to establish clear links in teacher standards and pupil learning even as broadly defined,” and as a result, critics argue that “performance based teacher education is of little consequence” (Zeichner, 2003, 498-299). As related to the issue of alienation in education, Zeichner raises an important point regarding the fact that experienced teachers are becoming more hesitant to work in teacher education programs because “they are asked to write performance indicators and rubrics and to examine their courses to see if they are covering what will be covered on the state content exams” (501). Along with public education, teacher education programs are also grounded in the *product-process* model of education, and are thus creating the identical problem in higher education that exists on the levels of elementary and secondary education, which Apple (2004) describes as a situation wherein the “tail of the test wags the dog of the teacher” (174). Educators in institutions of higher learning are unable to freely select and organize curriculum content and pedagogy, which might benefit from their insight, experience, and sense of better judgment concerning the best ways to educate teachers because they have been absolved of the responsibility of writing and implementing the curriculum. As Zeichner states, this type of standard based educational program for teachers does not lead to better learning, and that the clear and present danger is already upon us, because teacher education is

turning performance based teacher education into a purely mechanical implementation activity that has lost sight of any real purpose and of the need to constantly step back from the daily grind of implementation to ask hard questions about what is being accomplished and for whose benefit (502)

Diamond (2008) stresses yet another aspect of educator and student alienation from the curriculum, namely, the manner in which “high stakes testing” is negatively effecting both curriculum content and pedagogical methods. Diamond states that teacher and student accountability and performance on standardized tests has changed the face of education, e.g., Illinois State Standards directly effect “instructional content (the knowledge and skills that teachers teach) and pedagogy (how teachers teach that content)” (293). Since the bulk of the curriculum is grounded in the content of standardized tests, based on the Board of Education’s mandates, the context of the learning environment, and subsequently those who teach and learn, is being adversely affected in the following ways: First, there is a narrow focus of curriculum content, e.g., Diamond sights a current rise in privileging math and language arts over other subjects such as science and social studies. Next, there is a narrow focus within these areas that are privileged, e.g., only certain aspects of math and language arts are highlighted. Finally, there is a significant amount of class time devoted to test preparation, e.g., teachers are not only drilling students using the content of tests, they are also reproducing the stultifying “testing atmosphere” in the classroom, all in the name of “accountability.”²

² Although Diamond’s findings show that the effect of high stakes testing has a greater effect on curriculum content than pedagogy, Pike (2003) writing on the authentic aspects of teaching English, or literature, indicates that a major change in

According to Smith (2011), standardized testing in education represents the process of “erasing social difference,” which in philosophical terms might be likened to the process of “reification,” whereby the abstract, generalized categories education creates, as they emerge by means of inductive reasoning from standardized scores, in terms of student “ability,” “achievement,” and “intelligence,” assume the objective and substantial characteristics of “real,” existing transcendent/transcendental categories of human Being, and to the detriment of students and educators “differences in language, opportunity, familiarity, education, and safety are somehow forgotten” (93). The problem of alienation in education is duplicitous and it unfolds in a vicious and circular manner, engendering an insidious process of codependence. Instructors are increasingly alienated from what might serve as legitimate or authentic curriculum; for teachers entering the field are slaves to institutions governed by pre-determined standards of achievement. Institutions are then filtering ill-prepared (alienated) teachers into a system that is governed in much the same way, namely, by standards and competencies established by bureaucratic agencies that are at a remove from authentic educational purposes and practices. Teachers are thus alienated in two-fold manner, both from the “standardized” curriculum they are now forced to teach and the students who cannot relate to what is being taught.

2. The Phenomenological Understanding of Education: Authentic Being-in-the-World

Contemporary education, as I have presented it, is forging “subjects” in terms of reified inauthentic categorizations, and in doing so, and here is my philosophical concern, there is also a loss, or, in terms that are perhaps more appropriate, a *forgetting* or *covering-over*, of authentic *phenomenological subjecthood* occurring. Educators, unfamiliar with philosophical origins, usually trace the problem of “standardization” and “accountability” in education, as it emerges from *social efficiency*, to positivism and the rise of scientism in the post-industrialized age of advanced technology. However, if we look to the modern tradition in philosophy that branches out and breaks off from Husserl’s phenomenological science (*Logical Investigations*), i.e., the “existential-phenomenological” tradition, the problem I have identified is understood in terms of the “forgetting” of our ontological roots and is commonly traced back to the metaphysics of Plato (*metaphysics of presence*) and moves forward through the Christian philosophy of Descartes. For the purpose of this paper and for the sake of brevity I focus on one thinker among many who has addressed this problem in detail, namely, Heidegger.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger (1962) identifies what he calls the *forgetting*, or *covering-over*, of the original “phenomenological,” or authentic, sense of self (*Dasein*). Heidegger claims that the ontological sense of existence is always present to our various activities and modes of comportment. “Dasein’s Being is an issue for it in a definitive way,” writes Heidegger, “and Dasein comports itself towards it in the mode of average everydayness, even if this is only the mode of fleeing *in the face* of it and forgetfulness *thereof*” (69/44). Here, Heidegger is referencing the *ontological difference* between Being and being, or the crucial, and long forgotten authentic distinction in metaphysics between a being (as a thing or entity) and its Being (the way of its unfolding, the “how” of its existence). Our phenomenological sense of selfhood is associated with the second conception of Being, and this represents the ontological aspects of our lives that the history of philosophy as it has been taken up within the tradition in education, within which we are immersed, engenders this forgetfulness.

pedagogy is evident when educators are forced to approach literature exclusively from the perspective of the Either/Or epistemological framework. Pike observes that English teaching is being reduced to a calculative and “explicit” endeavor, wherein teaching is akin to a technology, or “vehicle which delivers a subject in an efficient and effective manner, where rote analysis and explicit teaching are all that appear to be required” (92). In effect, English teaching, which should unfold as interpretation, along the lines of hermeneutic discourse, is being reduced to a didactic system of delivery, and so in reading Pike there is the sense that pedagogy (at least as it relates to teaching literature, which interesting enough, Diamond claims is now being privileged in the “High Stakes” curriculum) is in fact impacted in a severely detrimental way. See also, Magrini, J. M. (2012). “Worlds Apart in the Curriculum: Heidegger, Technology, and the Poietic Attunement of Literature,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44 (5) 500-521.

Contemporary education, as a spawn of positivism, haunted by the specter of Platonic metaphysics, obscures, or *covers-over*, the more primordial, ontological sense of selfhood associated with the Being of students and educators. For Heidegger, the *covering-over* of the ontological aspects of our lives marks the necessity for a return to the original questioning of our Being, which might allow us to transcend the grip of positivistic explanations of history and the tradition, which serves as our “master,” which blinds us through what it “transmits” and causes us to “forget” that our lives have an ontological origin, which then becomes inaccessible, and beyond, in a mode of double-concealment, “makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand” (43/21). The tradition in education that is driven by the concern with beings and permanent presence over the ontological meaning of Being, “blocks our access to those primordial ‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part genuinely drawn” (43/21). Thus, we simply take our inherited ways of viewing the world, ways of conceiving and enacting education, as self-evident. As stated, our ways of doing things and viewing humans and the world get solidified, codified and we become oblivious to the fact that we have the power to change things, we forget “the most elementary conditions which would alone enable [us] to go back to the past in a positive manner and make it productively [our] own” (43/21).

We have forgotten the most original ways in which we exist, i.e., we have forgotten the sense of *phenomenological selfhood* that defines us, not in terms of a thing or being, but rather in terms of an individual with unique and indeterminate possibilities who, in the most primordial moments of worldly dwelling, demonstrates a solicitous sense of care for its existence. Bonnett (2001), writing on the phenomenological aspects of education, echoes the above sentiments when stating that the current “predisposition to regard *outcomes* of education as definable in advance of the *process* of education” engenders a deterministic system of education that obscures authentic *subject-hood* and we lose sight of the fact that humans are “individual centers of consciousness capable of relating to the world in ways that have personal meaning, for this is essential to human being against some sort of mechanized and depersonalized being” (30). In short, there is a loss of ownership of the learning process on the part of both educator and student; ironically, by means of education, we are losing sight of what it means to be truly human, and the inauthentic notion of the self that education grounded in the philosophy of *social efficiency* is fostering is both “phenomenologically untenable and educationally stultifying” (Bonnett, 2001, 357).

Moving beyond Bonnett, I suggest that that the ontological understanding of the human being as *Being-in-the-world* with others should precede curricular discourse for determining the overarching purposes, aims, and goals of education. Traditionally, the essence of education is located in epistemological concerns, e.g., asking, what forms of knowledge are most reliable and hence valuable? However, phenomenological research claims that ontological concerns are antecedent to any and all systematic considerations of epistemology in education, focusing more on the view of the human and the unfolding of its *Being-in-the-world*, which includes, of course, ways of knowing and learning, which are derivative of the more primordial ways of human dwelling: In short, phenomenology is concerned first and foremost with a view to the human and only secondarily with technical, systematic questions of knowledge. I now move to formalize a reconceived notion of *phenomenological self hood* as it relates to inspiring a view towards authentic education as it emerges from: (1) Sartre’s phenomenological description of *Being-for-itself* and the notion of freedom and the concomitant burden of responsibility, which opens the potential for our authentic projects and allows for the manifestation of the unique values we bring into existence through autonomous choice, and (2) Heidegger’s phenomenological (fundamental) ontology of *Dasein* (“there-being”) and the ontological understanding of *Dasein’s* “care-structure,” which grounds the deep, solicitous care we demonstrate for our Being and the Being of others. Attempting to return to the grounds of human existence in order to philosophically define the human in terms of its untapped ontological-existential possibilities, I consider common themes or patterns in the phenomenological descriptions and interpretations of Sartre and Heidegger, which might provide insight into the various modes-of-Being that potentially define and give structure to our embodied conscious worldly existence, as the essence of our *Being-in-the-world* with others.

Sartre (1986) states that the main tenet of existentialism is reducible to the epigram, “existence precedes and commands essence,” which succinctly represents the ontological understanding of the human being set within a critique of essentialism in Western philosophy (438). Any analysis of Sartre must begin and end with the interrelated notions of freedom, responsibility, and the “creation” of values. The human is for Sartre *Being-for-itself* (*entre-pour-soi*), while all other aspects of the world are *Being-in-itself* (*entre-ea-soi*). The human is free and *for-itself* because she is self-questioning and can envision a life-project, or “fundamental project,” that emerges through the exercise of her autonomy in relation to *facticity* within what Sartre terms “the situation”. There is always the potential, barring the single fatality of death, of assessing, reassessing, and re-defining our lives, this because of the ontological structure of freedom itself, which is a necessary condition for the enactment of our freedom in any and all situations, within the lived experience of our life. Morris (2005) states that being free within particular situations refers to “the fact that the situation is a condition for, though not a limitation on, our freedom” (144).

“To be free,” writes Sartre (1986), “is not to choose the historical world in which one arises – which would have no meaning – but to choose oneself in the world whatever this might be” (668). When born into the world, or *thrown-into-the-world*, the historical milieu we enter is not of our choosing, it is literally given to us in advance as heritage. This is something we cannot change, but can work with, in that we can determine its meaning for us and re-value it if we so choose. This represents for Sartre, according to Sherman (2006), the dialectical aspects of subject formation, or the manner in which Being is revealed by intuition, which is “the perspective of the subject that must actively make itself in history rather than the perspective of the subject that is wholly made by history” (104). Other aspects of *facticity* would include the laws of nature, the historical world with its scientific limits, the genetic limits of our physiology, and the past choices we have made as *having-been*. Sartre even includes family and community to this notion of *facticity*. However, *facticity*, “far from being a danger to freedom, resolves only in enabling it to arise as freedom” (621). *Facticity* might be understood as marking out the horizons, or limits, that allows for authentic freedom to manifest in the first instance. Initially, our choices are made possible there is a convergence of freedom (as human *transcendence*) and *facticity*.

Sartre (1986) writes of the *freedom toward* the enactment of a “fundamental project,” which always involves “nothingness,” or the *negatite*, because in the present situation we are always seeking to bring into existence that which has not-yet been chosen or given form, and all authentic action “necessarily implies as its condition the recognition of a ‘desideratum,’ or lack, and absence” (560). Morris (2005) claims that for Sartre, *nothingness* is duplicitous in nature, involving a “double nihilation”: First, the ideal end or goal exists is conceived in futural terms as that which is not-yet enacted, and represents *nothingness* in the present moment, while the present moment also shows up as lacking (*nothingness*) that particular “something” in terms of the futural goal or ideal end (148). According to Sherman (2006), for Sartre, “Nothingness is not a transcendental foundation but rather arises within Being itself” (96). As stated, freedom is directed toward our *fundamental project*, which “constitutes the person’s – totally individual and changeable – essence” (Morris, 2005, 154). We are utterly responsible for our “fundamental project” and the enactment of our own unique possibilities that arise through its creation, and this project is always bound up in important ways with others, because while choosing a world the human is also choosing, or creating, the values that give meaning to it. The values that the *for-itself* brings into existence also affect others, and so there is a great burden of responsibility associated with the authentic exercise of one’s freedom.³

³ It must be noted that this notion of the “burden of freedom” (as it is presented in Sartre’s 1945 public address, *Existentialism as a Humanism*) in relation to other people appears to overcome the problem associated with the mode of Being-for-others in Sartre’s philosophy as expressed within *Being and Nothingness*, for it tends to outstrip, or at least gloss over, the inevitable state of “conflict” into which all interpersonal relationships ultimately fall. Sherman (2006) sheds light on this issue regarding *Being-for-others* when stating, “Being-for-itself is, therefore, basically a relation, and in addition to being mediated by its relation to being-in-itself, being-for-itself is mediated by its relation to others [...] As the indispensable condition of making the for-itself an object for itself, others are responsible for the development of the empirical ego” (113). Sherman goes on to add that there is inevitable conflict and tension within our relations with others because “our individual projects of founding ourselves invariably conflict on account of the mutual objectification that this process involves” (113-114).

If we turn from this responsibility, Sartre (1948) claims that we are living in *bad faith*, which in certain instances amounts to turning ourselves and other human beings into objects, or the *in-itself*, things with immutable essences lacking embodied, conscious potential. Thus, we must be cautious and clear when making choices, for all actions are bound up with a process of personal valuation, but this valuing transcends mere subjectivity when we are choosing projects that involve others, e.g., the creation of institutions, states, nations, and the like: “And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men” (471). Thus when we express our values, we are at once informing the Other, “I value X, you too *should* value X.” So, we must always act with the understanding that in significant ways we are ethically responsible for the Other’s Being. When “creating” values, we are engaged in reassessing, reinterpreting, and either accepting or rejecting the values that have, in many ways, been passed along to us through our emersion in the world and by way of our heritage, which forms one of the horizons of our *having-been*. If we accept, or choose, these values as part of the *status quo*, we are not authentically exercising our freedom, and hence, living in *bad faith*, resisting the burden of freedom and making excuses for our imagined lack of autonomy. Since the latter portion of this explication of Sartre concerned the human’s responsibility for others, I deepen this line of thought by turning to the philosophy of Heidegger in order to further elucidate what human responsibility entails when thinking about human communities, history, and destiny.

In Heidegger’s (1962) fundamental ontology, “care,” in terms of the human’s *care-structure*, is instantiated within the “formal existential totality of *Dasein*’s ontological structural whole” (237/192). Care situates the human being in the world temporally, as the stretching out of the *Dasein* from its birth to its death, in such a way that both its own Being and the Being of others become issues for it. The understanding of care is linked inextricably with the enactment of *Dasein*’s authentic Being-with others: “Selfhood is to be discovered existentially only in *Dasein*’s authentic ability-to-be a self, that is to say, in the authenticity of *Dasein*’s Being as care” (369/322). When dealing with others, our sense of concern should manifest as care (*Sorge*) and in particular, care as *Fursorge*, or solicitude that “cares-for” the other, and this represents not only a respect for and preservation of the other’s freedom, it also represents the call for a resolute understanding of the responsibility we must shoulder when helping to the make the other’s freedom an authentic possibility. When caring for entities in the world that are not like *Dasein*, we demonstrate concern (*Besorgen*), e.g., when encountering *present-at-hand* entities. It would be inauthentic to show mere concern (*Besorgen*) for other human beings, and yet this is precisely what education grounded in the model for “accountability” and “standardization” appears to be doing. Huebner (1999) expresses precisely this concern when critiquing educational goals, aims, and objectives that are determined in advance of education, in this instance “educators too easy acceptance of the function of or the necessity for purposes or objectives has replaced the need for a basic awareness of his [temporality and] historicity, i.e., at a complete remove from the student’s temporality, her historicity conceived in terms of the “caring” communal destining of *Dasein*’s supreme, authentic manifestation of *Being-with* (132). Care, as *Fursorge*, is thus integral to *Dasein*’s living historically (*Geschichtlichkeit*) in an authentic manner, crucial to it enacting its collective destiny (*Geschick*).

Heidegger (1962) states that *Dasein*’s authentic temporal existence, as related to the three moments, or horizons, of the *care-structure*, expressed in terms of the fundamental character of our Being as “ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (the world) as Being-alongside entities which we encounter (within-the-world),” is an historical occurrence culminating in *Dasein*’s authentic destiny (293/249). While it is certain that we die alone, it is not the case that we enter the world in the self-same manner, for we are born into a family and community, we share, as part of our *thrownness*, a common lineage and heritage, and this element of our Being discloses our factual possibilities through our authentic historical comportment, or *historizing*. When authentic *Dasein* enacts its possibilities, projecting itself toward the future, its heritage approaches from out of the indeterminate future and is taken up in “repetition,” by enacting the possibilities “it has inherited and yet chosen” (435/384). However, the mere acknowledgement of the past does not constitute the authentic understanding of heritage in terms of *historicality*, rather *historicality* involves choosing to accept or reject, through reinterpretation and

appropriation, the decisions and choices of our forebears, the collective *ethos* of the community, in light of our unique and ownmost potential-for-Being. Thus, there is the notion of “burden” of autonomous choice also present to Heidegger’s fundamental ontology as associated with the “repetition” of Dasein’s heritage. The concept of destiny, the pinnacle of Dasein’s authentic existence, refers to the shared, collective *historizing* of a community, through ecumenical endeavors that include education in community with others, in which people draw from a collective heritage and fatefully enact their existence through “communication” and “struggle”. Destiny is not merely a collection of individual fates, as it is guided in advance by the fact that Dasein’s existence is *Being-in-the-world* as *Being-with*. “Our fates have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world [...] Only in communicating and struggling does the power of destiny [*Geschick*] become free,” and our destiny is bound up with and in our “generation,” which makes up our “authentic historizing” (436/384-385).

3. Reclaiming Our Authentic *Being-in-the-World* as *Being-with-others*: Recovering of the Ontological Aspects of Education

What are the implications of the ontological-existential insight as described above for educators in the lived experience of the classroom of the public school, for educators in the *lived world* of the university who are engaged in teacher education programs? I suggest the ontological concerns that are at stake manifest across the curriculum through the organization, or *bringing-into-existence*, of the context of an authentic experience of learning. My focus will not be directed on curriculum content, on the subjects that are included or excluded, i.e., the knowledge-centered aspects of education. Rather, I am concerned with focusing on learner-centered and community-centered aspects of education along with the crucial aspects of authentic classroom management, which includes pedagogy when seeking to understand the types of things that authentic teachers should know about the education of their students. It is the case that when educators are developing a curricular vision they are concerned with the knowledge of the students and how they learn, the *content-knowledge* that students are to be learning, and the manner in which student learning might be clearly, cogently, and accurately assessed in relation to the goals and aims of the curriculum in order to evaluate the processes of education.

However, as suggested earlier, developing an authentic curricular vision does not begin with attempting to provide answers to the foregoing “epistemological” curriculum concerns, but rather with an analysis of the ontological constitution of the human as related to the processes of learning about the world, which is to say, we should first be concerned with the types of questions being formulated. Prior to concerning ourselves with answers or solutions to problems, educators should return to an original understanding of the questions they are asking and encouraging students to ask. For example, when formulating what might be termed “original” questions, we embark on an *inquiry* as opposed to an *investigation*. With respect to the latter, it is terminated by the answer provided; as related to the former, the problem is not terminated but enriched by means of revelation and understanding (Gelvin, 1979, 81). When asking original, or fundamental, questions, we learn that answers do not always follow the lines of logical argumentation and that the truth revealed defies standards of deductive correctness. As related specifically to our educational practices, Heidegger (2000) states that the original questions that educators should be concerned with formulating emerge only when they are “not being seduced by overhasty theories, but instead experiencing things as they are in whatever may be nearest” (32/23). Original questions are of a dual-nature: they are *transformative* in that they seek to reveal, but at the same time inspire in us the preservation of and care for the basic question-worthy status of such things as love, existence, transcendence, freedom, human potential, and authentic education. Original questioning “pushes us into the open [...] and transforms itself (as does every genuine questioning), and casts a new space over and through everything (32/23).

Thus, the question I pose is of a special kind, which is antecedent to any formalized curriculum plan, and it is not a question that admits of an easy answer, for it is the type of question that evokes the mode of the infinitival as it attempts to elucidate the essential movement of the experience of learning, intimately bound up with inquiry of a philosophical nature. Pursuant to the end of understanding what

authentic teachers should know about education and pedagogy, as opposed to asking the question, “What *is* an effective teacher?” “What *is* an efficient curriculum?” Or, “What *is* an ideal democratic student?” I ask the more primordial question, “How is it in the first instance that an authentic education unfolds in its essence in relation to the unfolding of the human’s Being-in-the-world?” Addressing this ontological concern, the reader is encouraged, in a resolute moment of reflexivity, to return to the lived world of the classroom as an ontological context for learning in the *originary* sense, envisioning her future role as educator enlightened by the phenomenological understanding of the ontological structures that give form and open the potential for meaning to arise in our existence through the processes of *real* education. This final section is devoted to inspiring the educator’s transcendence of the alienated state of education by means of formulating a response to the foregoing query. The ontological-existential structures introduced above, as they emerge from the philosophy of Sartre and Heidegger, will be interpreted in terms of their concrete enactment in educational *praxis*, through formalizing the manner in which authentic education might be conceived, and from this interpretation, an authentic curriculum is intimated through the vision emerging from the inquiry.

Education includes the creation and sustaining of a fecund and intimate environment (or world) for learning that engenders a sense of responsibility for the values that emerge through the activities in which educators and students engage. The classroom environment that fosters and nurtures an atmosphere of existential authenticity must be grounded in the notion of a free, responsible, and caring human being, and this phenomenological understanding gleaned from approaching education by means of asking fundamental questions about existence might serve as the guiding framework, or *Gestell*, marking or sketching out the appropriate horizons within which the authentic occurrence of learning transpires. Educators seeking to promote authentic learning experiences should allow students to *feel-at-home-in-a-world* of learning that is, in great part, of their own making, in terms of their *fundamental projects*. It is possible to conceive of the curriculum in terms of a *fundamental project*, as the organizing structure that directs the learning, but is itself, as of yet, incomplete, for it is “groundless,” bound up as it is with the students’ indeterminate *futural* potential. It is possible to state that education, as our *fundamental project*, is rooted in the choices educators and students make, it is always the “original choice which originally creates all reasons and all motives,” and our *fundamental project* as educators “arranges the world and its meaning, its instrumental-complexities, and its coefficient of adversity” (Sartre, 1986, 465).

Every *for-the-sake-of-which* giving direction and form to an authentic education, e.g., choice of curriculum, choice of content, choice of instruction and assessment, selection of knowledge that we value or devalue, is directed toward the fulfillment of our *fundamental project*. Thus, the phenomenological understanding of *being human* inspires the educator’s *fore-knowing* into the authentic “formation” of the classroom because it is always already situated in the ontological understanding of the student as human Being, as *Being-for-itself*. Through this preparatory insight into the Being of students, educators are readied to respond authentically to the ever-changing, ever-evolving needs, wants, and desires of all students, which emerge through the understanding that change, *becoming*, and transcendence are integral components of our lives, in terms of a way of life, and this is essential to all authentic teaching and learning. All situations, all learners, hold the potential to be otherwise, but this is something that is either forgotten or ignored in much of contemporary education, and such an authentic understanding of the student as a locus of freedom and the unique, as of yet, untapped potential for enacting a free, unique, and meaningful life-project, as I suggest, might be expressed in terms of Sartre’s philosophy.

Educators should be skeptical of “empirical” models for curriculum making such as the Tyler (1949) rationale, which through techniques of behavior modification leads students toward the achievement of curriculum goals and aims that have been established in advance for their education. In addition, to reiterate a point made earlier regarding “reification” in relation to Sartre’s existentialism, when we standardize, label, and categorize students and prospective teachers preparing to enter the field based on rigid standards that are pre-determined in advance of the curriculum, we are stripping students and educators of their ontological sense of *self hood*, or existence as *Being-for-itself* and reducing them to mere objects, to *Being-in-itself*, to things equivalent to the chairs, tables, desks, books, and things, or

artifacts, that fill up our classrooms that have immutable essences but do not hold the power to transform their existence. There must be ways of teaching and formulating the direction of our educational practices in which students are participants and co-creators in the process of learning and the determination thereof in ways that maximize their freedom through the enactment of unique possibilities that contribute simultaneously to the context of education, the formation of the student, and the emergence of authentic standards of education, where the goals and aims for teaching, rather than being determined in advance of the curriculum, are imminent, or emergent, *as* potential in the authentic unfolding of the curriculum within the classroom. Greene (1995), who has written much on the subject of existentialism and education, also argues for the power of student autonomy in contributing to the authentic “dialogue about educational purposes, standards and common learning,” and claims that fundamental to the formation of our educational purposes must be “the achievement of human freedom within a human community” (184).⁴

Authentic education is also concerned with the educator’s knowledge of the subject matter and the most effective ways to teach the subject matter, and these issues are undoubtedly crucial to effective teaching and learning. However, putting these aforementioned components of teaching aside, our focus should first be on the understanding of “how” authentic education unfolds by exploring the educator’s understanding of knowledge as it relates to the ontological aspects of the student’s Being, i.e., becoming aware of whether or not educators are operating “within the framework of a crude subjective-objective dichotomy that encourages passivity and inhibits” the thoughts of both teachers and students (Detmer, 2006, 83). Education grounded in *social efficiency philosophy* tends to favor the positivist notion of “objective knowledge” (and this is clearly the epistemological model for standardized exams!), which means that in education there exists but one answer, the “correct” answer, which can be verified and validated through the application of the appropriate technique or methodology. This epistemological view presupposes a specific form of pedagogy that is direct and didactic, wherein education unfolds exclusively in terms of monologue or lecture. Detmer finds Sartre helpful on this epistemological point in education, for Sartre’s philosophy questions the validity of the simplistic subject-object dichotomy at work in much of philosophy’s tradition.

“Sartre” according to Detmer, “is everywhere concerned to emphasize the importance of freedom and of subjectivity, even in connection with such seemingly objective domains as mathematics and the physical sciences, without, in doing so, ever lapsing into a crude, facile sort of relativism” (84). As opposed to didactic techniques such as monologue, where the educator embodies a “possessor” of objective, immutable knowledge to be transferred through a system of “delivery” to students who are viewed as empty vessels, education should unfold primarily by means of discourse (dialogue), which stresses the importance of the student’s subjective existence and represents the search for meaning through a process of inquiry and knowledge-construction, or *meaning making*, in fellowship. This opens the space for student participation in a communal environment for learning, for in the processes of asking original questions about not only the material they are engaging, but also their lives, their “autobiographies,” regarding various and potential meanings, students are at once assuming the roles of learners, teachers, and assessors and, in a true Sartrean sense, “creators of values,” contributing to determining both the validity and value of the learning, in the context of their lessons.

⁴ Greene (1995), however, does not talk explicitly about the process of allowing goals and aims to organically emerge from the curriculum in progress, but it is possible, in line with the phenomenological method, to imagine goals and aims for the curriculum emerging through a process of hermeneutic interpretation. Following a “spiral structure,” rather than a linear model for curriculum-making, educators begin with a fore-conception, or presupposition, concerning goals and outcomes, but these goals and outcomes are fluid and protean in nature, they change, evolve, develop, and are reworked as knowledge and understanding of the student and her needs, desires, and abilities are revealed and “interpreted” by the educator. Following a *process-product model*, goals and aims set forth at the outset are thus subject to revision and elaboration as the educator works to deepen and clarify her understanding of that which emerges from the learning experience. It must be noted that the goals and aims should always begin at the existential level of the ‘lived experience’ of the student in her environment. See also the existential study, Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as Stranger: Educational Philosophy for the Modern Age*. Wadsworth: California.

[A]s teachers we should be careful not to reinforce, especially through our assessment methods, the idea that education is primarily a matter of passively memorizing the ideas of others. Rather our challenge should be to help our students achieve genuine *understanding* – to encourage them to respond, critically and creatively, to the ideas of others and, ultimately, to develop their own ideas” (Detmer, 2006, 85, emphasis in original).

As evident from Sartre’s philosophy as outlined, bound up with freedom is the supreme burden of responsibility, which both student and educator must assume. However, the contemporary state of education, as earlier described, in fact works to abolish the students’ freedom outright, and so with the loss of freedom it follows that any authentic sense of responsibility for the curriculum, learning, and their unique potentiality-for-Being is also lost. This occurs because we are telling students in advance what forms of knowledge are most valuable, what specific “facts” and “skills” are absolutely necessary for mastery, and then we are handing over to them the curriculum in the form of a pre-packaged finished product. Education of this type is not intellectually demanding from the perspective of deep meditative rumination, as the foundation for all critical thought, nor is it personalized in any sense of the term, so it should not be surprising that students fail to demonstrate an authentic sense of responsibility, they are not beholden to the material educators are presenting in the curriculum. They are being forced to assume the *faux* sense responsibility for things learned that are not of their own choosing or making, things that are not related in any authentic manner to their own unique fundamental *projects*. We are doing a great disservice to students by relieving them of both the burden of freedom and responsibility as related to their unique lives. Because every single thread forming the student’s web of meanings comprising her present and potential world, every action, every *for-the-sake-of-which*, must be done in the service of her unique *fundamental project* if it is to be authentic.

In terms that are familiar to educators, the situation described above manifests a lack of student ownership of to the process of learning, and this I suggest is a problem of monumental proportion. If students and educators are to ever experience the full weight of their freedom and responsibility, they must take seriously what Sartre indicates about those who ignore, or *flee-in-the-face* of, their responsibility as autonomous agents: When in “anguish” we shirk the responsibilities of enacting our freedom, we are living an existence of *bad faith*, for we must not seek to, nor should we impose this condition on others, relinquish the burden of responsibility that has been given over to us in light of our being condemned to an existence that is bound up with autonomous choice and action, When living authentically, we “cannot help escape the feeling of [our] total and deep responsibility” for our lives and fundamental project (Sartre, 1986, 472) It is clear from the foregoing diagnosis of the crisis in contemporary education, educators must shoulder much, if not all, of the burden for creating the inauthentic learning institutions that are exemplary of *bad faith*. There must be a move by teachers to engender an authentic sense of responsibility, or ownership, in the classroom, which accompanies the informed choices that our students make in the process of learning. This relates directly to the manner in which the learning unfolds, i.e., the “how” of an authentic education and the pinnacle role that the teacher must assume when working towards structuring and managing an authentic classroom in order to facilitate and allow for a deep and true sense of ownership in student learning to once again emerge, and hence, revive the all-important sense of responsibility for the unique and authentic choices they make.⁵

⁵ It is possible to make the claim, in light of what I have presented earlier in the paper, that since teachers are alienated from the authentic notion of education (curriculum) in a duplicitous sense, that the values they are modeling might not be freely chosen, and in fact, are being forced upon them by social-political-economic ideological factors governing the institution of education. In short, it is the system that has stripped teachers of their ontological *Being-for-Itself*. This would undoubtedly represent a post-modern critique of social structures, institutions, and human subjecthood. However, if we are to read Sartre correctly, and take his claims about *bad faith* to their logical conclusion, to make such a claim, that one is a mere victim, or unwilling and reluctant participant in the processes of social construction, amounts to the admittance of living a life of *bad faith*. It is for this reason that I have focused on the teacher as one who is in full-ownership of her choices and the subsequent values she brings into existence and models.

Sartre's concept of *nothingness* as earlier introduced will prove helpful when envisaging the space of education as the locus of potential, growth, and evolution. "If man as the existentialist conceives him is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing" (Sartre, 1986, 471). This notion includes responsibility for the learning environment that students and educators have formed as well as a responsibility for its future enactment, by means of speculating on how the learning environment might be improved in more authentic ways through collective choice. It is crucial to grasp that the present structure of worlds within the classroom represents what Sartre calls the "given," that which has been brought into existence through the autonomous choices we have made, and the Being of both educators and students "causes there to be a given by [first] breaking with it and illuminating it in the light of the not-yet-existing," and that which does not yet exist, represents our unique futural potential (615). The notion of *nothingness* also relates to learning, knowledge, and meaning, i.e., what we already know and what we seek to know in the future as it relates to the *fundamental project* of education to which we are contributing. If educators view the context of the classroom authentically, a sense of *nothingness* must be acknowledged, they must remain open to student potential, which is the understanding of those elements of human existence, as *Being-for-itself*, that have not yet been enacted, and can never be fully determined in advance of the *situation* at a remove from the lived world of the classroom, the locus of the merging of *transcendence* and *facticity*. To teach and to learn is to be as "projection" toward the future, with the knowledge that learning occurs when what is (a current lack of knowledge) is rejected in the move to bring about a condition that is not as of yet present (future erudition as actualized potential brought about by our inquiries). Reading Sartre we are reminded that no educational program, no curriculum, no lesson, no method of pedagogy, no schema for classroom management, despite the amount of research poured into its justification is determinate, for he is adamant that that no current state of affairs (including education as a national institution) can influence the projection of our freedom, nor can any factual state "determine consciousness [*Being-for-itself*] to apprehend it as a *negatite* or as a lack" (615).

When discussing the importance of the awareness of the values we are choosing in the classroom, recall that Sartre claims our actions affect the lives of those around us. It is crucial to understand that in choosing our values in the present moment of action, in the *situation*, and "creating the man we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be" (Sartre, 1986, 427). Thus, educators assume a double-responsibility when choosing values, for not only do they establish values in the present, they are simultaneously bound up with projecting these values upon others, and in an undeniable ethical sense, making a powerful normative declaration that others *should* assume the values they are endorsing. Here, I focus exclusively on the educator and the awareness that she is at all times modeling values for students along with embodying the collective values of the educational programs that she endorses. For if the context of the classroom represents the human's communal, social, and ecumenical *fundamental project* of learning in microcosm, the teacher must be vigilant at all times about what her choices (personal and educational) indicate about the values she is endorsing ("creating") and projecting onto students. This includes everything from the physical structure of the classroom's environment, the way the room is arranged, the style of instruction, the manner of assessment, to the tone and timbre of her discipline. In addition, simply the manner in which she expresses her thoughts and emotions to the students is indicative of her value system. While Sartre is clear that our values are really groundless, for without God, the luminous realm of intrinsic values falls, evaporates, it is perhaps safe to say that an educator choosing and modeling an authentic existence would demonstrate the characteristics of an engaged, authentic learner, a person who genuinely functions as an "engaged" co-facilitator and co-participant in the process of learning, and as such, would be of great benefit to all students.⁶

⁶ Although I am not pursuing the issue here, there are certainly aspects of Sartre's existentialism that might be related with great success to *social reconstruction* and *critical pedagogy for social justice* in education. For the values we are "creating" and endorsing are never restricted to the classroom, they have an impact on the greater society and, most importantly, the potential that exists for its change. Education can help us "to live up to not only our moral and political responsibilities, but also our educational responsibilities to our students," who should be viewed in terms of autonomous agents of change" (Detmer, 2006,

Moving from Sartre's *existential-phenomenology* to Heidegger's *fundamental ontology*, it is the case that the authentic learner is in integral component of an authentic learning collective, whose *fundamental project* might be described in terms of a caring collective who are engaged in the ecumenical pursuit of their *destiny* as authentic learners. Caring for our own Being of that of others as a "primordial structural totality, lies before ["vor"] every factual 'attitude' and 'situation' of Dasein, and it does so existentially *a priori*; this means that it is always in them" (Heidegger, 1962, 238/193). In order to speak of a true community of learners in the Heideggerian sense, it must be understood as representing Dasein's authentic possibility as a "historical," communal being, because for Heidegger, when Dasein is readied through *Angst* and individuated for its authentic existence, there occurs the resolute openness to the understanding that its own Being is authentic (historical) only when in community with others, and this is referred to as *Mitsein* ("Being-with"). In Heidegger's analysis of the existential-ontological structures in relation to time (temporality), he writes about *Dasein's* authentic communal achievement, or its destiny, which is "fateful Dasein," or the authentic way in which the human "exists essentially in being with Others, its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny [*Geschick*]" (436 /384).⁷ In the classroom we are always already bound up with others in our ecumenical pursuit of learning, and to grasp the weight of this claim, Heidegger indicates that this social aspect to our Being is the center of our authentic *historicality*, and it is inextricably linked with the notion of solicitous care and temporality. The care of a solicitous nature might be understood as manifesting in the environment of the classroom, where the student's freedom is embraced and she is given space for both personal and communal growth within an environment that strives to assure that her own most *potential-for-Being* becomes *as* authentic possibility in communion with others within the learning experience.

Learning in community, learning within an intimate social context, is essential to an authentic education, and we return to Heidegger who indicates that the bond between the teachers and taught represents the primordial relationship wherein Dasein is in tune with its own Being in communion with the Being of the other, soul to soul, as it were, which allows learning to be *as* authentic learning. Importantly, each student brings to the learning context (as *having-been*, as *heritage*) a vast store of knowledge and personal experience, which holds the potential to make a valuable *futural* contribution to the communal learning. Communal learning, in an atmosphere of solicitous care unfolds through a process of knowledge construction, where the view to knowledge is primarily one of a *procedural* nature (constructivist), especially when dealing with the humanities, art, music, and the like. There is at once care for the communal archive of knowledge developing as a collective in the classroom, and care for the student's individual store of knowledge, as related to her own unique possibilities of existence, which grow and evolve in community with others who are also demonstrating a like-minded sense of care. Meaning is constructed within a shared horizon of learning wherein students' interpretations are composed of clusters of interpretations, and individual interpretations develop along with, and indeed

87). Our responsibility as educators might be enhanced by Sartre's philosophy, for in addition "to assisting our students in their preparation to fit into existing social, political, and economic structures, as so much of our educational system is currently geared toward doing, we, perhaps especially those of us who teach philosophy, need to encourage our students to think about how these structures might be significantly changed for the better" (87). Indeed, this is something I deal with when teaching Sartre and existentialism to my undergraduate students, for although Sartre is clear that values are "groundless," if we survey Sartre's life and works we can certainly see that he values human freedom within his championing of humanitarian causes. He has chosen these values as his own and is in a sense offering these to us as viable (albeit not intrinsically valuable) life-choices for our consideration – and hence, within Sartre's philosophy, my students and I find the inspiration for authentic ethical discussions.

⁷ In Huebner (1999), we find an educational scholar who, for the first time in the philosophy of education, confronts Heidegger's fundamental ontology head on. Huebner argues for what he refers to as the "individual-world dialectic" in his philosophy, which is related directly to Heidegger's notion of Dasein's authentic "historizing," in terms of Heritage, fate, and destiny in *Being and Time* Section 74. Huebner's claim is that philosophers of curriculum and those who design and make curriculum have neglected the authentic notion of time, or "temporality," in their work. For Huebner, temporality is experienced within the "back-and-forth" between individuals seeking to understand their world: "The springs or sources of temporality do not reside in the individual, but in conjunction between the individual and other individuals, their material objects, and other ways of thinking as they objectified in symbol and operation" (138).

because of, those with whom the student participates with in the process of learning. The communal character of learning, where knowledge emerges through the arduous but respectful process of accepting rejecting, refining validating and honing various interpretations that are offered up for debate, nurtures the students' problem-solving abilities through a process of self-discovery grounded in communicative discourse, or "conversation".

Students are engaged in the community of learning because their Being and the Being of others is an issue, and we might imagine the classroom embodying what Heidegger (2004) refers to as the "originary community," which represents Dasein's authentic dwelling in the world with others, its authentic *destiny*, which manifests as a possibility because of the way Dasein is grounded in the world as *Care*. There is a true sense of belonging in such an environment embracing *heritage* and students are beholden to the learning because the classroom or learning community is, "through each individual bound up in advance to something that binds and determines each individual by exceeding them," and what they are bound in advance to is the common, ecumenical goal of authentic learning as the authentic destining of both students and educators; authentic learning may be likened to the process of *historizing*, where what is given as *heritage* is taken up in "repetition" by the students and creatively interpreted anew, in relation to their unique and distinct *potentiality-for-Being* (74). This community of learning also unfolds as an "ethical dwelling," for as Brook (2010) states, the Being-with others in the authentic sense requires that "the practice of teaching should pursue the formation of an interpretive horizon of care within students' awareness of life that will cultivate in students the goal of caring relations" (61). Brook goes on to add that an

authentic or ethical education requires that the teacher-student relation serves as the basis for confronting ourselves and our lives [...] the teacher-student relationship is thus, I the first case, the practice of ethical formation in relation to the question of what it means to be human [...] teaching becomes the formation of authentic relations in so far as the teachers demonstrate, explain, and genuinely live out their "care" for students and their concern for the formation of students (62).

As related to Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the *heritage* that each student carries with her to the context of authentic learning, in addition to foreknowledge, the student also brings a diverse cultural background to the learning context, which has been given over to her in advance through her unique *heritage*, as a member of a family, community, and most importantly, a person with a distinct, and unalterable, culture ground. This authentic aspect of our Being, as *Being-with*, must not be overlooked, and functions as a valuable and indispensable contributory aspect of an authentic education, which seeks the formation of students in social contexts, welcoming diversity in learning and actively embracing the social, cultural, and linguistic background of students because these elements are inherent to their *Being-in-the-world* with a *heritage*.

Solicitude, according to Heidegger (1962), has two distinct forms, an inauthentic manifestation, wherein "it can, as it were, take away 'care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can *leap in* for him" (158/122). When this form of solicitude manifests in education we have an example of learning that is devoid of authentic care. Drawing on Heidegger, this taking away of the other's care might manifest in several ways in the classroom: First, in the form of a domineering educator, who assumes that students are inferior, and secondly, in the form of a dotingly overbearing teacher, one who may be good-hearted and well-intentioned, but is adverse to witnessing students struggling and is all too eager to step in at the most inopportune moments. Ultimately, she becomes an enabler to students who are dependent on her for their learning. In both cases, Heidegger indicates that what is actually occurring is that when we are "dominated" or "dependent," the notion of solicitous care degenerates into the type of concern we show objects, and "pertains for the most part to our concern with the ready-to-hand" (158/122). The authentic manifestation of care is described by Heidegger as

a kind of solicitude that does not so much leap in for the Other as *leap ahead* of him [ihm *vorausspringt*] in his existential potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his care but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time, This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care – that is, to the existence of the Other, not to a “*what*” with which he is concerned; it helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care and become free for it (159/122).

Dwyer, Prior, & Shargel (1988), writing on Heidegger, authenticity, and education present an accurate interpretation of how care might manifest in the act of teaching as the solicitous concern for the Being of students as essential learners. The authors suggest that this latter instance of authentic care is enacted by teachers who, “rather than doing the work for the students, leaps ahead and prepares the way for them” (147). Students should be given encouragement as they work through formulating their own answers and solutions to learning quandaries, in a moment of anticipation, as related to *fore-knowing*, the authentic teacher “should anticipate the obstacles to be encountered and, rather than remove, help the students to find what is necessary for them to overcome such problems themselves” (147).⁸

4. Conclusion

As stated at the outset, I believe that ontological insight into the human and education holds the potential to enrich professional development and improve the quality of our classroom teaching. However, there is resistance to the positive contribution that the type of theorizing represented in this essay might make to education, and this occurs along two lines: First, practitioners are wary of academics or curriculum scholars, at a remove from the day-to-day operations of the “lived classroom,” who are writing on educational issues from the supposed abstract heights of the university, speculating on educational reform by means of abstruse, impenetrable jargon. Secondly, education policy makers are wary of the potential application of such philosophical theorizing because it does not live on the epistemological plane of quantitative research associated with the “bureaucratic rational choice model,” which forms the foundation of what policy makers prefer to reference. Apple (2004) traces this propensity to resist philosophical methodology in educational policy making to the overarching anti-theoretical and anti-intellectual tendencies in the United States. For Apple, resistance is centered around the tradition of “aristocratic culture,” which is underdeveloped in the United States, and in general, there is disdain for what might be termed “elitism,” which means that “theoretically complex apparatuses like the kinds of ways of looking at the politics of education and curriculum that requires a great deal of discipline and study are actually seen as simply ‘mere theory’” of an impotent, vacuous nature, which is of no practical (or pragmatic) value in the day-to-day happenings of our schools (185).

Dall ‘Alba (2010) argues along similar lines, stating that such descriptions the we find in the phenomenological tradition, which take us into the ontological grounds of the human Being are viewed pejoratively by educators as abstruse, metaphysical speculation, and often “goes unacknowledged in theorizing and practicing relating to higher educational programs” (42). Clearly, one reason for the “anti-

⁸ Although I have quoted a scholarly work from the 1980s, it must be noted that Heidegger scholarship in education continues to grow. Willis (1991) wrongly dates the introduction of “American” phenomenology to curriculum studies at 1972, with the publication of *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (Pinar & Grumet), when in fact it was Dwayne Huebner that introduced phenomenology to the philosophy of education in the United States when in 1967 he read a paper at the Ohio State Curriculum Colloquium entitled, “Curriculum as Concern for Man’s Temporality,” which introduced not only phenomenology to educational philosophy, it also presented the first in depth treatment of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology as related to education (Vandenberg 1965 and DeSoto 1966 did write short articles for *Educational Theory* incorporating Heidegger’s ontological notion of death). Since that time such studies in education focused on Heidegger have become ubiquitous. See Peters, M. (2002) (Ed.) *Heidegger, Education, and Modernity*. New York, Rowman and Littlefield; Thomson, I. (2005). *Heidegger and Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Magrini, J. M. (2012) “Huebner’s Critical Encounter with the Philosophy of Heidegger in *Being and Time*: Learning, Understanding, and the Authentic Unfolding of History in the Curriculum.” *Kritike*, 5 (2), 123-155.

theoretical” attitude toward such philosophizing is the difficulty in adequately justifying it by means of traditional epistemological models, and like much of phenomenology it is subjected to the charge of epistemological subjectivism, or worse, relegated to theoretical scrapheap of obscurantism because it is untenable. However, as Morris (2005) argues, the charge of subjectivism and obscurantism leveled at the phenomenology is itself untenable as critique. Admittedly, there is no way in which to provide categorical objective verification for its claims because they emerge from descriptions of the lived experiences portrayed. However, this is not to indicate that these descriptions are limited to subjective ruminations occurring within the interior consciousness of an isolated ego to which readers have no legitimate epistemic access. Rather, in a manner unique to phenomenology, readers are “meant to *recognize* something in this description, a recognition which may be manifested in our spontaneity of relating” the descriptions contained within the work to our own world and occasions where we have had similar, if not identical, experiences (29). Morris goes on to add, that far from phenomenological “descriptions being untestable, we might say that our recognition is a *criterion of correctness* for a phenomenological description” (29).

For example, in the phenomenological educational research of Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1994), the “criterion of correctness” of which Morris writes extends beyond validation through recognition, and serves as testimony to the *authenticity* of all that is revealed through the phenomenological lens, which captures “the essence and resonance of the actors’ experience and perspective through the details of fiction and thought revealed in context” (12). The authors, in line with the theme of this essay, writing on “portraiture” as a methodological tool for conducting qualitative research, which is “framed by the traditions and values of the phenomenological paradigm,” express identical concerns with revealing and discovering “resonant universal themes” (13-14). As was my concern, I sought to highlight the common themes of ontology as they might be expressed through and within the enactment of our authentic modes of teaching and learning. However, it must be noted that the alternative paradigm for approaching education that I chose does not represent, despite the fundamental, ontological nature of the discussion, the entire picture of what authentic education should be. For as Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis rightly point out, researchers must always recognize their limitations, and their “inability to capture and present a total reality,” and thus our purposes must not be “complete and full representation, but rather the selection of some aspect of – or angle on – reality that would transform our vision of the whole” (5).⁹

Thus, I have attempted throughout to present an aspect of or view to education that is not readily available to research methods grounded in traditional empirical quantitative methods, in order to reveal, or tease out, an alternative vision of education as related to the question of the Being, or essence, of authentic teaching and learning, which might lead to a transfigured vision of teaching and learning – contributing to a renewed, invigorated *vision of the whole*. Although working from the critique of the standardization of education and professional development, I have refrained from compiling a list of new and improved standards and practices for teaching our students or teacher training, or specific directives aimed at more efficient teaching techniques or professional development, which are grounded in the above existential-ontological analysis; for to produce yet another rigorously outlined program of education is counter-productive to the meditative aims of this essay. Rather, focused on the forgotten ontological aspects of learning, I have attempted to speculate on ways in which teacher education might

⁹ Indeed, this phenomenological vision or insight into existence is one that is always situated at an ontological distance from the things it attempts to reveal and know – and this is precisely how Sherman (2006) describes Sartre’s epistemic position in relation to his ontological philosophy, i.e., to classify the “understanding” of Being we must approach Being in terms of it representing a “remainder,” an overflow, because it is recalcitrant to all epistemological moves to capture it in terms of “knowledge” in the traditional sense of the conscious subject “assimilating” objective reality: “I believe Sartre’s emphasis on a subject that is ‘constantly changing’ has far reaching implications. To be sure, unlike Husserl’s transcendental ego, which statically intuits essences from a privileged point of view, Sartre’s prereflective cogito, by virtue of its unity with positional consciousness, is inescapably in a changing world,” within a world that *flees in the face* of our best attempts to capture it and render it wholly present and understandable to consciousness (102).

inspire a move beyond the inauthentic constraints and limitations of the standards imposed on both teacher education programs and the public schools' curriculum.

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