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Worlds Apart in the Curriculum: Heidegger, Technology, and the *Poietic* Attunement of Art

Introduction

Margonis (1986) criticizes Heidegger's philosophy and those who would attempt to adopt his views for the purpose of thinking education because of the "abstract nature of his discussions," which suggest "proposals regarding our political, economic and educational lives from the place of metaphysical argumentation" (p. 125). To the contrary, Dwyer, et al (1988) claim the Heidegger's philosophy, "clearly suggests an educational theory" (p. 100). This, is perhaps an overly optimistic claim, for it glosses over the difficulty associated with plumbing the depths of Heidegger's vast corpus in order to speculate on the legitimate potential his philosophy has for contemporary educational practices. It is possible, I suggest, to find meaning in Heidegger's text as it relates to curriculum study, most specifically in the direction of conceiving educational practices that inspire lucid and legitimate thinking on our ontological potential as humans, which includes our unique possibilities as individuals understood in relation to our solicitous interpersonal relations with others with whom we share the world: Our *Being-in-the-world* in terms of *Being-with-others*.

This paper falls into three divisions, and unfolds in the attempt to: (1) understand what an authentic existence from an ontological perspective entails; (2) explicate the detrimental effects of *das Gestell*, or the *Enframed* "attunement" of modern technology, on our current educational practices and our ontological "potentiality-for-Being"; and (3) analyze literature and English teaching, forms of ontological education (inquiry), as potential means by which to overcome the negative effects of this "technological" trend in contemporary education through understanding what Heidegger wrote about the grounding *poietic* attunement of art. For according to Heidegger (1971), art opens worlds apart from the ordinary, the everyday; it holds the power to transform us by putting in touch with our "potentiality-for-Being." Indeed, the essence of art lies in "a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealedness of what is, and this means, of Being" (p. 72).

The Ontological Ground of Dasein and Fundamental Modes of Attunement

Heidegger uses the term *Dasein* to describe the human. This term is not psychological, biological, or anthropological in nature. Instead, *Dasein* denotes specifically the way of life, or Being, of the human. *Dasein* is unlike any other entity in the world. For *Dasein* is neither an object nor subject we hypostatize. As Heidegger (1971) writes, "When we designate this entity with the term *Dasein* ['there-being'], we are expressing not its 'what' (as if it were a table, house, or tree) but its Being" (p. 67/42). It is possible to envisage *Dasein* functioning uniquely as both noun and infinitive, as it indicates that we are always on-the-way, always moving toward our own potential for being what we will *become* through the enactment of our unique possibilities for an authentic, flourishing existence.

Science does not engage in ontological inquiry, rather it is focused exclusively on learning facts about entities, without concern for their Being. Science conducts *ontical investigations*, and asks questions that can be answered with empirical certainty. To conduct an inquiry into Being, or the Being of entities, is to do *ontology*, and *ontological* questions are much more difficult, if not impossible, to answer with certainty. *Ontology* unfolds in the form of an inquiry as opposed to an investigation, e.g., *ontology* is concerned with more primordial questions than science, such as “What is it to be *as* a human being?” *Ontology*, as conceived by Heidegger, raises both the fundamental question concerning Being in general and the concomitant concern with the Being of beings, this latter concern presupposes that there are existential structures sustaining and enabling our *Being-in-the-world*.

Heidegger’s philosophy places great importance on revealing the *existential* structures underlying our lives, and in particular, the various authentic ways we exist. He believed that our potential for a rich and fulfilling existence was bound up with the understanding of these structures. Living authentically relates directly to the ontological ways in which we are free, beholden and responsible to our ownmost potential for living, which includes the understanding of mortality and our solicitous *Being-with-others*. When caring for our Being and the Being of others, which represents an authentic existence, we are living in such a way as to exercise critical thought and engage in creative intellectual and artistic problem-solving. Heidegger lived out this type of life as a philosopher, educator, and “learner,” for Heidegger placed the highest value on education, stating that the teacher’s vocation is perhaps the most important and difficult role for one to assume. Heidegger’s entire philosophy, which includes his thinking on education, was directed toward awakening humans to their authentic ontological potential for living as true guardians of Being, for dwelling poetically on the earth.

Heidegger viewed the history of the Western world in terms of the concern only for “beings” and “present-at-hand” entities, a concern for “what” comes to presence as opposed to a concern for “how” this is made possible in the first instance. We tend to value *ontical* investigation over ontological inquiry into the nature of Being, into the essence of our unique “potentiality-for-Being,” i.e., *what we can be* as ontological sites of potential and transcendence. This phenomenon, the “loss of Being,” the forgetting of the original question of ontology, dramatically effects our lives and world, and this includes the dehumanization of our social-political-educational institutions. This relates directly for Heidegger to the way in which our contemporary world is in the grip of an adverse form of attunement, which is the spawn of modern technology, causing us to understand and discourse about our lives in impoverished ways.

Attunement (*Befindlichkeit*), represents the ways in which we find ourselves in the world. Our existence is revealed through the following “modes of disclosure”: moods (*Stimmung*), understanding, and *interpretive* discourse. It is important to know that our understanding and discourse are never revealed outside of our moods, as they are co-original with moods, therefore being in a mood is the most primordial way in which we inhabit our world. Moods are always at work coloring our thoughts influencing our behaviors and shaping our understanding of the world.

“In having a mood,” writes Heidegger (1967), “*Dasein* is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over in its Being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the being which, in existing, it has to be” (p. 173/135). Moods should not be mistakenly identified as “emotions,” which are derivative of moods and extremely limited in their power to disclose our world, whereas moods are far more all-inclusive in what they reveal. However, not all moods disclose our world equally. For example, everyday moods do not provide us with authentic insight into our life, do not provide fundamental insight into our Being as a whole, and are associated for this reason by Heidegger, with inauthentic moods, ways of existing in which we are adversely attuned.

When we are adversely attuned our full ontological potential is obscured; we live for others as opposed to living authentically for ourselves, we flee-in-the-face of our responsibilities, and this is a *flight from original philosophical thinking*. As Heidegger (1967) argues, when we are lost in the world, in the “They-self,” we are not beholden to our ownmost potential and possibilities, and that “factual potentiality for Being which is closest (the tasks and standards, rules, the urgency and extent of concerned solicitous Being-in-the-world) has already been decided upon” (p. 312/268). In such a state, we inhabit the world in an inauthentic manner, our lives are not our own, and we surrender our ontological potential for authentically existing, for authentically enacting our own unique possibilities. Authenticity is contrary to what I have described above, as Dwyer, et al (2000) state, “Authenticity has to do with the possibility of *Dasein* becoming awake of itself as existing inauthentically and consequently changing. In order to be authentic, *Dasein* must assume responsibility for its choices, and, more important, it must make these choices its own” (p. 144). The first step in recovering our ontological grounds for existing, consists in the recognition that our potential has been covered over due to being adversely attuned to our life and world.

Dwyer, et al (1988) argue that Heidegger’s philosophy of Being has implications for educational practices, content, and reform. The understanding of Being, existential potential, and authenticity can prove meaningful for our practices in the classrooms, and this is not limited to institutions of higher learning. When considering the current state of educational, viewing the curriculum in terms of either the “factory-model” or the “corporate model,” both espousing a philosophy grounded in vocational, economic, and technological concerns, Dwyer, et al (1988) state the following: “Schools are exemplars of inauthentic existence, and we can see it in many of their practices, such as the emphasis on rote memorization and unreflective praise of contemporary norms, as contributors to the development of a pervasive inauthenticity” (p. 146). The authors envision educational reform, as inspired by Heidegger’s philosophy, in terms of a recovery of the human being’s potential to develop ontologically. They envision a time, when “students progress to the point where they are no longer bound, to a considerable extent, by the possibilities which their own tradition offers” (p. 146).

However, this movement to recover our ontological potential for Being is not an easy or simple matter to conceive, for it must not be mistakenly understood in terms of one educational philosophy overtaking another, e.g., progressivism usurping essentialism, and neo-revisionism overtaking progressivism. Rather, as Thomson (2002) argues, it entails us asking and responding to the difficult question of “the ontological impact of our reliance on the particular metaphysical (“metaphysics of

presence”) presuppositions which tacitly dominate the Academy” (p. 141). For Heidegger, educational reform it is not simply about a change in our mind-set or radical conscious awakening as we find in Sartre’s existentialism or Freire’s spiritually inspired educational philosophy. Rather, it is about transcending our inauthentic modes of attunement, and thereby enacting the authentic possibilities of our *Being-in-the-world*. What is called for is a “paradigm shift,” a radical move from an inauthentic existence to one that is highlighted by resolute openness to our potential for Being, and this change means that along with our mood, our understanding of the world and the ways we interpret and discourse about it has also been reconfigured.

Heidegger (1995) stresses that we hold the potential to change our attunement, “Whatever is adversely attuned can undergo a change of attunement, “ he writes, “where there is attunement there is also the possibility of an awakening attunement” (p. 181). Heidegger is clear that it is possible to be in the “right” mood. Some moods, which Heidegger classifies as fundamental moods, are forms of “awakening attunement” and they include *Angst*, deep boredom, melancholy, and, as will be my concern, the mood of the “holiday” (*Das Festliche*, or “The Festival”), the mood of art. These *awakening attunements* provide insight into our Being as a whole, revealing our world in terms of what it is, in its authentic ontological nature; a change in attunement would put us back in touch with our own *potentiality-for-Being*. For as Heidegger (1995) reasons, “Awakening attunement is a manner and means of grasping Da-sein with respect to the specific ‘way’ in which it is, of grasping Da-Sein as Da-Sein, or better, of letting Dasein be as it is, or can be, as Da-Sein” (p. 68).

Heidegger claims that our post-modern epoch is under the spell of *das Gestell*, the “Frame-up,” or the inauthentic *Enframing* mood of modern scientific-technology. In order for educational reform to be as a possibility, it requires that we undergo a change of attunement, which is the paradigm shift from inauthentic to authentic existence. Education conceived in terms of an inquiry into the existential nature of our Being, holds the potential to attune students anew, to inspire their transcending beyond the numbing attunement grounded in the “misunderstanding” and “misinterpretation” of today’s technology. Heidegger is clear about the path we must tread in order to recover our “potentiality-for-Being,” our ontological potential for living in an authentic manner, and interestingly enough, it is “real education” that first makes this transformation a legitimate possibility. According to Heidegger (as cited in Thomson, 2002, p. 134), “Real education lays hold of the soul itself and transfers it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential Being and accustoming us to it.” Heidegger’s philosophy does indeed have implications for inspiring us to reexamine and reassess our current educational methods, practices, and curriculum content. The ontological concerns of which Heidegger speaks, the return to the “place of our essential Being,” I argue, should form the essential grounding for any authentic philosophy of educational theory and practice.

Technology and the Inauthentic *EnFraming* of Contemporary Education

According to Heidegger, three world epochs composed the history of the West: the Classical, Medieval, and Modern. Of the three, only modernity came into its founding ground and origin

without the attunement of great works of art within which people communally participated. Heidegger (1971) speaks about art's power to ground a civilization in the following manner: "Whenever art happens - that is, whenever there is a beginning - a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again" (p.77). Modernity emerged quite literally through a lack of art, the privation of art, as previous ages had known it. Instead of the founding power of the work of art, modernity experienced industrialization, and as Heidegger (1971) argues, the concern for Being was transformed in a unique way, "Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation" (p. 77).

"Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealing take place, where *aletheia*, truth happens" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 13). However, what technology discloses, unlike the founding attunement of great works of art, no longer shows itself in terms of its Being, rather technology transforms and reduces all things to their inauthentic function as resource. The world, nature, and human beings, our entire existence, shows up in terms of "resource": we understand all things that come to presence in terms of their use value, in terms of their function and *telos* as exploitable objects. Heidegger defines *Enframing* as "the gathering together of that setting upon which sets upon man, i.e, changes him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering as standing reserve" (p. 20). This relates directly to what was stated regarding our ontological predisposition for enacting our *Being-in-the-world*, for as opposed to a concern for the *presencing* of Being and the Being of beings, under the sway of *das Gestell* and technology's *Enframing* effect, there is only a concern for subjugating, using, storing, and ultimately disposing of what comes to presence when its use-value has been depleted.

Although *Enframing* is the danger associated with technology, it must be thought in terms of what has been said about attunement, for *Enframing* has nothing to do with technological things, in the form of rockets, computers, or cell-phones. It's not our technology, in and of itself, that is the problem, rather it's the inauthentic way in which we understand our technological capacities and capabilities that pose the threat. As Fitzsimons (2002) articulates, "For Heidegger, it is the essence of our technological way of being rather than the mere equipment that is the problem" (p. 184). *Enframing*, as the essence of technology, is always already at work coloring the way the world reveals itself, and this includes not only the modes of production and the things we produce, but also, more important, the ways we envision our selfhood through our interpersonal dealings with others. It represents an extremely limited one-dimensional mode of world-disclosure, out of which our understanding takes the form of "calculative knowledge." Through the lense of *Enframing*, we seek to quantify our entire existence, including our educational systems, in terms of pure and unadulterated resources for technological advancement.

Greene (1987) situates the current state of democratic education within the "context of technicism," and argues that we "treat education as a means to the end of achieving economic competitiveness and military supremacy in the world," and so our contemporary pedagogical goals are born of essential principles of utility (p. 214). It is possible to state, according to what has been outlined, that the purpose of schooling dictates that the political and social aspects of schooling are subjugated in

service of economic purposes, education unfolds as “vocational” training, and Spring (1991) drives this point home in the following manner: “The most important arguments given for the support of public education are that education *increases national wealth and advances technological development*” (p. 19). Given such a purpose, the social aspects of education, as opposed to encouraging the development of autonomous individuals whose unique abilities and talents might give direction to future social-political reformation, are relegated to the task of contributing to our society’s economic growth, and this amounts to the “*socialization* of the future worker into the modern organization of industry, “ along with “the *sorting* and *training* of the labor force” (Spring, 1991, p. 19).

Thomson (2002) claims that we are “what” and “how” we know, “Our being in the world is shaped by the knowledge we pursue, value, and embody” (p. 130). From the discussion of technology and *Enframing*, as might be expected, the knowledge that educators value is scientific-technological. As Spring (1991) concludes, the politics of the right continue to demand, that the “major purpose of public schools should be aiding the economic development of the United States by emphasizing achievement in math and science,” and he predicts that this trend will continue into the new millennium; the history of education bears out Springs’ prescient insight (p. 5). Heidegger feared that calculative knowledge, as the sole mode of world-disclosure, which he associated with the dominance of math and science in the curriculum, would one day envelope the educational landscape. As opposed to meditative thought, which is ontological thought, a “thinking that contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is,” calculative thought is always on the move, and never stopping to reflect on its purposes or meanings, never stopping to contemplate the wreckage it leaves in its technological wake (Heidegger, 1959, p. 152).

Enframing relates to the problem Heidegger associates with the “metaphysics of presence” and its intimate connection to a technological world-view. As Young (2001) writes, “It is in this sense that Heidegger wishes to maintain that metaphysics, the absolutization of a single horizon of disclosure, is the essence of modern technology” (p. 37). *Enframing* is conceived as one - albeit dominant, dangerous, and violent - mode of world-disclosure among many possible forms of attunement. Since our authentic ontological potential is concealed within the *Enframing* of technology, we sustain it, and paradoxically, we feed into its power to maintain a hold over us; in service to technology, we are inauthentic, reluctant collaborators in the process who have strayed from the path of our ontological destining. Heidegger, as early as 1933, in his Rectoral Address to Freiberg University, “The Self Assertion of the German University,” recognized the devastating influence that this inauthentic mode of world-disclosure was having on the educational practices of his day.

Heidegger was concerned with the fragmentation of the university into a multiplicity of disciplines and clusters of specialized and “hyper-specialized” academic departments, where each discipline worked in isolation on its own unique set of the problems. According to Heidegger, the university (as a system) had lost its direction, had lost its unifying goal, namely, the pursuit of truth as *Wissenschaft*, here translated as original, founding knowledge, or meditative understanding, associated with rigorous philosophical inquiry and the *ontological* concern for Being. The university,

to Heidegger's chagrin, was concerned only with the instrumental efficacy of scientific-calculative knowledge. When fragmentation occurs in the university, each discipline becomes concerned with amassing *ontical* facts and data related only to their specific field of investigation and are also concerned with "producing instrumentally useful results regularly to find external support," in the form of grants to sustain their scientific advancement and this inevitably leads to the "professionalization of the university, and eventually, its degeneration into vocationalism" (Thomson, 2002, p. 131). Addressing the university, Heidegger (1998) declared Prometheus the "first philosopher" because the fallen Titan was insightful enough to recognize the marked difference between questions of science and philosophy: In Aeschylus' *Prometheus bound*, the tragic hero concludes: "Knowledge (*techne*) is far less powerful than necessity," and Heidegger reads this as indicating that technological knowledge is always subservient to higher ontological truths, such as the historical destining of our Being (p. 34).

The *Enframing* of education does away with our ontological potential to enact a unique existence and sets up an inauthentic communal environment, an industrialized worker's community, which is anything but solicitous in nature. Since the *telos* of a technological education is always already built into it, that of productivity, economic and capital advance, world supremacy in the global market, the student's own unique possibilities never manifest, she lives for the corporation, and if the education is good, she serves as an efficient cog in the wheel of the democratic, technological machine. A technological education is not only linked with "factory-models" and "corporate models" for curriculum and pedagogy, it literally embodies an industry, it is analogous to an industrial plant. As Fitzsimons (2002) astutely observes, "Just as in industry, the student (consumer) supplies the consumption, the government supplies the capital, and the teacher supplies the product. All parts of the framework depend on the regulation of all other parts; it is the system that reveals not the individual that reveals" (p. 184). In such a model, *das Gestell*, or the *Enframing* "framework" organizing the system consumes the individual, her authentic *potentiality-for-Being* remains concealed, she is lost in her inauthentic status as either a contributive resource or disposable liability.

The dominant model for education in America is by and large grounded in the philosophy of essentialism. This curriculum is structured around a set of predetermined standards for competency, the chosen method of instruction is didactic and excludes self-directed or cooperative learning in terms of knowledge construction. Teachers effectively and efficiently transmit objective facts to the students who passively receive the knowledge. There is little or no sense of ownership in this mode of education, for this model dictates what should be taught, what is of value, and precludes the student from questioning beyond the bounds of the transmitted knowledge. As related to what was stated about contemporary schools as the mimetic equivalent of an industrial plant, it is clear that the essentialist model allows no spaces for authentic and autonomous development of the student. As Fitzsimons (2002) observes, in such a system, "any tendency toward self-emergence is thus overruled and absorbed back into forced production" (p. 184). The student sees herself only from within the *Enframed* confines of the system, and in a mode of double-concealment, *Enframing* obscures her authentic possibilities and disguises the fact that it is doing so. Who we are, ontologically speaking, slips farther and farther away from us. "With no self-awareness of dwelling

outside the framework, and with the imperative of continued production, no place is available that is not productive” (Fitzsimons, 2002. p. 186).

Pike (2003), writing on the Being of English teaching, documents the effects of *Enframing* he witnesses in contemporary education, specifically in terms of the humanities and literature. “English teaching is being conceived as a technology with which to get something done or as a vehicle which delivers a subject in an efficient and effective manner, and where rote analysis and explicit teaching are all that appear to be required” (p. 92) Citing *The 2001 National Literacy Strategy (NLS)*, Pike (2003) reveals the “technologically” driven ideology at work in education which believes that methods of instruction dominated by direct, rote explication, are “seen as a panacea for all pedagogical ills,” and Pike goes on to warn educators that such philosophies for teaching English “may have very grave side-effects upon children’s motivation and engagement” (p. 93). For Pike, Heidegger’s philosophy harbors the legitimate potential to overcome the negative effects of technology on our schools. Focusing on English teaching as form of aesthetic engagement, Pike claims that literature, when done right, as “meditative” ontological inquiry, has the power to inspire a radical change in our mood by initiating the *awakening attunement* of those involved as participants in the literature, due to its ability to disclose truth (*aletheia*) and open new and authentic worlds to those enraptured by art’s power. As Heidegger (1971) states regarding the “preservation” of and participation in the work of art, which is *as* work of art only when “we remove ourselves from our commonplace routine and move into what is disclosed in the work, so as to bring our own essence itself to take a stand in the truth of beings” (p. 78).

Just as Heidegger focuses on the loss of Being, Pike focuses on the loss of English study as an aesthetic endeavor that is ontological in nature. Because of *Enframing* there is an unyielding drive in education, which cuts across the entire curriculum, for accomplishing explicit goals which can be “standardized” and evaluated and assessed with unwavering accuracy. This tendency, according to Pike (2003), gives the erroneous and dangerous impression that “the interpretation of human engagement with the world is grounded in cognitive representation, which Heidegger resists” (p. 94). Pike (2003) recognizes that spaces, or gaps, for the arts in the curriculum are diminishing as “the demands for our economic and technological advancement privileges more deterministic areas of the curriculum” (p. 92). The type of knowledge (constructed or *procedural*) associated with the arts and humanities is being devalued, for the curriculum favors methods which afford concrete, categorical answers to the types of loaded questions that we are asking our students. As Pike (2003) argues, English education, rather than allowing itself to be inspired and guided by ontological inquiry, wherein the aesthetic experience is central, attempts to “redefine the subject through an emphasis upon literacy,” and this manifests our current culture’s “obsession with the *ontic* rather than ontological, where what can be easily measured, even though it may be of least value, is highly prized” (p. 92). Literacy, as employed by Pike, does not refer to early reading acquisition, but rather to our higher-level comprehension of literature, and his claim is that education has erroneously reduced “literacy” to the accumulation of rote facts about the text, which can be marshaled to defend the notion of “competency” in a *goals-driven* curriculum for English teaching.

In terms of English pedagogy, as related to what has been said about essentialism, Pike (2003) outlines a typical method of instruction that functions “explicitly” as a “delivery” system that excludes the meaningful type of hermeneutic inquiry necessary when approaching literature, and so precludes the student entering into the literature *as* an experience of art. As Pike (2003) states, “English is being reduced to a method with an undue emphasis on the explicit” (p. 93). The instructor clearly communicates in advance explicit goals and objectives to the student prior to delivering the material, or content, which is always of a *pre-procedural* nature, and then, after teaching evaluates and assesses the success of the ‘delivery’ of the material. “What we are really teaching the student,” states Pike (2003), “runs antithetic to the nature of literature as an aesthetic field of vast exploration and potential, its fundamental ontological character, and we give the impression to our students that all is needed and required in the engagement of art - is paraphrasing, genre recognition or copying conventions of certain types of texts” (p. 92).

Employing an example of teaching Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Pike (2003) demonstrates the manner in which the tragedy defies easy answers that might come through investigating the text with the explicit purpose of mastering one or another canonical interpretation and regurgitating it back in the test-taking phase of *summative* evaluation. “At the end of a profoundly moving first reading of *King Lear*, it is not unusual for the class to want to *be* rather than to explicate, for attempts to explicate can be futile as well as inappropriate” (p. 92). To explicate the so-called “factual” elements of the play, or engage in a structural analysis of “how” the text gathers its meaning (poetics), to do “new criticism,” bastardizes the more immediate, experiential, and aesthetic elements of the play. Such approaches ignore the higher ontological truths of Shakespeare, elements which cannot be quantified, or stated with factual assurance, because their real “truth” lies beyond full-disclosure, and in many ways, resists our attempts to bring them to language, they remain in great part, ineffable, but are no less valuable for this reason.

Ontological Worlds of *Poietic* Learning Grounded in Heidegger’s Philosophy

As stated, the event of our recovery of Being requires a radical change in attunement, and this attunement is not simply a change to the “individuated” subject. Rather, it must occur within a communal-social horizon, similar to what Heidegger envisions in moments when great works of art awakened past civilizations to the potential for enacting their historical vocation as given in advance by Being. For example, Heidegger writes of the ancient Greek temple at *Paestum* as a monumental work of art, within which the Greeks participated in during the great festivals. Through the power of art’s working, its “work-being,” they were transformed in terms of a fundamental mode of attunement. Heidegger, unlike Kant, suggests that the work of art is a legitimate *noetic* experience, or experience of truth, for it conveys to us insight and understanding of an ontological nature. The work of art facilitates Being’s disclosure, and for Heidegger, disclosedness represents the primordial origin and essence of truth, and he connects this with the Pre-Socratic notion of truth as *aletheia* (un-concealedness), which transforms all of those who participate in the work of art as preservers, and to an important degree, co-creators in the process of truth’s happening in the aesthetic experience.

The Greek temple, opening a *poietic* world apart from the ordinary, “gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline require the shape of destiny for the human being” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 42). Heidegger describes the aesthetic experience in terms of a churning ever-renewed vortex of energy, which is created and sustained through the counter-striving activity of the forces of “world” and “Earth,” and within the art’s “work-being,” the lighting clearing of Being (*Lichtung*) occurs. Within the temple’s “relational context” the power to mean and transform a people is the moment when a historical “world” is disclosed in its essence, in its relation to historical Being, its relation to “Earth,” the primordial seat of all mystery. The Earth is the founding ground upon which a civilization raises its dwellings, containing the rich soil from out of which a culture is sustained and nurtured. Attuned to its destiny, in the clearing light of Being that the temple’s work-being has broken open, the Greeks for the first time held the potential to appropriate their authentic historical, ontological-existential ways of being human.

Authentic art, according to Heidegger (1977), belongs essentially with *poiesis*, and the “poetic brings the true into the splendor of what Plato in the *Phaedrus* called *ekphaneston*, that which shines forth most purely” (p. 34). Great art, like the temple, gathers its power to mean and inspire through language and its primordial ability to “name,” which for Heidegger (1971) is “*Dichtung* (poetry) in the essential sense” (p. 74). Language for Heidegger shelters the original nature and power of poetry, and it is poetry’s primal power to open us to truth (*aletheia*) for the first time that gives our language its essential power to mean. Primordial language as poetry in the essential form, first brings beings out of concealment in the original way of their self-showing, opening the context within which art work such as the temple functions. “The foundation of human existence,” states Heidegger (2000), “is conversation as the authentic occurrence of language. But the primary language is poetry as the founding of Being” (p. 61). As Heidegger (1971) states, the plastic arts and architecture acquire their power to mean, to inspire truth (*aletheia*), through “the Open of saying and ‘naming.’ It is the Open that pervades and guides them” (p. 74). Heidegger reasoned that Hölderlin’s voice spoke, or poetized, the language and voice of the Greeks, and his poetry reminds us of the impoverished nature of our “language” (due to *Enframing*), which has fallen away from its ontological origins, the original moment when beings were first brought from out of their unconcealedness into the light of Being.

In the poem, “Remembrance,” Hölderlin poetizes The Festival, the holiday which Heidegger reads as expressing the founding mode of attunement (*das Festliche*), which held the power, through our acceptance and resolute participation in the poetry of Hölderlin, to inspire the reclamation of our authentic ontological grounds. Heidegger envisioned Hölderlin’s poetry, bringing the archaic “fire from heaven,” as re-opening the space, or “holy ground,” where the gods of ancient Greece and modernity would meet once again. This form of attunement, Heidegger suggests, transports us (ecstatically) into a mood of profound wonder (*thaumazein*) and awe at all the things around us, which are shown in their essential Being. As Young (2001) describes, in this ecstatic state, things cease to mere objects, mere “resources” for our use, and our “care (*Sorge*) ceases to be mere technological manipulation and becomes instead a caring for the essential nature of things in their

Being” (p. 86). We come, for the first time, into the authentic ontological potential to serve as stewards and guardians of Being. “In the festive mode,” as Young (2001) elucidates, “things show up as belonging to a sacred order, and since they themselves share in the sacredness, command of us love and respect” (p. 88).

According to Young, the essential nature of The Festival, just as in the “work-being” of the temple is the “gathering together of the community within the ‘wonder’ that happens in the work (‘the community condition’)” (p. 89). However, after sustained meditation on these issues, Heidegger began to question art’s potential, on a grand scale, to attune Western Europe anew. As Young (2001) points out, in Heidegger’s later philosophy there is a concern for whether “the modern poets in general, and Hölderlin in particular, was capable of aligning such a goal”(p. 89). Heidegger, in his later texts adopts a profoundly negative attitude toward this possibility, the poet of modernity was language deprived, “wordless,” and as such could “only sing, and cannot found the festival because there exists no appropriate language in which to do so” (Young, 2001, p. 90). Heidegger viewed our contemporary landscape as barren of the “gods of Greece,” and as such there are no longer holy names; destitution that pervades our existence. In a world where *das Gestell* holds sway, nothing is holy, art cannot be created because language is inauthentic, it lost its ontological essence to mean. As Heidegger (1977) argues, the way of discourse that emerges through technology’s revealing, through the inauthentic attunement of *Enframing*, as opposed to essential *Dichtung*, is a “challenging revealing, the words ‘setting upon,’ ‘ordering,’ ‘standing reserve,’ obtrude and accumulate in a dry monotonous and therefore oppressive way, has its basis in what now comes to utterance” (p. 17).

In the later writings such as *Discourse on Thinking* (1959), as opposed to envisioning large communal moments of attunement in the presence of world-founding works of art, which Heidegger came to believe might never happen again, he began to meditate on other possibilities for recovering our lost potential for Being, e.g., small worlds apart from the oppressive effect of *Enframing* that we might inhabit, albeit only for short periods, which lie off the beaten path, holding the potential saving grace for our future. Heidegger suggests that we might, in the midst of *Enframing*, and this is a slight return to his thinking on attunement as presented in *Being in Time* (1927), might “will” the temporary overcoming of *das Gestell*. Heidegger (1971) is careful to point out that “willing” is not conceived in terms of applying knowledge, rather it is a “knowing that remains a willing and a willing that remains a knowing,” it is a responsive willing that facilitates the “human being’s entering into and complying with the unconcealedness of Being” (p. 67). This occurs when we listen and respond, in a *resolute* manner, to the “call of Being,” and through releasement (*Gelassenheit*), we surrender ourselves over to its sublime overarching sway. The transformation to our existence might not occur on a grand scale, but simply by embracing alternative ways of Being that are other than technological, we might reclaim the lost ways of being that have been relegated to marginal practices in the age of technology, e.g., as he suggests, simple natural pleasures, such as sojourns along wooded paths in communion with nature, “meditating on what is closest,” or creating and participating in works of art (Heidegger, 1966, p. 151). In short, Heidegger calls for us to open new worlds to inhabit, which inspire philosophical and meditative activity, a marginal way of life that has been lost to us in this contemporary age.

In highly idealistic terms, education reform might be construed as occurring instantaneously across the existing social-political structures, such an envisioned liberation of education ignores the complexity and depth of what is involved in this day and age. Such a revolutionary move calls for the impossible, namely, adopting a critical stance outside the exigency of history, outside the movement, or practical construction, of what Heidegger calls “world,” the entire system of meanings and relations that alone holds the potential to give authentic purposes to our lives, and the world, according to Heidegger (1967), is always “disclosed essentially *along with the Being of Dasein*” (p. 247/203). I agree with Dwyer, et al, (1988) that to conceive of the transformation of the entire system of democratic educational from an inauthentic state to a state in which it is authentic would be a gross misinterpretation of Heidegger, it would even be wrong to consider the notion of an “authentic classroom” (p. 148). However, in light of the ground covered, it is indeed possible to imagine marginal practices in the classroom inspiring the type of attunement that has been suggested in the foregoing sections of this paper, to inspire small moments of change, where we are enraptured in the grip of *awakening attunements* that carry us, educators and students alike, into the proximity of our ontological potential by conceiving of the notion of “letting be,” or giving ourselves over to, the power of the attunement that we experience in the arts and humanities. For as Heidegger (1971) states, when enraptured by art’s founding attunement, we, “remove ourselves from our commonplace routine and move into what is disclosed in the work, so as to bring our own essence itself to stake a stand in the truth of beings” (p. 78).

Pinar (2004) and Greene (1987) also write on the beneficial aspects of opening local dwellings and “art-worlds” in the classroom that stand apart from the “everyday” *non-contextual* subject-matter that dominates the curriculum. Art worlds put students directly in touch with *contextual* ways of knowing in which their world is revealed through autobiography, personal emotional and existential insight, and solicitous discourse. Pinar (2004) argues that if intelligence is to be legitimately understood and cultivated in schools, classrooms must allow, and indeed encourage, the autonomy that “accompanies the meditative contemplative modes of cognition, and for exploring subjects - those associated, for instance, with the arts and humanities - that may have no immediate payback and might be evaluated by standard examinations” (p. 29). Although Pinar does not reference the aesthetic experience in terms that are identical to those I’ve employed, he undoubtedly understands the ontological implications of such endeavors, for as Pinar (1994) reasons, curriculum theorists are in fact attempting to open such worlds of attunement apart from the ordinary, apart from the hustle and bustle of our day-to-day classroom activities, apart from the inauthentic understanding of *praxis*, creating, “separate rooms of our own as we try to see past the corporate model, to not-necessarily economic forms of human organization, intelligence, and experience” (p. 241).

Greene (1987) writes on the aesthetic experience in the following manner: “Martin Heidegger, earlier wrote that arts ‘make space for spaciousness’; they open worlds. Openings, beginnings, initiatives, new understandings, more intense engagements: these I think, are our shared concerns” (p. 214). These art-worlds are worlds in which students and educators experience a change of attunement. As Greene (1987) describes, engaging students in great works of literature, such as Melville’s *Moby*

Dick, they are awakened to new possibilities of their existence, for literature, in the moment of aesthetic attunement, “opens windows through which we see beyond the actual,” into our potential for being authentically human, as the experience “summons up the ‘as if,’ the possible, the what is not and yet might be,” opening the participants to their potential to “see more, to hear more, to feel more, to attend to more facets of the experienced world” (p. 217).

What Greene (1987) describes is undoubtedly a powerful representation of Heidegger’s *awakening attunement* of art, and these moments of aesthetic transfiguration, within these art worlds apart from the “counters, benches, and desks of the ordinary,” allow students to “explore the language of imagery, to seek their own symbols, to use intelligences often ignored” (p. 219). These momentary encounters within the semiotic world of metaphor and metonymy, the language of art, hold the potential to inspire a return to the world of the “everyday” curriculum with new and reconfigured forms of understanding. This is precisely the manner in which Thomson (2003) describes Heidegger’s notion of education as “revolutionary,” in terms that necessitate the radical change in attunement we undergo through our education in the arts, which brings us in proximity to our *originary* ontological potential for Being, and such education transports us, attuned in a moment of ecstatic transcendence, “full circle back to ourselves, first by turning us away from the world in which we are most immediately immersed, then by turning us back to this world in a more reflexive way” (p. 135).

Pike (2003) links the rise in “explicitness” in English teaching, due to the technological effect of *Enframing*, the “encroaching rationalism and the current obsession with efficiency, measurement, and target-setting within English education,” to the devaluation of other ways of knowing in the curriculum, e.g., implicit, intuitive, analogical, experiential, modes of knowing arising from the *aesthetic-perceptual* cluster. Pike (2003) does not focus directly on the rise of math and science in the curriculum (as subjects or disciplines), but his work intimates a more fundamental epistemological concern with the nature of knowledge and the validity of different knowledge claims. Despite the many and varied forms of knowledge in the classroom, the differentiation of knowledge, educators are applying the scientific-mathematical criteria for truth across the curriculum. While scientific knowledge obtains by means of observable facts, and mathematics obtains by reason of axioms, *aesthetic-perceptual* understanding, the “truth” of art and literature, simply does not obtain in the manner of the aforementioned species of knowledge. Adopting an ontological approach to English instruction, Pike (2003), argues that the ways of knowing in the arts and humanities cannot be reduced to “scientific or rational understanding because they are placed in a situation that cannot be exhaustively analyzed” (p. 92).

According to Pike (2003), literature as *art* demands that we pay heed to the aspects that make it unique. As opposed to solutions to the problems we encounter, which are tied off neatly, literature brings us face to face with “absurdities and dissonances of life, without seeking to reduce the them to neat formulae or maps” (p. 94). As Heidegger (1971) claims, in the midst of the aesthetic experience of literature, we learn and understand truths in ways that are beyond any rational mode of comprehension, for knowing in the moment of art, “does not consist in mere information and notions

about something,” rather it is a form of knowing, or *noetic* insight, that is synonymous with our existential autonomy, i.e., the ontological potential to will our lives, to make and remake our existence by means of “entering into the compliance with the unconcealedness of Being” (p. 67). The logic of the deductive syllogism cannot approach or approximate the higher ontological immediacy of literature, e.g., the higher truth of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, which works philosophically by giving us the universal through the particular, in a moment of immediate intuitive understanding, much like Plato’s understanding of *noesis*, manifests to the reader “like light flashing forth” (Plato, 1997, p. 1659).

As Pike (2003) states, the value of studying literature is to put us in touch with the ontological aspects of our existence, literature “helps us to understand the ‘is,’ in its fundamental ontological character” (p. 96). As Heidegger claims, when asking the fundamental question of philosophy (“What *is* Being?”) we are simultaneously, in an elemental way, asking, “What *is*...?” The verb (“is”) breaks open the scope of the inquiry to include beings as a whole and Being itself, not even the concept of “nothingness” is left out of the inquiry. Dwyer, et al (1988) stress that educators need to be acutely aware of the student’s autobiography, and its crucial role within the process of learning. Literature communicates uniquely to each student, and although the learning transpires communally, the experience is undoubtedly deeply personal, and so certain problems, concerns, and issues that arise in the process of studying literature will also be of a unique and particular nature. Inquiring into the student’s life, breaking open the ontological discourse into “Being,” initiating a communicative discourse, the inroad into her unique *existential* grounds is opened, and as Dwyer, et al (1988) claim, the teacher in this ontological model, in a solicitous gesture of authentic care (*Sorge*) at once, “leaps ahead of the student and prepares the way for them,” e.g., encouraging the initial attempts of the student at the self-formulation of proposed solutions to the problems they encounter along with assisting in the process of refining their interpretative solutions. This occurs, as Dwyer, et al (1988) argue, when teachers “anticipate obstacles to be encountered, and, rather than removing them, help students to find what is necessary for them to overcome such problems themselves” (p. 147).

We might approach Sophocles’ tragedy as a philosophical inquiry into the issue of “self-identity,” but there are most certainly other, and no less viable, perspectives from which educators and students might begin the journey into the play, e.g., we might consider the issue of determinism and autonomy, asking, “To what degree, if at all, are we pilots of our own fate?” By adopting the line of questioning that seeks to understand self-identity, we are launching an *inquiry* into the ontological way of *Being-in-the-world* as *Being-with-others*, as opposed to conducting an *ontical* investigation concerned with discovering “facts” or objective truths about the play or the characters. Amassing facts about Oedipus, that he was the King of Thebes, or truths about the structure of the play, about its formal ability to “mean,” that Greek tragedy is its own unique genre, or memorizing the chronology of the events without touching on their higher significance does not provide us with any valuable philosophical insight into the ontological meaning of the tragedy. As Gelven (1972) reasons, the advantages of conducting an *inquiry* into self-identity as opposed to an *investigation*, is that the former provides us with the ability to dwell within the mode of the *infinitival*, allowing us to “talk about modes of existence [specific and restrictive] reference to a particular subject and without

objectifying or substantizing what is talked about” (p. 81). Thus the self is neither a mere logical subject nor an object, and so it holds the potential to provide a fundamental source of ontological, or universal significance. This existential *inquiry* into self-knowledge that Oedipus undertakes, and we, the reader undertake with him, is at once the understanding and acknowledgment of the uniqueness of his personal quest as the King of Thebes along with the tragic implications that the quest has for our lives, for all lives. Such concerns are beyond facts, for they are *trans-historical*: it is not *that* Oedipus suffered which has importance for us, but rather, what holds the existential immediacy for us is that, as a basic constitution of our humanity, we too *have* the potential to suffer profusely.

Reading instruction in such a model, transpires as hermeneutic interpretation. To enter the hermeneutic circle is to enter into literature’s “work-being,” as outlined previously, which was described in terms of a vortex wherein the reciprocal inter working of the forces of “world” and “Earth” give life to the art, as a mode of truth-happening. As Heidegger (1971) makes clear, in their reciprocal actions there is a unity in tension, for their conflict is not a “rift (*Riss*) as a cleft is ripped open; rather it is the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other” (p. 63). The engagement with literature institutes the interplay of these forces, which might be understood in terms of the student embarking on an inquiry where truth is never fully disclosed and possibilities of the literature are never exhausted. Literature gathers its power to mean through the encounter with the “lighting concealing in the opposition of world and earth” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 63). Our encounter with literature brings us face to face with aspects of our world that forever remain concealed, as mysteries, beyond our full comprehension. This is precisely why literature functions at the level of the ontological: it is more philosophical than “literary,” as it continually reminding us of the question-worthy status of all things we encounter. A Heideggerian approach to instruction would include, as this following discussion implies, the empowerment of the student and the nurturing of her skills in the process of the self-discovery. Rather than simply “handing over to the students finished products in the form of answers, theories, or moral precepts,” educators should encourage instructional methods that enhance students’ potential development in the context of exercising their freedom in the encounter with their own unique possibilities for Being (Dwyer, et al, 1988, p. 146).

The student learning experience, if we attend to what Heidegger says about the ontological import of our authentic social experience, would progress primarily through discourse and critical interpretation, a method privileging authentic communication, a mode of speech for Heidegger that importantly demand “listening” in response to the language of others. For our ontological predisposition to “hear,” to listen, in anticipation of language, forms the ontological grounds of our ability to authentically speak. In such a context, as Dwyer, et al (1988) argue, students acquire “communication” skills “necessary to evaluate information and to communicate their conclusions and the processes which led them to those conclusions” (p. 148). This type of learning experience thrusts students and educator alike as participants in the aesthetic experience, into a communion with others, which as opposed to an experience of an egocentric nature, is highlighted by a way of learning where all become active contributors to and participants in the learning process. “Participating in the work,” writes Heidegger (1971), “does not reduce people to a private experience, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work” (p. 68).

Pike (2003) argues that English teaching lives as communal activity, wherein those attuned to the literature are responsive to the truth-happening in the activity of learning, it is both communal and contextual, and importantly, based on the personal lives of both educator and students. English teaching “must be based on a special knowledge of the pupils as individuals and an awareness of their lives outside the classroom” (p. 95). As Pike’s theory indicates, it seeks to bridge the chasm between the modes of *contextual* and *non-contextual* knowledge; there is a blurring of the lives between school and home, between the so-called life in the classroom and lived experience. For the understanding gleaned in moments of art’s *awakening attunement* transcends the boundaries, the walls, of institutionalized education, it is valuable beyond the setting of the classroom. Understanding Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* in terms of hermeneutic interpretation, which works from the perspective of “inside-out” learning, as opposed to the “outside-in” style of learning we find in explicit transfer, presupposes that meaning is constructed in a shared horizon of meaning wherein the reciprocal interaction occurs between instructor, students, and text.

This method allows for an ownership of knowledge, for students are active participants in and contributors to the process of interpretation and knowledge construction. The students understanding of the play is synthetically composed of clusters of interpretations; it is knowledge that is constructed by means of a social context. The student’s individual interpretation develops along with, and indeed because of, the influence of those with whom the individual participates in the process of learning. It is a unique instance of education where personal, emotional, and assertive elements of the student’s ever-evolving autobiography are integrated into the lesson, and indeed become crucial to its success. Knowledge that relates directly to us becomes extremely personal, self-referential, and ontologically significant. When participating in the discourse emerging from the hermeneutic, students are, as Heidegger(1967) states, “co-creators in the process of truth’s happening” (p. 67).

Concluding Remarks

As Greene (1987) concludes, our educational institutions continue to erroneously view and categorize students as resources, as commodities, “for the building of a technological society” (p. 214). Viewing the problem through the lense of critical theory, Spring (1991) suggests that schools should “be organized to teach students that they have the power to shape history and one that will give students the skills and knowledge to participate in shaping history” (p. 32). In their own way, all of these educational theorists are calling for the reassessment of the ideal democratic citizen that education has adopted for its model upon which it bases its curricula. We have lost sight of exactly what it means to be a productive democratic citizen, namely, one who thinks deeply and critically, is compassionate, is developed and responsible enough to participate in discourse as a potential agent of social-political change, and demonstrates a concern for aspects of her being that transcend inauthentic aspirations of a mercantile, materialistic nature. If the possibility of educational reform, or liberation, exists, which for Pinar (1994), is a process of “freeing - oneself and others - from political, economical, and psychological inequities,” I argue that it lies in the reassessment of our relationship with the humanities as a response to the urgent need to recapture our lost ontological

grounding, our lost potential to *be* (p. 102). In terms reminiscent of Pike's notion of authentic English teaching, educational reform might also begin from the "inside" to slowly, but surely, work its way "outside." By breaking open and holding open small worlds apart from the ordinary, "art-worlds," wherein our *awakening attunement* grows and is nurtured, the light of change on education, as Wittgenstein once remarked, might dawn slowly over the whole.

According to Greene (1987), there is hope for educational reform, and this latent force for change resides within the arts and humanities in the classroom, for they harbor within the "range of human capacities to often left dormant," forgotten, covered over in our current age (p. 214). As opposed to transmitting pre-packed truths, values, and goals, the humanities provide instances wherein students embark on the all-important quest for truth, a quest that is intimately bound up with the assessment and reassessment of our values such as justice, equity, and equality. The humanities provide us with instances, examples, and rich fodder for experiential growth, encounters with literature allow for the student to form a unique sense of personhood through the ever-evolving processes of knowledge-construction through enlightened communal discourse with the great artists and writers of the past and present. Authentic education, emerging from the origin of the Greek practice of *paideia*, was for Heidegger "real education," and its goal was straightforward, but exceedingly difficult to accomplish. To return to Heidegger's powerful epigram that opened the paper: *Real education lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us back to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it.* Education, as envisioned by Heidegger, is a return, as I have attempted to show, to our ontological potential to dwell authentically in the world with others, and this understanding might emerge through a critical confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with literature, the arts, and Heidegger's philosophy, which expresses his thoughts on what a "real education" entails in these difficult times.

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