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Phronesis as the Educational Outcome of Hermeneutics

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Abstract

'Practical Wisdom' is often quoted as Being the offspring of the marriage of experience and knowledge, but what precisely makes it so pragmatic, and why is it considered to be wise? An interpretive investigation into some of the canonical source of modern hermeneutic theory in education reveals that the elements of the other, concernful Being, suspicion and play are amongst those at work in constructing both the discourse regarding how authentic learning of the 'new' occurs, but also in that very process itself. Dangers and risks associated with the encounter with otherness as a strange and threatening exercise are also examined, with a view to understand them as in part emanating from the structure of educational institutions and the persona of teachers in the classroom. The text concludes with a sense that to discover the meaning of the new is to rediscover one's own origins, as the learning process creatively reproduces every beginning of self-understanding.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Education, Phronesis, Learning, Other, Suspicion

Introduction: The Character of Practical Wisdom

For true education disdains polluting itself with the needing and desiring individual: it knows how wisely to give the slip to those, who would like to secure it as a manes for egoistic aims; and if even one person fancies himself to hold it fast, in order now perhaps to make a living out of it and to satisfy the necessities of life through its exploitation, then it runs away suddenly with inaudible steps and with a mien of derision (Nietzsche, 2003:82 [1872]).

The terms in any dialectical relation are not part of an arithmetic formula. Thesis and Anti-thesis do not add up to a synthetic position. The third term exists in an archiphonemic relation to the plane of the other two. It stands uplifted from them, and constitutes a gestalt, whose substance is more than the sum of the parts of the content of the other two. Thus practical wisdom is not a simple combination of customary habit and technical knowhow, nor even the fullness of the experience of the natural attitude leavened or extended by the theoretical prosthesis of discourse and technology. Phronesis is, rather, the ability to reflect theoretically upon one's experiences. To have experience in the lighted space of Being, a Being which is now put into touch with the existential envelope of World through language and thought that are not mere functions of the hectic life. The synthesis of the dialectic transforms its two

previous figures, and then taking them together, transfigures their sum in its own turn. Hexis is transformed not by its running up against the instrumental rationality of techne. In doing so, it is only altered, extended as we have seen above, and made surer of itself. It carries on, in other words, with the bloated blitheness of anyone who has had his most cherished and local opinions confirmed by official sources. Hexis comes to Being only through its combination with the reflective and critical knowledge of authentic praxis -this is theory's truest 'application' - and when it is uplifted into its new Being, that of the practical ability of an understanding which is also self-understanding. Hexis now no longer is naive about its origins and its inertia, just as praxis cannot rest in technicalities and abstract models. In its turn, praxis too is transformed. Not by disdaining hexis and seeking to supplant it, and neither by merely extending it without Being fundamentally genealogical and critical about it. Praxis is transformed rather by deepening its understanding of where its own origins, the cultural and historical roots of both custom and experience. Critical and theoretical thinking, the scientific and philosophical attitudes combined, are yet practiced by human Beings who also must exist in their various cultures as the day to day citizens of living on. If praxis reflects and questions this mode of Being in the world then it too begins to uplift itself into the realm of phronesis. Finally, practical wisdom also does not rest smugly atop the horizontal of internecine conflict, custom and theory, belief and knowledge forever distracted, staring across the ontological fence erected by otherwise distant neighbors. Phronesis must regularly delve into the other plane, traversing such a boundary as if it were only a metaphor. In doing so, it replenishes its own self-understanding. Wisdom does not descend from the cloud of Being, it rushes up from the grounds of Beings, and it is to these grounds that teaching and learning must unite in reaching.

The Play of Suspicion and Anticipation in Learning

This entire process is characterized by a kind of hopeful suspicion. Our doubts are those of discontent, but they do not already have the tragic tinge of pessimism, let alone nihilism, that the darker shadows of doubt impel forward. We are suspicious of the nature of culture, the world as it has been, and the world around us in its social ongoingness. Nietzsche homes in on the utilitarian desires of modern education, but of course this is but one draw, even for us. Accreditation also produces the status of a projected egotism, as well as the fulfillment of an interjected egoism, the souci de soi that can as well distance ourselves from the practical wisdom offered by the encounter with other Beings. It remains the primary manner in which we turn away from the wording of the world, and the motive force we apply to nature to make it give itself to us, penetrating and delving, demanding that it yield: "If we understand 'nature' as that which culture has always taken itself to have left behind but with which it still must settle accounts, then even Nietzsche's radical interpretation entails that tragedy is a means for reweaving the future of culture out of its historical past "(Horowitz, 2001:10). The ability of the wider nature to connect its present and past through the advent of a continuous future-creating has always made a deep impression upon human Beings. Nature connects the beginning and the end in a way that humans cannot yet do. And indeed, if we gain such a power we will cease to be human, not that such a future in principle is to be deplored. Nature, like the Raven, eats from the dead and yet goes on living, in fact, it eats of itself in order to live. Necrophagous cannibalism has no real meaning outside of our cultural confines, and the horror we may visit upon ourselves in the darkest orgies of self-destruction does not touch the indifference that the natural world exudes within what for it constitutes the most mundane of day to day ecological processes. So nature would seem to have a kind of ultimate

wisdom, the kind that human Beings might well seek, and due to our finitude and limited consciousness, fall into the abyss that awaits all ultimacies, the pit of meaningless death. This is likely part of the reason why Aristotle observes two kinds of wisdom in the world, the phronesis of nature and that of humanity. Human phronesis is linked to the crucial event of human foresight, something granted to us by Prometheus: "Thus, for example, Aristotle claimed that certain animals also clearly possess phronesis. He was thinking primarily about bees and ants, about animals which gather food for the winter and so, from a human point of view, reveal foresight, something which must include an awareness of time" (Gadamer, 1996:47 [1986]). Of course this is but an analogy, as evolutionary instinct can often give the appearance of anticipatory intelligence. A true awareness of time includes its own history, the ever shifting experience of a life which does not run on the rails of predetermined behavior and reaction. It also must include the abstract knowledge of one's own finitude, and thus an awareness of the historicity of time, in that we cannot have foreknowledge of our own precise demises, but must have the ability to imagine the biographical, and increasingly today, the collective, end of life so that we can, perhaps ironically, live on. So far as we know, only humanity betrays this much more fragile state of affairs, and thus Aristotle conserved his more profound definition of practical wisdom for the sphere of human ethics: "He considered phronesis not only as the clever, skilful discovery of means for meeting specific tasks, not only as an awareness of what is practical, of how to realize incidental goals, but also as the same for setting the goals themselves and taking responsibility for them. The concept of phronesis thereby acquires, and this is what is important, a substantive determination." (ibid:47-8).[i] As well, just as does nature ever renew itself through a seeming play of forces whose constellation is vast and complex, the organicity of forethought plays upon its past experience just as it must take into account the present context, and yet imagine outcomes, even attempting to calculate them and predict their plausibilities. Nature of course does none of this internal work, but we are no longer nature. We must contrive all of the steps that automatically take place in the cosmic manifold. In doing so, we restore our subjectivity to its proper accounting: "...play involves putting into effect one's freedom, which strips the real world of its reality and 'releases subjectivity'." (Gallagher, 1992:147). Yet play in the hermeneutic sense much more closely resembles the action of nature, and the subjects of the play are not the players themselves, the goal is not human freedom, but the non-goal of renewal. In this sense, the modern understanding of a non-teleological evolution in nature is affirmed: "Play is an impersonal movement in which subjectivity loses itself." (ibid:47-8). Not that the playing humanity is somehow not serious, or that it attains the indifference of the process of nature. Quite the contrary. Play - imagination, dialogue, even critique - contains a 'sacred seriousness' that cannot be had by any other means. It is necessary to create self-understanding in the face of both hexis and praxis, and thus is a major character in the synthetic action through which these two worlds of human activity are reconciled and uplifted: "The self is nothing other than this playful process of transcendence and appropriation taking place through the possibilities opened up for it in art, in action, in all educational experience" (Gallagher, 1992:52). If this is the case, practical wisdom comes into its own only when the play of Beings opens upon the space of Being. Knowing in the special sense of coming to know, the mode-of-Being-knowing which is forthcoming and not resting in fore having, plays itself out in the dialogue of Being-together which is to say, with Beings other to the sensibilities of previous prejudice, which might be characterized as within-Being or with-Beings, depending upon whether or not we are only ourselves, or attempting to relate to others but within the cast of norms or techniques. In this way, then, the play of Beings

becomes authentic by risking itself in its own 'unresting'. This restlessness, once again, in the dialectic, 'hopeful yet discontent', must play in order to approach that which is its very own-most: "Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from man. Man at first clings always and only to Beings. But when thinking represents Being as Beings it no doubt relates itself to Being. In truth, however, it always thinks only of Beings as such..." (Heidegger, 1977:210-1 [1947]). This kind of truth proposes itself from the world as it has been, inasmuch as it can rest upon the propositions, tried and true, of our expectations regarding both hexis and praxis. Neither of these alone can surprise us in any profound manner, although we may be momentarily taken aback by the statistical or detailed discoveries of a descriptive science, as when a new species is found or the presence of a lost city uncovered. Yet the truth of these events escapes the discourse of truths. A new Being is a Being created, and its *evenement* proposes that there is another aspect to Being and its World that we knew not. Each scientific discovery is an event in the plot of self-discovery, just as each new understanding of the subjected objectives of the social world is a moment of self-clarification of our location in that world. Who we are, in the deepest sense, is premised upon what the world holds in store for us. Our very identities are presaged upon the identifications of new worlds, ones that have not yet been lived by previous guises of humanity and do not fall into the dominion of what we already have known to be the truth of things: "Because this dominion is as much a feeling and a value as it is an ordinary piece of propositional 'truth', one cannot be wrong to claim its transiency and impalpability. But one can find no better use for the inward sense of dominion that is both the starting point for the reconstruction of one's social Being, and the starting point for the pursuit of knowledge" (Bleich, 1988:49).

All of this points in the direction not of ploy - for this seeks to use the known in a manner which sabotages the other's self-understanding rather than aiding its maturing - but of play - which seeks rather the opening up of the self to the other in the risk of movement away from what it has been as a self. Common to the ethical notions of the 'neighbor' and virtue, practical wisdom as the sudden abode of Being in the language of learning appears but cannot root itself. Even learning from one's experiences means also and inevitably to apply them elsewhere in the form of understanding a new experience. In the encounter with the newness of what has the potential to become 'hermeneutic' in the sense of both its demand that we interpret it and in doing so its demand to overturn our prior prejudices, we are in a similar position as the child who learns in innocence, and hence the notion of playing has this added overtone of the absence of knowledge which is always to come: "In the Greek expression paideia, there is an echo of the light-heartedness and innocence of children's play. Its authentic 'object', if we can apply this word at all, is the beautiful. But that just refers to everything that commends itself without Being of use for anything, so that nobody asks what is its purpose" (Gadamer, 1998:9). It is not that education has no purpose. Its telos seeks itself, that is, just like play, love, or nature, the ever renewing properties of learning allow it to become a perennial part of the human condition and take its place alongside these other forms of beauty. So learning and therefore teaching must have this hermeneutic character, and it is through the playful creativity and endlessly seeking curiosity that human learning take their particular form, and thus also that human intelligence takes on its characteristic manner of searching, whether it be for its own origins or for a benevolent future.

Departures from the Authenticity of Learning

Only when the instrumental praxis of institutional education co-opts learning is it goal altered away from itself. Even before this common event lies the eventuality of all custom which seeks only to reproduce itself? Reproduction of the same is not renewal. As the root of the term implies, renewal seeks the new, whereas replacement seeks to restore what is already in place, or that place which had been disturbed in some way. The circle of hermeneutic pedagogy is not a tautology, there is no 'viciousness' about it, though even where such a pejorative applies, and the edge of the vicious cuts us only if we attempt to grasp its meaning. This is when we find out we have been chasing our own tails. But it does not consume itself as does the serpent who bites its own tail, for a tautology merely serves to affirm that two or more of our conceptions are so closely related as to be indistinguishable for the purposes of argument, and thus it too has a purpose which lies beyond itself. Something truly 'vicious' does not reach outside of itself in such a manner. It cannot feed anything but itself. The hermeneutic circle of learning plays away from its sources in the direction of Being, just as it rolls along on its torus with the impetus of experience behind it and the promise of the undiscovered before it: "To the extent that play is the dialectical interchange of transcendence and appropriation, it reflects the circularity found in all learning. If this circularity collapses, if the lack of coincidence which characterizes subjectivity is suddenly transformed into coincidence, then subjectivity congeals into substance, play ceases, 'seriousness' or 'bad faith' sets in, and learning comes to an end" (Gallagher, 1992:77). Our learning selves do not flail around in the world at random, there is always a method of sorts in play, because playing in the world - as a calculated sub specific to Being in the world - entails some foreknowledge of the rules of play, or at least, the process of moving from ignorance to knowledge, whatever the context. The unspoken and even unthought-of sense that 'I will learn something new', or 'I will understand something about myself or the world anew' always backdrops all attempts at learning once the pure play of children is colored with the added proposal of a gradual maturing. Gallagher adds that even within the sensibility of formal learning, the attitude of play is necessary to the discovery that what we have taken for granted has more to it than meets the normative eye, and that this attitude vanishes at the point of thinking that one has 'got it', or that there is nothing more to 'get' about something: "Play is finished as soon as the learner thinks that he already understands. This 'serious' posture, which takes everything as familiar and recognizes no other possibilities, this 'Meno-type' ignorance or bad faith, signifies the foreclosure of learning." (ibid:144). A 'hermenoics' then, would be the position of a self-interpreter who not only projects his own understanding into the world and makes that world conform to it - in other words, the student or scientist who engages in self-fulfilling prophecy, a potential problem, as Weber warned, with any type of deductive stance - but also would characterize the interlocutor who assumes that there is nothing new in the world even if he is unaware of all that is contained in the world. If he does not know it, someone else does, and thus the necessity for play and curiosity is shipwrecked on the stolid transmission of reproductive learning. If we insert only a Meno-like character in the circle of interpretation, we lead ourselves only either back to ourselves as we have already been or to the tradition which awaits us unquestioned and unchallenged. We have already seen how neither of these options has any merit with regard to pedagogy: "Learning does not take place on the basis of a rhetorical or pedagogical question posed by the teacher unless that question seriously and playfully opens up both the student and the subject matter to an indeterminacy." (ibid:163).

Not everyone agrees with the ultimate place phronesis has within the circle of hermeneutic learning, as we will see shortly. It has within it a 'safety' or 'governor' that, because it also looks back to the history of experience, does not entirely let loose its bonds with the tradition as it has been. It would seem that this is inevitable, and that sources such as Caputo are stretching a point when they suggest that practical wisdom is too conservative. Indeed, anything from the ancient world might well seem to us uncritical given their society, but here we are speaking of philosophical conceptions which are not only portable in the manner the notion of the sacred is portable, but must themselves participate in the play of human reason and intelligence. They themselves are historical and thus mutable, and mean something different to us than they likely meant to our forebears, no matter how recognizable they may seem for us: "For Caputo phronesis is no match for the wisdom one needs to allow the play to play itself out - that is, the wisdom needed for hermeneutical emancipation." (ibid:305).[ii] The Nietzschean concept of the play of Dionysiac radicalism still contains the foreknowledge of a dual finitude; one, that we are dying as we live, and two, that human life can be transported but not transcended, the beginning does not reach the end, but only abruptly trails off.[iii] It may be that all previous pedagogy that is extant within mortal memory has the undertones of evaluation against a previous norm, which is set up as what the case must look like, but as Bleich cautions, even if we eliminated such norms there would still remain the habit of learning within the environment of hexis and rationalized technique - that which contains the purposes of reproduction and usury of which Nietzsche spoke - for "In part, grading is now a social substitute for an ideal of pedagogy that itself unconsciously rules out collective work" (Bleich, 1988:254). At the same time, what is normative but not yet part of an institutional structure may still have a role to play in the construction of the phronetic process of self-understanding. This is so, because as we have already stated, interpretations of living on are based first on the day to day presumptions that are attendant upon certain aspects of hexis, especially those that do not aspire to, or find themselves placed in, larger rational organizations or systems of technical discourse: "...The proper model for a local hermeneutics is to be found in the concept of *phronesis* rather than the concept of *techne*. If there are legitimate universal canons they must be dependent on or derived from local ones, not *vice-versa*. (Gallagher, 1992:333 and cf. also 348 where this position is restated in the form of dialogue). This local situations of Beings is the one in which we find ourselves along the arc of our thoroughness. This trajectory does not necessarily afford us a surveyor's view, but it takes only the torsion of the hermeneutical torus to allow us the parallax we need to view things awry. The hermeneutics of suspicion emanates from such a viewpoint. The immediate problem of all incipient critique on its way to wisdom is the same problem we encounter in having a new experience. The newness of the next world is that it has not yet been taken into the home of our language, though it may be extant in the Being of human language. The nomenclature of experience is something that must be constructed after the facility of Being-here. The there-Being of facticality is what issues forth, a world which is no populated by something other than what it held before, but this otherness is now part of ourselves, and we have come to be familiar with it. So "...if man is find his way once again into the nearness of Being he must first learn to exist in the nameless. In the same way, he must recognize the seductions of the public realm as well as the impotence of the private" (Heidegger, 1977:199 [1947]). Generally, the naming procedure of learning hexis short-circuits the approach to the existential envelope of World by telling itself everything is 'okay'. The comfort zone of the normative can continue undisturbed. It may be interrupted, but no real irruptive force can be brooked. With praxis, the approach to Being is sabotaged simply

by the sense that everything that is can be made known through its function and its place in an empirical catalogue. This functionality is not the same thing as the implicit understanding that is to be had by the actual use of a cultural object, like a tool. Caputo expressly states that though we may know what something is for, within the force of its Being an object in the realm of objects, a thing in the world, lies the inertia of its partial boringness, that manner in which it becomes 'involved' in the world. The most forceful interpretation of the object is held within the actuality of its non-function, as when Heidegger's famous hammer breaks, and one suddenly knows what it is 'for', because the unthought-of of 'not Being able to' must now be reflected upon. The presence of Being, then, shows itself in its very absence, and thus even a mundane event such as the breaking of a tool has within it an uncanniness that must be confronted. We generally take such things in our stride - we may buy another tool or attempt to mend the one whose vitality is no longer at hand, or we may move on to another task and return to the one incomplete at some future date better equipped - but even here we must acknowledge that the world as it has been can abruptly change its tenor, even in small ways, and thus the fore having of the world has an apparent quality to it. It is the exposition of this realm of appearances in the world that calls us back to ourselves: "But over and beyond the world of everyday concerns, Dasein is stretched out to that for the sake of which there is a world, to Dasein itself. Dasein is projected upon its own deepest possibility to be the Being which it alone is or can be... Dasein 'understands' what it is about, that is, it predelineates for itself an anticipatory sketch of its world, casts itself forth into a sphere or horizon of existence within which it must make its way about" (Caputo, 1987:69). Just because we have learned to move about in such a world does not mean that that self-same world does not change, and thus we must change with it. The breaking of a tool is perhaps the most poignant of mundane events, because it 'shows up' our knowledge to be incomplete, and indeed, the finitude of human consciousness makes incompleteness both the character and the task of our personal and collective existence. This kind of life cannot be entirely prepared for; we cannot know what we need to know and also expect that what we know will be needed. Although we may shy away from the knowledge of our partial knowing, the factuality of our perspectival facticity, we must confront the Being which is at hand in the world because the wording of the life world continues with or without our acknowledgement. Authenticity in learning then must include the sense that we do not learn entirely at our own pace and we indeed should not always attempt to control the environment in which we learn. Yet because we are also pointed towards the ethic of concernful Being by the vector of our shared thoroughness, we are always mindful - perhaps even over-wrought - of the fragility of what we have come to know and how it too may break upon us: "The *ego* is first and foremost a Being of care or anxiety of which the first concern must be that of its authentic Being-in-the-world. This rehabilitation of the *ego* as a Being of care, as a practical project, is not foreign to the renaissance of practical philosophy which came out of the heart of the phenomenological movement..." (Grondin, 1995:44). The breaking into the expected or predicted routine of mundane existence cannot actually be formulated with any certitude. The human interest in prediction is perhaps primordial, but it is our culture that has obsessed over the methods of predictive prosthesis, from meteorology to statistics to probability theory, in the always odd duet of care and anxiety. The anxious Being is one 'of the world as it has been' whilst knowing the character of all human worlds is one that is immanently historical. The concernful Being has also an 'of-ness' about it, but it is more fully involved 'in the world' in the phenomenological sense, in that it does not excerpt itself to pass its time in the over-concern of worry. The adoption of the concernful Being takes itself into its own care, because it too

knows that it has had ethical lapses where its lack of care absented Being from its proper relationship with Beings. Yet it does not strike itself low with regret. It seeks rather to use such lapses or even absences as pedagogic events: "Nothing is to be gained, then from *re*morse, from *re*pentance, for who can say 'I am good'? Heidegger does not even want to hear conscience referred to as admonishment, warning, in the name of the curious argument that conscience would thereby once again become the prisoner of the 'they'." (Ricoeur, 1992:350 [1990]). This suggests that our ethical Being cannot be beholden to the externality of either custom or theoretical application. Both are 'deductive' in the sense that there has been a judgment made ahead of time, and thus conscience is pushed to become something other than it is ahead of its time. Whatever lapse of good or bad conscience has occurred, for both of these serve equally well the ends of education, the honest coming to terms of with the absence of ethical Being indicates its very presence, its return from Being otherwise.

This circle of withholding one's will to act in the ethical context of learning is also hermeneutic, in that it requires of us to risk that which has been held back. In confronting the absence of conscience we are generate a character study which places us both in negative and positive light, in the most casual sense, we are 'learning from our mistakes'. There is also a perhaps all too convenient rhetoric about such a circle, especially if it is exposed in the formal settings of classroom or teacher-student relations. Like a first date whereby one's true confessions generate a sympathy that may turn to erotism the second time around, the ability of bad conscience to produce a more base advantage cannot be overlooked: "Most likely a teacher who says "Yes, I am unjust; I am just as human as you are; something please me, and some things 'don't,' is more convincing than one who strictly upholds the ideology of justice but then inevitably commits unavowed injustice" (Adorno, 1998:187). Whether or not, as Adorno suggests, the psycho-analytic genre of archaeological self-reflection is a necessity for pedagogues may be disputed, but it nevertheless remains clear that the teacher cannot at all afford to play a moralizing game with either students or subject matter. Opening oneself up to the pedagogic process at hand does at least mean not to place on a pedestal the concepts or the Beings involved in the history of discourse and consciousness. 'Historical effective conscience' could thus be rendered as the ethical taking to task one's moral premises in the light of their genealogy. Pedagogy centering itself on phronesis does not rest assured that there would be secrets in any case, that mystery is the necessary heart of all things. Rather, the aspects of the human condition which are shrouded always *become* shrouded, and in principle they are value neutral in their attraction or disdain of the light of Being. Such ontological facticity is still a matter of historicity, that is, the veils of interpretation drop off or are replaced according to what is at hand in the culture of the day. This means the hermeneutic circle of pedagogy employs not only previous interpretation as and questions them along the lines of that which students bring to the classroom as a resource, but in doing so has accepted the risk that both what we understand about ourselves and how the discourse has understood itself are subject to critique and must thereby change themselves. But this is not all, for the attainment of phronesis, however momentary it too must be, can only reside in the home of a language which is of the human essence: "It means that ontology must, as phenomenology of Being, become a 'hermeneutic' of existence. It lays open what was hidden; it constitutes not an interpretation of an interpretation (which textual explication is) but the primary act of interpretation which first brings a thing from concealment" (Palmer, 1969:129). Yet in doing so, the autonomy of the object which is now suddenly at hand - the concept, idea, text, or person - cannot be enthralled to a model which subjects it to a self-

objection. That is, this 'thing' which we are and to which we bring ourselves to be must object to itself in a critical manner, without subjecting itself to a criticism which makes it part of something else. Such subjection is the object of the critic who is also a missionary, be it for ideology or instrumental praxis, the ritual of custom or the fealty which 'should' be felt to filial ties. This kind of slippage, where we might feel that prodigality is the only measure of not only our learning but also too our conscience in principal, is in fact an ethical error: "...the very willingness to connive with power and to submit outwardly to what is stronger, under the guise of a norm, is the attitude of the tormentors that should not arise again. It is for this reason that the advocacy of bonds is so fatal. People who adopt them more or less voluntarily are placed under a kind of permanent compulsion to obey orders" (Adorno, 1998:195). We are already well aware of the experiences that the letting go of historical experience brings upon us in the present. It is lived experience itself which stands as a reasoned bulwark against the tyranny of models or instrumentalities. Adherence itself is alone enough to close off both dialogue and dialectic, whether it is to an argument or a position - one's favorite 'concept', even phronesis as a status, let alone an ideology or a belief system. Once the double ensconcement of Being in a model and the conception of self that finds a subterranean lair in a cognitive recess that deliberately shuns the interpretive light is effected, the rhetoric of reproduction can be as shallow as it would be if we were to have seen through it at the first: "Those who adhered to the established system needed merely a few fine-sounding words to justify existing practices. The real work was done by habits which were so fixed as to be institutional" (Dewey, 1938:29). Hence the experientiality of any educational always mitigates against the acceptance *prima faci* of any state of previous practices, for the practicalities that they have measured themselves too and for are also changed by new experience.

Concernful Being as a Mode of Learning

Of course, we cannot guarantee ourselves that our experiences will be new, and this is why the understanding of hermeneutic pedagogy takes place within the self-understanding of concernful Being. Caring about something is by definition future looking, even if the care is conserving to the point of ritual. The ritual, as it has been, and thus the world as it has been, must be kept in this or that way at all costs. Such concern, however reactionary, thinks ahead of itself. So caring is at its basis not mere prediction, control, calculation or repetition, though all of these highly rationalized tools can either emanate there from or adhere to the basic ethic of concernfulness not unlike the manner in which students or other persons have just been seen as adhering to a system of rules and practices. Caring is, before all of these other things, the major form of existential self-understanding which notices its own Being as having to be in the world, and further, fore having this Beingness as part of a world which is not all at once our own in the same way as we might imagine ourselves to be: "Must we not agree that to be *careful*, to care for something, is always the central character of care; but whoever is 'caring for' is careful in doing so, and that means he is concerned with himself; in the same sense in which Husserl says (with Kant) that to be conscious of something is, for essential reasons, to be self-conscious" (Gadamer, 1984:61 italics the text's). This existential ethic is but one side of the currency of the life world. We must care for others to care for ourselves, even if capital has redefined the self as often only selfishness, or at least, self-centeredness. That everything can be made a commodity does not exempt the self. We fetishize about our own doings, our coming s and goings, our visage and image, and our presentation of self. The process of self-objectification in which we are partial volunteers takes place within the ethic of care, but one which has been narrowed by the error which confuses egoism and egotism.

Especially in North America, we are pressed each day to be responsible for ourselves, to love ourselves, and only then may we be in fact responsible for others or be loved by them. The facticity of this situations of Being - the singularity which desires *mitsein* but does not immediately know how to attain it - lends itself, specifically if it be rejected by others in its learning process, to the indifference to others characteristic of the worst human crimes: "The coldness of the societal monad, the isolated competitor, was the precondition, as indifferently to the fate of others, for the fact that only very few people reacted. The torturers saw this, and they put it to the test ever anew" (Adorno, 1998:201 [1969]). So it is obvious that concernful Being must have a human breadth, and not be solely concerned for the self in its various guises, or, by extension, only for the selves which are to be used as means for one's own ends. Indeed, this kind of extending of the narrow ethic of self-care is kindred in its chicanery to that of instrumental praxis masking itself as a mere extension of hexis. Neither at the level of the individual learner nor within the systems of education and discourse can such a movement lead to phronesis. One is not only in the world, and one is not only with one's contemporaries, but one must strike up a quite specific attitude of interest in both. This position takes upon itself the responsibility of the very facticity of otherness in opening up the self to dialogue and dialectic: "Because dialogue is an encounter among men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some men name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man by another" (Friere, 1970:77). This is part of the story here, though it be epiphenomenal to a more basic ethic that holds the world and its others as both subject to one's care, and the object of one's caring: "Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for men." (ibid). The individual of the modern social world is turned away from the other because he cannot risk himself. As well, the otherness turns him away, because he cannot find recognizable the mode of Being in the other's world that for him could act as an instrument to serve his own ends. This is why persons from differing social classes almost never marry. Not only do they not encounter one another, the dominant group's domination cannot possibly be served by taking into its folds the very margins it has created. Dialogue rather assumes that we are at least partially conscious that our interlocution with others changes us and points us in a new direction. Often this direction is also partially occupied by the other to self, and thus the encounter becomes more intimate as time goes on. But that such encounters cannot be as two ships passing in the daylight, in sight of each other and extending themselves only in the most typified of greetings, we must confront the otherness of Being otherwise to how we are for ourselves through the dialectic of dialogue, the edge of the world as we have known it. It is this, more than intimacy, which gives forth the wisdom of practice. We must recognize ourselves as part of the process of learning about the self only through the other, rather than the opposite case, where we take the other as part of ourselves and feign a learnedness about her because we think we know ourselves only too well; "To put this point in pedagogical terms, had I stuck to the traditional self-concept of the teacher, that of the 'banking educator', I would have conceived of my essays as having been written in a variety of different modes, and I would have disregarded the fact that my Being in class, *as a class member* was influencing my development" (Bleich, 1988:270 italics the text's). Taking the other 'into account' is perhaps a phrase which betrays itself by its very polysemy. Whose account is Being enriched here? Why must we 'take in' as if hoarding the profit of our encounters with others, or using them as a form of ego-gratification? On top of this, there is the arrogance which appears in related phrases such as 'the human factor', which also must be taken 'into account' as something that will be seen to detract from the otherwise proper

and rational functioning of either machines or organizations, economies or political systems, as if these very constructions were made by humans only to supersede the humanity of their creators! Between arrogance and selfishness then there is little room indeed for otherness or the authenticity of self-risk, unless risk means staking one's wealth or status upon tables that have the chance to increase the same. The problem of identification with one's external trappings, including ones status relationships with others - without my wife, I am nothing, for instance, or my job or portfolio, etc. - severely limits our ability to move in the direction of practical wisdom, for such, if it exists at all, is held only by other or within the sources of material wealth and social status that I have arranged around myself as a kind of insulation from the existential risk of the Worldly envelope. As with ourselves, the teacher, who is in fact a class or course participant, a member of a temporary community dedicated to learning, must overcome her insularity in the same manner as she expects of her students. The teacher envisages the future Being of the student, but must also come to terms with the Being of the present, in herself and win others: "Think of them as they ought to be when you have to influence them, but think of them as they are when you are tempted to act on their behalf." (Schiller, 1965:54 [1795]). The suasion of hermeneutic pedagogy is one that remains open to Being swayed. The otherness it seeks to encounter is not alien at all costs, but must needs reside in the self as the always already partiality to both knowledge and self-understanding. In other words, such a dialogue aspires to know the self anew in the same way that it looks to know the newness of the other.

Conclusion: On Learning the Other

Even though there are at least two faces involved in the encounter with the other, this kind of pedagogy cannot afford any serious duplicity. It is quite reasonable to embark upon theatrical projects that lessen the social distance which pervades the nascent classroom setting in any kind of course, but to do so is also to commit to a self-exposition that allows students to see the trick Being turned in its turning. They may at first reject the sensibility that on the one hand, they are suddenly responsible in an encompassing manner for their own learning, and on the other, for the learning of others in the new community of learners. It is this second aspect of the concernful hermeneutics of education that will be the more difficult to accomplish, simply and precisely for the reasons to which those like Dewey and Adorno have alluded. We live squarely in a social milieu which sees the self as the reality of an ideal which is also looked to as the highest form of living. We may act *as if* we care for others, but this is mere grease that keeps the wheels of social order turning without excessive and noisome constraint. To alter this requires of us a general shift in the sensibility that the self is only responsible *to* its own actions, let alone for them: "My changing reference to 'acting' from the stage to the class is perhaps my individualized version of seeing students and teachers (actors) as members of the *same class*." (Bleich, 1988:279 italics the text's). This similitude stems neither from the fore having of hexis nor from the foreknowledge of praxis. It can take place as the lighted stage of Beings only because this new community finds itself anew in itself and in its shared circumstance of learning about Being in the world through the aspiration to phronesis. It learns, in other words, through the learning of Being-towards-itself, though here, unlike in the contexts of the socius, the 'itself' is the community and the Being-with is the shard undertaking of concernfulness towards practical wisdom and the shared overcoming of the previous limits bestowed upon members by both hexis and praxis. For every student, and each teacher is also and still a student of both others and of discourse and the *lebensweldt* in general, what has closed upon us is the cognatic comfort of the presence

of what we think we are. Yet we also must return to ourselves from Being otherwise even though such a 'return' constitutes no prodigal homecoming: "Learning entails opening up the fore-structure of her understanding and projecting the possibilities of meaning that will ultimately situate the object of learning in a more familiar context. This transcendence means going beyond the once familiar context; it means risking that familiar ground in order to allow the unfamiliar to find its place" (Gallagher, 1992:138-9). There is a new feel for the significance of reality, for it at first made fragile and exposed, charted and fathomed as if it were a discovery incipient of a more detailed auto-cartography, and then it is made, perhaps paradoxically, more solid and believable because of the group of students, joined by the teacher, who undergo this quest together. The recording of this shift in reality and the mobile perceptions of multiple realities of learning, thinking, writing, and speaking to one another in the context of critical praxis involves all of us and each of us in turn as interlocutors. We are very much communicating to ourselves as well as to others, for the new self which must come to understand the new experience is gestating, and we generally do not know other students or teachers even on smaller campuses or in larger course enrollments. In a mature or extended course that participates in hermeneutic pedagogy, however, "...the audience is always real and relatively well known to each student, and the purpose of writing is, first, to record in some orderly fashion memories and experiences of language use that seemed to have remained important, and second, to make these experiences meaningful to specific, real people" (Bleich, 1988:191). Further to the new reality of pedagogic situations, there is the doubling over of the old reality Being shown to have been not what it had appeared to be. The hinge of this opening up of the unforeseen vista of learning and yet the closing of the previous prejudice of now limited fore structure of understanding is the facticity of experience of both radical otherness in the apparently mundane arena of the classroom, or when reading a text, listening to a dialogical presentation or what have you. Praxis alone, even in its most authentically critical form and breadth, cannot provide the sharpness of the edge of an ontological horizon that has this edge not because we see with eagle vision, not because its blade is our own to use as we will, but because it is we ourselves who are cut into and thereby opened up by its presence. The critical edge of praxis is still a tool to be applied with the surgical philosophy of sounding out 'hollow idols', the famous 'philosophy with a hammer': "Instead, the hermeneutical notion of application, related to the concept of *phronesis*, requires a situated, less than objective response. In this view there is never anything like a pure problem unrelated to the more ambiguous or 'mysterious' dimensions of human existence" (Gallagher, 19992:186).

The world as it has been has remained so in part because its version of 'mystery' is a calculation based on the inertia of custom and the false pretenses of instrumentally applied theory. Practical wisdom is generated within the movement that understands Being in the life-world to be the fore having of the living in the social world, and thus also the ground of relevance for all prosthetic *techne* that shares such a world with us, almost as if it were another form of Being entirely. Insofar as others must come to terms with our presence and we with theirs, even the technologies of rationality may find a home within the language of World as vehicles for not only opening up the cosmic mystery, but of equal importance and necessity, the disclosure of how we have imagined ourselves and others as sharing the same mysterious cosmogony.

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Notes:

[i] Gadamer continues by sketching out what in our modern sensibility owes its allegiance to this original conceptualization. He sees it as a 'motive force' of science in particular, "...which we describe in terms of 'practical reason'. Since the eighteenth century this is the term we have used to describe what the Greeks meant by the words *praktike* and *phronesis*, namely an awareness appropriate to a particular situation, like that in which diagnosis,

treatment, dialogue and the participation of the patient all come together." (Gadamer, 1996:138 [1986]).

[ii] Yet Gallagher ultimately decides that practical wisdom is in fact what is necessary to confront the finitude of human consciousness: "*Phronesis* is not, as Caputo would have it, inadequate to the conversation or relegated to normal discourse alone. It is the only virtue available to deal with the ambiguity, the play involved in the incommensurability of discourses. It is the only virtue that will not deny the ambiguity." (Gallagher, 1992:311)

[iii] It is precisely this abruptness that constitutes the Nietzschean edge of interpretation. This is not a recollection of the 'all is vanity' or 'all flesh is as grass' call to arms of the Pauline anxiety, but rather a fundamental acknowledgement of the needful and yearning aspiration of humanity - to make meaningful the cosmos is also to return to it. In doing so, we radically risk our previous sense of self, and in this we are not at all conserving, for we do not know the ends of this play: "...an 'authoritative' teacher can share substantial parts of his or her subjectivity, thereby disclosing my common participation with the students in the universal processes of growth and change" (Bleich, 1988:255).