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HUNGRY FOR INSUBORDINATE EDUCATIONAL WISDOM

I came of age to womanhood in a hopeful, angry generation for whose social challenges, moral controversy, and iconoclastic artistry many war-weary, loving parents and teachers were utterly unprepared. Within that painful intergenerational predicament, from early girlhood onward, I have encountered repeatedly the ethical necessity of my own and others' insubordination – which has posed complex questions about its possible enactment with wisdom. Those questions – and wondrous encounters suggesting various possible constructive answers to them – have made philosophy of education vital for me. Confronting the postmillennial market society's demoralizing effects, both ecological and educational, makes insubordinate educational wisdom more urgent now than ever. My intellectual self-portrait consists of three brief narratives about my hunger for insubordinate educational wisdom and how I have fed it: in my initial choice of professional path, in my early education, and in my philosophical-educational inquiry itself.

CHOOSING PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Blue-eyed, cross-eyed daughter of southern New Jersey's Jim Crow culture, I was born and grew up on the Delaware Bay's Quaker-colonized eastern shore, once the peaceful Lenni Lenape's tribal territory, three years before Brown v. Board of Education. I graduated from elementary school one year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964; graduated from high school one year after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination; and graduated from college one year after President Nixon's signature on Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 – also one year after proposal of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, still not ratified in 2013.

Title IX states simply, No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Before the Ford and Carter administrations had finished translating that legislation into federal policy, I entered architecture school with very few other women students. I encountered only one African American classmate, not one woman-professor, not even one woman in the history of architecture curriculum. By the end of my fifth loan-financed semester, I let go of my developing gifts and intense hunger for design, dropping out in utter disgust at pervasive sexual harassment, a practice that did not yet even have a name. My recent critical plea for

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educators' theoretical attention to learning environments harks back to my architectural learning, itself an undeniable intellectual watershed for me. But chastened by that profession's hostility to women, I took up pink-collar wage-labor in 1976 – becoming a secretary for several African American women who were administering the government-assisted Educational Opportunity Programs at mostly white Ithaca College.

Learning much from my bosses' instructive advocacy and mentoring and from our experiences together serving the belated education of smart, hard-working, high-achieving African American and Hispanic American undergraduates whose talents New York's urban public schools had neglected, abused, and squandered, I became involved also as a volunteer in teaching English to evening GED students. While contemplating what I could and would do with my post-architectural work-life, I learned much about other struggles against political-economic injustice from Spanish, Mexican, and Latin American graduate-student friends as I began reading romantic white public intellectuals' polemics about education's needed radical transformation – Kozol, Ashton-Warner, Illich, Postman and Weingartner, Goodman, Silberman, Holt, Wigginton, Kohl, et al. Finally I decided to devote my own privileged learning to a life's work in public education for social justice. Still smarting from my architecture-school wounds, I started on that path by joining what Catherine Beecher had named "woman's true profession," school-teaching.

I found my "methods" courses (required for Cornell's Master of Arts in Teaching English) shallow and stupid. Therefore, a half-decade before Donald Schon's *The Reflective Practitioner* inspired constructivist teacher education reformers with its case studies of architectural and other professional practices, I designed my own professional preparation within that MAT program to resemble my abandoned architectural design curriculum's constant, dialectically fluid learning interactions between theory and practice – then a distinctive feature of architectural studio education at Cornell. Previously, as an undergraduate at Vassar College, I had double-majored in English and Art, minoring in Classical Greek, and had also studied philosophy of art and aesthetics, so I had necessary conceptual tools for making that logical curricular translation from one artful profession to another. Intent upon theorizing metaphorically my own concept of teaching and locating my own teacher-preparation's academic curricular core in philosophy of education electives, I applied those studies of Dewey's moral and aesthetic thought, and of related literary theory, to close reflection upon my student-teaching field experiences in public junior and senior high-school settings – including what may be the longest-enduring public progressive-alternative school in the U.S. Oddly, however, no course introduced me to either Maxine Greene's *Landscapes of Learning* or Israel Scheffler's *Reason and Teaching*, although I learned years later that both classics spoke directly and usefully to what I was then attempting.

When I graduated and became a certified Secondary English teacher in 1979, already considering future doctoral study, I remained in Ithaca to teach high school. I "did" philosophy of education, on my own, just as I had learned, in order to design and critique my own classroom curriculum and teaching practice, which I conceived as an art form. I began reading feminist theory and racially diverse

women's literature also, while educating myself more specifically about African American literature and culture in order to desegregate the school's English curriculum racially. But I found that literature I was reading and teaching often expressed and provoked educational thought of a differently useful sort; for it spoke critically to emotions and imagination as well as reason, to hearts and bodies as well as minds, to characters, events, and settings as well as language and ideas, and to aesthetic complexities of reader-response whose significance for education of moral imagination in contexts of cultural diversity both Deanne Bogdan and Martha Nussbaum would later theorize so brilliantly. Even now, I cannot understand why the educational foundations field's self-definition excludes mention of literature as one of its core liberal disciplines, using literary artifacts as mere auxiliary resources (interpreted only mimetically) to inform philosophical, historical, anthropological, or sociological studies of education. This is one theoretical issue that remains nagging on my life-work agenda.

I met weekly after school with several teaching colleagues, librarians, aides, and parents from across the school district to discuss popular books about sexism in schooling. With encouragement from an African American woman administrator in 1982, we organized the Ithaca Feminist Education Coalition, a school-district Title IX Committee, and the PreK-12 Caucus of the National Women's Studies Association – at whose conference I heard an unforgettable standing-room-only philosophical symposium presented by Ann Diller, Maryann Ayim, Kathryn Pauly Morgan, and Barbara Houston, which cast new, conceptually clarifying light upon our after-school discussions: "Should Public Education Be Gender-Free?" Earlier that year, a friend had shared with me Jane Roland Martin's 1982 *Harvard Educational Review* article, "Excluding Women from the Educational Realm," whose insubordinate questions about the conceptual meanings of both teaching and coeducation I thought about often while on my daily cafeteria duty at IHS.

After earning tenure there, one year after the Equal Rights Amendment's unexpected defeat, I went back up the hill to Cornell for doctoral study in philosophy of education, literature, and gender. However, my doctoral adviser had encouraged no expectation whatsoever of future employment in the Education professoriate, because he said university faculty positions in philosophy of education were then scarce, and many women with PhDs found themselves in clerical jobs instead, which I knew to be true.

LEARNING LOVE, DISSONANCE, AND DOUBT

My parents discouraged my doctoral study. But the foundational structure of their objections seemed so fraught with significant contradictions that I chose to rely gratefully on strengths they had taught me while staying my course without their further support. Recovering from world-war traumas and grief together, they had settled on a ramshackle old farmstead near their own families' homes and there had two children. They kept mostly to themselves, living quietly as they repaired our house; built a good family library; fed me much poetry and many women's biographies; taught my little brother and me to value their own parents' wisdom;

shared with us their love for animals and the natural world; and enjoyed mind-challenging games, crafts, and conversations with us. Thus they taught us deliberately and joyfully everyday at home – my mother as an artful modern blend of Rousseau's Sophie, Pestalozzi's Gertrude, Alcott's "Marmee," and Girl Scouts; my father as a modern self-styled sort of Epictetus. If philosophy for children had yet appeared on the U.S. educational landscape, he might have wanted it included in his children's schooling. His only career guidance came as a dinner-table confession that he'd rather have become a philosophy or history professor, or perhaps an architect, than an engineer, the profession his own father had chosen for him – so he promised never to dictate such a choice to us.

While educating us at home, instead of sustaining both their families' strong traditions of musicianship which I hungered intensely to learn, my parents sent us to the local Christian day school, where we suffered daily bullying – perhaps because on our applications for admission, asked if he believed in the Bible, my father had responded simply that he believed in God. But my parents and grandparents collaborated to contradict our school-days' abusiveness with loving lessons in rational self-respect and mutual sibling care, as they got together with our family's Episcopal parish and some extremely prosperous friends to found a new day school with a loving ethos and a classical curriculum in 1959, as war began in Viet Nam. Within two years, the Church developed sufficient anti-racist conscience to withdraw diocesan support from this all-white school, which continued to grow independently and, somewhat later, welcomed children of color. Committed to gender equality, the school never even sex-segregated its playground activities – offering tumbling and judo to all children in response to boys' pleas for football. But during my last two years, much to my parents' chagrin, I tried to trivialize my own intelligence in school lest it might make me an unattractive girl.

So they sent me away at age thirteen to an Episcopal diocesan convent school for girls in long flowing chapel veils, with a classical curriculum, on a remote northern New Jersey hilltop. Its "High-Church" (Anglo-Catholic) rituals and disciplines were so intensely ascetic that my "Low-Church" (evangelical) father could only counsel Spartan forbearance, with stories of his own army experiences while my mother wrote her love daily. The following year, my parents transferred me to a "Broad-Church" (liberal) Episcopal diocesan school for girls in Maryland, run by egalitarian progressives, explicitly grounded in "situation ethics" and existentialist theology, the core of its college-preparatory curriculum – about which I suspect my conservative parents had no clue. That is where, as philosophers say, I fell in love with wisdom.

Arriving there fresh from the convent school's doctrinaire rigors, I titled my first week's tenth-grade English composition "Logic, Not Faith," which (much to my surprise) teachers circulated among one another, applauding my skepticism. That first year, I argued often with the Lutheran priest who was my New Testament teacher and loved composing geometric proofs. The following two years' theology classes (whose pedagogy anticipated Maxine Greene's *Teacher as Stranger* by more than a half-decade) shocked us with Holocaust documentaries and offered my first heady tastes of philosophy – Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, Tillich, and

philosophical interpretation of fiction as well as basic conceptual analysis and radically free-thinking but careful construction of our own sexual ethics. This racially desegregated, but still mostly white school proved to be a loving, joyful, democratic, faith-and-doubt community of girls led by girls. I graduated one year before the Kent State Massacre, already pacifist and egalitarian, inwardly baffled by my entire family's social and political values, which seemed so obviously to contradict compassion and love that they and our church had taught me.

Thus I left school, church, and home in 1969, clueless about my future, but eager in my deep quiet puzzlement at age 17 to study philosophy, literature, and other arts in college, among other women who dared to claim intellectual vitality, without fear of denigration for breaching feminine propriety. When I opened my letter of acceptance to Vassar, my father joked memorably that I would finish by becoming a suburban mother of four and drive a station wagon. I did not yet realize that my unusually religious, conservative early education had posed so many contradictory challenges for me that I would feel compelled to think hard about education for the rest of my life.

At Vassar I never went to chapel – except for poetry readings and lectures, some of the most important events in my education: Muriel Rukeyser, Denise Levertov, Mary McCarthy, the Berrigan brothers, Herbert Marcuse, Angela Davis. But my first philosophy course disappointed me so deeply that I took no more courses offered by that department until my senior year. Although that first course did engage arguments about God that I had been eager to study, it was conducted as if no cultural events outside the text and its logical forms were noteworthy in the least, as if early modern arguments were irrelevant to late modern problems. By contrast, even my courses in Classics addressed our contemporary cultural surround with strong critical comparisons, and my freshman orientation began memorably with student-led seminars on ancient and American philosophical classics in searching dialogue with Eldridge Cleaver's Soul On Ice. As the year began, Black Panthers were occupying Main Hall to support African American students' demands for a Black Studies program and for a separatist residence hall.

My first English course at Vassar, taught by a Johns Hopkins doctoral candidate who had experienced the 1968 Paris student revolts, posed provocative ontological, ethical, political, and aesthetic questions – insubordinate questions – about gender and race, segregation and desegregation, equality and freedom, war and peace through studies in twentieth-century literature. Thus I encountered my first major reading in educational thought, Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, and through my senior seminar on English Romantic Poetry I met my second reading in educational thought, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. I did not choose to take philosophy of education at Vassar, so I did not recognize these two landmark texts from my undergraduate experience as educational theory until I met them again as a doctoral student. However, they prodded my thinking about social justice as well as my own education and life-choices.

My first year at Vassar, the first U.S. women's college, was its last year as a women's college, which many (like me) had chosen precisely for that reason. Gradually it became more coeducational over the following three years, allowing

students to choose between sex-segregated and sex-desegregated residence halls, while admitting veterans and other anti-war men as well as gay and transgender students. In my second year, the intellectual tone of classroom discourse became abruptly more informal with men's arrival (as exchange students from men's colleges). This sex-desegregation process's challenges and consequences provoked my first comparative reflections about my experiences in girls' schools and my quite different experiences of variously configured coeducation both in elementary school and at home. Later, the entirely different process of sex-desegregation in architecture school and my encounter with a more taken-for-granted coeducational configuration in the public high school where I taught English would complicate those comparisons even more – especially when I amended them with thought about racial segregation, desegregation, and separatism.

THINKING ABOUT COEDUCATION

In 1983 I began doctoral study deeply concerned that feminist pedagogy and the women's studies movement had focused (as women's colleges had) almost exclusively on undergraduate women's learning in higher education and, within that limited context, almost exclusively on liberal education, as if no other kind of education were valuable or necessary, as if boys' and men's learning were of no consequence to girls and women. Urgent concerns about girls' learning, about boys' and men's brutal miseducation, about racism and public schooling, about professional education, about domestic education and childrearing, including sexuality education, all seemed to be off the women's studies radar no less than they were off the education profession's radar. Therefore I intended to answer Martin's 1982 call to conceptualize coeducation with my own dissertation.

My adviser Bob Gowin had expressed enthusiasm about my research interest in philosophy of education, literature, and gender, and taught inspiring courses on Dewey, Rorty, conceptual analysis, and modern movements in educational thought, welcoming my eagerness to engage the arts campus culture's exhilarating conversations with and about Barthes, DeSaussure, Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Adorno, and others. With his guidance I assembled my doctoral committee to include a pioneer scholar of children's literature, Alison Lurie, and a pioneer scholar of African American literary theory, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for I wanted to continue my studies in African American literature and culture and integrate them into my research, if I could do so credibly. As I embarked upon my dissertation prospectus, I met Jane Martin, who encouraged my plan warmly. But soon thereafter my adviser surprised me by rejecting it on grounds that coeducation was "not a concept." Since coeducation meant nothing more than sex-desegregation, he explained, it was not a specifically educational concept.

I had experienced so many different configurations of coeducation myself, with such vastly different consequences for teaching, learning, and curriculum that I thought him mistaken. I argued that coeducation was not yet a concept only because no one had yet bothered to formulate it in terms of the "commonplaces" of educating that he had theorized. In retrospect, perhaps I did not persuade him

because (following the analytic tradition) he understood the meaning of a philosophical concept to be a generalization that formulates a standard sense of common regularities to be found in experiences, events, activities, and objects bearing a particular name. The only such regularity about a-theoretical coeducation seemed to be both sexes' presence in a particular setting, so he was plainly right about the concept's thinness in educational discourse.

I did not then attempt to make my own insubordinate argument by citing the different meaning of "concept" that I had learned in architecture school, which had shaped my thinking on this subject. Even though educators often claim to be engaged in curriculum "design" and instructional "design" as "constructivists," I had never heard any of them engage the theoretical language and logic of design that I had studied with architects, nor (oddly, I thought) had I ever read any philosophy of educational design. I was wandering into some kind of philosophical wilderness with this line of thinking from another artful profession. The various cases of coeducation (and sex-segregated schooling) that had convinced me it was worthy of conceptual study reflected no standard pattern, so they suggested to me a problem for which there might be better and worse concepts – since my design education had taught me to form concepts as statements of or solutions for problems. (Architects have theorized this notion of "concept" too extensively and subtly to explain here.) Different configurations of coeducation that I had experienced were mostly not by thought or design, but by mere happenstance of different locations, times, demographics, policies, prejudices, or economic conditions. Those different configurations did not necessarily reflect coherent ideas of coeducation, because often little or no thought about gendered learning aims, or consequences of those configurations, seems to have been exerted in their formulation. Concerned about harms done by educators' obliviousness to such thoughtless configurations, I wanted to identify and analyze concepts of coeducation that might stimulate coeducational imagination pragmatically and critically astute about gender – not to formulate a standard sense of coeducation that might yield a correct, best, standard, or systematic gender practice. This approach's logical appropriateness seemed clear to me in view of the variously gendered conceptual foundations for public schooling that Ayim, Morgan, and Houston had theorized in Diller's NWSA symposium. Thus I came to draw up my plan to analyze distinctive concepts of coeducation evident in writings of Wollstonecraft, Alcott, Dewey School teachers, and Adrienne Rich. Upon that plan's rejection, I had to go back to my drawing board to design my dissertation, but I did compile some of my abortive doctoral research into a paper that won the John Dewey Society's essay contest, "Women and Gender in John Dewey's Philosophy of Education." Meanwhile mentored by Jane Martin, I developed a dissertation prospectus that my adviser approved: a conceptual analysis of "maternal teaching" in its achievement sense, indebted to Audre Lorde's essay, "Man Child" and represented in Louisa Mary Alcott's Little Women and Ntozake Shange's Betsey Brown, which also enacted it textually for girl readers and their mothers. My work on the former source drew also upon particular advising by Lurie; the second, upon particular advising by Gates. Both Jane and Bob advised

me I might focus only on Little Women, but I insisted on studying Betsey Brown too – not only to racially desegregate and historicize my own educational thought, but also to show that, although both texts instantiated my proposed achievement sense of maternal teaching, each author narrated a substantially different interpretation of educational problems standing in that aim's way and therefore differently interpreted the maternal curriculum and the teaching activities it required. This conceptual inquiry constructed a useful foundation for other insubordinate thinking I undertook: about the analytic standard sense of teaching that grounded the teaching reform movement, about feminist pedagogy in that context, about in *loco parentis* teaching, about the curriculum of childrearing, about ideals of the educated teacher (much as Martin had theorized ideals of the educated woman in *Reclaiming a Conversation*), and eventually also about coeducational teaching and the coeducational childrearing possibilities of school lunch.

But my doctoral program itself had no design concept beyond completion of coursework and dissertation. My various graduate assistantships and campus jobs offered no opportunity for substantial experience educating pre-service schoolteachers philosophically, which might strengthen my candidacy for the Education professoriate. Therefore, in 1987, after I had completed my dissertation draft, I took my philosophical inquiries on teaching westward across the Mississippi River, into collaboration with Landon Beyer, a generous new curriculum-theorist mentor with whom I discovered profound common ground in aesthetics, on design of a "foundational" teacher education program for an undergraduate liberal arts college, much like the secondary teacher education I had designed for myself at Cornell the previous decade, albeit more fully developed for elementary teacher education also. After completing my Ph.D., I moved into a tenure-track assistant professorship in philosophy and history of education, serving the professional preparation of teachers, counselors, and leaders at the University of Maine. While there, my philosophical education continued through monthly participation in a Boston group of feminist philosophers who offered one another a helpfully critical audience for their writing in progress, "PHAEDRA," which at that time regularly included Jane Martin, Ann Diller, Susan Franzosa, Barbara Houston, Beatrice Nelson, Jennifer Radden, and sometimes Janet Farrell Smith. Four years later I moved into an associate professorship for which the University of Oklahoma targeted me with an explicit charge to develop a doctoral program in philosophy of education. I have regarded that charge as a design problem also, a challenge to formulate my own concept of doctoral education. My collaborations with Susan Franzosa, Lucy Townsend, and my advisees to found the Society for Educating Women have been pragmatically integral to that thinking. In my scholarly writing, however, I have focused on the research program that I had wanted to pursue as a doctoral student.

Writing various encyclopedia, handbook, and otherwise expository articles about coeducation, women's and girls' education, domestic education, Mary Wollstonecraft, Louisa May Alcott, and Jane Roland Martin has proven to be useful preliminary work for that research, and new reading of African American

educational thought and of feminist philosophy and theory that I have undertaken both to teach courses and to prepare response essays for conferences have broadened and deepened my study of coeducation. Autobiographical reflection upon my educational experiences has taken my inquiry on coeducation in directions it might never otherwise have taken, as well. But I came to particular new clarity when Jim Garrison invited me to respond to critics of my first gender critique of Dewey, a project through which I studied closely Bob Gowin's objections to my initial doctoral proposal. With reference to a racially diverse variety of philosophical, literary, and historical sources on coeducation, I analyzed the concept's imprecision as a framework for examining particular conceptual understandings of coeducation that grounded Dewey's high modern defenses of the practice and Rich's late modern critique of it: its relativity to setting; its vagueness with regard to learning, teaching, and curriculum; and its ambiguity with regard to ends and means. Thus, in "Rethinking Coeducation," I raised theoretical questions about its political-economic foundations, about spatial manipulations' consequences for its changing meaning, about its logical relationship to changing conceptions of family, and about its possible pragmatic dependence upon the educational value of friendships in order to avoid pitfalls occasioned by those problems.

That latter point prompted my own practical inquiry on possible strategic responses to a-theoretical coeducation's most stubbornly pervasive, harmful problems, in a context of misogynist backlash against feminism. I embarked upon a service project – Girl Scouting for undergraduate students as well as for racially, sexually diverse teenagers coming of age in severe poverty – which informed my construction of a new concept I named "Befriending Girls as an Educational Life-Practice," that later I made more broadly inclusive. My own experience of this practice, like that of maternal teaching, included encounters with girls' eating disorders and their gatherings around food whose leftovers went home to hungry families. Thus I was inspired to undertake research that became my presidential address to the Philosophy of Education Society, "Food for Coeducational Thought."

That effort also took shape within the context of my writing a volume on Mary Wollstonecraft's educational thought, based on my philosophical reading of multi-disciplinary research that 1989 publication of her complete works in seven volumes had prompted, not yet available to Jane Martin when she wrote "Wollstonecraft's Daughters" in *Reclaiming a Conversation*. Here I discovered that Wollstonecraft had developed her thought as a Philosophical Mother of Coeducation by writing in multiple genres: recounting experiences in letters, composing her reflections upon experience and its educational possibilities into fiction, and finally also theorizing in philosophical treatises. I also found that, although her thought on coeducation has often been reduced to mere advocacy of gender-blind sex-desegregation, it does begin to formulate a more complex concept of coeducation in a sense whose understanding of gender was more deeply critical than blind. For she constructed her concept through critical analysis of what I named "monarchist miseducation," advancing five propositions that composed her sense of "republican" coeducation's

definitive purposes and challenges – several of whose structural elements my research had already begun to theorize.

As an architecture student I had learned to generate a design concept by looking at other past solutions to similar problems and then subjecting those solutions to transformations determined or suggested by the problem's particular contextual and relational demands – its site, its people, and so on. Thus I began to see the Girl Scout idea of educating girls and women as a kind of sex-segregated coeducation, insofar as it has pursued Wollstonecraft's coeducational purposes despite Baden-Powell's exclusion of girls from Scouting. In similar fashion, feminists after Wollstonecraft have transformed her conception of coeducation variously – Alcott, Dewey, Woolf, and Martin, as well as the African American feminist orator Anna Julia Cooper and the American Association of University Women. In these several concepts of coeducation we may read diversely imagined ways that its practice might resist coeducation's presently misleading and harmful character and at the same time provide new foundations from which to critique and reconstruct policies for compliance with Title IX and UN-CEDAW. Two particular gaps in Wollstonecraft's theory require urgent attention: her failure to theorize coeducation for childrearing and her failure to theorize aesthetic coeducation. This is my current work: breaching those gaps while responding to global-corporatist miseducation just as Wollstonecraft responded to monarchist miseducation. As we confront challenging climate changes, we need concepts of intercultural coeducation for social justice that can re-educate our ways feeding, sheltering, transporting, nurturing, and healing ourselves no less than future generations.

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