CHAPTER 8

An Ontological Curriculum: Liminal Encounters of Subjectivity and Affect

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Introduction

This chapter explores affect within student-teacher relationships. To do this, I will use the concept of "affect" as composed by Baruch Spinoza (1991, 2007) in *Ethics* (1992) and further in *Theological-Political Treatise* (2007), specifically, I will focus on Deleuze's (1988) and Negri's (2011, 1991) immanent interpretation, and their implementation of the term within their own philosophy. When approaching the implementation of affect and Spinoza's ontological repositioning, this chapter proposes the use of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2009, 2011; Kincheloe, 2003) in conjunction with the emerging new discourse of affective pedagogy as defined by Watkins (2006), Dahlbeck (2014), and others. In order to unravel the way Spinoza defines and uses affect, it is important to follow its genealogical trajectory through its ontological construction in Deleuze (1992, 2007), followed by Negri (1991, 2013), through to its implementation in educational theory within the discourse of Affective Pedagogy. This genealogical inquiry, so to speak, constitutes the ontological and ethical foundations of the term and is followed by its potential implementation into the discourse of curriculum theory (Pinar, 2012).

Why Deleuze and Spinoza?

Deleuze's affinity for Spinoza is twofold and is perhaps best characterized by Deleuze (1995) himself: "The paradox in Spinoza is that

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he's the most philosophical of philosophers, the purest in some sense, but also the one who more than any other addresses nonphilosophers and calls forth the most intense nonphilosophical understanding" (p.165). Here we have the dual nature of Deleuze's Spinoza, on the one hand we have the great pure ontologist, the philosopher of philosophers, while on the other hand we have the one thinker who, according to Deleuze (1988), best "teaches the philosopher how to become a nonphilosopher" (p. 130). The relevance here is this: We do not need the permission of old dead white men to create and put to use concepts and experiences that help shape our craft, either as educators or as youth workers. I do not have to prove my worth to Deleuze or Spinoza; it is *they* who have to prove their worth to *me*. And they earn this by function and nothing more. In this chapter I ask how does "affect" work? And what can it do for me? And it is in this direction that the complex ontology of Spinoza that is further expressed by Deleuze and Negri, ceases to be a test or an appeasement to any transcendent authority, and instead becomes a force—a force of life, a living breathing philosophy for the nonphilosopher.

The challenge is balancing the complexity of Spinoza and Deleuze with their radical pragmatic and liberating conceptual tools. Attempting to use Affect in the Spinozist/Deleuzian sense of the word means integrating its relations with other concepts, because leaving out all ontological pretext in attempting to implement a concept like affect means butchering it from its larger body, thus making it lifeless and unusable. The benefit of framing pedagogy around encounters of subjectivity and affect is that it recenters our understanding toward what it is teachers really do, which is build relationships with young people.

Affective pedagogy shifts discourses toward building spaces designed for the immediate benefit of the relations and subjectivities that compose them, and in order to do this one must draw on an immanent ontological position based in praxis (Dahlbeck, 2014). This means opening up new possibilities in the staple educational discourse of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2009; Freire, 2000; Kincheole, 2003) while also extending the emerging field of affective pedagogy (Dahlbeck 2014; Watkins 2006; Zembylas, 2007) within the context of biopolitical capital (Hardt and Negri, 2001, 2005, 2009).

Affect

For Seigworth and Gregg (2010), it is not what affect or affect theory *is* that should concern theorist of affect but instead what it can *do*. To

elaborate on this shift from the content to the action of affect, the two editors reiterate Spinoza's famous line, "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (as cited in Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, p. 3), in order to emphasize that affect remains within the continuous unraveling of what it is exactly the body or bodies can do, and how one can use it to map out this infinite domain of bodies. In his series of lectures on Spinozist affect, Deleuze (1978/1980/1981) states:

> And here it is no longer the domain of a comparison of the mind between two states, it is the domain of the lived passage from one state to another, the lived passage in the affect. So much so that it seems to me that we can understand nothing of the Ethics, that is of the theory of the affects, if we don't keep very much in mind the opposition that Spinoza established between the comparisons between two states of the mind, and the lived passages from one state to another, lived passages that can only be lived in the affects. (para 21)

This quote from Deleuze is important because it reiterates Spinoza's distinction between our ideas of affect and what affect really is materially among bodies. Thus Affect is a lived passage of duration among bodies. It is not two states in comparison with each other, but rather the transition of the body(ies) between those two states. Again it is worth repeating Spinoza's "we do not know what the body can do," a statement that sets up the conceptual transitions from subjects of sovereign power to bodies each as "a singular essence, which is to say, a degree of power" (Deleuze, 1988, p. 27). This de-essentialism of the individual is not to suggest that human bodies are limitless in their own right, but rather that their engagement with other bodies and environmental conditions remain limitless in their capacities to affect one another as assemblages (Skott-Myhre, 2008). In this new understanding of bodies, affect breaks free from limited essentialized beings and becomes relational between bodies contained by capacities to be affected and to affect other bodies in either an empowering act of composition or a disempowering act of decomposition. It is within this ontological relation of bodies as modes with certain capacities of affect that we find the definition of Spinoza's affect so important.

This is the ontological affect that Hardt and Negri propose as the center of institutions of affect. Returning to the last chapter of *Commonwealth*, Heart and Negri (2009) are worth quoting at length regarding this issue:

> The path of Joy is constantly to open new possibilities, to expand our field of imagination, our abilities to feel and be affected, our capacities

> for action and passion. In Spinoza's thought, in fact, there is a correspondence between our power to affect (our mind's power to think and our body's power to act) and our power to be affected. The greater our mind's ability to think, the greater its capacity to be affected by the ideas of others; the greater our body's ability to act, the greater its capacity to be affected by other bodies. And we have greater power to think and to act, Spinoza explains, the more we interact and create common relations with others. Joy, in other words, is really the result of joyful encounters with others, encounters that increase our powers, and the institution of these encounters, such that they last and repeat. (p. 379)

My interest in the student-teacher as immanent encounters is done so on two main personal fronts in regards to building encounters of joy and affect as outlined above by Hardt and Negri (2009)—first being that my work in educational institutions and the subjectivities that I engage with have always been blurred, in teacher's college I was the student-teacher, and now in grad school I am the teacher-student. As a "teacher" I had access to the system, I learned the language of administration, I learned how to walk as an authority figure and where to stand, how to position myself as a subject of authority. As a student I was given space to take risks, to let students get away from the ever expanding apparatus of standardized testing by dismissing absurd technocratic rules that strangled creativity of both the students and myself.

It is my role as a teacher that I discovered that typical Marxist terms like "false consciousness" and "alienation" were useful but not wholly satisfying in terms of describing my encounters with young people as subjective bodies. In that they did not adequately concern themselves with why it is students and I could learn more by staying in at recess and playing scrabble then in the following whole afternoon of classes I would teach them. How do I better understand the phenomena of these encounters in and of themselves, as encounters of subjectivities, rather than solely through the larger political forces that constitute them?

The second front that I have found the encounter of subjectivities to be of value is in my pursuits as an activist. Although I have issues with the term activist, it best categorizes my pursuits as a young person, working primarily with other young people to build relationships and construct alternative avenues for community politics. In this capacity I have found that being a teacher or being a student is less about education and more about institutions, in how do we play certain roles in these institutions that we attempt to build together.

In the seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2005) outlines the encounters of teachers and students as engagements of subjectivities, and holds dialogue as the main form of engagement between student and teacher; thus, the relationship between student and teacher for Freire (2005) is fundamentally if not completely linked through language. In solidarity with the students the teacher and student engage directly with the larger sociopolitical and historical contexts, but always through language (Kincheole, 2003). Thus, the student-teacher relationship is largely defined as one wholly through language.

What immanent affect does is extend the craft of teaching beyond the domain of language and into what Deleuze (2007) considered the AND of a relation. Teaching and the institutional roles that compose it are indeed embedded in discourses, but the actions of teaching are the encounters of bodies and the subjectivities they produce. This is why Deleuze and Guattari (1992) considered affects to be like weapons on the longitudinal and latitudinal cartographic plane of bodies. Critical theory and self-reflexivity are only one component of teaching, the other is what is actually done, what it is educators and students do together as bodies, and that's where affect can assist in outlining new territory for empowering educators, in the hopes of building new spaces of learning.

Ontology

An ontology is a set of parameters about life or reality that one uses as reference points (common concepts include truth, being, the self, etc.). It is not about proving my ontology to be correct but about analyzing how it comes to be and what characterizes its processes. It is like shining a spotlight on a phenomenon that strips that phenomenon bare to its most basic assumptions and it is up to the researcher to inquire about how the assumptions are constructed and why. It is making bare all the deep epistemological pillars that uphold a specific ideology or process of thought that constitutes human behavior at least partially (Kinchole and Mclaren 2005).

At its most basic description ontology is the inquiry of what it means to be or "being." Ontology is primarily associated with the disciplinary tradition of philosophy, and its origins are most notably attributed to Aristotle and his *Metaphysics*. It was in the *Metaphysics* that Aristotle drew out the infamous inquiry of "being qua being" as its own conceptual pursuit separate from physical scientific studies. The pursuit of being in and of itself remained one of the

cornerstones of philosophical insights in the history of ideas capsizing with Heidegger's "being and time" (Jacquette, 2002). Heidegger can be seen as bringing "phenomenology back to classical ontology" in a "brooding reflection over the failure of modernity and destruction of its values" (Hardt and Negri 2009, p. 29). The poststructural turn of philosophical thought in the second half of the twentieth century, and its reflection on traditional philosophical tools such as language, power, and oppression, revealed the limitations of these dominant Western philosophical discourses while also exposing these traditional ontological questions of being as *transcendental ontology* (Hardt and Negri, 2001).

Hardt and Negri (2001) refer to *transcendental ontology* as a "transcendental apparatus" that is "capable of disciplining a multitude of formally free subjects," and according to Hardt and Negri (2001), historically philosophers have simply disputed "where this mediation was situated and what metaphysical level it occupied, but it was fundamental that in some way it be defined as an ineluctable condition of all human action, art and association" (p. 78). From Decartes, to Kant, and to Hegel, there has always been a tight relationship between modern European politics and metaphysics, or as Hardt and Negri (2001) put it: "Politics resides at the center of metaphysics because modern European metaphysics arose in response to the challenge of the liberated singularities and the revolutionary constitution of the multitude" (p. 83). Thus, *transcendental ontology* essentially acts a form of appropriation, one that acts through abstract representations in order to condition bodies and the relations that compose them (Hardt and Negri, 2001). For example, within schools, bodies are abstracted to the roles of "students" or "teachers" and are punished for deviating from these forms of representation. What this appropriation does, as *Transcendental Ontology*, is immediately contain any form of possibility of different relations (both meaningful and hostile) and the ontological production that these relationships could possibly generate.

In Antonio Negri's *The Savage Anomaly* (1991), Negri claims that Spinoza offers an "ontological philosophy of praxis" (p. 125) or "the constitution of collectivity as praxis" (p. 21), while also mapping out how the radical potential that Spinoza's ontology offers is subsumed and appropriated (transcendental ontology) within the academic and political discourses that contextualize Spinoza during his particular historical epoch as well as in the present one, a process that leads to what Negri refers to as "Spinozism." This is the general theme of Negri's *The Savage Anomaly*, but is also the cornerstone of Negri's

later works, where this infinite ontology verses contextual appropriation is a theme extended and enriched (1996, 2001, 2005, 2009). But what is this "ontology" that Negri deems to be the true interpretation? And why has it been continuously dismantled and appropriated? And what use is it for contextualizing affect?

Transcendent ontology is configured as a fundamental component within Hardt and Negiri's theory of *Multitude* (2005) and *Empire* (2001). Hardt and Negri (2001, 2005, 2009) outline that abstracting ourselves into static representations and conditioning our behavior and relationships to those ideas is not only a fundamental tool for appropriation, but is also fundamentally backwards in terms of configuring any form of liberating political practices. In this context people rely on assumptions and stereotypes as points of reference for their own patterns of thought and action, which Freire (2005) would label as a disengagement of subjectivity. What Spinoza provides, according to Negri (1992) and Deleuze (1988) as well as many others (Gatens, 1996; Ruddick, 2010; Williams, 2010), is a way out of this habit of appropriation. Ruddick (2010) outlines the potential of Spinoza's ontology in this regard: "The conception distinguishes between innate power and domination/alienation, providing contemporary Marxists and post-Marxists with a basis for understanding resistance as something more than a reaction-formation to the oppressive capacities of capitalism or other structures of oppression" (p. 25).

In *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze (1988) outlines Spinoza's ontological and ethical paradigms with great lucidity and constitutes the term affect within the plane of immanence. Deleuze distinguishes between the common interpretation of Spinozian affection (*affectio*) and affect (*affectus*), from what Deleuze thinks is the more legitimate one. The common interpretation positions the two terms within the mind/body dichotomy of transcendental ontology, *affection* being the affect of the body and *affectus* being the affect of the mind. This interpretation however fails to capture the complexity of Spinoza's affect and also reappropriates it into the dominant Cartesianism paradigm of Spinoza's historical period, a paradigm that Spinoza worked so diligently to undermine (Jarret, 2007). Deleuze (1988) makes clear how these two terms of affect work within both the body and mind holistically:

> The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies. (p. 49)

Here Deleuze (1988) makes the distinction that affect does not influence the mind or body independently, but rather a positioning of an affective body within relation(s) to other affecting bodies. Spinoza breaks down the mind/body dichotomy specifically in Part II, proposition 13, of *The Ethics* where he claims that "the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body—i.e. a definite mode of extension actually existing. And nothing else" (p. 71). Spinoza explains further that we "have ideas of the affections of a body. Therefore the object of the idea constituting the human mind is a body, a body actually existing" as "the human Mind is united to the Body" (p. 65). This reorientation of mind/body by Spinoza is referred to as "parallelism" and is fundamental to Spinoza's generative ontological paradigm, as Delueze (1988) elaborates:

> The practical significance of parallelism is manifested in the reversal of the traditional principle on which Morality was founded as an enterprise of domination of the passions by consciousness. It was said that when the body acted, the mind was acted upon, and the mind did not act without the body being acted upon in turn (the rule of the inverse relation, cf. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* articles 1 and 2). According to the *Ethics,* on the contrary, what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind. There is no primacy of one series over the other. (p. 18)

This parallelism is what lays the groundwork for Spinoza's ontology and ethics, which provides the context for truly affective relationships within the Spinozist/Deleuzian understanding of the term. By undermining the traditional mind over body dichotomy, the dichotomy that upholds transcendental ontology, Spinoza reconstitutes morality from the bottom up, in that morality is no longer the divine law of good and evil but a rigorous ethics of good and bad, or, as Spinoza phrases it, "joy" versus "the sad passions"; this is an ontological reversal from the judgment of the sovereign power to a generative expression, or, as Deleuze (1988) puts it: "There is, then, a philosophy of 'life' in Spinoza; it consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life" (p. 26).

Ontology and Education

In their work *Commonwealth* Heart and Negri (2009) conclude their series with a final chapter subtitled "Instituting Happiness." The two

thinkers summarize their seminal political critique with a hopeful inquiry into what is to be done next or more accurately *now*. In their concluding chapter, Heart and Negri propose what most mainstream educational theorists do that any kind of claim to a theory of education is also a claim to a theory of sociopolitical orientations, meaning that to inquire about what it entails to teach is to inquire about what it entails to be social and political. This contextualizing of education within its larger sociopolitical context is what Dewey (1997) and more critically Freire emphasize as fundamentally necessary in any serious approach to pedagogy. Even teaching methods that are based on self-proclamations of nonpolitical pedagogy are saturated in market-driven ideologies of what it means to be a "citizen" or "consumer" or "productive," and all within technocratic and psychological epistemologies based in control (Kincheloe, 2003; Giroux, 2011; Pinar, 2012).

Now more than ever there is no escaping the political when in engaging with the educational. What constitutes the abstract roles of a student and the roles of the teacher and their relationships to each other is to discover that this process of abstraction is equivalent to the process of abstraction from body to citizen—worker—woman, or what Deleuze refers to as "becomings," and what it means to play these abstract roles that are codified be ideological discourses. It is this engagement, or "micro-politics," that thinkers such as Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault, and others, help navigate (Gatens 1996), whether this navigation is the technologies of the self, the multiplicity of desire, or the ontological expression of life in contrast with the apparatuses that seek to appropriate it (Hardt and Negri 2001). This intricate and complicated entanglement of bodies and the affects they produce is where teaching and learning really happens.

In his outlining the parameters of the society of control, Deleuze (1995) describes the position of schools and other institutions as being in perpetual flux or in a constant motion of training and retraining. For Deleuze; "One can envisage education becoming less and less a closed site differentiated from the workspace as another closed site, but both disappearing and giving way to frightful continual training, to continual monitoring" (1995, p. 180). In this new society of control that Deleuze articulates, the walls of the institutions fall and what it is replaced with is a smooth surface of the constant ineptness of vocational preparation. This dismantling has been outlined by current scholars in the field of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2009 and curriculum theory (Pinar, 2012) alike, its origins have been labeled many names such as neoliberalism, empire, and casino capitalism, while

its obscene tactics have been outlined with great lucidity: austerity, standardized testing, and anti-intellectualism to name a few (Giroux, 2009; Kincheloe, 2003; Pinar, 2012; Reynolds and Weber, 2004). As Pinar (2012) points out, what is needed now is a conversation on what curriculum or pedagogy can be, and the postmodern conceptual tools that can be used to reorientate pedagogical practices away from reductionist value systems of quantification and technocratic methodologies of behavior control.

Schools as Producers of Subjectivities

Although the dismantling of these institutions in their material form is certain, this does not mean a breakdown of the subjectivities they produce: Hardt and Negri (2000) remind us that "the enclosures that used to define the limited space of the institutions have broken down so that the logic that once functioned primarily within the institutional walls now spreads across the entire social terrain. Inside and outside are becoming indistinguishable" (p. 196). This is what the intimate detail of Foucault's work outlines, how exactly it is that disciplinary practices produce themselves immanently and subjectively within "biopower" (Hardt and Negri, 2000). According to Hardt and Negri (2000), "Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it . . . Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself" (pp. 24–25). In the context of the school it is not the principle's discipline but the habits and mannerisms of the students that enact them (as biopower) that produce the institutions as they are. Thus the role of the principle, as the one in power, is an illusion. The great force of biopower is what hangs in the back of your head as a teacher in the guise of "what if today these kids just decide not listen to me?". This is the dreaded feeling that makes some teachers into dictators and others into saints. The former looks to squash any sense of creative interaction, while the latter pleads and guilts them not to do so.

This process of institutions separating people from the means of producing themselves (in expressing a surplus) is fundamental to capitalism. In the words of Marx, this is the social relation that holds variable capital to constant capital, in that the factory worker (variable capital) has always had the ability to produce a surplus but lacked the means of doing so in the form of machines (constant capital) (Hardt and Negri, 2009). Hardt and Negri (2009) claim that now in the

capitalism of biopower the space between variable capital and constant capital (or our ability to express ourselves subjectively) has never been weaker. Students today have never had more powerful tools for learning at their disposal and this is a fundamental anxiety among many administrators characterized by demands that students not bring in what they have learned "out there."

In the context of schools, in the discipline society, schools were in charge of producing subjectivities aligned with factory workers. In the context of biopower, it is the subjectivities themselves as they are produced that is the drive of production and accumulation (Hardt and Negri, 2009). This is just one example of why schools find themselves in crisis; structurally speaking, the most important point is that public schools are no longer needed simply because they were constructed to serve specific economic ends that no longer exist. During industrial capital schools were responsible for producing certain subjectivities that maintained production and the separation of people from the means to produce value, whereas now it is the producing of subjectivities themselves that produce value; thus, the tools for doing so are immediate and always shifting.

Affective Pedagogy

Megan Watkins (2006) is often cited as being one of the founders of engaging Spinoza's affect within educational theory (Dahlbeck, 2014; Mulcahy, 2012). In her article "Pedagogic Affect/Effect: Embodying a Desire to Learn," Watkins (2006) plugs the "Deleuzian/Spinozistic" term of affect into the discourse of pedagogy and educational theory. Watkins conceptualizes affect as "understood from a Deleuzian/Spinozistic perspective as force or capacity" (p. 270). Watkins uses the work of Gibbs (2002) and Newton (2003) to explore the biological studies of affect within the realm of the physical body, while also attempting a reconfiguration of affect into Vygoskian social psychology. Watkins is careful to distinguish between affect and emotion, unlike many (see Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999) in the biological field who tend to clump the two together (as cited in Watkins, 2006). Watkins (2006) describes her use of affect as a tool to redefine the classic binaries of mind/body and unconscious/conscious; Watkins (2006) describes this attempt:

> It involves not simply focusing on nature/culture and individual/society but the relations of mind/body and consciousness/unconsciousness in reconceptualising being, so crucial in theorising pedagogic

> practice. Affect provides a useful mechanism for doing this. The notion of affect I want to pursue does not deny its biological realisation; rather, it is more the case that I want to broach this dimension of affect from a philosophical perspective as an ontological issue. (pp. 271–272)

Watkins's choice here to frame affect as an "ontological issue" outlines the significant weight that Spinoza's affect brings with it and is why her conceptualizing of the term is so important. What Watkins (2006) and others such as Zembylas (2007) make clear is that without the ontological weight of Spinoza/Deleuze there is no true affect, because it allows the term to fall back into the domain of emotional intelligence or other psychological concepts.

Using the Deleuzian/Spinozaistic form of affect, Dahlbeck (2014) cites Watkins (2006) and defines affective pedagogy "as the idea that generating (and being sensitive to) bodily affects-understood in terms of force and capacity rather than emotion or feeling" (p. 20). Dahlbeck (2014) draws on Watkin's Deleuzian/Spinozaistic conceptualizing of affect and refers to Sam Seller's (2009) assertion that pedagogy must be based in ethics rather than technical or methodological assertions resulting in a more ontologically inclined inquiry. Sam Seller (2009) presents pedagogy as "an inherently relational, emergent, and non-linear process that is unpredictable and therefore unknowable in advance" (p. 351). By using this form of pedagogy, Dahlbeck (2014) avoids "academic success" as the goal of affective pedagogy and instead frames it as follows:

> Affective learning pertains to the idea that generating (and being sensitive to) bodily affects- understood in terms of force and capacity rather than emotion or feeling (Watkins, 2006, pp. 270, 273)—can be thought of as the very hotbed of learning, where learning is understood as a creative process of experimentation with an exploration of one's bodily capabilities- of exploring the as of yet unknown- rather than as a purely reflective process of developing one's supposed natural ability to recognize and identify that which is already known. (p. 20)

Seller's (2009) conceptualizing of pedagogy is important for the context of affective pedagogy (Dahlbeck 2014). In his article "The Responsible Uncertainty of Pedagogy," Seller (2009) raises the challenging question that "perhaps pedagogy cannot readily be described because it is inherently relational?" (p. 350). In his attempt at wrestling with pedagogy as a fluctuating relational event between bodies, Seller (2009) chooses to define pedagogy as a process that "is thereby

framed as a fundamentally relational process, which has ontological primacy over the knowledge and identities it produces" (p. 351). This correlates well with the Deleuzian/Spinozaistic affect because it eliminates any top-down ontological presumptions, because if pedagogy truly is "an inherently relational, emergent, and non-linear process that is unpredictable and therefore unknowable in advance" (Seller, 2009, p.351), then there is a constant opening for generative and context specific forms of relations among bodies, a process that results in what Dahlbeck (2014) describes as being "able to create something new and becoming something different body and mind" (p. 22). What follows then is an attempt to rebuild curriculum as it stands now in hopes of what it can be within the new domain of affective relationships.

Building an Ontological Curriculum

> For those prospective and practicing teachers for whom teacher education has been primarily an introduction to the instructional fields—the teaching of reading or mathematics or science—curriculum theory may come as something of a shock, if only due to its emphasis on 'what' one teaches, rather than on 'how'. Of course *how* one teaches remains a major preoccupation of curriculum theorists, but not in terms of devising a 'technology' of 'what works', not as a form of social engineering designed to produce predictable effects (i.e., 'learning'), too often quantified as scores on standardized exams. (Pinar 2012, p. 30)

This best outlines my experience of attempting to engage with curriculum in the field of teaching. During teacher's college, my first encounter with curriculum was as a pretext to in-classroom experience, so it was solely an encounter with the language and ideas proposed by the ministry of education maintained by the curriculum documents. The Ontario curriculum is constructed as a series of "expectations" within different teachable subjects; thus, the curriculum acts as a discursive structure in which all real life educational experiences are positioned. All lesson plans were to be configured to the set parameters of the curriculum "expectations"; it was not about what we taught but rather about how we taught. Thus, learning to teach meant learning the technocratic methodologies of knowledge production, tricking the students into learning via technology or entertaining practices. This is the kind of discourse that produces

horrible slogans like "edutainment," while terms such as "pedagogy" or "scholarly" that remain untaught, or worse, are appropriated into one-dimensional definitions that are to be regurgitated and reproduced without criticality.

When I was finally in a classroom and creating lesson plans every day, I discovered that most, if not all, teachers were not using the curriculum expectations that were used in our teaching method courses. In fact, the process of lesson planning and materials gathering was much more creative and collective of an experience than the top-down forcing of curriculum expectations. The only reason the curriculum expectations remained relevant was because our evaluations were largely based on our collection of lesson plans and how well we had aligned them with curriculum expectations. From my experiences then, curriculum's main function is a wholly political one, in that it forces administrative discourses on young ambitious teachers, and within such a hostile job market it is the equivalent of intellectual blackmail. Learn and speak the language or don't get a job. Learn the code, regurgitate the code, and forget about pedagogy or any pursuits of critical inquiry.

William Pinar (2012) outlines an alternative form of curriculum, one that transitions away from technocratic methods and standardized value systems and into the possible domain of understanding education as encounters of subjectivities. For Pinar (2012), the role of curriculum is to understand "what knowledge is of the most meaning" in terms of characterising education as meaningful experience. Pinar (2012) explains:

> Curriculum theory, then, is a field of scholarly inquiry within the broad academic field of education that endeavors to understand curriculum as educational experience . . . curriculum theory aspires to understand the overall educational significance of the curriculum, focusing especially upon interdisciplinary themes—such as gender or multiculturalism or sustainability—as well as the relations among the curriculum, the individual, society, and history. (pp. 30–31)

Exploring the potential of creating truly affective relationships among teachers and students involves exploring the fundamental presumptions that construct educational institutions and ourselves. If there is to be a transition away from old industrial forms of educational institutions, and their quantitative systems of value, it must be within new ontological encounters of subjectivities where affect and the capacity to affect are engaged.

In their final chapter of *Commonwealth*, Hardt and Negri (2009) link education with the concept of human nature:

> Human nature similarly is not immutable but rather open to a process of training and education. This does not mean that there are no limits to what we can do or that we can break absolutely from the past to create a clean slate…What it does mean, though, is that change is possible at the most basic level of our world and ourselves and that we can intervene in this process to orient it along the lines of our desires, toward happiness. (p. 378).

By linking education with human nature, Hardt and Negri (2009) remind us that any project of education must be an ontological one. Cynicism at its worst is the entrenched certainty that we are all biologically determined according to certain transcendental absolutes; it is the robbing of our capacity to create, and the blocking of the infallible fact that we are infinite in our relations and our abilities to transform them. This is the project that Spinoza's ontology prepares us for; it is only equipped with an ontology or what Negri (1992) refers to as a "constituent ontological praxis" in which we have the conceptual tools to tackle the ever present now, because the most mendacious ideology is the one that denies us the immediacy of action, of creative transformation, of the only thing we can truly claim to own—our capacities to affect and to be affected.

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