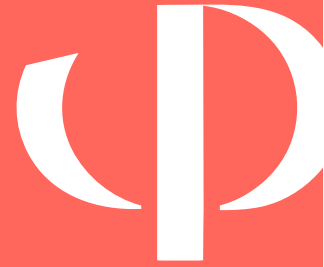


Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

Special Issue: Education and Pedagogy



FALL 2021

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 1

FROM THE EDITOR

Lori Gallegos

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

MEDITACIONES

Manuela Alejandra Gomez

*Philosophy in Action in the US-Mexico
Border: Desenterrando Conocimientos y
Resolana*

Minerva Ahumada

Finding Nepantla

Nelson Maldonado-Torres

*Notes on Decolonizing Philosophy:
Against Epistemic Extractivism and
Toward the Abolition of the Canon*

ARTICLES

Eric Bayruns García

Judging Students and Racial Injustice

Kim Díaz

*Paulo Freire's conscientização: Mindful
Awareness and Trust*

INTERVIEW

Walter Omar Kohan and Jason Wozniak

*Where and When to Think with Paulo
Freire? A Timely Conversation between
Walter Omar Kohan and Jason Wozniak*

BOOK REVIEW

Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography

Reviewed by Magda Costa Carvalho,
Translated from Portuguese by Bryan Pitts

ANNOUNCEMENT

AUTHOR BIOS



APA NEWSLETTER ON

Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

LORI GALLEGOS, EDITOR

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2021

FROM THE EDITOR

Special Issue on Education and Pedagogy

Lori Gallegos

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

In the professional philosophical community, few activities are more impactful and more challenging than the work we do as educators. Teaching is an activity that is ripe for philosophical reflection, insofar as our beliefs about what knowledge is, how knowledge is produced and transmitted, and what is worth knowing manifest in our pedagogies. In a multitude of ways, teaching is also a practice that is inescapably political. Education—and institutions of education—can be liberating, or they can further entrench unjust systems of power. It is in relation to this particular concern that the Latin American and Latinx philosophers/teachers contributing to this issue of the newsletter offer us work that is especially valuable. Given that the authors are all oriented by their commitment to students who are members of marginalized social groups and to communities pursuing social justice, it comes as little surprise that the authors present bold critiques of the discipline and inspiring visions for how we might transform our institutions and practices. I am delighted and honored to introduce the following issue on education and pedagogy.

The issue begins with three *meditaciones* on education and philosophy. The *meditaciones* dwell at the intersection of theory and praxis. Here, each author's practices and their philosophical ideas intermingle on the page in a way that adds dimension and gravity to both. It is one thing to postulate about pedagogy, and another to *live one's ideas*.

The first essay, "Philosophy in Action in the US-Mexico Border: *Desenterrando Conocimientos y Resolana*," is written by Manuela Alejandra Gomez. Gomez presents her rich concept of *Desenterrando Conocimientos* (Unearthing Knowledge)—a method for knowledge production that emerges out of the experiences of those living in the US-Mexico border, and which can lead to social transformation. She illustrates this concept through an account of her and her students' extraordinary work in response to the major concerns facing their communities in El Paso-Juárez. Gomez advocates for *Desenterrando Conocimientos* as a method of teaching and doing philosophy in order to more effectively address the problems facing communities of color.

The second essay is also inspired by an innovative approach to teaching philosophy. In "Finding Nephantla," Minerva Ahumada reflects on her experience creating and teaching a Spanish-language philosophy course at Arrupe College in Chicago. Her narrative artfully traces the way that the unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable challenge of doing academic philosophy in that context ultimately helped to bring various philosophical ideas to life for her and her students.

The third essay calls for a transformation in the way that philosophy is taught and practiced. In "Notes on Decolonizing Philosophy: Against Epistemic Extractivism and toward the Abolition of the Canon," Nelson Maldonado-Torres warns readers about the increasingly common practice of epistemic extractivism, in which social movements are taken to be the object of theoretical reflection that nevertheless fails to challenge the liberal order of knowledge production in academia. Rather than merely expanding the canon to include more diversity, Maldonado-Torres proposes a recommitment to philosophical thinking that is neither restricted nor oriented by the discipline of philosophy.

This issue of the newsletter also contains two articles, which take up the theme of instructors' attitudes toward their students. In "Judging Students and Racial Injustice," author Eric Bayruns García notes that instructors' judgments about students' academic character can unwittingly be influenced by and contribute to the very racial injustice that impacts students' academic performance in the first place. To address this concern, Bayruns García advances the thesis that both just and accurate assessment of students and their work must involve taking into account how racial injustice affects students' performance in their work.

The second article, "Paulo Freire's conscientização: Mindful Awareness and Trust," examines Paulo Freire's writings on trust towards students. Author Kim Díaz critically analyzes Freire's arguments that, as teachers, we ought to believe in students' ability to come into their own power while also remaining distrustful of students' internalized oppressive patterns. Díaz also extends Freire's advocacy of trust to her own work teaching philosophy and mindfulness to students who are on probation.

Finally, this issue includes both an interview and a book review about the recently published *Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography* by Walter Omar Kohan. The English-language text follows the 2019 publication of the first edition of *Paulo Freire, mais do que nunca: Uma Biografia Filosófica* (Editora Vestígio). The conversation between the author and the book's translator, Jason Wozniak, provides

an opportunity for multilayered explorations of the nature of time and space; of hope, struggle, and emancipation; and of childhood and the mode of errantry.

The review of the book, written by Magda Costa Carvalho and translated from Portuguese by Bryan Pitts, highlights questions raised by the book on the nature of translation, such as the following: What questions are born of the possibility (or impossibility) of saying something in different linguistic codes? What epistemological cleavages will remain silenced in the idiomatic gaps? In what sense is translation a political issue? Consistent with the theme of this issue of the newsletter, the review also explores the value of biography for philosophy. Costa Carvalho puts the point most poignantly when she writes: "An individual's gestures are the word translated into action, and . . . this action is the very life of thought."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to Josef Mathews for his assistance with copy editing.

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

The *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* is accepting contributions for the spring 2022 issue. Our readers are encouraged to submit original work on any topic related to Hispanic/Latinx thought, broadly construed. We publish original, scholarly treatments, as well as meditaciones, book reviews, and interviews. Please prepare articles for anonymous review.

ARTICLES AND MEDITACIONES

All submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All essay submissions should be limited to 5,000 words (twenty double-spaced pages) and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting. All articles submitted to the newsletter undergo anonymous review.

BOOK REVIEWS

Book reviews in any area of Hispanic/Latino philosophy, broadly construed, are welcome. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Book reviews may be short (500 words) or long (1,500 words). Electronic submissions are preferred.

DEADLINES

Deadline for spring issue is November 15. Authors should expect a decision by January 15. Deadline for the fall issue is April 15. Authors should expect a decision by June 15.

Please send all articles, book reviews, queries, comments, or suggestions electronically to the editor, Lori Gallegos, at LoriGallegos@txstate.edu, Department of Philosophy, Comal Building 102, Texas State University, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666.

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

The *APA Newsletters* adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use italics instead of underlining. Use an "em dash" (—) instead of a double hyphen (--). Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90. See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

Journal of World Philosophies

Journal of World Philosophies (e-ISSN 2474-1795) is a semiannual, peer-reviewed, international journal dedicated to the study of world philosophies. Published as an open access journal by Indiana University Press, *WP* seeks to explore common spaces and differences between philosophical traditions in a global context. Without postulating cultures as monolithic, homogenous, or segregated wholes, it aspires to address key philosophical issues which bear on specific methodological, epistemological, hermeneutic, ethical, social, and political questions in comparative thought.

If you'd like to submit a paper, or if you have an idea for one and would like to discuss it, contact Carlos Alberto Sanchez, carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu.

MEDITACIONES

Philosophy in Action in the US-Mexico Border: Desenterrando Conocimientos y Resolana

Manuela Alejandra Gomez

EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

This piece introduces my concept of *Desenterrando Conocimientos* (Unearthing Knowledge) as a process of inquiry and praxis that reveals and produces knowledge of the US-Mexico border. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is grounded in pragmatism and is a qualitative vision of philosophy in action. I argue that conceptual analyses, thought experiments, and armchair philosophy have been insufficient by themselves for capturing radical knowledge that enables social transformation in the US-Mexico border. Consequently, my proposition is metaphilosophical and epistemological. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is a philosophical instrument to question, challenge, and heal some of the structural racism, violence, and injustices many have witnessed and experienced in the US-Mexico border. It is a method for knowledge acquisition and knowledge production that can be linked to social activism.

Historically, Western epistemologies have excluded minoritized voices in academia, and communities of color have been disenfranchised in multiple ways and in various degrees that range from exclusion in intellectual discourses and academic spaces to the devaluing of their ways of being and knowing.¹ As a result, philosophy is one of the least diverse fields in the humanities.² For Ofelia Schutte, one of the few Latina philosophers in the US, “The continually low representation confirms that given the current practices, standards, and teachers of philosophy, Latinos/as tend not to be attracted to the field because they see studying philosophy as a mark of social privilege and they fail to identify with either the subject or its professors.” She claims that, at best, they perceive philosophy as a protected space for asking unusually clever questions, and at worst, a field reserved for exclusionary white privilege.³ Therefore, *Desenterrando Conocimientos* offers a remedy, as it arises from the unique complexity of living in a transnational space and navigating between experiences that manifest different parts of multidimensional identities. It emerges from the distinctive challenges of demonstrating allegiance to one or two countries, and from exploring the boundaries between nationality, citizenship, language, and social class. In other words, *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is as hybrid as Mexican Americans and Mexican American philosophy. It is meant as an epistemological and pedagogical tool that promotes inclusion in philosophy.

I compare *Desenterrando Conocimientos* to the concept of *Resolana* by Tomás Atencio.⁴ I argue that both concepts uncover and create powerful truths about Mexican American communities in unconventional but meaningful ways. While I explore some similarities between the accounts, I also note some crucial distinctions. Ultimately, the purpose of this comparative work is to elevate *Resolana* into a philosophical discourse that serves as a backdrop for *Desenterrando Conocimientos* and to elucidate two different approaches that highlight the philosophical importance of everyday lived experiences.

RESOLANA

In the book *Resolana: Emerging Chicano Dialogues on Community and Globalization*, Atencio claims that *Resolana* is a physical and figurative space, where the sun (*el sol*) strikes and reflects off a wall creating a warm place of light and serenity.⁵ Atencio states that *Resolana* is usually where villagers in Northern New Mexico and many places in the Spanish-speaking world gather to talk. *Resolana* serves as a casual and welcoming center of communication. It is the Chicano parallel to the Socratic dialogue and a metaphor for enlightenment through discourse. Enlightenment for Atencio serves an emancipatory function that enables the oppressed and marginalized to become full agents. This dialogue is a way to uncover what he calls “subjugated knowledge” from the community. It is also a way to use everyday lived experiences as a source of truth. Atencio relies on Hispanic New Mexican history and oral traditions that embrace community stories and ways of being in the world. *Resolana* shines light on community knowledge. It is a process of reflection that exposes *el oro del barrio* or, as Atencio refers to it, the “gold of the community,” even though a more appropriate translation would be “gold of the hood” because of its informal and subversive nature.

Just like Socrates compared himself to a midwife to help the birthing of ideas through discourse, Atencio believes that *el oro del barrio* must be mined from individual and communal lived experiences to extract knowledge.

For Atencio, life experiences can be reflected upon and discussed to unveil a body of knowledge that can be linked with universal knowledge and, as such, is transmissible to others. Atencio affirms that he was intimidated by the term *phenomenology* until he realized that *Resolana* could be another word for it, since it is a process of analyzing experiences and their meaning.⁶ He claims that while Martin Heidegger had an individualistic orientation, *Resolana* uncovers meaning from the community’s experiences through conversations with people. According to Atencio, each culture has its own *Resolanas*, but they must be nurtured.

Most examples of *Resolana* knowledge presented by Atencio were gathered in New Mexico. For instance, he recalls a Navajo physicist who had been drawn to the study of theoretical physics through his native religion, and through *Resolana*, he connected similarities between Navajo myth and theoretical physics.⁷ Atencio believes that ideas share Platonic archetypes, and they exist universally independently of cultural particulars. Other examples include young men learning to butcher animals under the supervision of experienced men, and young women learning to deliver babies by apprenticing under experienced midwives. For Atencio, storytelling is the primary way of passing on and exchanging life lessons, knowledge, and values.

In summary, *Resolana* is reflexive and reflective learning based on the following assumptions:

- (1) life stories are history and sources of knowledge;
- (2) imagination, visions, and other psychic productions are foundations for knowledge;
- (3) traditional cultures have indigenous knowledge by which they interpret themselves to themselves;
- (4) stories consist of themes that are universal while remaining specific to time and place; themes are essential to democratizing knowledge, allowing for dialogue within as well as across cultures, by crossing cultural boundaries and linking cultures through the thematic bridge.⁸

Atencio’s account successfully lifts individuals’ experiences to the status of knowledge. His contribution to philosophy is that social networks are key to ways of becoming known and being a knower. Furthermore, he opens the door for a collective unity where people participate in and become epistemic agents through dialogue. He recognizes the subjugation and dismissal of certain types of knowledge and presents an urgent argument for the acknowledgment of this and the creation of new knowledge networks. Likewise, he defends storytelling as a way of communicating and enabling reflexive processes of reasoning. He also captures this knowledge as being discounted in virtue of being associated with subjugated people. His equalization of ways of knowing entails that his account also has room for a pluralism of inquiry.

While Atencio's account effectively emphasizes community dialogues and propositional knowledge, my account of *Desenterrando Conocimientos* has a social activism component that goes beyond dialogical efforts and focuses on actions that solve problems in the communities in which it exposes and produces knowledge. My account of knowledge is more dynamic and open-ended. However, both methods of philosophical inquiry relate to the value of lived experiences. *Resolana* is the embracing condition, the safe, warm, and welcoming setting, while *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is the praxis that can occur within that condition.

DESENTERRANDO CONOCIMIENTOS

Desenterrando Conocimientos is a proposition to expand the parameters of what philosophy is expected to do. When we think of Mexican American labor, many immediately think of physical agricultural work in the fields, like picking fruits and vegetables from the ground (*la tierra*). My proposal reimagines Mexican American labor to include much-needed intellectual work. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is the active unearthing of knowledge in communities full of rich epistemological crops. It happens when we engage with *la tierra y desenterramos los conocimientos* of it and of its people. Through social interactions of first-person synthetic experiences grasped as qualitative data, we uncover knowledge from the ground up.

In English, we do not typically use the plural form of the word *knowledge*, as it is commonly perceived as a single body of truth; however, the Spanish language allows us to conceive of *conocimientos* as plural. So I intentionally present *conocimientos*, as this plurality allows for the democratization of knowing. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is an individual and shared uncovering of experiential truths that cannot be deduced a priori. Unlike *Resolana*, individual and communal experiences—but most importantly praxis, not just communal dialogue—are what reveal knowledge. *Conocimientos* appear in the actions and organically unfold in the experiences of individuals.

Desenterrando Conocimientos is a process grounded in experience, and unlike Atencio's epistemological commitments, my account is not tied to metaphysical idealism or representationalism. Additionally, the knowledge revealed through *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is beyond cultural and generational. While Atencio opens up the possibility for *el oro del barrio* to be philosophical, my account explicitly allows for the *desenterrando* of *conocimientos* to occur intentionally within a philosophical context and for the knowledge revealed to be clearly within the bounds of ethics, existentialism, metaphysics, and many other philosophical realms and sometimes beyond.

Atencio believes that the best way to illustrate *Resolana y el oro del barrio* is through his own story. Even though autobiographical stories and recollections of lived experiences may be perceived as self-indulgent, when these stories come from those who have been historically silenced and underrepresented, they reveal power and become a disruption to mainstream epistemologies. For example, when we analyze the trailblazing work of Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*,

we are looking at a revealing counterstory that violates academic and linguistic parameters.⁹ In my opinion, Anzaldúa is not offering an autobiographical piece; she is a pioneer of presenting a philosophical *testimonio*, one in which she depicts the US-Mexico border as an intricate space of hybridity and of constant navigation of in-betweenness through her own experiences. *Testimonios* have been a critical Latin American oral and written practice that is contingent upon personal and communal experiences as important sources of knowledge in understanding one's place within political, social, and cultural contexts. However, they are not just a source of knowledge, but also of empowerment, and political strategies for claiming rights and bringing about social change.¹⁰ Unfortunately, this is rarely acknowledged philosophically. Some stories or *testimonios* are perceived as merely anecdotal and are delegitimized as not having much epistemic merit. One clear example is that many still categorize Anzaldúa as a Latin American thinker instead of a Latin American philosopher.

Yet, Atencio argues that listening to other people's stories allowed him to understand individual perceptions about life and detect a collective undercurrent, a mutual consciousness, and unconsciousness, that told of a people's shared beliefs and views about life. Most importantly, these stories reveal the knowledge and skills people use in everyday life to survive.¹¹ Like Atencio and Anzaldúa, to understand my account of *Desenterrando Conocimientos*, it is crucial to situate my own lived experiences of being born and raised in the US-Mexico border of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and of teaching philosophy on both sides for over fifteen years.¹²

US-MEXICO BORDER

"Aquí es todo diferente
 Todo, todo es diferente
 En la frontera, en la frontera, en la frontera."

—Juan Gabriel.¹³

Borders are not just physical; they are also metaphysical. *La frontera* is an axis of inclusion and exclusion that manifests the best and worst of two worlds simultaneously. Particularly, on the one hand, El Paso has been considered one of the safest cities in the US.¹⁴ On the other hand, Ciudad Juárez has been labeled one of the most dangerous cities worldwide, infamous for its ongoing narcoviolence and horrific femicides.¹⁵ They are sister cities simply separated by concrete bridges and incomplete border walls, polarized by contradictory, but coexisting dichotomies.

Post-9/11 threats increased what were already extraordinary challenges of continuous border enforcement and the militarization of both sides of the binational community. The El Paso-Juárez border has become the epicenter of immigration debates and where we house most undocumented brown children in cages and migrant adults in tent cities. People here constantly face fears of deportation and family separation, even with legal documentation, as they are often considered illegal and demonized on both sides. Daily migration for work, school, or fun implies long wait times at the bridges, or at the very

least, denigration when trying to prove citizenship at both points of entry.

El Paso has a population of 85 percent Mexican American residents. On August 3, 2019, this community became the site of the deadliest massacre on Mexican Americans in modern US history, when a white supremacist killed twenty-three people at a local Walmart because he feared a "Hispanic invasion of Texas."¹⁶ Before this horrific act, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez had been a safe *Resolana* of proud displays of culture and heritage. El Paso had been a carefree, warmhearted place for people of color, different from the rest of Texas, until the secure bubble we had been living in was busted, and we realized we were not exempt from the deadly reality of racism.

A lot of the experiences here have forced individuals to become naturally philosophical. For instance, many people of all ages were confronted with the question, Why would somebody drive over six hundred miles to kill us just because of who we are? Philosophy can serve as a mirror for self-reflection in examining and making sense of contested border identities. In many instances, it is precisely the exposure to the experiences of crime and injustices in the border that has allowed some of us to *desenterrar conocimientos* even before reading any philosophy books. Border suffering sometimes leads to raw introspection and social reflections that reveal pivotal ethical, existential, metaphysical, and epistemological questions, but above all, it leads to authoritative philosophical answers that arise from lived experiences.

An example of communal *Desenterrando Conocimientos* happened after the August 3 incident, when the binational community of El Paso and Juárez, despite multiple political and military efforts of being divided, was obligated to realize that it was particularly targeted as one. The community *desenterró* political knowledge of border identities. The victims were Democrats and Republicans, supporters of El Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and El Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Mexican nationals, and Mexican Americans from Juárez and El Paso. However, they experienced one common enemy of white supremacy. This revelation forced an unexpected unity between the two sides. The tension between "pochos" and "juareños," two pejorative terms used to refer to incomplete and disloyal identities of each side, was softened. While the complex relationship between the two sides continues, a powerful counternarrative, different political identities, and critical consciousness against hateful and dehumanizing rhetoric about the US-Mexico border was reinforced. It is essential to note that the victims of August 3 were not just the twenty-three people murdered. The collective lingering trauma permeated beyond and is still present in many ways, especially and inevitably in the context of education.

PEDAGOGY

In terms of pedagogy, both *Desenterrando Conocimientos* and *Resolana* have Freirean influences, as they recognize that not all lived experiences are valued equally and that a critical education is the key to liberation from oppression.¹⁷ They also have Deweyan undertones, as they uphold the advantages of the combination between theory and

practice and cherish the organic connection between education and personal experience.¹⁸ Additionally, they also share a common thread to Freire and Dewey through their commitments to democracy.

However, one necessary distinction between the two concepts is that my account of *Desenterrando Conocimientos* seeks to create social activists, and not just everyday knowledge-producers or scholars. *Desenterrando Conocimientos*, beyond an epistemological method, is also a proposition to begin a new way of doing and teaching philosophy. When students live philosophy and see themselves as agents in their learning and in the creation of knowledge, the outcome is student engagement with outstanding tangible effects. This becomes relevant when we acknowledge the current state of academic underrepresentation of minoritized individuals in the academy in general and in philosophy in particular.

One example of *Desenterrando Conocimientos* that occurred in the classroom emerged during a discussion of sociopolitical philosophy. A student started crying while confessing that she was scared that President Trump would be reelected and that the racist rhetoric and actions that had already hurt the El Paso-Juárez border community after August 3 would continue or increase. I reassured the student that those feelings were valid, but then I asked, "So, what can be done? How can philosophy be practiced in this context?" Students started sharing ideas, until they proposed creating a voting initiative project. The original idea was for some students to become deputized and register other students to vote in a county with historically low voter turnout, but then the proposal evolved into ensuring family and friends also voted. By the time of the 2020 elections, more people got involved with the project, like the parents of a student who voted for the very first time after living in the US for twenty years. They had never voted because the process had been too foreign and intimidating.

The *conocimiento desenterrado* was the overall value of voting and the recognition of the students' political agency. This new knowledge was outside of traditional cultural expectations. The student who was scared reasoned from her individual fears to a sense of communal responsibility and action. Many students claimed that they could not have learned this value from a book, a simple discussion, or a philosophical lecture. It was the experience and the process that unfolded in the project, including collecting *I Voted* stickers, and proudly showing off their selfies with them on social media, that led them to recognize themselves as political beings. The final results showed that El Paso had a 17 percent increase in voter turnout compared to the 2016 presidential election and an all-time high for the county. My students held the knowledge that they had done their part to contribute to this historic increase.¹⁹

Another example happened at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic during a virtual Zoom meeting. El Paso was a hot spot for the Coronavirus and because of its unique demographic: 90 percent of the cases and deaths were of Mexican Americans in the community.²⁰ Again, I asked students, "How can philosophy be put into action in this

context?" One student answered that while everyone would be focused on prioritizing the safety of medical professionals, if we wanted to be ethical, we had to focus on the most vulnerable in our community, which would be the homeless and migrants. At a time when there was a toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and mask shortage, another student said, "We should make masks." Nobody knew how to sew. But what seemed like a far-fetched idea actually became a reality. Students started borrowing sewing machines, looking up patterns and tutorials online, and involving their loved ones. The initial goal was to make one hundred masks. Over the next months, we ended up making more than 2,500 reusable facemasks.²¹ Students *desenterraron* the value of their own potential, even in a situation like a global pandemic, in which they felt at risk and helpless. One student claimed, "No matter what, there is always something we can do." The philosophical lesson learned was a deeper understanding of social obligations and the concept of the common good. Other existential revelations included the recognition of the power of choosing to act to create change and meaning in our community and the satisfaction of knowing that perhaps at least one life was possibly saved.

For many philosophers, it is easy to make normative claims of what should be done and what needs to change from the comfort of the ivory tower. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is about doing it and changing the world by solving real problems at the community level. We do not live in the era of Socrates or Descartes or Heidegger. While their contributions are valuable, the question is how are they relatable? If students cannot connect to philosophy, if they cannot see themselves reflected in the curriculum, they will not become philosophers or experience the benefits of philosophy. So as philosophers, we need to recognize our influential role of first and foremost being educators, and we must convey our material in a way in which it can have practical worth.

In the implementation of a grounded philosophical pedagogy of *Desenterrando Conocimientos*, students examine various historical and contemporary philosophical ideas, but beyond theoretical understandings, the emphasis is on the application of philosophical notions in a real-world context. Philosophy can be a powerful tool for marginalized students who may lack confidence and self-advocacy. If taught correctly, it can arm students with the capacity to question and act on behalf of themselves and others. By combining classroom-based instruction with practical hands-on experience of philosophy in action, students can learn to care about themselves and their communities.

In his work on *Resolana*, Atencio similarly refers to the reflections on the experience of serving a community as "praxis learning." He had as one of his lifelong goals the creation of the Academia de la Nueva Raza, a grassroots educational school that he and his friends founded in Dixon, New Mexico. La Academia aimed at creating awareness, conscientiousness, a thirst for justice, and a commitment to work towards a free society. It included projects in Texas and New Mexico in the '60s and '70s. Some of these

projects included recording oral histories from Mexican farmworkers in California and Arizona. Atencio's vision was also for intellectual work to happen outside the classroom.

Atencio argues that storytellers, *cuentistas*, not only recall their immediate experiences as sources of knowledge, but often share stories from the past and others in the form of folktales, songs, and *dichos*. In my pedagogical research over the years, I have asked philosophy students to share examples of Mexican American philosophy in the form of everyday *dichos*—something that is not in philosophy books, yet which is valuable knowledge to students because it is part of their lived experiences. The two most pertinent and recurring examples provided by them have been *El que no tranza no avanza* and *El jale Chicano*. It is almost impossible to charitably translate these. Lived experience itself has taught some of us their unique meaning, and a literal translation would never capture their profound value.

Nonetheless, these two sayings hint at the fact that in order to thrive, we have to think differently, that we must deviate from the norm to make things work. Philosophy cannot continue to be predominantly Eurocentric if we expect it to solve the challenges of communities of color. *Desenterrando Conocimientos* is an attempt to develop a philosophy of action that pushes the limits of philosophy to create social activists who are more than academic scholars. As philosophers, we need to ask ourselves if scholarship is really changing the world. If the answer is yes, then my proposition is a way to speed up that change. If the answer is no, then what are we waiting for?

CONCLUSION: RESOLANA AND DESENTERRANDO CONOCIMIENTOS

Both of the concepts of *Resolana* and *Desenterrando Conocimientos* aim to make philosophy relevant to particular social realities. They both treasure what a person already knows, like individual and communal funds of knowledge. They also set up the embracing social conditions that invite for new knowledge and make individuals feel valued while being emancipatory. Moreover, they equally appreciate the significance of context to understand communities commonly ignored. But we must realize that *Resolana* and *Desenterrando Conocimientos* are more than mere useful metaphors. They are products of Mexican American philosophy.²² One might wonder if these propositions can be applied outside of Mexican American communities or the context of the US and Mexico. The answer is *perhaps*, though it is important to recognize that they arise from unique circumstances and valuable lived experiences. They also have epistemological consequences on whose knowledge matters and lead to practical applications.

There are deep mythical connections between *el sol y la tierra, y la resolana que ayuda a desenterrar conocimientos*. Our ancestors were the people of the sun.²³ Miguel Leon-Portilla²⁴ states that Nahuatl philosophic thought revolved around an aesthetic conception of the universe and life, and that to know the truth is to understand the hidden meaning of things right in front of us, or in the case of *Resolana*, above through *el sol*, and *Desenterrando Conocimientos*, through *la tierra* below. According to Portilla, philosophy

of metaphors does not pretend to explain the mystery completely, but perhaps will awaken the desire for further understandings.²⁵ My proposition is a simple return to our rich philosophical roots through *nuestro sol* in the form of *Resolana y nuestra tierra* in the form of *Desenterrando Conocimientos*.

NOTES

1. Michael Baffoe, Lewis Asimeng-Boahene, and Buster C. Ogbuagu state that the field of academic research and publication have traditionally been almost exclusively the domain of white academics and that they institute, control, and apply “white codes” to syndicate the publication of academic journals, magazines, and books, all from their white privileged positions in academia, especially in the Western world. Consequently, “knowledge has been constructed, reconstructed, distributed, and reproduced by whites who fail to see value in the knowledge base of academics and researchers from the so-called Third World.” See “Their Way or No Way: ‘Whiteness’ as Agent for Marginalizing and Silencing Minority Voices in Academic Research and Publication,” *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 3, no. 1 (2014): 13–32, <https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2014.v3n1p13>.
2. As of 2020, the American Philosophical Association’s demographic statistics report that out of almost 2,000 members, 248 self-identified as Hispanic/Latino (Demographic statistics APA, 2020). These statistics are not broken up further to distinguish between those who identify as Mexican American, or Chicano, or anything else. The label Hispanic/Latino is used as an umbrella term, proving that it is as far as the diversity distinctions go, illustrating the need for more intersectional categories. Diversity in terms recognizes diversity in people and experiences. See American Philosophical Association, FY2020 Demographic Statistics Report – Final,” American Philosophical Association, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/fy2020-demographicstatistics.pdf.

According to Eric Schliesser, the current philosophy teaching canon systematically excludes whole cultures, is biased, and is primarily white and European. See *Ten Neglected Classics of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Marilyn Friedman identifies some aspects of professional philosophy that seem relevant for explaining women’s low participation in the field. This includes a look at the way philosophical activity is portrayed in some introductory philosophy textbooks and a reminder of the adversarial style that is common throughout philosophy. She has categorized the issue of underrepresentation as two problems. The first one being that some philosophical gatekeepers, mostly white men in academic philosophy, who hold positions of power, devalue women, and make it difficult for them to engage in philosophical work. The second being that some features of philosophy, such as the dominance of abstract conceptual reasoning that excludes social ways of understandings, might alienate women and prompt them to avoid the field. These features have historically been associated with men in philosophy. Friedman argues that men in philosophy have historically not engaged respectfully and attentively in serious intellectual interchanges with women. This practice seems connected to the informally closed nature of philosophy and the way those already in the profession act as gatekeepers who determine who gets to enter and stay in the academic field, whose voices are heard in prestigious refereed publications, and so on. See Marilyn Friedman, “Women in Philosophy: Why Should We Care?” in *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?*, ed. Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21–39.
3. Ofelia Schutte, “Latinas/os Roots in Philosophy from Authenticity to Intersectionality,” *Latino/a Philosopher: A National Symposium* (2012), as quoted in Robert Eli Sánchez, Jr., “The Process of Defining Latino/a Philosophy,” *APA Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 1, (2013): 1–4, <https://philpapers.org/archive/FRASIA-7.pdf>.
4. Miguel Montiel, Tomás Atencio, and E. A. Mares, *Resolana: Emerging Chicano Dialogues on Community and Globalization* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009). Thank you, Dr. José-Antonio Orosco, for introducing me to this valuable work.

5. Atencio’s *Resolana* emerges from Chicano dialogues, which necessarily leads us to the recurring trouble with labels. Who counts as Chicano? Is it Chicanx? Chican@? How is this different from the labels of Latino/a, Latinx, Hispanic, Mexican American and their variations? Various terms are frequently used interchangeably to describe a group of minoritized people. The trouble occurs when the various labels used to define diverse groups are often presented as monolithic, and they erase the visibility of important distinctions. These common labels have changed through time, they mean something different depending on the geographic location of those who use them, and are used for, and often can be politically charged. Ultimately, these overlapping terms signify the absence of an in-depth understanding of the complex identities of each of these groups, and of minoritized people in general because they lack reference to important personal lived experiences that constitute those identities. This semantic issue of categorization becomes relevant when we realize that minoritized groups are severely underrepresented academically in the US.
6. Montiel, Atencio, and Mares, *Resolana*, 45.
7. Montiel, Atencio, and Mares, 51.
8. Montiel, Atencio, and Mares, 46.
9. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).
10. Dolores Delgado Bernal, Rebeca Burciaga, and Judith Flores Carmona, “Chicana/Latina Testimonios: Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political,” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45, no. 3 (August 2012): 363–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149>.

Rina Benmayor, Rosa Torruellas, and Ana Juarbe, “Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights,” in *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, eds. William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 152–210.
11. Montiel, Atencio, and Mares, *Resolana*, 15.
12. Thinking of/at the Border: The Liberation Philosophy of Manuela Gomez: <https://youtu.be/GKu7-zA6XTU>.
13. Juan Gabriel, *La Frontera*: <https://youtu.be/Nl4Z9BeHQ8l>.
14. Times staff report, “El Paso Ranks as 5th Safest Large US city in Study by Business Research Company,” *El Paso Times*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/crime/2020/06/10/el-paso-ranks-5th-safest-large-us-city-study-research-company/5335288002/>.
15. “Leaders Dismiss Juarez’s No. 2 Ranking of World’s Most Violent Cities,” *Border Report*, <https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/border-crime/leaders-dismiss-juarezs-no-2-ranking-of-worlds-most-violent-cities/>.
16. Gillian Brockell, “‘Hispanic Invasion’: A White Nationalist Version of Texas That Never Existed,” *The Washington Post*, August 5, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/08/05/hispanic-invasion-white-nationalist-version-texas-that-never-existed/>.
17. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* (New York: Continuum, 1993).
18. John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938, 1971).
19. El Paso Matters Staff, “Live blog: Election Day 2020 in El Paso,” *El Paso Matters*, November 2, 2020, <https://elpasomatters.org/2020/11/02/election-day-2020-el-paso-texas-live-blog/>.
20. “How El Paso, Texas, Became One of the Nation’s Most Dangerous COVID-19 Hotspots,” *NBC Connecticut*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/coronavirus/how-el-paso-texas-became-one-of-the-nations-most-dangerous-covid-19-hotspots/2368407/>.
21. “Community Champions: EPCC Philosophy Club Recognized for Philanthropic Work,” *KVIA ABC-7*, October 19, 2020, <https://kvia.com/lifestyle/community-champions/2020/10/20/community-champions-epcc-philosophy-club-recognized-for-philanthropic-work/>; Manuela A. Gomez, “Praxis in the US-Mexico Border: Inside the El Paso Community College Philosophy Club,” *The Blog of the American Philosophical Association*, October 14, 2020, <https://>

blog.apaonline.org/2020/10/14/praxis-in-the-u-s-mexico-border-inside-the-el-paso-community-college-philosophy-club/.

22. The future of Mexican American philosophy depends on philosophy's ability to engage students practically in addressing the problems that they face in their everyday lives. Carlos Sanchez and Robert Sanchez argue that there is a growing tendency to take seriously the question of Mexican national identity as a philosophical question. See Carlos Alberto Sanchez and Robert Eli Sánchez, *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Manuel Vargas (2013) claims that accounting for the origins and parameters of Mexican American philosophy, just as with Latinx philosophy, has been a difficult business, both because of the messy, slowly emerging nature of academic fields and because of special challenges about how to characterize the field. This relates to the trouble with labels and to figuring out what these philosophies are supposed to do. First, there is a disagreement about whether "Latinx" ought to be understood expansively (as including both Latin Americans and US Latinxs) or whether it ought to be understood narrowly (as focused on US Latinxs). However, Vargas claims that over the past decade, there has been a marked increase in scholarly work by Mexican American philosophers. Along with this change has been increased attention in the idea of a specifically "Mexican American philosophy." See Manuel Vargas, "The Process of Defining Latino/a Philosophy, A Report from the First National Symposium" on the current state of the Latino/a philosopher and Latino/a philosophy in the United States, (conference presentation, SUNY Stony Brook, New York, NY, March 2013) and Manuel Vargas and Jorge Gracia, "Latin American Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/latin-american-philosophy/>.

Likewise, according to Gregory Pappas, over the last twenty years, scholars in both Latin American philosophy and American philosophy have produced original work on inter-American philosophy, which includes new work in Mexican American philosophy. These scholars include "José Medina, Carlos Sanchez, Eduardo Mendieta, Kim Diaz, Alex Stehn, José-Antonio Orosco, Chris Tirres, Manuela Gomez, Sergio Gallegos, Lara Trout, Albert Spencer, Jacoby Carter, Daniel Campos, Pablo Quintanilla, Alejandro Strong, Grant Silva, Andrea Pitts, Lee McBride, Jose Mendoza, Federico Penelas, Carlos Pereda, Stephanie Rivera, Paniel Reyes Cardenas, Mauricio Beuchot, Guillermo Hurtado, and Terrance MacMullan." See Gregory Fernando Pappas, "Jazz and Philosophical Contrapunteo: Philosophies of La Vida in the Americas on Behalf of Radical Democracy," *The Pluralist* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.5406/pluralist.16.1.0001>.

While this is some progress, José-Antonio Orosco claims Mexican Americans have been discriminated against and systematically oppressed within the US and that they have not lived under conditions in which they have been free to develop their own authentic culture or intellectual ideas. So as a result, Mexican Americans have not had philosophy until recently. In other words, they have not been able to produce it, given different social, economic, and political circumstances. Therefore, the task of Mexican American philosophy might be to examine and articulate the experience of the Mexican for the purpose of developing theories and strategies of resistance against their discrimination and oppression. José-Antonio Orosco, "The Philosophical Gift of Brown Folks: Mexican American Philosophy in the United States," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2016): 23–28, <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/60044C96-F3E0-4049-BC5A-271C673FA1E5/HispanicV15n2.pdf>. Additionally, it is possible that this type of work has ended up in other fields such as ethnic studies, sociology, and anthropology, but has not been categorized philosophically. Desenterrando Conocimientos and Resolana offer a solution to these challenges.

Francisco and Lori Gallegos (2018) propose that Mexican American philosophy be a kind of philosophy that begins with the concerns and intuitions of the Mexican American community. They posit that Mexican American philosophy should be shaped by the experiences and relationships that are characteristic of those who identify as Mexican American. Lori Gallegos de Castillo and Francisco Gallegos, "Review of *On the Distinctive Value of Mexican-American Philosophy: Beginning with the Concerns and Intuitions of Mexican Americans*," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (2018): 22–44, [http://ijp.tamu.edu/](http://ijp.tamu.edu)

blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Gallegos-Distinctive-Value-of-MXAM-Philosophy.pdf. But for this, a sense of community is important for philosophers of color. Grant Silva explains that the act of writing philosophy as a Mexican American often results in an alienating and existentially meaningless experience for many philosophers, especially for those who wish to think from their racialized and gendered identities in academic philosophy. Grant J. Silva, "On the Difficulties of Writing Philosophy from a Racialized Subjectivity," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2018): 2–6, <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/60044C96-F3E0-4049-BC5A-271C673FA1E5/HispanicV18n1.pdf>. Even when trying to highlight the work of other philosophers of color, many encounter resistances and delegitimization, but it is time we vindicate Mexican American philosophy.

23. Alfonso Caso and Miguel Covarrubias, *The Aztecs: People of the Sun* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).
24. Miguel Leon Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).
25. Portilla, 182.

Finding Nepantla

Minerva Ahumada

ARRUPE COLLEGE OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago received its first cohort of students in August 2015. A two-year college within the university, Arrupe College attracted students who are usually underrepresented in higher education. In many cases, students are coming to Arrupe because it lessens their financial burden and eases their path to their bachelor's degree. As the very first class got underway, what I was not expecting was to hear a student swear in Spanish. As I expressed my surprise and admonished the student, I realized that my students were also surprised to have a professor who understood the student's expletive. We chatted about this exchange, and I learned that about half the students in that classroom spoke Spanish. Because of Chicago's demographics, Arrupe College has attracted high numbers of students who have grown up speaking Spanish at home. Some of our students attended high schools that had bilingual programs (i.e., Cristo Rey) and/or have taken AP Spanish. Getting to know their stories—and especially their doubts around their mastery of Spanish—made me realize that we needed an environment that understood our students' bilingualism, honored it, and helped them embrace it. What started with a Freirean understanding of education ended up moving us to experiencing an instance of Nepantla, following Gloria Anzaldúa's work.

THE STUDENTS

Arrupe started with 158 students; 71 percent of them identified as Latino. There is no information about how many of these students are fluent in Spanish, maybe because there are no language classes at the college. As a philosophy professor who was born and raised in Mazatlán, México, I was excited to see—and hear—so many students who identified as Latina/o/x or Chicana/o/x and to hear the different ways in which they had gotten to Arrupe. We have students whose families have been in the US for generations and others who have recently gotten here—some live in mixed-status households, while others came to the US as refugees; we have had students who got to

the US as unaccompanied minors and others who barely missed the eligibility criteria to apply for DACA. Arrupe has many students who have received all of their education in the US and some others that have received their education in different countries.

Spanish is always present in the college, whether that is in the hallways or in the classroom when students are working in small groups. This is one of my favorite things at Arrupe. For example, when students are working in small groups drawing the “Allegory of the Cave,” as I walk by their tables I can hear that some of them are peppering their work with Spanish here and there: “la cueva,” “las shadows.” As Paulo Freire says in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings.”¹ So how do we hear the word and engage with them in dialogue? How do we honor our students’ bilingualism?

Our first attempt was to create a “Spanish Table” club where we would meet in a classroom once or twice a week and hold conversations in Spanish. While some students joined in, the effort was short lived. Students felt nervous to speak in Spanish in front of their peers, other activities were happening at the same time, and my schedule kept changing, so it became a bit of a guessing game to schedule the meetings.

In January of 2018 I started teaching a philosophy class for Illinois Humanities and its Odyssey Project. The Odyssey Project is a Clemente Course in the Humanities, where students take classes such as history, philosophy, literature, US history, and art history at no cost and can earn college credits. I started teaching in the Spanish program Odisea. The experience was fun, and I was overjoyed with the opportunity to teach a philosophy class in Spanish—something that I had never done, because even when I taught philosophy in Mexico for a year, I was asked to teach the class in English. I was able to share the classroom with adults that were working on their college credits and who, despite working all day, came to class at night ready to discuss philosophy.

Teaching for Odisea made me wonder if we could not do the same at Arrupe: Would it be possible to offer a philosophy class in Spanish? This would have several advantages over offering Spanish as a club, but mainly it would change the locus of operation from a social to an academic one. Throughout the years I had heard students talk about how Spanish is the language they speak at home, but it did not translate to their academic endeavors. Many students believed that their Spanish wasn’t refined, academic, or “good enough” and often felt embarrassed to use it, especially when they needed to talk to someone from a Latin American country. A social context can only go so far in addressing these needs, fears, and anxieties.

Since Arrupe students need to take three philosophy classes, I proposed using ACPHI 205 (The Person and Society) as a class that could be taught in Spanish. Students could practice the same skills they had been practicing in their philosophy classes, but we could also work on

increasing their vocabulary in Spanish, presentation of arguments in a language other than English, plus—what I saw as the most exciting opportunity—students would be more intentionally exposed to an academic and scholarly community of people with backgrounds similar to theirs. The proposal to pilot this class was accepted in June 2019. We scheduled the class for spring 2020. Twelve students enrolled in it.

LA COYOLXAUHQUI

I did not imagine that twelve students would register for this class. I was hoping for at least four. The class had been advertised, but students were the ones who decided if they felt ready for this class. There were no language tests or requirements for them to fulfill. The first day, I think we were all nervous. There was a giddiness that I had never experienced in a classroom before.

In *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo oscuro* Anzaldúa invites us to think of the Coyolxauhqui and her dismembered and disjointed body as an analogy for the constitution of those who are marginalized. Anzaldúa says, “I don’t write from any single disciplinary position. I write outside official theoretical/philosophical language. Mine is a struggle of recognizing and legitimizing excluded selves, especially of women, people of color, queer, and othered groups.”² As an excluded self, Anzaldúa uses those identities within herself to articulate the whole they shape. This is how Anzaldúa threads a connection between herself and the Coyolxauhqui: the disc that delineates the Coyolxauhqui also shows the different parts/members/identities that shape her.

I grew up listening to my dad talk about the Coyolxauhqui: The lunar goddess that had convinced her brothers to attack their mother, Coatlicue, when they found out she was pregnant. Huitzilopochtli defended their mother and vanquished Coyolxauhqui. On vacation in Mexico City, my dad—who taught history and literature—always made it a point to take us to the National Museum of Anthropology and History so we could see the stone that represented her: a disc where the goddess lay dismembered. When I first read Anzaldúa’s use of Coyolxauhqui, that image from childhood helped me make sense of this immigrant who still feels like a foreigner in this country. The first time I ever presented on Anzaldúa’s use of the goddess was in a conference in Chiapas, Mexico, where I was told that both Anzaldúa and I had misused the myth, which was understandable since neither of us was Mexican. My own ancestry was now being erased; I was being told who I was. And in that moment, Coyolxauhqui became even more relevant in my life.

“Coyolxauhqui,” Anzaldúa writes,

also represents the “me” tossed into the void by traumatic events (an experience of the unconscious). I disintegrate into hundreds of pieces, hundreds of separate awarenesses. A plurality of souls splits my awareness so that I see things from a hundred different viewpoints, each with its own intelligence that can “do” a hundred different things (think, feel, sense, observe) in a continuously changing consciousness moment to

moment. Yet while experiencing the many I cohere as the one reconstituted and restructured by my own unconscious urge towards wholeness.³

That giddiness I mentioned before is represented in this quote from Anzaldúa. But if we think about this experience of granting Spanish an academic space, it also brings these hundreds of pieces that have been separated and aims to integrate them. While it is possible that everyone in that classroom had spoken Spanish while at Arrupe, this was our first experience of doing so in an academic setting. These different viewpoints that had been taught to exist in different modes, in different spaces, were colliding with each other, activating a new consciousness and a way of being among others whose identities are also being reconciled in the moment. In the classroom, we laughed, and that released us from this moment.

We talked about it: Who was nervous? Was anybody feeling anxious? Students had questions about whether there would be any penalty if they spoke English instead of Spanish; we agreed that there was no reason for a penalty. As a matter of fact, since everyone was feeling rusty, we established that we would always work in Spanish (all readings and assignments would be in Spanish), and use English and Spanglish for those moments when the right word escapes us, since everyone would be able to understand one another. Anzaldúa's Coyolxauhqui felt extremely relevant in this moment: we were bringing together these different identities, and we needed a space to recognize and reconcile them.

As we continued to work together, this new consciousness allowed us to travel as each other's companions. We all made mistakes; we all forgot words; we all supported each other in this process. There was an acceptance of these different identities we all hold that made it OK to have more fluidity with the language and our embodiment of it.

Teaching this class in Spanish felt very different for me, personally. While I knew that I needed to guide my students to be at least as successful as they would have been if they had not taken the class in Spanish, being in this classroom with them helped me understand myself differently, and I became playful with the students in a way that I cannot do in my other classes. I saw myself care for my students differently, as if this care was now emanating from two sources within myself. Anzaldúa says that she "stare[s] up at the moon, Coyolxauhqui, and its light in the darkness. I seek a healing image, one that reconnects me to others. I seek the positive shadow that I've also inherited."⁴ This reconnection to others and to other parts of myself was healing: Suddenly, I was not the only one in the room that felt in two worlds at the same time; I wasn't the only one checking the news on Puerto Rico or Chile, while also wondering what the Trump administration was saying about immigration and travel bans; sayings that I learned when talking to my grandparents now could be uttered when teaching a class. This (lunar) light that Anzaldúa stares at is healing because it reveals that we need not only be one part of who we are, but that we can travel through worlds and that we can and do reconcile or articulate those worlds without having to forget or annihilate the more homey

aspects of who we are. When I proposed this class to my deans, I had no idea how much it would mean to me.

Anzaldúa talks about the Coyolxauhqui imperative. She says that it "is the act of calling back those pieces of the self/soul that have been dispersed or lost, the act of mourning the losses that haunt us."⁵ She continues, "I call this impulse the 'Coyolxauhqui imperative': a struggle to reconstruct oneself and heal the *sustos* resulting from woundings, traumas, racism, and other acts of violation que hechan pedazos nuestras almas, split us, scatter our energies, and haunt us."⁶ While I had read this prior to teaching the class in Spanish, being in the classroom embedded these words with a new lived urgency: this opportunity to reconcile, rejoin, and gather those pieces that have been wounded before has the power to heal because it helps us to recognize the ways in which we have moved on, survived, and learned. Accepting that my students and I carry these different pieces—that we are made out of pieces—can make us more resistant against the many ways in which we are told that we are different, that we do not belong, that we need to hide some part of who we are (or maim it, file it, shrink it). These parts then become hinges, joints, junctions. The more we explore them, activate them, and nurse them, the more resistant we can become. To heal from our wounds we must embrace an awareness that privileges flexibility, ambiguity, and adaptability between our different identities and those of others.

ENTERING NEPANTLA

In acknowledging and leaning into these hinges, the classroom space became a crossroads: different pieces or our souls, different experiences, were addressed here. The difference is that we did not feel pressure to choose a road onto which we could continue. This crossroad, unlike some proverbial ones, was a resting, healing place. This experience bears resemblance to Anzaldúa's idea of *Nepantla*.

Anzaldúa sees *Nepantla* as a transitional space where we arrive after experiencing a *choque*. She writes,

Este choque shifts us to *nepantla*, a psychological, liminal space between the way things had been and an unknown future. *Nepantla* is the space in-between, the locus and sign of transition. In *Nepantla* we realize that realities clash, authority figures of the various groups demand contradictory commitments, and we and others have failed living up to the idealized goals. We're caught in the *remolinos* (vortexes), each with different, often contradictory forms of cognition, perspectives, worldviews, belief systems—all occupying the transitional *nepantla*.⁷

As we were exploring topics in social and political philosophy, the class(room) became the proper space to examine our connections, belongingness, and longing in our society and communities. For example, students speak of how they feel a lack of support from their families when it comes to the practical reality of attending college. Parents and other relatives encourage them to attend college, but they also make demands for their time that

clash with their obligations as students. While at school, students also feel that they are being encouraged to remain engaged, but they find themselves navigating spaces that are not built for them or with them in mind. While students might have enrolled in this class because it was in Spanish, our conversations threaded academic/philosophical discussions and personal concerns in such a way that students were able to see that they were not the only ones who had had these experiences, had felt a lack of belonging, or were longing for some part of their selves to be more incorporated into their academic life.

In a way, I think that those few moments we had at the beginning of the semester, where we giggled and discussed expectations of using Spanish in the class were part of that first *choque* we experienced. Before this class, I have mostly experienced choques/shocks/clashes by myself. I have been one of the few people in the room with an accent; I have been the one thinking of soccer but calling it *fútbol*; I had been the only one struggling to translate that word that would only come to me in Spanish. In this classroom, I was not the only one. This place of encounter—this *Nepantla*—provided both healing from previous wounds/slights/erasures and a way to move forward. Anzaldúa emphasizes this by claiming, “Only by speaking of these events and by creating do I become visible to myself and come to terms with what happens. Though it is hard to think and act positively en estos tiempos de Coyoлахuqui, it is exactly these times of dislocation/separation that hold the promise of wholeness.”⁸ Students seemed to have experienced this even in the final project: a video essay. They chose to analyze media that had been created in Spanish. One group analyzed Bad Bunny songs, another one analyzed the movie *El Hoyo*. They did not need to translate the work they were engaging with, and they did not have to provide a lot of detail as to why they had chosen these lesser known works. Conversations in class became more invested in making connections between the texts and what these ideas had created. The class, as a whole, was more thoughtful about the ways in which, for example, social contract theorists have constructed and idealized some subjects at the expense of others. The texts were still challenging in Spanish, but because of the makeup of the class, certain conditions and experiences, and the erasure of some knowledge had become more visible.

As I was coming to the realization that the class was offering us more than I had envisioned, we needed to switch gears and move to a virtual setting. This put an end to our plans to visit the Chicago campus of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, just fifteen minutes away from Arrupe College, and Instituto Cervantes, ten minutes away from campus. These are organizations that most of my students had not heard of. There was more that we wanted to do, but what we did do helped us move—I hope—to a more complex understanding of who we are and how and why we operate the way we do in different environments.

NEXT STEPS

There is much to consider when teaching a philosophy class in Spanish. As I think back to my experience teaching this class, I wanted to offer my students the world of philosophy that I enjoy when I read in Spanish or when I

attend presentations in Spanish. In a political moment when immigrants were being vilified, a philosophy class in Spanish was needed. What I did not imagine was the healing it would offer as we convened as a class: where anxiety over the language had been the first shock we experienced together, we had the rest of the semester to examine how those different pieces in our Coyoлахuqui can best interlock with one another.

We will offer this class again, hopefully in spring 2022. Between now and then, we at Arrupe need to figure out how to make the class be transcribed, and what opportunities we have to give students credit for taking a philosophy class in Spanish.

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary ed., translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 88.
2. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. Ana Louise Keating (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 6.
3. Anzaldúa, 50.
4. Anzaldúa, 10.
5. Anzaldúa, 2.
6. Anzaldúa, 1.
7. Anzaldúa, 17.
8. Anzaldúa, 21.

Notes on Decolonizing Philosophy: Against Epistemic Extractivism and Toward the Abolition of the Canon

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There has been a proliferation of writings on the decolonization of various areas of knowledge in the last decade.¹ One reads about decolonizing anthropology, psychology, political science, critical theory, and, of course, philosophy, among other fields and disciplines. While these discussions open up spaces for the circulation of ideas that are grounded on decolonial movements, it is nonetheless the case that many of the recent publications are mainly academic in a narrow sense and that perhaps too many of the scholars who pursue these topics have little connection with the movements that are mainly responsible for keeping the discourse of decolonization urgent and relevant.² One notices the usual pattern of taking social movements as objects of research more than as producers of knowledge. In critical theory and philosophy, including some work often cited as liberationist or decolonial, this takes the form of theoretical, cognitive, or epistemic extractivism: social movements and their intellectual creations are taken as zones for intellectual excavation and as springboards for theoretical and philosophical reflection that remains caught within the liberal order of knowledge production in academia.³

It is an essential part of the modern academic and liberal order of knowledge production that epistemic extractivism—not only in Philosophy, but throughout the liberal arts and sciences—becomes dominant and that a few authors are made to appear as a vanguard of sorts, or as part of a proto-canon that unsurprisingly includes figures whose problematic translations and elaborations of movement-based knowledges undermine the very movements with which their work is often identified. From then on, the limited and compromised reflection and theoretical elaboration of decolonial themes takes the place of actual engagement with producers of knowledge at the forefront of decolonial movements. Extractivism is combined with a new kind of scholasticism, leading to the formation of a cadre of experts on decolonization and decoloniality: from senior scholars to assistant professors and soon to be assistant professors, who in turn help to produce an entire industry of publication about—a largely detached and purely academic conceptualization of—decoloniality. Since the modes of knowledge production in the modern Western and liberal academy were imposed, reproduced, and imported globally—they were part of the civilizing mission of the West and belong to the apparatus of the modern nation-state—epistemic extractivism takes place in the “north” as well as in the “south.” As a result, geopolitical location alone is not a sufficient condition of possibility for delinking from this system of knowledge production. Racial or gender designation or identity are not a sufficient condition, either.

In some cases, engagements with decolonization in scholarly debates go beyond publications and help promote calls for institutional change—in degree granting departments and programs, professional organizations, and journals, for instance. However, these efforts tend to be met by what Houria Bouteldja refers to as the “white immune system,” among which she counts Western humanism as a centerpiece.⁴ Today, the “white immune system” is most active and present in universities in the uncritical reproduction of the white academic field, including calls for multiculturalism and mistranslations of Black Lives Matter and other such movements in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.⁵ Diversity and inclusion has become the most recent dominant expression of modern/colonial humanism, perhaps its liberal and neoliberal face in the contexts of racial formations that include formulaic rejections of vulgar racism and even certain celebrations of racial difference; an industry seeking to protect corporate and liberal institutions by monopolizing the terms of legitimate calls for transformation and change.

It is only thanks to student movements that defy the liberal grammars of knowledge production and their allies that a few places have been able to break through the monopoly of diversity and inclusion with explicit calls for decolonization. This is particularly the case in South Africa where there was a powerful movement for “free and decolonised education”—Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall (RMF/FMF)—that shook the nation in 2015 and 2016. The ripple effects from the settler colony of Azania were felt in one former imperial metropolis, leading to calls for Rhodes to fall at Oxford University in the United Kingdom as well.

Surely, the white immune system has many ways of protecting the white academic field beyond seeking to limit the terms of debate about institutional change to matters of diversity and inclusion. This is one reason why pursuing the decolonization of the university or the decolonization of disciplines within the university today is a difficult and risky endeavor, as Naomi Snow, a philosophy student at King’s College London (KCL) recently put it in the opening to a panel on “Decolonising Philosophy” at KCL. Snow, whose work is greatly inspired by the Rhodes Must Fall movement, considers that:

What has become clear throughout the course of my project is that decolonisation is no easy task. It is a very risky endeavor. On the one hand there is the risk of the call being reduced to a box-ticking approach. Within neoliberal universities there is the risk that decolonisation becomes a performative exercise whereby the core structures that have upheld systems of coloniality remain vastly unchanged.

On the other hand, there is the risk that calls for decolonisation will not be sufficiently strategic or practical to be incorporated into the mechanics of the university. There has indeed been a fine line to walk between the practical and the radical.⁶

Snow’s formulation captures the drama of calls for decolonization of the university, and of philosophy in particular, as well. South African student activists and their close supporters, among which I count myself, would probably agree with this general assessment concerning the difficulty and the risks in having liberal institutions consider the question of their own decolonization.⁷

In the United States perhaps the principal generator of claims for decolonizing the university so far has been the Third World Liberation Front, which emerged in 1968 and led to the formation of Ethnic Studies, the family of trans-disciplinary studies that includes what today is called Latinx Studies, among other crucially important fields.⁸ Since its inception, Ethnic Studies has been confronting the severity of the white immune system, and there is much to learn about the difficulty and risk of calls for decolonization in liberal and academic institutions by examining its history carefully. Anyone with a serious pretension of advancing decolonization in any area of the academy today should seriously consider the promise and the challenge to create the equivalent of what the Third World Liberation Front referred to as Third World College.⁹ The existence of a College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, which emerged out of the Third World Strike, has long defied the idea that it is impossible to approach knowledge production outside the largely nineteenth-century Eurocentric institutional formations of the humanities and the sciences. The ongoing struggle for Ethnic Studies in California and the recent call for “the creation of visionary institutional spaces, such as centers, institutes, schools, and new divisions” by a group of Black and Indigenous faculty as well as faculty of color at Rutgers University, New Brunswick (USA) helps to considerably expand and challenge the narrow realm of the possible within liberal academic frameworks.¹⁰

I would like to contribute to national and international calls for decolonizing the university and decolonizing philosophy, more specifically, from my perspective as someone who has spent most of his career teaching and writing theory and philosophy within Ethnic Studies units. There is no doubt that part of my interest in advocating for decolonizing philosophy comes from my own grounding in the history and efforts of the Third World Liberation Front, but another part of it comes from my exposure to philosophy in Puerto Rico, a contemporary colony of the United States, followed by my work in Africana Studies and Africana Philosophy.¹¹ If, rephrasing Paul Ricoeur's sentence in *The Symbolism of Evil*, colonialism and coloniality—two very concrete and complex forms of evil; that is, not only symbolic—give rise to thought, how are we to expect at least some philosophers in a territory facing a long history and contemporary reality of colonization and coloniality not to want to engage in the question of decolonizing philosophy—and do so against the coloniality of philosophical education, the humanities, and the liberal arts and sciences in the island and elsewhere?¹² It may be easier for some to ignore or set aside colonization as a problem and a concept while working in academic institutions in the US, but not for contemporary colonial subjects or others whose thinking has been marked by the questions raised by the anticolonial and antiracist movements all across the world.¹³

It was in the colonial territory of Puerto Rico that I was first introduced to philosophy as an activity and to Philosophy as an academic discipline. We should not confuse one with the other: while philosophy—with lower letter p, or, in the context of this reflection, philosophy conceived as an activity and an attitude—could be characterized as a rigorous formulation and exploration of fundamental questions, the discipline of Philosophy—with capital letter P—not only tends to confuse rigor with disciplining, but also to significantly narrow the definition and the scope of fundamental questions.¹⁴

In a colonial context, Philosophy, the academic discipline, serves the interests of colonization when it fails to consider the ways in which colonization raises fundamental questions, which is often paired with the apparent impossibility to consider the colonized as a questioner.¹⁵ Approaching the colonized as questioner is different from seeking to include them in the discipline of Philosophy. Given that many of those who have questioned colonization most profoundly have done so outside of academia, it is rather about the possibility of finding philosophy outside Philosophy, which can only raise questions to and about Philosophy itself. In a colonial context, Philosophy tends to delegitimize the philosophical interrogation of colonialism while simultaneously seeking to colonize philosophy itself.

If Philosophy plays an active role in the colonization of philosophy, decolonizing philosophy can be understood as a way of countering the colonization of philosophy by Philosophy and as a form of reintroducing philosophy into Philosophy. This is not to mean that we should delimit the decolonization of philosophy to decolonizing the discipline of Philosophy. When limited in such a way, the so-called decolonization remains within a limited and problematic

framework that reproduces, rather than challenges, coloniality.

One could conclude, for instance, that decolonizing philosophy is about adding more authors into the canon of Philosophy, or about adding more classes focused on non-European or non-Western thinkers into the specialization in Philosophy. Decolonizing philosophy is not a matter of multiculturalism or of diversity and inclusion. Paying attention to the culture of the colonized without addressing colonialism is as problematic as incorporating texts written by colonized subjects to the canon without seriously addressing the ways in which the discipline of Philosophy, its scope, and its pedagogy reproduce coloniality. That is why while practices of hegemonic multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion—the new woke white man's and woman's burden, as well as the new marker of liberal and neoliberal benevolence—seek to appear as progressive—when, in truth, they seek to accommodate the interests, perspectives, and rights of (principally white) individuals within a liberal legal order and to counter robust appeals to justice and reparations, not to speak of decolonization—they easily collapse into the categories of the offensive and the obscene. There is no apparent harm done in a colonial and racial world when the offense and the obscenity are only seen and felt by minoritized sectors, especially if they are colonial and racial subjects. How else could coloniality continue for so long?

So how should one then approach the project of decolonizing philosophy? I'd like to submit two basic ideas: first, that decolonizing philosophy should be less about decolonizing the discipline of Philosophy, an activity that still leaves the academic discipline at the center and therefore always remains oriented and limited by it, and more about the rigorous pursuit of the fundamental questions that emerge in the historical and still unfinished struggle for decolonization. I am proposing a shift from decolonizing Philosophy, the discipline, to producing a philosophy—an activity and attitude that explores fundamental questions—that advances decolonization. Second, I submit that the struggle for decolonization is an intergenerational and collective project, as well as one that bridges spaces and temporalities in the process of creating an-other world. Let me explore these two proposals.

1. DECOLONIZING PHILOSOPHY AS A COUNTER-CATASTROPHIC TASK

The main idea that I would like to explore here is that decolonizing Philosophy is less about decolonizing a particularly academic field than about generating a philosophy that is itself decolonizing or a philosophy that is decolonial. Without generating a decolonial philosophy, any effort to decolonize Philosophy—the discipline—is bound to remain caught in the coloniality of modern Western scholarly research and scholarly production. Decolonial philosophy, or maybe even better put, decolonial philosophical thinking, does not abandon but rather reclaims the material taught by Philosophy—the discipline—to assess it and in the process critically revise it, reject it, and/or transform it. Too much has been left out of the corpus of academic Philosophy for

decolonial philosophizing to be restricted to it or oriented by it. Decolonial philosophical thinking demands the abolition of the canon, which does not mean the rejection of every idea found in existing canonical texts, but rather, a fundamental reorientation of the ways of conceiving knowledge production and creation—one that cannot take place without active involvement in decolonial struggles and without generative relations with knowledge creators and explorers embedded in those struggles.

Since decolonization is an ongoing movement, decolonial philosophical thinking is to be anchored, not in a discipline, but in a movement or movements: the movements of and for decolonization. From the perspective of decolonial philosophical thinking, movements for decolonization are not simply social manifestations of various forms of resistance against the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality, which includes the presence and afterlives of Indigenous genocide, conquest, colonization, and racial slavery in the contemporary world. Rather decolonial movements, looked at philosophically, are movements that seek to restore the conditions of possibility for love and understanding in our world. Likewise, philosophy, looked at decolonially, cannot possibly seek to affirm the “love of wisdom” without committing itself to counter the catastrophe that makes love and wisdom an exception to a colonial rule in the world. Decolonial philosophical thinking can therefore be understood as a counter-catastrophic practice that seeks to restore the ample conditions of possibility for love and wisdom to flourish in our world. Decolonial philosophical thinking does this in part by identifying, engaging, critically assessing, and building from the fundamental questions that are posed by decolonial movements. Decolonizing philosophy is rooted in questions that emerge in movement and in movements.

2. DECOLONIAL PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING AS A COLLECTIVE AND INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT

Since love and understanding are eminently intersubjective activities, this should mean that philosophy is too.¹⁶ If so, this would indicate that decolonial philosophical thinking has a point of departure in the struggles for love and for understanding that emerge in the midst of the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality. This view has various consequences. For example, it means that decolonizing the curriculum of Philosophy—the discipline—cannot be done without decolonizing the multiple other areas in the academy that can potentially offer insight into these struggles for love and understanding in an antiblack, anti-Indigenous, and colonial world. The classroom has to be decolonized too: it should no longer be in the service of the occupation of land and the erasure of questions that emerge from the ground of decolonial struggle, but be opened to contact and engagement with decolonial struggles outside the university.

If decolonial philosophical thinking is to be nurtured in academic settings, it has to include an effort not only to critically revise and expand the reading materials, but also to decolonize the classroom and the very conception of education and research. The decolonial classroom cannot end in the physical walls of a room or the library,

as important as these could be. The decolonial classroom extends to the streets and to spaces led by community and activist organizations that also counter catastrophe by making love and understanding an increasing possibility for those who Fanon called the condemned of the earth.

Decolonial philosophical thinking cannot emerge without this form of learning, as many crucial lessons for decolonial thinking are much better formulated by community and activist organizations than by academics. In fact, the symbolic value of academic work often depends on and advances a schism with other forms of knowledge production, just as it reproduces the ethos of modern/colonial scholarly work. Instead of starting with the discipline, or taking the academy as the point of departure, we should start from who we are and where we are: not merely as individuals, but as part of networks of oppression and emancipation; and not so much to assert our individual importance in the world or the uniqueness of our individual or regional perspective, but first and foremost to practice solidarity, understood as “the enactment of the social debts we owe each other.”¹⁷ These are “acknowledgement of debts owed: from top to bottom and horizontally too, between and within groups, communities, and movements” as a transition to a post-extractivist decolonial world—also a post-MoMA’s world, in the terms of the “Strike MoMA” document cited here. In this approach, solidarity is a quintessential task in the effort to restore and expand love, understanding, and intersubjective reason, and therefore philosophy in the world. By participating with others in decolonial struggles and by learning from our ancestors’ ways of thinking and acting, we can seek to become worthy of saying some of these things and be heard.¹⁸

NOTES

1. The first draft of this essay was presented at the “Decolonising Philosophy” panel discussion organized by philosophy students at King’s College London on May 10, 2021. I thank philosophy student Naomi Snow as well as the student groups Decolonise KCL and KCL Minorities and Philosophy for the invitation and for making the event possible. I also thank the Strike MoMA! working group of the International Imagination of Anti-National and Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF) for providing a space to explore the linkages between extractivism and coloniality.
2. I also comment on this phenomenon in my response to Huey Copeland, Hal Foster, David Joselit, and Pamela M. Lee, “A Questionnaire on Decolonization,” *October* 174 (Fall 2020): 73–78. For a critical engagement with the coloniality of critical theory see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “What Is Decolonial Critique?” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 41, no. 1 (2020): 157–83.
3. I turned my attention to epistemic extractivism and the abolition of the canon in the context of discussions about extractivism and abolition as part of Strike MoMA!, some of which is documented on video. See the conversation among Kency Cornejo, Saudi García, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and MónicaRamón Ríos, facilitated by Nitasha Dhillon and Shellyne Rodríguez. Strike MoMA, “Kency Cornejo, Saudi García, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, MónicaRamón Ríos,” YouTube Video, 2:15:05, June 3, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4HNvsf8XEs&t=1s>. Strike MoMA! is an initiative led by the Strike MoMA Working Group of the International Imagination of Anti-National and Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF) and supporters. See <https://www.strikemoma.org>. I approach epistemic extractivism as a normative practice in the modern research university, which means that, most likely, everyone who has gone through the university has practiced it or become complicit with it in one form or another. Epistemic extractivism is the order of the day in doctoral seminars, academic reading groups, professional organizations, etc., even in spaces that

- engage colonization, racism, sexism, and homophobia critically. To be sure, this does not mean that epistemic extractivism needs to be condoned. It is necessary to identify it, criticize its operations, and, most importantly, engage in non- and post-extractivist practices of knowledge creation. Other approaches to epistemic extractivism include: Naomi Klein, "Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle-No-More's Leanne Simpson," *Yes Magazine* (March 5, 2012), and Ramón Grosfoguel, "Epistemic Extractivism: A Dialogue with Alberto Acosta, Leanne Betasamosoke Simpson, and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui," in *Knowledges Born in Struggle: Constructing the Epistemologies of the Global South*, eds. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses (New York: Routledge, 2019): 203–18.
4. See Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017): 43. Bouteldja analyzes the "white immune system" as a political-ideological apparatus, but her reference to humanism suggests that it is also an epistemic-academic one. This is how I approach the concept here. This is part of a conversation with Bouteldja's work that I have pursued elsewhere. See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Interrogating Systemic Racism and the White Academic Field." Frantz Fanon Foundation, June 16, 2020, <https://fondation-frantzfanon.com/interrogating-systemic-racism-and-the-white-academic-field/>.
 5. Maldonado-Torres, "Interrogating Racism and the White Academic Field."
 6. Snow's opening comments to "Decolonising Philosophy: Panel Discussion," Zoom online panel on May 10, 2021. Thanks to Snow for facilitating her opening comments in writing.
 7. I have been visiting South Africa and collaborating with South African academics for about seven years, and I happened to be in South Africa for three months during one of the most intense periods of activity for Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall. In 2017, I wrote the "Foreword" to the student-led publication *Rioting and Writing: Diaries of the Wits Fallists*, ed. Crispin Chinguno, et al. (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 2017). My "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality" is also heavily marked by my time in South Africa during the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall activities. See "Outline of Ten Theses on 'Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality,'" posted on October 26, 2016. Frantz Fanon Foundation, <http://fondation-frantzfanon.com/outline-of-ten-theses-on-coloniality-and-decoloniality/>. See also Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Hashtag Lessons from the US and South Africa about Racism and Antiracism," *Mail & Guardian* (June 29, 2020), <https://mg.co.za/opinion/2020-06-29-hashtag-lessons-from-the-us-and-south-africa-about-racism-and-antiracism/>.
 8. Decolonizing the university has been one of the persistent themes in ethnic studies scholarship. Consider publications such as Carole Boyce Davies, et al., eds. *Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003); and the conference that commemorated the 40th anniversary of the birth of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley: "Decolonizing the University: Fulfilling the Dream of the Third World College," see <https://vimeo.com/15729523>.
 9. Among other sources, see the special issue of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Ethnic Studies in the *Ethnic Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2019), <https://online.ucpress.edu/esr/issue/42/2>.
 10. See the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition, <https://www.ethnicstudiesnow.com>, and Akinbiyi Akinlabi et al., "Letter from Black and Indigenous Faculty and Faculty of Color who Specialize in the Study of Race at Rutgers, New Brunswick," <https://sites.google.com/view/rutgers-blm-bipoc-letter/home>.
 11. I have written about my experience as a philosophy student in Puerto Rico and about doing philosophy in Ethnic Studies in "Thinking at the Limits of Philosophy and Doing Philosophy Elsewhere: From Philosophy to Decolonial Thinking," in *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*, ed. George Yancy (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012): 251–70. I was fortunate to find in Lewis Gordon and Enrique Dussel supportive teachers, advisors, and mentors while in graduate school, and to closely collaborate with the late Latina philosopher María Lugones since my early years as an Assistant Professor. The Caribbean Philosophical Association offered an important space for the kind of work that we pursued.
 12. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).
 13. The most recent work of Rocio Zambrana is an example of this. See *Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). Also of crucial importance are works in Puerto Rico by Anayra Santory Jorge, whose publications, classes, as well as her initiatives while chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, played an important role motivating and supporting a new generation of philosophy students with interests in decolonization and who are now in the process of completing their PhDs. This includes Pedro Lebrón, author of the recently published *Filosofía del cimarronaje* (Toa Baja: Editora Educación Emergente, 2020). From Anayra Santory Jorge, see, among others: *Nada es igual: bocetos del país que nos acontece* (Toa Alta: Editora Educación Emergente, 2018); *Convidar* (Toa Alta: Editora Educación Emergente, 2020); and the co-edited anthology *Antología del pensamiento crítico puertorriqueño*, eds. Anayra Santory Jorge and Mareia Quintero Rivera (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2019). Another important author and teacher in Puerto Rico whose work in the history of Caribbean and Puerto Rican philosophy has animated interest in the philosophical exploration of questions and themes that are prevalent in the island-archipelago and the Caribbean is the Colombian-born Carlos Rojas Osorio, winner of the 2005 Frantz Fanon Lifetime Achievement Award by the Caribbean Philosophical Association.
 14. I have developed related ideas about the meaning of philosophy in Maldonado-Torres, "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality," as well as in the co-authored chapter "Decolonising Philosophy." See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Rafael Vizcaino, Jasmine Wallace, and Jeong Eun Annabel We in *Decolonising the University*, eds. Gurminder Bhambra, Dalia Gebrael, and Kerem Nisancioglu (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 64–90. See also Lewis Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder, Co.: Paradigm Press, 2006), and Lewis Gordon, "Decolonizing Philosophy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 57 ,no. S1 (2019): 16–36.
 15. As evinced in the "Outline of Ten Theses," the works of Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* have been crucial in the formulation of this view of philosophy and its operations and mutations in colonial settings. See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).
 16. I am building here from a view of philosophy presented in Maldonado-Torres, "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality," where I write: "That is, while philosophy is traditionally conceived as the love of wisdom, for Fanon, or rather through Fanon, we can conceive of philosophy as the intersubjective modality of love and understanding. Philosophy is therefore not simply a particular form of questioning or production of knowledge that characterizes the work of some people called philosophers. Rather, philosophy can be conceived as a name for the basic coordinates of human subjectivity: the modality of intersubjective love and understanding."
 17. Working Group of the International Imagination of Anti-National and Anti-Imperialist Feelings (IIAAF), "Strike MoMA: Framework and Terms for Struggle," Strike MoMA, <https://www.strikemoma.org>.
 18. This last sentence is to be read along with Fanon's initial lines in the introduction of *Black Skin, White Masks*: "Don't expect to see any explosion today. It's too early . . . or too late. I'm not the bearer of absolute truths. No fundamental inspiration has flashed across my mind. I honestly think, however, it's time some things were said. Things I'm going to say, not shout. I've long given up shouting. A long time ago . . ." See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Wilcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008): xi.

ARTICLES

Judging Students and Racial Injustice

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In 2002, I was a student in a political science course at the City University of New York's LaGuardia Community College. At this time, I was working fifty to fifty-five hours a week in a warehouse in the Woodside, Queens section of New York City, and I was also living with my grandmother, mother, and brother in a one-bedroom apartment in Jackson Heights, Queens. As a result, I often did not have the space, time, and energy to devote to producing high-quality essays or coursework. But from time to time, circumstances would allow me the space, time, and energy that I needed to produce high-quality work.

On one of these occasions, I managed to produce a good short essay in this political science course. The instructor's comment on my work was simply that "I must have plagiarized some published political science work" because, by his lights, there was no way that I could have produced work of this quality or be aware of the historical facts that I referenced in the essay. This instructor clearly based his false inference on a false assumption about the capacity of Black and Latinx students at LaGuardia Community College. But he also based this inference on the false assumption that the work that I produced in the past represented the highest quality of work that I could produce. This assumption, I submit, betrayed his ignorance of how racial injustice can negatively affect the conditions under which Black, Indigenous, and Latinx persons produce philosophical essays or work. I assume that if he had understood how racial injustice relates to these conditions, then the likelihood that he would have erred in this way would have been depressed.

Leaving aside many of the political and moral features of this case, this political-science instructor made two kinds of judgment. The first kind of judgment is about the quality of a student's philosophical work. The second kind of judgment is about a student's general capacity or disposition to produce philosophical work of a certain quality level. Instructors' bailiwick seemingly involves precisely these kinds of judgments about students. This essay's aim is to get clear on how racial injustice relates to these kinds of judgments and how instructors can do better by way of these judgments.

Instructors at the university level who care to take racial injustice into account when they assess their students' work face a challenge. This challenge is that we, instructors, also care to assess students' work according to university-level academic standards of quality, such as clarity of prose and argumentative rigor.

In the discipline of philosophy, as in other disciplines, instructors often refer to their students as "good" or "bad" while discussing their students with other instructors. A charitable interpretation of how instructors use these

terms to describe their students is that a student is "good" if she performs in accordance with some evaluative academic standard and, similarly, a student is "bad" if her performance does not accord with this academic standard.

With this academic standard in mind, instructors often judge students as "good" or "bad" on the basis of the work that a student submits over the course of a semester. Here the assessment of a student's work can differ from an instructor's judgment of her as a *student* who can produce "good" work. Good students can turn in bad work and bad students can turn in good work according to this conception of how students relate to their work. I will call the disposition that students have to produce good or bad work *academic character*.

I assume that instructors often judge students' academic character on the basis of how they have judged their work. I take it as commonplace that instructors judge a student's academic character good because she has turned in good work and vice versa.

I also assume that the academic-character judgments that instructors make of a student will tend to affect whether they afford a student leeway or give them the benefit of the doubt in terms of handing in assignments late, arriving late to class, deciding whether to give students the higher of two grades when they are on the borderline, and awarding course grades of incomplete rather than a failing grade for a course.

The picture that I am painting involves how assessment of a student's work affects assessment of academic character and then, in turn, affects the final grades that students receive in a course. This affects students in terms of their grade point averages and whether faculty are willing to write letters of recommendation for law school or graduate school. As a result, accurate and just assessment seemingly matters quite a bit for our students' life plans and goals.

I will argue that just and accurate assessment must involve taking into account how racial injustice affects students' performance in their work. To this end, I will motivate what I call the RACIAL-INJUSTICE-ASSESSMENT THESIS. According to this thesis, instructors must account for how racial injustice affects a student's work for an instructor's judgment of her work to count as just.

To motivate the RACIAL-INJUSTICE-ASSESSMENT THESIS, I will defend the ACCURACY THESIS and the JUSTICE THESIS. According to the ACCURACY THESIS, the accuracy of an instructor's judgment of a student's work will covary with the degree to which she considers how racial injustice affects the performance enshrined in the student's work. According to the JUSTICE THESIS, the justness of instructors' judgments of student work covary with the degree to which instructors consider racial injustice's effect on student work.

The argument that I present will take the following form. If (P) the ACCURACY THESIS is true and the JUSTICE THESIS is true, then (C) RACIAL-INJUSTICE-ASSESSMENT THESIS is true. I show that (P), thus (C) obtains.

THE ACCURACY THESIS

I now defend the ACCURACY THESIS. According to this thesis, the accuracy of an instructor's judgment of a student's work will covary with the degree to which she considers how racial injustice affects the performance enshrined in the student's work. To defend this, I will present cases that illustrate how racial injustice affects the performance that a student's work enshrines.

Take Yuderky. She is an Afro-Latinx Dominican undergraduate student in philosophy at a public university in New York City. She lives in the south Bronx in a one-bedroom apartment with three siblings and her mother. Her mother is an immigrant from the countryside in the Dominican Republic who speaks no English and received only a primary school education. To help make ends meet, Yuderky works forty hours a week while she attends university full time to complete a philosophy BA. And she has attended New York City public primary and secondary schools that underserved her in terms of the rudiments of writing, such as favoring the active rather than the passive voice.¹

Now take Chad. He is a White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant man undergraduate in philosophy at the same public university in New York City. He lives in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in a three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with his one sibling and parents. His parents provide him more than enough funds so that he can devote as much time as his academic work requires. He attended private primary and secondary schools in Manhattan that played a crucial role in the development of his capacity to write clear prose.

Yuderky and Chad are in the same upper-level ethics course with Professor Smith. This course involves a seven-to-ten-page term paper in which they defend a thesis. Professor Smith clearly communicates to students of this class what is expected in terms of clarity and rigor. He also makes himself available to discuss paper topics and arguments during his office hours, which he holds at 2 p.m. twice a week.

Professor Smith gives Yuderky's essay a grade of A-. Her essay is good, but not worthy of an A+ in his eyes because it does not satisfy the criteria it must meet to receive an A+. On the other hand, Chad's essay receives a grade of A+ because his essay satisfies these criteria.

Yuderky regularly receives grades of A-, and Chad regularly receives grades of A+. At a faculty meeting, someone asks Professor Smith whether Yuderky or Chad is a "better" student. Smith answers that despite the good quality of Yuderky's work, Chad's is excellent and thus he is a "better" student. Here, Smith judges on the basis of the work that Yuderky and Chad turn in that Chad is a better student. But Smith does not consider how racial injustice affects the philosophical performance that is enshrined in the work that they turn in. I assume that defending a thesis by presenting reasons or premises in an essay and clearly explaining relevant philosophical views is a kind of philosophical performance that can be judged more or less successful and thus more or less "good" according to some academic standard of clarity and rigor. That is, I assume

that the philosophical argument and exposition enshrined in the work that students submit is a kind of performance that can be judged more or less successful.

Professor Smith judges Yuderky's and Chad's performances on the basis of the performance enshrined in the essays they submit. But here Smith judges these performances without considering how racial injustice affects the difficulty of the performance. I assume that if one actor performs an action under more difficult conditions than another actor's outwardly identical performance, then the actor who performs similarly under more difficult conditions exhibits a higher level of skill and thus a better performance.

Take José. He is an archer who hits his target from two hundred feet away in clear and calm conditions. One can evaluate his performance as "good" because he did successfully hit his target from this distance where his success is due to his skill rather than luck.² But now take Marisol. She hits the same target from two hundred feet away, but under foggy and windy conditions, because of her skill rather than luck. One can evaluate her performance as even better than José's performance because the conditions under which she performs it elevate its difficulty. These are external performance conditions that figure into proper judgment of their performances.

But an actor's internal conditions can also affect the difficulty of their performance.³ Famously, Michael Jordan exhibited an extremely high level of skill and successful performance in a game of the NBA finals even though he had an extremely high fever. Each successful sinking of a shot, assist, or steal in this condition can be judged as more difficult and thus "better" than performances by other players not in this condition.

Suppose that Marisol had unwittingly consumed a hallucinogen before she successfully hit her target. If both she and José hit their target from an equal distance, but Marisol is under the influence of a hallucinogenic substance, then Marisol's internal condition elevates the difficulty of her performance in comparison to José's.

Consider how racial injustice affects Yuderky's external condition in terms of the philosophical performance she enshrines in her essay. Racial injustice explains (1) why she must complete her work without quiet in the apartment she shares with her siblings and mother, (2) that wage work consumes the lion's share of her time such that she has comparatively little time to devote to developing her philosophical work, and (3) the comparatively depressed level of preparation she received in primary and secondary schools in terms of the clarity of her writing.

But racial injustice also explains Yuderky's internal condition. Racial injustice explains (1) the level of psychological stress she undergoes as a result of working forty hours a week while attempting to produce high-quality philosophical work,⁴ (2) why she sustains elevated levels of cognitive load due to tracking whether interlocutors misperceive her as not credible or not a knower because of anti-Black Woman prejudices, such as the angry-Black Woman stereotype,⁵ and (3) a generally elevated level of stress that results from

dealing with the possibility of police maltreatment in the south Bronx.⁶

Chad's external and internal conditions are comparatively much better because he benefits from racial injustice. In terms of external conditions, racial injustice explains (1) why he has tranquil environs in which he can complete his philosophical work, (2) why he need not engage in wage work, and (3) why he received ample preparation in primary and secondary schools in terms of the clarity of his writing.

In terms of his internal conditions, racial injustice explains (1) the lack of psychological stress that he faces from having to both engage in wage work and work on philosophy, (2) why he benefits from positive prejudices and stereotypes regarding White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant men,⁷ and (3) why he lacks any significant levels of stress due to worries about police harassment.

THE JUSTICE THESIS

According to the JUSTICE THESIS, the justness of instructors' judgments of student work covary with the degree to which instructors consider racial injustice's effect on student work. I now present a reason that motivates the JUSTICE THESIS.

This reason is what I call the INJUSTICE-PROMOTION REASON. According to this reason, that an instructor errantly judges, because he does not take racial injustice into account, can promote racial injustice. Erring in this way promotes and sustains the disadvantage that Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students suffer as a result of racial injustice.

Take Professor Smith. He errantly judges that Yuderky's work is not as good as Chad's work because he does not take into account how racial injustice affects Yuderky's performance conditions in comparison to Chad's conditions. Suppose that a result of this is that Yuderky will receive a lower grade and thus grade point average, a letter of recommendation with a depressed level of praise and less commitment and guidance from Smith because he thinks Chad has the best odds of gaining admittance to a good graduate program or law school.

Smith's judgment of Yuderky promotes and sustains racial injustice because this judgment sustains Yuderky's disadvantaged position. That Smith does not take racial injustice's effect on Yuderky's performance into account results in the curtailment of her life chances and opportunities.

Here racial injustice curtails her life chances and opportunities through its effect on Smith's judgment of her work and also through its effect on her performance conditions.

Smith's judgment can either maximally contribute to this curtailment, not contribute at all to this curtailment, or form some degree of this curtailment. This degree of curtailment that his judgment comprises will in turn depend on what degree he takes racial injustice to have an effect on Yuderky's performance. Put simply, whether

Smith's judgment comprises racial injustice itself depends on whether he takes into account racial injustice's effect on the target of his judgment.

That Smith errs in judging Chad also promotes and sustains racial injustice, as he does not consider that racial injustice's effect on Chad's performance conditions promotes and sustains the advantage that Chad, as a White student, enjoys as a result of racial injustice. As a consequence of this errant judgment, Chad will receive an elevated grade point average, a letter of recommendation with an elevated level of praise and more commitment and guidance from Smith than Yuderky receives because he thinks that Chad has the best odds of gaining admittance to a good graduate program or law school.

Smith's judgment promotes racial injustice not only in terms of how it shapes external features of Yuderky's and Chad's worlds, such as grade point average and likelihood of admittance to graduate programs, but also in terms of how it affects their internal features, such as their intellectual confidence and abilities. This errant kind of errant judgment is an instance of what Charles Mills calls white ignorance. Someone is in a white ignorant state if she falsely believes or lacks a true belief because of white supremacy, racial injustice, or anti-Black, Indigenous, or Latinx racism.⁸ I assume that this is an instance of white ignorance because the likelihood is infinitesimally small that white supremacy or racial injustice plays no causal role, whether structurally or psychologically, in Smith forming his false judgment.

Suppose that the performance enshrined in Chad's and Yuderky's essays are equally good if one controls for the differences in performance conditions that obtain because of racial injustice. This supposition should put into sharper relief that Chad gains a larger vote of confidence in his intellectual abilities than Yuderky even though their performances are the same. This difference in vote of confidence obtains because of racial injustice and, as a result, Chad unjustly benefits in this internal or self-attitudinal way. Smith's judgment that his essay deserves an A+ is a signal to Chad regarding his intellectual abilities, which not only involves false content, but also promotes racial injustice. On the other hand, Yuderky does not receive a similar vote of confidence in her intellectual abilities that she should receive from Smith because of racial injustice. Smith's judgment that her essay deserves an A- is not only a signal to her regarding her intellectual abilities, but also involves false content that promotes racial injustice. This capacity for Smith's judgment to promote racial injustice is both an example of the causal constructive power of instructors' judgments and an example of how systemic injustice can continue to perpetuate itself.⁹

TWO KINDS OF ERROR

The two cases of instructor error that I have presented both feature errant judgments based on bad information where this information is bad because it lacks inferentially relevant information about how racial injustice relates to students' philosophical performance. But these cases can differ because the political science instructor could poorly base his judgment due to some kind of racist motive while Professor Smith could poorly base his judgment due to

a lack of sensitivity of how this information evidentially relates to his judgment. Put simply, in the former case, the political science instructor's errant judgment largely tracks his antecedent racist attitude about Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, and in the latter case, Smith's errant judgment is largely a result of not properly sensing how racial injustice relates to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students' performance.

Evidence sensitivity is a notion that distinguishes these two cases as instances of two kinds of error. In the political science instructor's case, he errs because he harbors a kind of a racist and thus morally noxious attitude that wholly or largely determines how he judges when it comes to the racial-injustice-information domain. Kristie Dotson points to this phenomenon when she explicates the idea of testimonial smothering.¹⁰ For Dotson, a Black woman suffers testimonial smothering if she truncates some information she would otherwise fully convey due to the testimonial incompetence of her audience.

The case Dotson presents of this phenomenon features a White woman who signals her inability to comprehend information that Black women must raise their Black sons in ways that differ from how White women raise their White sons in the US. That this White woman wittingly or unwittingly antecedently harbors a racist attitude towards Black persons explains why she is testimonially incompetent. In this case of testimonial smothering, this Black-woman speaker anticipates that a racist attitude will result in this White-woman hearer's evidential insensitivity, and as a result, she smothers her own testimony to avoid the consequences of this insensitivity. The political science instructor, like this White-woman hearer, judges in ways that correspond to his racist attitude rather than his evidence.

On the other hand, suppose that Professor Smith does not harbor such a racist attitude and that he errantly judges because he does not properly sense how racial injustice causally relates to the circumstances in which Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students philosophically perform. But Smith is not completely insensitive to this evidence. He acknowledges that racial injustice is relevant when considering, say, how schools are underfunded and how economic opportunities are depressed in Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities even though he does not sense the causal relevance of racial injustice vis-à-vis his students' philosophical performances.

One way to distinguish Smith from the political science instructor is that if someone explained to Smith this evidence's causal relevance, he would likely understand this evidential relation and believe in accordance with it. On the other hand, if someone explained this evidence's causal relevance to the political science instructor, he would not understand it because his racist attitude would in a sense block him from understanding this evidential relation.

This distinction between these two kinds of errors matters because remedies that an education system could develop and implement that do not countenance this distinction will tend to fare poorly in comparison to remedies that do take

this distinction into account. Remedies that countenance this distinction will tend to fare better because instructors like the political science instructor who resist evidence and explanation will tend to not respond to remedies that merely aim to inform instructors of how racial injustice relates to students' performances. But remedies that not only aim to inform, but also disabuse or deal with instructors' racist attitudes will tend to fare comparatively better because instructor populations will tend to consist in both kinds of instructors.

HOW JUSTNESS RELATES TO ACCURACY

According to the analysis that I have presented, justness and accuracy are distinct but related features of instructors' judgments of their students. But to some, these judgment features might seem not to significantly differ and as a result these features improperly figure as distinct in the analysis that I have presented. I will show how these features are analytically distinct even though they tend to run together empirically.

A subject justly judges, on my account, if her judgment is based on evidence that takes into account how injustice shapes the world. For example, if a subject bases their judgment that "Central American persons seeking asylum at the US border should be granted asylum" on evidence that involves how racial injustice and colonialism shape the situations and actions of Central Americans, then this subject justly judges.

A subject accurately judges, on my account, if her judgment is true. For example, if a subject forms a true belief that "Central American asylum seekers should be granted asylum at the US border," then this subject accurately judges.

Even though justness and accurateness will, in point of fact, tend to feature together in subjects' judgments, they can come apart. For example, a US politician could base their judgment that "Central American asylum seekers should be granted asylum" not on any evidence that involves the causal role of injustice and colonialism but rather on evidence that the likelihood of their retaining political office is elevated if the US grants this asylum. Here this US politician's judgment is accurate but not just. So even though these two judgment features tend to obtain together, they need not obtain together.

WHAT SHOULD INSTRUCTORS DO?

The argument that I have presented raises the issue of what instructors should do to avoid promoting racial injustice through their judgments of student work, given that not only do instructors have a limited amount of time to evaluate student work, but that they must also hold students to some kind of generic academic standard.

There are at least two general ways to deal with this issue. The first is structural. The problem of racial injustice's effect on student work is a structural one because US society's structure has been shaped by centuries of racial injustice, white supremacy, and colonialism.¹¹ As a consequence, any remedies that will make a difference for Yuderky over the course of her educational and academic career will affect

the structure of society so that it depresses the degree to which it favors White persons over Black, Indigenous, and Latinx persons.

Decreasing the amount of grading and evaluating that any one instructor must do by increasing the number of instructors, graders, or teachers' assistants is one such structural remedy. The idea here is that if instructors have limited time to evaluate papers and decreasing the number of papers they must evaluate will allow them to take into account how racial injustice might affect the performance of this student, then decreasing the quantity of papers that instructors must grade will result in providing instructors with more time to consider racial injustice's effect on student work. This remedy, of course, is in conflict with the current trend in higher education to diminish the number of tenure-line faculty who instruct students. But that this conflict obtains is a further reason for instructors to push back against this trend.

There are, of course, more general structural remedies, such as shifting the resources that White communities enjoy due to slavery, Indigenous genocide, and colonialism to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities. But I will only focus on structural remedies that, say, higher education administrators can implement.

The second general way to deal with this problem is individualist. The problem of racial injustice's effect on student work is partly an individualist one because individual instructors often do not consider racial injustice's effect on student work. As a consequence, individual instructors can opt to implement policies at the course or classroom level.

One such individualist policy is to implement grading policies that will tend to avert the penalty that Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students face when instructors evaluate their work. Allowing students to resubmit work that can be improved is an example of a policy that may tend to mitigate how Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students' performance conditions differ from White students. This will allow students the room and opportunity to improve their work. The idea here is that if one set of students is disadvantaged in terms of their performance conditions, then allowing them to continually refine their work over multiple attempts will in a sense improve the condition in which they perform philosophical work.

Now reconsider the archery case involving Marisol and José. If Marisol's archery performance conditions are much worse than José's conditions, then allowing her multiple attempts to hit her target will result in her suffering less of a penalty because of her performance conditions. Similarly, if Yuderky's performance conditions are worse than Chad's, then allowing her to submit her essay multiple times will result in her suffering less of a penalty because of her conditions.

One might object that instructors do not have the time and energy to allow students multiple attempts or submissions. Thus, the individual proposal that I present fails. There are at least two responses to this objection. The first response cedes to the objector that indeed instructors have

insufficient time and energy to implement this proposal. But it is just a brute fact that something of value must be exchanged or expended to remedy how Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students' performance conditions generally differ from White students' conditions. White students' performance conditions benefit from unjustly obtained value in terms of free slave labor,¹² opportunities gained due to Jim Crow and redlining policies,¹³ and expropriating of Indigenous land and exploitation of Latin American resources through colonialism.¹⁴ As a consequence, remedying these conditions will take the expending of this value that the White power structure enjoys. There are no free lunches here.

A second response to this objection is that this objector merely points to facts that motivate structural solutions to this problem. Instructors will only be in a position to implement policies that allow them to account for this problem if the White power structure introduces value in terms of instructor salary and wages into the higher education system so that instructors can implement these policies at the individual level across the education system.

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Paulo Freire's conscientização: Mindful Awareness and Trust

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In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Paulo Freire explains how an important aspect of anyone's liberation is the process of conscientização, becoming aware of both external oppressive dynamics such as sexism, racism, and how each of us has internalized these oppressive patterns. Freire noticed that in the attempt to facilitate another person's liberation (their realization of their own agency and freedom) we are often met with resistance. This resistance comes from the oppressive patterns we have all internalized, and Freire suggests that, as teachers, we ought to believe in people's ability to come into their own power. However, he also warns us to be distrustful of their internalized oppressive patterns. The following is an extension of Freire's views and his encouragement to trust others in ways that recognize the challenges of internalized oppression. I employ this approach through the practice of mindfulness to trust the process of our own or another's authenticity.

1. FREIRE'S WORK

Myra Bergman Ramos translates conscientização as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."¹ According to Denis Collins, a biographer of Freire, this critical awareness entails developing a type of political awareness or a conscious attitude of the oppressive dynamics in our society and relationships.²

There are several elements in the process of conscientização:

1. A person recognizes their own agency.
2. The person realizes that they are able to give shape to their life, to contribute to their culture, and create knowledge and history.
3. Through the process of conscientização, the person rejects authoritarian relationships.

When Freire shared conscientização with the peasants of Northeast Brazil, he began by creating the conditions by which his students could come to recognize their own

agency. Freire describes this first step as the difference between being an object (a thing) and a subject (a person). Once a person recognized their own agency, Freire emphasized that human history and culture is given shape by the decisions that each human being makes, so that each one of us has the ability to give shape to our own lives, create knowledge, and make history. While conscientização allows us to become aware of the oppressive dynamics we have internalized, the internalization of our oppressors is an obstacle in the process of conscientização. Freire rejects authoritarian relationships due to their oppressive nature, not only for those who are obviously oppressed, but also for the oppression the oppressors experience in the process of oppressing others.

In the early 1960s, Brazil's law required that a person be literate in order for her to vote. Freire taught Brazilian peasants how to read and write, and they gained the right to vote, but the peasants Freire worked with were not only marginalized people, but much worse. They saw themselves as being for others, not for themselves. Their social context had made the primary purpose of their agency to carry out their master's wishes. The phrase *criado mudo* in modern-day Portuguese, means "nightstand," and remains a telling example of how former slaves were perceived by their masters, and how they came to think of themselves.³ Their economic and political conditions and their experiences with others had conditioned these peasants to see themselves not as men and women (subjects), but as objects that existed to serve another. For this reason, Freire chose not only to teach literacy classes, but more importantly, to create the conditions where people could become aware of their own agency as human beings.

Freedom for Freire means the right of every human being to become more human.⁴ The notion of what it means to trust people but distrust the oppressor in them means that each one of us has developed patterns of oppression against ourselves and others. These patterns of oppression limit our freedom and the freedom of others, even when the external conditions are not themselves oppressive. For example, if I have a disability, and I have internalized the idea that accommodations for my disability lessen the worth of my effort, then I won't ask for accommodations to be made for my disability. In this example, I have internalized one oppressive pattern that discriminates against people with disabilities. Even if employers were willing to accommodate me, I choose not to ask for accommodations because of my internalized belief that I should be able to work under "normal" conditions. Given that changing the external conditions is not enough to end oppressive patterns, Freire worked to create both the external and internal conditions for people to be free from oppression. Our becoming aware of the different ways in which we are conditioned to behave is part of the process of conscientização and our deepening freedom.

Also important for my argument is Freire's distinction between the "humanist" and "humanitarian" approaches to helping others. Freire uses Erich Fromm's biophilic and necrophilic descriptions from his book *The Heart of Man* (1967). Fromm draws a distinction between those of us who feel the need to help in order to control the

circumstances, or the people we are helping, and those of us who help by allowing the circumstances and people to be what they may be. Fromm calls those who help out of the need to control “necrophilic,” because our need to feel a sense of control is so strong that we inadvertently deny life’s possibilities. Fromm calls the helpers who allow people and life to be what they may be “biophilic.” Fromm characterizes biophilic helpers as loving and trusting of both life’s processes and the ability of people to come through on their own.

Although both the humanitarian and the humanist mean well, they are not the same, and their approaches do not achieve the same results. Freire was critical of humanitarian help because although this approach supported the marginalized, it also robbed those being helped of the opportunity to exercise their own agency to improve their own condition. As he puts it, “Handing out help to someone robs that person of the conditions for achieving one of her deepest needs—responsibility.”⁵ The best help we provide to others is the type of help that promotes the autonomy of the person or group being helped. Rather than imposing what we believe is the right way to solve problems, Freire invites us to engage in dialogue, for which it is necessary that we cultivate a trusting sensibility, a willingness to learn, the willingness to take risks, to love, and allow others to be. Trust is a necessary condition. Freire made it clear that no one can educate another person. Only a person with a humanist approach who trusts in the potential of her students can create the conditions for dialogue so that she and her students may learn together. Similarly, no one can liberate another. Only someone who has a humanist approach and who trusts the potential of the people she is working with is capable of co-creating the conditions for others and herself to grow in freedom.

Freire calls for trust in ways that recognize the challenges of internalized oppression. According to Freire, Ernesto Che Guevara was a model revolutionary who fought alongside his people rather than liberating them externally. Che lived with the peasants he fought for. He understood their context and was guided by a sense of love. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire comments on the advice Che gives to his friend, Patojo, when Patojo decided to go back to Guatemala to help liberate his country.

This is what Che wrote about their last conversation: “I just strongly recommended three things: constant mobility, constant mistrust, and constant vigilance. Mistrust, at the beginning. Mistrust even your own shadow, mistrust the friendly peasants, the informants, the guides, the contacts; mistrust everything until an area has been liberated.”⁶ Regarding Che’s advice to Patojo, Freire writes, “In this way, when Guevara draws the revolutionary attention to the need to ‘always mistrust—mistrust the peasant that adheres himself to the revolutionary movement, mistrust the pathway guide, and even one’s own shadow,’ he is not breaking the fundamental dialogical condition. He is only being realistic.”⁷ Freire believed this mistrust is realistic because peasants undergo a type of confusion through the conscientização process. He writes:

Confidence in the masses of oppressed people cannot be a naïve type of trust. Leaders must trust in the potentialities of the masses and not treat them as objects the leaders can use to reach their own goals. A leader must trust that the oppressed can seek their own liberation, but always mistrust the ambiguous nature of the oppressed. To mistrust the oppressed is not to mistrust them as men, but rather to mistrust the oppressor internalized within them... Thus as long as the oppressed are more their internalized oppressor than they are themselves, their natural fear of freedom may lead them to denounce not so much their oppressive reality but rather the revolutionary leadership.⁸

This description of the moment of confusion which the oppressed undergo and which they are not be able to overcome and may lead them to denounce the revolutionary leader is not unique to oppressed peasants, but actually common to all people who have internalized any patterns of violence and oppression. Freire describes this moment as a type of confusion that is played out by the inner struggle experienced between a person’s freedom wanting to assert itself and the internalized oppressor.

According to Freire, both trust and distrust are needed when facilitating the conditions for conscientização. Freire warns his readers to distinguish between the person/student that they are helping and the oppressor this person has internalized. He recommends that we trust the person/student, but distrust the person’s internalized oppressor. This is an important distinction, and Freire’s warning is helpful insofar as it sheds light on the difference between the person and the person’s internalized oppressive patterns. It is important to point out, however, that Freire chose an extreme case to explain the difference between the person and the person’s internalized oppressor. Given the context of combat, Freire agrees with Che that before an area is liberated, the revolutionary must be “realistic” and mistrust the peasants.

Freire’s example is problematic because, while it is true that some of us may need to keep the distinction between a person and that person’s internalized oppressive patterns at the forefront of our experience, a combat zone and a classroom are two very different environments. Surely both contexts entail people who have internalized patterns of oppression, but Freire’s analogy does not hold, given that we cannot draw the same conclusions regarding how to behave towards a stranger in combat and one of our students in our classroom. If we are helping to liberate people within a territory that has been occupied by oppressive forces and the threat of imminent death is one of our considerations, then it may indeed be crucial for us to mistrust the oppressive patterns they have internalized, but if we use Freire’s pedagogy to share, learn, and create knowledge with our students, we may want to consider a different approach.

2. TRUST IN THE STUDENT AND THE PROCESS

In his *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey suggests that the teacher’s role is to make use of her broader perspective to help the student explore her inclinations

and foster them for her healthy development as an adult. As teachers, we are in a position to look at people the way they want to see themselves (a writer, a nurse, a free man or woman), and insofar as we see them this way, they come to see themselves this way, too, because when they look at themselves through our eyes, they see themselves as the person they aim to become.⁹ The privilege we have as teachers and helpers comes in part from trusting our student's ability to figure things out for themselves on their own time.

Freire's advice to distrust the internalized oppressor is appropriate in certain contexts, but not all. He chose Che Guevara's example as a case in point and then generalized it to all other situations, but not all of us are doing the work of conscientização in the middle of a combat zone within occupied territories. Most of us work in physical classrooms and, more and more these days, virtual classrooms through some type of learning management system, where the threat of imminent death is not something we must contend with. It is certainly important to acknowledge that those we work with, including ourselves, have a variety of internalized oppressive patterns such as sexism, agism, classism, ableism, homophobia, racism, etc., which do at times influence our behavior.

In agreement with Freire, I suggest to simultaneously trust our students while distrusting the oppressive patterns our students may have internalized. There is harm in distrusting our students as students, because when we mistrust those we wish to help, our approach devolves into being humanitarian and necrophilic. This is theoretically inconsistent with Freire's and Fromm's preference for a biophilic approach to helping, because the mistrust we feel in our students' process of authenticity causes us to feel the need to control the process and outcome. Our mistrust causes us to view the peasant in Che Guevara's example, or the student in our classroom, as someone we want to "help," "liberate," or "educate." Mistrust precludes us from seeing ourselves and others as the freedom-seeking beings that we are, as well as from further developing a sense of confidence and solidarity with others. Demanding that others be authentic, or become liberated, are not acts of love. These are necrophilic acts caused by our lack of trust and respect for the decisions of others. To educate and liberate from without, to aim to "fix" another person, besides the important fact that it does not work, is to attempt to colonize another human being, to control them and make them subject to our desires, good intentions notwithstanding.

In her article "Four Ways to (Re)consider Facilitating Discussions on Race and Social Justice," Lindsey R. Swindall recommends cultivating trust as one of the conditions for facilitating any discussion on social justice issues.¹⁰ Swindall quotes an observation made by James Baldwin in his 1964 essay "Nothing Personal," where Baldwin points out how "talking with Americans is usually extremely uphill work. We are afraid to reveal ourselves because we trust ourselves so little."¹¹ Swindall facilitates conversations on civil rights and African American history throughout the US. Her work has been supported by Humanities New York and the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. In order to

build trust, Swindall recommends facilitators of discussions on social justice issues begin by taking a few moments to reflect on our own relationship to privilege and how our background and our experiences have informed our perspectives on these issues. She also recommends that we ask ourselves what our goals for the discussion are, both for the individual and the group as a whole, as well as for us to consider our fears about leading discussions. Swindall recommends taking some time to think through these questions in order for us to come into the conversation, not as someone with all of the answers, but rather as someone who is willing to engage and grapple with the difficult questions and issues with honesty. Swindall recommends beginning the discussion by sharing about oneself. This need not be a lengthy biography, but simply some of our background and the reasons we do the work we do. She points out how allowing ourselves to be vulnerable in the discussion space is key to creating a space where others feel safe. If possible, she also recommends pairing up with another facilitator who comes from a different background but who shares similar goals. In her case, she works with Grant Cooper, an African American stand-up comedian and artist. Co-facilitating is a great way to generate trust with our audience or our students because we begin the conversation on the basis of trust from the co-facilitator relationship.

Trust has many layers, and time is on our side if we have patience, commitment, and respect for those whose trust we wish to earn. Listening closely is a skill that also helps to develop trust. Listening means not only allowing others to speak but being present, listening for cues such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and in my case as a mindfulness teacher, listening closely for the quality of their breath—listening to hear if my students are breathing with ease as they speak or if they are holding their breath. All of these cues are indicative of how my students are feeling. It also helps to have been teaching for some time and to have a reputation. When our former and current students trust us, it becomes easier for the new students coming into our classroom to feel they can also trust us.

3. MINDFULNESS AND CONSCIENTIZAÇÃO

Pedagogy of the Heart (1997) was one of the last books that Freire authored. He wrote it thirty years after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). During this time, Freire's understanding of conscientização widened:

Consciousness of, an intentionality of consciousness does not end with rationality. Consciousness about the world, which implies consciousness about myself in the world, with it and with others, which also implies our ability to realize the world, to understand it is not limited to a rationalistic experience. This consciousness is a totality—reason, feelings, emotions, desires; my body, conscious of the world and myself, seizes the world toward which it has an intention.¹²

Towards the end of his life, conscientização became for Freire, not only a political awareness, and not merely a rational matter, but also a matter of awareness of one's body and emotions. In this section, I would like to share

some of the elements of my work with law enforcement, and how our team combines the practice of mindfulness with Freire's latter understanding of conscientização with our students.

For the last six years, I have worked for the United States Department of Justice, more specifically for US Pretrial Services and US Probation. My work entails meeting three times a week with two local groups, Sendero, a federal re-entry program for returning citizens, and Adelante, a federal diversion program. Both Sendero and Adelante are initiatives of Federal Judge Frank Montalvo. There are then two different teams, Sendero (re-entry) and Adelante (diversion). Both teams are comprised of the US attorneys (prosecution), federal public defense attorneys, counselors, US probation officers, US pretrial officers, three philosophers, a systems engineer, a doctoral student in education, two social workers, a magistrate judge, and the federal judge.

After our students serve their sentence, they are released by the Bureau of Prisons, but they are still under supervision for a number of months or years. The time between prison and freedom is called probation. Sendero, the re-entry program, aims to help people transition from prison into our community and to ultimately reduce the rate of recidivism. Adelante, the diversion program, is for people who have pled guilty to felony charges, but have not yet been sentenced. When the Adelante participants complete this diversion program, their case is dismissed, which means they are not sentenced, and no felony charges show up on their record.

I can only begin to share with you how significant these re-entry and diversion initiatives are for the El Paso-Juárez community. Given our location on the US-Mexico border and our proximity to the state of New Mexico, El Paso has roughly 1,300 ongoing federal cases in pretrial, custody, and supervision. These are cases that cross state or national borders. Also, El Paso is 80 percent Hispanic, and it is a well-known fact that incarceration rates are the highest among people of color. Both of these programs give people a second chance, and this is important, because once a person enters the correctional system, it becomes nearly impossible for them to get out of the system and reintegrate into society to live a productive and meaningful life.¹³ Statistically, the recidivism rate in the US is roughly 80 percent within the first five years.¹⁴ Also, when children grow up in households where a member of the family is imprisoned, they are that much more likely to follow in their same footsteps. Incarceration then becomes a never-ending cycle of systematic imprisonment for individuals and their children.¹⁵ The following are well-known facts: The US has had the highest incarceration rate in the world since 2002.¹⁶ Despite being only 13 percent of the overall US population, 40 percent of those who are incarcerated are Black. Latinos represent 16 percent of the overall population but 19 percent of those who are incarcerated. On the other hand, Whites make up 64 percent of the overall population but account for only 39 percent of those who are incarcerated.¹⁷ It is estimated that one in three Black males, and one in six Latino males will go to prison at some point during their life. By contrast, the rate for White male incarceration is one out of every seventeen.¹⁸ The rates of

incarceration for women are as follows: one in eighteen Black women, one in forty-five Latina women, and one in 111 White women will be incarcerated at some point during their life.¹⁹

To better engage with my students, I received training from Rishikesh Yog Peeth in Rishikesh India, where I earned a yoga teacher certificate. I also trained with the Prison Yoga Project in 2014. The Prison Yoga Project is based out of San Quentin and, as the name indicates, we were trained to teach yoga—the ancient Indian physical, philosophical and spiritual tradition—to prison inmates. I was also trained by the Prison Mindfulness Institute in 2014 to facilitate and share the practice of meditation with incarcerated adults. I have spent considerable time in India, training in yoga, living, working, and teaching. I have also trained and taught martial arts for the last fifteen years.

I work the closest with Dr. Juan Ferret, a fellow philosopher and founder and executive director of The Philosophic Systems Institute, Maria de los Angeles Perez Piza, a systems engineer and doctoral student of education, and Jules Simon, a fellow philosopher and big helper. Juan is a visionary, and he is the model teacher I write of in this article. He confidently trusts in his students, in the best in people, and the future we can create together. The four of us teach philosophy and share the practice of mindfulness three times a week with our students. We are Freireans at heart and in practice. This means we work with everyone. Besides working with our students, we also work with federal law enforcement officials at various levels. We have conducted several philosophy and mindfulness workshops for law enforcement officers including pretrial officers, probation officers, counselors, defense attorneys, prosecutors, the US Chief of Probation for the Western District of Texas, and two federal judges. Just as with our students, we share the importance of mindfulness and engage in philosophical discussions of justice, freedom, and identity in order to bring about positive changes in our system of justice, one person at a time.

Although mindfulness is everywhere these days, meditation is an ancient practice that goes back at least 2,500 years. According to Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."²⁰ Mindfulness is the *practice* of observing what we are feeling and thinking as we are feeling and thinking it.

The non-judgmental part of Zinn's definition is particularly important for my extension of Freire's work. There are two aspects to the non-judgmental part of Zinn's definition. First, I simply notice that I feel a certain way, irritated for instance, without judging my feeling of irritation as being either right or wrong. I am simply feeling irritated, just as a person may feel sleepy or hungry, which are neither right or wrong. They are simply different feelings a person may feel. Second, once I notice that I am irritated, I choose to do something helpful for myself and others about this. What does it mean to choose to do something helpful for myself and others? Without a mindfulness practice, I may not notice that I am irritated, and unaware of my own irritation, I might blame others for how I am feeling and ask

them to behave differently so that I may feel better. When a person practices mindfulness, they notice they are irritated and address the source of irritation in a helpful, non-oppressive way. Here is a concrete example: One of our students shared with us that he had recently seen a man driving his ex-girlfriend's car. He shared how he noticed the physiological sensations of anger, possessiveness, jealousy, and the thoughts that come along with those feelings. Once he realized he was feeling possessive and angry he took a step back to breathe and reflect that there really was no good reason for him to choose to continue to feel this way. He chose to instead feel grateful for the years they had spent together and chose to wish her well. Besides thinking differently about what it means to have authority, our students' transformation allows them to reject authoritarian relationships.

The practice of mindfulness may be seen as an extension of Freire's conscientização because, through the practice of mindfulness, our students become aware of the oppressive patterns they have internalized. They then choose not to act out of the oppressive pattern but in ways that bring about their own freedom and the freedom of others. Thus, we are able to trust our students while distrusting the oppressive patterns they have internalized.

According to the Mayo Clinic, a practice of mindfulness helps to decrease anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, physical and emotional pain, emotional reactivity, and addictive behaviors.²¹ Practicing mindfulness helps to increase and support emotion regulation, empathy, self-compassion, positive relationships, positive parenting, our ability to focus, and cognitive flexibility.²² Through a mindfulness practice, we develop the ability to notice the thoughts we are thinking as we are thinking them, and notice the feelings we are feeling as we are feeling them so that with practice we are able to choose thoughts and feelings that are helpful to us and thus diminish our suffering.

Many if not most of our students have a history of trauma. The trauma often goes back to childhood and often continues through adolescence when they first enter the correctional system as youth in juvenile probation. A series of factors contribute to their trauma. These include parents who are incarcerated and unable to raise them as children and abuse they experience at home or foster homes, often at the hands of uncles, older brothers, grandfathers, or the mother's boyfriend, and, once imprisoned, at the hands of other inmates or abusive correctional officers. Besides the trauma that they have personally experienced, there is also the abuse of others that they have had to witness: mothers beaten by or shot at by boyfriends, family members and friends who have gone missing or who have been stabbed, shot, or raped in front of them.

The series of traumatic experiences compound and go untreated for years. Some of us cope through traumatic experiences by becoming abusive ourselves. Growing up in abusive authoritarian environments leads many of us to believe this is just how life is, and we do to others what they have done to us. Some of us numb overwhelming emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear through the use

of drugs. Some of us survive traumatic experiences through reactive patterns of behavior, such as post-traumatic stress. Unbeknown to us, our body develops triggers that activate the sympathetic nervous system and override our cognitive ability. Our bodies are hijacked by our primal need to survive and we find ourselves habitually reacting in ways that are not helpful for us or those around us.

A mindfulness practice allows us to explore different and deeper types of freedom. We come to understand that freedom is much more than not being locked up. Our students share with us how at times they seem to be held hostage by their thoughts, feelings, and impulses which compel their behavior. They also share moments of victory over their impulses and patterns of reactivity. They notice their anxiety swell as they find out that their sister has sepsis, their brother goes missing for two weeks, or their friend overdoses. They share the accomplishment of noticing where their thoughts go and of being able to observe the thoughts as thoughts: The achievement of being able to take a deep breath and go on with their day; the fulfillment of being able to walk away from a fight at work when an argument got heated and their co-worker squared off; the pride of self-mastery over their impulses after a client punched them in the mouth, and they were able to observe the physiological sensations of their heart pounding, the heat and tension in their body, and still have the presence of mind to self-regulate their emotions to deescalate situations responsibly. Together, we learn that choosing is not only whether to go back to school now or wait until the fall, but that our agency goes all the way down to the level of choosing to think one thought over another, choosing to feel one feeling over another. This awareness of ourselves is liberating because it allows us to notice when we are triggered, notice our old reactive patterns, the sometimes violent and hurtful habits we've had to develop to survive and instead use our thoughts and feelings as information for us to make the best decision for ourselves and those around us.

The process of transformation that takes place in our students' lives includes the elements in the process of conscientização, namely, (1) a person recognizes their own agency, (2) the person realizes they are able to give shape to their life, to contribute to their culture, and to create knowledge and history, and, (3) through the process of conscientização, the person rejects authoritarian relationships. Through a practice of mindfulness, our students are able to embody a nuanced experience of what it means for a human being to have a choice. Often when they first sign up for our class, they are angry, impatient, and resentful. They often believe they have been dealt a bad hand, others have done them wrong, that they are a victim. Often, they justify their attitude by pointing at the unfortunate events in their life. The recognition of their agency does not happen overnight. It takes weeks or months of us earning their trust. It takes patience, love, and a good sense of humor. We are not always successful, and sometimes our students prefer to go back to prison or abscond. But, more often than not, after several months of being in our classroom, they come to realize that they can choose, and that they have in fact been choosing all along. The awareness of their decision-making abilities deepens

as they realize that they had been sleep-walking through life, unconsciously choosing but choosing nonetheless. They realize they have the choice to think differently about the events in their past, that they can choose the thoughts they think, and choose the emotions they feel. Consequently, this awareness of their agency allows them to think differently about what it means to have authority. Whereas “authority” had been a word that meant disrespect, oppression, and abuse, it slowly transforms to become a source of personal power and confidence as they realize they can choose to think differently about their past and the choices they make at the everyday level to ultimately become the authors of their life. In this way, things and experiences do not happen to them; instead, they are the creative agents that give shape to their day and their life.

Once our students realize their own agency and the power they have to give shape to their life, they also reject authoritarian relationships. Authoritarian ways of relating to people fall off like withered leaves from a growing branch. Once we understand that we give shape to our moment-to-moment experience, our lives and our well-being are no longer subject to how other people behave or how situations turn out. We realize that regardless of how others behave or how situations turn out, we are OK because we can always choose how to think and feel about everything. Hence, the need to control how situations turn out and the need to manipulate or control others stops.²³

I must say here that each one of our students is different. I have generalized in order to give an account of how we use mindfulness in the process of their transformation and conscientização. Many of them have come to our classroom to teach us far more than what we have shared with them. I have met some of the best and most inspiring people in this journey: Rosa, Alberto, Sofia, Bradley, Jody, Raul, Lizette, Zayra, Jacobo, Saul, you are my heroes. You are each walking proof of the value of trusting ourselves even when others doubt us.

CONCLUSION

It is a mighty heritage, it is the human heritage, and it is all there is to trust. . . . This is why one must say Yes to life and embrace it wherever it is found—and it is found in terrible places; nevertheless, there it is. . . . For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and the children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.

– James Baldwin

I have suggested the possibility of working with Freire’s latter definition of conscientização to include a mindfulness practice and have outlined how this combination has been liberating for our Adelante and Sendero students. The practice is to facilitate a process by which individual people,

including ourselves, become aware of their/our own agency, emotions, thoughts, behavior, reactive patterns, and the ways in which we have become socialized to behave, think of ourselves, and react. A mindfulness practice aligns with Freire’s earlier definition of conscientização and his trust in a process of education whereby we become aware of the ways we have been conditioned to behave and break free from our internalized oppressive patterns.

In her book *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, bell hooks quotes Parker Palmer: “I am fearful. I have fear. But I don’t need to be my fear as I speak to you. I can approach you from a different place in me—a place of hope, a place of fellow feeling, of journeying together in a mystery that I know we share.”²⁴

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 35.
2. Denis Collins, *Paulo Freire: His Life, Works & Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 61.
3. *Criado mudo* in Portuguese means “nightstand” in English. The literal translation of *criado mudo* is “mute servant.”
4. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 44.
5. Freire, *La educación como práctica de la libertad* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1969), 50.
6. Ernesto Guevara, *Obra Revolucionaria*, (Mexico: Ediciones ERA, 1967), 281.
7. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 222.
8. *Ibid.*, 222.
9. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, (New York: The Free Press, 1916), 163.
10. Lindsey R. Swindall, “Four Ways to (Re)consider Facilitating Discussions on Race and Social Justice.” *New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1, (Winter 2021): 373–82.
11. James Baldwin, “Nothing Personal,” *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies*, 6, Article 5, (September 2008), <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs/vol6/iss1/5>, last accessed March 26, 2021.
12. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 94.
13. National Institute of Justice, “Measuring Recidivism,” July 31, 2019, nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/measuring-recidivism.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Taryn Finley, “The Racial Achievement Gap Can’t Close Without Prison Reform, Report Shows,” HuffPost, December 19, 2016, tinyurl.com/kax2h88r.
16. Tyjen Tsai and Paola Scommegna, “U.S. Has World’s Highest Incarceration Rate,” Population Reference Bureau, August 10, 2012, www.prb.org/us-incarceration/.
17. Jamal Hagler, “8 Facts You Should Know About the Criminal Justice System and People of Color,” Center for American Progress, May 28, 2015, www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2015/05/28/113436/8-facts-you-should-know-about-the-criminal-justice-system-and-people-of-color/.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Mindful Staff, “Jon Kabat-Zinn: Defining Mindfulness,” Mindful, January 11, 2017, www.mindful.org/jon-kabat-zinn-defining-mindfulness/.
21. Mayo Clinic Health System, “Mindfulness and Our Mental Health,” February 16, 2015, www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/mindfulness-and-our-mental-health.

22. Ibid.
23. There are many examples I can provide to illustrate how our students reject authoritarian relationships through their process of conscientização. Our student who I mentioned earlier works the graveyard shift as a security guard at a homeless shelter. His client who is a resident at the shelter, suffers from a mental illness which caused him to punch our student in the mouth. Although our student could have easily punched the resident back, he chose not to.
24. bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 197.

INTERVIEW

Where and When to Think with Paulo Freire? A Timely Conversation between Walter Omar Kohan and Jason Wozniak

Walter Omar Kohan

STATE UNIVERSITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Jason Wozniak

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

The following interview took place at Café Lapa, Rio de Janeiro, in the very early days of 2020, just a few days before COVID-19 exploded in Brazil and the US. Jason had translated Walter's book, *Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography*. The interview is included in the appendix of the English edition of the book (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021, pp. 175–87). The conversation, which is not limited to the book, touches on different concepts like life, equality, love, errantry, childhood, and time, crucial not only to Paulo Freire's life and work but to any educational experience and practice.

Jason: We are here today, January 17, 2020, with Walter Omar Kohan, author of the new book *Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography*. The literal translation of the title in Portuguese, *Paulo Freire mais do que nunca—Uma biografia filosófica*, would be: *Paulo Freire More Than Never*.

Walter: Never?

Jason: Is that what we are going to say?

Walter: I thought in English it could be *More Than Ever*.

Jason: So, this is the first question . . .

Walter: (Chuckles)

Jason: Because when we talked at your house, I thought it was *More than Ever*. But you insisted on, *More than Never*. The best English translation would be, *Paulo Freire: Now More than Ever*, in which case, we would add a bit to the title. Do you want to say something about this title choice even though the English title has been changed?

Walter: Yes. I think the original title translated into English is much more interesting than in Portuguese or in Spanish,

even though it is not clear enough to be used as the title of the book in English, and that is why we opted for a simpler title. *More than never*, literally, would be the Portuguese *mais do que nunca*. It is a kind of obvious time. In the sense that any time is more than never because never is no time. So, more than no time is any time. When you say that you could say in English, *now more than never*, it is because it seems that there is something missing if we just say *more than never*. It is not that *more than never* is incorrect, but it could be more natural and obvious if we added a word like in Portuguese we add *hoje* or *agora*.

Jason: Today or now.

Walter: Yes. So *today* or *now more than ever* would be expected. In fact, when I proposed the title *Paulo Freire mais do que nunca* to the Brazilian editor, Rejane Dias, she said that a word was missing. She wanted to say, today, *hoje* more than ever. But I responded that if we include, today or now, we would be relating Paulo Freire to a dimension of time that is *chronos*, which is only one dimension of time, and I would say, more superficial in terms of education. It is obvious that *chronos* is very important in educational institutions. They are, in fact, chronological institutions. Differently, when you just say *more than ever*, it turns into another time. And if *more than never* is any time, then *more than ever* is no time because *ever* is all time. So, more than all time needs to be understood not quantitatively but relating to another dimension of time that, I would say, is a qualitative, intensive, *aionic* dimension. I think that this is the time of true education, or the time of Paulo Freire.

Jason: *Aionic* time?

Walter: Yes, *aionic* time. This is the time that is important for Paulo Freire. For Paulo Freire this sense of time, *aionic* time, is recorded in the bodies and in the spirit of the Brazilian educated-educators. So, it is not about chronology or quantitative time. If the title was *today more than ever*, or *now more than ever*, it would be saying that it is just at this moment, at this chronological time, that Paulo Freire is important. And, of course this is true in the sense that today, here and in many other places, to think with someone like Paulo Freire helps us to put into question the present we are living. It is not untrue that today or now Paulo Freire is important. But the other dimension of time, *aionic*, is even more important or more relevant because it reminds us that, for Freire, education does not merely have to do with chronological time. For him, education has to do with inhabiting the present, a way of experiencing *aion*. Remember that *chronos* has two parts, past and future but no present other than a limit (now or today). And that *aion* is pure present. The *aionic* sense of time is not easy to experience in schools. Quite the contrary, more and more our societies do not provide the spaces to experience this kind of time, a time that suspends chronological time. So teachers are kind of like artists and magicians, offering *aion* as a way of offering a time that is not given in the institution. In any case, in the English edition, we do not have this complexity because we decided on a more simple and direct title.

Jason: You are suggesting, then, the need for a suspension of *chronos* to open up the possibility of *aion*, and that Freire can help us do that.

Walter: Yes. Of course, this suspension of *chronos* is not something that is literal in the sense that there is nothing we can do to stop *chronos*. *Chronos* happens regardless, but maybe the way we relate to it, the importance we give to it, the way it interferes in the way we live our lives, this is something that we can act upon.

Jason: I wanted to follow up on this question with something we talked about beforehand, which is another Greek word for time, *kairos*. I remember that when we spoke before, if you did say, *now more than ever*, there is a certain sense of urgency. *Kairos* has the meaning of urgency to act, to do something in the moment, now. So, I wanted to hear your thoughts on taking *kairos* into consideration.

Walter: Yes, I think that, in fact, *kairos* is also relevant for education and more specifically for the phrase *more than ever*. In a sense, it is also true that at this particular moment and at this opportunity, let us say, it is precisely important to read Freire. It is an opportunity, a special moment, to read Freire because of his potential to help us rethink our now, which is really problematic. And probably, that is why the book has been received with special attention in Brazil, because of the particular historical moment and how Freire has been so undeservedly vilified.

Jason: By the Brazilian government?

Walter: Yes, as you know. The Brazilian government has adopted as part of its platform a main political goal which is to expulse the ideology of Paulo Freire from Brazilian education, as they say. Each and every week the Minister of Education says something bad about Paulo Freire. Three or four weeks ago, we received the results of the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) education worldwide study. The first thing the Minister of Education said was, "Good morning, we have had horrible results at PISA and this is because of Paulo Freire."

Jason: He is the scapegoat.

Walter: Exactly. Everything that is wrong with Brazilian education has to do with Paulo Freire. So, in a sense, you are right, *kairos* is very meaningful also because of the *now* we are living these days. And *Kairos* was also very meaningful for Paulo Freire. He was trying to recover time for people from whom time has been robbed.

Jason: The oppressed?

Walter: Yes, exactly, Freire's attempt was something like searching for their stolen time, that time that the system took from them by excluding them from educational institutions. In a sense, I think, for Paulo Freire *kairos* is always now. It is trying to recover, at any moment, some lost past of the lives who have been robbed of time.

Jason: And maybe, I do not know if you would agree, the now of action would be the acting in the moment to try

and give *aion* or maybe not give, but the opening up of the possibility of *aion* for the people that are constantly forced to live in *chronos* and oppression.

Walter: Exactly, because *aion* is not only the time of education, but *aion* is also the time of art, is also the time of love, is also the time of thinking, of philosophy, and playing. And as you said, *aion* cannot be given, but maybe the role of an educator has to do with creating the conditions so that *aion* could be experienced. Giving time, a lovely double impossibility, as we know from Derrida...something impossible and necessary for educators, I would say.

Jason: *Aion* is also the time of childhood, as you mention in many of your works.

Walter: Exactly, it is a time where we can play, and as a chronological child or a non-chronological child we can put into question the world we live in. And we need *aion* for that. We cannot put into question our world looking at the clock or worried about the calendar.

Jason: You brought up love, childhood, and play, and I want to briefly ask you a question about the five principles that you use as a framework for the book, or a way to think Freire, and as a way to think with Freire. The five principles are life, infancy, errantry, love, and equality. One thing that struck me in the epilogue is that you suggest you are not providing ready-made recipes or formulas to apply these principles, but you did have a nice idea that I think is very Freirean where you say, "What if we experimented in the classroom or in any educational setting, by bringing these principles into play, one for each day of the week?" I thought that this was appropriate also because it brings together theory and practice, something that Freire was adamant about. I am wondering if this is something you would care to add to because you only refer to it at the end of the book.

Walter: First, I want to say something about the word "principle." While I call these terms principles, I would like these terms to be understood as principles only in the sense of beginnings, forces of beginning. I would love to think of them as engines of thinking and of living and not as something that is fixed or the base for something else. It is more in the sense of a beginning or inspiring of practices of emancipatory or liberating education that I understand the word principle.

In the case of Freire, and I think this might make the book different than others on him, usually you find people trying to interpret what Freire means in terms of a topic, a problem, a question, even a book or trying to apply his ideas. What I am trying to do is have a real dialogue with Freire about how his life and thinking might inspire our educational practices. So, in this sense, we can say that I am interested in how we can begin or re-begin to be educators, by thinking with Freire. In this sense, these principles work as starting points for education and educators. In other words, I would love readers of the book to ask questions like: from this principle (life, errantry, etc.) what new educational life can I begin? More extensively: what kind of educational life can I begin practicing by

following these five principles (beginnings)? This is also related to the idea of infancy or childhood and how we can be reborn as educators or re-begin a new life of education. I think that, while writing the last part of the book, I was trying to bring together theory and practice, because, on an unconscious level, I was probably imagining a reader saying, "This is very nice and very inspiring. It has made me think a lot of things, but what has all this to do with practice, and how can I put this into practice?" So, I decided to give a few examples of practice in the epilogue of the book, not meaning for them to be recipes, or reapplied as they are, but as a way to focus on the many times we live our lives in our educational practice in ways that are not faithful to equality, love, and errantry, especially, when we work with children. I wanted to provoke us to consider whether or not we are embodying the ideas we say we value. In other words, to put into question how we tend to inhabit some fixed spaces even when we do not agree with them or we do not realize that we are doing so. How we forget to err more often, we would think.

Jason: To err, in the sense of ...?

Walter: Wander. We usually try to bring students to our knowledge, or at least to a knowledge we think they should know: we want others to move, but we do not move at all. And finally, erring helps us ponder how we educate childhood/infancy. Childhood/infancy is the object of our educational intentions, but we do not listen to childhood/infancy in the same way we expect childhood/infancy listen to us. More than often, we are not sensitive to the strength of childhood/infancy. Because of all this, I suggest in a very concrete way a practice of these principles so that they might really be practical beginnings and put our own practice into question. This is something Paulo Freire was very sensitive too. He makes it clear elsewhere that questioning should not be a mere intellectual game, but the beginning of actual transformation.

Jason: I also thought, because of the way you play with time, one way to translate the word *inícios* in Portuguese which in English means "beginnings", would be "initiative" or "initiate." We often say that we initiate a project, or adventure, and with this in mind, it is compelling that at the end of your book you suggest some ways to initiate some new forms of thinking and practicing education. So really, the end of your book is only the beginning, maybe of erring, and I think that this fits well with the way that you want to rupture *chronos*.

Walter: Yes, and I think this is also why childhood or infancy is the last principle I discuss in the book, because it is a way of realizing that at the end we might also be at the beginning. In a sense, it is a metaphor for what it means to think. I believe that we begin to think when we have a question, which is why I also end the book with questions, because in doing so we might experience the end of the book as a beginning. In a way, there is no real end. We are always beginning (while initiating or finishing), because when we think we are in *aion's* temporality. In this sense, I would like the reader, when she finishes the book, to experience that she has not finished anything, and that in fact she is beginning or initiating something.

Jason: Which is appropriate if we think back to the Portuguese title where it is not now, and now only, that we need Freire, but always.

Walter: Exactly, because in a sense, if you have to imagine a representation of this kind of time, I would say that *chronos* is a line where there is no way to repeat one moment. *Chronos* just passes: once you have experienced one moment in *chronos* there is no way to live it again. Differently, *aion* is a circle. You are experiencing a moment or a present that is recurring. It comes again and again. Repetition, free and complex, from which difference emerges, as Deleuze would say.

Jason: We have been talking about time and temporality, but I want to ask you a question about place. Or, you could say, we have discussed: why Freire today?—which is a time question. But I also want to ask, especially for English readers or people living in the English-speaking world, a place question of: where and why? I think you have pointed to one response to this question, and it is quite clear in the book why at this current moment in Brazil it is so important to resurrect Freire, to defend him, and to let him inspire again. But as we know, unfortunately, Brazil is not the only place where authoritarian tendencies like those exhibited by the Bolsonaro government exist. Part of what you highlight, and it is done beautifully in the book, is Freire as a wanderer, as a journeyer, traveling all his life to so many different places. Maybe, you could say something about where and why we might find Freire useful, helpful, or inspiring today.

Walter: It occurs to me now that something that might be interesting to think about in regards to your question is that there are several Greek words for time. We have named them above: *chronos*, *aion*, and *kairos*. But there are also more than one word for space. We have the most commonly used *topos*, but we also have, for example, the word *khora*, which is a word that Plato uses in the *Timaeus* when he is describing the birth of the world. It is a kind of intensive space. In a sense, I am thinking now that there is a kind of parallel. *Topos* is a kind of more superficial or extensional way to answer the question of "where Freire?". We could say that the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Brazil, and Latin America, in general, are particular places where Paulo Freire is important to dialogue with today because of the neoliberal public policies that dominate, especially in public education. We all suffer from policies that are completely sensitive to big private corporations, and insensitive to the public and the excluded from the system. So, wherever the public system is suffering, and wherever teachers are forced to live a more effective, productive, and unthoughtful life, this book has a place. But we could also speculate that, possibly, these principles are not just about a given *topos*. Perhaps, they are not related to just this or that space, but instead, they are tied to a more intensive space, like *khora* would suggest: they might be meaningful anywhere, or everywhere, for any teacher desiring a new beginning for her educational life. In this sense, Paulo Freire might be meaningful everywhere an educator wants to deepen her relationship with what she is doing and how she is living. Doing so, she puts into question what it means to be an educator, or to live an

educational life, and what kind of practice and relationship between education and the outside world should be cultivated. So, we might say that Freire is everywhere where Freire inspires an intensity of inhabiting the space of being an educator, or living an educational life.

Jason: Then, would you maybe say, and this is just me thinking out loud, that Freire as an educator, or someone who educates with these principles that you mentioned, can open up *khora*, a place to inhabit in a certain nurturing way, *khora*?

Walter: What you are saying is interesting because, thought of in this way, *khora* is a condition but, in another sense, it is like a result or a consequence. We might say the same of *aion*, because if we think of ourselves as capable of producing beginnings, we are also capable of producing *aion*. It might be very meaningful to say that *khora* is a kind of condition, but, at the same time, it might emerge as a new form of inhabiting space if we relate to our practice through these beginnings or principles.

Jason: One of my friends (Derek Ford) in our field, philosophy of education, writes a lot about Henri Lefebvre and space. He taught me something that I think is helpful in this case. For Lefebvre, space is produced and produces. So maybe, in that sense too, Freirean ideas and way of living, traveling, and loving are both produced, and produce.

Walter: Precisely. And I think it is also possible to experience education like that. The more you experience an intensive time and intensive space, the more this kind of practice produces new spaces and new relationships to spaces and to time. You might also say new rhythms, in the way we experience time, and maybe new rhythms in the way we experience space also.

Jason: It seems, too, that it is always a process. Again, we go back to it not being linear, but it is always something constantly in motion being produced and producing, and we do not always know what. What is nice about the *khora* idea, too, is that it is hospitable to that which will come.

Walter: Exactly.

Jason: I think you suggest that Freire was very much open to in his travels and his teaching. Whoever and whatever would come, hospitality was granted.

Walter: Yes. And something just came to my mind that I do not want to lose, because I think it is nice. Freire speaks about experiencing three exiles. The first one was from his mother's uterus, when she was pregnant with him, and he was exiled to the world. This is literally *khora*, which is powerful. Also, I was thinking about your comment just now, and perhaps it is how I am phrasing it that gives the impression of an either/or, but it is not.

Jason: Rather than an either/or, we are dealing with a both/and....

Walter: Right. You are both produced and producing, rather than an either/or.

Jason: I want to ask you one more question that leads us, I think, into the book. It has to do with hope and struggle. Freire has a very famous book translated as *Pedagogy of Hope*. He is obviously known for his continuous and never-ending struggle. There is a phrase that you and I have talked about on many occasions from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that I cannot exactly translate, but rather rephrase and make plural instead of singular, which is in Portuguese *se temos esperança, precisamos lutar e se lutarmos com esperança, podemos esperar*. In Portuguese, there is a nice wordplay with *esperar*, which can mean hope and wait. One way to translate this would be, "If we have hope, then we must fight, and if we fight with hope, then we can wait." I want to ask you about this because I think it is important to keep in mind when considering both Freire and education. We are facing so much, not you and I *per se*, but the world is in so much danger, and there exists so much oppression, that people become cynical and want to give up. Or, there are people that say, "We can't wait. We need an immediate response." And this makes perfect sense, because there are so many people suffering through injustices that need to end immediately. But it seems to me that Freire is teaching us something different here. He seems to be teaching us that we always have to fight if hope exists, and hope dies last. But also, that we have to commit to the long-term struggle, and understand that we will not change things right away. Emancipation does not come in one second. We have to wait, and we have to cultivate and do education work. I think, too, that that is also very important. Especially, with the world that we live in with technology, and how we want everything right away. So, I wonder what you think about this line.

Walter: Yes, I agree. Your quote makes me remember a quote from another prominent Latin-American, Ernesto "Che" Guevara: "The only defeat is not to continue fighting." What both Freire and Guevara seem to be saying is that what is important is not the result, or the achievements of our lives, but the way we commit ourselves in fighting for our ideals, a fairer, beautiful, and joyful world for every human being and not for just a few. And there is no term for this. If we commit ourselves to such solidarity, in such a coherent, and inventive way, then we should not be as concerned about the results. We can expect with hope. There is also another expression close to the one that you mention, where Freire teaches us, inspired by Amílcar Cabral, "to impatiently be patient."

Jason: What would that be in Portuguese?

Walter: It could be *ser pacientemente impacientes o a paciência da impaciência*.

Jason: The impatience of patience. What would that mean in terms of the prior phrase I mentioned?

Walter: I could place patience and *esperar* on the same side, no? We need to be impatient, to not passively accept things as they are, but we also need to be patient if we confront the order of things accordingly.

Jason: Patience and waiting.

Walter: And on the other side, we could place impatience and fighting. In this sense, if you say we need to be patient, or we need to wait, then it might be imagined that we do not need to do anything, and that it is just about expecting another time to arrive through patience or waiting. But, when Freire adds the impatience or the fighting, he is saying, as you said, we should not displace many expectations onto another time, but we can be patient under some conditions. It has to do with not just sitting here to let the time pass. It is more of an active attitude, to intervene and take an active position so that this other time can emerge. And this is related, I think, to many other thinkers in Latin America. So, it is not about expecting something, and it is not about gaining something, but it is about how we relate to the fighting that we need to do. So, it is about how we experience time. Again, I think, it is not about *chronos* and it is not about results, but it is about how we live our lives. In the case of Freire, how we live our educational lives. This, for me as an educator, is very inspiring. The educational reality sometimes looks so desperate, so difficult to transform, so hard to overcome that lack of hope is very close on the road. But it seems to me that the philosophical life of Paulo inspires us to never give up! And maybe today, in such a difficult global situation, this is meaningful here in Brazil, and elsewhere. Finally, I would add someone very different, and from another context, Heraclitus, said, "If we do not expect what should not be expected (what it is impossible to be expected), we are not going to reach it, for it is hard to be sought out and with no path" (fragment 18). The word he uses to say "with no path" is *aporos*, related to *aporia*.

Jason: Without place.

Walter: Without place, exactly. With no path, no way.

Jason: With no way, yeah.

Walter: No path. And this is very interesting because it seems like a contradiction. He doesn't say, "If we don't expect the unexpected." It is not that. He is saying, if we don't expect the *unexpected*, what we shouldn't expect, what seems impossible to be expected. This is connected with Freire, because these days people say that politics is the realm of the possible. And I would say that Freire would say that politics is the realm of the impossible, of utopia, no place. So that we expect what should not be expected, and we turn an impossibility into a need.

Jason: Would you say that about education, too?

Walter: Yes, precisely. The educator is not someone who looks for the possible. The possible is in *chronos*. The transformative educator, the Freirean educator, is someone who expects the impossible because this is what we need, at least, in Latin America. The impossible lives in *aion*. It is not the possible. It is the impossible. Some people say that transformation is impossible, or it seems to be impossible, but it is the only life, an educational life worth living.

Jason: And that is why we have to keep fighting.

Walter: I would say that. Even though it seems that our numbers/forces are very few and not strong. Even if we feel alone and that the enemy is so powerful, and it seems impossible. There are so many examples in education where, let's say, a standard educator would say, no, I cannot do anything with this child. It's impossible. She is not capable. No way, she doesn't want to. She cannot learn. And then another more loving, errant, childlike educator enters with a different attitude, one who says that the person perceived as not capable, is equally capable, and then everything changes, a "new" student, the unexpected emerges. Or something happens to the standard educator in that she herself changes, her attitude shifts, and everything changes. This has to do also with the principles. If you assume that everyone or anyone is capable, then the impossible tends to be the only thing that is real and that deserves to be fought for.

Jason: Then maybe, if we come back to the principles, and if we fight in education and in the world to live a life of dignity with equality, with love, errantry, if we travel, we journey, and we fight in a childlike manner, in the sense of opening up the world to the impossible, then maybe that is where education has something to teach us.

Walter: That is my hope. I am sure that some educators will read this book and say, yeah, yeah, yeah, it would be lovely to put our lives on the line like this, but we cannot. Or they might say, I would love to consider my students as equals, but it is obvious that they are not as fully capable as I am, or that some are more capable than others. Concrete educational conditions are so bad, and so difficult, that many educators say, "How can I love being an educator with the conditions that are offered to me in public education?" Or, some others could say, "How can I wander, how can I err, if I have to arrive to some fixed concepts, curriculum, or content?" Or, some might question, "How can I experience education as a child if people demand that I provide answers not questions?" But I would say, when all this seems impossible, then it is more needed than ever, and if we relate to them as beginnings, and with hope, to try to expect what seems to be unexpected, who knows what can happen? Why shouldn't we try? Why not? Then, a new education and practice might emerge. It might begin. The new always might begin in education. It's just a matter of being sensitive to life, equality, love, errantry and childhood. Don't you think?

BOOK REVIEW

Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography

Walter Omar Kohan. Translation by Jason Wozniak and Samuel D. Rocha (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

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WHY TRANSLATE A BOOK?

This is a question that would seem to have been answered long ago, from the time books first started being translated. Perhaps it is a question that disappeared as a question, for we (almost) never ask it anymore. We assume that translation should be carried out whenever possible. After all, when books are made to speak other languages, their geographical reach grows, they are sent on flights to distant lands, to encounter the world. So why return to the question? It is not to categorically reject any of its possible answers. We return to the question as a question, as an opening act. We return because, at the start of this critical review, we hear in this question a model of the act of reading that allows us to perceive some important strengths of the text discussed here.

This book is a translation.

In 2019 Walter Kohan published in Brazil, with Editora Vestígio, the first edition of *Paulo Freire, mais do que nunca: Uma Biografia Filosófica*. In this book, the author rereads the work of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian thinker, by problematizing the political role of the person who educates. Kohan advances a philosophical theme that has been present in his research throughout the last few decades, coming from his encounters with other educators such as Socrates, Jacotot, and Rodríguez. In light of the global reach of Paulo Freire's work, the educational relevance of Kohan's own studies, and the positive reception of his book by Portuguese-speaking readers, in 2020 the Latin American Council of Social Science (Conselho Latinoamericano de Ciências Sociais) published the first translation of the work into Spanish with a similar title: *Paulo Freire, más que nunca: Una Biografía Filosófica*. By this point the English edition was already being prepared. It would come out one year later, in 2021, published by Bloomsbury with the title *Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography*—the edition which we are reviewing.

In addition, this book turns its gaze upon itself as a translated book, taking the translation itself as a philosophical resumption of the experience of thought that Kohan proposes throughout the work. The author—who has published innumerable works in various languages, such as Portuguese, Spanish, English, and Italian—now takes up translation as a problematic field, where Freire's political approach also finds an echo. What can a translation tell us as a place from which the world is perceived? What questions are born of the possibility (or impossibility) of saying something in different linguistic

codes? What epistemological cleavages will remain silenced in the idiomatic gaps? As Antonia Dardler reminds us in her excellent preface, from the beginning, Kohan acknowledges some of the challenges and complexities when translation is done as a profoundly political issue. On this basis, it becomes clear just how much can be lost from a given conceptualization of the world when no connections are made to other linguistic filters. After all, the difficulty of translating from Portuguese to English is a problem that begins with Freire's own books and that, according to Dardler, reveals old and deep political tensions between colonizer and colonized.

But we also began this review with the question "Why translate a book?" because this book is one of questionings. Not because Kohan tells the reader what should be asked, or what the important questions are about Paulo Freire's educational thought (or that of any of the innumerable other authors who he carefully cites). Rather, the question must be asked because the text presents itself as a philosophical biography of Paulo Freire whose focus resides in the idea that education is a constant battle for the rights of all—children and adults, educators and those who are educated. Kohan thus organizes the book on the basis of five principles that he calls "life," "equality," "love," "errantry," and "childhood." These words give the chapters their titles and represent opportunities to restore educational relations as their own sites of questioning. They are principles not in the sense of axioms or necessary postulates; rather, they reproduce another meaning of the Portuguese word *princípio*: beginnings. Kohan proposes these five words as points of departure, or triggers for a different experience of education, precisely as points of questioning about the value and meaning of what is done politically when someone educates. Kohan avoids prescribing any formulas that would once again make educators fall into the trap of a way of thinking that has been prepared in advance, paths already marked. Instead, he opts for, what Freire calls in one of his books, *the pedagogy of the question*.

In this review of a translated book, we also invoked the question "Why translate a book?" because of the exercise in questioning that Freire proposes. *A Philosophical Biography* is an invitation to permanently return to oneself. It is a practice of questioning as questioning oneself (in the reflexive), of a return to the questions with which we confront ourselves. It is a practice that asks us to find our own questions: the ones that inhabit conscious thought, that comprise the decisions of our present desire, but that also accumulate layers of forgetting. The questions that, after much use, lost their disruptive power and removed the question marks from our speech. These are nonetheless questions, and thus they must be repeated, re-spoken, redone. Notes of thought will never become music unless they are played. Thus, Kohan states in the introduction that his desire is that his writing provoke in his readers the possibility that each of them question their own certainties, so that they might be infected by the same questioning that the writing of the book brought him to as the author. The question, then, is Freire's privileged connection to Kohan and Kohan's to us, his readers, as though he had tried to do to us what Freire did to him. After all, what better way is there to pay tribute to a thinker than to do what he did?

In fact, this is the secret that allows life and thought to remain indistinguishable in this book, and it is necessary that we arrive at this point to understand what Kohan means by the subtitle “A philosophical biography.” The narratives about Paulo Freire, the person, and the chronological accounts of his existence are there to situate the reader in the greatness of this journey. An example of the importance of these accounts is the long interview that Kohan conducted in November of 2018 with one of Freire’s children, Lutgardes Costa Freire. Transcribed in Appendix II, this conversation plays an important role in helping reconstruct, in very direct speech, the importance of certain historical moments in Paulo Freire’s journey, such as prison, political exiles, the writing of his books, and the presence of his family. But this same interview also sparks the inspiration that is present throughout the entire book—and perhaps this is why it was placed at the beginning of the Portuguese edition—that *ideas don’t fall from the sky onto your head*, that they are connected to life. A philosophical biography, then, assumes that there is no philosophy outside of a life that is committed to the gesture, that an individual’s gestures are the word translated into action, and that this action is the very life of thought. Above all, when what we are dealing with is education.

And the first gesture here is always the question. Our questions, Kohan’s questions, Freire’s questions. The questions in the reading, the questions in the writing, the questions in education. The politics of the question. This persistent return of the pedagogy of the question to itself inevitably calls into question questioning itself, thus inviting us to ask what its place is in the life of education: A pedagogical resource? A cognitive exercise? An informal game of learning? The gamification of pedagogical relations? Kohan helps his readers discover that when considered on the basis of Paulo Freire, education is the life of the question just as the question is the life of education. The political power of both education and the question cannot be separated, since their conjoining produces one of the most powerful (and even dangerous) ideas for anyone who wants to change the world: everything can always be different. Nothing portrays the world like it really is better than a question. Just as there is nothing like a question to show what this world might come to be like.

WORDS TO TRANSLATE A POLITICAL EDUCATION?

The discovery of the intimate and constitutive rapport between philosophy and life places a responsibility upon the readers of *Paulo Freire. A Philosophical Biography*. It makes us feel like runners that hand over the baton, who have received a message to deliver and can’t remain where we are.

And in fact, Walter Kohan, Jason Wozniak, and Sam Rocha—the author and translators—state in the “Note on the English Translation” that the book offers its readers a gift, an antidote to political authoritarianism’s domination of the education of life: the power of questioning. It is the boldness to think after the periods that generates the rebellious daring of “a people who ask and wonder.” At the end of the book, Kohan confirms this idea and spells out

how this message might endure in the hands, ideas, words, and gestures of others. He writes:

I would love readers of the book to ask questions like: “From this principle (life, errantry, etc.), what new educational life can I begin?” More extensively: “What kind of educational life can I begin practicing by following these five principles (beginnings)?” This is also related to the idea of infancy or childhood and how we can be reborn as educators or re-begin a new life of education.

As readers, we have received the urgency of a gift and, above all, a challenge. Educating demands that we start anew as though we had never learned or taught anything before. This is the true political gesture. This is why we seek to accept Kohan’s call—and, through his writing, that of Freire himself—to keep asking questions and not simply repeat what they both say. For this task, we return to the question we started with: “Why translate a book?”

After unraveling the roll of yarn that Kohan’s book presented us with through this first question, we decided to return to it and, moreover, to ask: “What does it mean to translate?” Beyond the exercise of transporting meanings between the words of different languages, the verb “translate” has other meanings, such as searching for words or actions to say a certain thing, to make concrete or embody ideas in words, gestures, and actions. The exercise of translating contains an attempt to make something concrete, a search for the ways of saying and doing that, in their difference, open up into a common space. If in translating meanings we seek equivalencies, we also know that we will always leave out a good portion of the interreferential web of a given word. But when translation is understood as the elucidation or concretization of an idea, perhaps it is most characterized by the structural inability to finish the task. To search for words, behaviors, or actions that mean a particular thing is an exercise that always resembles a hesitant stutter. It is never completely satisfied or ready. And for this reason, it returns upon itself.

“I would love [for] readers of the book to ask questions like: ‘From this principle, what new educational life can I begin?’” The author’s call echoes within us. And thus, we return to our questions: Why translate a book? What does it mean to translate? What can a political education translate? Or with what words shall we be able to translate this same education? Might the five principles—life, equality, love, errantry, and childhood—just be another way of saying something about the political education that Kohan proposes to us through Freire?

The question implies that these words themselves can serve as translations, five entryways or access points that embody a place from which we can experience a certain type of education. Understood in this way, they work as a constellation, a broad and interconnected set of gestures whose confluence simply indicates a way forward: hesitant translations that simply await the questions that each person might want or be able to pose. None of them, however, would be sufficient by themselves to describe this way of inhabiting education. Neither do the

five of them claim to exhaust its full meaning. Perhaps only through playing with the meanings that these words establish between themselves, activated when and how we position ourselves, is it possible to find suggestions for what a political education might look like.

All these words are concepts with a vast philosophical resume, as Kohan shows through the references he cites in each chapter. Beyond the profound and rigorous knowledge of both the apologetic and critical literature surrounding Paulo Freire's work, along with the reception his books have received in a variety of geographical and cultural contexts, Kohan returns to thinkers who have long influenced his writing. To name only a few: Foucault, to speak about life; Jacotot, to discuss equality; Socrates, to speak of love; and Rodríguez, to analyze errancy. (Curiously, the chapter about childhood is the only one where Kohan cites only Freire. He certainly did not lack reasons to cite the philosophers who have informed his understanding of childhood, but perhaps he was trying to discover childhood in the writing of Freire himself... or maybe Kohan might have wanted to always start anew, above all, when thinking about childhood. More than just exterior interpretations of childhood that fit with Paulo Freire's writings, or even readings from Paulo Freire about the notion of childhood, was Kohan perhaps searching for his own childlike writing about Freire?)

Having come this far with the invitation to consider the five words that can translate a political education, we couldn't resist carrying out a translation exercise of our own. Although the result will of course be precarious and tentative, we give it here as a witness that we have passed onto our readers here everything that we were not able to say, so that they might be able to do so, under more favorable conditions.

So if we translate a certain experience of education in the tension between life, equality, love, errantry, and childhood, what might we find? The rejection of a dualistic and reductive position between thought and action, as well as of an aseptic and decontextualized view of the educator's work. An education that can only be maintained as an opportunity to create relations that never diminish anyone or cast anyone as superior. An encounter in spaces and times that can lead to even their transformation, places where one loves so much that one allows others to find their own way through unexpected thoughts and words. An education that wanders and only lets itself speak through the movement its verbs are allowed. An education that lives, that equalizes, that loves, that errs, that becomes childhood or that "childizes" (to borrow the Portuguese verb *meninizar* that Freire himself invented). The education that, at each moment, affirms itself as an elusive and whistling child. A child who is within us all, who leaves its restlessness hanging in the air but who does not allow itself be caught, learned, or sometimes even understood.

IT'S JUST A MATTER OF...?

It is not easy to write about the most well-known Latin American educator in the world and one of the most cited authors of all time in the social sciences. Amidst the innumerable appropriations to which his work has

repeatedly been subjected, it becomes necessary to pass over the impoverishment of the interpretations, the banalization of the citations, the lacks of care with the text, and even the politicized twisting and instrumentalization of his thought. *Paulo Freire: A Philosophical Biography* pays attention to all these difficulties and seeks to turn them into some of the book's strengths. We could continue to offer other reasons to justify this book's importance, to convince readers that it is worth reading. We end with a reference to a conversation between Jason Wozniak and Walter Kohan in Rio de Janeiro on January 17, 2020, only a few days before the world would shut down due to a pandemic. The title of the conversation is, "Where and When to Think with Paulo Freire? A Timely Conversation," and it postdates the Portuguese edition. In it, the author offers some interesting reflections on the title, the book's internal organization, and his readings of Freire. It is a dialogue that retakes the book, once again, as an exercise in questioning itself. Or perhaps it is the book that, near the end, retakes, requests, (re)thinks. As Kohan states in his final words, "The new always might begin in education. It's just a matter of being sensitive to life, equality, love, errantry, and childhood."

We can always start anew. That is the secret of this book. What Kohan leaves to each of his readers are the paths they can take to do so. "The new always might begin in education. It's just a matter of. . . ?" Each of us might continue after the ellipsis and fill in the blank spaces. Or to put it another way: to each, the challenge of his or her own translation.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Deadline Change APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought

The author of the best unpublished, English-language, philosophical essay in Latin American thought will win \$500. Eligible essays must contain original arguments and broach philosophical topics clearly related to the experiences of Hispanic Americans and Latinxs. The winning essay will be published in the *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*.

New deadline: April 25, 2022

For more information on this essay, including details on criteria and eligibility, visit the [Essay Prize in Latin American Thought page](#) on the APA website.

To submit your essay for the prize, fill out the Essay Prize in Latin American Thought submission form on the APA website. For questions, contact prizes@apaonline.org.

We look forward to receiving your submissions.

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reviewed articles, chapters, and books in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, English, and French. Some of the English-language titles include: *Philosophy and Childhood: Critical Perspectives and Affirmative Practices* (Palgrave, 2014); *Childhood, Education, And Philosophy: New Ideas for An Old Relationship* (Routledge, 2015); *The Inventive Schoolmaster* (Sense, 2015); *Thinking, Childhood, and Time* (co-edited with Barbara Weber; Lexington, 2020); and *Paulo Freire: A Biography* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Nelson Maldonado-Torres is President Emeritus of the Caribbean Philosophical Association (2008-2013) and co-chair of the Frantz Fanon Foundation with its founder, Mireille Fanon Mendès France. He is a professor in the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies, and the Comparative Literature Program at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, where he also serves as Director of the Rutgers Advanced Institute for Critical Caribbean Studies and Chair of the Comparative Literature Program. Maldonado-Torres has an ongoing relationship with the Blackhouse Collective, based in Soweto, South Africa, and he holds the positions of Professor Extraordinary at the Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, and Honorary Professor at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Durban, also in South Africa. Maldonado-Torres is the author of *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2008) and *La descolonización y el giro decolonial* (Universidad de la Tierra, 2011). Recent publications include "El Caribe, la colonialidad, y el giro decolonial," [The Caribbean, coloniality, and the decolonial turn] in the *Latin American Research Review* (2020); and "Philosophy, Racist Reason, and Decoloniality," in the *Journal of World Philosophies* 5 (2020).

Jason Wozniak is an assistant professor at West Chester University. Currently, he teaches graduate courses focused on higher education philosophy and history for the department of Educational Foundations and Policy Studies. His research focuses on critical theory analyses of financial debt and education theory and practice. Wozniak has published widely in both North and South America. He is completing his first book, provisionally titled *The Mis-Education of the Indebted Student*. In addition, Wozniak is the founder and Co-Director of The Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES.org). For the past two years, he has been one of the lead researchers on *Hacer Escuela/Inventing School: Rethinking the Pedagogy of Critical Theory*, a sub-project of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant: Critical Theory in the Global South.