

# Is Curriculum Studies a Protestant Project: A Jew and some Protestants Walked into a Bar . . .

Edited by DONALD BLUMENFELD-JONES

## Introduction

### *The Origin of the Section*

THE ARTICLE IN THIS SPECIAL SECTION are based on a symposium held at the Bergamo 2014 Conference. The origin of that symposium began at AERA 2014. Donald Blumenfeld-Jones (Donald) was telling Jim Henderson (Jim) of his experience working with a colleague over how to schedule a course. (I will proceed in a more informal, first person pronoun narrative. If what follows does not appear even-handed, it is not meant to be even-handed. This voice to which I refer has long been suppressed. Freud's father taught Sigmund to be even-handed and quiet. I, while not Sigmund Freud, as with him, refuse to be silent any longer.)

I intended to offer a professional development course in the teacher prep program I had created. I had already worked out with the school administrator the schedule for this course, a schedule which did not match the university's scheduling. I approached an administrator for help: schedule the course as if it fits the university but, then, work with the teachers to meet within their parameters. The administrator refused, insisting on "proper channels" and asserting the university would be very cooperative. As it turns out, they scheduled the course in the only way they knew and the course failed to get one classroom teacher to register for it.

After hearing this story, Jim contended that the administrator didn't understand the *spirit* behind my request. I said that my request had nothing to do with spirit. I was manipulating the system to make things work. There was no spirit, just a simple strategy. Jim persisted on insisting that this is the same as spirit. I said, "No, it's a literalist approach for a better education." I felt silenced by Jim's insistence and refusal to understand.

Jim's use of the word *spirit* triggered a memory of two scholarly arguments I had read years ago. As we spoke further and Jim seemed unable to hear me I felt that I was in a kind of mortal

combat in which I was existentially fighting for my existence. This was more than an intellectual affair: it was ontological and ethical.

The arguments found in John Cuddihy's book *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle for Modernity* and Susan Handelman's *The Slayers of Moses: the Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* assert that we (including Curriculum Studies) live within a Protestant world dominated by the rule-of-law, propriety in the form of proper (read civil and civilizing) decorum (including academic decorum), and a spirit- and idea-driven environment that silences other modes of expression and thinking. Cuddihy (1987) argued that Freud, Marx, and Levi-Strauss were driven to their work by confronting the call for civility in assimilationist Europe, asked to cover over their Jewish Stetl life. Their insight: behind the veil of civility is a seething "world" (nature, class warfare, deep structures related to the primitive) the modern world would rather not see. Marx, specifically, wrote "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction", responding to his being silenced by the Prussian censor not because of the content of his writing but because of his style: too brash, too loud, too insistent, not decorous. (Even the word "comments" is Rabbinic as the Talmud is a set of commentaries (and commentaries upon commentaries) of each passage of the Bible. This is opposed to a hermeneutic view that is an "interpretation" of the Bible. Rabbis are not interpreting in a hermeneutic sense; they are commenting on the text of the Bible and its implications in relation to the lived world. But more of this in the body of the section – play on words [body – as in Christ's body] deliberately meant.) Handelman (1983) argued that the work of Freud, Lacan, Derrida and Bloom, all of whom, in one way or another deconstructed Western literary theory, was a Rabbinic/Talmudic move focused on the word, not on the meaning behind the word. Literary theorists had, previously, focused on ideas and interpreting the spirit behind words (parallel to interpreting Jesus' parables), drawing upon the Hellenic and later Christian traditions of hermeneutics. These four thinkers, on the other hand, carried a Talmudic approach, focused on words and their meanings, writing rather than voice, challenging the idea that there is a spirit behind the word, a transcendental being. No, there are only words which make a particular world and, for deconstruction, contain their own dialectical doppelgänger that is suppressed and returns in surreptitious manners. As a third point, teleology, for Christianity, marks "the end of days" (the Second Book of John). Jews did not believe Christ represented the "end of days" because he had not fulfilled the signs foretold in the Bible, chief among which was a world in which the fractures of the world were healed and justice prevailed. Jews are not teleologists since it is not G-d who will heal the world but the Jews who must prepare the world for G-d through such healing. In Curriculum Studies I note an obsession with being teleological in a Christian fashion: underneath much of what we do is the notion that we can make the world a better place by leaving error behind. Judaism, in difference, focuses on reassembling a broken world, not on making a different world. While I have provided some "religious" discussion, this present work is not theological. Rather, these two different approaches to living are entirely cultural in character even if they seem inflected with theology.

To be direct about this, what I am arguing is as follows:

While Curriculum Studies scholars might not believe that they are functioning from a Protestant base, given that the culture is profoundly grounded in Protestantism it is difficult for any of us to avoid this issue. It is not just Christianity but an Hellenically influenced Christianity that focuses upon the individual seeking her/his own spirituality á la Luther, which is what makes it, in

particular, Protestant in character. What I seek is for Curriculum Studies scholars to look at themselves and see that there may be issues of which they are not aware. In this self-examination, there is irony and a certain amount of self-circumspection in which none of us can any longer hold on to our sense of superior intelligence. And to be forthright I, too, am an expression of the culture. And, I think importantly, I am not asking to be correct. I am asking to be acknowledged as having a way that, while not compatible with the Protestant way, may have merit that does not need modification or assimilation. I am asking to not have to fight for my life. But that may be inevitable.

A note on reading this section. Petra pointed out to me that there was a sense of entering a conversation that is already ongoing or, as she put it “that we have been embroiled in the conversation and now we are asking others to jump in in the middle.” I want to encourage this messiness. I like the feeling of having entered the middle of a conversation a Jew and some Protestants are having at a bar, as you, the reader, are sitting near us, overhearing us, maybe interested in what is going on without knowing entirely how we started but feeling the passions. You will have to find out where each of your various insertion points lie and how to get the lay of the land for your various selves.

You will find us, sometimes, arguing at loggerheads as if we are talking about entirely different entities. I think we are. That is all to the good. In a sense Curriculum Studies is a “mess” of differing stews all owning the same name. Which and who we are is always up for contention. For me a problem with our contemporary situation is that, within our small enclaves, we are in such agreement that we are only working out the details of our enclave’s questions but not questioning the questions. I am questioning us in this vein, not for mere illustration’s sake but because as I state in the above, I feel I am fighting for my own life living within an alien world that does not get they are not the world *toute court*. Step back; see ourselves anew, be worried.

And so to our papers. To be followed by our commentaries on each other’s contributions.

# The violence of words, words of violence: Keeping the uncomfortable at bay, a Jewish Perspective

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**T**HE WESTERN WORLD IS A PROTESTANT WORLD. Not just simply Christian, but, dominantly, Protestant. (Never mind that someone might not identify as Protestant. It is the culture I am addressing, not the individual and her/his life.) It is also an anti-Judaic world. These two assertions underlie this work.

It is a Protestant world in that the Protestant requirement of a smooth social façade of civility and quietness dominated Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cuddihy, 1976). This world functions by pacifying and domesticating potentially disruptive thought. It is anti-Judaic in that the modes of understanding derived from Hellenic and subsequently Christian thinking rely upon an active rejection of Jewish ways of understanding the world (Handelman, 1984). This long history of active rejection has been lost to view and the pacification project of Protestantism has become not so much history as simply the way we do things. In this present work I am performing a Judaic incision into this placid miasma. I begin with an instance of domestication/pacification (that echoes the story in the Introduction to this special section).

At a recent faculty meeting, devoted to discussing what our graduate students needed to understand about research, I offered, after a litany of the ordinary (how to improve their ability to read research intelligently and do it well), that I wanted them to “distrust” research. I meant: notice that all research is driven by particular agendas that choose “this” as data and not “that” as data, even though they both might be “data.” Further, distrust our “outcomes” for what they hide from us. “Distrust” was met with a fire-storm of response, both embracing and rejecting. One young colleague, after the meeting, sought me out. He said, “I like your idea but I can’t sell the word ‘distrust’ to people. They just wouldn’t take it well. What would you think of ‘doubt?’ May I use that?” I responded that he could use whatever word he desired, but I would stay with *distrust*. It carried something specific that I intended. In this encounter he was trying to pacify and make safe my ideas, my word, make it acceptable, as if words mean nothing, there is a world

behind words that is the “real” and words simply point toward it and it is separate from words. (But, of course, words must mean something; otherwise he wouldn’t have tried to change mine.) Interestingly, I had, just the previous evening, in class, had a similar response to a similar offer. In being asked to change my language I was being asked to pacify, domesticate, and make safe my ideas and, therefore, cease existing. What makes my move Judaic?: the insistence on language and the argument about the meaning and implications of words that create particular worlds and whose meanings are never closed or complete. What makes the response Protestant? The request for me to pacify my language so that it doesn’t upset the civil surface and call anything into question.

This reading is grounded in John Cuddihy’s (1976) analysis. He points out that, in the assimilationist environment of Jews in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, there was a demand to adopt a civil, passive exterior and form of discourse that would take the most disquieting of thoughts and make them safe (and therefore not disturbing the Protestant world into which the Jews were to be folded). I am claiming that my encounters are attempts to make something dangerous safe and, therefore, to not actually have any power to change anything. I was trying to reveal a darker side of research (it is misleading and we are not to simply trust it) so that we might deal with the full spectrum of possibilities. In my scheduling story I was calling the state and its sanctified structures into question. Disturbing the status quo, my moves were met with a shutting out of possibilities.

The prompting events (my interaction with Jim) for this special section are also in this pacification territory. Every feint and move I made with Jim was met with a placid discussion centered on the notion that the administrator simply misunderstood my request. Jim emphasized an embracing of loving balance, to which I responded: in that balance the scales will always tip in the Protestant direction. I was trying to show Jim how the administrator acted on behalf of the dominant culture, doing violence to my actions, clothing her moves in adherence to rules and laws. Rules and laws function as hedges against a seething nature that threatens the fabric of the “civil” world of the university. Further, she told me I couldn’t be devious (was I being a cunning Jew?). I was being schooled in how to be a proper person (read Protestant).

In our everyday academic scholarly life, I am claiming, this schooling, domestication and pacification live at the heart of that life. Additionally, this life is anti-Judaic at its core, beginning deep within the history of an ancient pacification project against, specifically, the Jewish people. This pacification project worked through changing the specific voice of Jewish thinking (see both Cuddihy, 1976 and Handelman, 1984) to something safe that would not call into question the hegemony of the Protestant view of correct living. That hegemony continues to assert itself through what counts as an acceptable scholarly voice. Were I to write this essay in a Protestant voice, even though the content were “Jewish”, it would be found acceptable because the voice mutes the content. (See the introduction to this section for Marx’s response to such domestication.)

One mode of domestication and control relates to what I term *citation fixation*. A fixation upon citations can produce convergent, univocal narratives seemingly different from each other but, in fact, reliant upon minute differences of little import. Or they may produce the illusion of truth by focusing upon a topic as if it is important. Or, they may become an insular self-referencing device. In all cases we must show that others have preceded the offered thoughts or some variant,

giving credibility to our thinking (for or against) that it does not have it on its own (even though the citations don't change what is offered). Even if we had those thoughts prior to reading this literature, the demand for citation implies we are only derivative of these scholars. All of these run the possibility of infantilization as we good academic children are to cite, cite, cite letting those who went before speak *for* us but we speak *with* them. We are not taken seriously when we simply speak our own thought. Our thought is made safe by tethering it to a past already legitimated by the academic hurdles and gates administered by the academic police. We are made safe by being linked to something already deemed safe. (This is a description that stands for the whole of academe, not just for Curriculum Studies.) To be sure, it is not that we should never notice and note what has been already said and engage in conversations with it. But, I am arguing, we are acting in deference to that thought as if, in its being a predecessor, it confers some greater truth upon our speaking.

Additionally, note that some of our most influential Curriculum Studies writings are reflections upon the field without the need of citations to warrant the arguments. Joseph Schwab's groundbreaking bracing of the field in 1969 has no citations. James B. Macdonald's most important work ("Transcendental Developmental Ideology of Education") leverages a variety of sources to co-construct his approach, not to validate his interests or act as foils against which to test his ideas. Dwayne Huebner's "Curricular Language and Classroom Meanings" relies on his own understandings of educational practice coupled with his particular way of thinking about language and consciousness. There is a tradition behind his work but of greater importance is following Huebner's thinking and sinking into the lived experience he offers rather than worrying about those sources.

If *Citation fixation* is a matter of learning to be a good Protestant citizen – it is what we should do - then a Talmudic/Judaic critique/analysis offers a view of present practice steeped in the centrality of language and its relation to the world around us rather than ideas about the world. This practice potentially reveals the fractures and hypocrisy underlying our lives. It is to this that I now turn.

Susan Handelman (1984) lays out the tension between Christianity/Protestantism and Jewish interpretive practice as a tension between spirit and word (the very tension in Jim's and my interactions). In this tension language either points toward a non-substantive, non-material world (the world of spirit favored by Protestantism) or language points to real things in the world which require our making sense of them in language (a Judaic perspective). Early Christian thinkers, especially Paul, leveraged Hellenic thinking that reality is in the mind (in the form of ideas and pure forms or these ideas are found in material reality but transcend that reality). They built Christianity upon a similar ground: Jesus' parables are also pure forms not of this world, of which it can be said they are not transparent in their meaning - there is a spirit behind the words that is the truth of the words. The words do not lead directly to that spirit but the spirit must be found, primarily beginning in faith. This act of faith is not an act of linguistic interpretation as staying with language misleads: meaning is not in the words. This position went against a Jewish view which begins with the stance that there are only words, the words of Scripture. These words contain meaning in relation to the world around us. Our task is to make sense of the relationship between the words, divinely delivered, and experiences in the world. Understanding does not come through faith but through the close parsing of words in relation to the world to which they



point. The words continuously manifest the world in various ways that help us act correctly in the world. In short, Christians and, especially these days, Protestants are people of the spirit and Jews are people of the Book. While for Christianity there is one truth that transcends language (spirit), for Judaism there are many truths in the material world all of which can be found in the language (the book with its laws). These many truths do not reveal some spirit so much as they reveal our unfolding relationship to an unfolding world. In order for early Christianity to establish itself it needed to de-legitimize Judaism and took, therefore, an anti-Judaic stance. Handelman (1984) argues that the Rabbinic approach was leveraged by Derrida, Lacan, and Bloom to interrupt the literary theory world (steeped, in an unseen way, in Christian/Protestant culture). They were not religionists but they were Rabbinic. So, too, am I attempting to interrupt our Curriculum Studies world.

How does a concern for words rather than spirit manifest? I've already pointed to my colleague who wanted to change my language from "distrust" to "doubt" and my response. In another example, when one of my students (Aquino-Sterling, 2009) asserted that a well-known critical left scholar, through the language he used, admitted into his thinking a rapprochement with the No Child Left Behind act, by directly accepting the legitimacy of an accountability concern, a colleague declared this was unfair – everyone knows that this well-known scholar is entirely opposed to NCLB and that he didn't intend what my student took his words to mean. She missed the point: there is no spirit lurking behind the words, but only the words which undercut the ostensible position of the person. Or, does he really hold this ostensible position? Perhaps his words betray an unnoticed cast of mind that, in fact, supports accountability efforts. My colleague rejected this as unfair and misleading. Certainly this well-known scholar is on record with his ideological opposition to NCLB but when his language undercuts his opposition and accepts, through linguistic deployment, that he is in favor of the accountability tenet of NCLB, then we must be concerned that his position is not what it seems. We could say he is expressing and supporting the dominant culture even though he thinks he isn't. And as we seek to understand the deployment of language, we must notice that the words invoke a particular world and world-view that brings the material world into being in specific ways, teaching us how to live. Different words, different ways to relate to the material world. The material world remains "there" but our relation to it can change. This is not simple nominalism as all words have histories that cannot be ignored. The "old" words continue in their power and our "new" words fight against that power and history. But making this move does destabilize the power of the old, established ways of languaging the world. This relation between words and the material world is at the heart of what I am trying to do in this work and that are sidelined, at best, in Curriculum Studies.

A further distinction grows out of this spirit/word dichotomy. Handelman (1984) argues that the Hellenic/Christian/Protestant tradition works in the area of metaphors, parables, allegories and analogies. In all these cases there is a truth to be found beyond the details of the metaphor, parable, and so forth. In the Judaic tradition, rather than these fictionalizations of reality, there are models. A model, unlike a metaphor, parable, allegory, and so forth must reflect the details of the image presented and the details of the image/model must be mapped onto what one is interested in understanding.

Curriculum Studies scholars' focus on ideas (in distinction to words), ideas that are parallel to metaphors, parables, allegories and analogies. I term this focus *etherialization*. The ideas float free from material reality, living in the ether of our thoughts. The ideas are not about material relations; they are in conversation with each other. This closed world of ideas is not benign: it has a more serious consequence. Their ideas do not simply float free of our lived life; they live within *abstraction* and even when a scholar appears to use concrete images, these images are treated in an abstract manner, thus removing them from a presence in the real world in which the images live and are experienced. The serious consequence is this: Jewish scholars assert that abstract thinking is weak because "it is constantly creating new terms and concepts, and since they cannot be defined except through use of similarly abstract terms, we can never know whether they constitute a departure from the subject or are . . . relevant to it" (Adin Steinsaltz (Handelman, 1984, p. 60). And they cannot have an impact on the world. If, as Schwab argued, curriculum is a practical field, curriculum theorists have abandoned the world, abandoned trying to heal the world as they listen to and enjoy the music of their own ideas.

At this point I will provide an illustration of the ways *abstraction* and *etherialization* function in Curriculum Studies work by analyzing a short section of Vonzell Agosto's book chapter (2014) on teaching curriculum theory. In the Rabbinic tradition, a small portion of text can be taken to speak for the whole. I am contending that this analysis of a short passage speaks for the whole of Agosto's process. I will argue that, in this sort section, Agosto employs three metaphors that function in an abstract and etherialized manner, the manner of which speaks for the whole of the chapter. Why do I write this? There are moments when Agosto has the opportunity to provide narratives about his students' activities in the class (please note how I have used concrete stories in this article to model the issues I wish to raise) who are the focus of his study. Instead he gives the most general of descriptions while making declarations of the meaning of the event. From a Talmudic/Rabbinic perspective this lack of detail disables us from discovering possible actions we can take that relate to ways we wish to be in the world. Agosto may name a model (in this case making artwork) but not describe it in detail (in which case it might become a model), making of it an inspirational meme that does not necessarily help people to act.

At this point in the chapter Agosto is writing of a how he had his students do art-work in order, he hoped, for them to see more deeply into the world and, thereby, think more clearly about how curriculum studies could help. He departs from this to write theoretically.

Tuck (2009) . . . claims that theories (of rhizome) and indigenous worldviews (i.e., importance of roots) can run counter to one another. She suggests that in order for one to bring them together, like clay, one has to rough them.

I raise this not because I believe that the rhizome and Indigenous worldviews need to be reconciled (a futile task) but rather to make explicit the ways in which theory use is complicated. This is not a rare instance; it happens at every nexus of theory, experience, culture, and memory. In pottery, when bringing two pieces of formed clay together, the potter makes scratches, or 'roughs the clay' on each piece at the locations they will be joined. In theory use too, we rough the clay in order to hinge unlike, unfired, textures and shapes. (Tuck, p. 118-119).

Pottery that was insufficiently 'roughed' fell apart under the heat of the kiln. Most pieces were salvaged and then glued back together.



The students continued to read and engage in dialogue about curriculum theory (as a complicated conversation) and curriculum theorizing as an existential experience (Pinar, 1975; Taliaferro-Baszile, 2010). Though they had only roughed the surface of their work as potters, the summer ended and they would soon enter the metaphorical kiln that Fall as (full or part-time) doctoral students and/or practitioners.

What is the structure here? Two theories in the form of metaphors are in play – “rhizome” and “root.” Agosto notes that Tuck believes these two theories (rhizome and roots or indigenous worldviews) cannot be reconciled; it is “a futile task”. Yet Tuck, and with her Agosto, undertakes this task through a third metaphor – “pottery making”.

I begin with examining the initial metaphors of “rhizome” and “roots.” “Rhizome” and “roots” are acknowledged as running counter to each other. Examining “rhizome” as a model rather than a metaphor reveals this truth of this difference. In the real world a “rhizome” is the underground expression of the above ground expression of certain plants such as the poplar tree: all the poplar trees we see above ground in a grove are actually one single tree, connected below ground by the rhizome. Rhizome models the ways in which various manifestations we see are really one and the same and so difference is only understandable in its inextricable connection to sameness. Rhizome is about a singularity seemingly manifested as multiplicity. “Roots”, on the other hand, belong to only one plant: a grove of oak trees are individual trees discrete from each other. Roots are about difference and individuality and ignores sameness. Roots are about singularities. Boris Pasternak in *Dr. Zhivago* (2013), asserts that individuality (singularity) is a Christian invention and is the only religion that relies upon a singular individual relationship to G-d. Judaism is a communal act (the need for a minyan, 10 prayers, in order to pray), thus relies upon the community. Favoring difference over unity, as I contend is frequently done in Curriculum Studies with our focus upon particular identities such as race, gender, sexuality, ability and so forth, stems from a Christian/Protestant position. It is not wrong but it is parochial. Treating “rhizome” and “root” as metaphors and not models abstracts some small portion of their reality and, in so doing, performs violence upon them. Howso? In our present context, “roots” are the more socially valued image - are we not to seek our roots as members of particular groups in order to be better rooted in the world? But, our focus on difference and diversity marginalizes our ability to understand our connections to each other. This is a politically violent act as it opts for an either/or position favoring difference, rejecting its dialectical doppelgänger of sameness.

The model approach provides more. The contiguous rhizomatic plant is comprised of two complementary sets of qualities: the above-ground, in the light plant and the below ground in the dark, dank earth rhizome. Yet, of course, they are one in the same being. This suggests that a focus on difference (indigenous world views which suggests different views as it is pluralized) is also sameness and unification. The dialectic of light, above ground and dark below ground provides further possibilities. What if we see these various worldviews as the whole plant, above ground plant and rhizome? Then we must consider the dialectic of light and dark, dry and wet? What if the good in indigenous worldviews (*light*, given the predilection, in the West, for equating light with goodness) isn't their only attribute? What if there is a hiddenness in their worldviews which is part of the worldview that is dank and dark (also partaking of the Western predilection for equating darkness with something wrong)? What if we must reconcile that which we esteem with that which is problematic if we are to understand the whole? This de-

romanticizes indigenous world views without dismissing them. Just as the dominant worldview also partakes of both light and dark. And all these different worldviews are also one worldview. These are questions and issues presented only when the image (rhizome) becomes model. Thus, it is reasonable to not reconcile “rhizome” and “roots” as this distracts us from their complexity by treating them incompletely.

Agosto’s and Tuck’s attempt to reconcile them continues by reconciling through another metaphor – the making of a clay pot. Tuck asserts that theorizing is like clay with the potter roughing up the pieces of the pot to stick together just as the theorist roughs up the edges off various theories to stick together what is not ordinarily put together, perhaps not even desirable to put together (so suggests Tuck). What if we treat the making of a pot as a model rather than a metaphor? We must confront what it is like to sit before the clay and feel it in our hands. As with the rhizome, the clay is wet, dank, earthy smelling and sticky. How is theory wet, dank, earthy smelling, and sticky? Perhaps theory is only capable of being put together because there is wetness (dryness would never “stick”). This suggests that what appears to be separate has some affinity, in its very nature, for sticking together (clay always has some moisture). Dankness suggests heaviness. Perhaps theory must be sufficiently heavy and portentous to be usable. As it accounts for a multiplicity of elements that, on their surfaces, appear to be irreconcilable. Theory can show the patterns that hold them together, making each part heavier by being in concert with each other. Earthy smelling suggests that theory must be connected to lived experience if it is to be worth something. (This flies in the face of the predilection for abstractness and ethereal thinking.) Then there is the potter (theorist) who might confront this reality and dwell within the messiness. When we see this image in reality, we see that theory is complex in *lived* ways. Reconciliation, as suggested by Agosto and Tuck, does away with this complexity, as they present half realized metaphors that domesticate “rhizome,” “roots” and “pottery making.”

There is more. Tuck writes of the potter roughing up the clay. But she also writes of the unfired clay. By stopping short of the whole potting process (firing is crucial) she makes her employment of the metaphor abstract. No potter leaves her/his pot unfired. Until it is fired, submitted to this intensity, the pot is not a pot. Why does Tuck leave out this crucial step? What would happen to the clay and its roughed spots? They would be “reconciled” in order for the final pot to have integrity. Why ignore the reconciliation phase (which is not the roughing up phase)? Does Tuck not want to have reconciliation? She has already expressed ambivalence. But if she is ambivalent, why offer reconciliation at all? While Agosto mentions actual firing in the next sentences he blames the failure to hold together on the students’ technique rather than the possibility that his project is wrong. His students needed to glue theories together that make for a very weak pot. Reconciliation seems not possible and, yet, is valued as the desired end.

What can we make of these disjunctures? Perhaps Tuck’s and Agosto’s desire to fix the world (why else would they do this work?) is not what they really want? Perhaps they believe, deep down, that “nothing can be done”. Perhaps they are doing the work of a world that does not want to be fixed. Perhaps reconciliation talk is a Protestant ruse. Their language reveals contradictory tendencies which leads to the possibility that their ideas are contradictory. If Agosto and Tuck are offering a species of hope, their language suggests otherwise. In dealing with these words as ideas and abstractions, these possibilities cannot be accessed. And notice how Steinsaltz’s description of abstraction is fulfilled. Agosto and Tuck pile metaphor upon metaphor, abstraction

upon abstraction in a way that has little or nothing to do with the real world and our lived experience. They create a web of thinking separate from that world.

We cannot take it on faith (a Protestant move) that Agosto's and Tuck's meaning is clear if we will only not hold them so closely to their words. Their meaning is in their words, making a particular world with those words. They, and we, cannot and should not want to escape our words. But this is precisely the desire of the Christian/Protestant worldview which dominates our thinking. And with this escape we are allowed to not disturb our self-congratulatory schemes, thinking we are making a world that escapes the present world. What is escaped when we do not see our words and the world they make, is our reality. If we escape reality then we cannot do anything to help the world be a better place. At least this is one argument that can be made.

However, I speak too strongly. Unlike Schwab I am not interested in setting aside current Curriculum Studies practice. I am interested in allowing a multiplicity of practices to stand. Let Curriculum Studies stand but let it also be shown to be participating in a parochial worldview: valuing abstract ideas that exist in the ether, rather than in this world, ideas that are sewn together on the basis of their internal logic but not on the basis of the logic of lived experience. This is what I mean by *etherialization*. This is what I mean by Protestantization.

What is at stake in this analysis? This insistence on words over ideas is anathema to Protestantism and, I would suggest, to Curriculum Studies scholars as well. In my publication experience, reviewers have responded to my close reading of texts and my insistence on hidden meanings within the text that undermine the supposed thesis of the text with "being unfair" to the authors under examination. "We all know what they mean? Why this close reading that is unfair to their intentions?" In the above I am critiquing what I see as "missing the mark" in Agosto's and Tuck's employment of metaphors. And they rely on a cultural predisposition for individuality and difference: "Who would not want a return to our roots?" A return to our roots is one of the clarion calls of multi-cultural education, that the histories and roots of groups have been shorn from the curriculum and from their lives and made to be seen as inadequate and uninteresting. Oppressed groups seek a return to what is good in their individual cultures and histories. No problem with that. But, what of what is wrong with those histories and traditions? That is left out.

In calling into question Agosto's and Tuck's images and metaphors I am suggesting that there are difficulties not just with their thinking but with how they occupy their being. I am transgressing the politeness of not giving them "the benefit of the doubt." I am pointing to the foibles in the language and the ways in which language trips us up. To the degree that this kind of work is seen as nit-picking and unfair, to this degree it is being domesticated and pacified ("please be polite and civil"). It is also anti-Judaic as my form of analysis lives within this Judaic/Talmudic/Rabbinic tradition that challenges through the impoliteness of linguistic analysis, pointing to paradox and even hypocrisy of an ontological sort, not merely an epistemological glitch. Handelman (1984) points out that this way was deliberately suppressed in order to strengthen the Christian position. Little has changed today, except the invisibility of the history.

The critiques which I have delivered (*citation fixation, abstraction, etherialization*) find some footing in those who accuse Curriculum Studies of being wedded to jargon and esoteric ideas. However, unlike those critiques, I am not suggesting that Curriculum Studies scholars abandon their practices just as I am not asking for their permission to do my work. I am only asking that we see what we are doing to our particular voices. And, to be very clear, this is not about other kinds of voices (ethnic/identity Curriculum Studies, politically left studies, gender studies or studies grounded in particular methodological positions). Most of these topics/methods are also grounded in the parochial Protestant practice I have described (*citation fixation, abstraction, and etherialization*). Only, the parochial Protestant position is so naturalized it cannot be seen. We defend ourselves as a misunderstood practice. Everyone else is wrong; we are not. This reveals our inability to see the narrowness as well as the fecundity of what we do.

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# A Balanced Personal, Hermeneutic, and Holistic Curriculum Response:

## A Transactional Knowing Informed by a Subjective/Universal Ethic

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### Introduction

**I**N LIGHT OF THE VENERABLE TALMUDIC/RABBINIC HERITAGE and with respect for Donald's more informal and personal way of writing, I'm using his stylistic approach to respond to this special section's organizing question: Is curriculum studies a Protestant project? I'm writing for an academic journal in the way I talk and teach. I don't often write this way, but I find it liberating. That's a point supporting Donald's critique of abstraction, which I will be further addressing later in this essay. I also want to acknowledge how much I enjoy grappling with provocative, complex questions. I like the Socratic, hermeneutic challenges embedded in disciplined inquiry. With reference to philosophy as a way of being, I embrace opportunities for open-minded questioning, open-hearted conversation, and honest soul-searching. I resonate with Socrates' humble, public confession that though he could never be a wise person, he could be a lover of wisdom through the practice of inquiry, dialogue, and self-examination. I interpret hermeneutics as practicing the arts of interpretation through a dialogical playfulness that has no precise methodological foundation; and as I proceed, I'll be continuously referring to my Socratic, hermeneutic orientation.

Macdonald (1995) argues that "curriculum theory...is a form of hermeneutic theory. Thus curriculum theory is an ever renewing attempt to interpret curricular reality and to develop greater understanding" (p. 181). To make his point, Macdonald draws on van Manen (1980), who writes, "Theorizing contributes to one's resourcefulness by directing the orienting questions

toward the source itself; the source which gives life or spirit to (inspire) our pedagogic life” (p. 183). A key purpose of this essay is to explore this inspirational source. I quote Macdonald and van Manen because I respect them, not because I’m suffering from “citation fixation.” I’m using the generic term ‘work’ to refer to a broad range of curriculum projects with differing degrees of theoretical emphasis. The theory/practice distinction in curriculum is too simplistic; after all, isn’t all theorizing a form of practice?

I stand by what I told Donald at the time he shared his story about the bureaucratic constraints on his curriculum judgments at Arizona State University (ASU). I quickly responded that I felt that the ASU administrator didn’t seem able to distinguish between the ‘letter’ and the ‘spirit’ of her educational support work. I’ve now had the opportunity to think much more deeply about this letter/spirit distinction, particularly with reference to what I generally consider to be good curriculum work in societies with democratic values and social contracts. I’m not familiar with ASU’s educational mission statement; and for purposes of writing this essay, it isn’t necessary for me to research this matter. However, since I’m a member of Kent State University’s faculty, I do know the KSU mission statement, which explicitly refers to educating students to “think critically” for purposes of “responsible citizenship...in the service of Ohio and the global community.” Such an aim refers directly to respecting Ohio’s democratic constitution and indirectly to practicing a world-wide democratic ethic. Since KSU and ASU are both public educational institutions in the USA, I imagine that their mission statements are similar.

I also don’t know the ASU administrator’s literal responsibilities; however, that’s also not necessary. My response to Donald can be simply explained. In my view, this individual and her relevant administrative colleagues have important responsibilities tied to their institution’s mission statement; and it seems to me that their deliberations, which culminated in a scheduling decision, weren’t informed by such deep-seated educational values as advancing critical thinking and democratic citizenship. This, of course, is not surprising since as Ryan (2011) points out, a key characteristic of our current “crisis of modernity” is the decoupling of fact and value. In our current historical era, how many educators seriously consider the ethical implications of their institution’s mission statement? How many educators think about the principles underlying their daily practices?

I view Donald’s story as a useful springboard for exploring four fundamental principles of curriculum in light of democratic interpretations of Socratic *erōs* and Pauline *agapē*. With a caveat that I’ll shortly address, I’m comfortable with the notion of spirit. For me, it denotes deeply inspired and informed actions embodied in passionate vocational callings, and connotes the infinite, mysterious reach and realm of an inclusive, all-embracing love. With reference to Ricoeur’s (1978) argument for a hermeneutics that balances the critique of illusion with the poetics of renewal, I appreciate Donald’s critical insights; however, I want to balance his critique with an affirmation and celebration of what Ricoeur calls the “poetic power” of Jesus’ Parables: “If we look at the Parables as...addressed first to our imagination rather than to our will, we shall not be tempted to reduce them to...moralizing allegories. We will let their poetic power display itself within us” (p. 245).

Donald draws on Freud, Marx, and Lévi-Strauss to critique the hegemony of Protestantism and “an Hellenically influenced Christianity” in the brief introductory essay he wrote for this special section, and Ricoeur corroborates Donald’s succinct points. Ricoeur’s (1978) critical focus is on what he calls the problem of “false-consciousness,” which he



examines through the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. For Ricoeur, this falseness is due to epistemological and ethical errors caused by “illusion...as a cultural structure, a dimension of our social discourse.” In effect, Ricoeur’s critique is parallel to Cuddihy’s critique as outlined by Donald. However, by drawing on Nietzsche, Ricoeur adds an important critical insight. The problems of illusion embedded in Protestantism and Hellenic Rationalism are, in part, due to a “weak will.” Ricoeur (1978) explains: “The Nietzschean genealogy of morals must, I believe, be understood as a certain hermeneutics of our will—the willing will that Nietzsche tried to look for behind the ‘willed’ will in its limited objectives” (p. 216). As a curriculum studies scholar, it’s this Nietzschean “willing will”—enacted through a democratic *erōs* and *agapē*—that interests me.

#### Four Fundamental Principles of Curriculum

I regularly teach a graduate course that introduces educators to the underlying principles of good curriculum work in societies with democratic aspirations. The course, which is entitled *Fundamentals of Curriculum*, is guided by the concept of teaching for a holistic understanding that links subject, self and social learning. There’s a strong emphasis on critically thinking about the integral, vital relationship between educational courses of action and democratic ways of being. On the eve of World War II—in the context of America’s upcoming fight with German Fascism, Japanese Imperialism, and Soviet Communism—Dewey writes, “We [Americans] have advanced far enough to say that democracy is a way of life. We have yet to realize that it is a way of personal life and one which provides a moral standard for personal conduct” (Dewey, 1939/1989, p. 101). This Deweyan interpretation of morality is a key normative referent in the course.

Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1755) was a leading Enlightenment philosopher in France, and the authors of the United States’ constitution carefully studied his published works. This is globally relevant since the USA’s constitution has inspired and informed democratic constitutions around the world. In his examination of the ‘spirit’ underlying the ‘letter’ of the law in democratic republics, Montesquieu (1748/1952) writes,

If the people in general have a principle, their constituent parts [such as education]...will have one also. The [principle]...of education will therefore be different in each species of government: in monarchies, they will have honor for their object; in [democratic] republics, virtue; in despotic governments, fear. ...A love of the republic in a democracy is a love of the democracy; as the latter is that of equality (pp. 13, 19).

Though Montesquieu recognized the vital importance of education in advancing the spirit of democratic laws, the details of virtuous, equitable education were left implicit, unexplained and, therefore, underplayed in public educational policy and leadership. This limitation creates profound hidden and null curriculum problems for societies with democratic aspirations. In short, there’s a pervasive, hegemonic avoidance and ignorance on how to educate for responsible, democratic living.

The *Fundamentals of Curriculum* course addresses these hidden and null curriculum problems by focusing on building capacities to enact and embody virtuous, equitable education through disciplined study and practice. This capacity-building approach is informed by Garrison’s (1997) explication of Dewey’s democratic reconstruction of Socratic *erōs*. Garrison

(1997) writes that he wants, “to efface the remote, abstract, and elitist sense given to philosophy by Plato when he spoke of ‘philosopher kings.’ With Dewey, I insist that there is no theory-versus-practice dualism, all reasoning is practical reasoning, and everyone should be a lover of wisdom” (p. 2). My pedagogical work with my graduate students in *Fundamentals* focuses on this Deweyan love of practical wisdom. In effect, I’m treating the experienced teachers in this course as lead professionals for democratic education. With a nod to Nietzsche, I tell them that I’m not interested in compliant, unthinking semi-professionals.

The course begins with class discussions and inquiry learning activities on the interplay of the three fundamental principles of liberal study, equity critique, and currere agency as guided by a fourth fundamental principle of democratic practical wisdom. My pedagogical referent for liberal study is a synthesis of the Western heritage of liberal studies, the European heritage of Hegelian Bildung/Didaktik, and the North American heritage of general education. My pedagogical referent for currere agency is Pinar’s method of currere as informed by Maxine Greene’s insights into the existential subtexts of teaching-learning relationships, Janet Miller’s work on teacher voice, and my own work on teachers’ holistic journeys of understanding. There’s a critical question I like to ask: how can teachers foster **3S** understanding—referring to teaching for academic and/or technical Subject understandings that are embedded in democratic Self and Social understandings—if they are not personally cultivating such holistic understanding?

I tell the graduate students that they have the freedom to tell their personal meaning-making stories. In fact, I let them know that I view their narratives as the most important assignment in the course and one that cannot be graded. In Greene’s existential terms, how could I possibly evaluate the life journey of another human? I didn’t talk to ‘God’ last night. I tell students that I don’t live in that dogmatic cosmos, so I don’t pretend to have an overview on what constitutes quality journeys of understanding. I tell them that grades fall on the literal side of curriculum work, while their personal essays address the underlying, willful spirit of interpreting the Latin noun, curriculum, as the Latin gerund, currere. And the currere that interests me is passionate, existential, democratic, and holistic ventures!

My pedagogical referent for democratic practical wisdom is Dewey and Bentley’s (1949) transactional epistemology. I want students to acquire a beginning understanding of why Dewey felt, in the twilight of his academic career and life, that transactional knowing was a more precise referent for what he meant by educative experience. Ryan (2011) notes that, after much deliberative conversation, “Dewey and Bentley opt to replace ‘experience’ with the bold word... ‘cosmos of fact’...[referring to] a transactional interpretation of fact—that what is known as fact is inseparable from how we determine it to be so” (pp. 50-51).

In an earlier publication, Dewey (1910/1933) argues that we humans can be liberated from the limitations of habit and custom through the practice of reflective inquiry: “Genuine freedom, in short, is intellectual.... To cultivate unhindered, unreflective external activity is to foster enslavement, for it leaves the person at the mercy of appetite, sense, and circumstance” (p. 90). I want students to understand that liberating reflective inquiry is grounded in a transactional “circuit of valuation,” as explained by Ryan (2011): “I must ask myself whether what I like, desire, or value *really is* likeable, desirable, or valuable. To determine this requires a test reflecting not just my present likes and dislikes, but the long-term interests of everyone affected by such action, including myself” (p. 66). Due to its focus on enduring values for all, I tell

students that the practice of this circuit of valuation is a powerful way to enact a love of democratic practical wisdom—a Deweyan *erōs*.

As part of this class discussion, I want students to comprehend Aristotle’s argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* that practical wisdom is pivotal for staying centered on the “golden mean” of a virtuous life and for the happiness and flourishing that results from this balanced way of being. Aristotle (2011) writes: “He who is a good deliberator simply is skilled in aiming, in accord with calculation, at what is best for a human being in things attainable through action” (p. 124). Aristotle’s insight is reinforced by Socrates’ understanding of philosophy as the practice of a love of wisdom. Kekes (1995) explains that Socrates “held that [the]...virtues are related to each other more intimately than parts are related to a whole..., although ‘wisdom is the greatest of the parts’...because no action can be virtuous unless it is based on the knowledge moral wisdom gives” (pp. 32, 37). With reference to this love-of-wisdom insight, I ask students to envision the four fundamental principles of good curriculum work as a balancing of liberal study, equity critique, and currere agency through practical wisdom.

After studying these four fundamental curriculum principles, students are asked to think of themselves as lead learners for a critically-informed, study-based curriculum development that is prompted by three embedded reflective inquiries informed by four deliberative conversations (Henderson et al., 2015). The three reflective inquiries address contextually based problems of *teaching, embodying, and collegially studying* 3S understanding. The four deliberative conversations address relevant issues of *management-to-wisdom critique and negotiation, educational equity, democratic interdependence, and mythopoetic inspiration*.

### Working as a Public Intellectual

Before addressing Donald’s concerns about the problems of abstraction and anti-Semitism underlying the use of ‘spirit’ terminology, I want to first return to his story about administrative rigidity at ASU. As I mentioned earlier in this essay, my immediate letter/spirit response was based on what seemed to me to be a limitation with the ASU administrators’ deliberations. It appears to me that their decision-making was not informed by the underlying, principles of their institution’s mission. I feel this problem is, in part, due to the current professional socialization of educators in the United States and throughout the world.

To address this problem in a specific, concrete way, I’d look for an opportunity to have a conversation with the ASU administrators about the collegial, lead-learning, study agenda that I’ve introduced. The point of the dialogue wouldn’t be to convince them to undertake the study of these seven interrelated topics, since they may be too busy for such an engagement, but to simply appreciate the deep sense of professional responsibility that underlies this reconceptualized curriculum development approach. I’d want them to consider the possibility that accountability doesn’t have to be tied exclusively to numbers and rules—that ‘accountability’ is more powerfully interpreted as a commitment to the professional responsibilities of disciplined curriculum studies. In short, I’d invite them to distinguish between study-based responsibility and standardized, regulatory accountability as explained by Noddings (2013):

Basic to accountability in any profession is the expectation that a practitioner should be able to *account for*, to justify, his or her professional decision and acts. Notice that this is very different from being held accountable for the outcome itself. ...*Responsibility* is a much more powerful concept for teachers. (p. 8)

Though these ASU administrators may not be interested in such a critical dialogue, nor of its implications for their own continuing professional growth, I've had such conversations with the two key KSU administrators in my professional life: my Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Studies (TLC) School Director, Alexa Sandmann, and my College of Education, Health, and Human Services (EHHS) Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, Catherine Hackney. My dialogue with these two administrators has been in the context of my work as the coordinator of KSU's Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) M.Ed. Program. As program coordinator, I've been working as a lead learner with my C&I colleagues on activities that are designed to deepen their understanding of the C&I M.Ed. mission statement with its emphasis on the practice of transformative curriculum leadership.

It's outside the scope of this essay to provide a detailed description of the ways in which Drs. Sandmann and Hackney have supported my lead-learning work; however, I do want to provide two pertinent illustrations. Though Drs. Sandmann and Hackney don't have the time to study the seven lead-learning topics I've just introduced, they do recognize the value of this disciplined study. They comprehend the distinction between curriculum management, instructional leadership, and curriculum leadership in higher education, and they appreciate the lead-learning interpretation of transformative curriculum leadership that I've created. They realize that I'm advancing a sophisticated form of curriculum problem solving.

Dr. Sandmann is a literacy and middle childhood education scholar who recognizes that teacher educators can benefit from understanding how to advance '3S' pedagogy through curriculum leadership. She agrees that teacher educators should think of themselves as public intellectuals with particular academic specializations. Consequently, she purchased copies of *Reconceptualizing Curriculum Development* (RCD) for the TLC school library as a way of encouraging the C&I teacher education faculty to read the text. As a leadership studies scholar, Dr. Hackney recognizes that all educators—not just teacher educators—could benefit from reading the RCD text. Consequently, I asked her if she'd be interested in writing a supportive essay for the RCD text as an experienced preK-12 and Higher Education administrator. She agreed and composed an essay entitled, "Generative Leadership: Protecting the Good Work."

Ultimately, I'd like to point out to a wide range of preK-12 and higher education curriculum stakeholders—teachers, teacher educators, administrative leaders, policy leaders, etc.—that Montesquieu's insights into the spirit of democratic laws provides a principled basis for educational professionalism and artistry. Montesquieu's work is still a relevant historical resource for thinking about Dewey's (1934) call for "a common faith" in aspiring democratic societies. Using this religious term foregrounds the theological subtext of complicated curriculum conversations and serves as a good segue for addressing Donald's concerns about the abstraction and anti-Semitism that is embedded in my letter/spirit distinction. I'm not responding to Donald as a religious official but as a committed public intellectual.

### **A Transactional Knowing Informed by a Subjective/Universal Ethic**

Ryan (2015) introduces two key distinctions in Dewey's transactional pragmatism: "Dewey doesn't speak of realities *in terms of* inquiries, but *as terms in* inquiries—the bolder claim that inquiry is not merely *revelatory* of reality, but somehow *constitutive* of it" (p. 15). For

Dewey, having knowledge is qualitatively different from engaging in a knowing/known process. The former is an artifact of a non-reflective experience embedded in habit and/or custom, while the latter “marks a reflective discrimination *from* such [non-reflective] experience in response to a specific [inquiry] need or purpose” (p.15).

This reflective inquiry is hermeneutically grounded in what Ryan characterizes as Dewey’s postulate of immediate empiricism: “What is *is* what is experienced *as*” (p. 16). In short, Dewey is advancing the disciplined practice of interpretive, creative, experimental, learning-through-experience activities as the basis for human knowing. The often-stated curriculum question—What knowledge is of most worth? —can be rephrased in light of Dewey’s transactional knowing as follows: ***With reference to the enduring pragmatic consequences of the knowns that are the objectives/objects of knowings, what knowing/knowns processes are of most worth?***

Because I resonate with Dewey’s transactional pragmatism, I interpret disciplined curriculum work as involving not only Pinar’s (2007) “verticality” and “horizontality” but a pragmatic “diagonality” (Henderson & Kesson, 2009) that cuts across vertical and horizontal engagements. This diagonality is a willful, personal journey of transactional knowing resulting in holistic, democratic knowns. It is a particular application of Ryan’s (2011) “circuit of valuation,” as introduced earlier in this essay and summarized as follows:

In the transactional view, the circuit of inquiry helps produce values as readily as it determines objective facts. Moral deliberation over a problem does not directly yield a value, but rather a value candidate that can be tested like any other hypothesis. (p. 65)

Badiou’s (2001) sense of “ethical fidelity” informs this pragmatic diagonality with its three reflective inquiry and four deliberative conversation prompts. Writing as an agnostic philosopher, not a true-believing Christian, Badiou (2003) argues that Saint Paul is an exemplar of an ethical fidelity possessing subjective and universal dimensions. The subjective dimension refers to the particulars of Paul’s faith, while the universal dimension touches on the affective, aesthetic inspirations of Jesus’ teachings—the lessons of a Jewish teacher who preached a love for all, including the Jews’ Roman oppressors. Badiou (2003) explains:

Faith is the declared thought of a possible power of thought. It is not yet this power as such. As Paul forcefully puts it, ‘...faith works only through love’ (Gal. 5.6). It is from this point of view that, for the Christian subject, love underwrites the return of a law that, although nonliteral, nonetheless functions as principle and consistency for the subjective energy initiated by the declaration of faith. For the new man, love is fulfillment of the break he accomplishes with the law; it is a law of the break of the law, law of the truth of the law...., a content that, through love, is reduced to a single maxim, on pain of relapsing into death, because it is entirely subordinated to the subjectification by faith: ... ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13.8-10).’ (pp. 88-89)

Badiou (2003) summarizes his critical analysis of Pauline *agapē* with what he calls the “theorem [that] what grants power to a truth, and determines subjective fidelity, is the universal address of the relation to self [that is] instituted by the event...” (p. 90). In Paul’s case, the event is the



birth and death of Jesus with its attending faith; and the universal address is the inspiration to practice a compassionate love for all humanity.

In parallel fashion, the diagonality I'm introducing is based on the faith that educators can cultivate the personal power of holistic, democratic understanding through recursive knowing/known processes prompted by selected reflective inquiries and deliberative conversations. I've faith that teacher can engage in journeys of 3S understanding in order to be well-positioned to foster their students' 3S understandings. The universal address of this faith is the inspired practice of 3S teaching-learning reciprocity. Adapting Paul's *agapē* language, I want teachers to be able to do onto their students what they are doing onto themselves as disciplined, holistic learners in a society with democratic aspirations. I want teachers to embody and enact democratic virtues in their particular subjective ways while inspiring, facilitating, and encouraging their students to follow this same noble path.

In broader cultural, historical terms, I want teachers to engage in a holistic teaching-learning reciprocity and generosity that can be characterized as the ***subjective/universality of 3S understanding***. I want teachers to practice a pedagogy that has the aim of cultivating a particular 'power of the people.' Ryan (2011) explains the broad, global significance of this curriculum and teaching commitment:

Education is still fixed on rote memorization and standardized tests rather than the synoptic problem solving that worked so well in Dewey's Chicago school. ...We [must] think about the unresolved crisis of modernity: the prospect of self-annihilation should we fail to integrate a humane view of science and technology with an experimental approach to values. We can't work together until we begin to *see* together—not some preconceived *what*, some universal good, but a common *how* that is experimental, inclusive, and pluralistic. (p. 76)

The pragmatic diagonality that I want to advance is a specific application of this common *how* with its underlying *faith* and *love*.

Over the past four years, I've introduced this diagonality to a diverse, experienced group of Ohio teachers in the context of KSU's Teacher Leader Endorsement Program (TLEP). As the lead author of the *RCD* text, I invited three of the TLEP graduates to contribute a narrative montage to the book. All three teachers had created lead-learning plans that they initiated during an internship and then continued to enact upon graduating from the TLEP. My graduate assistant, Jennifer Schneider, and I worked with these three teachers over seven months to compose the narrative montage, which ultimately resulted in four distinct expressive outcomes: opening statements of professional willfulness, curriculum platform contemplations, currere conversations, and study inspirations.

Space doesn't allow for an in-depth discussion of their narrative montage; however, I do want to provide a brief snapshot of their lead-learning voices, recognizing that words alone don't capture the spirit of their work. When the *RCD* text first appeared in print, I invited all three teacher leaders to present selected pieces of their narrative montage to a graduate class of twenty-one teachers. During their presentations, the classroom was so silent that you could hear a pin drop; and there were tears in the eyes of some of the teachers. A special, sacred mood had taken over the class. The following brief excerpts from the opening personal statements in their



narrative montage provide a brief snapshot of what they shared during a sixty-minute presentation:

**Susan:** “I have the confidence, wisdom, and skills to find the wiggle room within the wiggle room. It’s right to be on the side of my students, to empower them to work together to think for themselves. Likewise, I am thinking for myself in my teaching and not following a choreography that someone else has written for me.”

**Konni:** “Our students should be the center of our classroom discussions and shouldn’t need to raise their hands to get our permission to enter the conversation. Students have to be given the chance to *do* the 3S themselves to understand it, just like teachers do.”

**Jennifer:** “We teacher with calling for holistic pedagogy must take risks in order to grow. We need to let ourselves blossom, becoming living expressions of our craft” (Griest, Schneider, School, & Stagliano, 2015, pp. 139-140).

## Conclusion

I find much common ground between my lead-learning interpretation of curriculum development and Donald’s Talmudic interpretation of the practical in curriculum work, and I appreciate Donald’s openness to “divinely delivered” words. In the future, I’m interested in further integrating the diagonality that I have just introduced with Pinar’s (2012) autobiographical, allegorical interpretation of currere. I want curriculum workers to engage in educational practices that are interpretive, creative, experimental, and subjective/universal. I see this as a vital ‘spirit’ underlying good curriculum work, and I look forward to my continuing conversation with Donald on this matter.

My curriculum scholarship is grounded in particular democratic interpretations of Socratic *erōs* and Pauline *agapē*, and I view Donald’s critique as providing insights into why the faith and love that I am celebrating and modelling through a particular lead-learning practice is under such duress. I’m committed to embracing the ‘baby’ of holistic, democratic *faiths* while discarding the ‘bathwater’ of disempowering, dogmatic *faiths*, and I celebrate all of humanity’s inspiring teachers with universal messages, including Buddha, Laozi, Confucius, Rabbi Hillel, and Rumi (Armstrong, 2006). Turning back to Donald’s critique, are there versions of Christian *faith* that are working against my transformative curriculum leadership advocacy? If so, how do my like-minded colleagues and I establish critical distance from such versions while exploiting the wiggle room that is available? I eagerly await Donald’s further critical insights into this important historical, hegemonic matter.

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# Disfiguring our Spiritual Ontology: A Call Toward Transactional Being

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GIVEN THE NATURE OF THIS CONVERSATION, I feel it's fitting to begin my response with a confession. When Donald asked me to participate in the project I did so with reservations. Over the last two decades that I have both known of Donald and his work as well as come to know Donald himself, I have had the utmost respect and admiration for his work. Further, I understand his frustration and his feelings of disenfranchisement. I applaud the door he has opened by framing his frustrations in terms of religion – whether we consider the framework in terms of religious identities or metaphors. And yet, I have reservations with the potential for productivity in such a conversation.

Much work has been done over the years regarding identities and their implications within academic fields. For example, Butler's work has made a tremendous impact regarding feminist and queer theory (2012; 2014). Patricia Hill Collins' (2002; 2004; 2006; 2012) work has also had an impact regarding the experiences of African American women. Specifically within curriculum studies, we have numerous examples, particularly the life work of William Pinar (1994;2006;2014) and highly influential works by Erik Malewski (2009), Adam Howard and Mark Tappan (2009), Wayne Au (2012 ), etc. Further, many compelling works addressing identity and curriculum studies have been autobiographical (Whitlock, 2007; Pinar, 1994; Slattery, 2001; Malewski & Phillon, 2009). It is evident that our field offers meaningful opportunities to explore important questions regarding education through lenses of identity.

It is also evident through the literature that when we consider academic issues in terms of identities, we need to be mindful of the potential to essentialize others in the process. For example, Jupp and Slattery (2010) address this as they critique the first wave of white identity scholarship and call for a second wave that focuses on becoming. Similarly, Asher (2007) introduces readers to one of her students, Amanda, who is frustrated by the ways in which others essentialize her Christian identity, assuming that she must be anti-gay. This challenge extends

beyond the pages of scholarship and across continents. Berkema, Zimbylas, and McGlynn (2009) examined schools in Israel, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland where they then noted that educators often operated under essentialized notions of children based upon ethnic and faith identities, and while the children themselves were aware of such distinctions, they did not fit others into such absolute categories. The authors contend that we should not erase these categories, but instead, we should reject a “fixation with an epistemological worldview that leaves no room for historicizing the categories we make and understanding their consequences in every day life” (p. 000). They argue that we must learn how to listen to one another and to appreciate one another’s perspectives without imposing our own beliefs. This, I believe, is our cosmopolitan challenge (Callejo-Perez, Breault, & White, 2015; Hansen, 2010; Pinar, 2009).

For the most part, curriculum scholars engage one another in this cosmopolitan challenge. Our professional spaces – both our annual meetings and our publications – encourage complicated conversations. In spite of these robust academic spaces, conversations regarding religious identities, particularly Christian identities, are nearly nonexistent. While I realize this is not necessarily the focus of this exchange, it is nevertheless important to note for it provides a context in which an argument such as Donald’s might largely go unchecked within our field. We do not have the historical conversation from which to draw in response (with the exception of Eugenia Whitlock’s work), and, for the most part, we do not care to respond (as evidenced by the “research desert” that appears when you use “Christian” and “curriculum studies” as filters within Google Scholar).

This explicit lack of history in terms of curriculum conversations coupled with an over-reliance on a narrow (and highly flawed) conceptualization of both Christianity and Protestantism create conditions under which debate, while ultimately possible, would undermine the actual issues buried beneath, and what I perceive to be the genuine aims of this exchange. Thus, my quandary – while I find the essentializing of both Christianity and Protestantism in Donald’s argument problematic, and, to be frank, personally offensive, I do not want to focus my efforts on a lengthy theological back-and-forth.

Nevertheless, I will briefly provide the basis for my concerns before shifting the conversation to what, I hope, addresses the focus of this debate. I realize I do so at the risk of being accused of seeking the “spirit” of the argument and thus reinforcing Donald’s original point. Donald’s argument is laced with overgeneralizations and, at times, false antinomies. First, he juxtaposes faith and reason, associating the former with Christian/Protestant (C/P) influence and the latter with Judaic traditions. For every example one may find acts of faith and calls for faith within a C/P tradition, one can find similar examples in every religious tradition. Further, faith and reason are not diametrically opposed. Faith is not inherently (nor usually, for that matter) blind nor does reason exist outside of deeply held beliefs. As Tillich (1957) notes, “faith as a personal, centered act is related to the rational structure of man’s personality which is manifest in his meaningful language (p. 7).” Zittoun (2006) recognized this when examining the lives of four young people who transitioned from Yeshiva to a secular university, their cultural and religious systems – products of a “religious bricolage” involving both faith and reason – served as bridges that allow them to internalize their beliefs and enacting their faith within the secular context.

Second, Donald juxtaposes spirit and word as he shares his experiences with colleagues as well as his conversations with Jim. To this end, he associates parables, allegories, metaphors,

and analogies to the C/P perspective and identifies them as “fictionalizations of reality” while characterizing the Judaic perspective with a focus on the word. He contends, “Protestants are people of the spirit and Jews are people of the Book.” I would argue that this falls within the category of a false antinomy because Donald sees parables and other literary devices found within the Bible as C/P “truth.” In fact, a number of C/P scholars acknowledge that these parables and the like are, in fact, historically grounded tools that do not reflect historical reality (Borg, 1997; Bruggeman, 1993; Crossan, 2007). Further, words, metaphors, religious laws, etc. can be tools for domestication and/or shutting down inquiry, but they can also be tools to engage one another. The key is *how* we use them. Yes, they pose a slippery slope that can contribute to misunderstandings and abuse, but how is that different from Hillel’s declaration that the sacrifice of the paschal lamb should take precedence over the Sabbath (Zeitlin, 1963)? Even “the words” must be interpreted and judgments must be made in relation to those words. Thus, words, parables, metaphors, and all instruments of communication have been used in varied faith traditions both to attempt to control as well as to question.

Toward the end of his essay, Donald adds a modifier to his references to Protestantism: parochial. This word sheds much light on his argument. Donald contends that curriculum studies reflect a C/P perspective and that this perspective is narrow, small, insular. Ironically, his characterizations of Christianity and Protestantism are parochial. They reflect a narrow and historically-bound image of a wide and complex range of beliefs. This image is understandable given the prominence of fundamentalism found in various media outlets, but as with all identities, what we see on our Facebook feed is not the whole story. Fundamentalism is quite real, in all faiths. In fact, Breault (2009) argues that many of the qualities found within fundamentalist sects parallel practices among some curriculum scholars. However, C/P perspectives include images of revolution (Bonhoeffer, 1954; Freire, 2000; Gutierrez, 1983; King, 1958; Neibuhr, 1944), inclusion (Cobb, 1998; Marty, 2000; McLaren, 2012; Wallis, 1996), and rejection of absolutes (Bass, 2012; Borg, 2014; Jill-Levine, 2006): all values espoused by many in curriculum studies.

When this “complicated conversation” began prior to the Bergamo conference, Donald posed this question: Is curriculum studies a Protestant project. My response - my lament - is “no.” Based upon how I construct a C/P perspective as outlined briefly above, curriculum studies is not characterized by Christianity or Protestantism, nor is it characterized by Judaism or any other faith identity. As I continue to struggle with this judgment, I cannot help but recall the documentary I have assigned when teaching a diversity class: *Beyond our Differences*. At the beginning of this documentary, Andrew Young makes a powerful point. He notes that we often consider ourselves human beings having a spiritual experience, but he feels that we should consider ourselves spiritual beings having a human experience. To this end, I believe we need to be spiritual beings engaging in curriculum work instead of seeing ourselves as curriculum scholars who, at times, use spirituality as a tool to understand and/or “do” our work. To this end, we would focus on our shared ontological vocation (Freire, 2000) and we could then work together to support the qualities and capacities that transcend our different identities: a command to be better, to be more humane, to be more just. We would focus on how we care for one another. We would strive to be humble, peaceful, forgiving, and compassionate. Rather than writing and presenting to be “right,” we would engage one another in ways to better understand. I believe this is the moral call for all us: to be fully engaged in the world and with one another so that we can be compassionate.



Thus, whether we see curriculum studies through a lens of Protestant/Christian views of the world or whether we argue for inclusion of Judaic forms of thought, we cannot ignore the fact that as a field we are, by and large, morally complacent. We grow complacent from the utopian symbolic worlds our narratives weave (many of which focus on being right instead of helping others) and symbols and metaphors that pervade our intellectual discourse become barriers for authentic engagement with one another. To move beyond intellectual exercises and to become morally tethered to one another, we need to become these spiritual beings with shared human experiences. To do this, we need to actively seek out tensions and significance in our shared lives and respond to them collectively. This seeking out and responding is consistent with Taylor's (1992) notions of disfiguring – a collective act that conjoins abstraction and figuration. It involves seeking the eternal and the immutable within our collective lives while simultaneously holding on to the contingent. Taylor (1992) notes,

Disfiguring enacts denigration in the real figure, image, form, and representation... revelation and concealment as well as presence and absence are interwoven in such a way that every representation is both a re-presentation and a derepresentation (p.7).

Because we see ourselves as human beings occupying spiritual spaces (vs. spiritual beings occupying historical, political, commodified, and, at times, violent spaces), we can still separate ourselves from the spiritual nature of our work. We can isolate the essence of individual meanings and thus shield ourselves from wrestling publically with who we are in relation to one another. To the degree that we can see ourselves as spiritual beings, then we are better prepared to identify and hold on to tensions that result from irreconcilable meanings while simultaneously seeking out that which transcends our differences. We use our individual and collective identities with and against themselves in order to respond to the referential enactment of those identities upon our shared experiences. This requires two very different tasks that combine the aesthetic and the epistemological in a collective moral act. We wrestle with what our identities mean to us personally and collectively while we simultaneously critique what these identities do to us when they are used by others.

In order for us to achieve this level of transactional being, we must create a heterotopian space for our theorizing. Heterotopias are enacted utopias. The utopian spaces within which we often theorize are not real. They provide images of perfection and invite disengagement by creating enough space and enough surveillance of one another to maintain our ideological and professional differences. In contrast, heterotopias embrace both the real and the ideal simultaneously. While they are outside the real world, they nevertheless signify reality. Foucault (1967) characterized the relationship between utopia and heterotopia in terms of a mirror. We may stand before a mirror and see what we could be in its reflection – an image of possibility. This allows us to re-examine who we are in the world and to approximate the utopian image we see. To this end, the mirror represents utopia while our engagement with the mirror and the manner in which we change to reflect what we see in the mirror represents heterotopian spaces. He notes, “it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (Foucault, 1967, p. 4).

Heterotopias can serve multiple and often incompatible functions. As such, they allow us to create spaces for complicated conversations representing multiple curriculum perspectives.

Heterotopias create opportunities to hold conflicting images of the nature and purpose of schooling simultaneously and to engage one another in relation to these conflicting images. Further, heterotopias can embrace the historical nature of our identities without relegating us to be finished fixtures within a historical point and time. As Huebner (1967) notes, the notion of time arises out of our existence. Human life is made up of how the past and the future are brought into the moment. Our temporal nature, as Huebner argues, is never fixed. Heterotopias embrace both the “perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place” (Foucault, 1967/1984, p. 7) as well as the temporal and emerging nature of our lives.

Thus, as spiritual beings occupying heterotopic spaces, we are compelled to encounter differences and engage one another in ways that honor those differences as part of the complexity of living together. This cosmopolitan state is consistent with the democratic ideal, and it is a necessary condition for our aesthetic receptivity to the world (Schoolman, 2001). According to Schoolman, our we are receptive to the world to the degree that we can accept differences and act together in light of (and at times in spite of) those differences. If that context is not democratic, we are unable to accept differences and act in concert within and among those differences. He notes, “Without democracy...individuality is unable to become aesthetic” (p. 22). When we are spiritual beings occupying democratic spaces, we can engage with one another more fully because of the mimetic and moral dimensions to our theorizing. According to Schoolman, democratic spaces promote the means through which we are able to take in and maintain difference. As such, we do not lose whom we are when we work together. Similarly, we do not morph into some easily categorized group by virtue of those with whom we associate. He notes, “For each individual, differences are pluralized or multiplied; hence, for the mass, differences are undiminished.” (p. 277). Therefore, if we are spiritual beings occupying this democratic space then we maintain our own identities while we forge our collective identities and still recognize the differences within and among those with whom we work. We not only see difference, we seek it. Seeking differences becomes an aesthetic impulse in our lives and work with one another. It can lead us to transactional ways of being: engagement that ensures growth and meaning making (Boyles, 2012).

This shift toward transactional being with one another calls for a radical ontology. According to Carlson (1982), we need to return to a hermeneutic rationality that summons us to seek out and face anxiety, and this work should be a vital part of our theorizing. I would add to Carlson’s definition that as spiritual beings, we have a moral obligation to see ourselves as both the subject and the object of that anxiety. We must examine how our collective lives have played a part in the conditions of this work that are unjust, inhumane, or otherwise uncaring. To this end, in order for curriculum scholars to transcend our differences and truly work together, we must remain ill at ease. We must maintain a sense of ideological vulnerability and compassion as a community in order to fully address the implications of who we are and the significance of the multiple (and often conflicting) meanings we share.

However, our “community” within curriculum theorizing is often interactional, not transactional. As Boyles (2012) notes in his analysis of Dewey’s naturalism as transactional realism, interaction can occur without considering the consequences of the interaction. Curriculum scholars can interact in passive ways. We can sit before a group of conference participants and transmit our ideas. Even if a session provides the time and space for discussion following the presentations, participants and attendees still remain rather passive in their interaction. Rarely does the experience of sharing ideas through a professional conference or

journal lead to growth “by means of an environment” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). In contrast, as spiritual beings engaging in a shared human experience, our responses would be collective and our ideas would be shared. If those ideas are at odds with one another, we would see that as an opportunity for challenging ourselves and to enlarge the cosmopolitan encounter as well as the complicated curriculum conversation.

This collective response should challenge our perceptions of curriculum. According to Dewey (1994), perception is more than what is immediately encountered. It involves an accumulation of meaning. It opens up potential within our work together and provides a “predictive expectancy” (p. 144). More importantly, particularly in light of this project, perceptions give us pause to consider the complex nature of categories we once held and challenge us to accept that our preconceived notions about others could be wrong. How we perceive curriculum together should jar us out of our intellectual complacency and invite a sense of shared humility. As the spiritual leaders in the documentary acknowledged, none of us can have more than a glimpse of the truth – whether we consider that truth in absolute terms, as something socially constructed, or otherwise. Knowing this and engaging with one another requires both an intellectual and a moral commitment. It compels us to respond to others – and to do so in ways to build genuine mutuality, not to prove that we are right. According to Dewey (1934), perception is a vital part of our experience because it helps us to grasp meanings as a whole. We are able to reason according to our range of understanding we have accumulated, and that range is based upon the degree to which we have lingered together over complex matters. Didactic and siloed theorizing really does not require the kind of vulnerable and uncomfortable work required in disfiguring our curricular discourse. Instead, it involves recognition of signifiers that represent a false sense of certainty. In other words, it involves recognition, not perception. Dewey (1934) laments, “Recognition is perception before it has a chance to develop freely” (p. 52). Further, our desire to be right in relation to others’ theorizing arrests recognition before it can develop into perception. When the basis for our theorizing is rooted in recognition of false signifiers of certainty (or misguided and essentialized judgments of others), then we are at great risk of falling into morally complacent positions and shutting off the possibility of engaging in authentic curriculum conversations with others. In contrast, perceiving the nature of curriculum and working together to explore the significance of our theorizing engages our capacity to imagine something altogether different and better. As Dewey (1934) notes,

An unseen power controlling our destiny becomes the power of the ideal...the artist, scientist, parent, as far as they are actuated by the spirit of their callings, are controlled by the unseen. For all endeavor for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual (p.23).

Engaging our public imaginations within our curriculum theorizing disrupts habits and vague responses to the world around us. It challenges us to reject false choices perpetuated by our ideology. Perceiving curriculum differently can serve as an “edifying discourse” to draw us into the profound, complex, and uncertain (Kierkegaard, 1958). As Jackson (1998) notes, engaging our imaginations this way “reawakens our sensibilities” (p. 27). Engaging our curricular imaginations not only causes us to see what we have otherwise come to overlook. It also challenges us to see in full that which we have only seen in part, and it draws us into the recognition that certain tensions between curriculum theorists cannot be easily reconciled, but that does not mean that they should be ignored.

Further, engaging our curricular imaginations to perceive new images and ideas propels us toward living out our ontological vocation of being in the world more fully because it engages what Garrison (1997) describes as our prophetic capacities:

Prophets have the capacity to penetrate the veneer of supposedly fixed and final actuality and name what constrains and oppresses us. They expose the aesthetic and moral possibilities that lie beneath the knowledge and unalterable rules and laws. Their poetry is the criticism of life (p. 135).

This capacity, according to Garrison, involves a passionate awareness. As prophets, as spiritual beings engaging in a human experience, we cannot help but turn outward, and when we turn outward, because of our love for others, we must respond (Greene, 1995). As Freire (1970) argues, we “insert” ourselves within our world and see ourselves belonging to it. We position ourselves as subjects who can act upon the world in the midst of its ambiguity and uncertainty. We are able to do this because of imaginative visions (Garrison, 1997). Our response to each other becomes a rhythmic enterprise – grounding and welling between harmony and disharmony as a “more aesthetic as well as intellectual journey” (Garrison, 1997, p. 135).

### **Conclusion: Curriculum as Radical Transactions**

In other manuscripts and in countless classes I’ve taught, I have turned to an Audrey Lorde poem to wrestle with the ontological vocation that I believe lies at the heart of curriculum studies. The poem is “To My Daughter the Junkie on the Train.” I continue to turn to this poem because it offers a brutally honest look at our challenge. In the poem, Lorde describes a woman’s experience returning home from a PTA meeting on a subway. A young woman “with a horse in her brain.” slumps down beside this woman and uses her as a pillow as she drifts off to sleep. When it is time for the woman to exit the train, she extends a glance of compassion toward the young girl. Her offer to help is met with “terrible technicolor laughter,” and all the mothers up and down the aisle of the subway car turn away – unable to gaze upon their own failures as mothers displayed in this image of a junkie. This woman is a spiritual being having a human experience. The compassionate gaze she offered was a transactional, aesthetic, and moral act. It reached beyond the mere utility of assistance to make a connection with something that was part of the woman but had been lost.

Returning to Donald’s question posed months ago: is curriculum studies a Protestant project? No. But it should be a transactional project. It should be a spiritual project. It should be a cosmopolitan project. None of these “shoulds” conflict with Christianity and/or Protestantism nor do they conflict with Judaism or any other faith identity. As the Chief Rabbi David Rosen noted within the documentary, religion gives meaning to our lives. We are bound up in the understanding of who we are as individuals, as family, and as a people. Spiritual beings respond to violence with love and compassion, and that is what makes their work revolutionary. Andrew Young confessed that civil rights workers in the South were, at times, wary of responding to violence with love, but he concluded that they followed the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the South in order to “save black men’s bodies and white men’s souls.” In this same documentary, the Dalai Lama noted that violence always reaps violence, and those who work from a place of hatred are always the ones most violated. The film ends with a quote from the Talmud Shabbar, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary.” Sadly, much of what we do within curriculum studies involves only the commentary.

How do we live as spiritual beings sharing a human experience? First, we must recognize that the mimetic dimension of our identities is a very real part of our work together, but it is not enough. We cannot identify and debate the complexity and tensions found within our shared lived experiences and yet, like the women on Lorde's train, turn away and reject our role in those tensions. Not only must we strive to be compassionate with one another, but we must also recognize the brutal compassion that binds us in pain and suffering (Breault, 2002). It is not enough to look toward the girl on the train as the woman in Lorde's poem did. We must be ready at all times to extend that gaze. Our individual and collective posture should be such that we anticipate opportunities to be more humane, more kind, and more just.

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# Protestantism as Ideology: Or, how I learned I was a Protestant

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*My writing must begin with my own Protestant upbringing, a very German Lutheran (Missouri Synod) form of Protestantism. My family went to church every Sunday, no exceptions. What I remember most is that I did not feel religious. Of course there was my eighth grade confirmation, a ritual of adolescence, in which I felt like an angel in my white dress, and there was high school bible youth group every Wednesday night, an excuse to stay out late on a school night and hang out with the “older” crowd. What I liked most about going to church was coming home afterward when my whole family sat down for a communal meal in our formal dining room (the only day of the week we ate in this space). I loved the white tablecloth, my mother’s china, silver and the big platters of Mid-Western meat and vegetables. Sunday was a rest day from work. We would sit for several hours engaged in everyday conversation, sometimes politics (as I got older more politics) and often getting lessons in good manners. These are my fondest memories of going to church. Nothing that had to do with religion, but I loved church because it brought my family together in shared rituals that serve as memory.*

AS I REFLECT ON THESE MEMORIES, my experiences of religion growing up were clearly not grounded in deep theological understanding. These autobiographical musings function as a clear reminder that for me growing up was not a religious experience but instead was where I learned the culture and language of Protestantism. Like Max Weber (1904), I understand religion as rituals that embody culture – in this case Protestant culture.<sup>1</sup> The ritual of

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<sup>1</sup> I must comment on my use of citations. Given Donald’s salient and very important critiques of “citations” as a mechanism for producing “convergent narratives” and “illusions of truth” which imply a subjectivity that is derivative, my own use of citations functions as a way to honor those I have been inspired and shaped by and as a means of acknowledging the intra-actions which produce my subject position at a particular moment, and show the intra-relationality of my thinking and work. What I deeply appreciate about Donald’s critique is the opportunity to rethink

going to church every Sunday inscribed not theological lessons, but a hidden curriculum of discipline, self-control, and working hard. My religious upbringing indoctrinated me in habits necessary for participation in American Protestant culture, particularly schools and eventually as a curriculum scholar.<sup>2</sup> My work as a curriculum theorist cannot be separated from my cultural fabric, which is deeply Protestant. And, while I am not a Protestant, who I am, how I think and how I read the world (in fact that I read the world) is inevitably shaped by culture. Religion is, as Durkheim (1912/1995) reminds us, ultimately a social thing.

The rituals I took part in as a child were *practices* that produced my subjectivity as a disciplined, hard working student who believed that mastery of knowledge would bring enlightenment. As a curriculum scholar my subjectivity is constituted through a past, present and future that is deeply implicated in a Protestant culture. My *practices* as a theorist cannot help but be constitutive of the culture, the very Protestant culture, in which I was raised. *Practices*, as Foucault (1972) maintains, function as processes of normalization through which human beings are made subjects through and in a historically specific discourse. In other words, these practices had little to do with my spiritual development, and everything to do with my indoctrination into a Protestant discourse of culture and ethics that disciplined my subjectivity (what I understood as my salvation) by hard work, individual achievement, and outward signs of material gain. Max Weber (1904) in *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* argues that capitalism would not have been possible without Protestant culture and its practices. Likewise, curriculum theorists and historians (Baker, 2001; Hendry, 2011; McKnight, 2003; Meyer, 2000; Pinar, 2006; Trohler, 2011; Tyack, 1966) have maintained that American education/schooling is not only the product of a Protestant ideology, but is constitutive of it. Almost fifty years ago David Tyack (1966) suggested that the Kingdom of God as understood by the Puritans did not simply affect the American Common School, but that the common school was the embodiment of Protestant culture. More recently, Douglas McKnight and Stephen Triche (2011) have mapped out how the Puritans deployed constructs like “one best method” and “technique” (p.34) for “Godly learning,” as a means to simplify knowledge through reductionism and rationalism, resulting in a language that made impossible direct, emotional, knowledge of God. In the language of Protestantism, education is for information (learning), not communication (study, conversation); it is an epistemology (abstraction), not an ontology (way of being in the world); and it is product (individual soul) not a process (ethics).

Curriculum theorists and historians often attribute and critique the roots of technocratic, scientific, social efficiency paradigms of curriculum to twentieth century curricularists like Frederick Taylor, Edward Thorndike, and Ralph Tyler. This dominant narrative functions to situate contemporary curriculum studies as the redemptive force in recasting curriculum as an

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in what ways “citation fixation” functions as a means of learning to be a “good Protestant citizen.” I had not thought about it in this way before and will never think the same way each time I see a citation. I continue to use citations in this text as a way to acknowledge and build a community of dialogue with those dead, present and future.

<sup>2</sup> Protestantism is, of course, not a monolithic category. Four principal forms of ascetic Protestantism are Calvinism, Pietism (eventually Lutheranism), Methodism and Baptism. This paper does not allow for a fleshing out of the nuances of each form and its iterations across time. Protestantism will be used here as an umbrella term, however given that early American Protestantism, Puritanism, was primarily shaped by Calvinism, this will be my focus.

emancipatory project that will make a “cut” from an historically oppressive curriculum.<sup>3</sup> This “cut” is, I maintain, a move that is indicative of a Protestant culture which is deeply embedded in notions of progress, a concept which ultimately is predicated on a “new body of knowledge” (abstraction) not a “body without organs” (a set of intra-acting relationships). Ironically, it is the “production” of new knowledge (“progressivism,” “reconceptualization,” the “next moment,” etc.) that reifies notions of “progress” that contributes to the erasure and suppression of the multiplicities of history including the language of Protestantism. I suggest that this hegemonic, linear curriculum “history” obscures the multiple roots or rhizomatic lines that connect “semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). Like Nietzsche’s call to shatter the linear unity of knowledge, curriculum studies has not sufficiently acknowledged the “cyclic unity of the eternal return, present as the nonknown in thought” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 6). This nonknown, the unspeakable, is the legacy of Protestant discourses as constitutive of not only modern education, but curriculum studies as well.

In my upbringing, religion functioned not as a set of spiritual beliefs, but as an ideology embedded in my schooling that was both conscious and unconscious in shaping the possibilities and limits of my desires, ideas, morals, goals, and expectations. Louis Althusser (1977) reminds us that ideas (ideology) are the products of social, material practices, not the reverse. In other words “*ideas are material.*” What is ultimately ideological for Althusser are not the subjective beliefs held in the conscious “minds” of human individuals, but rather discourses that produce beliefs, the material institutions and rituals that individuals take part in without submitting it to conscious examination. The practices and rituals of American education – method, curriculum, objectives, disciplines, tracking, sorting, and classifying – are very deeply rooted in Protestant discourses that emerged during the Reformation. The dominant discourses or “languages” of education, as Daniel Tröhler (2011) maintains are religious, more specifically Protestant (German Lutheranism and Swiss Calvinism). These religious languages are not at all restricted to theological questions, Tröhler suggests, “but include also the questions of the earthly organization of life. They thus include ideals of politics and social order, too, and alleged ideal ways to educate the new generation into this order” (p. 2). This “new social order” – capitalism, compulsory education, and the cult of individualism ushered in by the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648), ultimately challenged the “spiritual universalism” of the Roman Catholic Church as the primary locus of authority in society, replacing it with the Protestant soul of the individual.

Consequently, the question for me is not “Is Curriculum Studies a Protestant Project?” (this is already well established), but “What has made possible the invisibility of the hegemony of Protestant ideology in curriculum studies?” and “How does the very nature of Protestant ideology, language and culture conceal its own complicity in maintaining this dominance?” John Meyer (2000) posits that education is the secular religion of modernism, contending that

The religious origins of and nature of education are very striking, both at mass and elite levels. In modern analyses, and in the structure of content of modern education itself, they seem to have disappeared in an avalanche of secularization. (p. 207)

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<sup>3</sup> See P. Hendry (2011) for a more detailed discussion of the critiques of the dominant narratives of contemporary curriculum studies as reproducing modernist, Protestant concepts of rationality, linearity and progress.

The traces of Protestantism in contemporary education are obscured given the supposed secular nature of schooling in which church and state are separate. However, the invisibility of the languages of Protestantism in education does not make them ineffective. In fact, Tröhler maintains invisibility makes discourses even more effective. This essay seeks to extricate the nonknown to trace the invisible “ghosts” of Protestantism in curriculum studies (method, curriculum, disciplines, classification) that are hauntingly real.

***An Educational Reform Movement: Protestantism and Method***

The Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) might be considered one of the very first “Western” educational reform movement. Coinciding with the rise of nationalism, the Renaissance, the scientific revolution, and the printing press, the Reformation marked the transition from the medieval to the modern age. Nowhere did this shift to modernity have greater impact than in major changes to education and teaching. Prior to the reformation teaching had been done through dialogue, either through conversation or through a formal argument (rhetoric) or disputation between the student and teacher (Trueit, 2012). In fact, Ong (1958/1983) maintains that the sixteenth century had no word in ordinary usage that clearly expressed what we mean today by method - “a series of ordered steps gone through to produce with certain efficacy a desired effect, - a routine of efficiency” (p. 225). According to Ong (1958/1983), “this notion is not entirely missing ...but it has no *independent* existence” (p. 225). While the concept of order was not absent in medieval thinking it tended to be focused on the order of the mind or discourse (rhetoric); in other words a routine of thinking. The shift from rhetoric to a method of logic certainly did not occur overnight, but is often associated with one particular individual: Peter Ramus (1515-1572).

Ramus was a schoolteacher at the Collège de Presles. While he started his teaching career employing rhetoric, by 1555 he began to “methodize” everything. For Ramus “method” (*methodus*) is the “orderly pedagogical presentation of any subject by reputedly scientific descent from ‘general principles’ to ‘specials’ by means of definition and bipartite division” (Ong, 1958/1983, p. 30). Method came to mean, among other things, a curriculum subject because it signified a short cut to knowledge. Triche and McKnight (2004) point out that this intellectual short cut “suppressed the metaphor of education as intellectual journey characterized by lengthy, rigorous study and inquiry from which knowledge of self and the world would emerge” (p. 39). Learning, rather than “study” (a significant shift to which I will return later in the paper), became for Ramus the goal of his teaching as a means to simplify or “short cut” the procedures of his students. He accomplished this by creating a map that attempted to codify knowledge and present the reader with a linear process by which to attain that knowledge (McKnight, 2003). According to Doll (cited in Trueit, 2012), “in charting knowledge in this way, Ramus in the interest of pedagogical expediency -‘dissociated knowledge from discourse’ (Ong, 1983 [1958], Preface). Teaching now moved from laying out issues for discussion to disseminating knowledge for absorption” (pp. 92-94). The shift from study to learning, and from rhetoric to knowledge, necessitated method. Teaching was reduced from the universal and general principles to the smallest, singular parts.

The success of the Protestant Reformation was dependent on shifting from scholasticism’s use of Aristotle’s complex logic to developing a practical set of educational tools (or *practices*) that would be expedient and useful both in terms of preparing sermons and running schools, institutions that were central to converting Protestants. Both the term “method” and “curriculum” emerged, constitutive of Protestant discourse and the Reformation, as a means of producing individual human subjects and converting meaning making into knowledge.



According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the earliest source for “curriculum” is the University of Glasgow in 1633, with the exception of the 1582 records of the University of Leiden where a version of Peter Ramus’s *Professio Regia* with the term “curriculum” appears. Both universities (Glasgow and Leiden) were heavily influenced by Calvinist ideas, leading Hamilton (2009) to suggest that to speak of post-Reformation curriculum “is to point to an educational entity that exhibits both structural wholeness and sequential completeness” (p. 11). While humanist education had not been structured, negotiated instead between the student and teacher, the emergence of “curriculum” as a Protestant concept suggested the need for control of both teaching and learning. This shift to “order” education also shaped the concept of method. Whereas rhetoric in humanist education had functioned as a mode of intellectual analysis that was a leisurely art, it did not provide, according to Hamilton, a science or technique that articulated “guidelines that could be rapidly assimilated and easily applied” (p. 11). These “reforms” to order education through method resulted in teaching and learning becoming more open to external scrutiny and control.

The term “school” emerged at the beginning of the seventeenth century in England and marked what would become mass education (Davis, 2004). “Education” as a formalized institution was radically different from ancient and medieval understandings of education in which the liberal arts (geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, music, grammar, logic and rhetoric) were the heart of curriculum, as opposed to the practical arts (math, reading, writing). These “disciplines,” which reflected the emerging scientific view of the world, marked a radical epistemological shift in which knowledge was no longer understood as critical to meaning-making, but as a tool for mastery of the world (Hendry, 2011).

This “method” of teaching had great appeal to Protestants, who adopted Ramus’ maps in Calvinist universities throughout Europe (McKnight, 2003). Puritan leaders, trained in and by Ramist curriculum maps at British universities before coming to America, were well versed in the utilitarian nature of Ramus’ curriculum. For the Puritans, “without a reasoned, linear method, one could never understand and explicate, by way of a spiritual narration, one’s conversion” (McKnight, 2003, p. 54). The Puritans adopted “method” at Harvard as well as throughout the schools and churches in colonial New England. At the heart of being Protestant and Protestant salvation (for the Puritans in particular) was “method.” Reason alone could not be trusted to discover salvation since this would mean “man” could “know” God. According to John Morgan (1986), “reason could be trusted to help faith by providing it with an intellectual base, but it could not discover the means to salvation” (p.45). While reason was essential, salvation also required living a “civil, good life, the peaceful carrying out of the duties of earthly existence” (p, 55). While “method” ensured reason, schooling (beginning with Harvard and eventually the common schools) provided the mechanisms for ensuring civility. Method and compulsory public education were the *practices* through which Protestant culture achieved hegemony.

This need for method is perhaps best understood in the context of understanding the concept of the Protestant soul and its salvation. According to Tröhler (2011), “the human soul is of utmost importance, because according to Protestantism, salvation takes place in the soul while a person contemplatively reads the Holy Bible or prays” (p. 134). In contrast to this individual self-examination, salvation in the Catholic Church is located in the collective rituals of the Church (confession, communion, etc.) characterized by a “cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin” which provides the certainty of forgiveness (Weber, 1904, p. 117). The Roman Catholic Church assured salvation to individuals who accepted the church’s sacraments and submitted to clerical authority. However, the Reformation effectively removed



such assurances, creating a void in what had been a worldview in which the average person had unconditional salvation. In the absence of such assurances from religious authority, Weber (1904) argued that Protestants began to look for other "signs" that they were saved. Calvin and his followers taught a doctrine of double predestination, in which from the beginning God chose some people for salvation and others for damnation.

Calvinism, unlike Roman Catholic doctrine, did not provide an absolute, universal source of mitigation for sin, only the "chosen" were guaranteed salvation. Salvation was predicated on a life of good works combined into a unified system. For Protestants, according to Weber (1904) "the moral conduct of the average man was thus deprived of its planless and unsystematic character and subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole" (p. 117). This regulation of the self, of the whole of conduct, in both private and public life, functioned as a new form of control through self-examination. This method was based on the rationalization of the world and the elimination of magic, as well as passion, as a means of salvation. Protestant theology thus contributed to a radical shift in the relationship of the human subject to God in which the "individual" was in direct relation with God rather than intermediation by an institution or set of rituals (which were considered by Protestants as the equivalent of magic). Critical to the salvation of the individual soul was the ability to read and interpret text as a means to derive an absolute "truth." The "scriptural economy" of reading that emerged as a consequence of Protestantism, as de Certeau (1984) illuminates, is an apparatus of modern "discipline," "a practice that is inseparable from the 'reproduction' made possible by the development of printing" (p. 132). The practice of reading (necessary for salvation) argues de Certeau accompanied a double isolation "from the 'people' (as opposed to the "bourgeoisie") and from "voice" (in opposition to the written). These "cuts" -of the people (separation of the masses from an elite chosen-emerging bourgeoisie) and of the oral (myth, pagan, primitive, magical, profane) from a scriptural economy (representation, enlightened, sacred) guaranteed the production of a society (culture) in which external markers (reading) would guarantee the production of the rational, individual through education (method).

***Textual Moves: From "Word" to "Spirit" to "Study"***

*I knew I was Protestant because it turned out that most of my best friends in middle school (Andrea Gordon), high school (Caryn Rosenholtz) and college (Steve Lee, Lisa Sameulson, Cheryl Friedman, Leslie Bloom) were all Jewish. I went to synagogue, Hanukkah celebrations, bar mitzvahs and Jewish weddings. None of my friends went to Friday services, but they all identified as Jewish. Religion was not a topic of conversation, but politics was – the Nuclear Arms Race, Apartheid in South Africa, overpopulation, as well as whether to be a Maoist or Freirian socialist. We carried around Mao's little Red Book and quoted heavily from it, as well the works of Julius Nyrere. We were well read; I would say text driven – and loved to debate, argue, challenge, each other. Politics and ideology were my religion and we had faith in the revolution. My Jewish friends had what I had been missing in my Protestant upbringing—disagreement, conflict, and real dialogue – not polite conversation (or what Donald refers to as civility). I realized being Lutheran had meant inward contemplation, individual thought and an internal experience of God. Being Jewish meant outward "kwishing," collective arguments and questioning not God, but always the meaning of God. As a young woman, I realized for the first time that there was another way to be in the world.*

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"

According to Alan Block (2004), this statement, the first in the Hebrew Bible, is a supreme challenge to the entire classical tradition of Western metaphysics. The temporality inherent in this statement, “in the beginning,” suggests that matter is not eternal, the world was created, and that creation came into being through divine hands. Hebrew thought holds that “the world could not be perceived through Reason because there were no natural laws that could be rationally explicated or logically deduced: the universe was not naturally formed: rather, the world was created” (Block, 2004, p. 13). This is the very antithesis of Greek ontology in which there is a natural order, in which meaning recedes and reason is central to meaning making. Greek thought is based on the assumption that meaning preceded the word. There is meaning and it must be found. In contrast, for Hebrews there is always another interpretation of text because “what is at stake is not final knowledge, but daily practice” (Block, 2004, p. 14). The Platonic concept of the real – real concepts and real ideas – a belief that mind could grasp these concepts and ideas through reason – is opposed by Jewish practice which “seeks not the truth but a life that is true” (Block, 2004, p. 20). Meaning is not in the text, but may be made with the text; meaning is not in God, but may be made with God. Rabbinic thought encourages multiplicity of meanings and offers not knowledge but ways to create knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the purpose of education from a Judaic perspective is not learning, teaching or knowledge, but study. Study, as Allan Block (2004) reminds us, is like prayer; it is a way of being-an ethics. Education is not about knowledge, but an ethical responsibility to create new worlds through study (Biesta, 2014).

At the very center of Talmudic discourse is an understanding of education as an active process of deliberation, as opposed to a Protestant focus on method for deriving/organizing knowledge. Joseph Schwab’s (1971; 1977) work, as Donald points out, reminds us of the influence of these ancient traditions, whose deep-rooted history is rarely appreciated in contemporary curricular thought. In these ancient Jewish traditions education is the *process* of seeking answers, not the answers themselves. Clearly, I hear echoes of this Jewish rejection of grand narratives and foundations within post-modern, pragmatist, post-structuralist and narrative understandings of curriculum. Perhaps we might suggest that, in part, contemporary Curriculum Studies is entangled in Talmudic ideology. Talmudic pedagogy is one focused on thinking of questions, not finding *the* answers, but asking another question (Block, 2004, p. 13). Talmud is not concerned with the merely theoretical (abstract/etherialization as Donald refers to it), but insists on the particular and on the intimacy between thought and action (which does not require spirit). This ongoing process of deliberation and textual interpretation is a hermeneutical thinking that distinguishes itself not only from canonical Greek thinking, which can be described as discursive logical reasoning (Douglas, 2001), or medieval Catholic practices, which were rooted in ritual and oral traditions, but most significantly from Protestant practices and ideologies.

The Protestant Reformation ushered in an emphasis on text that diverged significantly from either Jewish hermeneutical practices or Roman Catholic ritual practices. For Jean Calvin (1509-1564), it was the individual’s duty to read the Bible for himself or herself to directly receive God’s wisdom and truth. As McKnight (2003) suggests “education became important in terms of learning to read the bible, instead of passively receiving the word as a mysterious missive delivered by a priest” (p. 15). Knowledge of the word, the shift from an oral to textual culture, signified that an external marker (the word), as well as interpretation of its truth, was

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Rabbinic thought see *Engendering Curriculum History* (Hendry, 2011).

necessary for salvation. No longer was the “body of the church” (community/communion) sufficient for salvation. Education for interpretation and self-examination ensured that passions were kept in check, functioning as the guarantor of an “ordered modernity” that would “ensure economical progress and social justice” in the liberal democracies emerging in most modern European nation-states (Trohler, 2011, 35).

Jean Calvin’s concept of “Sola Scriptura” (by Scripture alone) embodied his thought that true knowledge of God could only be achieved through reading the Scriptures. Without it, one is condemned to ignorance and sin. (Hence the current hegemony of being “literate” meaning reading, constructs the subject through external markers). For Jews and Catholics, meaning-making is always a process – either a hermeneutic one or one embodied in ritual – because complete understanding of the divine is impossible because there is no abstract, absolute truth, only the practices of dialogue or ritual. For Protestants on the other hand, knowledge is absolute and to be found in the text. For Calvin, only when we read the Bible can God be revealed as a saviour. Calvin was careful to avoid any idolatry of the written word. He said that the Biblical text in itself was “as if dead, devoid of any vigour.” Only the Holy Spirit in our heart and our mind could make it become a living and life-giving word. Reformed theologians who lived after his time distinguished between the “*verbum Dei*” (the written Word of God), which we could find in the Bible, and the “*vox Dei*” (the living voice of God) which the Spirit enabled us to hear. In essence, salvation required text, reason, and spirit.

Without the Spirit, the Scripture was a “*verbum*,” a statement or an account, which was based on a real knowledge of God and from which it was possible to deduce a true doctrine. This did not, however, bring Christ close to us, in our midst, even if it enabled us to discover his teaching. Being a Biblical scholar or exegetist was not sufficient to receive the Word that saves and transforms. Conversely, without the Scripture, the Spirit cannot say or teach anything at all. Thus Calvin argued against the emotionally inspired who believed that the Spirit taught them by speaking straight to their hearts, and also against the allegorical writers of the Middle Ages who thought that if they were inspired by the Spirit, respect for the Biblical text was no longer necessary. The Spirit could not give knowledge to a believer: the believer him or herself transformed the knowledge to be found in the Bible into absolute truth. Faith did not mean it was no longer important to study the Bible as a scholar or an intellectual. The Word of God was most effective when the *verbum* (*word*) and the *vox* (*spirit*) came together in unison.

Here is the line of “spirit” that Donald names as specifically Protestant. For Protestants (and here I differ from Donald in that I do not include all Christians, since Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Coptic Christians, Gnostics, Quakers, etc. do not necessarily share these Protestant ideologies), interpretative practices, (read: salvation), are steeped in “ideas about the world” not in the “centrality of language.” For Protestants, words alone are not enough because meaning is not in words. Spirit is engaged because words are not “transparent in their meaning; there is a spirit behind the words that is the truth of the words” (Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, personal communication, March 3, 2015). In Talmudic/Judaic discourses words do point to real things (not abstractions) in the world that require making sense of them through language. According to Donald (Under Review),

words contain meaning in relation to the world around us. Our task is to make sense of the relationship between the words, divinely delivered, and experiences in the world. Understanding [not salvation] does not come through faith but through a close parsing of words in relation to the world to which they point. The words continuously manifest the

world in various ways that help us act correctly in the world.

In short, as Donald suggests, Protestants are people of the spirit (ideas/abstraction) and Jews are people of the Book (the word, thus Cuddihy's connection between Jews and Structuralism). Donna suggests that this is a false antinomy since "all instruments of communication have been used in varied faith traditions both to attempt to control as well as to question" What I understand Donald to say is that Talmudic thought does not include faith. The world was created and that is how we know there is a God. Because God is not questioned there is no need for faith, spirit or any other mediating factor, there is only the word. How we use language, as Donna points out, is key. Within the Talmudic tradition reading the word (language) is an ethical responsibility to dialogue. Within the Protestant tradition reading the word (language) is a methodological requirement for transcendence/salvation (abstraction). This difference has made all the difference. In my own life as a curriculum theorist, I have had to make sense of these contrasting, multiple worldviews. I read the world as an embodied, material girl who has continually "bumped" up against abstraction, being good/ civil, and having to defer to "others" (in other words spirits) deeply embedded in Protestant culture. Re-reading the world out of this binary required a trip South, of all places...

***Un-Schooled in Protestantism: On Becoming Un/Catholic***

*I did not realize I was a "real" Protestant until I moved to the south, to the very Catholic South of Louisiana. Being Catholic in Southern Louisiana is not a religion; it is a collective way of life. The only Catholics I had known growing up in the Northern suburbs of Chicago were the Gory's. Their 6 children stood on the corner in their uniforms waiting for the bus to go to the Catholic school, not the public school. They were strange and alien creatures who were different from us. They were not Christian; they were Catholic. Now for the past twenty-five years I have lived in what I, as a youth, perceived as that alien, Catholic southern Louisiana, where religion (Catholicism) is celebrated all year. There is Mardi Gras (which is a four day holiday), then there is five weeks of lent, when even people who are not Catholic do not eat meat on Friday, then All Saints Day, and the season of Christmas (it is "illegal" to say Happy Holidays). Being a Catholic in Louisiana, however is also a creole, hybrid experience that draws on African, French, Haitian, Spanish and Native American epistemologies and ontologies. There are black saints, black nuns, black Catholic churches and black Catholic Mardi Gras Indians. Louisiana was born of a trans-Atlantic, creole, revolutionary spirit in which Catholic "universal spiritualism" assumed that all people were to be treated as moral equals. It has been my experience of Catholicism (with all its contradictions) as a "lived religion" that has brought into relief the tyranny of "Protestant" ideology and how understanding the language and discourses of Protestantism are imperative to curriculum studies.*

Alan Block (2004) claims Jewish educational/curricular thought had to be excluded in order for the Greeks and early Christians (also not a monolithic group) to justify their worldview. This exclusion, he claims, forever altered pedagogical purpose and practice. I would maintain that although early Christianity replaced the textual mediation of Jewish practice with the insistence on personal mediation (with Jesus as mediator), this was a deeply embodied, ritualistic practice that was not text driven, nor truth driven. For the emerging Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century the text is made flesh through Jesus, and meaning is based on experience of Jesus. Like the exclusion of Jewish thought, this embodied Roman Catholicism, where experience is a collective, ritualistic one repeated over and over again as a community of

believers, has also been excluded from curriculum thought, as well as suppressed in American education. The heart of the Protestant Reformation was the return to a focus on an individual, rational method of experiencing Jesus (the Spirit of). This return was predicated on the suppression of both Judaic and Catholic thought (as well as pagan, animistic, mystical traditions) and was disciplined and regulated through compulsory, public education.

This cut of Roman Catholicism is essential to the hegemony of a Protestant “scriptural economy” of salvation, an ideology grounded in the “spirit” of Jesus, in other words in abstraction. Within the ideology of Roman Catholicism, salvation is conceptualized as embodied in the literal flesh of Jesus (the host), which is a visible, tangible, and experienced embodiment. The body of Jesus is transubstantiated in the host at every Mass. Jesus becomes a “material body,” not an abstract, transcendent floating signifier whose meaning must be experienced through the text aided by the spirit. The embodied, ritualistic, cyclical, and very material ways in which Roman Catholicism (many of these cultural rites/rituals/symbols of course appropriated from Jewish and Pagan traditions, making Catholicism a very creole/hybrid religion) is practiced are central to shaping an ontology of communion/community. Unlike the Jewish/Talmudic traditions, textual deliberation/dialogue is not the primary focus of education. Rituals and practices form the heart of Roman Catholic pedagogy as a means to solidify a shared, common “spiritual universalism.” This focus of universalism, as opposed to individualism, was of course a profound threat to Calvin’s belief in the “chosen” or “elect.” Consequently, a “scriptural economy” guaranteed not only the emergence of the rational “individual” but provided an external marker for distinguishing among those who were “elect” (gifted) and those who were not. The disciplining of these new “Protestant” subjectivities required the discourse of “method” to totalize “knowing” as rational thinking, as opposed to mystery, dialogue, deliberation or embodiment.

The oral traditions and material rituals (again not text driven) that were central to a Catholic concept of salvation were targeted by Protestants as magic, evil, and the work of the devil. At the social level, Catholics were portrayed as a group to be most feared and distrusted; as agents of Lucifer. Material objects central to an oral culture like crucifixes, trinkets, murals, statues, visual ornaments, paintings and all other objects were suspect, and use of them was almost satanic. The visual and oral world in which the masses had lived became visually and aurally different. Catholic celebrations such as Saints days were attacked, and the number of "Holy days" and "Festival days" was significantly reduced. As Robert Orsi (2002) has pointed out, it is these Catholic “folk” days, in which people interpret their own religious beliefs, that people’s lived religion is expressed. This “folk,” everyday, embodied, aesthetic experience of religion, often a resistance to orthodox religion, was not only too emotional and irrational for Protestants, but it could not be regulated and thus was intolerable for Protestants. Protestantism was not a religion of the masses, it appealed to the elite. It was a religion that spoke to the intellect, and allowed the educated (the emerging bourgeoisie, see Trohler, 2011) to put their intellectual skills into action. It distanced them from the more irrational, pagan world of the lower classes. Rather than having to partake in rituals and ceremonies, Protestant Culture maintained that all that was required for salvation was to read and learn the Scriptures, and apply their teachings to everyday life. All else, such as the performance of good works, praying to the Saints, and Confession, were a distraction from true faith in God.

Protestantism was a movement that favored the wealthier and literate in society, it was an intellectual movement. The emphasis on interpreting the Scriptures for oneself, which might



seem liberatory, actually placed the masses at a disadvantage simply because they had not been socialized into a worldview based in abstract concepts and ideas. In theory Protestant Culture was available to everyone. Yet as Emily Clark (2007) maintains, despite the rhetoric of spiritual equality, the story, especially of American Protestantism, illustrates that a sophisticated ideology grew up to support a hierarchy of status and worth that was legitimated through Protestant theology. This included not only the ability to read (often class based) but also the gendered division of labor that excluded women from roles of public authority, such as preaching and church governance. The disciplining of Catholicism, as well as all other religions, the illiterate (poor and slaves) and of women who refused to comply with the cult of domesticity was central to American Protestantism. This disciplining is key to understanding American curriculum and curriculum studies. Of course, it is no coincidence that formal, compulsory schooling began with the Protestant Reformation, and was brought to America by the Puritans. For Protestants being literate, reading the word, not merely hearing it, was critical to shifting authority from ritual to an “external” marker that could be “graded.” The focus of salvation was the individual, no longer the community; internal revelation of Christ was central, no longer public rituals, sacraments and communion; outward signs (wealth, consumption, reading) were the mark of salvation, no longer was universal spiritualism a given (ordering, sorting became the norm). As Doug McKnight has maintained the perpetual state of educational “crisis” and calls for reform mimic the Puritan jeremiads through which Protestant culture is reinforced. American education cannot help but be deeply Protestant. And, curriculum studies is deeply entangled in this dynamic web of history in which the Protestant ideology of control, rationality, the individual, absolute knowledge and method continue to circulate as the nonknown, the invisible ghost. While contemporary curriculum studies has clearly provided multiplicities, it is clearly entangled and part of an assemblage which is deeply woven and connected to Protestant culture.

### **Concluding Thoughts: Education as Religion**

A highlight for me in the fall of 2014, when we were preparing for Bergamo, was anticipating the exchange of emails between Donald, James, Tom and Donna. Each day I awaited another response, listening – doing my best to hear the passions, anxieties, desires, and most of all, love shared in these writings. I have been asked not to critique or analyze this conversation but to talk about my experience of reading/hearing/feeling this dialogue. Like Michel de Certeau, I am concerned with “Enlightenment” productions of reading as “poaching,” as a form of consumption that claimed that the “book” was capable of transforming society (ala the Protestant Reformation). To read is to receive text from someone else, an external mark, without putting one’s own mark on it, without as de Certeau suggests, “remaking it.” In that regard de Certeau maintains:

The reading of the catechism or of the Scriptures that the clergy used to recommend to girls and mothers, by forbidding these Vestals of an untouchable sacred to write continues today in the “reading” of the television programs offered to “consumers” who cannot trace their own writing on the screen where the production of the Other - of “culture”- appears. The link existing between reading and the Church is reproduced in the relation between reading and the church of the media. In this mode, the construction of the social text by professional intellectuals still seems to correspond to its “reception” by the faithful who are supposed to be satisfied to reproduce the models elaborated by the manipulators of language. (1988, p. 169)



Our religions are many: reading, science, television, Protestantism, education, Judaism, democracy, curriculum theory, Islam, capitalism, and Catholicism (and many others I am sure). “Religion” with a capital “R” is embedded in institutions/ideologies/discourses that are “satisfied to reproduce models.” We are faithful to science, reading, and technology just as in the past others were faithful to gods, sacrifice and storytelling.

Reading “religion” (what we put our faith in) is reading culture. And when I read (read Donald, Jim, Donna), I poach. Like de Certeau (1984) and Derrida, I resist making reading into a religion. When I read, “I read and daydream”...My reading is thus a sort of impertinent absence” (p. 173) Roland Barthes distinguishes three types of reading: one that stops at the pleasure afforded by words, the one that rushes on to the end and “faints with expectation,” and the one that cultivates the desire to write: erotic, hunting, and initiatory modes of reading (cited in de Certeau, 1984, p. 176). I read not to learn (this assumes passivity), or to acquire knowledge (this is consumption) or to critique (this creates an “other” and animosity, it is a form of epistemic violence), or to deconstruct (as Lyotard (1984) reminds us “to arrest the meanings of words is what Terror wants”, in de Certeau (1984: 165)) or even to engage in hermeneutic renderings and interpretations (this is to translate), but I read to arouse my desire to write and study. So this is what I have written:

I don’t believe that it is “religious” beliefs that divide us, or threaten democracy or community. It is our “Faith” in institutions (whether it is schools, churches) and ideologies (democracy, emancipation, hope) to represent and name the world that is our sin. To “sin” in the original Greek means to miss the mark. We have missed the mark if we think we can read the world. To assume such a position is to sin because we believe that we as humans can make it on our own, without recognizing our intra-relationships to the cosmos. To assume that we can “Read” (whether through education, religion, science) the world is the illusion of control that alienates us from the sacred, from death, and the unknowable. I am not sure whether I have faith in democracy, schools, or even humanity. I have faith in “death,” for without it I cannot live; it keeps me present in being, it enables me to love, and it is the only thing we share as a community.

I am not sure whether there is religion, with a capital “R” – this assumes (like Marxism and many forms of Neo-Marxism) an overly deterministic view of society that lacks agency. I am more inclined to think of “lived religion” or Robert Orsi’s (2002) concept of “popular” religion which claims that “the clergy” act as unofficial foils to otherwise extra-liturgical manifestations of religion as experienced outside of the domineering orthodoxies of the “church.” Lived religion is the way in which humans create meaning in their everyday practice. Official religion is just that. It does not account for the agency and narration of individuals who take up religion in relation to other cultural forms and in relation to the life experiences and the actual circumstance of the people using them. This view of lived religion would like Eugenia Whitlock (2007), require us to queer religion, to acknowledge the complex, contradictory ways in which all people narrate their lives within the discourses of religion, whether they claim to be “religious” or not. Like the Dalai Lama (2005) I am very skeptical that we can make neat, tidy divisions between science, religion and spirit given that all phenomenon are interconnected, interrelated and part of an assemblage that cannot be unraveled. Perhaps we might argue that all ideas about curriculum are inherently based in religious discourse. The suppression of this, the forgetting, the

“cutting” necessary for these erasures, are the gaping wounds from which we as curriculum theorists must drink.

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# Commentaries

## Entangled Responses

PETRA

I HAVE READ AND REREAD THESE MANUSCRIPTS multiple times and my first response is “Did we ask the wrong question?” I say this because none of us really addressed the question “Is Curriculum Studies a Protestant Project?”

-Donald suggests that the “Western World” is a Protestant one and that the *rhetorical* style of curriculum scholars is based in the concept of ideas (abstraction, transcendence) a Protestant construction, not the meaning of words and how they matter (dialogue), a Jewish construction. This binary, while illuminating differences that make a difference, doesn’t really address the field of curriculum studies. So, where is the answer to the question?

-I (Petra) say “yes” to the question, but immediately dodge the question by situating the discussion within the larger history of education, rather than perhaps more directly in curriculum studies, thereby not really addressing the contemporary field of curriculum studies. A sleight of hand if I have ever seen one. So, where is the answer to the question?

-Jim is liberated by the question and responds by articulating the fundamentals of “good curriculum work” as a “model” for a transactional epistemology. Clearly, indirectly his answer to the question is a “yes” since his answer to the question is presented in the form of a syllabus, a body of knowledge that will allow us to progress toward a more democratic society, clearly a Protestant, epistemological, teleology. So, where is the answer to the question?

-Donna, answers emphatically “no”! She responds that categories like Protestant/Christian/Judaism essentialize, critiquing identity politics and positing that we need to “transcend” our different identities through “transactional being,” clearly on ontological move. So, where is the answer to the question?

Was this avoidance of the question, a misreading of the question, or was it a poor question? It clearly was a yes or no question. Given that we could have each submitted a one-word paper-yes or no? Perhaps the question might have been “In what ways is or is not Curriculum Studies a Protestant Project?” or “How can Curriculum Studies not be a Protestant

project?” However, this seemingly simple question generated four narratives that reveal as much as they conceal.

They reveal much about how our own passions, desires and fears, not so much about curriculum studies as Protestant or not. They reveal, as I think each scholar suggested, a need for a curriculum history that takes seriously the role of religion, both as ideology and lived, in shaping understandings of curriculum. In fact, these essays reveal that curriculum studies are deeply entangled not in religion necessarily, but in the languages of what we call “religion.” Of course, there is nothing natural about this “cut” called religion? In fact, this “taboo” (religion) is a Protestant one since it guarantees the secularization of society thus coding society as reasonable, rational and controllable, read Protestant. And so these narratives continue to conceal the profound ways in which the power of language and practices circulate to make invisible a curriculum studies field that is entangled and bound not necessarily in religion, but a language and ideology that assumes we can “transcend” our culture (shaped by Protestantism, as well as other ideologies), which is ironically a Protestant concept.

What is fascinating to me is thinking about why this simple question was so difficult to address. For me, I realized that I didn’t really know the history of Protestantism or for that matter I didn’t know the basic fundamental ideology of Protestantism. I understand the history of Protestantism as a religion, but I had to grapple with the basic epistemological and ontological foundations of Protestantism. Without that, I couldn’t answer the question. Consequently, I have learned that I need to redirect my course of study to a much deeper understanding of the relationship between of Protestantism and education. Thank you for this gift of new directions. I also had to grapple with what constitutes “curriculum studies?” Most curriculum history narratives frame contemporary “curriculum studies” as beginning with the reconceptualization. Some histories include the whole twentieth century as a means to situate branches of progressivism as the “roots” of curriculum theory/studies. However, it is clear to me that curriculum studies is an entanglement that cannot be understood as bounded artificially by time. It must be unleashed by time in order to take lines of flight that we can “not yet” imagine. It is imagination, not transcendence (spirit), which I seek in order to generate new questions and keep the conversation going. I do not want to transcend these exchanges, or the relationships that are being build in this dialogue, I want to stay present so that I can listen to the stories of others as central to meaning making. This process of study in which we have engaged over the past year is curriculum studies. I am not sure it requires naming. It just is.

## Skin You’re In. . .

DONNA

**I**N HER POEM, *The Belt (An Owner’s Manual)*, Theresa Davis poignantly addresses the young African American males in her middle school classroom and how their pants



sagging and forcing them to walk “shoulders bent, feet shuffling” remind her of long ago: “middle passage / bodies in the bellies of ships / chains to hold in place stolen treasure / backs bent, feet shuffling.. . times so long ago they seem like yesterday.” Ultimately, Davis challenges her students to think about their fashion choices – questions how they can call any material reality that puts them in the same physical position as their enslaved brothers “swagger” or “fashion.” She jars them into the realization that their history matters. In this poem, Theresa reminds her students (and all who hear), “Well, the skin you’re in, that’s the skin you wear.”

I think this is an important image to introduce in this project, for we all come to this challenge in the skin we are in. So, in a meager attempt to share that skin I wear, I offer a brief statement of context. I’ve been a teacher for more than a quarter of a decade. I taught elementary students who are now priests, musicians, and teachers. I taught middle school students who lost their lives to gang violence. As a school administrator, I sat in meetings where central office administrators imagined building a school for the perpetual fifth graders: students who would never be able to pass their new high-stakes district exam. Later I became a teacher of future teachers and then of future administrators. I worked with aspiring leaders in Atlanta Public Schools during the height of what was to become known as “The” testing scandal. Since that time, my focus with doctoral students and now my work as a university administrator has resulted in playing a different role: a teacher of those who teach future teachers and/or administrators. In each of these roles, I feel the biggest challenge has been to engage others in the struggle: that leap into shared vulnerability and mutuality critical for living together as spiritual beings sharing a human experience.

When I first became an administrator, I was required to attend administrator orientation along with the many others who had been hired that summer. The mantra for the district at the time involved two key principles: “world class standards,” and “measured student achievement.” In the middle of the orientation, the superintendent asked each of us to come up to the podium, give our names and the schools where we would serve, and then tell everyone what we felt the mission of our schools were. It was quite apparent that this was not an information gathering exercise. Instead, it was an effort to hear what he wanted to hear. Each new administrator immediately struggled to think of an interesting and new way to restate the two mantras: “Internationally recognized achievement,” “measured student growth,” etc. One by one, each new administrator introduced himself or herself with words that echoed the superintendent’s rally, and one by one, each new administrator was reinforced with a beaming smile from the superintendent. Then it was my turn. I approached the podium, gave my name, and declared, “At Dyer Elementary School, our mission is that students will esteem something greater than themselves.” The response was much like one you would see in a credit card commercial when the buyer pulls out the checkbook. The rhythm of the mantra halted. The smile that had occupied the superintendent’s face disappeared. Just for that moment. Then, of course, the next new administrator took my place, stated “world class standards and measured student achievement,” and the rhythm, once again, was restored.

I feel like I am in a similar position now. Donald posed the question, “Is curriculum studies a Protestant project?” to which he wants to hear “Yes,” followed by comfortable scholarly narratives that reinforce the images we hold within curriculum studies today. Granted, there would be ideological splitting of hairs in the midst of that scholarly narrative, but it would, nevertheless, be comfortable and, for the most part, compatible. For that is what we do in curriculum studies: we genuflect to the prominent theses and we otherwise engage in parallel

theorizing, taking some sort of spin not too far off from the prominent way of thinking. We have achieved this sort of parallel theorizing in this project. To that end, I'm afraid, Donald, you have not been acknowledged as you wished. Given the manner in which the project itself began, that sort of goal was unobtainable.

There is a mantra and a rhythm to this project. Curriculum studies is Protestant. Protestants are bound by rule of law and focus on civility. They pacify those who introduce dissent. They domesticate those who are different. As Petra notes, "the language of Protestantism, education is for information (learning), not communication (study, conversation); it is an epistemology (abstraction), not an ontology (way of being in the world..." Administrators do violence because they act in Protestant ways. As a member of this community, I should come up to the podium and say the same thing, only differently. I should frame it in some vein of ideological discourse: Foucault, Badiou, or Deleuze. If not, then I should use it as a starting point to make connections with my life's work, as Henderson so eloquently responds. Only, I can't. I couldn't do it as a new administrator, and I cannot do it now in the middle of my academic career. Much like my students at Dyer elementary school, my wish for those of us in curriculum studies is to esteem something greater than ourselves. For that to happen, we have to recognize that parallel theorizing keeps our intellectual backs bent and our moral feet shuffling. Instead, we need to restructure the question itself and seek understanding and growth, not validation or mere acknowledgement. Donald, both you and the field deserve more than that.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhVfiIv9S5w>

## On the articles by Jim, Donna, and Petra

DONALD

I OFFER THESE COMMENTS IN ALL LOVE for these three people. They have been willing to play with this prompt, have clearly been sincere in their approaches. But that is not why I love them, not because of what they do or how they do it, but love for them, before, they ever wrote a word. So, if my critiques appear harsh (they may) or dismissive (they're not), it is within the Yeshivah tradition of yelling grounded in passion, not in anything personal. All of that written, I proceed.

Petra states that it is inevitable that she would adopt a Protestant voice. She was, after all, raised Protestant and lives within a saturated Protestant culture. Just so with Jim and Donna. And I am who I am (although I have only recently acknowledged that "being," primarily through this work you have in front of you as, until recently I had tried mightily to be the good Protestant scholar but found this Talmudic voice in so much of my work over the years). Having agreed with Petra,

what now? Now is a more overt playing out of that voice. And so, some brief analysis of Jim, Donna and Petra, trying to show how even their responses silence me. They do not mean to silence me, I'm sure. But I am silenced nonetheless.

Jim begins his essay embracing my "informal" approach which he will adopt. He takes it that when I share stories I am being informal. The word "informal", in the present climate of academic discourse is a way of minimizing the contribution of the writer. I know that Jim did not intend that but it is a dismissive term that allows the reader to not take the work seriously.

Perhaps, more importantly, this term reveals that Jim does not understand my approach. My essay is anything but informal. The beginning in stories that are models from which to learn is calculated to lay out the terrain. Within my analysis of each of the narratives and with the analysis of Agosto, there is a formal attention to the details of language. This voice is not the academic, Protestantized, emotionless formal "voice" of typical academic work. There is a passion that is, to use Cuddihy's term, uncivil. "Informal" makes the work seem like a little excursion in the country: refreshing but, in the end, just an interlude between doing important and weighty work. This is revealed as Jim attempts stories (the informal). He, as with Agosto, does not follow through on providing the details of the stories. They seem meant to convey something but in their states as incomplete sketches they lack the detail necessary to arise to the level of model. Up against Jim's etherealized ideas work, they feel slight. In a sense they are unnecessary to what he is doing. You can know this by reading his essay excising them from it. You will find no violence done to the essay. Their lack of centrality reveals the Protestantized character of his work.

Donna's case is different. She does not attempt to embrace the question. In fact in her initial essay, she rejected the question from the outset as unimportant and proceeded to write about the question she thought we should be addressing. In the essay you have read, she focuses on Protestant as religion and complains that I have not been fair to all those strands of Protestantism that are morally good and want to do moral, social justice good in the world. There are two notable characteristics of this complaint. First, I am not writing about religion but about culture. I state this plainly at the outset. She seems unwilling to see her religion as "bad" on the whole and see it as a culture maker whose, as Petra points out, rhetorical characteristics are adopted by all of us, at least in the academic world. She refuses to implicate her work as a problem. In a sense her Protestantism is a hero of work she complains I refuse to acknowledge. This misses the point. This isn't about her or anybody in particular. It's about our common culture that, it turns out, isn't so generous as she appears to see it. Second, she criticizes me for being unfair to Protestantism. Two questions come to mind. What does "fair" have to do with this? It's a perspective I ask you (rhetorical you, not Donna) to, for a few moments, entertain and see how you are located in a way you may not have noticed. Fair? Not fair? When were questions unfair? In a corollary response to "fair," I am being unfair because I am pointing out that I am being silenced by a culture that is involved in an eons old war that is still occurring. I ask you, how fair is that? Why can't she and, perhaps you, step back for a moment and entertain this possibility?

Lastly Petra's essay. Petra wholeheartedly embraces the question and answers it quickly with a resounding "yes." She also supports the ideas I present in footnotes. But what of the essay itself.

Let me give an example of how I see her work to reflect a Protestant cast by focusing on small section of her essay, the section that begins “In my upbringing . . .” in which she invokes Althusser. She writes “What is ultimately ideological for Althusser . . .” and then references “The Practices and rituals of American education . . .” What if she had written, instead, “What is ultimately ideological for *me* . . .”? Where is she in this? How does she own this? There is a curious absence, for me, at the center of some of her writing. Further on she recasts the question (quite nicely I think) but, again, I can’t find the role she has played in this persistent hegemony. What if she had written (or shown in some other way): “how have *I* made possible the invisibility of the hegemony of Protestant ideology in curriculum studies?” In other words, she writes in a neutral voice that, for me, is civil and proper. She has sections of memory but I don’t know how they connect to her life in Curriculum Studies. Near the end she disquisitions on reading and here, after a listing of possible modes of reading writes of desire to study as what stimulates her in her reading. This does feel personal. But I wonder to what degree she needed the list of alternatives she is rejecting. What is the message in that? What if she had just written, “I read to arouse my desire to write and study” without showing the breadth of her knowledge? I’m not saying she should not but, in the Talmudic tradition, are these the Rebbes to whom she is holding most allegiance and wants to comment on them in order to extend their commentaries on reading? It doesn’t appear like that. It appears to be all the ways she will not be. This is a very subtle possibility of violence in this rejection as there appears to be nothing of value in the rejection list. I’m sure she doesn’t intend this but, for me, this is a subtle way in which such discourse might be working. (Please note the provisional tone of my comment. I’m not declaring my correctness but only asking questions and making notes.) Of equal importance, as another comment on her essay, she leaves Curriculum Studies behind to launch into a larger history of education. She, too, in the end, doesn’t stay within the confines of the topic. As with the others, I am not asking her to change, but only to notice what is working through her on the immediate level of her practice. Donna, in her commentary, is correct that we are each born in our own skins. She may also be correct that we can’t simply change those skins by will. But, what fascinates me, at least in part, is the ways in which each of us does not notice our skins and when they are “called out” we don’t like it much and, in one way or another, hold onto them, defend them, protect them, own them but, I think, without questioning them.

In sum, Jim’s reducing the work to informality, Donna’s rejecting the legitimacy of the question, Petra’s seeming absence in the main part of her text and her departure to larger climes, in all these cases my Judaic critique is silenced This occurs through not engaging with the critique but continuing down their own paths. In so doing their work censors and contains, encapsulating the foreign body and expelling it, maintaining the equilibrium I meant to disturb. Jim’s insistence on democracy dismisses all other forms of governance that humankind has developed as being inferior to his beloved. Donna’s attack upon the attacker expels the foreign body by refusing to consider that her beloved is also responsible for so much carnage in the world, by not owning that history as her history. Petra steps away from herself into a larger topic, as if what I have suggested isn’t the correct object of critique. In each case I am made to disappear.

Lastly, notice the formal structure of these commentaries. I begin with a general overview of the problem. I, then, provide some details of the dilemma presented by each. I finish with a seeming

summary that actually extends the critique through additional analysis of the evidence presented. I do this with all respect but, as in the Yeshivah, I do it at the top of my lungs! It doesn't mean I don't love these people. I mean that I need to yell in order to be heard over their quietness which blankets my voice in a softness that smothers.

## Questions Prompted by a Fourfold Curriculum Theory

JIM HENDERSON

I ENJOYED READING THE OTHER THREE ESSAYS. Much food for thought! In my essay, I interpreted “spirit” as constituting the animating principles of democratic education, and I'll stay with this perspective in my brief response. With a nod to fostering open-hearted dialogue, I will pose a set of questions emerging out of a four “folded” (Conley, 2011) curriculum theory that is inspired by Abraham Lincoln's educational vision: “The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.”<sup>5</sup>

***I envision curriculum work that is animated by the critical hermeneutics of democratic general education.*** When educators think deeply together about good democratic education for all and when educators critique institutions and practices that prohibit, inhibit, or suppress this inclusive and expansive dialogue, they are enacting this curriculum theory. Donald's critique of Protestantism touches on a deeply-embedded ideological bias with its repressions and suppressions, while Petra's essay corroborates Donald's analysis through an explanation of how the preoccupation with narrow curriculum methodologies is an artifact of this Protestantism. Given the global reach of Western societies, this methodological addiction is worldwide. In effect, Donald's and Petra's papers explain why Tyler's (1949) curriculum development “rationale” has been so influential. Donna is concerned that their historical critiques could possibly foster essentialized identities and rigid leftist ideologies. As Donna notes, a compassionate and open-hearted cosmopolitanism can too easily get buried in a constrained, limited critical righteousness. With reference to the hermeneutics of democratic general education, how do curriculum workers maintain an eclectic, dialogical fluency? How do they practice social-criticism and self-critiques that don't overgeneralize, berate, or attack? In short, how do educators practice a critical awareness that encourages complicated curriculum conversations?

***I envision curriculum work that is animated by a pedagogical artistry grounded in transactional pragmatism.*** I responded to Donald's paper with a concrete pedagogical model.

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in “Wit & Wisdom,” *The Week*, May 1, 2015, p. 17, as quoted in the *Herald-Dispatch*, Huntington, WV.



I'm quite concerned about separations of curriculum and pedagogy. Because of this concern, I worked hard to help establish the Curriculum and Pedagogy Group and the *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*. I share Donald's concern about abstraction in curriculum work. I've been regularly attending Bergamo since 1983, and I've often pondered how presentations at this annual meeting could be more accessible to educational practitioners. For example, I wonder how the four essays in this special section could inform P-12 educators' curriculum problem solving. Could the four of us do a better job of addressing the pedagogical applications of our respective arguments? What are the implications of our words for teaching artistry, particularly with reference to Dewey's insight that teaching is the supreme art in progressive societies? Dewey wrote as a public intellectual, not as an academic philosopher. In what ways are our four essays public intellectual exercises that avoid specialist, in-house jargon?

***I envision curriculum work that is animated by the narrative aesthetics of allegorical autobiography.*** In his *Curriculum and the Aesthetic Life*, Donald infuses the aesthetics of a relational ethic into his autobiographical narratives. He defines aesthetic consciousness as, “a bodily, imaginative, intuitive, cognitive practice for knowing the world around us. Aesthetic consciousness can provide the ground for *feeling* the presence of others in a way that honors their transcendence of categories” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2012, p. 106). Through this aesthetic mindfulness, we experience “our connection with others in our world as well as with our physical and social environment” (p. 31). Pinar (2012) adds an important allegorical subtext to this narrative curriculum work when he writes, “Allegory demands both detachment and intimacy in its transfiguration of lived experience into educational experience” (p. 57).

I interpret Donald's paper, from one perspective, as an autobiographical and historical critique that invites an “aesthetic consciousness...that honors experiencing connection with others over systems” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2012, pp. 106-107). To be honest, I don't know how well Petra, Donna, and I have honored his invitation for connection. Though I didn't initially understand Donald's historical frame of reference, I do now—but with the caveat that a general cultural understanding of a particular oppressive bias is not the same as understanding the personal impact of that bias. I can stay critically alert, but how well can I empathize? In general, how do curriculum workers respond to all deeply embedded biases—including racism, sexism and homophobia—in the spirit of democratic humanism? How do educators cultivate critiques that dignify all of humanity?

***Finally, I envision curriculum work that is centered in a generous and generative wholeheartedness.*** Macdonald (1995) writes:

The task of both student and teacher is the development of their own centering through contact with culture and society, bringing as much of their whole selves as they can to bear upon the process. There is no specifiable set of techniques or of rules or of carefully defined teaching roles. It is primarily a willing to ‘let go’ and to immerse oneself in the process of living with others in a creative and spontaneous manner...” (p. 96).

I feel Donald, Petra, and Donna have operated with this sense of gracious, creative wholeheartedness in our interchanges from the start; and I want to conclude by celebrating the good will that I've experienced throughout this dialogue. Democracy thrives in a spirit of ecumenical dissensus—in generous and resourceful paths of the heart. I feel that our papers are an embodiment of this critical insight.



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