

ONE

“BRINGING MORE THAN I CONTAIN”: ON ETHICS, CURRICULUM, AND LEARNING TO BECOME

WE READ SIMON WIESENTHAL'S *The Sunflower* in a graduate seminar I teach on ethics and education.¹ The central story consists of a grueling meeting that Wiesenthal has with a dying member of the Nazi *Schutzstaffel* (SS) while himself an inmate in a concentration camp. The SS man, Karl, has asked that a Jewish prisoner be brought to him so that he may be granted forgiveness for his participation in a mass murder involving a number of Jewish families. Wiesenthal is chosen from among the prisoners to be the man's confessor, and he listens with outrage, horror, and anguish to the soldier's detailed account of the murder. Yet Wiesenthal is also witness to the man's deathbed suffering, and his listening is punctuated by tiny gestures of ambivalence. At one point, in a moment of self-surprise, he shoos an irritating fly away from the dying man's face, an act that Karl is too incapacitated to perform himself. Wiesenthal takes his leave of the death room without offering the soldier any consolation, any forgiveness, and he is later haunted by lingering doubt about his inaction. A few years after his liberation, Wiesenthal seeks out the man's mother, uncertain as to whether he will reveal the truth about what he knows of her son. He decides to remain silent in the face of her grief, allowing her illusions to predominate over his own complicated feelings of sympathy and moral outrage. Told with the hindsight of many years' distance, Wiesenthal asks his readers to consider what it means to forgive, and whether he did the right thing in not granting the soldier his dying wish.

Rather than focusing solely on forgiveness, the class explores the moments of ethicality within the story, the moments of ambivalence that

make possible different configurations of moral action, discussing how Wiesenthal represents these moments in narrative form. We discuss the relationship to community, to trauma, and the vulnerability of what Levinas would recognize as “face-to-face encounters,” both between Wiesenthal and the dying SS man and between Wiesenthal and the man’s mother. Students generally discuss the difficulties they face in reading, and rearticulating what they read, in light of the enormity of suffering present on so many levels. Most significantly, it is also Wiesenthal’s continued ambivalence about his response to the SS soldier that students often have very strong feelings toward, ranging from empathic attachment to guilt to condemnation.

I reflect on this here to raise some fundamental questions about what we ask students to accomplish in staking out a relationship to a text, particularly one so filled with the pendulous vicissitudes between pain and suffering, on the one hand, and dignity and hope, on the other.² What do students risk in encountering a story, an idea, an other? What do they risk in forming a symbolic relationship to knowledge, and to curriculum, more generally? And what are our responsibilities to students as teachers in asking them to read and, indeed, to respond?

For students, insofar as curriculum involves introducing them to new encounters, it also asks them to change their views, perceptions, assumptions, and modes of thinking. This suggests that in asking students to produce meaningful relations to texts, ideas, or representations, we are not only engaged in a “provocation of semiosis,”³ but we may be provoking an ontological crisis of sorts.⁴ What appears to be at risk, therefore, is the self itself, or, more precisely, in Kleinian terms, the ego, developed through its continual negotiation with external reality.⁵ For instance, how could articulating a relation to the ambivalence in Wiesenthal’s story be so difficult (after all, it is *his* ambivalence he is writing about) if it were not for the possibility that such articulation would be risking something beyond the story, risking something beyond what is familiar, risking a relation with an other outside of the self? I wish to explore here the idea that it is in this act of symbolizing—of making meaning in relation to something outside of the self—where the conditions of ethicality and being come together. What might be the place of curriculum and teaching in this relation between otherness and ego? Does learning itself mean having to face a difference that is “not me”? Does learning mean becoming someone different than what one was before?

LEARNING TO BECOME AND THE PEDAGOGICAL DEMAND FOR ALTERED EGOS

Pedagogy starts at age zero and no one knows when it ends. The aim of pedagogy (or *paideia*)—I am of course speaking normatively—is to help the newborn hopeful and dreadful monster to become a human being, to

help this bundle of drives and imagination become an *antbrōpos*. . . The point of pedagogy is not to teach particular things, but to develop in the subject the capacity to learn.⁶

As a philosopher and political theorist, Cornelius Castoriadis opens up the question of pedagogy, of learning and teaching, to the conditions of a person's becoming. He proposes that along the trajectory of subjecthood, from one's beginning as a "hopeful and dreadful monster" to one's finale in death, pedagogy turns on the ability of the nascent subject to change, to alter, to become something other than what it was. The subject accomplishes this self-alteration through its capacity to negotiate meaning in the world in relation to the objects and persons around it. Castoriadis draws attention to how subjectivity is instituted, that is, how the nascent human subject is eminently pliable and is potentially fitted into any social order into which it happens to be born. But Castoriadis is also a psychoanalyst, and as such, he speaks of the project of becoming in terms of the development of the ego, glossing the famous Freudian adage, "Where Id was, there Ego shall become." What it means to learn, for Castoriadis, is to learn to become an ego, and it is in this process of learning where the subject is both shaped by and yet resists the forces of social circumstance.⁷

Like Freud, Castoriadis suggests that "learning to become" is an inherently violent activity where the social environment exacts a traumatic price from the psyche. The subject, through making symbolic connections to its environment, must relinquish its own unconscious desires and drives in the service of sociality. It renounces, represses and sublimates its "bundle of drives" in a struggle to negotiate with what is always necessarily outside and other to the subject itself. It is precisely through this negotiation that the subject learns to take pleasure and delight in the external world, and it learns to control itself, as best it can, for the purpose of making relationships to others. For Castoriadis the psyche is thereby necessarily coerced into becoming a being—a social individual, an ego—through the social institutions (e.g., the family, school, and religion) that furnish the subject with meaning, that impose limitations upon the subject's desires and drives.⁸ Yet for Castoriadis, there is always a residue, a psychical remainder that cannot be subsumed into the social order and that allows for the possibility that subjects will make meaning and learn in unpredictable ways.

In some ways, Castoriadis's radical insight is both simple and familiar: the subject *learns* to become a being in relation to others it encounters, learning values, behaviors, and modes of thinking within the nexus of culture, language, and social relations. However, rather than taking a naive view of this process, Castoriadis sees that this is an inevitably violent demand that society places on its subjects. Through social institutions, society exerts a force upon the subject to become, for example, a worker, citizen, or consumer (or, in other social-historical circumstances, feudal lords, peasants, or anointed kings).

Thus, insofar as education is a socializing institution *par excellence*, what Castoriadis underscores here is not only the need to speak of the violence *in* education, but the violence *of* education.⁹ It is important to signal that I am employing neither a metaphorical usage of the term nor one designed to erase the differences between specific acts of violence (e.g., neglect, humiliation, fear, abuse, torture). Indeed, acts of violence such as these are of a completely different order, for suffering is here inflicted through hatred, cruelty, and indifference. My emphasis here is on the inevitable external force that has the power to subject, that compels us to learn and become. In this sense, education, by its very socializing function and by its mission to change how people think and relate to the world, enacts a violence that is necessary to the formation of the subject (this is, after all, what is meant by “formation”). Following the metaphysical formulations of Derrida and Levinas, on the one hand, and the psychical formulations of psychoanalysis, on the other hand, violence is a necessary condition of subjectivity. Thus the question is not so much whether education wounds or not through its impulse to socialize, but whether it wounds excessively and how we (as teachers) might open ourselves to nonviolent possibilities in our pedagogical encounters.

Castoriadis’s portrayal is helpful in examining a major assumption underlying education, and social justice education in particular: that educators teach in the hope that others will learn and change. Yet at the same time, it challenges education’s innocence. Learning to become depicts well the ontological stakes in processes of learning, both in terms of the benefits of change and the high prices to be paid in terms of the coercive nature of subject formation. It echoes the comments students often make when they begin to think and experience their own lives differently through new ideas, concepts, and relationships to other people. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear even adult students say, “I have never thought of myself this way before reading this book,” or “My life has changed as a result of taking this class.” My own educational history speaks to such moments of elation. These declarations of change, however, are often accompanied by statements of struggle in making a relationship to a knowledge that is outside the subject; students wrestle with the otherness and difference that are presented to them through the curriculum and through the bodies of teachers and students they encounter. Building on Castoriadis’s view, such difficulty suggests that there is something profoundly at risk in coming to know, involving renunciations and sacrifices that are sometimes too great to bear. Students often feel that once they struggle to know something, they can never be quite the same again. And as if this struggle were not enough, the process continually returns, refusing to offer consolation for very long. Egos are not formed, nor are desires done away with once and for all. The ego is never finished but always incomplete, not “an attained state but . . . an active situation.”¹⁰ This means that the ego is continually vulnerable to the potentiality of violence, to the recurrence of learning to become.

Thus, pedagogically speaking, the simplicity of Castoriadis's insight is deceptive, for although it seems to depict, in a straightforward fashion, the ontological possibilities of learning, it also highlights the ethical aspects of learning itself, insofar as learning is accompanied by a certain violence to the subject. Moreover, this violence is occasioned not only by the content of what one learns but by the structure of the demand to learn itself. To illustrate this point more thoroughly, let us turn to a pedagogical interaction often held up as a paradigm of learning, namely, Plato's *Meno*.

A PEDAGOGICAL DEMAND
IN THE GUISE OF A QUESTION

"Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?"¹¹ Meno's question is the opening line in Plato's drama of teaching's limits. It teases and provokes, inciting Socrates to address the relationship between teaching and ethicality. The crux of the Socratic position in Plato's dialogue is a refusal of the possibilities of teaching virtue. Socrates turns teaching away from didactic pronouncement, turns learning away from factual acquisition, and concludes that virtue is not something that can be taught because learning and teaching are themselves impossible. Meno's incredulity echoes our own: "How do you mean that we do not learn, but that what we call learning is recollection? *Can you teach me that this is so?*" (81e, emphasis added). Caught within Meno's demand to teach that which cannot be taught, Socrates replies, "You are a rascal. You now ask me if I can teach you when I say there is no teaching but recollection" (82a). Shoshana Felman remarks that Socrates "inaugurates his teaching practice, paradoxically enough, by asserting not just his own ignorance but the radical impossibility of teaching."¹² But is the performance of his practice congruous with his assertion?

The teaching practice that Socrates inaugurates involves an encounter with Meno's slave boy in an attempt to prove to Meno that learning is recollection and that teaching is, by extension, impossible. We are made witness to a lesson within a lesson. In a subtle bit of irony, Socrates' "teaching" of the slave itself becomes an object lesson for Meno. "Pay attention then whether you think he is recollecting or learning from me," states Socrates (82b). The subsequent interaction with the slave boy takes on the twofold burden of teaching both the boy and Meno. On the one hand, questioning the boy supposedly substitutes for teaching him, yet the *performance* of questioning reveals itself as a teaching: teaching occurs in the guise of a question. On the other hand, Meno is instructed by example, not by question: he is to learn by *observing* Socrates *perform* the question.

What I wish to consider, through a close reading of the text, is how this double performance of Socrates' questioning provokes a demand for alteration;

it acts as an instantiation of subject formation, of learning to become, for both Meno and the boy, a becoming that is fundamentally about the asymmetry between self and other, between teacher and student, in this case. What is important to investigate, for my purposes here, is not only what Socrates *says* (*à la lettre*), but his *saying*: teaching through questioning has both rhetorical effect and ethical command. Socrates cannot simply be taken at his word.

A NARRATIVE OF LEARNING.
OR THE TYRANNY OF THE QUESTION?

The scene with the slave boy narrates three moments in the path of learning to become for the boy, and each of them revolves around a series of lines to be geometrically organized. Initially, Socrates' questioning is simply a rephrasing of a truth statement, to which his pupil responds in the affirmative, the response having been embedded in the question itself: "A square then is a figure in which all these four sides are equal?—Yes indeed" (82c). In his various replies to further questions, the student knows that he knows, and he finds a degree of naive certitude: a belief that certainty is attainable through the teacher's question.¹³ Meno, too, as witness to this event, is convinced of the boy's knowledge and of Socrates' powers as a teacher.

The pedagogical experiment continues at an increasing level of complexity, that is, the pupil is asked to perform functions that are not apparent in the phrasing of the question. The boy begins to stumble, trying to calculate what length of line is needed to form an eight-foot-square figure, and he finally gives the erroneous answer of three feet. Through Socrates' persistent questioning, the boy realizes he has given the wrong answer:

Socrates: How much is three times three feet?—Nine feet.

Socrates: And the double square was to be how many feet?—Eight.

Socrates: So the eight-foot figure cannot be based on the three-foot line?—Clearly not. (83e)

This inaugurates the second step in learning. Socrates identifies this point at which the pupil is at a loss as a *necessary* "fall into perplexity." Here the slave boy understands that he has given the wrong answer. In one of his numerous asides to Meno, Socrates says, "Do you think that before he would have tried to find out that which he thought he knew though he did not, before he fell into perplexity and realized he did not know and longed to know?" (84c). Socrates sees his questioning as provoking a crisis, what Melanie Klein acknowledges, as we will see, as the anxiety necessary to provoke the emergence of the ego. Such falling into perplexity, into a crisis, or into a state of anxiety, indicates not merely an ignorance on the part of the subject but an *acknowledged* state of ignorance: "as he [the boy] does not know, neither does he think he knows" (84b). Socrates has, in effect, made possible a shift in the

boy's thinking about his own learning, and sees this as necessary to the pursuit of knowledge itself. An alteration of the subject is required in order for there to be a continuation in the pursuit of knowledge and of new understandings: we must know that we do not know so we can pursue what there is to know.

Similarly, Meno is equally unsure of what he is witnessing. What seemed to be certain (that the boy knows) is no longer the case. Socrates' parenthetical remarks to Meno at the point of the slave's perplexity attempt to console Meno over his own confusion. Socrates prompts him repeatedly to, in effect, pay attention: "Look then how he will come out of his perplexity while searching along with me. I shall do nothing more than ask questions and not teach him. Watch whether you find me teaching and explaining things to him instead of asking for his opinion" (84c-d). Both in its substance and rhetorical drive, Socrates' speech massages Meno's worries, while on the other hand he continues to subject the slave boy to a new round of questions.

The climax of the scene ushers in the third phase of learning. Socrates draws for the slave boy a series of diagonal lines cut through each of the four squares they have been working with.

Socrates: Each of these lines cuts off half of each of the four figures inside it, does it not?—Yes.

Socrates: How many of this size are there in this figure?—Four.

Socrates: How many in this?—Two.

Socrates: What is the relation of four to two?—Double.

Socrates: How many feet in this?—Eight.

Socrates: Based on what line?—This one.

Socrates: That is, on the line that stretches from corner to corner of the four-foot figure?—Yes.—Clever men call this the diagonal, so that if diagonal is its name, you say that the double figure would be that based on the diagonal?—Most certainly, Socrates. (85a-b)

The pupil here becomes certain of his knowledge, has become convinced, as Meno is after him, that he can come to know that which he did not know. Indeed, both "students" are surprised and, by the end of the brief encounter, are convinced that knowledge was theirs to recollect from the start.

We witness this trajectory of coming to know as perhaps the pedagogical event *par excellence*, an event that calls upon us to take delight in the power of the teacher to facilitate and give birth to knowledge "in" an other, without recourse to didactic procedures. Socrates' own insistence that his act of questioning is a nonteaching event, is a practice of midwifery, obliges us, however, to rearticulate what we have just witnessed.

The three movements of learning that Socrates' teaching narrates—naïve certainty, acknowledged ignorance, and certainty of knowledge recollected—

do not, however, easily map on to the performative aspect of Socrates' questioning. The narration consists of a pedagogical scene that is continually refused by the teacher to even *be* a scene of teaching. For Socrates, teaching is impossible precisely because what there is to know is not transmissible, but recollected. Learning is made possible for the slave boy only because Socrates refuses teaching itself, refuses the grammar of didacticism where the imperative reigns over the interrogatory, the expository over the exploratory. Plato serves up the irony of teaching in the very consummate figure of the teacher, Socrates: the good teacher is someone who does not teach, or more appropriately, who does not see oneself as teaching. Socrates is the teacher, who, like the perfect murderer, makes it appear that teaching has not taken place, who leaves the scene without a trace, and who, moreover, is convinced of his own innocence.

This innocence, however, seems spurious at best and might serve to illustrate to all educators the need to be attentive to the demand for alteration that structures the conditions under which we come together to teach and learn. Performatively speaking, in a pedagogical scene where teaching is supposedly absent, where the teacher is an innocent facilitator, Socrates exhibits himself as a crafty questioner, a skilled wordsmith who carefully scaffolds the possibilities of response. Questions pregnant with insinuation offer the boy a means for organizing, quite literally, what begins as a series of lines drawn in the sand. The slave boy develops new opportunities for symbolizing lines and their values, and he alters his understanding as he proceeds to be questioned. In fact, the questioning pursues him relentlessly until this alteration comes about, until he thinks geometrically, so to speak. Socrates offers him words in the place of lines, offers him geometrical and mathematical relationships where he apparently saw none before. Despite his assertion that teaching is impossible, that questioning is not teaching, the artful rhetorician nonetheless structures a number of possibilities for the boy's subjectivity.

Most obvious, perhaps, the boy's position as a slave is a mode of being that is continually underscored through the act of questioning. The boy is very much unlike the interlocutors that people Plato's dialogues, such as Meno himself, and Socrates addresses the boy *solely* through the medium of the question. This sets up a set of discursive rules where the slave is only to speak when asked: the questions are crafted in such a way as to limit the opportunities for further engagement (e.g., "does it not?" "consider it this way," as opposed to "what do you think?" or "why might this be the case?"). The slave boy comes into being *through* the question: the boy's performance as a slave is the complement to the teacher's performance as questioner.¹⁴

Just as important, for the purposes of exploring the process of learning to become, the boy learns to recognize himself as a learner. Moving from the fall into perplexity into the realm of certitude, he becomes a subject of pedagogy, a subject that has learned to become a subject of learning. Under the tyranny of the question, the relation between what he knows about geometry and what

he knows about himself is regulated. Yet by proclaiming the question to be innocent, Socrates obscures the fundamental structures of alteration and asymmetry that are present between teacher and student. These are the very structures necessary for the boy to assume his position as a learner.¹⁵

Meno's learning, while following a similar path—naïve certainty, acknowledged ignorance, and certainty in knowledge recollected—is, however, significantly different in one respect: it comes about from the supposed *witnessing* of the questioning. Functioning as proof, as evidence of learning as recollection, the encounter presumably speaks for itself. However, throughout the encounter, Socrates interrupts himself and offers Meno a language for interpreting what he is seeing. Just as these asides to Meno function to objectify the slave, they also function to make Meno a subject of pedagogy and convert him to Socrates' view. Here we see the art of teaching as persuasion. The lesson with the slave boy cannot—and will not—speak for itself but requires the intervention of the teacher to disrupt its discourse. To learn from the lesson that learning cannot be taught requires Socrates to *teach*, to *tell* Meno that learning cannot be taught. Plato's figure of the teacher as nonteacher is indeed ironic! The object lesson Socrates devises suffers under the weight of its own intentionality to instruct: a naked didacticism and demand for alteration are revealed under the guise of the question. Thus, what I am suggesting here is that while these two pedagogical experiences are carried out differently, there is a violence located in both of them insofar as they force each student to become a subject of pedagogy through the demands of becoming a learner.

THE HOPE OF NONVIOLENCE

To say that violence occurs despite the teacher's intentions, despite whether or not one acts as facilitator or with extreme didacticism, seems to leave one with little hope. Learning to become occurs within a teacher-student relation, where the struggle to symbolize and make meaning takes place within complicated dynamics of communication. However, what I wish to suggest here is that it is also precisely in our relationality with others where hope is to be found. Consider, for instance, the following example written by a student teacher reflecting upon an experience in a first-grade class.

At the beginning of the morning children change their outside shoes to inside shoes, take off jackets and place them along with their knapsacks on coat hooks in the classroom cupboard. At 8:50 A.M. students are sitting on the carpeted area of the classroom and stand for *O Canada* that is announced over the P.A. system. The students have been instructed not to move or talk. I hear crying from a girl that is standing at the back of the room. The host teacher ignores the crying and continues to sing *O Canada* with the rest of the class. I walk directly to the girl that is crying. I ask the girl if she is hurt. She says "no." I then ask the girl why she

is crying. She says, "I could not go to the washroom because we can't move during *O Canada*." I notice her legs are rubbing against each other. I whisper in the girl's ear if she is wet. The student says "yes." She cries louder. The host teacher continues to stand and looks away from me as I look at him. I take the girl and we walk outside the class toward the health room. (student essay, December 1998)

Explored from Castoriadis's point of view, the girl portrayed here has learned to become a student who obeys the rules and procedures around a particular activity. Part of what is demanded is that the student control, however unsuccessfully in the final analysis, her own desires and needs in the service of performing a social ritual, the singing of the national anthem. In her own words, what she has learned is "I could not go to the washroom because we can't move during *O Canada*." The ego here understands the limitations and restrictions placed upon it by an external force: the school routine, the teacher's rules. She symbolizes that relationship in a particular way, associating the singing of the anthem with bodily stillness and control. Such symbolization displays a mode of understanding that incorporates the coercive impulse of education, where subjectivity is forged within the demands placed upon it, and, as Klein writes, such symbolism "is the basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality in general."¹⁶ The turn to language to explain her subjection simultaneously signals her entry into subjecthood.¹⁷

In retelling the incident, it is also evident that the student teacher is struggling to symbolize her relationship to the girl, to the host teacher, and to herself. By writing her scenario in the present rather than past tense, she is doing more than merely describing *un temp perdu*; instead, her retelling suggests an ongoing engagement with a past that continues to haunt her present. That is, the incident is not simply an event that has passed without comment, like so many others that occur throughout her day, but participates in her negotiations of what it means to be a student and a teacher. Does becoming a teacher necessarily mean learning to make certain concessions to rules and routines that might be hurtful, at times, to students in the class? A mature and thoughtful woman, she, too, is subject to an event that has challenged her sensibilities, that is demanding of her to participate in something—and become someone—to which she is utterly resistant and from which she attempts to distinguish herself. The scene captures a certain understanding of the culture of schooling, and it is the student teacher's continual resistance to rules at the expense of human relationships that marks her (ambivalent) entry into this culture. The witnessing of the event provokes a crisis to which she responds by retelling it as a story where she is not like the host teacher: she approaches the girl who is in tears and thereby disobeys the established rules and routines. In her resistance, and in her attempt to work through the crisis this incident has provoked for her, she in effect splits teacher as an institutional figure from teacher as a compassionate person. However, what is of particular significance

for my purposes here is not an interpretation of the content of her retelling (e.g., the splitting, the distancing from the teacher), but how the act of retelling attempts to capture her experience of learning as a form of coercion. That is, learning to be a teacher at this point is akin to learning to act like a teacher and, as this incident revealed to her, such learning is placing certain (undesirable) demands on who she is.

Thus the coercive force of education is here doubled: in seeking to articulate a position for herself that can only be caught within the tensions of being part teacher/part student, the student teacher offers a narrative that both reveals the violence of learning to become a teacher and the violence of learning to become a student. The retelling, as a form of symbolization, suggests, like the girl's own symbolic articulations, that learning to become (and the future toward which it beckons) can be fraught with anguish and traumatic awareness.

There is, however, another moment present whereby the girl's learning to become a student and the student's learning to become a teacher are disrupted by another event: their relationship to each other. In this instance, there is another mode of relationality in evidence. The interaction between the girl and the student teacher inserts another possibility in the girl's understanding of herself in relation to the anthem and makes it possible for her to imagine that there are other forms of social relation available to her. Similarly, the reaching out of the student teacher to inquire into the young girl's situation suggests a capacity for a relationality not premised on control or coercion. There opens up the potential for a nonviolent relationship, a relationship that is not based on denying or repudiating the student's needs (bodily needs, in this case), but is rooted in a response that is quite particular to the situation at hand.

In working with the idea that pedagogy is a process of learning to become that involves violence, I wish to consider below the ways nonviolence might also be evident in pedagogical interactions more generally. More to the point, I ask what are the conditions for ethicality, even in the face of such ontological violence?

LEARNING TO BECOME AND THE QUESTION OF ETHICS

As both the above examples imply, the idea that pedagogy is about the demand for learning to become crystallizes both the dream and the nightmare of education itself. On the one hand, it touches on the hope that people can think differently, can change the way they relate to one another, and can form new understandings of themselves and the world that make possible the very act of teaching and learning. As Britzman writes of education, "it demands of students and teachers that each come to something, make something more of themselves."¹⁸ There is an implicit rising to the occasion, as it were, a demand

for a certain kind of being in the classroom. On the other hand, the demand for learning to become carries with it a great burden, for if pedagogy is about the becoming of the subject, then it can become a tool for the most oppressive ends. Questions of a normative nature inevitably arise: Who is it that we, as educators and citizens, desire people to become?

Indeed, philosophically speaking, exploring the place of ethics in education often begins from this normative point of departure: What values are to be invoked in educational encounters? How might students be educated to become better citizens, more responsible moral subjects, or people who can live and work better across social differences? Roger Simon notes that pedagogy is not just about the teaching of morals, but is itself a “moral vision.”¹⁹ Normative questions are often central in helping to define and reflect upon an educational project.

However, posing normative questions has the tendency to make ethics programmatic in its orientation to education: a set of duties or obligations that if well enough defined and well enough followed will produce the ethical behavior desired. Bauman remarks of men and women living in a postmodern world, “we look in vain for the firm and trusty rules which may reassure us that once we followed them, we could be sure to be in the right.”²⁰ Education is seen as a fulfillment or failure of prior principles of goodness and rightness—prior, that is, to the actual face-to-face encounters between teachers and students. In such an understanding, ethics comes to education from the outside. It asks education, often through appeals to empathy, or reason, or politics, or moral imperative, to become a better practice, to think about how it imagines its ideals; it also asks education to consider what students have to learn and how teachers and students need to act in order to ensure the realization of such ideals. What it often forgets is the uncertainty and unpredictability of the pedagogical encounter itself.

But what if one begins from a slightly different place? What if one begins with the “messy and ambiguous” nature of human reality?²¹ What if one reflects upon the failure and uncertainty of the demand for learning to become? As Adam Phillips suggests, “people can never know beforehand, neither can their teachers, exactly what is of personal significance”; students insofar as they have unconscious desires “choose their own teachers . . . [an individual] picks out and transforms the bits [s]he wants, the bits that can be used in the hidden projects of unconscious desire.”²² Thus at the same time pedagogy demands that its subjects “learn to become,” in practice, there is a great deal of uncertainty and unpredictability to the pedagogical enterprise. People bring a host of idiosyncrasies and unconscious associations that enable them to resist, transform, and create symbolic attachments that pedagogy cannot predict or control. Could the host teacher, in the above example, predict that the girl would so rigidly attach to the idea of bodily immobility that she would forfeit her own bodily needs? It may not be surprising, but is it a sure thing?

Instead of asking what education ought to be, what if educators ask what makes ethics possible in education in the first place, particularly in light of the latter's uncertainty and its ontological entanglements with learning to become? What makes education receptive, perhaps even vulnerable, to ethicality? Taking my cue from Levinas, who holds that ethics consists in the non-violent relationship to the Other, in the particular relation the self has to another person, I look at the specificity of relationships within the pedagogical encounter as possibilities for ethics.²³

Shifting the focus from education as a scene where one ought to apply this or that principle to a scene where the conditions or contingencies of ethicality may be found means no longer simply thinking *about* education in relation to ethics; rather, it means thinking about ethics *through* education. This means exploring the day-to-day details of pedagogical encounters to see what they might offer in putting forth an understanding of education as a site of *implied*, rather than *applied*, ethics. To explore this idea of an implied ethics more fully necessitates reading teaching-learning encounters for the way they promote conditions for ethicality as they promote conditions for being, both of which involve relationships between self and Other.

TEACHING AS "BRINGING MORE THAN I CONTAIN" AND LEARNING AS RECEIVING

Levinas is helpful in fleshing out pedagogical encounters, for he centers otherness at the very heart of teaching and learning. But what he means by otherness is important to highlight here, for it does not simply mean a sociological "Other" who is marginalized or maligned, nor does it simply signify another person who, as a subject, resembles myself. Simply put, for Levinas "the Other is what I myself am not."²⁴ In Levinas's view, self and Other exist as radically distinct beings; the Other is not "like me," nor am I "like the Other."²⁵ Moreover, whatever psychical bridges a self does make with the Other, such as identification or empathy, merely serve to underscore the chasm that in fact separates the two. What is important for my purposes here is that it is in the very break between self and Other where Levinas locates both the conditions for ethics and the possibility for teaching and learning. Like Castoriadis in this regard, it is that which is outside the subject that provokes learning and alteration: the Other ruptures a sense of unified being.

Levinas suggests that teaching is about staging an encounter with the Other, with something outside the self, whereas learning is to receive from the Other more than the self already holds.

It is . . . to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is . . . an ethical

relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching [*enseignement*]. Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain.²⁶

Note here how teaching and learning are conceived as an ethical relation, not because of some prescriptive injunction, but because there are present two distinct beings who come face to face in an encounter. For Levinas, teaching and learning, like ethics, lie in the “insurmountability of the duality of beings.”²⁷ The Other signifies a limitless possibility for the self, and it is by coming face to face with such limitlessness that the self can exceed its own containment, its own self-identity, breaking the solitude of being for the self. In this view, teaching is only possible if the self is open to the Other, to the face of the Other. Through such openness to what is exterior to the I, the I can become something different than, or beyond, what it was; in short, it can learn.²⁸

This view of teaching as “bringing more than I contain” is antithetical to the Socratic method that so predominates dialogical approaches to educational practice, where teaching is viewed as “bringing out of the I that which it already contains.” The latter is, of course, more familiar: a pedagogy of recollection and self-knowledge, where the teacher as midwife facilitates the birth of students’ knowledge. As discussed previously, in the Socratic view, learning supposedly happens almost in spite of the teacher. It is the skill of the teacher to elicit that which is already inside the subject, not the social encounter per se that matters. The maieutic method erases the significance of the Other and claims that learning is a recovery contained within the I, rather than a disruption of the I provoked by the Other in a moment of sociality. Levinas writes, “This primacy of the same was Socrates’s teaching: to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me, as though from all eternity I was in possession of what comes to me from the outside. . . .”²⁹ However, as we have seen, this is also a fiction in terms of how the question itself comes from outside the subject via the Other.

In contrast, what is important to Levinas’s view is that it is sociality—the encounter with the Other who is radically distinct from the self—that enables the self to learn and to change. By recentering the importance of teaching, Levinas compels educators to think about their responsibility in terms of this otherness, something that the Socratic view, because of its emphasis on what is self-same, cannot. By posing otherness as a condition of learning, Levinas’s view underscores the point that teaching cannot abandon its ethical significance or run away from the possible consequences it generates.

Pedagogy seesaws between the “bringing more than I contain” that teaching aspires to and the “receiving beyond the capacity of the I” that learning strives to achieve. Within this movement, of course, there are many surprises and shifts, and the roles marked out for teachers and students are not so rigid as perhaps they first appear. Heuristically, Levinas’s focus on the centrality of otherness to teaching, learning, and ethics lends insight into the demand for

alteration that pedagogy makes, and it enables teachers to begin to consider what responsibilities they have toward those they teach. This is not to suggest that students do not have responsibilities themselves; their capacity to receive and to be open to difference is certainly an ethical response, according to Levinas. But the question that remains for educators is how, in the face of the violence that is implicit in the pedagogical demand for learning to become, might we be open and responsible to the Other?

Here is the crux of the tension. The subject can only become an ego if it is forced to repress or sublimate certain wishes and drives in the service of sociality, yet it must also be open, or receptive, to what is outside itself in order for this to occur. Teachers, as the vehicles through which the pedagogical demand for learning to become is made real for students, cannot escape their role—they require students to make symbolic attachments and meaning out of the curriculum they present, and in doing so they cannot escape a certain degree of coercion. It is not simply by repressing this coercion, by convincing ourselves that education is otherwise, that those of us committed to the project of education will arrive at ethical solutions that avoid this coercion. In fact, taking refuge in education's innocence denies the possibility of asking ourselves ethical questions, for it is precisely because violence is inherent to learning to become and because teachers and students are continually vulnerable to each other in the face of this violence that the question of nonviolence can even be raised. As Levinas himself writes, it is the potential to do violence that suggests its own reversal: "The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill."³⁰ Or, elsewhere: "Only beings capable of war can rise to peace."³¹

For teachers, perhaps participating in a nonviolent relation to the Other means having to become a learner oneself, opening up oneself to the rupture of being that the face-to-face encounter entails. "The face is a living presence; it is expression. . . . The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse."³² That is, ethical relations may rest in the teacher's own capacity to be receptive to the discourse of the face, to hear and listen for the meanings that students work out for themselves. Recall in the example above how the teacher could not face the girl or the student teacher; one can never know what motivated this turn away from the face but can simply note that in turning away, the teacher could not receive the girl's vulnerability, or be open to the meaning she construed between her body and the anthem, and thus foreclosed on the opportunity for response.

Thus far, what is at stake here for teachers are two layers of interaction. On the one hand, there is the demand for learning to become, where teachers have a social obligation to offer students opportunities for encountering difference—to bring more than the I contains. As has been discussed, however, the meanings students make are not cast beforehand, nor can teachers assume that fulfilling their obligations is not harmful. On the other hand, there can be a receptivity to what is unpredictably returned to the teacher: the meanings

that students make and the vulnerabilities that accompany them. What I am suggesting here is that if educators demand that students make relationships to curriculum, and if these relationships are always uncertain and open to failure, then the place of ethicality in education lies in the failure of the demand for learning, what Britzman refers to as “social, ontological, and epistemological breakdown.”³³ It is here, in the moments where students struggle for meaning, struggle to make sense out of and symbolize their relationship to curriculum, where teachers are called upon to be receptive, where a nonviolent element to the teaching-learning relationship may be allowed to enter.

Klein’s 1930 case study, “On the Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego,” outlines what this failure looks like and the impact it has on the ego development of a four-year-old autistic boy, Dick.³⁴ Klein has much to teach her readers about her role as a pedagogue, insofar as it is her function as a psychoanalyst to help the child make meaning and symbolize his world. At the same time, Klein also offers her audience a window through which to see how this harsh process is also inflected with an openness and receptivity to the vicissitudes of Dick’s vulnerabilities. As well, the case study highlights the work in which Klein and Dick are engaged when the demand for learning to become is front and center. The study also gives educators reason to pause, for in asking students to alter themselves, do teachers instigate a replaying of the students’ earlier struggles with ego formation outlined by Klein?

LEARNING FROM KLEIN AND DICK

Klein’s case study is a foray into how the subject learns to become an ego. The journey she embarks on is quite compelling, for Klein depicts not only the difficulties, trials, and anxieties that face Dick, but she reveals something of her own role in inducing these difficulties and her attempts at allaying them. For these reasons, looking in detail at Dick’s ego development may help educators understand some of the structures that emerge within the educational setting itself. Klein notes three movements in becoming an ego: initial nonresponsiveness; induced anxiety; and finally, the turn to symbolization in order to tolerate this anxiety.

Klein describes Dick as a four-year-old boy who functions, in terms of vocabulary and emotional relations to his surroundings, at the level of a fifteen-month-old child. He fails to communicate any feeling and is now thought to have been an autistic child at the time of his analysis. Klein offers an account of how the ego comes into being for Dick through his ability to form symbols and make meaning. During his first session with Klein, Dick refrains from all outward emotional activity, be it hiding, shying away, crying, or playing. He runs around Klein as “if I were a piece of furniture” (222). Klein concludes her initial portrait of Dick with the claim that “Dick’s behaviour had no meaning or purpose, nor was any affect or anxiety associated with it . . .

[his] ego had ceased to develop phantasy-life and to establish a relation with reality" (222, 224). She regards him as being absolutely incapable of aggression, and he refuses to chew up his own food, seemingly unwilling to allow even this little aggression into his life. Although she continually reminds the reader throughout the narrative that the child was affectless and disinterested, she nevertheless also notes his interest "in trains and stations and also in door-handles, doors and the opening and shutting of them" (224), a point to which I shall return below.

Because of Dick's incapacity to symbolize his fantasies through play, Klein notes that she has to shift her technique.³⁵ Instead of focusing on what the child acts out through his play, Klein must find a means of provoking play and thus symbolization and fantasy. "His lack of interest in his environment . . . [was] only the effect of his lack of a symbolic relation to things. The analysis, then, had to begin with this, the *fundamental* obstacle to establishing contact with him" (225, emphasis in original). Her analysis becomes focused on disrupting Dick's enclosed sense of self, and she begins a strategy that, to put it in Levinasian terms, brings him more than his I can contain, or, as Klein would put it, induces anxiety. This marks the second phase of Dick's learning to become. The demand is the familiar pedagogical one, tinged with coercion: to provoke the child into making meaning.

Klein takes the rather brazen step of placing two trains on a table before Dick, stating that the big train is "Daddy train," the little one "Dick train." This move acts as more than a provocation, appearing invasive and coercive, perhaps even "brutal," as Lacan would suggest. To quote from Klein: "There-upon he picked up the train I called 'Dick' and made it roll to the window and said 'station.' I explained: 'The station is mummy; Dick is going into mummy'" (225). Dick then runs into the dark hallway between the entryway doors of the room and says the word "dark." After repeating this several times, Klein reports:

I explained to him: "It is dark inside mummy. Dick is inside dark mummy." Meantime he picked up the train again, but soon ran back into the space between the doors. While I was saying he was going into dark mummy, he said twice in a questioning way: "Nurse?" I answered: "Nurse is soon coming," and this he repeated and used the words later quite correctly, retaining them in his mind. (225)

However, it is in the third analytic visit where Dick begins to make a sustained symbolic relation, marking the third phase in learning to become. Instead of running between the doors after picking up the train, Dick hides behind a piece of furniture and becomes seized with anxiety. It is at this point that he, for the first time, calls out for Klein to come to him.

This is the turning point in the analysis, the moment when Dick begins to formulate a relation to the outside world, occasioned, according to Klein, by his intense anxiety. This then leads Dick to an increased vocabulary and a

heightened sense of emotional investment in Klein and his nurse. Indeed, Dick begins to play, begins the work of symbolization. The work of making meaning through play is a strategy that allows Dick to tolerate his anxiety. The ego work that he is engaged in brings with it the pain of having to accept difference, to receive that which Klein has to offer him, which is always already outside himself. As Levinas might say, Klein has ruptured Dick's own containment. Now, in a face-to-face relation with difference, Dick struggles to overcome (what Klein would call a "working over") the profound vulnerability aroused by his anxious state.

The analysis continues, and Dick begins to act out his fantasies with regard to his parents. As Jacobus notes in her close reading of the case study, at each turn Klein, with "characteristic literalness," gives him "signs in exchange for toys."³⁶ Klein retells Dick what he is doing, interpreting his play as he performs it, rather than waiting for patterns of repetition to emerge in the play itself. This is how she describes the modification of her technique:

In general I do not interpret the material until it has found expression in various representations. In this case, however, where the capacity to represent it was almost entirely lacking, I found myself obliged to make my interpretations on the basis of my general knowledge. . . . I succeeded in activating anxiety and other affects. The representations then became fuller and I soon acquired a more solid foundation for the analysis, and so was able gradually to pass over to the technique that I generally employ in analysing little children. (228–229)

Her technique centers on giving to Dick words that activate anxiety and affect. Klein believes that it is only through such crises that Dick can begin the process of becoming. But she also gives him something more. She introduces him to significations that come from the Other and therefore places him in a potential social relation—and an ethical one. Dick, through his receiving "beyond the capacity of the I," beyond what he is at present, begins to make a relation with his own unconscious desires and conflicts; at the same time, he makes a relation to the otherness that is Klein.

This is crucial, for not only does Dick establish a relation to the outside world via a relation to the Other that is Klein, but he also must establish a relation to the otherness of the unconscious. What Klein demonstrates here is that the latter relation cannot take place prior to the former. It is through the Other that is Klein, through the social relation, that Dick's own relationship with himself is provoked. This suggests to me that it is not only Klein's words that are important but the very presence of two beings that conditions Dick's receptivity of words.

But what does this suggest about Klein's role as a pedagogue? What can educators learn from her? One certainly can see the ruthlessness of her invasive strategy. At least in her recounting of the analysis, Dick is pushed continually toward making a relationship to the words she offers, anxieties are

incited, and she fosters sublimation through her abnormally persistent interpretations of his fantasies. These are the key ingredients in Dick's developing symbolic relationships to his surroundings. Learning to become is indeed presented as a violent process, where Dick not only struggles to enter into a social relation with the Other but does so with profound affective difficulties, evident in his calling out to Klein in utter despair. But even in this case, where the violence of pedagogy, of learning to become, is so transparent, there is nonetheless evident a mode of interaction that swims against the current of Klein's seeming invasiveness, and it concerns Dick's initial interest in trains, doors, and handles.

There is no question that Klein brings Dick more than he contains, that she "teaches" him; she infuses the trains and doors with a signification that is truly "outside" what Dick is capable of articulating on his own. As Jacobus writes, "This all-too-literal naming is the glue that makes language 'stick' to the trains, door handles, and *'dark'* of little Dick's imaginary. Klein's words 'graft' the Oedipus complex onto little Dick's arrested symbol-making capacity."³⁷ However, the "grafting" only takes root because it already builds on a nascent interest. Dick has some—albeit tentative—capacity to begin the work of semiosis through his interest in trains, doors, and handles in the first place. What is of particular note to education is that in some measure Klein has been receptive to this interest and uses it in order to create a logic or structure for Dick's fantasies to take hold. Moreover, she alters her own technique, her own mode of symbolization, in order to do so. She gives Dick a social relation with difference, a signifying structure, to which he attaches his fantasy life and works through his anxiety.

In some ways, then, Klein is receptive to the otherness Dick returns to her.³⁸ She is open to working with the defenses Dick presents, and while we might say she errs on the side of giving Dick too much to handle (pun intended), of creating excessive anxiety, what Klein is also able to recognize is that it is Dick who has made meaning with the tools and structures she has offered him. Thus it is in Dick's failures to become, his hesitations, anxieties, indifferences, and *non sequiturs*, where Klein's openness reveals itself. As a psychoanalyst, she knows that Dick must learn to tolerate his own anxiety through symbolic attachments, but she also knows that she has a role to play in bringing him more than he can contain, and perhaps more than he can bear to know. Hers is not a maieutic method, where she is but eliciting that which Dick already knows, but a pedagogy of provocation and disruption that responds to the specificity of Dick's interests and needs. She listens for possibilities of slippage in meaning, in the breakdown of communication, in the glances he gives her, and in the associations of word and action made through play, and she returns them to Dick, returns them through the discourse of the Other. I want to return to a claim made earlier, that it is not the words themselves that provoke Dick's anxiety and subsequent symbol formation but the fact that they come via the Other, via the presence that is Klein.

To recall Levinas: “The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse”; and “Discourse is . . . the experience of something absolutely foreign . . . a *traumatism of astonishment*. . . . This absolutely foreign alone can instruct us.”³⁹ It is just such a traumatism that Dick received and one that, in my view, our students may at times receive from us.

Klein’s case study suggests to me that teachers, in trying to encourage students to engage in meaning-making activity, take a number of risks, the incitement of anxiety being a major one. What she helps educators understand, in my view, is the *delicacy* of engaging students in their interests, in offering them interpretations or theories of their experiences, in providing for them a structure through which they might think themselves in relation to the world. That is, even when teachers do offer interpretations and structures through texts, films, and the like, and even when they refrain from offering personal beliefs, curriculum nonetheless largely comes via the Other that is the teacher; it comes from that which is foreign, risking, to echo Levinas’s words once again, a “traumatism of astonishment.” This traumatism is not just about being “bowled over” or being in awe of something but about being traumatized, about risking the security of one’s self-identity, about facing the possibility of becoming altered. It is thus precisely within this context of risk that the delicate nature of teaching arises. But what might attending to the delicacy involved in teaching look like?

Klein, one could argue, employed anything but a delicate touch, instead forcing upon Dick her own prescriptive interpretations in order to provide a structure for meaning to take hold. Yet as I have suggested, her interaction with Dick is not reducible to the words she says to him; she is also open and, therefore, subject to Dick’s unique responses of fear and anxiety. She goes to him when he calls; she plays with him when he enters the analytic session; she responds to the looks he gives her; she talks to him when he is at play and, at times, she cuddles him when he is overwrought. What teachers might learn from Klein, and psychoanalysis more generally, is not a “laundry list” of behaviors replicating Klein’s actions but a concern to be attentive to the range of possible responses students generate out of their own positions of vulnerability and to be sensitive to the profound singularity of the situation at hand. That is, the quality of one’s response to another’s particular vulnerable condition is central and not merely incidental to learning; this is particularly so since teachers, as the ones who “bring more than I contain,” are implicated in this very vulnerability in the first place. Understanding teaching as a delicate engagement means that the emphasis is not on specific strategies or behaviors for “optimal” interaction (this would be not unlike an applied ethics with a set of rules to determine behavior) but on an attentiveness to the exposure and riskiness that students face in their everyday experiences of learning (an implied ethics where what is ethical about interaction is to be found within the pedagogical realm itself). Thus such an understanding means, on the one hand, accepting the fragility of students’ identities as they seek to develop

meaning for themselves with oftentimes heightened emotional intensity (e.g., the beginning teacher who is genuinely fearful of the students she is about to teach; the young child who anxiously awaits the teacher's approval for getting the right math answer; the graduate student who falls thoroughly in love with an idea). On the other hand, such an understanding also requires acknowledging that one's teaching, as a relation to otherness, is precisely what provokes (but does not determine) such fragility and intensity to begin with. The delicacy of teaching, then, with its emphasis on responding to the unique Other, is at once a curricular and an ethical matter.

PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM,
AND ETHICAL POSSIBILITIES

Where does this leave educators in contemplating the possibility for ethics in education? Where might this lead in terms of thinking about the nature and place of curriculum, particularly within social justice education?

Earlier I explored what an "implied ethics" might mean for education, that is, looking to the particularities of the pedagogical encounter, the relationships between teachers and students, between Klein and Dick, to see what might be learned from them regarding the ethical significance of education. As discussed, even within a pedagogy that is structured by a demand for learning to become, a learning that, often under the rubric of "socialization," is not so innocent or painless as educators would perhaps like to believe, there is nonetheless a place for ethical encounters. There are two pedagogical contingencies that lend ethical significance to an implied ethics for education.

First, there is the uncertainty of the pedagogical encounter itself, where the meanings students create for themselves cannot be foreseen, where learning to become is not a seamless project of success. As Klein's case study demonstrates, the miscues, associations, and interests found in Dick's play, and his failures to become an ego, compel her attention and responsiveness and lead to a change in technique. This attentiveness to unforeseeable detail and meaning also holds for the educational realm. It is from an "initial position of uncertainty," as Lynda Stone suggests, that "openness, humility and trust" become possible.⁴⁰ As teachers and students, we tentatively come together in anticipation of an encounter of which we cannot predict the outcome; the exchanged looks, the tones of voice, the artifacts of curriculum, the passion of opinion, the indifference to a question, the time and space to be negotiated, the desire for love and recognition, all of this and more comprise the tiny yet colossal details that shape and shake the ground upon which educational edifices are built. Thus such uncertainty in our interactions carries serious ethical weight, for if such uncertainty is inevitable, then the quality of response to the Other is rooted in shifting social relations rather than in solely abstract adherence to ethical rules or principles. Moreover, in terms of an implied ethics, such uncertainty compels educators to develop thoughtful

approaches to the Other rather than to carry out a set of predetermined behaviors that tell teachers “this is what you should do.” While some guidelines are unavoidable (and legally necessary), mere rules alone do not ensure ethical, nonviolent interactions.

Yet a second contingent feature of implied ethics is the relation the self has to the Other, which signals the importance of sociality and ethicality to education and also highlights that it is through this sociality that a different relationship with one’s self may be established. Words, information, and teaching are not disembodied within the pedagogical encounter but are made available through the Other; as such, the encounter speaks to the necessarily social aspect of teaching and learning. As I have argued, it is the potentiality of this relationship to do violence that makes it susceptible to ethics right from the start. Moreover, as Dick’s analysis revealed, the kind of provocation and disruption to self-identity that the Other brings to the I sets the conditions, in the form of anxiety or traumatism, for profound alteration of the ego; anxiety itself becomes an otherness to which the subject has to make a relationship. As a way of thinking about ethics through education, the self-Other relationship is crucial in understanding how profoundly teachers can be implicated in the lives of their students—often unwittingly, of course—and it enables teachers to reflect on how their everyday responses are always already ethically laden.

What I have been outlining here is, of course, a critique of the Socratic model in education, whereby learning is rendered through a process of dialogue and questioning. This midwife model is often a cornerstone both for progressive and critical approaches to education: the teacher is merely there to guide students to discover knowledge for themselves. This appears to be a model of limited pedagogical intervention, beginning from students’ own interests and building from there. But as we have seen, what is omitted from this account of midwifery or facilitation is how the questions always come via the Other, via an Other that is not reducible to the self. That is, the epistemological emphasis on self-knowledge blankets over the dialogical relation as a social and an ethical relation between two nonsynchronous subjects. Dialogical exchange is not seen to be about confronting otherness but about eliciting the implicit knowledge the student already has. Learning thus neither dislocates nor interrupts; it merely gives definition to what is already there.

Instead, what I am suggesting here is that learning is accompanied by a receptivity to the Other, by a receptivity to the difference that is returned to the learner through the practice of teaching. As Felman’s commentary on Lacan indicates: “Coming from the Other, knowledge is, by definition, that which comes as a surprise.”⁴¹ In this way, learning occasions states of affect that are disturbing and, perhaps, painful, making teachers and students incredibly vulnerable to one another. Thus being open or receptive to an other suggests a mode of relationality that may be very difficult to sustain. My own position, however, is that responsiveness to the Other can counter the harm

wrought by pedagogy's own demands for alteration. Perhaps receptivity and total nonviolence are not humanly or psychologically always possible—after all, teachers have defenses too—but if educators are going to live well in the uncertainty of their classrooms and interact in less harmful ways that respect the otherness of the Other, then are they not compelled by virtue of their roles as teachers who do “bring more than I contain,” who do provoke and disrupt the security of students' selves, to be responsible, to be responsive? As stated above, such receptivity does not only concern the Other but affects one's relationship to one's self. In this regard, then, part of the ethical relation involves an openness to considering one's own anxieties and defenses and how they appear in the self-Other relation.

At the risk of losing sight of the place of curriculum in pedagogical encounters, particularly since the content of curriculum is such a struggled-over terrain in social justice education, what is recentered in this discussion is the place of teaching and its ethical significance. Indeed, I have implied that it is important to think curriculum through teaching, just as I have been thinking ethics through education. Curriculum, in this view, is neither only a cultural or political instrument divorced from the concrete practices of teaching, nor is it a solipsistic rendering of personal or autobiographical knowledge. Instead, curriculum passes through the very sociality of self and Other, replete with uncertainties and diverse contexts. Moreover, it is precisely because it passes through this social relation that curriculum can become a tool for the most oppressive ends, in spite of best intentions. That is, it is not only the “content” of curriculum that matters but the articulatory practices through which difference is symbolized, as I have discussed at length elsewhere.⁴² From the perspective of the learner, curriculum comes via the Other that is the teacher in the form of new ideas, concepts, and texts; yet the meaning he or she makes out of such material can never be secured beforehand. As a feature of such self-Other interaction, curriculum lends substance to the process of learning to become: it is the symbolic raw material that students use, discard, or rewrite in making meaning for themselves. Curriculum is thus fundamental to the symbolic elaboration necessary to ego formation.

Yet in thinking curriculum through teaching, curriculum also participates in the pedagogical contingencies for ethicality already outlined: in both the uncertainty of meaning and the self-Other relation. With regard to the latter, curriculum cannot appear as a mirror in which students simply see themselves reflected. This would, in effect, serve to erase otherness, each self looking only for its own reflection, reading texts, and listening to people to see how they are “just like me.” On the surface, this view of curriculum I am elaborating seems to fly in the face of calls for a more inclusive curriculum, where social justice is premised on just such a capacity to see the commonalities between people, or when underrepresented and misrepresented groups seek to include curricular materials that more adequately reflect their reality and with which they can identify. However, I wish to maintain that even in

the face of such necessities in combating social inequities, one needs to be vigilant about what such curricular moves may be assuming. For instance, mirroring-type responses may in fact collapse difference within and between communities. It is not that identifications are not necessary or of no value to questions of community building and for disrupting systems of discrimination, but with regard to education, they alone cannot provide the conditions for ethics, that is, for a nonviolent relationship to the Other where the otherness of the Other is left intact and unharmed. Instead, seeing curriculum as part of a much broader practice of social (and ethical) interaction suggests that focusing on more inclusive representation for the purposes of identification is not sufficient—and not only because such meaning making may go off in unpredictable directions. The implication here is that curriculum needs to be more thoroughly considered as part of the quality of human response between teachers and students, as part of the delicacy of engaging students, rather than as a fixed set of representations.

In terms of the pedagogical contingency of uncertainty, curriculum itself is unstable, for it continually exceeds the bounds of its “content” in terms of textbooks, films, or literature. Instead, understanding that it partakes in a subject’s idiosyncratic capacity to symbolize, in a subject’s unconscious proclivity to make meaning, curriculum can include a wide range of objects, thoughts, expressions, and affects. Phillips writes:

From a psychoanalytic point of view, I have my conscious preoccupations and ambitions, and these make me more or less educable. But I also have my unconscious desire and affinities—tropisms and drifts of attention—that can be quite at odds with my conscious ideals. I may go to a lecture on psychology and be fascinated; but I may dream that night about the ear-rings of the woman sitting next to me; which, if I were to associate to this detail in the dream might, like Proust’s legendary madeleine, open up vistas of previously unacknowledged personal history.⁴³

Thus on another level, curriculum comes from outside the subject but not necessarily via the Other that is the teacher; rather, it also comes via the otherness of the self, the unconscious. The play of uncertainty does not merely lie within the teacher-student relation but within a different kind of relationship to the unconscious, as the preceding discussion on Klein and Dick has revealed. What is significant for curriculum here is how it at once participates in ego formation as well as in the subject’s creative capacity for unconscious representation. Curriculum gives form and substance to the delicate relations that mark the process of learning to become.

When reflecting upon the conditions of violence and nonviolence that are present in the pedagogical encounter, the question of what constitutes the possibilities of response may seem easy to ask but far more difficult to answer. Unfortunately, the trauma of wetting oneself in front of the class, or of witnessing such an event, is neither extraordinary nor rare. Yet it does seem to call

out for a responsiveness that is at minimum both sensitive and mindful of otherness. Similarly, using texts such as Wiesenthal's with the aim of discussing difficult social justice issues incurs an obligation to be sensitive to the many ways students respond to difference. In exploring here some of the assumptions guiding our teaching practices and in asking educators to consider the uncertainty of meaning and the vulnerabilities that are often displayed in the classroom, I am well aware that teachers and learners are already stretched to capacity in the hectic day to dayness of what it means to teach and to learn. However, if teaching is not going to abandon the ethical significance of its role in "bringing more than I contain," then perhaps the work of an implied ethics resides in teachers being able to live both within and beyond their means, both within and beyond their capacities, simultaneously.