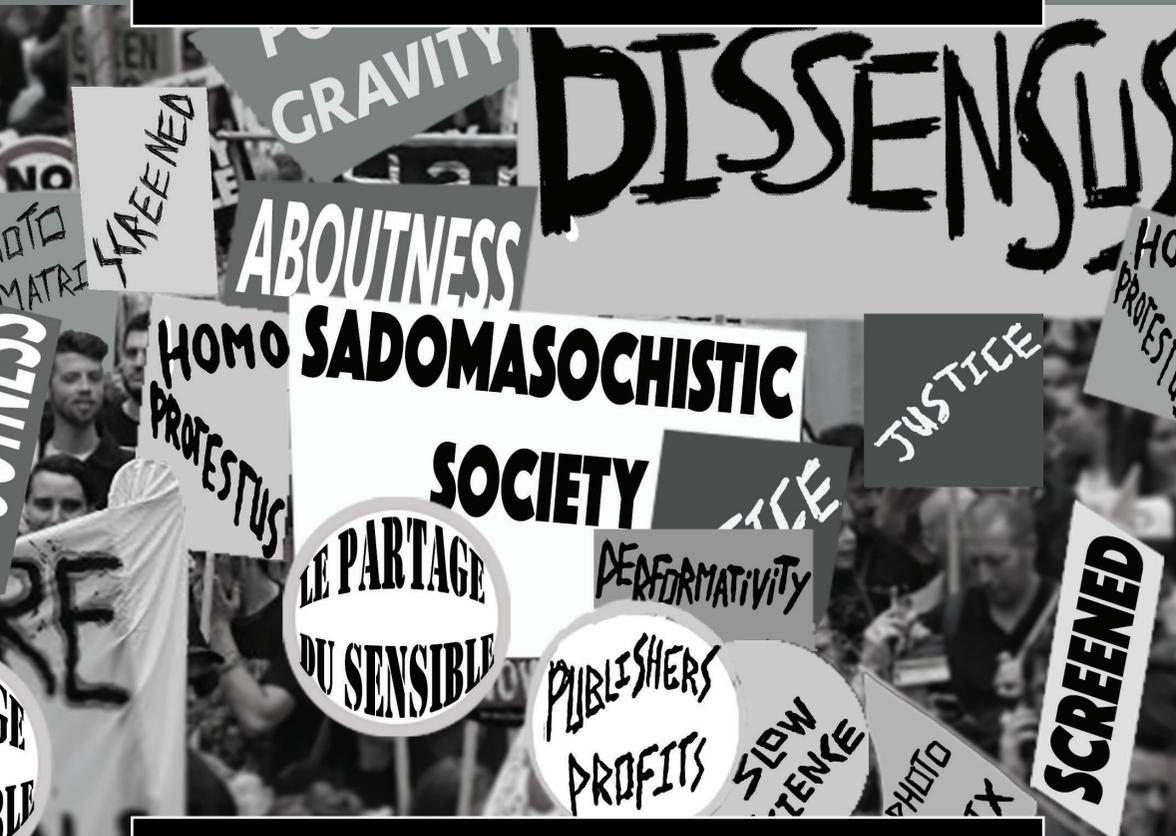


Demo(s)

Philosophy – Pedagogy – Politics

H. Letiche, G. Lightfoot and
J.-L. Moriceau (Eds.)



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Edited by

H. Letiche, G. Lightfoot and J.-L. Moriceau



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INTRODUCTION

DRAWING LESSONS

What echoes through the pages of this book is a conversation between two people that never met. The work of Jacques Rancière, not surprisingly, given his work on *Demos* and democracy, has been picked up by many contributors, while similarly, many of the chapters allude to the concerns that drive Hugo Letiche's work. The pieces here are the collected contributions from people who attended Hugo Letiche's *festschrift*, and as we curated the entries, it became increasingly clear that the relationship between pedagogy, politics and philosophy, explored in the field of organizational studies is the theme that holds the material together. But since Rancière and Letiche never met, and the conversation is but indirect, this opens up an unusual space within which to place a discussion. And, if there is one thing that we need to take from *Demos* – both the *festschrift* event and the subsequent book – it is that we are not marking the end of a career, but providing the opportunity to provoke wider, ongoing debate.

Yet *Demos* is not just debate, in that it is not merely a carefully mannered discussion that changes nothing. Rather, it always holds the promise of action, democratic and/or revolutionary. And *Demos* is also there in the organisation of the debate – an efficacy that plays itself out even before any word is spoken. In all politics, an untouchable something is at play, in our aesthetical contact with the setting, in the way speech is shared or captured, in a specific mode of presence, and in the interactions with the audience. Extrapolating from this, we can see that *Demos* haunts many organisational theory debates, for an idea (or denial) of *Demos*, often unconscious, un-discussed, over or under-exposed, orientates our engagements and writings.

To delve into this deeper, we turn first to William Kentridge (2014). We need the eye of the visual artist to capture this unspeakable, the actions that load every word, the rules governing the atmosphere nestled in the smallest gestures, manners, postures, and intonations; and the spirit that haloes the speakers' performance. In reflecting on a lecture of Rancière's, Kentridge examines how academics draw upon a catalogue of 'devices which one uses to [...] pin the words more closely to the world outside':

But there are many other things that happen in the gaps and spaces, most importantly the ... the ... hesitation.

The dramatic um ... um ... um ...

The uncertain UM, the pause before the certainty of the final statement.

Or ... or ...

Mock uncertainty, the pause before the clarity of the final statement.

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Or... or ...

Mock uncertainty hiding real uncertainty.

And a series of accompanying gestures, unspoken, which are not there in the text (though in truth some of them are here in my notes), but which are an essential part of what the performance, or conversation or talking or lecture, is. Emphasizing this precise point, the raised finger.

Gathering consensus, while letting thoughts expand, gathering further examples, the circling finger.

The adjustment of the sleeve, the removal of the watch.

A small but important point being made—the thumb and forefinger circle.

The open-handed tapping of the podium.

The collar tug.

The one hand in the pocket.

The double-handed tossing of the salad. The dovening, leaning forward to the notes. The shaking of the dice for emphasis.

A demonstration of other possibilities, the windshield wiper wrist.

The apparent losing of the place in the notes.

The real losing of the place in the notes.

The open-handed, sincere simplicity.

The weighing of words with an open hand.

The removal of the glasses for a frank look. Their replacement.

Their almost-replacement, the held gesture.

This complex combination: touching the nose, stroking the hair, the collar tug and the finger twirl, to take us through a complex question.

A separation of the tangential action from the essential thought.

The more extreme the action, the purer the thought.

This is part of one of Kentridge's six *Drawing Lessons*. The play on words is obvious – despite the descriptions of artistic technique and the notion that we are being invited to a drawing lesson, there is also the rhetorical play mimicking the manner in which politicians proclaim that 'lessons will be learnt' from the latest governmental failing. We would hope that, here, our words are less shallow than there, and that we actually do draw lessons from what we read and present.

Yet Kentridge's lessons are not easy ones. In one sense, this whole book of *Demos* is a means of exploiting the gaps and spaces of our writing, but it is also a more physical recording of the tics and gestures by which we assert our right to profess. The greater the apparent disruption of traditional academic mores, the greater the challenge. But disruption alone, as a means of demonstrating the purity of our thinking, can become shallow. Admittedly, such a reading would not be wildly incompatible with some of Rancière's apparent lessons for pedagogy and

indeed conformity easily provides simple tricks, deployed by the academic police, to inhibit genuine learning.

Thus, before presenting the texts that constitute the matter of this book, we first want to see what lessons might be learnt from Kentridge's drawing lessons before trying to picture some of the gaps and spaces of the aesthetic performativity, and of the spectral presence, that pervades their address. A brief sketch from Demos might help:

Hugo Letiche has been impatient and nervous the last few minutes. He stands up and, with a half-smile, repeating in his head some of the moves he plans to play, he slowly paces to the very centre of the room. A timid peek to his father, somewhat discomfiting, for it is the first time he will lecture in front of him. A gaze to his wife, this time reassuring. A play with his glasses. A strange posture, with his arms wide open. Then he stops: a false start. A look to the ceiling. A glance to a handful of his most significant others, and finally opening his gaze to the entire room. Earlier, he made sure that each chair was arranged so that everyone could clearly see the speaker, while still being able to listen to other people – now that work has paid off. A couple of slow, short introductory sentences, in his sonorous voice, creating contact with the audience.

All of a sudden he has captivated the room's attention. Something happens physically. The gravity of a presence. It is not charisma, this enthusiasm-raising magical power that captures and seduces without a rest, leading us to where we may not want to go. Rather, we feel invited, or caught, in the interaction, welcomed into sharing a world of ideas. Not as an *oeuvre* to be contemplated, but as matters to be discussed, ideas to be tried, provocations posed that are related to our way of living. Hugo strives for contactness. If someone loses or resists contact he will address him directly. What he fears most is his communication becoming a monologue. He does not want to convince us, he wants us to enter for a while into his perspective, as we might do after having been dragged up to the summit of a mountain. We share this moment of gazing, he fingers a silhouette-idea in the horizon or a shadow-thought far below. We don't need to agree, we just have to realise that we can look at our own questions from this perspective.

Similarly to Jacques Rancière, Hugo Letiche believes that we can teach thinking by letting it occur – by urging people to think rather than telling them how and what to think. Just like a drawing lesson. Demos has much to do with pedagogy and a care for demos is a call for action through pedagogy. Letiche's own pedagogic career has been defined by making interventions – perhaps most notably in the establishing of the DBA programme at the Universiteit voor Humanistiek, which championed normative professionalism. The learning of the students on the programme was not driven by didactic techniques through which all wisdom was dispensed by learned professors. Rather, students were encouraged to study – from other writers but also from their

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own practices – in order to learn more about their own professional actions. Hereby there was a place through which critical conversation might take place. In this, we also see part of the dialogue yet to be had: both Letiche and Rancière's pedagogy mix together action and reflection. Specifically, actions and reflections originated from their own experience, their own trials and errors, actions and reflections, to be contemplated from one of the heights constructed by significant authors.

If we had to draw Letiche communicating, we would have to sketch these multiple gazes in search for contact. But, for the drawing, we would need to be very careful of our choice of the background. For Letiche, as for Rancière, the background is often foreground, the context imprints the situation and gives authority or power to a voice even before any word is spoken. Rancière's (2013) distribution of the sensible is highly determined by the cultural and political moment of history. For Letiche also, actions have to be understood in their organizational context (2006), and the meaning can only be seized once you include in your drawing echoes of the mythical (2004), psycho-analytical (2011), or the context of history of thought, and essentially not until you find a way to include in your brush strokes the manners of the speakers and listeners. Once, during a conference, his son Terrence created a computerized drawing of Letiche, that appeared beside him bit by bit, as if emerging from the context, then slowly deconstructing itself, before reappearing anew. Hugo's double was ghostly, reflective, uncontrollable, and was not just an illustration, but was one of the subjects and actors of the communicative act.

This leads us to a second theme that we might draw from Kentridge – the connection between action and thought. Demos has always been more overt – pointing to doing rather than writing (or talking). Kentridge points to the suggestion in Rancière that: 'The more extreme the action, the purer the thought'; which, in a slightly different context, draws attention to the importance of *dissensus*. For demos does not lie in a feeling of unity, as one would experience in a football stadium. Both ideas and action come together in demos. However, we might well disagree about the kind of required disagreement, as well as how ideas mix with actions.

It's time for a second drawing.

Somebody proposes another possible interpretation of what Hugo has deduced. Hugo moves his chair to sit right in front of the questioner, his massive body adding strength and confidence to his reaction. A look at the ceiling to sort out his arguments, and his first point of reply is made with a measured voice, countering his hand movements. Here, he opens one finger from his closed hand every two seconds, as if counting his winning points or beating time in a jazz improvisation. Then he rushes to other end of the room, tilts his chair back, takes another voice, another face, another play with his hand to stress a second point from a second perspective, and then from a third. Finally he stretches his arms out in front of him, with small hand gesturing, his head inclined to suggest that he is all ears, inviting his opponent to reply to his reply.

Hoping for a reply, implying he will feel deceived if there isn't. Possibly even proposing a reply from the other's point of view.

When Rancière wants to make a point, his voice runs quicker, becomes shriller, underscoring his dissent and rapidly reaching out to his idea. By contrast, Letiche's voice distends, inviting us to spend a while on his wavelength, to try to look through his spectacles, to try out his perspective, to share in it (in the strong sense) – before summoning us to object, to discuss or to extend it. Both speakers encourage us to become emancipated observers of our world, or more reflective participants; one from the shrewdness of his analysis, the other from experimenting with different thought universes.

For Rancière (2010), dissensus is the hallmark of democracy. Disagreement comes first, and is almost a constitutive definition of *demos*. People are identifiably people both in their plurality and the urge of each one to defend his or her irreconcilable view. Everyone should have the right to defend their voice and each voice should bear the same weight. He abhors those intellectuals who want to tell the people what they ought to think, or who think their informed opinion is more valuable than your's. His postulate is that we are all potentially equal in intelligence. The main problem is not to convince the others that our thoughts are right, but instead to find a procedure so that every voice is heard and considered, and can express dissent. Strangely, perhaps, Rancière's books have a rather authoritative tone: he develops his ideas, his reflections and analyses, with almost no counterpoints (apart from Plato or Kant). Yet he remains outside of the general taken-for-grantedness, for example on education (1991), art criticism (example *artiste hollandais*), art history (2013b).

For Letiche, disagreement has to be striven for. Neo-liberalism has standardized ideas and tastes, and the neoliberal subject prefers to zap rather to lose time arguing, or disagrees merely on fashionable and trite issues. Disagreement and discussion pave the road for real contact and care for the other. Letiche favors engaged rather than distanced debate, and abhors conformity with front-stage unanimity. To respond to another's dissent, expressed from other societal positions, is our responsibility. *Demos* has to be constantly remade through listening, reading, reflecting and debating. Letiche's texts are always a dialogue with another author, not used as a shield from criticism or a claim of legitimacy, but as a partner in a dance of thoughts. He is aware that every idea can be turned into its contrary (2005), so he constantly strives to change ideas in their original phrasing, thought and context. Authentic, engaged informed debate can spread ideas; his models are not scientific truth-holders but parasites (2007), such as Hermès (2004) or Metis (Letiche & Statler, 2005).

If we had to make a sketch of Rancière, we would probably picture him alone on a stage, maybe with a megaphone, against a backdrop of books and artworks. By contrast, it would make little sense to sketch Letiche in solitude, without all the others' voices he is constituted by, and all the others that his voice and actions are connected to.

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Neither Rancière nor Letiche would pretend to speak for demos. They would not represent it. Nor would they even think that such a *thing* as a *demos* exists; they would not hypostatize it. They would examine how art pieces make us feel and think demos (e.g. Rancière 2006, 2013b, 2014), and how theories and practices show a concern and a care for demos. They try to speak from within demos, as a part of it. For them demos has still to be made, to be quilted, and they fear that demos is being unpicked by negligence, lack of awareness and finesse, lack of reflection and action, by insufficient grounding in culture and philosophy, by our inability of commonly sharing the world. Or by a lack of skill, because performativity requires artistic talents (Letiche, 2012).

However, for both, words matter. As Kentridge illuminated, there is a connection between voice and the flesh that delivers it. Voice and words are fleshed. (see Rancière, 2004). In the drawing lesson above, Kentridge shows that flesh speaks by anchoring the words in the corporeal. The body shows what is important, the gesture is not empty but fraught with meaning. Words are weighed in the empty hand, found to be heavy and quite material. Once established or solidified, they become more and more authoritative. Yet this is but part of the story – what do the words that we utter do performatively? If ideas are expressed through words, what are the actions that they enable, and what actions enable our words? This calls out an ethical question – if our words are making a political intervention, what are the ethics of this intervention?

In this, the ethical and the political are deeply interconnected. One cannot be abstracted from the other, just as action and words are also interlinked. Again here, we see elements of the conversation that never was – Letiche and Rancière both make explicit the way in which words and actions are inseparable. But we do not see simple agreement between them, for they approach the connexion from different directions. Letiche's performativity, stresses ethics as action, life lived as expression, and militates against mere expression over and over of the same ideas. His fight is for organisation to become more human, and he starts with his own teaching. He wants practitioners to reflect on their own actions and to find words for a more just praxis. Rancière puts politics before the words. He wants us to think of the organisation of the public and aesthetical spaces for a more democratic society. This spills out into wider considerations of academic power. The authority of the professor is hard-won, but delivers both the status of the intellectual, empowered to comment, and the academic position from which this might be delivered. How can the ethical academic avoid being part of the 'police'? As Letiche insists, context is always important and the context of academic pronouncements are always contextualised. Often this works against us, since we become safely pinned within our ivory towers, but when we attempt to reach outside, we must be conscious of our position. Rancière uses his position of intellectual and university professor to have his voice heard, though he is aware that his performativity will always be limited.

Demos embraces the outside, seeking to recognise that there are many positions other than those inside. Demos is about sharing, separation, and highlighting the

differences. The separation of inside from outside is important – democracy rests on the principle that there is an outside that can recognise the inside. Debate can never be settled with an all-inclusive inside. The process of organising and disorganizing is constant – meaning that there is always a demos to come. This book looks to the future and we hope, imagining it as a stilted dialogue, may open up a wider debate.

DEMO'S (DEMONSTRATIONS) AND DEMOS (DEMOCRACY)

That said, we hope that readers find the following chapters anything but stilted. This book of protest and community, opposition and democracy, is in two main sections. The first opens up the discussion of philosophy/pedagogy/politics and the potential or needed interconnectedness between these in (higher) education. A second series of pieces then follows, characterized by counter-movements, which claim that change in perception, perspective and voice, are crucial to any liberation of self and other, or to the transformation of circumstances. This argument, again, reflects ideas of Jacques Rancière. While for Letiche, Rancière is important because he brings together teaching, theoretical commitment and politics; Rancière can also be embraced because he explores the role that artistic innovation plays in changing ways of seeing, which lead to change. Finally, in a concluding chapter, Damian O'Doherty makes a formative assessment of the debate Letiche attempted to set off, before the editors present their brief afterwords.

More specifically, in Chapter One, Hugo Letiche describes how he has grappled throughout his career with the politics of research and education. He makes use of Rancière to describe three events in his work in university education where the demos or community (or commons) played a crucial role. Different assumptions, micro-politics, ideologies and pedagogies led to very different possibilities and (un-)freedoms. In Chapter Two, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, through descriptions of the politics of teaching, concludes that education is inherently narrative, and that the spoken poetry of that narrative is much more crucial to democratization than it is to protest. In Chapter Three, Isabelle Stengers describes educational practices and their politics. Here the logic of hyper-performativity embodied in misguided 'fast science' is described and critiqued. For Stengers, an alternative philosophy/politics of 'slow science' opens possibilities for a truly democratic pedagogy and asks the question as to what and how investigation is 'about'. In Chapter Four, Joanna Latimer and Rolland Munro delve further into the 'aboutness' of investigation, throwing up questions such as, 'What intentionality do we need to write, research, investigate and reflect?' 'Do we suffer from blind thrown-ness where we misunderstand what thought is all about?' In Chapter Five, Alphonso Lingis, in an auto-ethnographic philosophical exploration, questions the assumption that a philosophy and politics of justice could ever lead to a pedagogy or way of learning, which is respectful, calm and deliberate. What, he asks, about unexpected passions, violent needs, and hidden forces? In Chapter Six, Yvon Pesqueux questions the assumption that the contemporary university could harbor a constructive relationship between pedagogy,

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politics and philosophy. He suggests that the social psychology of contemporary institutions may be far too destructive or even sadistic for any such possibility. In Chapter Seven, Burkard Sievers explores the ambivalence of learning and of the pedagogical strategy championed by Letiche. Sievers takes us to a real prison, where prisoners and university students engage in an attempted learning experiment that at once both fails and succeeds. Practice indeed is deeply ambiguous. There are real possibilities but no guarantees. In Chapter Eight, Geoff Lightfoot and Simon Lilley provide an illustration of academe's relative powerlessness to match its will with deeds. Here the limits of academic action are highlighted.

In the second section, in Chapter Nine, Stephen Linstead and Garance Maréchal develop, in an extended case study of protest art in Northern Ireland, themes similar to Rancière's investigations of perception, aesthetics and politics. They suggest that changes of perspective (*le partage du sensible*) can indeed have massive potential. In Chapter Ten, Jean-Luc Moriceau continues the discussion of demos, arguing that Rancière's fourth narrative model, largely ignored in Letiche's discussion of the first three, is crucial to any understanding of demos. In Chapter Eleven, Peter Pelzer continues the discussion of *le partage du sensible* through exploring ways of seeing and their relationship to organization. Pelzer investigates Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione* etchings ('Invented Prisons') to identify the dark side to Enlightenment and Modern thought. In Chapter Twelve, by Niels Thyge Thygesen and Asmund W. Born, the limits to dissensus or Modernist critique are investigated further. The authors assert that Rancière's concept of 'dissensus' is misplaced and that the contemporary figure of the 'homo protestus' has made protest into a successful managerial tool of hyper-capitalism. Dissensus does not lead to emancipation, but to even more performativity. The possibilities of change implied in the strategy outlined by Linstead & Maréchal, by implication, are fundamentally questioned.

The book began with Hugo Letiche introducing the theme by putting accounts of his own teaching into dialogue with Jacques Rancière's arguments; it ends with Damian O'Doherty, in Chapter Thirteen, looking back on Letiche's *oeuvre* and contribution to the triad of philosophy/pedagogy/politics; and assessing the possibilities of the various strategies involved. In conclusion, the editors reflect on the routes taken.

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1. DEMONSTRATING DEMO(S)

Demo(s) is to be used here in three interrelated ways. I want to ‘demonstrate’ how philosophy, pedagogy and politics form a single gestalt or unity in action. And I want to do that by retelling three different pedagogical stories. Furthermore, I want to embrace the tradition of the ‘demo’, the ‘demo’ was a political demonstration in the UK, where the word was linked to the ban-the-bomb movement of the 1950’s and ’60s. That movement intended to be a form of popular pedagogy. It saw itself as an effort, mainly by the intelligentsia, to oppose violence, total (self-)destruction and political insanity. I do not want to repeat the ‘deterrence versus disarmament’ debate, nor in fact to take sides in that debate; but I do want to refer to the ‘demo’ as a form of direct democratic action. In the demo, pedagogy, politics, and philosophy were brought together; today I do not see that happening. The closest parallel would be the *Charlie Hebdo*: ‘Je suis Charlie’ outpouring; but a pedagogical exploration of the uses of satire linked to a radical philosophical questioning of ‘freedom’, and a real social-economic anti-apartheid politics (in the sense of opposition to the divide between the rich and poor), certainly did not ensue. Intellectuals are now without the ‘demo’ they have lost any such voice and no longer have the public position that they had. The ‘demo’ refers, thus, to the public intellectual’s space of action.

There is also the ‘demos’, in the sense of the place, city, or political unit of democracy. In Holland, where I live, almost everyone assumes that we are a democracy and that democracy is a self-evident truth. But the ‘demos’ requires ‘territorialization’—that is, places of encounter, understanding, awareness and action. Our ‘demos’ or space of discussion, as coupled to sincerity of speech and demanding acknowledgement of the integrity of the Other, is very problematic. We hold elections, but we do not listen to one another; we have a parliament, but there is little dialogue. Historically, ‘democracy’ only really came to the Netherlands when the French, post their Revolution, brought it. Democracy has only defined the Dutch political system for 150 years and I think it is far more fragile, indefinite and chaotic than many think. The politics, philosophy and pedagogy that is needed for democracy to exist is the subject matter of this book.

All of this has echoes in Jacques Rancière’s oeuvre. But the stories I will tell were not inspired by him. I only discovered Rancière post-2000, while the three critical stories to come in this chapter were all defined and conceptualized before that. Rancière defines an approach to politics-pedagogy-philosophy wherein the interrelatedness of the three leads to demos. Firstly, I will summarize his arguments.

Then, secondly, I will describe three political-pedagogical-philosophical experiments that I have been involved in. And lastly, I will point to the demos as a metaphor, as a working hypothesis, and as a theme for myself and others.

RANCIÈRE'S DEMOS

Rancière positions the triad philosophy-politics-pedagogy in opposition to other forms of social studies—especially structuralist and positivist sociology and psychology. He criticizes and suggests in the name of the demos, but he never actually does what he calls for. Rancière the polemicist is my inspiration here, not Rancière the teacher, political figure, or artist. In *La méthode de l'égalité* (2012) Rancière admits that he had simply taught Hegel, Kant etcetera (that is, the philosophical canon) to university students without applying his radical ideas to his pedagogy or even teaching his own ideas at all. Contrastingly, I had no such systemic vision of the pedagogy-philosophy-politics triad, but I did implement experiments on a content and process level. My experiments matched the zeitgeist of the periods and institutions involved. The first took place in the mid nineteen seventies, in an institution that saw itself as a radical extension of '68. It was a practice directed Polytechnic, which saw itself as politically engaged. Labor process theory (Braverman) was the intellectual basis to the curriculum. The second experiment took place in the 1980's. It took place as the hyper-capitalist globalization of the late twentieth century was emerging and in the context of the pro-business 'new economy' ideology that was then taking hold. The third experiment was rolled out post-2000, wherein doubt, self-questioning, and individual reflexivity were the only opposition in town to neo-con austerity politics, and wherein the 'rights' to a job, healthcare, shelter and education of the 'glorious thirty years' (post WW II), were being rolled back. Each of the pedagogical experiments to be described below embodied philosophical assumptions linked to the political circumstances of the times. And each grappled with 'voice'—with the ability of students and lectures to speak to one another, to speak out, and (in effect) to have any ability to speak at all. I present these experiments to you as exemplary of (the possibilities of) the politics of education of the last half century.

Jacques Rancière has theorized many of the themes that are to come. He sees the triad pedagogy-politics-philosophy as always territorialized. That is, he defines his thought as situational or place-bound. He talks about a cartography of thought—that is, thought is something that has to happen somewhere, in specific circumstances, linked to situations and persons. His choice for place-based ordering is in contrast to structuralism, which he believes is not freeing. The structuralist asserts that there are only a few, defined, and limited possibilities. In structuralism, according to Rancière, category, form and definition, prevail above circumstance, history and event. Rancière's critique of structuralism is a product of his experience. He came onto the intellectual scene as a brilliant student of Althusser, via the seminar/book *Lire Capital*, where Rancière wrote one chapter of the original version. Rancière broke with Althusser and structuralism over the events of 1968. In 1968, Althusser

insisted that the student-worker uprising was a mere distraction, an error of foolish or immature action, and that the truth of Marxism could exclusively be defined by scientific analysis. The street was irrelevant; the science of productive forces defined the real potential (or lack) of revolutionary action. Rancière chose for the street. He rejected the positioning of intellectual ‘truth’ as above and beyond actual lived action and insisted that ‘events’—lived circumstance, authentically voiced positions, opposition to hegemony and exploitation—are crucial to any emancipatory politics, and must not be defined into oblivion by Marxism, even if genuinely inspired by the plight of the exploited, downtrodden or subaltern. Thus, for Rancière, the voice of protest, the speech of experience, and the text of lived circumstances come first. Theory needs to follow life and not supplant it. Rancière began the historical research for which he later became known from this perspective. He explored the ‘nights of the proletariat’—that is, what the workers actually did when they were not working (*Proletarian Nights: The Workers dream in nineteenth-century France*, Jacques Rancière and Donald Reid, 2012). In a Platonic, categorical or absolute sense, a worker could be defined as a worker and that is it. But was it really so simple? Did workers really only labor, eat, procreate and sleep? Rancière posed the research question: ‘What did workers in the 19th century (1830’s–‘40’s) really think, say and believe in?’ Who were the workers before there was a communist party that claimed to speak for them? What did the workers’ culture look like, that later led to what was to be defined as a ‘proletariat’? The research question implied doubts about the Platonic and/or communist reification of workers. And indeed, the archives substantiated those doubts. Rancière discovered ample evidence that workers wrote poetry, philosophized, and were literarily active. They did not oppose themselves to current literary genres or intellectual trends, but sought to write and reflect in the style of their times. Workers had time of their own, however limited and restrained it may have been. And they used it to write, reflect and discuss. Their culture was not a popular culture of protest and rejection, but a considered culture of expression, debate and thoughtfulness. Seeing worker culture as anti-bourgeois and as a rejection of current intellectual forms was historically unjust. The proletariat as a cultural antithesis to dominant intellectual norms and pursuits was an invention of communist intellectuals and it did not agree with the archived data. Worker culture and reflection, pre-communism, was careful, deliberate and mirrored dominant genres of thought and creative work. In worker culture, individual, differing voices, perspectives and ideas, were expressed. These were varied, creative and personal. There never was one worker voice or culture, but persons voicing their perspectives and ideas. The idea of a single worker voice homogenizes and de-individualizes worker expression. It rejects the very individuality and personal quality of expression that workers sought after. Workers who wrote, wrote to express themselves. They created and defined their individual voices of insight and reflection, just as did other writers. They tried to achieve insight and to communicate what they saw, thought, wished and willed. Their intellectual work was an act of expression, very similar to that of other writers and thinkers. They did not want to be lumped together in a

category, but to make their individual perspectives, thoughts and insights known. Rancière arrives here at the basic assumption of all of his later work. The person acts to achieve individual voice and to make her- or himself heard. Politics is about who is and who is not allowed in society to be heard. Workers want to express themselves and to be heard, just as others do. Emancipation, thus, is all about the ability to be heard and the social struggle to have voice. Leftist politics that denies workers' or the 'proletariat's' voice being heard are not emancipatory.

In his studies of worker culture, Rancière discovered the worker tradition of self-help. Workers in the early nineteenth century could not afford to go to the doctor, so they created medical self-help manuals containing: "If you have these symptoms, this is what is ailing you, and these are the things that you can do about it." The theme of self-pedagogy emerges here as an issue. Much pedagogy reconfirms dependence and the excellence or the privileged position of the 'master'. If one goes to the doctor and the diagnosis and treatment leads to one getting better, one reverses the doctor. One may have gotten better thanks to (or despite of) the doctor's intervention, but one's sense of dependence has been increased. Expert knowledge operates in this way. The bridge gets built, the distressed parents are helped to deal with their upset child, the epidemic does not spread, and dependence on engineers, psychologists and public health epidemiologists increases. We have become more and more dependent on expert advice and counsel. Rancière is convinced that what we learn in school is to be dependent on experts. We do not become self-reliant; we do not learn to learn. We learn to live in awe of expertise. We are brought to witness over and over the wonders that expertise can achieve and thereby we doubt ever more our own abilities. Rancière's second historical book develops this theme (*The Ignorant School Master*, 1991).

Joseph Jacotot was a displaced French intellectual who after the French Revolution found himself in Belgium assigned to teach Flemish to a group of French speaking students. But he did not speak Flemish himself. He found a bilingual text and set his pupils to work. The lesson inspired by Jacotot is that schooling does not need to be the confirmation of the master's power or superiority, but can just as well be self-disciplined and self-taught. Rancière insists, for instance in his interviews (2012), that he is an autodidact. Learning is something, he asserts, one needs to do oneself; it needs to be an act of independence and self-discipline. Rancière here shadow-boxes with Michel Foucault and overtly attacks Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault in the 1970's stressed the disciplining dimension of academic research and teaching. Sociology, psychology, etcetera supposedly force practitioners to take distance from their 'objects of study'. Experts 'scientifically' prescribe what is to be done. The social scientist is not politically neutral or value free, but part and parcel of regimes of control, disciplining, and the imposition of norms. The 'fully functioning' person of the social sciences during the 1970's, had a job, was heterosexual, and believed in reform/evolutionary politics. Social science imposed mainstream norms and defended a functionalist view of society wherein all the parts add up to the best possible whole. Rancière agrees with Foucault's critique, but not its underlying

epistemology. Rancière does not think that knowledge inherently disciplines social relations. Knowledge is what you make of it via how you internalize it, and how you approach the relationships wherein you make use of it. The point of the Jacotot argument is that the social uses of learning and knowledge define the social existence of knowing; and this social existence can be defined differently. Most Professors teach via the so-called ‘hidden curriculum’ how knowledgeable they are and how dense the students are. The professor expresses: ‘Look at me, see how clever one can be, feel how inadequate your reading and thinking really is, you cannot and will not ever achieve my level’. There is knowledge—for instance, what is a ‘critique’ in Kant, or what can ‘knowledge’ achieve in Hegel, etcetera—on offer, but also a reconfirmation of social stratification that fundamentally blocks the democratic possibility. Democracy, Rancière insists, assumes that each citizen must co-govern and is able to do so. But contemporary education teaches that only a few can or should know, speak and govern. Education teaches an elitist ideology of the necessary rule of the few over the many.

Rancière’s engagement in pedagogy has to do with education’s fundamental, though often implicit, politics. Does education operate with an emancipatory logic or not? Rancière argues that for the most part, it is the ‘Not’. Education teaches a pattern of the master who questions, the pupil who answers, and the master who judges. Education is about dependency. What is to be learned and whether or not it has been learned, is all determined by the master/teacher. In education, the learners have to prove their ability to think and act as they are told to do. Education (mostly) has nothing to do with self-expression, determining one’s own informed choice, or voicing one’s own perspective and/or situation. Thus the alienating force of ‘disciplining’ is something that Rancière shares as a concern with Foucault. But Rancière sees Jacotot as a pertinent counter strategy. The master can admit ignorance. The master can organize a learning situation, which he does not control, overwhelm, or turn to his own advantage. Jacotot insured that his pupils worked. He set a pattern of discipline and control. But they were autodidacts; they learned Dutch all on their own. Learning may require some materials, a degree of control over one’s hours, and support to achieve disciplined behavior; but its content, Rancière asserts, can be entirely self-controlled. For Rancière, discipline is not inherently politically restrictive or socially degrading, as Foucault implied. Foucault asserts power is everywhere and takes many forms. Learning as disciplined thought, analysis, and expression is indeed a question of power; but for Rancière it does not have to be exploitive, repressive or restrictive. Its power can be emancipatory. Via discipline one can discover equality, shared interests and one’s own voice. Rancière agrees with Foucault that there is something very wrong with the social sciences, but he frames the issues very differently. It is not a question of discipline as such, but one of the imposition of limited categories of thought and structures of analysis.

Rancière’s *bête noire* is Pierre Bourdieu. Rancière begins the Jacotot book with an attack on Bourdieu’s sociology. Rancière’s point is that Bourdieu reduces the workers to the parameters that he, Bourdieu, has set for them. Bourdieu’s worker

has little or no agency. S/he is determined by social-economic factors (as defined by Bourdieu) and how forms of capital govern behavior. For Rancière, the construction worker may have no claim to ‘owning’ what is being built, but the worker nonetheless remains capable of appreciating the (potential) beauty of the building. Rancière’s worker is an equal to any one else in his or her possible awareness of the sublime. Anyone can be enthralled, amazed, bowled-over or enthusiastic. The human ability to perceive, feel, and be aware is universal. Bourdieu reserves many forms of perceptual awareness for the elite; some people with cultural capital possess the ability to see, to respond, and to know beauty. Others do not have these abilities. Rancière retorts that basic perceptual equality determines that everyone potentially can see the beauty of an object, scene or situation. Economic inequality does not destroy access to appreciating the sublime. Many rich persons see no beauty; many an owner has no awareness of what makes his/her possessions so striking. Bourdieu makes the worker into a dupe who is unaware of true perceptual value and is an aesthetic chump. Rancière insists that the ability to know beauty, to be inspired by one’s surroundings, to see value in what is about one, and to appreciate the sublime is universal.

Rancière’s rejection of Bourdieu’s sociology and embrace of Jacotot’s pedagogy is made in the service of an ontological assertion of anthropological equality. All humans are able to know, see, perceive and understand. Just as all humans learn their mother tongue, all humans can be aware, be cognizant of and appreciate existence.¹ Social science must not be permitted to differentiate humanity into two radically unequal categories: those of awareness and those without. Let alone, to then assert that the former are the privileged and the latter have been forced into existential poverty by political-economic circumstances. Rancière insists that human consciousness and the ability to appreciate existence is a human universal and not reserved for an elite. Bourdieu had stripped the workers of their humanity; he had asserted that the intelligentsia can know life and its beauty, while the masses cannot. Rancière finds this existential privileging of the (privileged) intelligentsia monstrous and its self-satisfied assumption of (potential) enlightenment of some and not of others, disgusting. Everyone can know, see, understand, perceive and learn. Awareness is radically equalizing—everyone can attain it.

Rancière’s thought is grounded in the assumption of ontological equality. Everyone can learn, be aware, and can govern. Democracy, according to Rancière, is the acknowledgement that every member of the demos can (could) rule. What differentiates democracy from oligarchy, meritocracy, and dictatorship is its radical assumption of the equality of citizenship. Every member of the city or community, or demos, is equal in his/her ability to participate in governing. This concept of the demos is based on Kantian enlightenment—reason is a human universal. Every member of the community can weigh alternatives, examine options, and make decisions about what is to be done. In an oligarchy, only some, i.e. the powerful and wealthy, can decide, and most are silenced. Likewise, in a meritocracy, only the skilled, informed, trained/schooled and professionally expert can rule. And in a

dictatorship, the rule of (raw) power prevails—a few dominate with only the most flimsy of justifications—which support their ability to impose violence on the others. Rancière believes that we live more in oligarchy, meritocracy, and dictatorship than in democracy.

In democracy there has to be dissensus—Rancière’s word for debate, emergent claims, and the assertion of (as yet) unheard voices. Politics is dissensus—the making heard of what has not (yet) been heard, the asserting of the equality that is not (yet) acknowledged, and the taking-part of those who have been excluded. Daily administration or consensus government, according to Rancière, is not politics. Social administration is not politics. Most of the time, governing is not politics. Most governments strive for well-oiled efficient social organization, with as little conflict as is possible. They do not want unheard voices to find themselves and to make demands, but attempt to maintain social cohesion and continuity. Rancière, somewhat provocatively, calls this the ‘police’. Government tries to police society, so that there will in effect be no politics. Politics entails dissensus—claims and counter-claims, demands and accusations, assertions of human will and denials of that will. Politics is existential stride—characterized by demands asserted to be heard and to be acknowledged in defining the collective will. Most governments seek economic and social stability—they have no collective project, define no goals for humanity, and avoid as much as they can, well-being, justice, and fairness as issues.

Equality for Rancière implies the assertion of one’s shared humanity, as crucial to the identity, actions, and the future of the community or demos. Equality entails the assertion of one’s humanness as a shared quality to be collectively and socially acted upon. And equality, for it to exist, has to be communicated and shared in the community. It is not an introspective process (alone), but entails claims, ideas, and proposals to be voiced, debated and examined in public. That process of speaking-out, of defining and sharing one’s existential position, entails a pedagogy. It entails a process of learning, defining and understanding. And to be effective, it needs to be worked upon, critically thought through, and developed. Thus, for Rancière, pedagogy, philosophy and politics, dove-tail the one into the other. One has to learn to speak, spend time developing one’s ideas, and take care to formulate what is worth proposing, saying and asserting. One has to be an autodidact of the ‘self with the other’, of responsibility and well-being, and of perceptually appreciating existence. All of these are philosophical and all demand learning. No enslavement to masters of educational systems is called for here, but learning is crucial. And the freedom and independence required for that learning is political.

As I have intimidated, Rancière claims to be a topological thinker. He asserts that different situations of politics-philosophy-pedagogy occur. They have been developed, one by one, through history. The adding of a new possibility does not make older one(s) disappear. Rancière explores four such politics-philosophy-pedagogy archetypes: (i) a Platonic, (ii) an Aristotelian, (iii) a modernist / social science, and (iv) an emergent one. As I have stated, Rancière defined his objection to structuralism in his critique of Bourdieu. The structuralist is the victim of his

(her) own epistemology. If events, relationships, and activity answer to some pre-existing logic, how can that logic be known without there being a radical divide between those who know and those who do not? Althusser or Bourdieu can claim to know how society is constructed, and what its economic depth structure means for its possibilities, and/or where history leads; but to do so, they have to assume that most people have little or no agency and are not aware of the laws governing their own existence. This radical inequality between most people and the political-scientific elite appals Rancière. Rancière asserts that there are different topologies of politics-philosophy-pedagogy, without denying the potential equality of awareness. In different places and at various times politics-philosophy-pedagogy have come together in one form or another of expression and understanding, with the use of different sets of assumptions. These archetypes differ in how politics-philosophy-pedagogy are thought to be held together. They form different practices of discussion, relationship and awareness. These forms are in principle equally transparent to all participants; that is, all those involved can know what sort of truth is being pursued, how one attempts to arrive at that truth, and how choices are to be justified.

The first of the four archetypes is the Platonic. Rancière reads his Plato through *The Republic*, identifying Platonic thought with that one dialogue. Plato, as seen by Rancière, is in pursuit of a truth: in *the Republic* that of good governance, in the *Symposium* that of love, etcetera. Unfortunately, Rancière identifies Plato with what *The Republic* has to say about governance. In *The Republic*, Plato is concerned with rule and rulers. And he identifies good government with a wise informed overview. Rancière's defense of demos flies in the face of *The Republic's* defense of un-self-interested ethically grounded political wisdom. For Rancière, democracy as the equality of all in decision-making is crucial; for Plato, that would lead to uninformed mob-ocracy. Nonetheless, Rancière's pursuit of equality is very Platonic. The key to Platonic thought is the identification of key concepts, such as equality, justice and beauty, with action. For Platonic thought, only if one knows what equality is, can one really write about it. Lived knowledge is the necessary prerequisite to any writer's knowledge claim. Rancière is here in essential agreement. Equality has to be lived, experienced and shared. It is not an idea, but a practice. Equality *is*; this is Rancière's primary ontological assumption—it defines human co-existence and identity. Thus Rancière does much the same as Socrates in the dialogues. He questions the person who claims to know what equality is; demanding to know what such a person thinks, does and believes. But while Socrates questions through intellectual discussion in the dialogues, Rancière questions by examining the writings of Jacotot and/or working class texts from the 1830–40's. But the method is in a way comparable; how, in what those questioned say and do, do they manifestly live the concepts that they claim as their own? How are the ideas existential life-forms and what then are their effects?

The second archetype is identified with Aristotle. Here politics-philosophy-pedagogy are elements to a social puzzle, where the question is how do they (not) fit

together and what effect do the relationships of the elements have on one another and on society. Platonic truths are consistent, uniform and united; Platonic thought abhors contradiction, messiness and incompleteness. For Platonic thought, equality, or virtue, or freedom, or justice, has to be one thing; consistently defined and acted upon. In Aristotelian thought, society is made up of parts, truths are partial, and beliefs are (most likely) local and not consistent but situational. The Aristotelian analyzes the parts that coalesce into some sort of approximate whole. Society is not one thing; human identity is partial, complex, and manifold. There is order in the multiplicity, but the parts do not necessarily combine into a single consistent or neat whole. Politics is about rulers and ruled, institutions and representation, media and visual culture, economics and self-interest. All these dimensions at any single moment mostly do form some sort of government; but that government can be inconsistent, partial, blind, ineffective and thwarted. The Aristotelian tries to define the parts and their interactions as best as he/she can. His/her question is how do things work out in practice.

The third archetype is identified with modernist social thought and science. Here the assumption is that social reality is hidden and that its principles are not directly phenomenally apparent. The so-called ‘natural attitude’ of ‘common sense’ deceives and lies. It delivers self-interested texts behind which lurk exploitation, greed, and repression. Freud and Marx are two outstanding modernist thinkers. Behind apparent family order there lurks aggression, sexual drives, and unspeakable desires. Behind bourgeois social order there is exploitation, a failing economic system and class conflict. Appearances are distortions; reality as understood by analysis and interpretation is not accessible to direct unmitigated perception. Modernism asserts that the real truth is not immediately seen. Appearances deceive, interpretations reveal. Modernism has a difficult relationship to equality because it debunks surface awareness. But modernism asserts that everyone can and should learn to see, understand and act. Modernism claims that it champions equality of insight and action, while common appearances produce passivity and an inability to act. Modernism produced the ‘grand narratives’ of ‘capitalist exploitation’, ‘sexual repression’ and ‘expressive subjugation’—overcoming these, supposedly, produces equality. But the masters of the ‘grand narratives’ are ‘more equal than others’—and much of Rancière’s writing fights them.

Finally, there is the archetype of ‘*le partage du sensible*’ (‘the partition of sensibility’). ‘*Le partage du sensible*’ is a complicated play on words. ‘*Le partage*’ can mean the partition, but it can mean the shared, and it can mean the settlement (as in settling a bill or an inheritance). Thus what exactly does Rancière intend for us to do with perception? Furthermore, Rancière sets himself off against phenomenology or the philosophical tradition that emphasizes perception, awareness, and intersubjectivity. But ‘*le partage du sensible*’ looks strangely like a phenomenological politics; wherein how one sees plays a big role in who one is, and what one does. Of course, a reversal is possible: what one does can determine how one sees, and who one is. But the link between identity-action-perception remains crucial. The fourth

archetype is speculative and I will only return to its prospects towards the end of this chapter.

A few critical notes are needed here. While Rancière's thought can be expressed as a sort of manifesto, much as I have done here, he never really acted on that manifesto. Rancière remained a classical university professor of philosophy, teaching enlightenment and post-enlightenment thought. Rancière was not performative. His most dialogic work is to be found in the books of interviews and in his seminars. While in these texts there are questions and answers, statements and counter-statements, there is little or no equality. For instance, in the three hundred plus pages of *La méthode d'égalité* (2012) the two interviewers never seem to get it right. They refer to some text or other of Rancière's, draw attention to some doubtful conclusion or ambiguity, and then Rancière tells them and us how it really is/was. There is no discussion; just a constant process of explication, correction and clarification. Jacotot is nowhere in evidence. Rancière operates in his own text as an all-knowing master who never doubts, is not surprised, and who does not wonder or stand corrected.

In Rancière's theory, equality is an ontological assumption to democracy. Democracy is possible as long as we assume that each member of the community can rule; that is, is able to co-decide and has the ability to co-determine the community's actions. Democracy is the radical sharing of the ability to rule. It entails that every community member is able to understand, judge, know, decide and deliberate. Demos is the community of those who share 'co-self-determination'. Politics occurs when equality is asserted, demanded and created. For Rancière, there is very little politics most of the time. And in the absence of politics, there is often too little democracy. In the administrative functioning of social consensus, the 'police' takes over, producing passivity, lethargy and allowing exploitation to prevail. Most of the time, the 'police' rule. But occasionally, there is politics—that is, politics-philosophy-pedagogy forming a single activity. That activity takes place under Platonic, Aristotelian or Modernist paradigms. How the politics of '*le partage du sensible*' might operate, I leave for later.

In the second part of this chapter, I will explore exemplary events that occurred in the late twentieth century university world. The question to be addressed is: 'What do different regimes of politics-philosophy-pedagogy experientially look like?' Answering requires self-reflective descriptions of practice. What follows could be called 'autoethnography' as it focuses on a thematic exploration of circumstance, action and thought. To frame the investigation: I am more or less a contemporary of Rancière's, in the sense that I also was formed by '68 and have lived in the discursive world of Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. But Rancière is some five years older than me and thus his engagement with Marxism includes a period characterized by a belief in the proletariat, which was already waning by the time I came to politics. Furthermore, his France had an industrial workforce, while my Holland really did not. Rancière actively engaged in Mao-ism and 'gauchisme', I did not. He pamphletted workers at factory gates, while I rather cynically observed that the Netherlands had more sociologists per capita than any other country and that they often did not

know what to do with themselves. Rancière hated Rocard and it seems that the PSU and *Socialisme ou barbarie* were not a part of his world; while they were an important part of mine. Thus, there are all sorts of differences between us; as well, rather obviously, that Rancière is a renown writer, which I am not. But we, more or less, have occupied the same intellectual and institutional period of history.

I repeatedly attempted political-philosophical-pedagogic experiments, which I thought answered to the circumstances and needs of the times, and these I will now describe.

THREE POLITICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL-PEDAGOGIC ACTIONS

Is it pure coincidence or a forced match, that the three instances of educational voicing described below follow the pattern Platonic, Aristotelian, Modern(ist)? The answer has to be sought in the circumstances and zeitgeist of the events. Thus, for each case, I will indicate the social-political context, describe in brief the nature of the educational institution involved, and then detail the experienced events.

(1)

The first case dates from 1975–80; it was a period of political idealism and contention in the Netherlands (and most of Europe). Already in 1971–73, there had been an austerity government in Holland proposing cutbacks on higher education, reduced social benefits, and more market directed policies. The post-war consensus of national reconstruction was already endangered. Getting a job as an academic was difficult. In 1973 the Labor Party (PvdA) returned to power in a coalition with the Christian Democrats (AR + KVP) and two smaller progressive parties (D'66, PPR), but the international context of the oil crisis and major uncertainty about the economic future, as well as inconsistencies between the political parties in power, all led to nondescript, compromise politics.

The so-called ‘Dutch disease’—a stagnating economy with high unemployment and large transfer payments, without sustainable social-economic growth; was yet to come in the 1980’s. Consensus was dominant in Dutch political mores in the so-called ‘polder model’. But there was no real agreement over how the economy could or should develop. What products or services could be(come) the basis of future sustainable economic success? How could investment, training, research and development, be focused towards the future? Leaving all of this to the marketplace, as in the laissez-faire standpoint, did not correspond with the Dutch tradition of planned social-economic development directed by government-employer-trade union agreements.

As an academic, I expected government in cooperation with the ‘social partners’ and a broad range of stakeholders, to have a vision on whom we educated and to what economic goals we educated them. Higher education was self-evidently thought of as part and parcel of a common effort to guarantee welfare, while attending to justice

and fairness. Writing this now, in 2015, I realize how much our expectations really were different from the hyper-capitalist position of, for instance, the Americans. Even now (2015), with a conservative-labor government in power (i.e. a ‘forwards-backwards’ coalition government of enormous inconsistency), most Dutch expect education to play a role in some sort of national economic development plan or model; though there seems to be none.

I was appointed lecturer in philosophy at The School for Social Service Administration ‘de horst’ near Utrecht. ‘De horst’ was an undergraduate four-year college, offering professional degrees in social work, community development work and personnel work. It had part-time programs in these fields, as well as psychiatric counseling and a program for refugee work, but I had nothing to do with these extension programs. As was typical at the time, ‘de horst’ was a small institution of undergraduate education with some 650 full-time students. ‘De horst’ had a leftist identity.

The senior lecturer in philosophy was a liberation theologian whose research record had long earned him a university professorship, but whose politics got in his way. The churches had several times vetoed him getting a university position in divinity; after I had already left ‘de horst’, he finally got the professorship he deserved at Leiden. I had listed one of his best friends as a reference when I applied. They spoke and I got the job, with the argument that I would be the most creative, enthusiastic, and dedicated of the candidates; I was definitely not the most experienced.

As lecturer at ‘de horst’, I had the task of teaching freshman philosophy to five parallel groups, and of teaching required as well as elective courses to students from one of the majors. The freshman year was a common year for all students; the major was declared at the end of that year. Since labor relations / personnel’s work was the most academic of the departments, with students who were willing to read and prepare serious texts for discussion, I chose that department. At the time, there were no research budgets or programs in such undergraduate colleges; they did not grant Masters degrees, and almost no faculty had a PhD. Now all of those points have been changed.

The lecturers could design their own courses and were very free on a content level. And that is no longer the case. Set, required curricula of competencies have been introduced and the lecturers are supposed to be able to deliver almost any course work required by their department. All the small colleges have been merged into large Polytechnics (to use the UK term) with thousands of students and very top-down management.

In the department where I was based, Braverman’s book on the deskilling of labor was the key text taught in the second year. The department claimed to form its students to understand labor relations so that they could adapt to changing circumstances. It was not a skills-based curriculum, but one based on gaining analytic insight needed for future professional awareness and effectiveness. There was training in things like: how to deliver ‘bad news’, the role of the personnel

worker in selection procedures, how to do job evaluations, etcetera; but that was not the emphasis. I still think that it was a very good curriculum, more challenging and with much more space for student development than what is on offer today.

The first year was focused on general knowledge and contained introductions to sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy, and the types of work for which the BA's were granted. In the second year, the core knowledge of the selected major was taught. The third year was a yearlong internship, with one day a week for intervention and occasional lectures. During the fourth year, students followed electives and wrote their BA theses.

During the first year, I would start out with a lecture: "This is what philosophy is all about," only to return the second week to say, "What I said last week may not be the whole story, here is another very different version of what philosophy is all about." And the third week I'd return to deliver the same message as the second, and to lecture a very different idea of what philosophy is and/or should be. I never got beyond three of these lectures, though I had prepared four or five. It never failed, at the beginning of week four the students erupted in protest: "Tell us what philosophy is and stop playing around with us." And my answer was: "I am not playing around with you, philosophy is all about thinking, doubting, not knowing, and investigating what ideas, perspectives or ways of thinking, are and are not important to you and why." Normally some students liked the answer and many hated it. Some wanted me to tell them the 'truth' and were convinced that lecturers owed them certainty.

I had done my undergraduate studies in the United States (at the University of Chicago). I arrived at 'de horst' thinking that students wanted to be told that you cared about them, about their thinking, and their development. I quickly discovered that I had got my cultural cues all wrong. Dutch students interpreted a lecturer 'caring', as a sign of weakness, which was to be blindly attacked. I quickly learned that I had to say: "I've got a Masters (Drs.) in social studies, I have learned to read complex and interesting texts, I can go off and challenge myself intellectually from now to my 65th year, you can or cannot gain this ability, it is your choice." Some students were horrified to think they might have to work harder for my course than for some other; many settled down to a content led focus. Once and a while, some students protested that I demanded too much, but I was not difficult in giving a minimum pass grade, so that always blew over.

I focus now on the third year. It seemed wrong to let philosophy dormant for a whole year. So the idea was born of launching an intensive one-week elective in the spring. But that had to take place at a moment that it would not interfere with other requirements. In the Dutch academic calendar, there are very many holidays (King's day, Liberation day, Whitsun, etcetera) in the spring. As long as we scheduled our one-week elective then, no one would be upset. But the polytechnic building was closed during all or some of those weeks. So we needed an alternative venue. The idea was born to hold the seminar on a farm (that I owned) in rural France. The dates were set, the required literature to be studied on the farm was determined, and the students rented two mini-buses.

On arriving at Audour in Bourgogne the students started to explore the neighborhood. The farm bordered on a vacant castle, was near a small lake, and was surrounded by hiking trails. The first morning we headed off, over the hills, to the Beaujolais to fetch wine. Stocked up on wine, with ample foodstuffs in the kitchen, it was time to go to work. But the students talked, wandered about, and amused themselves more than they read. I saw the danger; if the seminar became a week's vacation in the French countryside, then my plan would have failed. I went off to the village to call my wife who had remained in Holland. There were no mobile phones back then and we did not have a phone. Stuffing lots of francs into the village payphone, I explained that I felt I had no control over events. The students liked what they saw; for most of them it was their first vacation in a 17th century farmhouse with a huge fire place fueled with enormous logs, and with an old fashioned cooking stove, embodying the authentic sphere of rural France. To my plea: "How do I get them to work?" my wife answered: "Call them together and tell them what they have to do." But I answered: "What do I do if they just laugh at me? I have no real power over them and the project then has failed, and I will have a lot of explaining to do on our return." Answer: "Just do it. And call me back to tell me the result."

So I returned to the farm. Called everyone together, stood as dramatically as I could in front of the fireplace and read the riot act. We were there to study *Truth and Method* by Gadamer. At 20:00 there would be dinner. From 19:00 to 20:00 a team of four of the twelve students, would under my direction as chief cook make dinner. At dinner there would a glass or two of Beaujolais available per person. After dinner we would drink coffee and tea. Then, the first night, I would introduce the book, describe the chapters we would read, and pose some questions for us to consider in the days to come. From 21:30 to +/-23:00 we would focus each day on the text. From 23:00 to 24:00 we would discuss whatever ideas the text had generated amongst us that we thought were interesting to pursue. After 24:00 the Beaujolais would reappear and discussion, socializing, and debate would take whatever course it wished. After 02:00 it should be quiet enough to sleep for those who wished to. At 11:00 the next day there would be fresh croissants from the village and coffee and tea. Lunch would be informal—a buffet around 14:00. From 12:00–16:00 everyone was expected to prepare the assigned text for that day. One could do that outside in the farmyard, in the neighboring woods, or where ever. The last evening there would be a festive dinner in a one star (Michelin) restaurant.

I delivered my little speech and everyone obeyed. At that moment, I became 'Jacotot'. The learning was not about what I would lecture; the goal was not to reproduce a text of mine. I had defined the rules whereby we would live together for a week. During that week, I discovered that many students were different from their in-class personas. Sometimes they were shyer or more humorous, or more troubled and insecure, or much more or less intelligent than I'd thought. Everyone read the text; everyone could follow it. The equality of understanding the text was not a real problem. The concentration needed to read Gadamer might have been a real problem for some back at the Poly; but in the Jacotot discipline of the farmhouse, it was never

a real problem. There had been some self-selection. Not everyone chose to come to Audour. But the differences in academic level were significant—some had much better grades than others; but in Audour everyone achieved the goal. The objective was to intelligently discuss the text and the ideas it expressed. The purpose was not to write a paper or an exam. This was learning as living debate and discussion, and not as objectifiable results.

We discussed the ‘authority’ of the text, and that of expertise and ‘truth’. It was the period of ‘anti-authoritarian’ education. Authority was identified with repression, hierarchy and abuse. Gadamer asserts that some texts possess an inherent authority of commitment and awareness, often characterized by long human engagement. Texts and works of art can command our attention and praise; demand our respect and recognition. Such ‘authority’ is not a perversion of totalitarianism, but a gainsay of culture, civilization and relatedness.

There was certainly enough to discuss. Of course, Gadamer can tilt into conservatism wherein the patina of age closes down critical debate. But anti-authoritarian education can become anti-historical, merely fashionable, and destroy the link from generation to generation. Some texts really are special, but how does one find, discover and understand them? Tradition can stultify, but losing contact with the past can hopelessly impoverish awareness.

On the existential level, the students discussed what of the past they had received from parents and grandparents. Which stories had authority in their own lives—what texts seemed precious, crucial and unmissable to them. And what was the relationship between those texts and what they read and discussed in class. Otherwise said, why was there such a glaring gap between lived-history or lived-voice, and the formal world of the Poly. If Gadamer could inspire you to talk about your grandmother’s youth and the poverty of the 1920’s, the problem was obviously not the forming of links between formal and informal texts. High culture was a potential avenue to reconsider, discuss and share, personal stories. Thus what determined the ‘authority’ of the text—what gave a story ‘gravitas’ or import?

One of the students, I assume as a lark, registered at the University of Amsterdam and took the exam of their Gadamer course, just to test our learning. He passed with a good grade. We had done the textual exegesis properly; but we had also let the text address ourselves and our own awareness of authority. The 1970’s was a period wherein the relationship between learning and the person was emphasized. We were culturally encouraged to become our own learning. The question was often posed if what we actually did together and with others matched our stated ideas and goals. Thus the Platonic assumption that only by being and doing ‘virtue’, ‘justice’, ‘beauty’, etcetera, could one know what ‘virtue’, ‘justice’, ‘beauty’ were, was very much in the air.

The seminars in Audour (there were three, each with another text, before I moved on to the Erasmus University) were unique in my career. I still keep some sort of tabs on at least half the participants and it is now forty years later. It was the one point in my career wherein dialogue and teaching flowed together. What each participant

thought about the ideas under discussion was crucial. Discipline—as in my rules and in Gadamer’s text—provided us with the needed context; but our collective task was understanding and grounding the ideas in our own existence by exploring possible lines of thought. This was the Platonic pursuit of existence/awareness. It had a pedagogy of text exegesis, followed by explorative discussion, and focused on intense cooperative learning. It had a philosophy of exploring and defining humanist values and methods. And it had a politics of radical personal equality in discussion and reflection—recall, there was no exam. There was a learning community, but we were not inside the university, physically, administratively, or institutionally. Our politics was to voluntarily create our own temporary school and to live in it for a week.

On our return, there was a certain amount of hostility from colleagues. They seemed horrified that we had chosen to learn together, studying what was considered to be a very demanding text, with no institutional structure. As a punishment, at the last faculty meeting of the year, my colleagues turned down all student requests for me to be BA thesis director the next year. I was horrified and very sad. A few days later, back myself at Audour for the summer, I realized that they could never implement their decision and my good humor returned. And indeed, the first day of the new academic year, the students went to the Vice-Chancellor and told him that he had 24 hours to reverse the decision or they would call the inspection of the Ministry of Education and demand an investigation. The reversal took 30 hours, but none of us really minded that.

(2)

The second case occurred at the Erasmus University, a prestigious, fairly renown, and often well-ranked, organization. I had graduated from teaching at a low status, marginal Polytechnic, to a job at a top academic institution. But my first experience was a harbinger of what was to come. I attended a faculty seminar during my first week in Rotterdam. It was about beer. Heineken wanted to produce beer as consistently as possible the whole year through. But consumption peaks in the summer. So how do you plan production to not have enormous idle capacity most of the year, or very flat beer when it is needed? Beer in cans goes flat faster than in bottles, but all beer is perishable. The presenter had optimized the relationship between capacity, storage space, and perishability. My reaction was “Good for you,” but what does this have to do with organizational studies or research? And that reaction stayed pretty much the same for the whole time I worked at the Erasmus.

I got the job through a curious complex of circumstances. There was a trainer that the OB department wanted to give a job to. But she had no academic focus and was not really interested in research. After +/-20 years she did finally get a PhD, but even that was a real stretch for her. And there was a Polish academic, a sociologist who did theater reviews that they wanted to appoint. There were hours open for qualitative research methodology, so they placed an advertisement knowing that the

two appointees to be, knew little or nothing about that subject, but it seemed to be a handy vehicle to get them appointed. But I showed up. And I had extensively lectured qualitative research methodology on the Masters level (at the MEd program of the University of Amsterdam) and fit the profile. I got a three-day a week appointment (quickly expanded to 4½) and the other two got their jobs. But I soon discovered that there was really nothing for me to do. There was next to no course work in research methods and what little there was, was mainly statistics.² I had a job, but I had nothing to do.

Unemployment was high. A series of ineffective conservative governments had taken next to no decisions whereby stagflation (no economic growth with high inflation) predominated. I was very happy that I had made it from the Poly to the university. At least I now had time to do research and a budget to visit conferences. But there seemed to be next to nothing going on inside the management school of interest. However, I could now easily contact foreign colleagues and start to write and get articles published. Business education was something the Netherlands thought it needed to strengthen its economic performance. I had my doubts, but was happy to have the job. Of course, middle management needs training, but was a five to six years combined BA and MSc course the answer? If the MBA takes 18 to 24 months (with a thesis), wouldn't it be better to let the students do a social sciences BA and then thereafter a business (or professional) Masters? Weren't we trying to make a social science of something that just wasn't one?

At the time that the Erasmus University was developing its MSc in business it was starting its exchange program with other universities. Many faculty members could not lecture easily in English and it was very unclear what we could offer incoming exchange students. I proposed to the head of the exchange-program-to-be to design and run the in-coming program for the visiting students, a task no one else was terribly interested in having. He was happy for the offer and I had something to do.

But what to make of the in-coming program? As far as I could ascertain, the Erasmus lecturers mostly spoke broken English and did not have anything very interesting to tell. The few who were good, already taught on the MBA, and with their responsibility for the new MSc, had very full agendas. I saw one possibility. The Netherlands makes much more use of internships and in-company projects than do other countries. In most places, students never get into a company except to see what the PR department has laid out for them. It was 1985–86 and globalization was starting to take off. More companies were making extensive use of English as their daily working language and cross-border business activity was stopping to be something exceptional ('International business') and becoming the everyday rule. I proposed that the in-coming exchange program would center on in-company business projects with student groups of +/-5 or 6 coming from several countries, each with one Dutch member. We could add a course in project consulting and techniques, one on European cooperation and institutions, one on cross-cultural management, throw in a few electives, and we were there.

I got the responsibility to find the project sites, though the internship office would help me, and to lecture project methodology; and to take part in, as well as to supervise, the project work. The methods course was very pragmatic. The students were taught to never argue with one another in the presence of the client organization. To never disagree with the client representative, but if they wanted to do something different from what the client asked, to take all of the information they had and to turn it into a proposal that met their own needs. If the client really knew what it wanted it wouldn't be asking a bunch of students to do it, but a professional consultant. The chances were that the client was on a fishing trip for new ideas, trends, or possibilities. If the students offered to take that trip somewhere else than expected, 9 out of 10 times that was just fine.

The students were used to having to follow all sorts of hierarchical rules; the idea that rules are flexible, negotiable and can be adapted, was new to them. And the students were used to compete with one another in exam situations; they had very limited cooperative skills. Some processes were very predictable for us faculty members, and made for excellent feedback sessions. The southern Europeans (Spanish and Italian) would always cheat on their mid-term exams, where upon the Anglo-Saxons would no longer want to work with them. Neither side knew how to name the problem or how to attempt to resolve it. Likewise, in most every group there would be at least one free rider. The student reaction was to not tell the faculty and to get angrier and angrier. Our job was to get them to talk about work issues and to learn to resolve them. Doing all the work oneself is just not a successful way of managing a group. Some students had excellent analytic abilities but could not present well for an audience. Some were academically weaker but relationally brilliant. Learning to see differing strengths and weaknesses and make use of them was something the students had never learned to do. Relationally and practically there was more than enough there for the students to learn. And for me, and the colleagues I contracted as part-timers to assist, it was good fun.

We ran the program every fall semester, so we were involved in it for four months per year. That way, each September, we felt fresh. The first thing we did was to take the students out on the Ijsselmeer on cutters for three days. We'd meet them at the jetty, choose two of them, and let them go on board and check-out the living quarters. There were always some cabins that were roomier and nicer than others. The assignment was: 'Assign cabin space to each participant'. Some students returned to discuss options and decision possibilities; some assigned everyone to a bed. The former option opened discussion and challenged the ability of the students to compromise, the latter scenario turned inevitably into conflict. We were off and running. There was time to sit in the sun and enjoy the scenery, evenings were in typical old Dutch harbors with lots of bars, but there were sailing manoeuvres to complete and half-way during the program the coast-guard showed up and 'volunteers' had to be transferred from boat to boat in baskets suspended on ropes. The tone was set: the program was interactive, group dynamics and social processes

were crucial, and getting to know one another and to work together in a very diverse group, was crucial.

The program featured a group competition. One project would 'win' each semester and receive a significant prize. We would be running as many as 16 projects at once; four would come out of the pre-round of the presentations as the finalists. Those four would present to senior judges from well-known companies for the prize. In the twelve years that I ran the program, only one project group totally fell apart and failed to present. Many were excellent. Almost all were much more than adequate, which made it easier as the years went by to get projects. In addition, there was a friendly rivalry between the supervisors; we each wanted one of our projects to win.

Some typical projects:

- Emirates Airlines was starting up (mid-1980's) and wanted to know what image it would need to catch on in Europe. What would move Europeans to accept an airline from Dubai?;
- An American computer company thought that their operations in Europe all followed the same structures as in the States; after all, key functions all had the same names. The European headquarters (Geneva) suspected that very different people and tasks were linked to the titles at different sites. Sites at Barcelona, Bristol and Grenoble were analyzed.
- An international advertising conglomerate was entering into Europe-wide advertising campaigns, but what cultural differences would play a key role? Some findings: UK ads featured males dis-behaving in ways that others resented; Italian ads could feature elderly actors (grandparent figures) which was not done elsewhere; Czech ads were often self-depreciating and cynical in ways frowned upon elsewhere; Dutch ads talked a lot more about prices than other nations would accept; Germans liked men in white coats, while others did not. A Europe-wide campaign would have to follow the 'straight and narrow' to avoid all the pitfalls.
- Hoogovens (steel) wanted to assess the potential market for selling engineering production expertise. Low quality bulk steel (for instance to make white goods) was increasingly coming from countries like Slovakia where they could make steel cheaply, but their quality control was limited and ability to make 'specialities' was minimal. Hoogovens had mastered quality production but was too small a player to survive alone. The project looked at the potential for selling production expertise as a consulting product.
- An international autoparts reseller wanted to assess its market potential. How much of the market was for original parts providers and how much was accessible to others. Original parts often were designed to have a much longer lifespan than replacement actually required; could customers understand that they were paying for long-use when they had no need for it?
- An expat butler service wanted to know if it could achieve franchises in Holland. Their business proposition: busy expats having all their groceries, cleaning and

household chores arranged for them. But was the market for such a service big enough in Amsterdam or The Hague?

This was an Aristotelian endeavor. All the parts had something to do with one another, but how they made a whole was unclear. The ‘philosophy’ was performative—just as long as the learners reported that they had gained from the course, things were fine. Whether the learning was scientific, consistent, theoretically grounded, or could be described in critical terms was not important. The bits and pieces of the curriculum had to form a successful experience; the students had to go away feeling that ‘something valuable had happened to them’. But that something did not have to be searchingly examined, conceptually justified, or meet some criteria for human flourishing. The parts contributed to the whole; everything had something to do with globalization, the internationalization of business, and the skills needed to succeed in culturally complex environments. Students who succeeded in their projects, demonstrated that they had mastered these skills. The curriculum was a self-fulfilling prophesy. As long as the students ‘succeeded’ they demonstrated that what we did made sense. The politics were also purely performative—i.e. the mastering of skills for business success. And the pedagogy was very performatively directed. The horizon to the curriculum was entirely pragmatic and the justification was that the economy had to be restarted, unemployment had to be reduced, and stagflation had to be won over. The program was quite intensive for the faculty; the boat trips in the beginning and the weekly project supervision sessions took time. When I left the Erasmus, they cancelled the boats almost immediately, and the projects collapsed from a lack of adequate attention within a couple of years.

(3)

The third philosophy-politics-pedagogy triad concerns the PhD program in ‘Meaning in Organization’ at the UvH Utrecht. I have co-authored with Geoff Lightfoot a whole book about that experiment: *The Relevant PhD* (2014). The UvH had advertised for a lecturer in organization studies to plan a new major in that field. The university granted a Masters in Humanist counseling and guidance, and had a mini-program in education. It wanted to expand into the humanization of organizations. Several faculty members saw the domination of performativity and neo-con business thinking as a danger to humanist values and wanted to set up an alternative program in consulting and advising. The idea of entrusting such a task to a lecturer seemed unwise to me. I believed that you needed a (Full) Professor to design a new major. So I applied, but on my own terms. I could bring matching funding with me. A research foundation (ISCE the Institute for the Study of Complexity and Emergence, Boston MA) was willing to match the budget that the UvH had earmarked for the function, if the university appointed me as full Professor to the job. For me, the job was clearly the antithesis to the Erasmus—it was a professorship dedicated to creating an alternative to the blind performativity that the Erasmus celebrated. The

UvH could not have found anyone who was more deeply impressed by the evil that blind performativity produced. With a few like-minded colleagues, we had taken to calling the management school in Rotterdam ‘the evil empire’. For the UvH, my offer was too good to refuse.

In two years, I set up the new department—KOS or Critical Organization Studies. KOS had seven members (mostly part-time appointments)—we offered course work on the Masters level in: Introduction to Organization Studies; Communicative Management (based on Habermas); Organizational Development and Ethics; Being Self-Employed; Consulting: Art and Critique; Doing New Technology—Social & Research Uses of IT; Postmodernism and its Critique; Work: Marxism & Bourdieu; Social Constructivism: Methods & Practices. Other departments had relevant courses on ‘burn out’, work and meaning, counseling and coaching, total institutions, social interventions, the ethics of care, and research methodology. Once the MSc was set up, I was free to devote almost all of my time to my passion: creating a practitioner PhD.

I had left ‘de horst’ glad to gain research time and abhorring the intellectual climate of an educational institution that only consumes ideas but produces none. I believed that a university can only know something if it tries to produce or make knowledge as well. But I had also left ‘de horst’ with enormous affection and respect for practitioners. Young academics with high grades on their Masters’ course work may be good candidates for most PhD programs, but I had something else in mind. I wanted to chair PhDs with practitioners, where I could constantly learn from their experience. I wanted a partnership in PhD research between people who via their rich experience are really in the know, and academics who think long and carefully about writing, text production, and practitioner voice. So I launched the UvH post-experience practitioner PhD. Only candidates with at least five years of practical experience were welcome. I knew that the students would be theoretically less up to date or engaged than normal PhD candidates, but that they would bring a profound awareness of organization, work, and social relations with them that I found lacking in young bright highflyers.

Dutch PhD education required no exams or formal course work. Thus we could welcome candidates as researchers, to be respected and treated as colleagues. The curriculum of the program entailed four one-week workshops in the first year. In the second and third years, participants were welcome to attend two one-week workshops; one on a theme that changed every year and one at a befriend university that shared values and commitments similar to ours (‘Politics, Organization & Philosophy’ at Copenhagen Business School; Organizational Studies at the University of Leicester Management School; Organization & Society at the CNAM Paris; Management and Organization at the University of Essex). At the workshops, we invited researchers to come and tell what research they were doing, why, and what effect they hoped it could have. Almost everyone who was invited came, and came back year after year. Our students wanted to hear what was being done, how it was grounded in ideas and literature, and what effect scholars were trying to have

on society. And the invited professors were overjoyed at the intense, serious and constructive interest. Our students learned why research was being done, what research could hope to achieve, and how researchers forged links between their concerns and commitments and their research. Our students got exemplary answers to the questions they were asking themselves about their PhD projects.

All of this depended on a normative presupposition that research into organization is an ethically engaged activity in pursuit of community, respect, and ontological equality. The program was value driven. It was based on the assumption that the university defended rational thought, the critical examination of society, and democratic decision-making. We assumed that the social significance of policies, practices, and ideas needed to be explored, discussed, and revealed. The existential and social significance of practice is not self-evident. Careful examination, discussion and description, are needed to try and determine what practice signifies. Competencies and professional practices do not reveal their human significance at first gaze. It takes engagement, research involvement, and commitment to ferret out how self and other can interact beneficially in social practice.

In terms of Rancière, all of this entails modernist skepticism. Surface phenomena do not reveal their full significance. The ethical import of action requires careful observation and critical questioning before it is revealed. Existence has to be thought through before it can be judged. Critical philosophy provides the tools to see, examine, and reveal social circumstances. All the theses were evaluations of sorts. The researchers attempted to realize informed examinations of circumstance, with an intense focus on the ethics of the researcher/researched relationship underlying their observations and judgments.

To not fall into repetition with the *Relevant PhD* (2014), I will only explore PhD research completed during the academic year 2013–14; that is, after the book was written. Dutch PhDs have to be published in a book form and to be individually defended in public. Though there are trends to make the PhD into just another degree—i.e. into ‘school work’ produced in a ‘thesis factory’ where the research is standardized, protocolled and routinized, none of this applies to the theses discussed here.

(1) Temi Mutia is a Kenyan who resided in Kenya throughout his research period. He came to Utrecht for the four first year workshops, and thereafter for workshops and supervision. I went four times to Mwingi, the site of his research, during the period of his research. All of this was financed by a grant.³ Temi’s theme was grassroots community development. He had lost a younger sister to HIV-AIDs in for him a particularly distressing way. He had no idea what was ailing her until days before her death. As the oldest son in the family, he had expected to be taken into confidence in any situation of crisis or need. This was obviously such a situation, but his sister had not confided in him. To make matters worse, the sister had been working in a firm in Nairobi owned and managed by Temi. It seems that the shame and fear of Nairobi had prevailed over the values and traditions of the rural community from which they originated. After her death, Temi had a recurrent dream where his sister came back

to him, demanding that he do something about the AIDs epidemic. In the villages of their rural roots, the number of AIDs orphans was growing dramatically. Where they came from (Mwingi) is a very poor (for Kenyan standards) community in an especially arid part of the country, where the monsoon rains often just do not come. The women stay in the villages with the children and the men often leave for Nairobi to seek unskilled work. All too frequently, the men return with little or no money, but with AIDs. One bit of local progress, improvement of the roads, brought many truck drivers to overnight in Mwingi, causing prostitution to boom and thereby bringing even more AIDs. On the one hand, HIV/AIDs was a taboo, never discussed amongst the villagers; and on the other hand, alternatives to failing subsistence farming were desperately needed. If the taboo could be lifted, medicine and prevention could help the quality of life. If development projects could succeed, the children could afford to go to school and a better future would be possible.

Economic progress in Mwingi is historically linked to NGO aid projects. There is no capital in Mwingi; pulling themselves up by their boot-straps is not an option in a place where many people do not have any shoes. But aid has always had many perverse aspects—it encourages dependency, passivity, and parasitism. The ‘big man’/‘little man’ system has always prevailed in Mwingi. The ‘big man’ is the politician or official, often in Nairobi, who arranges for aid. He keeps a big chunk of the money for himself. The ‘little men’ are the project coordinators and employees on the ground, who implement what is decided on high. The villagers do what they are told to do and get a little bit of money. After 18 months to two years, projects always end and life goes back to as it was. For the villagers, aid amounts to: we get bribed every once and a while so that the ‘little men’ and the ‘big man’ can justify what they have earned. There is no project ownership on the local level. Many projects have come and gone, and none of them have really made a difference.

Temi’s favorite story about aid concerns a latrine project in northern Kenya (i.e. not in Mwingi) that he was sent to evaluate. Very high infant mortality rates had been identified in several villages. A Scandinavian expert visited the area (for two days) and determined that the problem was caused by water polluted with human waste. If the villagers would have latrines, the health problem would take care of itself. The latrines were funded and built. But the desired health results did not take place. Temi was sent with a colleague to write a summative evaluation. After a couple of days of interviewing satisfied villagers, who all concurred that the latrines had indeed been built, one of the researchers needed himself while visiting a village to go to the WC. He discovered to his amazement that the latrine he used had never been used before. When confronted, the villagers explained that for the men, squatting in a latrine was making oneself into a sitting duck to be attacked by one’s enemies. And sharing a latrine with women’s waste was unthinkable. The villagers had been happy enough to be paid to dig worthless holes. They were very poor and needed the money. But when asked about it, they all chimed in: “No one ever asked us if we would ever use the things!”

When Temi set out to initiate community development in Mwingi, he focused on buy-in and project ownership as crucial. He formed local village committees to discuss, plan, and supervise projects. As is normal in Kenya, the women immediately elected a chairperson, secretary and treasurer, and held meetings. But Temi discovered that many saw his projects as business-as-usual. You get yourself elected and cream off part of the money; and nothing ever gets done. He had to reorganize to make sure that his local committees would own the project(s) and be willing to take initiatives. From the start, Temi swore that he only wanted to help people who were willing to help themselves. He wanted nothing to do with so-called 'give-aways' wherein the 'big man' really comes out on top.

When, despite all the odds, Temi managed to organize a free health clinic in Mwingi he was treated to yet another revelation. Interns from various nursing programs in Nairobi contributed a day of their time to consult with the local villagers in order to identify shots that they needed, medical referrals that were necessary, as well as dental care that was urgent. Hours before the 'clinic' was to occur, there were already villagers massing at the planned venue. But then the representatives of the local MP arrived and told the villagers to disperse. The 'interns' weren't real doctors; the 'clinic' was illegal and a fake. Temi had organized the clinic, not the MP. The MP's power depends on dependency of the villagers on him for any development. He did not want any independent community initiatives to succeed.⁴ Temi encountered the real face of the 'big man'. The clinic went through; the villagers for once did not listen to the MP. But the swords were drawn and Temi's room for maneuver thereafter was limited.

Some projects succeeded. Aloe soap became a successful local product. Some sisal baskets were woven and sold, giving a boost to the local economy. The quality of the mango plants was improved, whereby profit from a modest cash crop was strengthened. And the stigma against HIV/AIDs was reduced; the taboo was broken. But when Temi tried to organize the villagers to question plans to locally develop coal mining and to demand a fair share of the rewards, he was bashed down. Intended meetings were disbanded by the local police. And when Temi ran for parliament on a no-graft community development platform, he lost ingloriously. Villagers told him to his face: "I might like to vote for you, but I want money for my vote now, that's the way it has to be."

By writing the thesis, Temi developed a Kenyan voice. How should a Kenyan text sound? There is next to no Kenyan social studies research. There are virtually no books. Most university professors run from the one teaching assignment to the other, desperate to make ends meet. They do not read much of anything, have no time to prepare their lectures, and don't even dream of writing. Temi wrote experientially. Everywhere he turned he found the logic of dependency, of 'big man' dominance, and the assumptions of a poverty trap. The male youth play pool (yes, there are pool tables in Mwingi), rather than work. The chronic lack of water could be reduced if one would build dams and help with 'water harvesting' measures, but the youths refuse to work. Eventually, they migrate to Nairobi and the slums waiting for them there.