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## HETEROGLOSSIA AND PHILOSOPHERS OF EDUCATION

Kathleen Knight Abowitz

Department of Educational Leadership  
Miami University

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In his elegant and provocative essay, René Arcilla evokes the vision of John Dewey in attempting to reconcile the philosopher of education's problems of alienation and irrelevance.<sup>1</sup> Such a reconstruction of the Deweyan view of philosophy makes me wonder, what would a philosopher working in the Deweyan tradition look like now? What sorts of work would such a philosopher be engaged in, and to what ends? Cornel West comes to mind, due to his formidable presence as an American philosopher in the great tradition of American pragmatism, and no doubt also partly due to his frequent presence in the American higher education headlines of 2002. West's metaphoric use of the concept of "heteroglossia," and his controversial performance as a public intellectual reworking the Deweyan tradition in a mediated, market-saturated culture, inspires my reading of West as a way to interpret and extend Arcilla's descriptions of our field.

Of his own intellectual and performative style, West writes,

I am continually caught in a kind of "heteroglossia," speaking a number of English languages in radically different contexts. When it comes to abstract theoretical reflection, I employ Marx, Weber, Frankfurt theorists, Foucault, and so on. When it comes to speaking with the black masses, I use Christian narratives and stories, a language meaningful to them but filtered through and informed by intellectual developments from de Tocqueville to Derrida. When it comes to the academy itself there is yet another kind of language, abstract but often atheoretical, since social theorizing is mostly shunned. Philosophers are simply ill-equipped to talk about social theory: they know Wittgenstein but not Weber, they know J.L. Austin but not Marx.<sup>2</sup>

West is a well-known intellectual, a widely read author, and a frequently circulated speaker who generates as much excitement among everyday liberal-leaning Americans as any contemporary American scholar could hope to provoke. The reason, in part, is that West seems to have an understanding of the scholar as a public communicator, as story-teller, and as performer. As his words suggest here, he speaks different languages in different contexts, according to the audience and the narratives needed to communicate meaningful ideas most effectively. We all do this, of course — but West is notable in philosophical and intellectual circles for the diversity of venues and audiences he addresses, and for the array of languages he employs in these various forums. The most notable recent example of his broad-reaching public presence is West's spoken-word recording, *Sketches of my Culture*.<sup>3</sup>

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1. René Vincente Arcilla, "Why Aren't Philosophers and Educators Speaking to Each Other?" *Educational Theory* 52, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 1-11. This article will be cited as *PE* in the text for all subsequent references.

2. Cornel West, *Prophetic Reflections: Notes on Race and Power in America. Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism*, vol. 2 (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1993), 98.

3. Cornel West, *Sketches of my Culture*, Compact disc (New York: Sheridan Square Entertainment, 2001).

This compact disc, West's numerous political involvements, his headline-generating dispute with Harvard president Lawrence Summers, his subsequent move from Harvard to Princeton, and his more recent (innocent) provocation of a conservative boycott of the planned panel discussion honoring Sidney Hook are all part of what makes West a controversial public intellectual. I want to comment on Arcilla's essay by examining the work of West as philosopher, as public intellectual, and as educator. West's understanding of philosophy and its role in social progress provides a contemporary interpretation of Dewey's ideas on the topic. West is a fascinating and inspiring case study with which to explore this Deweyan view.

West is of particular interest here because he, like philosophers of education, is speaking the languages of philosophy from outside of the walls of philosophy departments, and, like philosophers of education, is often addressing many diverse audiences in many different English languages. Like West, we in philosophy of education are "caught in a kind of heteroglossia," inasmuch as we speak the languages of philosophy in and through the many contexts of educational theory and schooling — to preservice and experienced teachers, administrators, theorists of various stripes, university educators, and our own departmental colleagues — most of whom do not (care to) "speak" our specialized philosophical languages. Compared to our colleagues in philosophy departments, we are engaged with a wide range of audiences, and feel the challenge of making these various exchanges communicative, in the Deweyan sense.

The heteroglossia in which we do our work is, I want to suggest, part and parcel of what Dewey might have been thinking about when he linked philosophy and education in matrimony, when he envisioned philosophy as educative, as having transformative, *public* potential. As Arcilla reminds us, the Deweyan matrimonial view of philosophy and education lies in the process of both developing a "holistic overview of social experience" and, with that view, successfully cultivating consistent social attitudes that give birth to improved, more intelligent conduct.<sup>4</sup> Arcilla suggests that this view of philosophy may no longer be viable, since, among other reasons, philosophers are still too preoccupied with Cartesian skepticism that has little to do with social problems and more intelligent conduct in resolving them. Since the current state of philosophical discourses makes the Deweyan notion of philosophy and education too utopian to guide philosophers of education in their work, and since education is now too positivistic to provide much of a place for philosophizing, we find ourselves in a predicament. To overcome our identity crisis — the problem of being a philosopher in a field that does not care much about philosophy, and the problem of being an educator in a philosophical world that does not care much about education — Arcilla suggests that we have two options. We can either give up philosophy and become social scientists, or we can bring to education

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4. Arcilla, "Why Aren't Philosophers and Educators Speaking to Each Other?" 5.

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KATHLEEN KNIGHT ABOWITZ is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Miami University, 350 McGuffey Hall, Oxford, OH 45056. Her primary areas of scholarship are political theory in education, ethics, and the social foundations of education.

and other fields the kind of Deweyan philosophical inquiry that we, and we alone, do best: deepening our understanding of democratic practices, engaging in meaningful inquiry aimed at social regeneration, and, most fundamentally, enhancing communication between and among learners. West's example offers a look at a both/and solution to these two options, and more critically, provides a glimpse at the all-important American cultural context of philosophical work that Arcilla does not consider in his essay. The contemporary context of philosophical work — social factors that include the ever-presence of electronic media fueled by the engines of global capitalistic markets and market-values — places a particular burden on philosophers reconstructing the Deweyan tradition. The heteroglossic work of philosophers of education, in this context, is both exciting in its democratic possibility, and potentially intellectually damning in its long-term theoretical consequences. Our mediated market society contains the seeds of greater equality — potentially greater access to information and the political process, for example — and this bodes well for philosophers of education working within American pragmatist tradition, but this cultural context also makes public philosophical work quite difficult. The heteroglossic kind of life that West constructs as an African-American public intellectual highlights the double-edged existence that many philosophers of education face in our professional lives.

West's work is regenerative in the sense that he is creatively addressing some deeply rooted social problems related to human oppression in America. West suggests ways that philosophers can join with other theorists and scholars in common agendas, as he himself places the discipline alongside other discourses, some from which philosophy has historically sought great distance, such as religion. But the heteroglossic challenge is the ongoing struggle of doing any sort of public philosophy in electronically mediated, market-driven culture such as America: how to speak to many different audiences in a way that creatively and intelligently employs philosophical tools and texts for social theorizing and problem-solving.

What exactly is the potential bind? To answer this question, let us turn to the origin of the term heteroglossia, in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language.<sup>5</sup> Utterances — written, verbal, and other speech acts — are conditioned by the specific historical, political, economic, and social contexts in which they are uttered. "The living utterance," Bakhtin writes, "having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment," intermingles with "thousands of living dialogical threads....[and] cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue."<sup>6</sup> Utterances are active in that they are assimilated by listeners through their own conceptual systems "filled with specific objects and emotional expressions," and in the response, the ground for understanding is created: "understanding comes to fruition only in the response."<sup>7</sup> Understanding happens when the

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5. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "The Dialogic Imagination," in *Reflections on Language*, ed. Stuart Hirschberg and Terry Hirschberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

6. *Ibid.*, 58.

7. *Ibid.*, 162.

utterance strikes a response, but to do so, the utterance must speak through conceptual systems that are meaningful to respondents. West's notion of heteroglossia communicates his embrace of this challenge as a public intellectual.

In the case of a contemporary public intellectual like West, the conceptual systems of American culture that one must communicate in and through are often foreign to, and even hostile to, the tools and practices of philosophy. Since West speaks to so many different audiences, and is therefore adjusting his message and theorizing to the many different kinds of potential audience responses to his work, the clarity and theoretical purpose of his philosophical work can become, to some, unfocused and wanting. The heteroglossic challenge, for contemporary philosophers of education, is that we too must address many different nonphilosophical audiences. We must join the social scientists and other types of educational theorists, as Arcilla offers, just as we also attempt to bring philosophy's unique gifts to education and the public at large. In so doing our meanings may lack the more modern sense of integrity and depth that some standards of scholarship insist upon. In a market-driven, sound-bite culture, the heteroglossic conditions of our work can drive our scholarship toward a state of incoherent and atheoretical meaninglessness. However, there is also great hope to be found in this heteroglossic existence, in meeting the exhilarating challenges of helping philosophy speak to wide audiences in education and public spheres. In my own department, in my own work, I confront this heteroglossic existence as both a joy and an occupational hazard.

#### WEST AS PHILOSOPHER

There have been a few dissenters who have ventured to assert, as did William James, that "philosophy is vision," and that its chief function is to free men's minds from bias and prejudice and to enlarge their perceptions of the world about them. But in the main philosophy has set up much more ambitious pretensions. To say frankly that philosophy can proffer nothing but hypotheses, and that these hypotheses are of value only as they render men's minds more sensitive to life about them, would seem like a negation of philosophy itself.<sup>8</sup>

West is a trained philosopher who has never held a position in a philosophy department.<sup>9</sup> Like philosophers of education, he speaks the discourses of philosophy from places that are largely outside of mainstream philosophy departments and journals. And, like philosophers of education, West takes up philosophy with special regard for "the concrete, [and] the particular."<sup>10</sup> West is akin to philosophers of education because he is using the disciplinary tools outside of traditional philosophy departments for specific purposes that are tied to material realities of everyday people. Like West, I deny being a "professional philosopher," when asked what I do for a living — I stress that I am a philosopher of education, thus locating myself in a concrete practice that, to me, is about human possibility and democratic engagement.

West plainly states that he is "Jamesian" in his view of philosophy. He understands philosophy as "a certain cultural response to the world...[in which

8. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1920), 21-22.

9. Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 19.

10. *Ibid.*, 20.

philosophers are] trying to come up with holistic views, synoptic visions and synthetic images of how things hang together."<sup>11</sup> West is clear that the pragmatist perspective he takes, in making this response, is deeply rooted in his experience as an African-American Christian man with a sharp Marxist critique of late capitalism. West views himself as a philosopher on the "inside" of the human experience, attempting to position himself in solidarity with the suffering masses rather than speaking outside of these communities from the Ivory Tower. Maxine Greene similarly warns us of theorists who engage in social critique as "outsiders," who assume "critical authority from their very detachment or marginality." These "disconnected critics press practitioners toward manipulation and compulsion....with standards that seem better than (or higher than) those prevailing in the society at hand."<sup>12</sup> In the spirit of West's Jamesian brand of philosophy, I take Greene to be suggesting that philosophy of education position itself as "a 'criticism from within,' taking place within a context of solidarity, a contest of shared human stories within a changing human community."<sup>13</sup> This is especially important to West as an African-American man, who testifies to the tensions of "doubleness" brought about by his pursuit of intellectual work as a member of an oppressed group whose concrete needs are urgent and palpable.<sup>14</sup>

Philosophy, as a narrative, is taken up by West as a dizzying array of human stories told to an equally diverse array of audiences. By his own admission, he is not concerned with arcane, abstract languages of philosophical discourse. He views philosophy as a story that can help us make sense of the beauty and tragedy of human existence; thus his attraction to pragmatism, liberation theology, Marxism, and existentialism. The beauty and tragedy of which West speaks also clearly has a vital aesthetic dimension. Like Greene, who calls "critiquing within a shared context, 'the dance of life,'" West also makes good use of the aesthetic imagination within his work.<sup>15</sup> This is evident not only in the jazz and literary references in his writings, but in the poetry and drama of his prose, seen here in the Introduction to *The Cornel West Reader*:

I am first and foremost a blues man in the world of ideas — a jazz man in the life of the mind — committed to keeping alive the flickering candles of intellectual humility, personal compassion, and social hope while living in our barbaric century. I am primarily a dramatist of philosophic notions and historical narratives that partakes of blood-drenched battles on a tear-soaked terrain in which our lives and deaths are at stake.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, West's use of the aesthetic is far more than gesture. In the Postscript to *The Cornel West Reader*, West writes that his "turn to a more pronounced dramatic discourse" grounds his current and future work with artists and critics "who plunge

11. *Ibid.*, 24.

12. Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 61-62.

13. *Ibid.*

14. "Who Owes What? On the Responsibility of Intellectuals [Internet]," *Boston Review* 18, no. 1 (January/February 1993). Available online at: <<http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR18.1/responsibility.html>>. Last accessed 25 April 2002.

15. Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 61-62.

16. *The Cornel West Reader*, xv.

into the depths of tragic and comic dimensions of dramatic literature," from Checkov to Ellison to Said.<sup>17</sup> His future plans, he writes, include authoring a major comparative treatment of African-American literature and Greek literature, and a meditation on Checkhov and Coltrane. Artistic forms, more than philosophical ones alone, help West to construct a vision of past and present that fits with James's notions of the purpose of philosophy. Artistic forms help him to ground present realities in historical narratives of meaning and purpose, to link the intellectual work of discernment and demystification with the artistic work of imaginative representation, and to creatively take up the political activity of the "engaged progressive intellectual."<sup>18</sup>

Theory's job is to demystify, "to give explanations that account for the role and function of specific social practices," and the engaged progressive intellectual uses theory to draw maps for the public, as it were, to reconstruct and redescribe "forms of signification for the purpose of situating them in the dynamic flow of social practices."<sup>19</sup> The role of philosophy, it seems, is to help in the process of demythologization (mapping) and demystification (theorizing) as a way to understand social problems better. West's view of philosophy here does not seem far from Dewey's, or Arcilla's — the act of comprehending or gathering together the details of life into an outlook that is as unified and consistent, as explanatory and meaningful, as possible. As Arcilla suggests, the Deweyan goal of philosophy is to gain "a holistic overview of social experience," (PE, 5) and West sees himself squarely within this tradition.

The second part of this Deweyan tradition, Arcilla reminds us, is the role of philosopher as educator, one who succeeds in not only "cultivating a consistent attitude for addressing certain social problems....[but who also] actually gives birth to improved conduct that intelligently attacks those problems" (PE, 5). Improved conduct, Arcilla writes, comes about by philosophers affirming certain attitudes that "motivate as many members as possible of the society affected by certain problems to take arms against those problems" (PE, 6). Dewey says this can come from activities as diverse as public agitation, propaganda, legislation, and administrative action, but that these activities must be educative, modifying attitudes.

Part of modifying attitudes is undoubtedly the work of motivation, as Arcilla identifies. West's power to motivate is perhaps one of his finest gifts as an intellectual — his eclectic intellectual depth, his oratorical style developed within the Black homiletic tradition, and his hopeful focus on the democratic possibilities of our future combine for spellbinding public performances and published texts. West, however, has been criticized for his methods of "moving the reader through passionate and motivational rhetoric rather than persuading the reader through the dispassionate execution of arguments."<sup>20</sup> It is here that the double-edge of public

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17. *Ibid.*, 549.

18. Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 103.

19. *Ibid.*, 89.

20. Clevis Headley, "Cornel West on Prophecy, Pragmatism, and Philosophy: A Critical Evaluation of Prophetic Pragmatism," in *Cornel West: A Critical Reader*, ed. George Yancy (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 70.

philosophy emerges, for despite Headley's binary logic — correcting passion with dispassion, subjective performance with objective argumentation — the tension that Headley points to does exist in West's work. West, like many philosophers of education who seek to do philosophical work "on the inside," faces the tension of many public intellectuals today: how to motivate and educate various nonphilosophical audiences without becoming simply consumed as intellectual entertainment, speaking in double-talk and sound-bites.

#### WEST AS ORGANIC INTELLECTUAL

We live at a particular historical moment in which a serious interrogation regarding "vocations" of intellectuals and academicians in American society can contribute to a *more enabling and empowering sense of the moral and political dimensions of our functioning in the present-day academy*. To take seriously one's vocation as an intellectual is to justify in moral and political terms why one pursues a rather privileged life of the mind in a world that seems to require forms of more direct and urgent action.<sup>21</sup>

West's conception of an intellectual is that of the "critical organic catalyst" who combines academic intellectual work with political activity, "whose vocation is to fuse the best of the life of the mind from within the academy with the best of the organized forces for greater democracy and freedom from outside the academy."<sup>22</sup>

As I was writing this manuscript in the spring and summer of 2002, Cornel West was, among other things, getting arrested with Michel Lerner in front of the State Department as part of his involvement with "Tikkun Community," a coalition that calls for the end of Jewish occupation of the West Bank and a nonviolent settlement to the conflict in Israel.<sup>23</sup> In the early months of 2002, West was the center of an academic spectacle that drew much criticism and attention. His conflict with neoconservative Lawrence Summers, the president of Harvard, over West's "nonscholarly" activities and his reported contributions to Harvard's grade inflation problem, is now well known. The "nonscholarly" activities that Summers was reportedly concerned about included West's political involvement — his participation in Bill Bradley's 2000 presidential campaign, and his recent involvement with an exploratory committee for the presidential campaign of Al Sharpton. Summers also reportedly questioned the scholarly value of West's compact disc. In general, Summers could be read as questioning the academic legitimacy of West's understanding of his "vocation as an intellectual."

The public fight between West and Summers deserves far more close analysis about the racialized and mediated politics of scholarly work than I can provide here, but as a case writ large, it speaks clearly about the need for, and dangers of, public philosophizing today. If a professor's decision to go outside of the academy to engage in political work — say, a political campaign, or an artistic endeavor with political implications — is worth policing by University officials, then we must wonder about the narrow notion of scholarship that operates in the academy today, at least in the

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21. West, *Keeping Faith*, 94 (italics in original).

22. *Ibid.*

23. Michael Lerner, "Jews for Justice," *The Nation* 20 (4-5 May 2002).

academy according to Summers. Summers's rebuke of West's "nonscholarly" activities has implications for philosophers of education in the sense that as philosophers of something, of an applied field that is historically a feminized, marginalized area of the academy, we are frequently called to get involved in political work — broadly conceived — as it relates to schools and education. Working on a school reform initiative is not "scholarship" in the traditional sense of the term, but such work can serve to deepen one's teaching and research in the praxis of educational philosophy. Dewey's life offers an outstanding example of one whose "nonscholarly" involvements in schools and political work enriched his thinking and writing. As the academy comes under attack for declining standards (such as grade inflation), the response is to narrow or "raise" the standards of scholarship in ways that privilege traditional discourses of philosophy and theory. This move does not bode well for envisioning more creative, engaged approaches to our field of study.

Yet Summers's rebuke of West — as politically motivated as it may have been — also warns of the dangers of the contemporary work of philosopher as public intellectual. West's output of philosophical scholarship has waned in recent years relative to his earlier, outstanding productivity, and this gap impoverishes the philosophical field in which West works. Touring on the lecture circuit, working on political campaigns, and writing about public policy issues, while all valuable activities for public intellectuals, have left West little time to contribute to philosophical discourses.<sup>24</sup> West has become more of scholar-celebrity than simply a public intellectual. The (media) story now often focuses on West the person, and his celebrity, rather than the ideas and visions of his work. West's celebrity status is, in part, a reflection of the current status of public intellectuals today, as products to be consumed in a market-driven, entertainment-oriented culture, often confirming the audiences' beliefs rather than challenging them.<sup>25</sup> In general, celebrities do not make arguments, they make headlines. Well-honed, insightful arguments are among the philosopher's most basic tools, but in American culture, headlines are far more seductive: "The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's apperceptive background."<sup>26</sup> The apperceptive background against which we assimilate utterances as Americans includes a history of anti-intellectual social moods that cross racial lines<sup>27</sup> and a consumerist mentality that is similarly universal within our national boundaries (and all-too-quickly being globalized). These factors, neglected in Arcilla's otherwise insightful analysis of our field, underscore the desperate need

24. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger and Cornel West, *The Future of American Progressivism: An Initiative for Political and Economic Reform* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998) and Sylvia Anne Hewlett, Nancy Rankin, and Cornel West, *Taking Parenting Public: The Case for a New Social Movement*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002). West has also been reportedly suffering from some health problems during the past year or two, which could also have dramatically decreased his scholarly productivity.

25. Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 176.

26. Bakhtin, "The Dialogic Imagination," 162.

27. Nada Elia, "Cornel West's Representations of the Intellectual: But Some of Us Are Brave?" in Yancy, West: *A Critical Reader*, 341.



for public philosophy, as well as the difficulty of executing it in a way that advances both the public(s) that it serves, and philosophy as a discourse itself. I face this challenge in my own work, as one of two philosophers in a Department of Educational Leadership.

#### PHILOSOPHERS OF EDUCATION AND HETEROGLOSSIA

Each spring, I teach a philosophy course called "Ethics for Educators" that is required for all doctoral students in my department. These students are earning degrees in Administration and Curriculum; some are oriented to work in public schools, others to work in higher education, and still others to alternative educational contexts. Most have been or currently are K-12 teachers or administrators, or both. "Ethics for Educators," or "Ethics" as it is known in the department, is one of three core courses required of all doctoral students in our department, no matter what their major. The other two courses, "Culture and Education," and "Power and Schooling," also come out of a comprehensive departmental philosophy oriented to the preparation of school leaders who understand the cultural, political, and moral context of schooling and education.<sup>28</sup>

As the discourses of ethics, power, and culture are introduced to students in their first year of doctoral study, the new languages, values, and logics that accompany these discourses begin to permeate the understandings and positions that these doctoral students take toward educational problems. I, and another faculty member who has taught this and other core courses, believe that for most students, the ethics discourse is the least compelling of these three discourses for most of our doctoral students. Students find that the philosophical discourse is the most alien, least comprehensible, and most abstract of the competing discourses in their graduate study. Not unlike Summers's policing West's "nonscholarly" activities, I find myself consistently policing the borders of "Ethics" from the intrusions of methods and theorists drawn from the discourses of "power" and "culture" — not for the purposes of keeping philosophy "pure" but for the instructional purposes of teaching the texts, methods, and languages of ethics as a specific focus of study, as one tool among many to be more precisely used in their future work. There is little interest among our graduate students in philosophers, in philosophical arguments, or in taking up philosophical inquiry for dissertation work. Here is my own example of Arcilla's "mutual shunning" between educators and philosophers in concrete fashion, in my own department (*PE*, 1). But unlike Arcilla, who believes that philosophy is too skeptical to be of real use, I find a different problem, or perhaps an additional problem.

As I present the course to these students, I emphasize the practice of argumentation. Philosophy is making arguments, I say on the first day of class. Making reasonable arguments — making creative, meaningful, and passionate claims that are well supported by evidence of various kinds — is a useful practice in any life endeavor, I (ironically) argue during the first weeks of class. But argument is not sexy,

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28. Richard A. Quantz, Nelda Cambron-McCabe, and Michael Dantley, "Preparing School Administrators for Democratic Authority: A Critical Approach to Graduate Education," *Urban Review* 23, no. 1 (1991): 3-19.

and reason has suffered its postmodern breakdown. As Boler explains, "educational theorists cannot be assumed even to agree that our society needs to be more 'reasonable.' Rather, the tragedy we collectively face is, in part, that metanarrative 'solutions,' such as 'reason,' no longer ensure collective faith."<sup>29</sup> Reason can no longer ensure collective faith, in part, due to the climate created by an entertainment-hungry, electronically mediated, market culture. The students and I exist in a world in which evidence is sometimes less powerful than emotional hyperbole, and in which claims are often supported by rhetorical flourish rather than reflective reasons. Philosophical argument is not entertaining, it is not good for ratings, and sound-bites do not allow for the kinds of reflective reasoning that philosophers seek to accomplish.

The tension of speaking the languages of philosophy to audiences who do not (care to) speak them is palpable here, and characterizes the work of philosophers of education as well as of West. Part of my challenge as a teacher of ethics in an educational context which devalues philosophy's methods and language is to engage students in the deepest satisfactions of philosophical work: asking and meeting the larger questions of educational purpose, ethical practice, and moral inquiry as a professional habit. Philosophy has "something distinctive to offer educators," Arcilla hopes, and in this vein, I must show how philosophy matters in education (*PE*, 11). Moreover, I must translate philosophy to a language that students speak, while helping them to speak the language of philosophy. In speaking the languages of ethics, we use terms that carry traces of many other contexts and meanings: values, virtues, morality, justice, and rights. The heteroglossia of my utterances lies not simply in the consumer context in which we exist as teacher and students, but in the pregnant meanings of the language of ethics itself — a language that is translated for many students into the (so-called private) languages of religion and domestic culture. Just as I seek to translate ethics for doctoral students, West seeks to translate philosophy (and many other kinds of) texts for his audiences. In these translations, over the varied contexts of our utterances, understanding can occur. At its best, this understanding represents the fruits of Deweyan philosophy, philosophy which engages "the interests of democratic citizens," in Arcilla's imaginings. What is sometimes lost in these translations is the clarity of language, the precision of meaning, and the depth of inquiry that can exist among interlocutors. The loss is that I, perhaps like West, sometimes find myself sacrificing "critical and analytical scrutiny in philosophical matters as well as in matters of more general public concern" for what passes as a general understanding among our students, our audiences.<sup>30</sup> Such a sacrifice is one of the costs that Arcilla points to when he warns of tying our profession to other disciplines, mainly in the social sciences, in order to "halt the slide into extinction" (*PE*, 8). The danger is that philosophy gradually mutates into social theory for educational practitioners, "and follow[s] the rest of the

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29. Megan Boler, "An Epoch of Difference: Hearing Voices in the Nineties," *Educational Theory* 50, no. 3 (Winter 2000): 360.

30. Headley, "Cornel West on Prophecy, Pragmatism, and Philosophy," 76.

social sciences out of philosophy" (*PE*, 8). The potential dangers of such philosophical work in our cultural climate, therefore, are clear.

But for philosophers like me, teaching at primarily undergraduate institutions without doctoral programs in Philosophy of Education or even Social Foundations of Education, there is also much to be gained by joining forces with other educational theorists. In my own department, there are curriculum theorists, scholars in K-12 Administration and College Student Personnel, Social Foundations, and Cultural Studies. As a collective, we have articulated an educational vision for ourselves and the students enrolled in our programs that is grounded in the belief that the "field of educational leadership must be reconstructed so that the transformation of schools becomes its central focus."<sup>31</sup> That transformation, based in democratic ideals, is constantly being reworked and practiced through our dialogue, our teaching, service, and research. Currently, our department has launched a five-year initiative into the intersection of Leadership, Culture, and Schooling. A year of weekly faculty conversation fed this initiative, which is (immodestly) aimed toward creating a new discourse — through dialogue, research, and other scholarly works — around educational leadership and culture. In this second year of our initiative, we are attempting to envision and communicate an emerging discourse that displaces the techno-rational approach to administration and schooling with one that positions educational leadership as a nonpositional moral practice embedded and enacted within the politics of culture.<sup>32</sup> My part in this initiative, as I see it, is to bring the contributions of philosophy to the table in a way that does not reduce philosophy into a social science discourse. I can recall the heady talk of "democratic schooling" in our year-long faculty dialogue about the initiative, and I kept pressing on the idea of "democracy" to become defined as something more than an ideograph in our work. I summoned the ideas of philosophers who have contributed to defining democratic education — Dewey, Amy Gutmann, and others — in a way that I hoped could bring clarity to our vision. To bring the ideas of philosophy to this Initiative, I must tie my discipline and my fate to the other educational disciplines in my department. I must find out what problems we share, and what visions we can collectively summon to address those problems. In bringing philosophy to these discussions and this work, I must join with other theorists and make philosophy "speak to" our shared concerns. In doing this shared work, I must sacrifice the pleasures of specialized philosophical language and concerns. Indeed, our next steps in the initiative include field-based work in public schools — studying dropout problems at the request of a local high school. How my expertise in philosophy becomes useful in this endeavor, and how much of a social scientist I must become to join in this field-based work, remains to be seen.

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31. Department of Educational Leadership, "EDL Principles," posted 1991. Available online at: <<http://www.muohio.edu/~edlcwis/general/principles.html>>. Last accessed 25 April 2002.

32. Bernard Badiali, Nelda Cambron-McCabe, Dennis Carlson, Michael Dantley, Frances Fowler, C.P. Gause, Jannelle Gohn, Richard Hofmann, Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Tom Poetter, Richard A. Quantz, Judy Rogers, Kate Rousmaniere, Ray Terrell, and Lisa Weems, "Intersection of Leadership, Culture, and Schooling," presented at the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 2001.

As I understand my own work in a multidisciplinary department, as a philosopher of education I must both join with other educational disciplines while I also bring something uniquely philosophical to the collaboration. This conclusion is akin to Arcilla's proposed solution to the problem of professional alienation, but is more dialogical than his sketch suggests. Heteroglossia, after all, is based on a dialogical view of communication, and in dialogue with my colleagues and students, I attempt to interrogate, defend, and broaden the borders of philosophy of education. Kal Alston supports the kind of heteroglossic existence that I view as necessary to "living well" as a philosopher of education in contemporary times:

It is one thing to enjoy free play with one's [philosophy of education] colleagues, battling back and forth over the hotly contested turf of Philosophy of Education. It is quite another to assume that these tussles will, in and of themselves, signify the world. Those...tasks can be intellectually challenging, yet that quality says nothing about whether distinguishing and clarifying will be self-reflexive or illuminating projects. As reflexivity, these tasks are the foundation of terra firma of life among those who speak the same language (at least vaguely) and recognizable to their fellows (through a glass, darkly). It's a living, but is it living well? As illuminating tasks, clarifying and distinguishing become situated in the realm of practice where there are multiple tongues and many peoples.<sup>33</sup>

Arcilla wonders whether "as a philosopher of education I have anything coherent to say, anything to say that expresses a coherent identity or reason for being, and to whom" (*PE*, 1). My response here, based in the idea of heteroglossia and in West's compelling example, suggests that coherence is precisely the challenge we face in a postmodern, mediated American society that often marginalizes intellectual work. The response to this challenge is either not to give up philosophy or to retreat into philosophy, but to take up Arcilla's dream of making "philosophy engage the interests of democratic citizens" (*PE*, 9). To do this, we must face the costs and benefits of our heteroglossic existence, working carefully to avoid its excesses while we mine its productive possibilities.

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33. Kal Alston, "The Difference We Make: Philosophy of Education and the Tower of Babel," in *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education*, ed. Wendy Kohli (New York: Routledge, 1995), 291.

