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## TO BE MINDFUL OF OTHERNESS: TOWARD A POST- PSYCHOANALYTIC PROBLEMATIC OF ETHICS AND EDUCATION

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The current cacophony of philosophical discourses on ethics and education includes poststructural,<sup>1</sup> postcolonial,<sup>2</sup> and psychoanalytic<sup>3</sup> frameworks. Within these multiple frameworks are critical insights regarding how we might theorize and practice ethical relations in pedagogical encounters. Such frameworks assume that educational environs are heterotopic spaces of competing demands among and between variously situated and embodied subjects. A central concern for philosophers of education remains the challenge to imagine spaces of/for learning given the constraints of subjectivity, schooling, and the material world.

In this essay, I attempt to discursively engender a performative “ethics of dissensus.” I examine three constructs that zigzag across multiple discourses to scaffold what I term a problematic of post-psychoanalytic ethics in education: otherness, desire, and relationality. While there are many theorists and educators whose ideas resonate with this problematic, I have chosen to highlight the work of Sharon Todd, Deborah Britzman, and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek to interrogate these terms and their usefulness for theorizing ethical relations in pedagogical situations. In reading their work, I trace how otherness, desire, and relationality function in representations of pedagogy and politics or what Todd calls learning from the Other. Practices of discursive and embodied vulnerability (what I characterize as mindfulness) might allow one to work through ipseity (Emmanuel Levinas’s term for how the ego sees the self) toward the possibility of openness to difference and our ethical obligation to otherness itself.

My selection of the terms otherness, desire, and relationality for constructing a problematic of post-psychoanalysis suggests that I situate myself both within and beyond dominant discourses of psychoanalysis. In turn, I attempt to speak to readers who similarly imagine their own scholarship crossing interpretive frameworks. My argument (to borrow a term from analytic philosophy) is that we do not necessarily need “new and better” frameworks for theorizing ethics and education. In contrast, we might look at the interstices of existing representations of ethics and politics within philosophies of education to articulate a contingent foundation for analyzing the work of pedagogy. In analyzing diverse representations of otherness, desire, and relationality, I hope to construct a web of intelligibility across multiple frameworks without seeing these frameworks as either identical or oppositional. I want to hold on to the specific context from which each articulation is produced yet consider how each of these articulations is effected by and affect each other.

Before I turn to the specific notions of otherness, desire, and relationality in conceptualizing ethics and education, let me provide a brief sketch of what constitutes a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education. I purposefully utilize the term “problematic” rather than “framework” to signal my poststructural inclination to interrogate how knowledge is based on assumptions and ideas that are both articulated and unarticulated. I use the term problematic in the Althusserian sense of “a theoretical framework that determines the questions an inquirer can ask about the object of inquiry *and* the answers at which he/she arrives.”<sup>4</sup> For example, my institutional location is within a department of educational leadership designed to prepare future superintendents and principals in mostly inner-city U.S. schools. Dominant discourses of administration, social reproduction, and deficit models of cultural difference co-mingle with critical narratives of power, freedom, resistance, and justice in schools and society. Together these discourses structure what can and cannot be said in the name of educational leadership.<sup>5</sup> Thus, my bundling together of the theorists in this current problematic is symptomatic of my own interests and desires to suture ethics and politics, democracy and education.

What (or whose) ideas might constitute a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education? I categorize the genealogical lineage of such a problematic around three nodes. First (and perhaps most obvious), a post-psychoanalytic problematic draws upon the myriad histories of psychoanalytic theory. Perhaps most visible in this area is Britzman’s work on Sigmund and Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. Within and across her scholarship Britzman provides an in-depth exploration of how constructs such as identification, the unconscious, psychic conflict, and symbolization may be of use to educational theory. Todd primarily utilizes Levinas’s scholarship to provide insights on the importance of desire and affect in pedagogical relations and theorizing an ethics of nonviolence in the classroom. Finally, Ziarek draws upon a broader cast of characters (including Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray) to elaborate psychoanalytic constructs such as negation, the libidinal economy, and sublimation. Moreover, in imagining a responsibility to otherness, she interrogates not only the ethics *proposed by* psychoanalysis but also the ethics *of* psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework. Across their writing, then, Britzman, Todd, and Ziarek operate from some of the basic assumptions regarding the importance of the psyche in theorizing ethical relations.

Second, a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education draws upon the diverse histories of poststructural theorizing. There is an emphasis on affect within this problematic, yet it is assumed that affect and emotions are discursively produced and mediated through discursive structures, “truth games,” and strategies of language and narrative. Consistent with poststructural claims that language is both overdetermined yet indeterminate, the scholarship of Britzman and Todd (and we might add Megan Boler here as well) investigates the work of discourse and narration in symbolization and vice

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versa. For our current discussion of ethics and education, such an assumption implies that “experience” (whether cognitive or beyond) must always pass through the interpretive processes of history and narration that accompany “giving an account of oneself.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, in pedagogical encounters, an ethical stance demands that speakers both recognize asymmetrical relations of power inscribed within discursive positions yet remain open to the heterogeneity of linguistic interpretation.

Finally, postcolonial theorizing (whether implicitly or explicitly) informs a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education. While otherness may be the preferred term within psychoanalytic and poststructural discourse, postcolonial discourse often utilizes the term “difference” interchangeably in theorizing representations of otherness in the context of subjectivity and social-cultural location. This may be a product of how the construct of psycho-social otherness or the interiorized Other appears in Western discourse simultaneous to ethnographic and cross-cultural analyses of indigenous populations and the invention/reification of the Other.<sup>7</sup> This may also be an effect of the collective resistances of racially marked populations to discourses of psychoanalysis.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, difference is conceptualized as an ontological given as well as a desirable aim within this problematic. Within postcolonial theorizing, constructions of difference (also referred to as alterity, the subaltern, otherness, and so on) signal a shift away from theorizing identities as positivities or attributes as they are typically characterized in contemporary multicultural educational discourse.<sup>9</sup>

The move to both mobilize yet critique articulations of otherness, desire, and relationality in “dominant” discourses of philosophy is perhaps most readily visible in postcolonial scholarship on ethics in educational theory and research.<sup>10</sup> While Tuhiwai Smith acknowledges the imperial histories and legacies imbued within philosophy and research in constructing “what counts” as theory and inquiry, she takes the position that native and non-native scholars must engage in colonial discourses in efforts towards the decolonization of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Thus, I utilize this notion of the “post” as it functions within much of decolonizing projects: (1) to demarcate the historicity of ontological and epistemological claims which come *after* their historical antecedents, and (2) to signal that such claims exceed the constitutive boundaries of the respective body of knowledge. The designation of “post” is not suggestive that such bodies of knowledge are moribund; rather, in contrast, it implies that the ideas linked to such a moniker are in negotiation and contestation regarding issues of dominance and boundary making. In other words, my articulation of a “post-psychoanalytic” framework is an attempt to both enter and interrupt existing discourses on psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and postcolonial discourses on ethics and pedagogy. I do this by identifying theoretical constructs that populate these seemingly disparate frameworks with the purpose of calling attention to the ways in which this re-articulation might allow for cross-fertilization of ideas and practices. How is desire constructed through

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narratives of learning? How is difference constituted by pedagogical desire? How is pedagogical relationality wrought with political and ethical problems of “otherness”? While a more thorough treatment of these last questions is beyond the scope of this paper, these are the kind of questions that a post-psychoanalytic framework of ethics and education might pursue.

#### CENTERING OTHERNESS IN/AND THE SELF

As I have introduced, a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and pedagogy makes use of the notions of otherness, desire, and relationality as they are conceptualized within psychoanalytic, poststructural, and postcolonial theorizing. I trace the elaboration of these constructs through the work of Todd, Britzman, and Ziarek. My mapping begins with the construct of otherness, since it is this illustration of difference that is taken to be the ontological condition of learning (and its ethical and political dimensions) among the three disparate traditions.

Otherness refers to the sense of psycho-social distance between multiple subject/objects. Psychoanalysis teaches us that the boundaries between inside and outside are blurred as we interiorize (external) symbolic figures through fantasy, desire, projection, and transference. Poststructural theorizing also contends that external relations become interiorized through psychological, medical, and other human scientific discourses. And, indeed, postcolonial scholarship illustrates how socio-cultural frameworks of empire and racialization operate to inscribe relations of colonization within and upon specific bodies for the purposes of the regulation of populations and social control.

As one might expect, Britzman, Todd, and Ziarek offer slightly different treatments of the concept of otherness/difference. Todd, following Levinas, likens difference to the notion of otherness; that is, otherness is present within the self as well as attached to particular bodies that get labeled and marked as “the Other.” Todd believes difference is not only an ontological given but necessary for ethical relations. For Britzman, difference also resonates with the notion of otherness, however, she foregrounds issues of conflict, particularly psychic conflicts which certainly are mediated by and through social categories of difference, but are part and parcel of the psychoanalytic subject. Britzman characterizes conflict (rather than difference) as central to the inauguration of learning. Similarly, Ziarek writes about difference as an “irreducible” and necessary component of learning, but pushes the conversation to an explicit discussion of how learning from difference and conflict are not only desirable ethical aims, but political aims as well. Born out of a frustration with philosophical arguments that polarize politics and ethics, Ziarek forces engagement between “race theory, feminism, psychoanalysis and the politics of radical democracy” by purposefully juxtaposing competing arguments made from cultural and political theorists from bell hooks to Judith Butler, Levinas to Patricia Williams to Luce Irigaray. She does not attempt to collapse their

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arguments or force them into mutual agreement. Instead, she highlights points of contention and enacts a sizzling analysis of intense disagreement and long-standing feuds. Like Todd and Britzman, Ziarek strategically puts into dialogue multiple objects, ideas, and embodied histories and invites the reader to make her own meanings. Yet, Ziarek's project is explicitly political: that of rethinking political philosophy to face its own "crippling moralism" and for moral philosophy to confront its own apolitical tendencies.<sup>12</sup>

It is through this multilayered, multi-mediated framework of what Ziarek calls an "ethics of dissensus" that I articulate my sense of my own current project while remaining humbled by the fact that my project is not really my own. No matter how "special" I am, I will never be unique. Subjectivity is a function of history in that the individual "I" who is imagined to be the author of her own experience is inscribed and constrained by hegemonic discursive practices. Yet, subjectivity also entails futurity in that our notions of ourselves imagine future possibilities that are uncertain, indeterminate, and unknown. There is a fundamental way in which otherness constitutes subjectivity in that our constructions of ourselves reference history (via memory), the present (via boundaries of who we are not), and the future (via the fantasies of who we might become). Todd writes, "Ontologically, otherness is precisely that which defies our own sameness and exists in a relation of exteriority to the self."<sup>13</sup> Thus, otherness is a condition of being yet its substance and location are marked by indeterminacy.

Although this indeterminacy is constituted by an infinitude of attitudes, beliefs, and experiences, part of the human condition is the desire for knowledge and the search for meaning to name and affect ourselves, others we encounter, and the world around us. As Ziarek notes, part of the postmodern human condition is resistance to power and attempts to intervene in the disciplinary techniques of power that objectify human subjects into "docile bodies."<sup>14</sup> Ziarek refers to this human struggle for ethical agency as an "ethos of becoming."<sup>15</sup> Todd, via Levinas, suggests that we become mindful of the otherness in self, this interiorized difference that constitutes the self/subject/ego that is characteristic of each and all of us (no matter how we are socially positioned). Like Britzman, Todd reminds us that it is this otherness in the self, and our desire to both understand and intervene in our own subjectivation, which, thankfully, allows, or rather requires that learning from difference (and otherness) is not only possible but necessary in projects aimed at nonviolent pedagogy.

#### THE POWER OF DESIRE IN PEDAGOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

Nonviolence in the psychoanalytic tradition refers to the view, from the "ancients" to direct instruction of today, that the pedagogical encounter is defined in the image of the teacher actively depositing knowledge in a student as a passive receptacle. This is what Erica McWilliam refers to as the "missionary position" embedded in educational philosophy and theories of

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pedagogy.<sup>16</sup> Of course this image maps onto Freirean critiques of “banking education.” And, Todd certainly draws on Freirean conceptions of transformative or critical pedagogy in theorizing how education might play a role in social justice. But Todd draws upon the work of Jane Gallop, Jacques Derrida, Rosa Braidotti, and others who call attention to the ways in which critical pedagogy can be both the site of pain and pleasure—given that learning is a project of embodiment and embodiment is learned. If education makes us nervous (as Anna Freud claimed), teaching and learning are “dangerous” endeavors; egoistic “interests” are subverted by unconscious fantasies for acceptance and destruction, redemption, and rebellion. Thus, theories of pedagogy, teaching, and learning, must “think through the body” by recognizing how desire(s) and resistance are not just sociological categories but psychic attachments (past, present, and future) that make it difficult (if not impossible) to decipher exactly “what’s going on” in classroom dynamics and pedagogical encounters.<sup>17</sup> This is because power and conflict do not just reside in external institutions such as government or schooling— or internalized versions of state apparatuses in the form of ideologies and discourses. Of course power and politics reside in both of these arenas. But power and conflict also reside in the unconscious, unsaid, and other symbolic spaces of knowledge such as the body, memory, and desire, as well as the real and imaginary relations that we call upon in narratives of “experience.”<sup>18</sup>

According to Britzman, the field of education has worked hard to contain definitions of learning within liberal humanist discourses of the individual and knowledge.<sup>19</sup> What emerges is the fiction of the subject of education as a unified self, governed by reason (versus desire), which intentionally chooses information and then engages in instrumental action. What if we disrupted this romantic fiction of education as the voluntary mastery of useful information?

One avenue might be to follow Michel Foucault’s notion of desire as a function of disciplinary power. In other words desires are not our own, or derived by our own volition, but rather determined by cultural scripts and discursive formations. But as others have charged, this construction of desire seems to contradict Foucault’s later writing on the cultivation of the self which emphasizes the possibilities of new pleasures to be “discovered” through the creation, experimentation, and re-routing of pre-existing circuits of affect. Thus, Foucault’s notion of desire seems to suggest that there is a past and future to its constitution. Symbolization, affect, and narration can and do shift depending on various contexts. Again, this highlights the permeable and uncertain content of learning yet retains the central role of desire in ethical living.

My conceptualization of desire borrows from Cris Mayo’s characterization of desire as a dynamic of push and pull of connection that both falls short of and exceeds dimensions of conscious identification and learning but is nonetheless grounded in matters of the material world. Desire, here,

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marks the potential to inaugurate new ways of thinking, yet often gets reduced to presumed political affiliations, thus, limiting one of the educative features of desire's potential, that is, its uncertain yet continuous movement toward future possibilities.<sup>20</sup>

An exemplary detour: The affective dimensions of pedagogy both get in the way yet provide the conditions for an ethical stance of nonviolence in the classroom, despite my intention and attention to move beyond the instrumentalism of knowledge and epistemology. Almost every semester my own fantasies of mastery and authority in the classroom rub up against my own feelings of failure and otherness. However, this conflict, and my explicit narration of it, allows for students and myself to create relations of trust and respect that have little to do with the exchange of curricular information and epistemological certainty. In contrast, being mindful of the incompleteness of pedagogical situations sparks a kind of relationality that allow us to notice each other: our worries, conflicts, and struggles, however disparate they may be.

DESIRING DISSENSUS:  
RADICAL DEMOCRACY OR NONVIOLENT RELATIONALITY

Being mindful of ethical and political dimensions of pedagogical situations includes working with others to problematize our understanding of the particular issues and contradictions we stumble upon in learning from others. Learning from the other does not relegate pedagogy to an interpersonal approach to multicultural education. A key difference is that most multicultural education works to achieve common understanding and epistemological agreement. In contrast, within a post-psychoanalytic problematic otherness, difference, and conflicts are not only presumed to be the impetus for learning, but likely to be the outcomes as we witness others making meaning of their contradictions and struggles of everyday life. Learning from others can take the form of reading and writing literature, theory, news accounts, policy, popular media, and so on. As Cornel West writes, enacting a “new cultural politics of difference” involves demystification of representational practices at the level of the intellectual, political and existential.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, democratic relationality also implies working with others to problematize how otherness or difference functions within various forms of representation. Finally, the radical component of this approach imagines that we consider the narrative constructions of our own positioning as open to interpretive investigation. This form of mindfulness is less about reflexivity for the sake of instrumentalizing knowledge into practice and more about cultivating a sensibility for the intolerable. Put another way, this approach may be more about unlearning the impulse to act “on behalf of” and learning to become witnesses to others in their struggles for becoming historical agents.<sup>22</sup>

Ziarek provides a theoretical framework for understanding how ethical projects of the self might connect with political agendas for social transformation. Ziarek's purpose is to elaborate an ethics of dissensus that takes

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into account what she calls an “ethos of becoming” with an “ethos of obligation.” Her sense of an ethos of becoming draws from the theorizing of Foucault and Butler and Derrida’s notion of disciplinary subjection. Particularly, Ziarek’s interest is to extend Foucault’s notion of the materialization of (external) relations of power through the constitution of the body. Persuaded by Foucault’s theory that the self is a function of various practices of regulation of identity, Ziarek hopes for conceptions of subjectivity that allow for the capacity to move beyond the injustices of history that show up in social positionality and encounters with otherness. Borrowing an argument from Joan Copjec, Ziarek links projects of the self to projects of social justice, since “the symbolic idea of the indeterminable subject” involves “the desiring subject that exceeds its historical determination, and for that very reason can claim the agency of reformulating the already established rights.” For Copjec, a democracy is defined as “that form of society that continuously inscribes the impossibility of inscribing the subject.”<sup>23</sup> In this way, democracy is intricately tied to ethical projects of the subject who is working towards her own definitions of self and agency.

The second component of an ethics of dissensus involves what Ziarek calls an ethos of obligation. Here, Ziarek incorporates the “psychic life of power” expressed through fantasy, affect, and the libidinal economy of encounters with the Other articulated by Julia Kristeva, Lyotard, and Levinas. Key to Ziarek’s conceptualization of obligation is her interest in a form of democracy that foregrounds rather than erases issues of power, difference, and indeterminacy. Ziarek hopes to create a new socio-symbolic imaginary that moves beyond “the problem of identifications” toward fantasy and “the irreducible negativity within the subject at odds with its social positionality.”<sup>24</sup> In this new imaginary, negotiations of the self/becoming are inextricably tied to responsibility to the Other.

Like Ziarek, Todd is fundamentally concerned with ethical projects that understand difference as an a priori psychic condition of subjectivity as well as a political goal for social justice. Attending to difference, for Todd, is an active process of thinking differently about ethics and education, specifically to foreground relationality as a central dynamic that structures both. Todd’s framework of relationality draws closely from Levinas’s work as well as psychoanalysis. In framing the relation between ethics and education, Todd discusses three theses: (1) “a view of education as a site of implied ethics” rather than the application of ethics; (2) “a recognition of the quality of relations”; and (3) that “to teach responsibly and responsively one must do so with ignorance and humility.”<sup>25</sup>

#### REINSCRIBING RELATIONALITY: EDUCATION AS A SITE OF IMPLIED ETHICS

Todd suggests that we cannot approach ethics as a project of epistemology and education. Unfortunately, according to Todd, this is the way

we typically conceptualize ethics as a set of proper moral laws, codes, and practices that are “owned” by moral experts and passed on through education. Psychoanalysis reminds us that ethical relations, problems, and solutions take shape in ways that are both inside and outside formal educational spaces. Indeed, we engage in ethical relations, problems and solutions every day in both big and small ways as we navigate the complicated arrangements we call our family and friendships, our claims to community, and in envisioning democratic publics.

In addition to ethical relations beyond epistemology and education, Todd notes that educational spaces and learning often *prompt* ethical conflicts especially in social justice education. Here Todd refers to the tendency within social justice education to learning about difference, which she suggests inevitably leads to the violent effect of containing and totalizing the Other. In other words, our desires for social justice (*vis-à-vis* critical pedagogy) can interfere with ethical relationality, precisely because the affect of otherness (fantasy, desires, emotions, and so on) is what structures difference, rather than something that occurs “epiphenomenally.” Thus, Todd concludes, “ethics is something other than acting on knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> I read this as a strange but fruitful irony; an ethics of nonviolence in education requires one to be mindful, but this mindfulness is of a different sort than reflexivity. Whereas reflexivity assumes self-knowledge to be the goal and end of reflection which leads to the assumption of instrumentalizing that knowledge, an ethics of acting on something other than knowledge, by definition, foregrounds the unknown, the unsaid, and the uncertainty involved in human relationships.

#### RESPONSIVE TEACHING □ IGNORANCE AND HUMILITY

Todd writes, “if we place susceptibility, vulnerability, and openness at the core of relationality, then the question that begins to emerge is how we learn from the other.”<sup>27</sup> Todd’s conception of relationality begins with the belief that otherness constitutes subjectivity (students and teachers) and to attempt to reduce or ameliorate “difference” would be tantamount to violent assimilation. Whereas modernist treatments of education and ethics emphasizes mutuality among multiple persons, Todd (drawing on both poststructuralism and psychoanalysis) highlights the conflicts and otherness within, between and among multiple subject positions that populate the split subject.<sup>28</sup>

This is where Todd’s insistence that discussion of ethics in/and education should be de-coupled from questions of epistemology. Rather than privileging “understanding” in pedagogical encounters, Todd (following Britzman) foregrounds the practices of “witnessing” and “listening.” Informed by the area of trauma studies, aesthetics, and clinical psychoanalysis, this position encourages the provocation of affective responses without requiring (or perhaps even desiring) epistemological certainty. Todd asks, “What happens to ethics and education when learning is not about understanding the other but about a relation to otherness prior to understanding.”<sup>29</sup> Can we imagine otherness as a

condition of our own (desire for) learning and allow otherness to guide learning from difference?

Teaching responsively situates teachers in the position of not just recognizing difference, but learning from difference— that is, fundamentally mindful that our institutional role as teachers positions us as non-innocent authorities in pedagogical relations. Thus, ignorance and humility are necessary components if we are listening to learn rather than listening to correct or persuade. Indeed, one of the most fascinating chapters in *Learning from the Other* is a chapter on “listening as an attentiveness to ‘dense plots.’” Here, Todd is well aware of the pitfalls of conceptualizing listening in terms of authenticity, innocence, and totality. Nonetheless, she insists that as teachers we allow ourselves to be “conditioned by our susceptibility to be stirred by the presence of the Other to respond.”<sup>30</sup> This is to say that we imagine/recognize ourselves as a presence of otherness that is at work in how others construct meaning— of the texts we ask them to read, of the concepts we discuss, and those forms of affect and everyday life that we ask them to leave at home.

Moreover, utilizing the insights of Ziarek, an ethical pedagogy of nonviolence may not just accept difference as an ontological given, but demand that pedagogical relations highlight attention to instances of social injustice. If we assume that the structure of pedagogical relations is that of violence (via persuasion and coercion of interpretation), an ethical stance of nonviolence is precarious, particularly if educators are interested in the intervention of social injustices. However, we should not assume that ethical relations, social justice, and nonviolent actions are universally defined practices. As Boler has argued, it may be necessary to silence certain voices given the fact that speech is not free and that public venues have censored dissenting voices in the name of democracy.<sup>31</sup> Indeed a post-psychoanalytic problematic implies that ethical relations are not established a priori, but are continuously produced, negotiated, and contested in particular situations. The concept of situated ethics is not new; poststructural theorists have articulated the need for contextual analysis ethics as a function of socio-historical and discursive claims to epistemological and moral “truths.” What I suggest, however, is a re-articulation of situated ethics that draws upon psychoanalytic, postcolonial, as well as poststructural theorizing on otherness, desire, and relationality. Specifically, this entails theorizing desire not just as a site of regulatory control and resistance but as a dynamic of psychic attachments and conflicts that migrate toward issues of gender, sexuality, race, nationality, and other identificatory practices.

#### CONCLUSION

In this essay I have outlined what I am terming a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education. This problematic heavily draws from psychoanalytic discourses for theorizing ethical and political relations in pedagogical encounters. Specifically, learning is foregrounded, but it is

assumed that both teachers and students are learners who struggle with affective as well as cognitive demands from the self and others. These demands are often framed as conflicts, both social and psychic between subject positions and identificatory practices manifested in narratives and representations of the self and others. Learning, then involves investigation of the multiple demands at work in representational practices. The focus on representation in pedagogical encounters signals the influence of poststructural insights. Postcolonial discourses remind us that theorizing otherness always already conjures images of The Other as it has been signified in dominant discourses of race and empire. As such, a post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education involves attending to asymmetrical relations of power both inside and outside of the classroom.

This essay, as a discursive production, attempts to engender an ethics of dissensus. I am not arguing that there is a clear body of ideas or scholarship that currently exists under the title post-psychoanalytic problematic of ethics and education. Rather, tracing my interests and attachments to issues of power and historicity has provided the impetus for me to suture together the writing of three theorists—Britzman, Todd, and Ziarek—to articulate an ethical problematic which foregrounds issues of otherness, desire, and relationality. I am drawn to their writing because it mobilizes diverse theoretical frameworks (psychoanalytic, poststructural, and postcolonial) to elaborate how representations of otherness, desire, and relationality might allow for understanding the possibilities and limitations of progressive views of education. Yet, by the same token, these theorists operate in the Derridean sense of putting concepts under erasure—that is to challenge the very assumptions and implications of the foundational concepts we cannot not think without (Spivak)—that is, ethics and politics, democracy and education.

#### NOTES

1. Bernadette Baker and Katharina E. Heyning, eds., *Dangerous Coagulations? The Uses of Foucault in the Study of Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Charles W. Bingham and Alexander M. Sidorkin, eds., *No Education Without Relation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Megan Boler, ed., *Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Nicholas C. Burbules and David T. Hansen, eds., *Teaching and Its Predicaments* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997); Rebecca A. Martusewicz, *Seeking Passage: Post-Structuralism, Pedagogy, Ethics* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001); Cris Mayo, “The Binds That Tie: Civility and Social Difference” *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2002): 169–86; Michael Peters, *Naming the Multiple: Poststructuralism and Education* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1998).

2. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), and Linda June Muzzin and

Peggy Tripp, *Teaching as Activism: Equity Meets Environmentalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005).

3. Deborah Britzman, *Lost Objects, Contested Objects: Towards a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), Deborah Britzman, *After-Education: Anna Freud, Melanie Klein and Psychoanalytic Histories of Learning* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), and Deborah Britzman, *Novel Education: Psychoanalytic Studies of Learning and Not Learning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Alice Pitt, *The Play of the Personal: Psychoanalytic Narratives in Feminist Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); and Sharon Todd, *Learning Desire: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Culture and the Unsaid* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Sharon Todd, *Learning From the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis and Ethical Possibilities in Education* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003).

4. William Spanos, *The End of Education* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 229.

5. See Richard Quantz, Michael Dantley and Nelda Cambron McCabe, "Preparing School Administrators for Democratic Authority: A Critical Approach to Graduate Education" *Urban Review* 23, no. 1 (1991), 3–19, for a description and discussion of the core courses and principles that heavily influence our departmental curriculum and pedagogy.

6. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University, 2005).

7. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and The Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University, 1995).

8. See Hortense Spillers "All the Things You Could Do Right Now if Freud's Wife Was your Mother": Psychoanalysis and Race," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (1996), 22, 4, and 710–34.

9. Gayatri Spivak, "Bonding in Difference: An Interview with Alfred Arteaga," in *The Spivak Reader*, eds. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (New York: Routledge, 1996), 27.

10. My reading of postcolonial scholarship in education is that issues of ethics and politics are imbued in theorizing representation. Thus, it is rare to see explicit discussion of pedagogical politics that does not raise concomitant ethical issues in theorizing difference and relationality. See Awad Ibrahim, "One is Not Born Black: Becoming and the Phenomenon(ology) of Race," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 35 (2004), 77–87; G.J.S. Dei and A. Calliste, eds., *Power, Knowledge and Anti-racism Education* (Hallifax: Ferronwood, 2000).

11. Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

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12. Ziarek, *Ethics of Dissensus*, 217.
  13. Todd, *Learning From the Other*, 15.
  14. Here Ziarek is referencing the notion of docile bodies articulated by Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
  15. Ziarek, *Ethics of Dissensus*, 15.
  16. Erica McWilliam, “Beyond the Missionary Position: Teacher Desire and Radical Pedagogy,” in Todd, ed., *Learning Desire*, 217–36.
  17. Jane Gallop, “Knot a Love Story,” in *Psychoanalysis and Pedagogy*, ed. Steven Appel (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 125–32.
  18. As Richard Quantz reminded me, the critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School also articulated these psychic dimensions of power. However, as their ideas have traveled and been taken up by U.S. educational theorists, critical theory typically foregrounds structural analysis of power relations between persons and groups rather than interiorized conflicts of the self.
  19. Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects*.
  20. My reading of Mayo is based on what I see as her construction of desire vis a vis Foucault and Butler, as well as the notion of desire from the “ancients” in philosophy. While Mayo takes into account Foucault’s premise that desire is discursively produced (and thus structured by historical asymmetrical relations of power), I read Mayo’s primary argument that philosophical discussion of desire must take into account the possibilities afforded by embodied and/or libidinal dimensions of desire as well as the more ephemeral constructions of eros that have characterized the discourse on desire in education. See Cris Mayo, “Desiring Chaos: Gender, Difference and Future Possibilities,” *Philosophical Studies in Education*, 37 (2006), 9–18.
  21. Cornel West “The New Cultural Politics of Difference,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2d ed., ed. Simon During, (London: Routledge, 1999), 256–70.
  22. Britzman refers to this as the possibility of learning from our own histories of not learning. For Britzman, it is the analytic setting that facilitates the narration of learning from not learning. She does not advocate that we “apply” this concept from psychoanalysis to education; however, she suggests that this concept may be instructive in thinking about the importance of the other in learning from the self (*Novel Education*, 4).
  23. Copjec, quoted in Ziarek, *Ethics of Dissensus*, 139 and 253.
  24. Ziarek, *Ethics of Dissensus*, 118.
  25. Todd, *Learning From the Other*, 14–15.
  26. *Ibid.*, 7.
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27. Ibid., 9.
  28. A good example of a modernist approach to an ethics of care and relationality is Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984). Again, I appreciate Richard Quantz's helpful comments to help clarify my thinking.
  29. Todd, *Learning From the Other*, 9.
  30. Ibid., 138.
  31. Boler, ed., *Democratic Dialogue in Education*.
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