

Seeds for Reclaiming Art in Education

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Abstract

The concern of this paper is to provide a number of 'seeds' for a reclaiming of art in education by placing emphasis upon art's pedagogy or art's education. The notion of reclaiming does not infer a return to a utopian past or to a halcyon future, but it invokes a reaffirmation of the adventure of events of art practice that can take us beyond ourselves towards new creative assemblages and possibilities for becoming-with. Such reclaiming requires a culture of trust, care and response-ability. In relation to art's pedagogy the paper calls for opening up what is formally recognised as 'practice' in art education to a sensing towards what might be obscured by such recognition and in doing so reshape our ideas and modes of practice.

Keywords

cosmopedagogies, divergence, ecologies of practice, paganism, prehension, reclaiming, subject-superject, thisness

Introduction

This paper provides what are called seeds for a reclaiming of art in education. Rather than presenting them in the usual form of an academic journal article I offer them as a program that attempts to capture different but inter-related components. This program takes account of our current epoch in order to rethink and reclaim art in education, its purposes, intentions, possibilities, potentials, values, and problematics. It suggests a shift from 'art education' to 'art's education' (Baldacchino 2019)¹ or art's pedagogy. A key agenda is to re-affirm the adventure of events of art practice that include risks, experiments, achievements, failures, surprises, contingencies and rhizomatic connections within art's education in its particular milieus of practice. This adventure is one in which the immanence of experiences of making animate or vitalize so as to take us beyond ourselves, to unlearn ourselves, precipitating ontogenesis and thereby perhaps transcending limits established by art education. In this process, the idea of agency as presumed

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in notions such as the subjectivity of the artist or the objectivity of the artwork are replaced by the idea of creative assemblages and their relations in human and more-than-human communities.

The emphasis on reclaiming is made in order to put aside current institutional manoeuvres to conceive art practice through a series of discursive practices that are essentially forms of audit that interpellate the identity of the maker (student) and the art object produced in terms of ability, a process in which students are 'already subjects' and the product is already prescribed. As well as these internal discipline pressures the notion of reclaiming is also meant to oppose the external force of government initiatives to marginalise the arts in education (The Guardian, 2023). In doing so, they marginalise those modes of existence particular to the arts and the evolution of sensibility.

The notion of reclaiming does not call for a halcyon or utopian past or indeed future. It could be associated with Benjamin's (1999) character the 'new barbarian', whom he conceived as emerging from the poverty of experience, following the devastations of war but also arising in response to new technologies. The new barbarian is forced to 'make a new start'. In our epoch, the brutality of capitalist exploitation and devastation, psychic, social and environmental (Guattari 2000) can precipitate a new barbarism that surfaces in the work of artists, poets, playwrights or musicians. It can also erupt as in recent acts of demolishing statues celebrating figures involved in slavery and other systems of exploitation. Reclaiming is therefore not a reclaiming of the past. Reclaiming emerges within the immediacy of 'now' and aims towards a future which is not known, or in the words of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, a people yet to come. This is a crucial notion for educational practices concerned with preparing students for their future. Such preparation, many increasingly argue, should not be controlled by economic imperatives that have precipitated massive social inequalities, environmental devastation and collapse, but should invoke explorations of living together otherwise.

Reclaiming incorporates the important task, stated by Haraway (2016), of 'staying with the trouble' and recognising that 'it could have been or could be otherwise,' thereby invoking a speculative attitude to possibilities for becoming. Haraway (2016, 13, 14; 2018, 61) mentions the traditional game of 'cats cradling' or 'string figures' which constitutes an engaging figure for conceiving reclaiming. A pair of hands holds an entanglement of string figures which is then let go and taken up but in a modified entangled form by another pair of hands. The initial figure is metamorphosed into another figure. The process involves an ecology of trust, conviviality and openness to future possibilities. This is a process of reclaiming that does not try to repeat the past but a process that, *in the passing* of a string figure there is a reclaiming through an imaginative power to create a new within a context of collective interests. Haraway (2018, 61) proposes the practice of passing between in cats cradling as a 'serious figure for thinking' that is 'more generative by far than binaries, hierarchies, triads and linear' modes. She continues:

Relays, string figures, passing patterns back and forth, giving and receiving, patterning, holding the unasked-for pattern in one's hands, response-ability: that is core to what I mean by staying with the trouble in serious multispecies worlds. Becoming-with, not becoming, is the name of the game. . .

The trust in 'passing-between' is not held by a 'you' or a 'me', it is embedded in the interstices of a creative uncertainty constituted *in the event of passing* that functions as a proposition, in Whitehead's (1978, 184) sense, as a 'lure for feeling' and action. The process of passing and receiving between, the incorporeal effect of the passing (Grosz 2017), involves a practice of 'taking care' and this seems to have real implications for pedagogic work if it is viewed through this trusting relay of entanglements. Indeed, this passing of string figures and the response-abilities and obligations involved constitutes a powerful metaphor for pedagogic work.

The seeds for a reclaiming of art in education are offered as matters of concern, in the spirit of the passing of string figures. A concern is an event of sharing, of reclaiming and re-worlding. Practitioners are able to weave together assemblages around common interests with an attitude of collective 'response-ability', perhaps learning through what we may inadvertently marginalise or exclude, the outside, listening, thinking and feeling with others and not being controlled by the authority of so-called experts or administrators that appropriate, define or dictate practice. This would constitute a speculative venture of reclaiming that engages practitioners in education in experiencing problematics that may demand that we transgress or transform established modes of thought and practice and be able to pass on or relay such transforming. Creating collectively but recognising the divergence in how things matter and therefore the requirement for lateral, sympoietic (making-with, worlding-with) relations (Haraway 2016, 58). Practice then becomes not something that adheres to general specifications, guidelines, competences or principles, but more speculative and divergent, according to the immanence and intensity of each practitioner's ethos and oikos of becoming.

The seeds below invoke a reclaiming that requires both innovation and taking care. They offer some thoughts towards what might be nurtured for how we might approach art in education and art's education without predicting its pathways or knowing how it will emerge. In a sense this would constitute a paradox of institutionalised art education, a kind of de-institutionalising, or an antonym of pedagogic practice, that might be called pagan pedagogies (Atkinson 2023), exit pedagogies (Baldacchino 2012), or wild pedagogies (Jickling *et al.* 2018). When we experience the unknown, sometimes we may be required to excavate and 'take care' of our own foundations in order to proceed productively. The notion of seeding suggests expanding horizons and agencies emerging in the grounds of practice; continuous new modes of growth, germination and modes of distribution.

Seed 1: subject-superject

Alfred North Whitehead's particular take on subjectivity is quite different from the idea of an already constituted subject who experiences the world. He brings together the notions of *subject* and *superject* (1978, 29), 'An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences.' What this suggests is that the process of prehending, sensing or *feeling* various events and experiencing, and thereby forming a novel concrescence, is also combined with a potential to throw itself into the future, towards a new becoming (Halewood & Michael 2008, 35) or towards an outside. A continuous movement between an inside and an outside that opens up new pathways of becoming, new ways of thinking, new sensibilities. Each becoming will unfold in its own manner, in its own 'howness,' and this manner constitutes its being. A subject can therefore be

conceived as an assemblage of experiencing and unknown potentials, a metastable process, a bit like a seeding process.

Debaise (2017, 68–70) turns to the etymology of the term ‘subject’ in order to bring out this embedded contrast. ‘Subject’ is derived from the Latin *subjectum* meaning ‘to be below’ a meaning that has given rise to the ‘impression of a subject being the foundation of its feelings (68),’ the substantial subject. This is not an incorrect use of the term but if it is taken to be the fundamental quality of the term subject, this loses any sense of genesis or the dynamic of becoming, or ontogenesis. In order to avoid this Debaise (69) points to a second derivation of subject from the Latin *superjaccio* which means ‘to throw over’ or ‘to throw towards, which indicates the subject as a projecting beyond actual experience.’ This notion of ‘subject’ is what lies behind Whitehead’s term ‘superject.’ For Whitehead ‘subject’ involves both actuality and virtuality or potentiality. Here we have an idea of the subject as a process of becoming unfolding in its own manner towards a future yet to be achieved.

The foundation of experiencing, indeed its ‘generic nature’ (Leclerc 1958, 148), for Whitehead is what he calls *prehension* which is not necessarily a conscious process but originates in feeling. Feeling is generally synonymous with prehension whereby an entity grasps or takes account of other entities, physically or mentally. In *Adventures of Ideas* (1933, 300), he writes ‘I use the term prehension for the general way in which the occasion of experience can include, as part of its own essence, any other entity, whether another occasion of experience or an entity of another type.’ From the Latin *prehendere*, which means ‘to take’, ‘to capture’ or ‘to appropriate’ (Debaise, 51) prehension relates to how something takes account of or seizes another. We might follow Halewood & Michael (2008, 37) and say that ‘prehensions are the *feeling* of another entity.’ Whitehead (1978, 87) states, ‘feelings are ‘vectors’; for they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*.’ But for Whitehead, as Debaise points out, prehension involves much more than capture and so the term *appropriation* is more accurate because, ‘it brings to light the movement of integration within a new existence (Debaise, 52).’ Prehension is not to be viewed as two separate entities or realities coming together or relating but as a process of transformation that arises in the process of relation through which a new entity or reality emerges. This can be seen in the passing of string figures, such passing exemplifies prehension. A crucial qualifying aspect of prehension relates to what Whitehead calls its ‘subjective form’ or, how something feels. Whitehead writes in *Process and Reality* (31)

Every prehension consists of three factors: (a) the ‘subject’ which is prehending, namely, the actual entity in which that prehension is a concrete element; (b) the ‘datum’ which is prehended; (c) the ‘subjective form’ which is *how* that subject prehends that datum.

In other words, crucially, the subjective form of a prehension constitutes the object for the prehending subject. We might see the importance of the process of prehension for reflecting upon processes of learning, particularly in relation to *how* a child or student prehends a learning encounter and also *how* a teacher prehends each student’s practice. This raises the further issue of *how something matters* for a learner or a teacher which determines their functioning.²

Seed 2: thisness, howness, concern and worlding

The term 'thisness' is derived from the Latin *haecceitas* that in the medieval philosophy of Duns Scotus became *haecceity*, translated as 'thisness,' which relates to that which constitutes a particular thing; those aspects of a thing that constitute its particularity, its thisness. This has temporal implications in that thisness does not define a permanent state, for example, the 'same' person, the 'same' tree, the 'same' feeling, and so on. Such entities are subject to changes or transformations, but each unrepeatable phase or instance will acquire its particular thisness. Allied to the notion of thisness is that of 'howness', how something matters in a particular experiencing process. Whitehead (1968, 116) advises, 'have a care, here is something that matters.' We may not be fully aware of the *importance* of such maturing and therefore need to tread carefully. In a nutshell, we are concerned with each singularity of experiencing, its manner of experiencing and its creation or its 'creature' of experience. In Whitehead's process philosophy actual entities or actual occasions are creatures of creativity (Whitehead 1978, 30), they are processes issuing in novelty (Whitehead 1933, 303). We might view how something matters for a student or a teacher engaged in their respective practices as an event around which develops a concern.

This is a term Whitehead takes from the Quakers. In Quaker meetings there is no priest or minister, though there are elders, and all are regarded equal, any participant can speak and raise a concern. For the Quakers 'concern' relates to the insistence of an occasion, an event, that activates a mutual concern. The concern is not about an individual's concern for someone or something, but for how the event might unfold. The event does not involve debate, but discernment, and it does not draw upon pre-formulated goals or criteria, but rather upon a mutuality and sensitivity for the future. The concern becomes a shared concern and it is this notion of sharing, without judging, that is important for the choreography of pedagogic work, a work-to-be-made. And it is through the choreography of such work that subjects can emerge and be transformed. Stengers (2023, 155) equates the Quaker procedure of concern to her notion of a *generative apparatus*, a facility for generating imagination, thought and, crucially, action in common. Generative apparatuses seem to be equivalent to the co-composing and passing of string figures, what we might call an ontogenetic choreography. She writes (158), "Generative apparatuses demand that each one of those assembled knows that what will emerge from their gathering will not belong to any one of them, but will be the achievement of the "being together" the apparatus brought into existence." Though a student may not appreciate or realise such 'knowing,' he or she needs to have faith in the teacher's practice as a generative enterprise. We might contrast the composing-with or the sympoiesis of a generative apparatus constituting pedagogic work as proposed here, with the more rigid and doctrinaire training of professional teachers today. Such training effects a dissimulation that masks what is aimed for (economic imperatives) behind more humanitarian needs (every child matters, no child left behind). Sympoiesis refers to the practice of 'making-with', what Haraway (2016, 58) describes as 'worlding-with'.

If we shift from these more abstract ideas, which require a far more detailed exposition than I have room for here, to more concrete processes of pedagogical practices or art practices, we might view the importance of the former to the latter when, in a broad sense, we consider the actual occasions, the singularity, of each student's learning pathway, or each teacher's pedagogical practice, or each

artist's practice. We are therefore concerned with the 'thisness' of such situated practices and how they matter for the student and the teacher. In other words, we are concerned with an ethics but also a politics of practice.

Seeds 1 and 2 present a very brief account of Whitehead's conceptual framework that he uses to describe processes of individuation or becoming, placing importance upon the singularity of actualisations of becoming, their vectors of feeling (prehensions) and their local potentialities. The intention is, therefore, to provide a notion of becoming and its potential, for exploring practices of pedagogic work and its obligation to attend, effectively, to local pathways of the ontogenesis, the becoming-making pathways, of learning that can be viewed as pathways of creativity and novelty. This disposition towards learning as a process of creativity involves both teacher and learner in a relation or assemblage of co-composing, it does not subjugate learning to teaching. In Whitehead's terminology this practice of co-composing, or composing-with, acknowledges the importance of what he calls propositions or what in pedagogic terms we might call propositional encounters. For Whitehead (1978, 184–189) a proposition functions as a 'lure for feeling', its aim is to generate an intensification of feelings or prehensions that lead to novel creations. Propositions link actual feelings to the articulation of possible worlds (Debaise 2017, 83, 84) and their potentialities. He makes a distinction between 'non-conformal' propositions that lead to the creation of novelty in the process of worlding or becoming, which may be beneficial or not, and 'conformal' propositions that link emerging prehensions to established modes of practice.

In England a new Government report by a House of Lords Committee (2023–2024) expresses real concern over the current emphasis upon 'narrow teaching methods and rote learning' in secondary schooling producing a system that subordinates learning to teaching. A system in which students or children are viewed as receptacles awaiting the induction of knowledge, the ingestion and digestion of conformal propositions. Little value seems to be placed upon educational practices that experiment with non-conformal propositions that may generate new and transformative vectors for the co-composing of pedagogical practice and open such practice to innovation.

Seed 3: divergence and ecologies of practice

Stengers (2005a) describes how she developed her notion of an ecology of practices and provides an intriguing characterisation of practice demanding that no practice be defined as 'like any other (184)'. Though her concern was with practice in the domain of physics, we can extend this disposition to other modes of practice such as education and pedagogic work. Stengers continues (2005a, 184):

Approaching a practice then means approaching it as it diverges, that is, feeling its borders, experimenting with the questions which practitioners may accept as relevant, even if they are not their own questions, rather than posing insulting questions that would lead them to mobilise and transform the border into a defence against their outside.

Divergence is a crucial notion for Stengers as it relates to the singularity of each practice, and she argues strongly against reducing a practice to general

apparatuses of comparison that destroy divergence – the kind that are often employed in educational contexts. She writes (Stengers 2011, 59)

What will have been destroyed, however, is what I call *divergence*. Hence I would take the term *practice* in a rather unusual sense, as denoting any form of life that is bound to be destroyed by the imperative of comparison and the imposition of a standard ensuring equivalency, because what makes each one exist is also what makes it diverge.

It is important not to link divergence with the idea of comparison as in *divergence from* a standard mean or from other practices but as something constitutive of the very event, being and becoming of a practice, the ways in which something matters for a practice. Stengers (2011, 59) puts it this way:

It is crucial here not to read “diverge from others,” as doing so would turn divergence into fuel for comparison. Divergence is not between practices; it is not relational. It is constitutive. A practice does not define itself in terms of its divergence from others. Each does have its own positive and distinct way of paying due attention; that is, of having things and situations matter. Each produces its own line of divergence, as it likewise produces itself.

As used here, the notion of an ecology of practice is to be viewed as a ‘tool for thinking through what is happening (Stengers 2005a, 185)’ and as a tool its use is particular, not generic, to each situation. In fact, tool and situation are not pre-existing but they emerge through their sympoiesis, their ‘making-together-with’. Thinking through what is happening, having a concern for what is happening, does not presuppose an already composed thinker and situation but an event through which a situation and a thinker emerge, an occasion when thinking emerges in its situational event and outcomes. This suggests that we allow such events to make us think rather than identify them through preconceived concepts. In adopting this approach concepts become generative tools that may allow us to discern what is happening and how it might become. Perhaps we might think of those moments in pedagogic work when we encounter art practices that mystify and we struggle to comprehend. How do we proceed?

Taking account of each practice, of its divergence, holding a concern, through its force of making us think and not *recognise* suggests that we put aside generalisations and try to think in what Stengers calls ‘a minor key’ that takes account of a practice and its particular surroundings, its *ethos* and its *oikos*, and thereby develop an ‘etho-ecology’ of practice (Stengers 2005a, 187). And the important point made by Stengers is that how we might address, define or discern a particular practice, let’s say a child’s drawing practice or a student’s art practice, becomes part of the surroundings that constitute its ethos. This brings together both thinking and ethics in pedagogical practice. Responding to a practice then involves, as Stengers (2005a, 188) puts it,

...paying attention as best you can, to be as discerning, as discriminating as you can about the particular situation. That is, you need to decide in this particular case and not to obey the power of some more general reason.

Seed 4: cosmopedagogies

If we build upon the importance of responding to the divergence of students' practice in pedagogic work and with particular reference to the domain of art in education, then how might we correlate pedagogic practice itself with divergence? If we accept that divergence is constitutive of practice so that it 'has its own way of paying due attention' to how something matters, then we need to take care not to impose standardised notions of pedagogic practice that, in Stengers's view, would destroy practice through 'the imperatives of comparison and the imposition of a standard ensuring equivalency (Stengers 2011, 59)'. Imperatives that many would argue dominate pedagogic work today and have led, according to a recent report by the House of Lords (2023–2024, 3) to 'a restricted programme of academic learning, delivered through a narrow set of subjects and teaching styles'.

If divergence constitutes each student's practice, then approaching and feeling its borders, sensing how something matters for a student's practice has to avoid imposing standardised notions of practice or competence. This seems heretical to a key aspect of pedagogic and educational practice, the evaluation and assessment of practice according to established norms. But if we acknowledge the importance of diversity and divergence then we require approaches to pedagogy that are grounded in these notions and the different and diverging experiencings to which they point. Approaches that value what we might call plural pedagogies obligated to the challenges of divergence, its potentials and modes of becoming.

Stengers has written extensively about the idea of cosmopolitics and from this term I derive the idea of *cosmopedagogies*. For Stengers (2005b, 995) the term cosmos refers to 'the unknown constituted by multiple divergent worlds and the articulations of which they could eventually be capable.' The emphasis therefore is not to focus upon established practices or worlds but upon the divergence of practices and their sense of becoming. Similarly, this is the emphasis of cosmopedagogies which are viewed as speculative adventures with the unknown, divergence and plurality of becoming. We might say that cosmopedagogies and their emphasis on becoming align closely with Deleuze and Guattari's (1994, 109, 110) notion of a people yet to come. In their geophilosophy (a philosophy of the earth), they distinguish between established practices or worlds and deterritorializing forces of earth (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 85, 86), that is to say those forces that exceed established orders and which can precipitate new practices. They identify these earth forces with art practices and the shocks of sensation that we can experience when encountering or engaged in making art. Roberts *et al.* (2022, 138) argue, "It is through our encounters with art, and the mutant forms of subjectivity it produces that we can become capable of encountering the earth as that which precedes and exceeds the world."

The radical force of art practice is one that challenges and disrupts established practices and opens up possibilities for novelty. The pedagogical challenge is that whilst acknowledging and valuing established modes of practice it has to be attentive to this radical force and its emerging possibilities and potentials for students in their learning encounters that can open up new modes of thought and practice, new cosmicities. We might then view art practice as beckoning and celebrating what Stengers calls *cosmos*, 'the unknown constituted by multiple divergent worlds and the articulations of which they could eventually be capable.' Cosmopedagogy prioritises the concrete situations of practice and its becoming, its local sense of importance and how something matters and possibilities that may ensue. It is not

subservient to so-called experts or the force of administrators who think they know better.

Cosmopedagogies constitute pedagogical adventures that require an obligation not to represent practice “according to” but to invent ways of responding through “learning with” and “composing with.” This is not to reject the structures and formatting of institutional education but to slow down, when approaching the diverse articulations of practice and what they might be capable of. We might say that cosmopedagogies of taking care are always emergent in their task of responding to the divergence of practices but as equally able to examine the limitations of established pedagogical frameworks when these are challenged. The ethics and politics of pedagogical work cannot function exclusively from established boundaries that anticipate compliance to them but have to negotiate strategies commensurate with the difference and divergences it faces.

Seed 5: the-work-to-be-made

Developing such strategies, which involve not only a passing-on of knowledge and practices, but also a concern for the potentialities of becoming can be conceived as a cosmic adventure (Stengers 2006, 15). Souriau was concerned with the plurimodality of arts of existing, that is, with the plural, diverse possibilities (and modalities) that art’s occasion represents. This is particularly the case with those more precarious, less confident or marginalised existences and their unrealised possibilities or potentials that emerge in art as such. He argues that, “we can only reach being through the manners in which it is given, (Souriau 2015, 187; Lapoujade 2021, 4)” or through engaging with its ‘particular art of being’. Lapoujade (2021, 25) quotes from Souriau (1938) who provides an interesting little anecdote to express this concern in his text, *To Have a Soul: Essays on Virtual Existences*, which has deep relevance for what I call pedagogies of taking care.

He describes a young child carefully and at great length arranging a variety of objects on his mother’s table, ensuring the arrangement is pleasing, to give his mother ‘great delight’. When mother arrives, she takes one of the objects she needs and moves others to their usual place, thereby undoing the child’s arrangement. When the child’s sobs give way to desperate explanations which reveal to the mother her error she exclaims with deep regret, “Oh! My poor little angel, I hadn’t seen that there was something there! But what was it that she did not see?” What did the mother fail to see? She saw the objects but what she missed was the mode of existence they were given by the child’s point of view. She failed to see the “architectonic that they sketch out in the child’s eyes (Lapoujade, 25).” In other words, what the mother failed to see in the initial arrangement of objects was the child’s point of view. A virtuality she failed to perceive. Something beyond her point of view. The child’s carefully orchestrated arrangement or cartography, his art of being, was difficult to see because their assemblage was outside the mother’s point of view and its data that constitute her daily existence.

This anecdote has deep relevance for reflecting upon the divergent arts of existence and learning encountered in pedagogic practice. But such arts do not exist as discrete independent beings or becomings but rather as *existing-in-relation*. Components and cartographies constantly inter-act and evolve in their particular milieus and they demand appropriate pedagogical strategies. We might conceive these arts of existence through Souriau’s notion of ‘the work-to-be-made’, which he

chooses to exemplify in what some might think a rather outdated practice, a lump of clay being worked on by a sculptor. By illustrating the dynamic of the work-to-be-made through the process of sculpting clay Souriau is not describing a *project*, a process informed by a pre-constituted plan, he is proposing an unplanned *journey*. Souriau is not describing a process initiated by an artist, this journey has no pilot or conductor. It is not a case of a project emerging through trial and error but something much more vertiginous. At each moment the process of the work-to-be-made is precarious and so is the being of the artist. It is not a case of a work to be made according to a model. It is not a realisation of potential through the creativity of an inspired artist. It is more of a co-respondence, a co-responding of the to-be-made and the made. Nothing (artist or work) is given in advance; everything emerges along the journey. The work-to-be-made applies to both artist and artwork, both involve processes of ontogenesis.

We can extend Souriau's practice to sculpting in clay to consider other practices of work-to-be-made and their particular journeys and modes of ontogenesis. Practices that involve other media such as paint or collage, practices composed through performance, practices that engage with environments or with other species, practices engaged with digital technologies.

Seed 6: paganism and a new barbarism

Liotard & Thebaud (1985, 16) states in *Just Gaming*:

...when I speak of paganism, I am not using a concept. It is a name, neither better nor worse than others, for the denomination of a situation in which one judges *without criteria*. And one judges not only in matters of truth, but also in matters of beauty (of aesthetic efficacy) and in matters of justice, that is, of politics and ethics, and all without criteria. That's what I mean by paganism.

He is deeply concerned with doing justice to incommensurable differences, to their modes of existence and what Haraway (2016, 40) calls their geostories. This suggests that he prioritises the immanent ontogenesis of singular events rather than fitting these to established overarching concepts or criteria. He views reality as a pluriverse of events such that no universal rule or judgement can do justice to them all. We must therefore try to approach the experience of beings (human and non-human) on their terms, their stories, and not constantly reduce these to the forms of pre-established criteria. The task is to approach without criteria but also accepting that frequently we do have to judge. Drawing from Stengers (2005b, 1001): we must try to invent the art of creating appropriate and relevant manners to approach and judge such differences in their respective modes of functioning; their centres of experiencing. To make judgements of multiple and diverging practices, we require multiple modes of judgements, some established but others that require invention.

The word pagan is derived from the Latin *pagus*, which denoted a place outside the city, to the rustic country dweller, a place where people had their own customs and identities that differed from those of the city. But these people were still subject to some of the legislation of the city. The outside as I am using this term in relation to paganism does not refer to a particular place but rather to

what we might call a virtuality or an otherness that may invoke new modes of practice or invention.

It may be more precise to argue that paganism requires judgement without *universal* criteria. We have to try to meet each situation in its 'thisness', its haecceity, [though this itself may be conceived as a universal criterion that Lyotard recognises (17)] and follow Stengers's advice of inventing relevant manners to deal with what we have to deal with.

Each situation has its 'mean' (JG 27), which relates to its mode of coherence, one 'works case by case (JG 28)' without a metalanguage in which these are grounded. A pagan approach to judgement that deals with each case by case is one that has no pre-conceived models, but which adopts an unqualified or unmitigated openness. An important implication of paganism therefore is that it implies both an autonomy and heteronomy of practice. In educational or art educational terms we might argue that no amount of competences, standards, guidelines, principles can exhaust the multifariousness of worlds as manifested in art practice and, hopefully, in art education. We therefore require pagan pedagogies or a pagan approach to pedagogy that acknowledges differences, divergence and multiplicity, to respond effectively to the 'always more'. But also, to take care of our frameworks of understanding, our abstractions, which are also never complete or all-embracing. This refers to what we might call our 'pedagogical indetermination' (Savaransky 2021, 123–132) when faced with the task of responding to the divergence and unpredictability of practices, as well as opening themselves to the always incomplete pedagogic work to be made. Pagan pedagogies therefore reflect a speculative pragmatism, a pragmatism of the suddenly possible, experimenting with and supporting differences and their potentials in their divergent journeys of the-work-to-be-made.

Lyotard draws upon Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' from the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), to characterise practices. For Wittgenstein, "a language game denotes a form of life," (PI 23) and "the meaning of a word refers to its use in the language (PI 43)." Both these statements imply that if the use of a word changes, then so does the language game, or the practice in which it is used. When extrapolated to the practice of art or pedagogy, both viewed as 'games', we might view such practices not in terms of fully constituted entities but as practices that are open to new moves that emerge in the process of practice. New moves that may be dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant, or they may open up new possibilities and values that change the artistic or pedagogic game.

Lyotard (JG, 62) argues, 'it is the artists that always establish the rules of a language game that did not exist before,' though we can also extend this to other practices that open up new modes of thought and practice. Being pagan is to 'have several kinds of games at one's disposal,' (61) not to prioritise one game over others, and to 'play moves' that is 'to develop ruses to set the imagination to work' (61). Developing ruses concerns developing forms of language or practice that are unexpected but efficacious, "either because one has made up new moves in an old game or because one has made up a new game (61)." He continues, "I think that pagans are artists, that is they can move from one game to another, and in each of these games (in the optimal situation) they try to figure out new moves. And even better, they try to invent new games (61)." Thus, a painter or a sculptor in a pagan sense is someone who invents new rules or even new games of painting or sculpting. In relation to recent and current contemporary art practices that involve a

plethora of practices we are constantly witnessing new moves and performances, extending practice and sensibilities.

The idea of pagan as relating to an outside, an otherness or a virtuality, recalls Walter Benjamin's short essay entitled *Experience and Poverty* (1999) in which he calls for a reclaiming of civilization as it was recovering from the devastation of the first world war but also heading for a second world war and witnessing the rise of fascism that is still pervasive today in the form of democratic fascism (Badiou 2019). He suggested taking civilization back to the drawing board, to begin again, and he offered the notion of a 'new barbarism'. It was a term aimed at shedding redundant modes of thought and practice and thereby opening spaces for new modes of thought so as to rescue the world from the bankruptcy of the present. He was inspired by artists and thinkers in Europe, such as Paul Klee and Berthold Brecht, who were transforming their domains of practice.

It is a matter of honesty to declare out bankruptcy. Indeed (let's admit it), our poverty of experience is not merely poverty on a personal level, but poverty of human experience in general. Hence, a new kind of barbarism. Barbarism? Yes, indeed. We say this in order to introduce a new, positive concept of barbarism. For what does poverty of experience do for the barbarian? It forces him to start from scratch to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further, looking neither left nor right. Among the great creative spirits, there have always been the inexorable ones who begin by clearing the tabula rasa. They need a drawing table; they were constructors. (Benjamin 1999, 732)

This passage seems unerringly prescient for the environmental crises of our current world as well as the rise of democratic fascisms. Environmental and political situations which philosophers including, Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers and Donna Haraway, as well as artists including, Olafur Eliasson, Agnes Denes, Mary Mattingly, David Buckland, Cai Guo-Qiang, seek to embrace a terrestrial cosmology that emphasises questions of habitability, of becoming and composing together in the earth. To abandon current extractivist practices, so instead of digging for gold, we till and enrich the soil. To put creatures and communities of all kinds before profit. Benjamin was indeed a pagan in the sense that he worked outside the institutional affiliation of the university and his notion of a new barbarism relates to its difference or its outside to established modes of thought and practice. Whilst barbarism formerly meant 'foreigner' it came to be understood in opposition to civilization and its values. Benjamin, however, does not adopt this notion of barbarism but views it as a challenge to the myths of immutable progress and the values it perpetuates. The term barbaric was frequently employed by colonisers to describe the peoples they wanted to civilise, viewing them as violent, savage and so on. But these traits were echoed by the colonisers themselves. Today the notion of a new barbarism would require us to ask crucial and critical questions about the dominant forces that are shaping or damaging our earth, to clear away or radically evaluate those modes of practice and inscriptions that have dominated our world, including the forces of colonialism, racism, phallogocentrism, extractivism, unlimited progress; to 'make a new start' and invent a new earth, propagating new realities, within evolving modes of practice.

Turning to art in education and the conditions of educational practice today that are determined largely by global capitalism, profit, competition, individualism.

Do we require a new barbarism, or paganism to reclaim and reinvent art in education, or more accurately, art's education, art's pedagogy, in the light of its current marginalisation (The Guardian, 2023) by the state in England, particularly in deprived areas. This lies in stark contrast to other European countries where, although subject to the forces of capitalist economics, the arts are viewed as an important dimension of educational practice. In England however a cultural apartheid exists between state and private education systems (Ashton & Ashton 2022) where the arts are valued by the latter but becoming marginalised by the former resulting in a poverty of experience.

Probably the most vital issue, ethico-political and ecological, relates to the future habitability of the earth in all its complexities that we barely grasp. How can art's education be reclaimed to support and engage effectively with this process? To engage empathetically and creatively with the earth, its 'creatures' and 'societies' in their Whiteheadian sense, so as to inaugurate a concern for new sensibilities and relations (ethico-political and ecological), new ways of sensing and making sense, that work towards a convivial and transversal future. Art practice not in its monumentality, which it needs to exit, but in its capacity for invoking new sensibilities for becoming. This is what we find in the work of current and past artists that open up new cosmicities, but we can also view this process in the smooth spaces of local ecologies of practice of children in their painting, drawing and other making events, often before they enter the stratifications of institutionalised practices.

Coda

I conclude these seeds with a reference to the work of Serres (2003) and his book on Leibniz in which he points to the dogmatism of umbilical discourses, that refer to the controlling effects of ideologies, in politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics, education, etc. that refuse legitimacy to alternative positions. The umbilical could refer to pre-programmed criteria or standards as we might find within educational contexts. The implication of such umbilical thinking is that it establishes boundaries of which we are often unaware and that which exists beyond its limits remains in the shadows.

Serres contrasts Plato's cave allegory in which truth is gained through the prisoner's escape from the shadows of the cave into the revealing light of the sun (the light of reason), with Jules Verne's story of the *The Vanished Diamond*. In Verne's story two protagonists are lowered into an underground cavern and the light of their torches reflects an infinity of worlds as it is reflected by stalactites, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, aquamarines and more. The contrast Serres draws is between the light shed by a single point of view, the sun, and multiple sources of light that dazzle and confuse. Whilst in Plato a lone captive experiences the sun, in Verne's story two protagonists and their lights are multiplied in the reflections. For Plato knowledge is produced by one unique source and it is individualised by a unique knower. In Verne's story the sources of knowledge are plural and it is experienced collectively. In Plato a central sun drives away shadows whilst in Verne the central shadow of the cavern contains multiple little suns (Watkin 2020, 48–63).

What we might term a pluralist, a pagan or a new barbarian approach to pedagogic work is one which advocates the constant struggle of learning to respond to the multiple capacities, the little suns, (human and non-human) that bodies and minds can achieve, as well as their as yet unknown potentials. Such pedagogies,

pedagogies of taking care, matter in all domains of education, in that their obligation is thrown towards those existences and potentials that have been hidden or obscured by the shadows cast by the light of normalisation or the light of umbilical discourses.

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Endnotes

1. I think it is important to distinguish between 'art education' and 'art's education'. Whilst art is inherently pedagogical, hence 'art's education', 'art education' is that which becomes formatted and schooled within the institutions of education, formatting in which the inherent pedagogical force of art is frequently reduced to, but not always, matters of technique, rendering, reproduction, emulation, cloning.
2. Although this article is concerned with prehension in human subjects it is important to acknowledge that non-human 'subjects' also prehend. For Whitehead the term subject can refer to a plant, an animal, a cell, a rock and so on. Using other terminology prehension is akin to the processes of sensing and making sense of what is sensed, (what Whitehead calls concrescence) processes that are 'experienced' by all the above as well as material and technical apparatuses that sense and make sense (see Fuller & Weizman 2021).

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