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"We Need Educational Confession": A Philosophical Inquiry of Curriculum as Confession

Christopher M. Cruz

Florida International University, ccruz013@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

WE NEED EDUCATIONAL CONFESSION: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY OF
CURRICULUM AS CONFESSION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

TEACHING AND LEARNING

by

Christopher M. Cruz

2022

To: Dean Michael Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Christopher M. Cruz, and entitled We Need Educational Confession: A Philosophical Inquiry of Curriculum as Confession, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Eric Dwyer

Brian Casemore

Ana Luszczynska

James Burns, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 20, 2022

The dissertation of Christopher M. Cruz is approved.

Dean Michael Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

For Natasha, Emma Jane, and Jack Hudson

My journey would not be possible without you all.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

WE NEED EDUCATIONAL CONFESSION: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY OF
CURRICULUM AS CONFESSION

by

Christopher M. Cruz

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor James Burns, Major Professor

This dissertation theorizes curriculum as confession and attends to questions of justice, selfhood, and the pursuit of truth. An inquiry on confession is atypical among traditional educational dissertations because the practice is normally associated with religious institutions as opposed to schools or higher education. Moreover, confession is something usually associated with guilt or shame, not with traditional educational discourses of learning, teaching, or curriculum. As a result, confession is overlooked within educational discourse.

I argue, however, that confession always occurs because curriculum is the site of subjective educational experience. Taking part in the reconceptualist tradition of the curriculum field, curriculum always happens because we are always already in a pedagogical world, and, therefore, are always teaching and learning. Drawing on curriculum history and continental philosophers like Foucault and Derrida, I argue that confession is an educational practice in instrumental and existential ways. I argue with Foucault that confession is instrumental and extractive and likewise can be the site of resistant responses to that extraction. Utilizing different philosophical and literary figures,

I theorize with Derrida that our attempts to conceptualize the world have an irreducible uncertainty and misrepresentation. Moreover, because there is no signification without difference, there is always the threat of exclusion from representation. The question, then, is, how do we tell the truth without violating the other? How does one do justice to the world they experience? This dissertation utilizes a humanities-based approach to imagining and re-conceptualizing curriculum as confession, which I find is ultimately the autobiographical play of formation and transformation.

I intend for the findings of this study to serve as a new way to think about curriculum and being, and will provide new modes of reflection and imagination for teachers and researchers. What is needed, I argue, is fewer ways to reduce the world to simply measurements and more ways to open up the pedagogical world we already inhabit with the hope that we press toward a world otherwise.

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Chapter I

An Introduction to the Investigation

“...I have to this day above all lived, enjoyed, wept, prayed, suffered as though at the last second, in the imminence of the flashback end, and like no one else I have made the eschaton into a coat of arms of my genealogy, the lips' edge of my truth but there is no metalanguage will mean that a confession does not make the truth, it must affect me, touch me, gather me, re-member me, constitute me...” (Bennington & Derrida, 1993, p. 75).

“A functionalist curriculum shuns abstractions. It is tied to the practical, the useful and the demonstrable” (Watkins, 1993, p. 324).

Problem and Purpose of Study

The significance of the change to education and society wrought by COVID-19 cannot be overstated. As of July 1, 2021, a study published by researchers from the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimated that the number of people who have died from COVID-19 is over 900,000, which represents a 57% increase from official figures (Sullivan, 2021). Furthermore, the number of globally confirmed cases of COVID-19 surpassed 181 million, according to the World Health Organization. The pandemic has revealed how inadequate our healthcare systems were to handle the demands of the virus (King, 2020). Additionally, an estimated 272 million global migrants have been prevented from border closures due to the virus, with nearly three million refugees seeking asylum without basic necessities, the International Organization of Migration reported (2021). Nearly half of the world’s child population has been affected by partial or full school closings, with the United Nations, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) calling the “recovery” from the disruption vital to avoid “generational catastrophe” (UNESCO, 2021). While this is only a small sample size of the many disruptions and violence illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic, these

examples have exposed the weakening of public institutions in the last 50 years of neoliberal capitalism.

The tensions, inequalities, broken systems, and conflicts that the pandemic has illuminated are not new (Kliebard, 2004). Prior to the pandemic, social and economic inequalities have persisted and widened due to the continual dwindling of public institutions by neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2005). Public sector austerity policies, including proposed cuts to welfare, parental leave, education, social security, and Medicaid, have for decades been marketed as good, with little regard for those who depend on such programs. Giridharadas (2018) refers to the marketing of public policy cuts as an “ascendant ideology” since the sweeping initiatives on civil rights and poverty passed during President Lyndon Johnson’s administration, suggesting that it is not solely the act of conservatives alone, but the action of a liberal “subcaste” who sought to remake the world using market-friendly policies (p. 18).

This is especially true of the public school system. The neoliberal foundations of the technorational schooling apparatuses have been under construction since at least the 1970s (Pinar, 2004). During the Obama administration, for example, public funding for charter schools was reallocated and the nationwide movement of standardized assessments were propagated (Mora & Christianakis, 2011). Technologies of “disruption innovation,” such as “hybrid” learning and artificial intelligence that “personalizes” educational opportunities using student data,¹ which claim to enhance student success and even educational equity, actually exacerbate existing inequities (Bower & Christensen,

¹ Student data can therefore be used to attain parental data, information about communities, public school data, income levels, credit history, and student interest trends, which ultimately give companies the advantage to forecast upcoming financial opportunities.

1995). Those technologies have strengthened the emphasis on schools to be in a position to provide discipline to students at their homes through programs including Zoom or lockdown browsers. The narration of free-market rationalities and competition as more in line with charter schools under the guise of rational choice through lifting test scores suggest to stakeholders and voters that charters outperform traditional district schools (Gottlieb & Schneider, 2020).

As Lafer (2017) points out, the initial image of the charter school is of a community of parents who decide to work with educators to take over a school and make it something better. That has not been the case, with fewer than 17 percent of charter students being in schools run by companies which had three or fewer schools. Many of these charter schools serve low-income urban communities, where the implementation of standardized tests can demonstrate that poor urban schools need to be replaced by independently run charter schools (Lafer, 2017). The most infamous example of this is in New Orleans, where in 2014, following the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, all the city's public school teachers were fired and the district reconfigured as a 100 percent charter school district staffed largely by Teacher for America (TFA) recruits (Lafer, 2017; Mullins, 2014). Naomi Klein (2007) referred to the aftermath of Katrina as "disaster capitalism," which Klein characterizes as "orchestrated raids of the public sphere" following catastrophic events. For example, President Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in fact stated on TV One's "Washington Watch" that Hurricane Katrina was "the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans" because it forced the school system to start over from scratch (p. 6). Duncan's statement mirrored the Heritage Foundation, who encouraged Congress to use federal funds to

“encourage the development of charter schools” (Lips et al., 2005). The takeover of public schools in New Orleans thus exemplifies the destruction of underfunded, crumbling infrastructure for the development of new privatized institutions.

In a report on COVID-19 and racial inequality, Kristen Buras (2020) connects the COVID-19 schooling crisis following the events of Hurricane Katrina, and she draws a direct parallel between Duncan’s ideology to that of President Trump’s Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who used the same entrepreneurial discourse of creativity and community ingenuity as activists for charter schools did. As a result, the initial desire to start charter schools never manifested as originally intended; that intention became perverted by corporate market logics, which have been pervasive in all aspects of social, political, and economic life (Harvey, 2005). Those logics have been instrumental in reconfiguring schools in the public imagination from public institutions as private benefits through a “market logic and practice of competition, choice, and mobility” (Yoon, 2016, p. 383). Under the discourse of “choice,” schools have become more privatized at a time in which district public schools are struggling to stay afloat.

School choice is the norm for Florida, with 45% of state students attending a school which is not their assigned school (Matus, 2019). In Miami-Dade County, which has more than 340,000 students, charter schools have proliferated from Liberty City to Homestead through companies such as Academica, Charter Schools U.S.A., and iPrep. Thus far, school choice is seen as a given, with the rise of Miami-Dade’s school grades across the board. For example, Miami-Dade has not had an “F” school² in three years, whereas two decades ago that number was at 26 (Travis, 2021). In addition, 13 out of the

² An “F” school is a school that has gotten a poor rating from the results of standardized assessments in the state of Florida. The grade is part of the accountability measures of the state.

top 20 schools in Florida, according to U.S. News & World Report, are in Miami-Dade, all of which are schools of *choice*. But not just school choice, programs of choice also determine where students go to school, with bio-medical environmental technology, ocean science and technology, film, interior design, pre-medicine, banking, and digital marketing all available as programs for students to choose. One example of this was the case of Richmond Heights Middle School located in southwest Miami-Dade County. The school had been ranked a “C” by the state for almost a decade, and when the school began to survey parents, they formed partnerships with local organizations including the Everglades National Park, Zoo Miami, and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, and opened up BioTECH High inside the middle school. BioTECH High grew steadily, and in the process, the Richmond Heights Middle improved its state grade to a “B.” However, to do all of this, the district secured \$10.1 million in federal funding for the new school and facilities (Matus, 2019). On the one hand, the Richmond Heights example could bolster the argument that school choice was effective for the purposes of raising educational achievement. On the other hand, the need for the district to secure money for education was precisely what educational activists had been fighting for from the beginning.

Nonetheless, the propagation of the “school choice” phenomena, a discursive proxy for privatization, maintained that the reason for achievement was choice. Following the Great Recession that began in 2008, Secretary of Education Duncan, championed the development of charter schools, state standards and objectives, and standardized assessments, through the competition afforded in the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top (RTT) initiative (Schneider & Berkshire, 2020; NCES, 2010). Although No

Child Left Behind enacted by President Bush began the conversation around standardization and assessments, it was during the Obama administration that the emergence of charter schools reached its apex in the RTT, with the president suggesting that caps on the number of charter schools that were allowed in different states were not “good for our children, our economy, or our country” (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2009, para. 30). There is no evidence to support the president’s assertion made by the president, which, unfortunately, is endemic of the history of education (Pinar, 2012). In fact, one meta-analysis that reviewed the results of 83 studies conducted over 12 years from 1996 to 2008 found that as a whole, charter schools performed similarly to public schools (Miron & Urschel, 2012). Evidence to the contrary did not stop the federal government’s major investment into education technology and test preparatory programs, with applications and programs serving to replace elements of schooling, guidance counselors, and classroom teaching (Haghanikar, 2019). Lafer (2017) makes this point succinctly by quoting from a teacher who states that educational policy has a path adjacent to the financial sector: “‘data driven’ education seeks only conformity, standardization, testing and a zombie-like adherence to the shallow and generic Common Core...My profession...no longer exists” (Strauss quoted in Lafer, 2017). This teacher’s statement, full of despair over the state of schooling, is concerned with the *scientification*³ of education, something of which educational researchers might be wary.

³ I introduce *scientification* as a term that I use throughout my dissertation to describe the institutional effort to reduce the world, and for the sake of the dissertation, the classroom, to sets of numbers for stakeholders. Specifically, I use the term because of the way “science” as a concept gets applied as quantification in the classroom, such that any sense of numeration represents, to many stakeholders, especially political ones, a scientific approach to curriculum and instruction. I draw from Baez and Boyles (2009), Pinar (2004), Lather (2007), and Taubman (2009) for my understanding of this.

A logic of instrumentality⁴ has continued to affect teachers and students inside and outside of the classroom, leading to increased tracking, which during a global pandemic I associate with death. So-called school reform substitutes virtual reality, through standardized testing and educational technology, Pinar (2019) writes, for the real which is “sealed off by technological insulation” (p. 27). Metaphors such as “accountability and “big data” amount to “rhetorical bandwagons” for self-interested parties to decontextualize information for “use” (p. 82). Data are neutrally utilized for policymakers to isolate raw numbers from their contexts to perpetuate the myth of control over educational experience.

Baez and Boyles (2009) discuss control through scientification as an effort to “tame” the world by producing “a world of data” through the use of statistics, which was initially data collected by state bureaucrats to aid in the affairs of the government (p. 136). Data, which we might draw a parallel to in the effect of the pacing of public school curricula toward standardized assessments, expresses itself in the language and logic of probability. Data then codifies “connotations of normalcy” (Baez & Boyles, 2009, p. 136). We can see this development in the field of education and the apparatus of schooling is guided by the “scientific” with respect to empirical research (Taubman,

⁴ By instrumentality I mean the focus on method and pragmatism as a characteristic for instrumental rationality. Using Habermas’ (1984) concept of cognitive-instrumental rationality, I suggest that the logic of instrumentality rests on two premises: the first is that truth or knowledge is acquired on an empirical basis and the second is the efficiency of the use of that epistemological (empirical) acquisition for practice (Autio, 2017). Education as an academic field has leaned on this logic of instrumentality since the turn of the twentieth century, which has culminated into what many school districts call “effectiveness,” “excellence,” or “evidence-based” truths, propositions, and strategies which guide curriculum planning. Kliebard (1982) notes that John Dewey, an American philosopher of education who famously taught at Columbia University Teacher’s College, referred to the practice of data collection as “intellectual instrumentalities” (p. 16). While it is important to distinguish between actors who have corporate interests in mind and thinkers like Dewey, it is worth thinking about the connection between Dewey’s overreliance on science as empirical and for use in the progression of society and the current corporate actors co-opting the language of science and evidence for self-interest in favor of the public.

2009). Empiricism increasingly structures K-12 schooling and the modern university⁵ as an institution under pressures from governing structures that evaluate academic research, such as the “Research Excellence Framework” developed in the United Kingdom (Smith, Ward & House, 2011, p. 747). Such frameworks provide rubrics of evaluation for excellence in research that maintain a sense of objectivity for how educational research is assessed. This framework, which can be also called a type of regime of truth,⁶ heavily favoring empirical papers (Foucault, 2008). By forcing education to take on an objective character, habits and practices of education become normative, de-contextualized, and thus, de-politicized in favor of reform and the “businesses-minded” (Pinar, 2004, p. 16).

In a study by Parker and van Teijlingen (2011) on the use of the Research Excellence Framework, the authors call for a balance in terms of the weight given to empirical papers and the marginalization that theoretical or conceptual papers typically receive. To add to the call for increased visibility for conceptual papers, Barrow (2005) argues for the need to move outside the model of the physical sciences to make connections to concepts such as teaching and education which have “impact” and “real world effects” beyond what can be conveyed in empirical inquiries. Scientific causal laws, Barrow (2005) states, “are not appropriate ways of describing human actions...How then can we have a social science of education and what connection does this have to classrooms and teaching?” (p. 47). Although Barrow questions whether there can be such a thing as a social science of education, my point is that centering empirical research in relation to the use of humanities-based inquiries, which can often be seen as anti-political

⁵ The university has itself become a governing structure operating underneath a set of governing structures.

⁶ I am setting up these “regimes of truth” already as extractive forms of confession.

or anti-realist in nature, is insufficient. This is despite the conceptualization of empirical research paradigms, methodologies, and designs focused on things such as poverty or race. One is not simply dealing with theoretical frameworks for how to tackle a problem such as poverty, but also a social and political philosophy to which scholars must attend.

The focus of educational research typically results in new programs or supplements that might round out an education that is lacking at the margins. In other words, what is important is supplementation for gaps in scholarship for educational researchers or learning for practitioners. What is important for educational scholars is an attention to instrumentality that favors the application of quantifiable data in the sequence of experience as “thought, action, and event” which becomes the effect of a particular situation⁷ (Pinar, 2004, p. 17). The sequence of instrumental experience is one used by the applied social sciences in educational research.

Claudia Ruitenberg (2019) has argued that education from the vantage point of “lack” in education has come to be referred to through language of competency or skills. Not every competency is weighted equally, of course, for the skills one acquires should be directly applicable to something one *does* in service of the marketplace. Research, too, has become weighted for its effectiveness for schools, which similarly serves the market. This is even the case if a demand is created for things that might be conceived as a social good (Giridharadas, 2018). Science certainly can be a social good, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, where many public health officials and researchers have

⁷ The sequence of experience resembles Ralph W. Tyler’s (1949) sequence of planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation found in his *Basic Principles for Curriculum and Instruction*. While I further discuss Tyler below, it is worth noting that, given the subject of my dissertation on confession, that Pinar (2013), while suggesting that Tyler plagiarized the Eight Year Study, also relegates the status of Tyler in the curriculum field to that of a “god” (p. 4). His invocation of Tyler as a “thickening cloud” that has “hovered over the field” from Block (2008) is interesting in that regard (p. 1).

been attending to the health needs of individuals via the production of vaccines. However, there are limits to what scientific thinking can “do.” Utilizing science as concrete principles can become dogmatic and ritualistic, forgetting that science is a historical phenomenon, and in a prior iteration, was not known as “Science,” but as natural philosophy (Gare, 2018). Foucault (1970) explored discourses of the human sciences to a rigorous genealogical analysis that *uncovered* the epistemological conditions of possibility in which those discourses were based. In doing so, Foucault (1970) attempts to restore “its rifts, its instability, its flaws,” which condition science as a metanarrative for Western culture (p. xxiv). In fact, the closure of using science to understand the world relates directly to this study, particularly because Foucault’s analysis to show the instability of the human sciences also applies to discourses of sexuality, governmentality, and ultimately, selfhood.

The Entanglement of Science, Philosophy, and Myth

Historically, science and religion, which are rarely separate from philosophy, are entangled. Aquinas uses both *scientia* and *religio* as “intellectual virtues” but particularly sees them as “personal attributes” that perfect “the powers that individuals possess” (Harrison, 2015, p. 12). The work of study is the pursuit of truth in all its forms; study distinguishes the work of science not as solely empirical, but metaphysical to understand being and the structures of the cosmos for their ultimate causes. Admittedly, science in its current form differentiates itself from metaphysics, but perhaps only in principle to a methodology that may yield empirical facts. As Hands (1994) writes, “empirical facts are not simply ‘discovered’; they are the product of negotiation by many agents and the result of the pragmatic rationality and the tacit local knowledge that characterizes experimental

practice” (p. 759). According to Hands (1994) science is clearly distinct in paradigm and practice from what is considered non-scientific, like philosophy and religion. Similarly, Neil Degrasse Tyson stated that “philosophy has basically parted ways from the frontier of the physical sciences” and that there are plenty of philosophical subjects for philosophers to engage that are not along the “frontier” of the physical sciences (Pigliucci, 2014). The separation of science is part of what Harrison (2015) calls a “comforting” myth for modern scientists, who suggest that science was a feature of ancient society until the advent of Christianity and the rise of the religion in the Middle Ages.

Christianity suppressed science, as the “comforting myth” goes, until science overcame Christianity in the scientific revolution. Harrison (2015) reminds us:

“To dismiss this as pious window dressing is to fail to understand how the religious perspective then [in the ancient world] pervaded every area of life. The narrative of an opposition between ‘science’ and myth also betrays too crude an understanding of the role of myth and its relation to reason. Myths were not thought to offer alternative explanatory accounts to ‘science.’ Not only were they regarded as compatible with rational, philosophical accounts of the natural world, but they were also considered to be important vehicles for the transmission of profound philosophical truths. It is a mistake, then, to regard myths as incompatible with rational explanations, or to imagine that a mythical phase of Western history gave way to a proto-scientific age” (p. 25).

Nevertheless, the disentangling of philosophy, science, and myth, which all were historically embedded with one another, has created the conditions for authority to be given to science to make determinations on learning and experience (Taubman, 2009). The story of disentanglement, and the positive influence of that disentanglement, had a demonstrable effect on twentieth and twenty-first century educational research. To an extent, the privileging of science as a discipline over other disciplines such as philosophy, literature, and history is synonymous with curriculum history in the production of a

discourse on the utility of history or literature. For instance, in an attempt to re-envision social studies as a school subject in 1913, Thomas Jesse Jones needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of a curriculum tied to the social functions future children as citizens would perform. However, to do that, the new social studies had to be tied to “social uplift” and “social science,” with “less emphasis on the academic study of history” (Kliebard, 2002, p. 34). The historic tie between science and social uplift, which raises questions about what kinds of epistemologies, policies, and practices are centered and de-centered, has often construed *education as* a social science (Ruitenberg, 2010). There is little doubt that the privileging of science as a meta-discourse over the other human sciences was and remains synonymous with social engineering.

Writing about the problem of curriculum and pedagogy, Pinar (2005) notes that the academic field of education is reluctant—I might add, opposed—to abandon social engineering and the authoritarian regulation of learning as a scientifically predictable phenomenon. Indeed, the institutionalization of social engineering “at the site of the teacher” requires an instrumental focus by policymakers, which means that education is left truly to the behaviorists (Pinar, 2006, p. 110). Even knowledge, defined by learning scientists as information, facts, concepts, and disciplinary methods and structures, is translated into knowledge utility for and as student conduct in classrooms and the workplace (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). As Taubman (2009) writes, the prime, meaning the first, assumption of education as a social science is that it must be something “demonstrated or reproduced” (p. 183).

To that end, Lagemann (2000) states that at Columbia University Teacher’s College, Edward Thorndike “won” and John Dewey “lost,” which describes the victory

of educational psychology over philosophy. Lagemann's (2000), therefore, suggests that the sciences, particularly the empirical sciences, were victorious over the humanities. The "crisis" concerning the humanities is not new (Frassinelli, 2020). Divorced from the utility of the sciences, the humanities have largely been relegated to the "role of edification" (Howe, 2009). In this sense, I gesture toward the supposed lack of *cash value* one might get from doing humanities-based research about education, which exemplifies the reduction of knowledge to data and the way we speak about knowledge and its potential for the income-enhancing prospects of individuals and industry.

Although it is unhelpful, and perhaps even dangerous, to romanticize the past, it is worth reactivating it for the purpose of better understanding "ourselves and our situatedness in the world" (Gadamer, 2004; Pinar, 2011). The description of investment in public universities in the 1946 President's Commission on Higher Education states the investment in education is for "social welfare," fighting "against ignorance and intolerance," and ultimately for "better human relationships, democracy, and peace" (Brown, 2015, p. 187). Unfortunately, these aims are at odds with how instrumental educational discourses have become. Brown (2015), describing the neoliberalization of education, states that the measure of our collective descent into *homo oeconomicus* has helped lose the "recognition of ourselves as held together by literatures, images, religions, histories, myths, ideas, forms of reason, grammars, figures, and languages" (Brown, 2015, p. 188). Instead, she argues, "we are presumed to be held together by technologies and capital flows" (Brown, 2015, p. 188). Such a statement is exemplified in the movement of education reform during the last four decades. What is being produced

in this discourse is a kind of subject who normalizes the habits and presentism of objectification.

Tyler's "Rationale," Ahistoricism, and Audit Culture

The historical proliferation of neoliberal rationales and logics of accountability through standardized assessments and data tracking has become commonsensical in teaching and teacher education (Apple, 2001). Processes to identify educational purposes and work backward to organize educational experiences have their ends in evaluation. This protocol for identification, organization, and evaluation provides the structure for Ralph W. Tyler's⁸ (1949) view of instructional programs as a "functioning instrument of education" (p. 1). Predetermined objectives of educational programs affect the materials selected, content outlined, procedures developed, and examinations prepared. The persistence of Tyler's (1949) "rationale" has institutionalized the conceptualization of education as "a process of changing the behavior patterns of people" to engineer the type of subject an "educational institution should seek to produce" (p. 5). The precepts of the "Tyler Rationale," as Kliebard (1970) refers to it, are uncritically accepted because they are conceived as rational and yield a "finished and useful product," especially to those who conceive of curriculum as a mechanism for behavioral transformation (p. 270). The unreflective acceptance of the precepts inherent in Tyler's rationale has, thus, resulted in its ascendance to the level of "revealed doctrine" (Kliebard, 1970, p. 259). For example, Tyler's logic is embedded in contemporary curriculum protocols such as *Understanding*

⁸ Tyler's (1949) rationale begins with identifying four fundamental curriculum and instruction questions:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

by Design, which articulates the value of *understanding*, but “especially for purposes of assessment” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 4). The reduction of curriculum to predetermined objectives is what Pinar (1978) called the traditionalist way of attending to what is practical, which is to say, the technical. Such a move is only possible, Pinar (2004) states, in the zeitgeist of the scientific age, when science becomes the measure of what *is* and what is *not*.

Of course, the past is reactivated in the present in curriculum history, with all of its violences and failures. The question “why curriculum?” must continually be asked in the field of curriculum studies (Britzman, 2002). To what extent has the trace of the field’s ideological past contaminated the field’s imaginings? As Winfield (2010) states, citing Bobbit’s acceptance of eugenics, the “sorting, testing, and tracking developed by eugenicists is rooted in the melding of scientific efficiency with educational objectives” (p. 152). Is not the language of educational research, at least in part, still contributing toward this end? Even the American Educational Research Association (AERA) describes itself as “concerned with improving the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education and *evaluation* and by promoting the dissemination and practical *application* of research results” (AERA). Thus, objectives, evaluations, and efficiency have been and continues to remain the institution’s concern, reflected in the types of research supported and valued due to the federal government’s anxiety over establishing a *science* of education, the goal of which is to make education predictable and reproducible (Baez & Boyles, 2009). Of course, such a discourse on science is made into predictability to appease stakeholders concerned with return on investment, and thus, for the administrative concerns of rendered services. As such, the most prominent linkage

of contemporary curriculum studies to the racist curriculum history of eugenics is Tyler's rationale, Winfield continues, suggesting that the endless "tinkering with organizational matter" has perpetuated an ideology which has perhaps embedded itself into the institution of the school (Winfield quoted in Pinar, 2013, p. 59).

In the wake of failed education reform policies such as NCLB and RTT, which Pinar (2011) calls "school (de)form," state and governmental officials renew calls for curriculum control (p. 222). New buzzwords, both from the political left and right, excite political bases for the purpose of instituting processes and techniques of accountability and management, which Shore and Wright (2015) call audit culture. Technologies of audit are, of course, not new and help to shape human conduct, such as in Foucault's (1977) genealogy of the discursive deployment of sex through the extractive tactic of confession. The enforcement of the practice of confession as a yearly ritual was imposed at the Fourth Lateran Council, urging congregants to give accounts of their interior lives for the purpose of the management and governance of populations. While the imposition of confession by the Catholic Church is one example, and one I will discuss later in this dissertation, its relation to audit culture is the institutionalized control and discipline of people at grand scale. Shore and Wright (2015) suggest that the process of enacting an audit culture is not just that practices of measurement and ranking exist. Rather, institutionalized control is extended in all modern institutions to control populations, institutions which include public schools and the university. Shore and Wright remind us that it is the extent to which these practices are "institutionalized, extended and above all, *financialized*" in the promotion of the governance—which is also to say, self-governance—of populations (p. 24).

Deviations from standardized norms of research, which are overdetermined by social science, suggest a narrow conception of education (Pinar, 2006). But it is not solely what occurs in the apparatus of educational research that is of great concern, but also how the political discourses that surround education produce practical effects for students, teachers, administrators, parents, and ultimately, the citizenry. Discursively, such political discourses include concepts like “education” and “curriculum” to aid the institutional instrumentalization and rationalization of schools. In part, the collapsing of the language of education, curriculum, and schooling can be traced to the social efficiency movement of the late 19th and early 20th century, which contained some of the same assumptions as the audit culture of the current neoliberal school apparatus (Kliebard, 2004). Social efficiency models function to train students to aid in the development of the nation (Evans, 2004). Society seemed to have been coming apart at the seams, and as Burns (2018) writes with respect to the same feeling during the War on Terror, the future itself represented a myriad of potential crises that needed to be “anticipated, prevented, or, better yet, profitably managed” (p. 97). Schools function as a crucial institution in which the rationalization and administration of bodies occurs. The relationship between school and social engineering is well-established, including the regulation of health (DeCicca & Krashinsky, 2020); innovation (DeAngelis & Dills, 2020); motivation (Kover & Worrell, 2010); crime (Bell, Costa & Machin, 2016); and national security (Kunst, Kuhn, & van de Werfhorst, 2020). Although a detailed examination of the relationship between social engineering and schooling exceeds the scope of this dissertation, this short detour illustrates how social efficiency positioned schooling as an antidote to what Kliebard (2004) called “an apocalyptic vision” (p. 24).

Indeed, this vision was for the purpose of managing people for their own good in order to prevent the onslaught of calamity, especially those which would affect the economy. The effect of developing curriculum in terms of profitability and replacing intellectual activity and places of study with business models serves the continued accumulation of capital. The neoliberal institutions that govern daily life divide the world into that which can be controlled, and thus, reduces the role of public institutions such as the school into a private economic benefit rather than a public good. It is no wonder, in the middle of a pandemic where an estimated 11 million are behind on their rent or mortgage payments, that there are many who believe that managing schools to return to standardized assessments represents a neutral sense of accountability free from business and political enterprise (Lane, 2021). For instance, despite the catastrophic effects of the pandemic, Florida's state government coerced students into taking standardized assessments to gauge "learning losses" for students (Solochek, 2021). Even the US government refused to extend a moratorium on standardized testing.

Teachers and students are technically managed by corporate language, data collection, and accountability measures to regulate the objectives of the established curriculum. As a result, Pinar (2004) notes, "the school is no longer a school, but a business" (p. 27). As such, business techniques represent a way to rid the "waste" of teaching and study in favor of efficient management. In this way, as I will discuss later in this dissertation, Franklin Bobbit's (1912) use of "need"—Tyler will also use the word "need" as a measure of curriculum—translates what should be learned into an *official* curriculum. Students should, therefore, study what they will immediately use, and whatever is institutionally deemed as extraneous should be eliminated (Hofstadter, 1963).

The marker of utility and elimination, however, is the *marketplace* which “provides the only final judgement” (*Guardian* Editorial, 2015). The use value of an activity must produce an outcome, which maximizes happiness or minimizes it, and therefore, as Maclean (1993) reminds us, has “moral value”⁹ (p. 8). Thus, the marker of utility for schools emerges from a moral philosophy. What, then, might we make of the methodology of this dissertation if not engaging in the triad of educational research—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research?

Humanities and Pre-Qualitative Research

In this dissertation, I engage in *pre-qualitative*¹⁰ educational research within humanities-based research methods. I join a tradition of scholars who use conceptual ideas to conduct their inquiries. Although many humanistic scholars do work that has tangible value, much of that work serves to further ongoing dialogue in a field of study. My field of study is curriculum theory. As the Stanford Humanities Center (n.d.) states, humanities scholars “are interested in raising questions, rather than providing absolute answers.”

Joining scholars across disciplinary boundaries, I can explore conceptual ideas in dialogue with questions of human existence¹¹ beyond simple thought experiments. Those

⁹ Maclean’s (1993) states, “the moral value of an action, according to the Principle of Utility, depends entirely upon the state of affairs it promotes or produces—upon its outcome. Moral action, on this account, has an aim or end, that of maximizing happiness or minimizing unhappiness” (p. 8). This statement highlights two things which are apparent to me. The first is that an action comes down to a choice, and that choice is a moral one. Does it maximize happiness or minimize it. The second is that each one of these choices operates on a continuum toward an end or objective. Seen in this way, education as schooling operates along these two philosophical ideas (whether they are right or wrong).

¹⁰ I borrowed the concept of pre-qualitative research from Samuel Rocha’s 2018 lecture, “The Humanities as Pre-Qualitative Research,” given at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

¹¹ When I say that this dissertation is not simply a thought experiment, I am displaying a bit of irony. In part, the irony is to play with the idea of “utility” as a measure of value (as I mentioned in page 17, the moral value even) for study. When utility is discussed, it is typically an institutional or pragmatic utility. In

who see humanities-based research as thought experiments forget that thinking, writing, and reading are methodical and practical *activities*. Indeed, those activities are excessive, full of imagination, and overflowing with potentialities. William James (1912) in his *Talk to Teachers* illustrates the point that thinking itself is a practical activity which does have an effect. James (1912) states:

As I talk here and you listen, it might seem as though no action followed. You might call it a theoretical process, with no practical result. But it *must* have a practical result. It cannot take place at all and leave your conduct unaffected (p. 13).

James, one of the founders of American pragmatism, is not content solely to ascribe action to a particular set of examples or circumstances, especially to teachers. Radical pragmatism concerns action in the widest possible sense, with James suggesting that this is both the enactment of speech as well as writing. This means, therefore, that reading, writing, and thinking are active components to what the university has called *wissenschaft*, translated from German into English as *science*, containing much more than the natural or social sciences.

Rather than letting *wissenschaft* and *Bildung*, which refer to the German tradition of self-cultivation, fall to commercialization, Pinar (2011) advocates for curriculum scholars and teachers to “allow ourselves to go into temporary exile” to be estranged from the familiar for the cultivation of the self, but also as creative activity which does not occur in isolation, an ongoing “subjective and social reconstruction” (p. 73, 76).

other words, the value of the activity serves pragmatic ends or aims. What I do in this dissertation is practically valuable because it does serve an institutional end (continued research at a research university for an educational school). At the same time, I attempt to subvert the practical utility of my dissertation research, by advocating for dissertation research that is not measured by institutional goals, but as itself having value. Moreover, I show what educational research can look like beyond the social scientific designs one learns in traditional research methodology courses. Perhaps what shows itself in this humanities-based existential study is valuable because, as Heidegger notes, being (existence) unveils (and occludes) itself as care, or concern. Human existence is already an educational concern and should be explored in dissertation studies.

Huebner already had this premonition in the 1960s, repeating in a 2013 “fireside chat” at the University of British Columbia that curriculum researchers should emphasize *searching* prior to researching. The emphasis on searching relies on self-reflexive educational experiences, the sorts of experiences that contribute to the meaning making of the subject and object of study. On the subject of study, Block (2014) goes even further, suggesting that study is “a way of being—it is an ethics” (p. 32). Although study, an avowal of the radical amazement and wonder of the world and, as I will argue later, its interrelation with being, “emanates from the silence of awe and wonder,” it is also an acknowledgement of how little we know (Block, 2014, p. 32). Although I do not want to suggest that the natural and social sciences are unnecessary, I do suggest that the path forged by curriculum theorists has been one that is existential, interpretive, associative, and even speculative in nature. As such, curriculum should not be seen as a static object, but as I will explain later, what “invokes, what it provokes,” in the *abundance* of experience both inside and outside of the classroom (Pinar, 2006, p. 1). In Jardine’s (2006) language, echoing Caputo (2003) and the thought of radical hermeneutics, curriculum is a calling.

Curriculum theory typically is expressed as a more focused field given its particular nomenclature in contrast to much broader access to education in the philosophy of education field. However, it is difficult for me to see the work I am doing as a curriculum scholar as not *philosophical*. I suggest that what is inaugurated in the reconceptualization movement of the curriculum field in the 1970s is not just an entanglement with philosophy, but the use of texts of various disciplines including

philosophy, literature, psychoanalysis, autobiography, ecocriticism, posthumanism, cultural studies, and quantum physics.

The reconceptualization of the curriculum field was a theoretical turn in the 1970s that was explicitly directed against the curriculum development traditionalists which was seen as entrenched in stasis (Pacheco, 2012). It was a reaction to where the field had been, especially with its bureaucratic and procedural character, and thus, participated in the creation of new curriculum paradigms following Schwab's pronouncement that the curriculum field was *moribund* (Schubert et al, 2002, p. 508). In a 1978 American Educational Research Association presentation entitled "Notes on the Curriculum Field," Pinar referenced the role of the reconceptualists in contrast to the traditionalists whose stated aims were to "provide technical modes of understanding and action" (p. 15). He continues:

The understanding (of the reconceptualists) is that to realize the aspirations of the field we must repudiate the dominant trends by examining their domain assumptions, such as the notion of technical interest. In a sense, the reconceptualization becomes more fully intelligible as it is viewed as a surfacing in the curriculum field of the same historical movement which has surfaced in philosophy as critical theory...Reconceptualists, in historical context, can be seen not as isolated, reactive curricularists, but as colleagues in a multidisciplinary transformation of our understanding of fundamental issues in the human disciplines (p. 15).

In contrast to traditionalist desire for technical interests, the transdisciplinary nature of the curriculum studies field makes it somewhat controversial in the broader field of education research. Curriculum theorizing carries a stigma to educational scholars due to its *avant-garde* tradition which some might see as too pragmatic and others as too irrational. For example, Rocha (2020) contends that curriculum theorists, at least the way they perform their scholarship at the Bergamo Conference in Curriculum Theory, are

philosophers. However, he notes particularly that Gert Biesta and Claudia Ruitenberg, two Dutch philosophers, expressed to him that curriculum theorists are not philosophers. Despite utilizing philosophy, some scholars note that what occurred in the infusion of multi-varied transdisciplinary perspectives became tension, ideological feuding, and fracturing within the reconceptualists. Cuban (1995) characterizes the academic curriculum field as in “stubborn disarray” (p. vii). Wraga and Hlebowitsch (2003) suggest that a “mainstay of reconceptualized theorizing” is the critical commentary of the current state of school curriculum with “little commitment to the generation of practical alternatives” (p. 428).

Wraga told me this at the 2020 Southeastern Philosophy of Education Society, when he suggested that the intellectual children and grandchildren of the reconceptualization were the progeny of an irrational movement. Interestingly, the qualm was with the word *experience*, a feature of Pinar’s notion of curriculum inquiry into educational experience. Wraga stated that Franklin Bobbitt had been discussing the role of experience prior to the reconceptualists. It is not that he is wrong here, it’s that the role of experience in what might be conceived as education or curriculum is much older than even Bobbitt. Thus, what the curriculum scholar does is go even further than Bobbitt, recognizing the dispute in Scholasticism over the role of *paideia* as well as Augustine’s (1995) dialogue about the role of language in teaching (Grant, 2001). Augustine outlines a “plan of study” in conjunction with theological methods that would provide a guide for those who want to interpret and teach scripture. Dewey spoke extensively about experience, as the curricularists of the reconceptualization know well. Such is the guiding principle of curriculum studies after the reconceptualization: to *re-conceptualize*. To do

so, it is necessary to not remain content with concepts like experience, curriculum, or confession, but to engage with different disciplines to continuously re-think them.

Data Sources and Reconstruction

Reading Burns' (2018) *Power, Curriculum, and Embodiment: Re-thinking Curriculum as Counter-Conduct and Counter-Politics*, led me to Jay (1988) and LaCapra's (1983) work on intellectual history to help inform my own inquiry situated between synoptic content analysis and phenomenology.¹² The phenomenological method emerges from the fundamental problem of describing the essential features of everyday lived experience, the descriptions of which are difficult because lived experiences are not statically presented to us. Rather, they are situated between various facets of ambivalent experiences, including conscious and unconscious experience, awareness and a lack of awareness, or reason and madness.¹³ Despite these many-faceted natures of our experiences, phenomenology emphasizes a "closeness" at the heart of the method to understand the essence of a phenomenon. As a result, the "thing" itself, or the phenomenon, is described and re-examined anew. My purpose is to describe the phenomenon of confession to theorize curriculum in a new way.

To describe and re-think confession, it is not enough to describe the practice of confession. The practice and concept of confession has a long history dating back thousands of years that requires my work with a variety of texts, which leads me to Jay (1988) and LaCapra (1980), who help me think about how I am handling different texts

¹² Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience. I explore this method more briefly in this chapter and heavily within the second chapter.

¹³ We will see later that these binaries do not hold for Derrida as they do in early phenomenologists such as Husserl.

in my own synoptic analysis. LaCapra (1980) notes that what he means by a “text” is marked by the interaction between those texts and the “processes of interaction between language and the world” (p. 247). This process is always in flux and requires the reader to reconstruct a text and context in relation to textual processes. The process might be distinguished between the “documentary” and the “work-like” aspects of a text (LaCapra, 1980, p. 248). The documentary aspect of a text situates the “factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality” (LaCapra, 1980, p. 250). On the other hand, LaCapra (1980) states that the work-like aspect of a text:

...supplements empirical reality by adding to and subtracting from it. It thereby involves dimensions of the text not reducible to the documentary, prominently including the roles of commitment, interpretation, and imagination. The work-like is productive and reproductive, for it deconstructs and reconstructs the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing into the world something that did not exist before in that significant variation, alteration, or transformation. With deceptive simplicity, one might say that while the documentary marks a difference, the work-like makes a difference—one that engages the reader in re-creative dialogue with the text and the problems it raises (p. 250).

Jay (1988) attends to the dialectical relationship between the documentary and the work-like by suggesting a “relationship between text and context” that should be “conceptualized as another form of intertextuality” (p. 53). Both these intellectual historians suggest that there is an interplay at work between deconstruction and reconstruction that is a perpetual process, which is important to do the work of curriculum theorizing. As a “strategy” for understanding curriculum, Pinar (2002) suggests that curriculum studies scholars research interdisciplinary “throughlines” in which “subjectivity, society, and intellectual content” run (p. 2). Researching the interdisciplinary “throughlines” of the curriculum field is nothing less than a renewed commitment to study and intellectual formation as we contribute to the “reconstruction of

the public sphere in education” (Pinar, 2002, p. 3). Among the many different texts in this dissertation, I engage substantially with Foucault and Derrida to theorize curriculum as confession. Attempting to find within those texts the “in-between” spaces of “creative tensionality,” as Ted Aoki (2005) reminds us, I aim to be faithful and charitable to those texts while also showing how they contribute to complicated conversations among teachers and students not reducible to institutional demands for extraction and exploitation (p. 232).

Confession as a Curricular Investigation

Too often, concepts such as curriculum and confession become institutionalized for new forms of discipline to serve the modern, liberal state. Among conservatives, part of that disciplinary power is the demand for accountability to ensure that each dollar spent has a return on investment. However, even among those considered “progressive,” like critical pedagogues, the project of transparency works toward the breakdown of the private/public distinction needed for a democratic society to emerge. For instance, Giroux (2011), who is one of the biggest proponents of such a variety of “intimate relations and social formations” among the populace, what is required for an absolute democracy to take shape is an “absolute transparency, absolute nakedness” (p. 122; Ford, 2015, p. 79). Educational research is bound to this question of confession because it is bound to a form of democracy that requires transparency and the publicness of the populace. Although I pursue this argument in a later chapter, as an introduction, it is important to note that already the question of curriculum and confession as transparency for an absolute democracy is one which shows itself to us in this investigation. If education simply privileges the “vital importance of public time,” as Giroux (2011) notes, there is a vital

connection between confession and curriculum, but I also inquire whether there is not something also hidden in the midst of such desires for transparency.

I explore the concept and practice of confession at first as an extractive practice by institutions seeking to constitute subjects who make themselves public. By making oneself transparent, the subject appeals to an institutional demand for transparency that serves the greater function of the institution. The subject's acquiescence to the institutional demand has become a cultural concern in favor of accountability, surveillance, identity, normativity, and selfhood. The language of interiority and "looking within" has been co-opted by institutions, such as corporate and political enterprises, who benefit from a culture of transparency that has instituted itself as a substitute for truth. Asking the question, "who am I?" becomes equivalent to authenticity or seeking after the truth. The question of authenticity or truth is, of course, posed in relation to institutional demands, as discussed above. Schools form an important aspect of this confessional impulse. Grades, high-stakes testing, college testing, personal statements, teacher evaluations, accreditation, and lesson plans exemplify how schools utilize the culture of transparency (Taubman, 2009; Shore & Wright, 2000). Accountability is itself an educational discourse at the heart of institutional governance. A "self" is produced under these governing structures, marking students, teachers, schools, and communities as good or bad under excellency frameworks and pass or fail discourses. An accountability discourse does not just demand an account, but itself creates and perpetuates normative structures by which subjects miss the mark, and, therefore, must turn from that failure.

In this study, I argue that confession neither can nor produce a positive, static "self." Consider the way that autobiographies or memoirs presume to put forward a self

for the public. For example, Michelle Obama's *Becoming* (2018) or *Open* (2010) by Andre Agassi both attempt to allow the public into extraordinary lives and lay bare what had at once been closed off from public view. Confession, as conceptualized in this study, however, does not make people more transparent, despite the cultural production of the idea of confession that presupposes revelation. In the pressure to reveal the self, confession conceals as much as it unveils. Thus, my question in this dissertation, is what does confession reveal? Through this inquiry, I conclude that my claim is that it reveals is more ontological, and in particular, an ontological relationality at the heart of confession.

Autobiography and Curriculum Studies

I move *from* the reconceptualization movement of the field of curriculum studies, which rejected the spirit of normative, behavioral, and static approaches to curriculum, in favor of the shifting private and public sphere, but in particular, the sphere of subjectivity constituted by historical time “embedded in regional, national, and diasporic cultures” (Pinar, 2004, p. 21). In other words, Pinar's call for autobiography in education asks for students and teachers to reconstruct themselves through academic study. The role of autobiography in curriculum studies is well established by scholars including Pinar (2011), Miller (1998), and Grumet (1988). Autobiography and biography in curriculum hearken back to the Calvinists in the form of the *curriculum vitae* and in the sojourn of Christian, the pilgrim in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). Bunyan suggests that the “open course through life,” or *curriculum vitae*, is what should be studied with attention to one's own life history as an educational journey (Hamilton, 1990, p. 34). Focusing on educational journeys, autobiography, a turn to the self, becomes how scholars, teachers, and students might work through their inner sources of imagination,

the “working from within” in *memoria* [memory] (Pinar, 1972, p. 331). As I noted on page 22, curriculum theorizing works from inner sources of educational experience, which assume at its heart a radical secret. The turning from the lesson plan to the self is the showing of this radical secret of the inner life. Rocha (2020) likewise attempts to show this radical secret at the heart of “objects” such as the lesson plan as well, referring to it as the poetic emergence of objects. He notes that the object humbly gives itself to the subject, and therefore becomes a subject as well. Rocha (2020), thus, opens up the phenomenological and theological¹⁴ as part of the complicated conversation of curriculum studies. Such a repositioning of the site of curriculum from the classroom to lived experience opens understanding of curriculum discourse as political, communal, and I suggest, theological.

Autobiography and Theology

Autobiography has a long tradition that exceeds the scope of this dissertation, however the purpose of this study, autobiography tells the story of oneself to another, a reader, one who participates in the process of re-creation of and in the text. However, as I discuss below, autobiography has historically been used to universalize the “self” as the (quasi) theo-political construction of whiteness (Carter, 2009). My inquiry, in part, argues that such a de-theologizing character of literacy, racialization, and selfhood functions to create the modern world with all its colonial settlements and segmentations. One must attend to the theological character of the curriculum field that does not focus solely on

¹⁴ Ironically, I make a critique of Rocha’s book in a book review (in press) where I discuss how he brings the theological to bear in his discourse around the object, but does not open up its meaning in expositional terms. I use a metaphor from Virginia Woolf’s *Miss Dalloway* to highlight this quick “passing over” of Rocha’s prose: it is like the stream of consciousness in her novel.

topic like school prayer or teaching religion in classes¹⁵ (Apple, 2001). Theology, both in form and content—when I suggest form, I mean the hermeneutic tradition inherited from particular schools of interpretation of scripture—is mediated in traditions of knowledge and understanding. The mediation of these traditions, especially through disciplines like philosophy and theology, become the form and performance of the “complicated conversation” that is curriculum theory (Pinar, 2004, p. 9).

While many curriculum scholars since the reconceptualization have engaged theology,¹⁶ their writings have often been relegated to a peripheral position within the field. Apropos of the current academic educational research discourse, I agree with Huebner’s (1972) essay, “Education in the Church” in which he states:

When church people were engaged in the Honest to God and God is Dead debates a few years ago I thought they were lucky compared to school people. The questioning of their institutions provided a significant opportunity to rethink what they are about, whereas school people were inhibited from such fundamental rethinking by the sheer inertia and magnitude of the school enterprise. The unquestioned acceptance of schools as social institutions, if not as educational institutions, meant that school people would always have teachers to prepare and school problems to solve. School people had not been forced to do the fundamental rethinking required by church people. But this is changing. With the move toward free schools and the call by an ex-religious to DeSchool Society, school people may yet be forced into the uncomfortable but very necessary practice of rethinking what they are about (p. 175).

Huebner does not suggest that what is needed is to engage in more theological texts, although I would encourage that because curriculum scholarship has engaged theology historically. Rather, I propose that Huebner’s statement suggests an interrogation of that which remains unquestioned and taken-for-granted. What questions lie dormant in the

¹⁵ I do not dismiss these issues as though they are not important. Rather, I am trying to do something differently with theology and curriculum studies.

¹⁶ These scholars include Pinar (2019), Purpel & Shapiro (1995), McLaren (2020), Rocha (2018), Leonard (2015), Morris (2020), McDonald (1995), McClintock (1971), hooks (1992), Jardine (1992), Slattery (1992), Steinberg & Kincheloe (2009), Noddings (1989), Freire (2016).

curriculum field? What questions¹⁷ escape critical analysis and remain as dogmas of an unyielding faith in schools, learning, teaching, study, the university, the canon, or the ritual of reading (Kliebard, 1970)? What is foreclosed through the history of social engineering and the use of disciplinary power in schools? Perhaps the religious and the theological are not as far away as we might imagine.

Connected to the tradition of the field of curriculum studies, theology and phenomenology act as an exposition and description of the real. Philip Phenix first used the phrase “the lure of transcendence,” a phrase that Huebner later used, to describe an eschatological reality. Curriculum moves *toward* something, Phenix argued.¹⁸ Phenix suggests that the lure of transcendence projects us “toward wholeness,” toward a “comprehensiveness of experience” (Pinar, 1975, p. 333). There is no determined eschatology in Huebner as in Phenix. However, Huebner (1969) is drawn to transcendence as a projection of being in relation to temporality, toward a conditioned and unconditioned end, drawing from Tillich’s philosophical theology (pp. 14-15). Transcendence is not a final form, but the possibility to move into new forms, or perhaps, as Kyser (2020) notes, “even out of all forms” (p. 133). Transcendence accomplishes itself in the interpretative act, and in the curriculum field provokes movement toward understanding. Transcendence can be conceptualized, following Grumet (1976), as the adoption of the “developmental goal and methodological assumptions” that bring

¹⁷ I am thinking here of Herbert Spencer’s question which would, according to Pinar (2016), become the curriculum question: what knowledge is of most worth?

¹⁸ This is evident in liberation theologies which highlight the divine movement and unveiling of God in History. Patrick Slattery (1989), in his dissertation, “Toward an Eschatological Curriculum Theory,” notes that “those things which have been set in motion in creation will be brought to fulfillment in the eschaton: ‘Within creation God calls all human beings to communion’ (Abbott, 1966). The communion with God is an experience which transforms and allows all individuals to experience salvation history as participants and not just as detached observers” (p. 139).

“structures of experience to awareness,” and which thereby enhance “the ability to direct the process of one’s own development” in the process of *currere* (p. 115).

Interpretation in the Method of *Currere*

Currere is a four-fold concept and process of movement drawn from the Latin infinitive of the word curriculum. This autobiographical concept denotes the running of the course, for the curriculum field, one’s lived experience. The steps of *currere* are the regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic movements. While I will discuss *currere* in a chapter four, the method, if we are to use that term as Pinar (2004) does wherein *methodos* signifies a pursuit, promises “no quick fixes,” is not a therapeutic cure, nor is it “a matter of psychic survival,” but is one of subjective risk and social reconstruction (p. 4). The way in which *currere* complicates our understanding of the present is through recollection, a reversion or re-engagement with the past, and even to imagine the future, and then to be mobilized by the subject running the race course. Of course, such a movement always already occurs in a hermeneutic fashion, as the “interpretation of educational experience” (Pinar, 2004, p. 58).

Hermeneutics is a branch of knowledge which deals with interpretation, especially with the interpretation of literary texts or the Bible. In the most basic terms, hermeneutics is the study of reading the self and the world. Hermeneutics is an interpretive philosophy that does not attempt to weave social reality under conceptual logic or natural, mechanistic, science. As Blakely (2020) reminds us, “interpretive philosophy holds that achieving the unity of science is an impossible task because humans create and embody meanings in a way that requires the art of interpretation and not simply scientific explanation” (p. xxii). Interpretation is not reducible to solely the

empirical, because interpretation encompasses a host of other forms of life, such as psychoanalytical, phenomenological, literary, philosophical, or affective realities. In the following section, I trace a historical and philosophical discourse on hermeneutics from the middle ages to the 20th century to show the interrelation of hermeneutics and understanding. Hermeneutics moves toward understanding. The question of interpretation is both epistemological and ontological because it concerns itself with language, and if language, then also being and the world itself. The interrelation of being, language, and the world, I claim, is continually erupted by new ways of being in the world.

Significance of the Study

My academic study is of the practice and concept of confession in curriculum theorizing. To do this, I will not provide a “full” historical treatment of confession. This dissertation is not solely an intellectual history, although the methods of intellectual history inform this inquiry. I offer re-readings of confession to re-think and contribute to autobiographical curricular inquiry, a genre that forefronts the reconceptualization movement of curriculum studies. The modern meaning of autobiography to self-actualize must be interrogated. The split that occurs between the *autos* (self) and the *heteros* (other) is contaminated, not a chasm which must be traversed, but an openness to the other as in the contamination of presence and absence. While I agree with Schwab’s (1975) warning to curriculum scholars to attend to the practical, in the overdetermination of the social sciences in educational research—as well as the overcommitment of school districts, state and federal boards of education to standardized objectives and assessments—I would argue that too many concepts go unchallenged and unexamined. Indeed, unchallenged concepts become institutional weapons wielded as settled

epistemologies, constituting uncritical subjects in society to go along with the destructive ways corporate power infiltrates every crevice of life.

A central tenet of the reconceptualization is that curriculum scholars must constantly interrogate the understanding of curriculum, which includes how one accounts for selfhood (Butler, 2005). The curriculum field emphasizes the individual's "capacity to reconceptualize his or her autobiography" (Schubert, 1986, p. 33). Schubert continues:

The individual seeks meaning amid the swirl of present events, moves historically into his or her own past to recover and reconstitute origins, and imagines and creates possible directions of his or her own future. Based on the sharing of autobiographical accounts with others who strive for similar understanding, the curriculum becomes a reconceiving of one's perspective on life. It also becomes a social process whereby individuals come to greater understanding of themselves, others, and the world through mutual reconceptualization. The curriculum is the interpretation of lived experiences.

This dissertation describes a concept in the self's lived experience. Confession implies a concept, or a multiplicity of concepts, which are then enacted. The priest, for example, hearing confession, or the therapist hearing a client. As it has been conceived, confession signifies a practice to be described. In doing so, one self-represents a narrative construction of their experiences in-a-world through language. Narrative constructions of lived experience are confessed openly, laying bare the self in articulated verbalizations, or speech acts. In this dissertation, I provide a representational account of curriculum theorizing through an interrogation of the split between the subject and the object, which in many ways is the basis for the way schools, teachers, administrators, and other education stakeholders understand curriculum. The perceived split between subject and object constitutes a reality predicated on the knower and the known. The knowing subject stands autonomous as an individual advancing to know objects "out there" to grasp. Those objects are useful to grasp for goals, aims, and objectives. Which of these objects

are the most valuable? Which ones constitute the most worth for the aims of the state, nation, or world? The account of a curriculum that focuses on the worthiest goal centers on examinations. As the concept of curriculum becomes transformed into a static object with perceived aims, goals, and objectives, what is worthy is placed in distinction with what is *not*. As a result, the metaphor of a *race* enters curriculum discourses. The metaphor of the race signifies a chase after a specific aim, presumably the finish line. It also demarcates what is worthy and what is not, like the boundaries of a race can signify what is *within* bounds and *out* of bounds.

The boundaries of curriculum were manifested in the Yale Report of 1828 when faculty members described their attempts to retain the then-current “course of instruction” until the university conceptualized “a distinct apprehension of the *object* of a collegiate education.” What concerned the Yale faculty members were the aims and purposes of education. Might we not also call these confessions, at the very least, of the desires of the framers of such a historic document? Are we under the illusion of confession solely as the self-revelation of guilt, or might it be something else? Is not self-revelation aimed at an objective? Conceiving of confession in this extractive way makes several assumptions that this dissertation will interrogate for the purpose of continuing the complicated conversation that is curriculum theorizing. This dissertation is concerned with understanding curriculum unmoored from the traditional boundaries of the school or the site of the teacher, but in and as the contact of relationality of beings in the world, a concept I explore in future chapters.

Synopsis of Chapters

In chapter two, I discuss my modes of inquiry for this dissertation. Specifically, I discuss the tradition of phenomenology with which I am working from Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida. Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience, which is an academic way to say the study of what appears.¹⁹ In part, I focus on the first two reductions of the phenomenological tradition before moving to a description—insofar as it can be described—of Derridean deconstruction. The two reductions are not only the sort of reduction one does when one cuts off excess, but also the type of reduction that attempts to locate an original source. This is by no means a settled debate among phenomenological scholars however, I make the argument that Husserl’s transcendental reduction is taken over by Heidegger’s method of “formal indication,” which opens and leads the investigation back to a transcendental horizon of Being. I focus on Derrida’s engagement with Husserl and Heidegger, in particular, their furtherance of what Derrida calls a metaphysics of presence, something that can be perhaps violent.

In chapter three, I take up the previously mentioned violence and draw a relationship between phenomenology to the field of curriculum studies. I discuss the social efficiency movement, Tyler’s (1949) “rationale” for evaluation, and the curriculum field’s response to the reductive, racializing, exploitative, and hetero-patriarchal norms of the field’s past.

In chapter four, I provide a historical account of confession that engages with Foucault’s genealogy in *History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1978). I take Foucault’s early

¹⁹ I continue this discussion in the next chapter and make a distinction between “qualitative” phenomenology versus philosophical phenomenology.

discussion of confession as the extracted articulation of thoughts, desires, intentions, and juxtapose it with his later writings about confession as not only the verbalization of the self, but also the politics of the self. Foucault begins to suggest that confession was not only a speech act, but that perhaps there were ways in which a subject “silently” confessed through one’s actions. The chapter engages with Foucauldian (1995, 2003) analyses of governmentality, subjectivity, and *parrhēsia*, or free-spokenness, to think about confession as a technology of the self through the embodiment of truth-telling. Finally, I interrogate subjectivity and confession as the break or “cut,” which, while fracturing the self, opens oneself to another.

In chapter five, I utilize Derrida’s “Circumfession” (1999) to further complicate confession. I draw from Augustine’s *Confessions* (2019) and Derrida as utilizing a “doubled” reading of *currere* in relation to the other, society, and the world (p. 5). In this chapter, the curriculum question²⁰ becomes altered in the always already deconstructed epistemological project of the West. I engage questions of selfhood, Truth, and autobiography are taken up to discuss the poetics and politics of curriculum as confession, and thus, also think through the confessional aporia of responsibility.

In chapter six, I re-think confession through the movements of the chapters, and I draw upon Caputo’s (2006) “weak theology” to understand the call of the *name* of curriculum as confession.

Conclusion

To begin this dissertation, I introduced my humanities-based investigation as one centered on curriculum as confession. I claimed that much of the work of curriculum

²⁰ What knowledge is of most worth?

reconceptualization resists the imposition of the social sciences and the greater emergence of the audit culture which was a crescendo of Tyler's logic of organization, development, implementation, and evaluation. The emergence of neoliberal audit culture which is common sensical in today's corporate agenda, has replaced professional judgement and wisdom from teachers who are managed while "living under the reign of accountability" (Taubman, 2009, p. 90). I showed that audit culture was not simply something which just happened, but part of a social and moral philosophy which pervades modern society. Additionally, I briefly discussed how I situate my dissertation's methodology as between phenomenology and a synoptic content analysis, utilizing the work of intellectual historians Jay (1988) and LaCapra (1980). Reading, writing, and thinking are the primary modes of research as I seek to re-conceptualize, by which I mean to "disclose, disentangle, explicate," curriculum as confession (Zahavi, 2019, p. 904).

Chapter II

Phenomenology, Deconstruction, and Curriculum Studies

“And then will *appear* [*phanēsetai*: from the word *phainó*, which means to bring to light, or to show itself] the *sign* of the Son of Man in heaven...” (Matthew 24:30).

“Educational experience is a process that takes on the world without appropriating that world, that projects the self into the world without dismembering that self, a process of synthesis and totalization in which all the participants in the dialectic simultaneously maintain their identities and surpass themselves.” (Grumet, 1992, p. 32)

“How does educational experience shape the cognitive lens, change the vision so that the world is, in fact, encountered differently? If one could, and that is questionable, alter another’s world view...on what grounds, if any, is that intrusion justified? How can the educator reconcile the phenomenologist’s *call* for detached speculation with the existentialist’s emphasis on situation and action in the world?” (Grumet, 1992, p. 42)

Despite the fact that I constantly drive by the canal next to my house, my daughter’s favorite thing to do is to walk around the canal and look at the ducks. As she sees them, the first thing that appears to me is the joy in her face, the exuberance of her smile. It is as if she has never seen something so cool. What appears to her is the difference of the ducks. She points her finger at the different colors and sizes of the ducks. “Look, daddy, it’s a little one,” she says as she sees a small duckling next to what appears to be a parent duck flapping its tail because we are getting too close. She points out that one of the ducks has a darker beak than the others, and that it reminded her of a cartoon she watched at home. As I try to lead her beyond the ducks, smiling, my daughter continues her gaze on the various ducks we pass by. It may not seem like a philosophical activity, but my daughter was being a good phenomenologist with those ducks.

Phenomenology can be defined as a study of the structures of consciousness from a first-person point-of-view. Phenomenology can also be called the study of that which appears or manifests to the viewer. It is, as Moran (2006) notes, a “way of seeing...whatever appears as such” (p. 1). Phenomenology can, therefore, be classified as a philosophy of experience. It is more than that, though, because it is not simply a description of that which remains as such. The description moves toward a pure consciousness, a properly philosophical dimension where, as Levinas (1969) points out, the philosophical problem of where “ultimate meaning” resides (p. lvi). It is not surprising that Husserl’s—considered by many²¹ to be the founder²² of phenomenology—historical use of the word “crisis” following the devastation of World War I to determine his phenomenology’s role in shaping contemporary philosophical debate is also paired with the question of the relevance or even fruitfulness of the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics (Trizio, 2017).

Husserl’s conception of metaphysics as the “ultimate science of reality” and as the teleology of phenomenology does not reach some theological system of ultimate reality behind all reality. However, Husserl attempted to convert the empirical sciences of nature into a philosophy that does away with the presuppositions of the natural ways of seeing. Specifically, from the natural, prescientific standpoint, those ordinary presuppositions are taken for granted until the subject does something with them. Husserl believed that

²¹ The “many” who consider Husserl the founder of phenomenology are those who utilized phenomenological description of lived experience in their own work. In the early days of the tradition, that includes Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Max Scheler, Emmanuel Levinas, and Paul Ricoeur.

²² I use the word “founder” rather loosely, considering that Husserl did not invent the term phenomenology, and is not the first philosopher to use phenomenology. Kant used phenomenology, albeit differently from Husserl, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Hegel wrote used the term in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

scientists do modify the assumptions of the layperson who sees the “object” of consciousness, but never really radically questions those presuppositions for a more *fundamental* knowledge of reality.

In the field of education, a fundamental understanding of reality is not only metaphysical speculation, it is also a curriculum concern. Curriculum and metaphysics are interrelated. The relationship between curriculum and metaphysics cannot be disentangled given the various curriculum theorists who have employed phenomenology in their own curriculum theorizing. Magrini (2013) developed a notion of a “fundamental [ontology] of curriculum or educational theory inspired by a form of phenomenology,” a method he sees occurring within the tradition of the reconceptualization²³ (p. 18). As Rocha (2021) points out, although the inspiration of phenomenology is embedded in the reconceptualist approach to curriculum, the use of phenomenology as a distinctly philosophical phenomenology has fallen out of favor.

I suggest the falling out of favor of phenomenology in educational research is because of how rooted educational research is in the social sciences, especially because social science is more likely to gain funding than humanities-based projects. For example, according to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council’s most recent award recipient list from June 2021, it appears that only four of the 92 projects listed are humanities-based projects. The rest are social science award recipients, which are funded at still a relatively low amount compared to other forms of research. Under five percent of the federal government’s \$42 billion research and development fund goes

²³ The reconceptualization of the curriculum field in the 1970s was a theoretical turn from the traditionalist, functionalist understanding of curriculum. The traditionalists were fundamentally concerned with curriculum development and organization, which the reconceptualists considered static.

to social and behavioral science research (Jahnke, 2020). I do not want to suggest that because social science is overrepresented in educational research, that social science does not struggle in relation to other forms of research which receive higher funding. That said, the humanities in education, just like the field of social foundations of education, have been marginalized by neoliberal reforms and conservative authoritarian logics of “utility” which demand that research must gain some sort of return on investment (Bird & Tozer, 2018). The neoliberal impulse to seek a return on investment shuts out research based in thinking for the purpose of seeking truth as good in itself. Study for the purpose of self and social reconstruction was reduced to “military and economic concerns” for over four decades, intensifying the exploitation and bureaucratization of public education (Pinar, 2004, p. 68). The resistance against such neoliberal reforms that reward only so-called useful research is not new in the curriculum studies field, and indeed provoked the reconceptualist mission to move away from the social and behavioral sciences.

Pinar (1975) marked a clear line for the character of the reconceptualization, noting that the purpose of the work was neither to guide practitioners nor to investigate through the use of behavioral or social sciences. Pinar (1975) argued that the function of the reconceptualist’s work was understanding, and “this understanding is of the sort aimed at and sometimes achieved in the humanities” (p. xii). He further suggests that the “dominant modes of inquiry” for reconceptualist curriculum theorizing was through the humanities (p. xii). Thus, the humanities enable curriculum studies scholars to re-think new possibilities in terms of where the field could go. Many curriculum theorists, including Pinar (2004), Grumet (1988), Greene (1971) and Huebner (1992) employed

humanities-based research, and in particular, phenomenological approaches to understanding curriculum.

Rocha (2020) bases his philosophical phenomenology on the phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida. Phenomenology operates within the tradition of empiricism without being reduced to scientism. I also distinguish between what I call *philosophical* phenomenology as my mode of inquiry and what many educational researchers call qualitative phenomenologies. I identify further distinctions within the philosophical phenomenological tradition. I outline how the history of Husserl's phenomenology evolves from Husserl's initial conception of the phenomenological reduction toward his interior radical movement "that characterizes this direct and immediate contact with the world of experience" (Tassone, 2017, p. 4). Husserl's phenomenological reduction is taken from the Latin *re-ducere*, which means to lead back, presumably to some form of immanence, to a source of presence with the world of experience. The question concerning the world of experience is whether that lived experience is to be reproduced or represented unaltered, or whether one has to *do* something with that experience.

A Distinction Between Philosophical and Qualitative Phenomenology

In response to a particular "interpretive" (psychological) phenomenological approach by Smith (2018) which emphasizes self-reflection in subjective experience, van Manen (2018) suggests that this approach acts as a kind of therapy cure, helping participants make sense of major life experiences or trauma. Van Manen's critique centers on Smith's focus on the person and their experience as a participant as opposed to the phenomenon itself. For van Manen (2017), phenomenology is not focused on the

person's ability to make sense of an experience, nor is it the distillation of the meaning of texts. Van Manen explains:

Phenomenology is not the study of how or why people attribute their meanings to texts. As I will show, the focus of phenomenology is on how phenomena are given to us in consciousness and pre-reflective experience. The problem of phenomenology is not how to get from text to meaning, but how to get from meaning to text (p. 2).

One example of the discord between how to interpret phenomenology, the same discord which has perhaps plagued the tradition. For example, Zahavi (2019) critiques van Manen's phenomenological method, referring to it as a distortion of phenomenology. Namely, van Manen's emphasis on phenomenology as the givenness of pre-reflective experience:

"The aim of the phenomenological description cannot be simply to reproduce the original experience unaltered. Rather...we are confronted with the so to speak dumb experience that must then be made to articulate its own sense. One aim of the phenomenological work is consequently to disclose, disentangle, explicate, and articulate those components and structures that are implicitly contained in the pre-reflective experience" (p. 904).

Thus, qualitative phenomenology focuses on unaltered experience, which represents the "lived experience" of interview participants (van Manen, 2017, p. 4). Qualitative researchers use phenomenology to discern the qualitative character of experience, to attend to those parts of experience which go "unreflected and unnoticed" (Zahavi, 2019, p. 901). Zahavi solidifies his argument by stating that Husserl's phenomenology was not the re-production of unreflected experience. Phenomenologists must not forget disclosure, disentanglement, explication, and articulation found *within* lived experience. Zahavi (2019) also demonstrates how logical principles should not be collapsed or reduced into "psychological regularities," or the relation between parts and wholes, for example (p. 903). Philosophical phenomenologies are philosophical analyses, not simply

a form of descriptive psychology.²⁴ If a phenomenology simply describes a phenomenon, Zahavi (2021) reminds us, the phenomenon is not sufficiently problematized, and thus, the phenomenologist remains in the natural attitude. The natural attitude is Husserl's phrase for a world which is simply taken for granted or taken as given. Zahavi suggests that Husserl's phenomenology is much more radical than that, if we want to take philosophy seriously. A philosophical phenomenologist takes a step back from their unexamined experience of the world to suspend their belief in an "absolute existence of the world," no longer taking absolute reality as an unquestioned point of departure (p. 262).

My own purpose is not to enter into the debate discussed above, but to clarify for the role of phenomenology in this dissertation. Following Zahavi (2019) and Rocha (2020), this inquiry is a philosophical phenomenology of confession to re-theorize curriculum as confession, which typically presupposes revelation and certainty.²⁵ What I define as confession is "the passion of non-knowing" which stands against certainty (Caputo & Scanlon, 2005, p. 97). I am thus disentangling, explicating, and articulating the concept and practice of confession as I think and re-think the concept otherwise.

The Tradition of Phenomenology and its Heresies

The distinction I made between a philosophical phenomenology and a qualitative phenomenology above does not settle what the phenomenological *tradition* is. The

²⁴ Husserl uses the phrase "descriptive psychology" in his *Logical Investigations* (2001) but quickly regrets the decision to use the phrase because the movement of his phenomenological method bypasses simple description.

²⁵ For example, the confession of sin and the certainty of forgiveness or salvation. Another example of this is the certainty of one's confession of faith in confessional religion, such as in the Westminster Confession of Faith: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever." Such a question and response assumes the certainty of God, the language of "man" to stand in place of "humanity," and the end point or purpose for humanity.

contestation between what constitutes phenomenology is not only one which exists among philosophers and qualitative researchers but is one which has always existed in the history of the phenomenological tradition. Since Husserl worked to establish phenomenology as a rigorous science, the tradition has produced phenomenological *heresies* that have pushed the boundaries of Husserlian methodology (Moran & Mooney, 2002). The movement of the phenomenological tradition through Heidegger, Levinas, Scheler, Stein, Derrida, and Marion, just to name a few, represents significant breaks in the phenomenological reduction of Husserl to the objectness of objects²⁶. Considering the history of the tradition, it is difficult to provide a coherent definition of what philosophical phenomenology is. For example, Moran (2001) states:

How are we to characterize phenomenology? Whose phenomenology? That the descriptive science of what shows itself in whatever manner it shows itself, as Heidegger calls it, or the science of appearances and of their appearings, the first science of science, first philosophy in its deep Husserlian sense, should admit of such diversity is indeed a challenge both to its claim to be science and to the task of mapping its relation to the analytic tradition or traditions (p. 418).

To use phenomenology as a descriptive science of what shows itself is to open oneself up beyond the strict parameters of scientific inquiry. I do not suggest that science does not yield knowledge or understanding, however Husserl's phenomenological reduction²⁷ has less to do with modern scientism than the ancient Greek notion of empirical research of

²⁶ The "objectness" of objects refers to the subject's gaze toward things in the world. Husserl's phenomenological method attends to things in the world out there, which the phenomenologist must suspend their natural disposition and "bracket" out any presuppositions which might hinder understanding the essential nature of the object. The process of "bracketing" is the suspension of beliefs, ideas, desires, intentions, which appear in the natural attitude mentioned above.

²⁷ I want to make a distinction between a reduction which simply disengages with certain aspects of a phenomenon and a reduction that leads from the natural sphere to its transcendental foundation (*re-ducere*) (Zahavi, 2019).

nature and the mythical tradition when the natural boundaries of conceptualization were surpassed²⁸ (Lather, 2014).

Husserl spent his life attempting to re-work and re-characterize what phenomenology actually *was*, which provided new ground for later thinkers to re-invent the course of the phenomenological tradition, producing considerable debate. Heidegger, for example, rather forcefully added his negative perspective on what phenomenology became by suggesting that phenomenology had descended into becoming a “pimp for public whoring of the mind” (Heidegger, cited in Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 19). In a set of lectures he gave between 1920-1921, entitled *The Phenomenology of the Religious Life*, his own sense was that since Plato, the distinction between objects and things had been blurred. Heidegger argued that stating generalizations or retreating to observations about things does not say anything essential about a phenomenon. Moreover, objects cannot be distinguished from the world they inhabit. He states, “objects, things, and phenomena cannot be placed alongside each other as on a chessboard” (p. 95). Rather, Heidegger (1927/1962) argues, the phenomenologist enacts a “formal indication” of the vague, fluctuating, and manifold philosophical concepts that arise from factual life experience (Dahlstrom, 1994). Thus, what constitutes phenomenology is bound to be as wide as those who attend to the world as it is given. Later phenomenologists diverged from Husserl’s phenomenology, moving away from a reduction to the object and opening up the horizon of the phenomenon.

²⁸ One can see this in the idealism in which Husserl is situated. Loncar (2021) suggests that the mythic and religious is fundamental to understanding the phenomenological tradition, but most especially Heidegger’s ontological investigation of *Sein* (which is traditionally translated as *Being*, but Loncar argues for a translation into *existence*).

The French Theological Turn in Phenomenology

The divergence of later phenomenologists often took shape in what Janicaud (1992) referred to heuristically as a theological *turn*. Whether the so-called “theological turn” stays true to the phenomenological method is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I draw attention to it to indicate the tradition in which I situate myself. Janicaud (1992) believed that the “theological turn” had abandoned Husserl’s commitment to philosophy as a science which determines the givenness of appearances as essential experience (Luft, 2004). Indeed, philosophy as transcendental phenomenology was to “show the way” to the endlessly objectifying natural sciences (Janicaud, 1992, p. 91). Janicaud (1992) explains:

From the moment this concern was overtly abandoned by [Husserl’s] successors, was it any wonder that the phenomenological movement became the shelter for all the metaphysical questions ‘continental’ thought still has not succeeded in throwing off? The shelter also for the summit of all metaphysics, the inevitable mirage of the absolute? (p. 92).

The abandonment that Janicaud cautions against is the addition of theological discourse to the project of phenomenology. Philosophy as a discipline had presumably discarded the theological and committed philosophy to the realm of sophistry. However, the distance which emerged between those philosophers and metaphysical God-talk, or theology, simply created new forms of theological discourse in the wake of the “death of God”²⁹ (Eagleton, 2015). I tend to agree that theology does not “enter” in at the moment

²⁹ The “death of God” is taken from Nietzsche’s statement from *The Gay Science* (1882/1974) in which he states: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” (p. 120). Nietzsche’s sermonic set of statements refer to his idea that the event (or series of events) called the Enlightenment has eliminated the possibility of the existence of God. What stands in the place of divine providence, so

one begins to speak properly about the divine, as though the disciplines including theology, philosophy, and science can be neatly segmented from each other. Rather, there is simultaneously a “rupture” and an “overlapping” between disciplinary discourses that indicates their intrinsic interdisciplinarity. The rupture between disciplinary boundaries is not an “overcoming” or “destruction” of those boundaries, but simply the opening between them that reinforce their need for one another. An example of this is in the reconceptualization of the curriculum field. The reconceptualization did not create new humanities-based directions, it simply exposed openings that were previously hidden from the established discourse of the field. The field was neither destroyed, nor abandoned. As curriculum studies scholars often remind each other, the past is with us in the present. The curriculum field, therefore, took on new shapes and horizons of possibility. However, what counted for “useful” or established knowledge in the neoliberal university often took shape as scientific or empirical concepts or ideas, which is why Janicaud (1992), as noted above, suggested that phenomenology had become a shelter for all manner of metaphysical questions. Such questions are not necessarily welcome in the academy or K-12 schools, and as a result, should be overcome or destroyed by more guaranteed forms of epistemological inquiry that establish positive forms of knowledge.

Phenomenology and Epistemology

Phenomenology initially drew upon epistemological questions, specifically the study of the essence of objects, and what one could grasp. Future thinkers, however, would continue contributing to phenomenological investigations by critiquing Husserl’s

Nietzsche’s rationale goes, are the physical laws of the universe as ultimate reality, and thus poses a tremendous concern for the potential for despair or meaninglessness.

phenomenological reduction while simultaneously utilizing certain parts of it (Janicaud, 1992). Chretien, Marion, and Henry argue that what constitutes phenomenality exceeds what Husserl and even Heidegger acknowledge in their major works. Husserl (1962) recognizes that there are many phenomena which give themselves but do not show themselves. One example of that is Heidegger's investigation into *Dasein* (Being-there or Being-in-the-world), which I will explore in the coming sections. Heidegger is not exploring an object like a hammer, but rather about how using the hammer, and perhaps the failure of the use of a hammer, or the hammer breaking, gives us a "sense" of what it means to exist at all.

Phenomenology during the French turn mentioned above was the pre-condition for a kind of theorization not confined to perceptible entities, but an opening up of phenomena to that which is given in experience. Many things are given in experience that do not neatly fall within the realm of certainty, especially of the sort of immanent certainty sought by positivists.³⁰ Positivists formulated a framework for thinking and understanding the world that serves as the foundation for social science, which as I mentioned in chapter one, is an impositional force in the field of curriculum studies. For example, concepts in our experience such as love or community that are not given to us as objects or things to grasp, however, they remain part of our discursive and immediate relational experiences, including significant others, sons, daughters, and brothers. Certain strands of 20th century philosophy³¹ find a quest for certainty attainable in the same way

³⁰ The positivists I am thinking of are Durkheim (1895/1982), and Comte (1856/1983), who believed that the scientific method should replace metaphysical thinking. The positivism put forth is that all genuine knowledge is either true by definition or positive, exclusively derived from experience.

³¹ The 20th century philosophy strands I am thinking of include analytical philosophy, logical positivism, philosophers of language.

Descartes was able to find certainty of himself as a thinking being. Phenomenology pushed beyond the boundaries of certitude toward new epistemological horizons. The postmodern challenge to modernity raised metaphysical questions once again. Currently, following the presidency of Donald Trump and in the age of COVID-19, questions of the nature of truth, meaning, existence, the body, community, and politics are centered in public discourse (Burns & Cruz, 2021; Murillo, 2021). These are inherently curricular questions.

I read phenomenological thinkers as disrupting modern epistemological and metaphysical discourses, while working within them. This chapter traces the movement of the tradition of phenomenology to the eruptive non-metaphysical differential ontology of Derrida (1967/2011) in which this dissertation is situated. Beginning with Husserl, who formulates the task of philosophy as direct intuition, the phenomenological grasp of *essences*, I attend to the ways phenomenology and deconstruction play a part in the construction of curriculum studies (Aoki, 2004; Pinar & Reynolds, 1992; Greene, 1973; Tarc, 2015; Grumet, 1992; Daignault, 1992). The next sections move through two reductions in phenomenology: Husserl's reduction of everything that does not let itself be led back to the objectivity and transcendental³² of objects, and Heidegger's "reduction," or return to the conditions of possibility to open and lead his investigation "back" to a transcendental horizon. Before the horizon of Being is established, however, I

³² Transcendental refers to a contrast in a simple science of facts, or the psychology of a science of facts as they give themselves. Husserl (1982) distinguishes his phenomenology from a "psychological phenomenology" by adding that it is a "science of essential Being" (p. xx). Husserl's phenomenology is a "science which aims exclusively at establishing 'knowledge of essences'" and from "factual to essential universality" (p. xx).

will describe Husserl's transcendental object which reduces the world to an intentional and constituting "I."

Husserl's Reduction to Objects

The importance of understanding Husserl's phenomenology cannot be overstated because it both provides a starting point and the movement of my inquiry. This dissertation's discussion of confession, subjectivity, truth, community, and curriculum is contingent on Husserl's phenomenological reduction to objects, and especially, the inability of his reduction to produce the essential nature of anything as such. The question as to Husserl's relevance may be answered simply by holding up Husserl as a philosophical thinker who radically rethinks subjectivity in the late modern world. By thinking of the subject as the radical origin of departure, phenomenology can think about a world in relation to the radical immanence of human beings. The radical immanence of human beings served as a conceptual tool to mitigate the "crisis" of the European Sciences attempting to, in Husserl's (1965) thought, eliminate the transcendental subject. Husserl's "crisis" is evident in Pinar's (2004) work on technology as he warns of the imposition of education technology to sublimate human academic study. Forgotten in the process of educational institutions is the radical return to subjectivity which characterizes Husserlian subjectivity.

Kant's critical philosophy and Descartes' *Meditations* (1641/1993) both seek to give an account of the way the world subjectively appears. Descartes' doubts about the external world as the real provides the condition of possibility for the protagonist of the *Meditations* to emerge as a subject who thinks, or the ontology of a thinking being. Importantly, Descartes does not provide a system of thought in his *Meditations*. Descartes

institutes the “I” in philosophical discourse, which rethinks epistemology through subjectivity.³³ Rather, Descartes attempts to eschew the impersonal discourse of philosophy, which can be read as metaphysics. Thus, Descartes’ institution of an “I” who discovers the world is a figure or character like a character in a novel. We, along with Descartes, are grappling with his narration of an experience of the protagonist. The character of the “I” becomes a mediator for us to think alongside the protagonist,³⁴ which is why Moriarty (2008) in his introduction of the *Meditations*, draws upon the phrase “radical reflexivity,” in which “one focuses not on the objects of one’s experience, but on oneself as experiencing it” (p. xxi).

The “self” who experiences the world ushers in a kind of normative mode of thought, and with it the foundation for social, cultural, and political norms. The self likewise is the foundation for the modern novel, with Descartes’ character represented as a “heroic” figure. The self as heroic figure is one who suggests not only an experience, but a way of seeing the world that is unique and set apart from the historical past. Such a unique way of seeing springs from the question: what, then, am I? For Descartes, the question reflects the formulation of a “self” as a thinking thing, which specifically means higher order reflection, but does not mean that there are splits or divides between thought and perception. As Strawson (2017) suggests, although Descartes uses *consciuis* and *conscientia* in a fluid way to mean conscious, it is clear to him that Descartes uses thinking and consciousness as synonymous.

³³ I think that there is no epistemology which has ever been thought through without subjectivity, but it is worth noting that prior to Descartes, subjectivity was subordinate to truth as an ideal which stands apart from experience.

³⁴ I am using protagonist to denote how Descartes’ first-person thinking subject is a “proto-protagonist” that would eventually become the modern novel.

Thinking and consciousness, together, remain the most obvious to us, and also what is perhaps the most difficult to understand. Nobody wakes up and asks someone how to be conscious or how to think, it appears to be something which always already *happens*. I am consciously using the word “happen” to develop a point about curriculum. Thinking is something that is always happening; we think of things because we are part of a world which appears to us. For Descartes (1641/1993), thinking is a general term which is stressed to mean all forms of awareness by the subject as substance whose only essential property is thought. As Descartes (cited in Haldane & Ross, 1911) notes:

thought is a word that covers everything that exists in us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the operations of will, intellect, imagination, and the sense are thoughts (p. 52).

A thought from Descartes’ perspective is a mental state in which a subject is directly conscious, thus, Descartes’ thesis is that the essence of a mind is to be conscious.

Kant (2003), in contrast, questions whether appearances are things-in-themselves, and suggests rather that our minds create a picture of the world which guide what he calls the phenomenal world and the noumenal world.³⁵ Kant, however, suggested that a thought is a kind of unity in an absolute sense, and noted that that a thought is the “logical unity of every thought” which cannot be separated from the “absolute...logical unity of the subject” of the thought (Strawson, 2007, p. 182). In other words, thinking is a

³⁵ The phenomenal world is the world of appearances. It is the world as it appears to a subject through experience. On the other hand, the noumenal world is the world as it really is. Kant’s point is that we have access to the phenomenal world in a way we could not with the noumenal one. We do not see the world as it is, but as it appears to us. This distinction is not without some tension as scholars contend that the distinction is not always sharp. For instance, Uleman (2004) reminds us that “Kant’s chief contribution to metaphysics, in this contemporary sense, has been his doctrine of transcendental idealism and the attendant distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal. There is of course no consensus on the merit of the contribution; many regard it an out-and-out confusion, if not a fatal liability. A clear picture of Kantian external freedom can, I think, help us to see how Kant thought a doctrine like transcendental idealism might fit with the world as we know it. In particular, external freedom shows us how extensive and everyday our traffic with the ‘noumenal’ is, and how inadequate *strictly* phenomenal—that is, natural scientific—descriptions and explanations are to our experience” (p. 598-599, emphasis mine).

movement from the knowledge of the truth to the conclusion of the subject as a metaphysical unity, even if the subject does not fully grasp the world as it is—the thing-in-itself. Kant developed the metaphysical unity of the subject limited by the world as it appears to us. Whatever can be known *a priori* apart from science or systematic doctrine is metaphysical. For instance, God is metaphysical because God is not an object of experience, and thus, belongs to the noumenal world. Despite the noumenal world being hidden from the subject, there are practical uses for the noumenal world, such as the use of God or the self as a metaphysical starting point for morality. For Kant, the use of the noumenal world is pragmatic for the purpose of practical and ethical use. Husserl called on thinkers not to be swayed by idealism,³⁶ but to go back to the “things themselves,” leaving the realm of abstraction to see objects of experience in their essential nature (Rosenthal, 1985, p. 242).

In his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl (2013) responds to Kant’s doubt about the objectivity of appearances by asking whether “a phenomenology that proposed to solve the problems of Objective being, and to present itself actually as philosophy, be branded therefore as transcendental solipsism?” (p. 89). To suggest that the realm of appearances is simply a representation of the world, for Husserl, would simply thrust us into solipsism, the theory that the self is all that can be known to exist.³⁷ Of course, Husserl and many phenomenologists stated that Kant’s separation between the phenomenal realm

³⁶ The philosophy in which something mental (either the mind, spirit, reason, will) is the ultimate foundation of reality.

³⁷ Much has been written about with respect to the relationship between philosophy and colonialism (Dussel, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2013; Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). I gesture toward this relationship because I will be returning to it in a later chapter. For our purposes here it is important to note that Dussel (2007) will trace this “I” of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* as the *ego conquiro*, which constitutes the other as “conquered” (p. 31).

and the noumenal realm is part of a metaphysical system in which Kant attempted to show how subjective forms of intuition and non-empirical knowledge have objective validity for all objects of appearances.

Husserl rejected the split between the phenomenal and noumenal world, and attempted to draw philosophy back into a rigorous investigation of pure consciousness. Thus, what gives itself to us are phenomena, intentional objects that are constituted in and for consciousness. Husserl's project, however, is neither a science of "facts" as determinative *names* for objects, nor is it a synthesizing of perception from sense data. Husserl's phenomenology is not just another name for empiricism, or what Husserl considers a false empiricism, because Husserl suggests that traditional empiricism, descended from Locke and Hume, contains assumptions that do not derive from experience alone. In Husserl's phenomenology, the phenomenon requires a participant to whom the phenomenon gives itself, but the phenomenon does not merely appear, the participant acts to structure the appearances, to describe it, to draw its factials into "essential universalities" (Husserl, 1931/2002, p. 3). The goal of phenomenology is to go back to things themselves by reorienting philosophy as a rigorous science of objects that is more radically subjective than any philosophy dared to be up until then. Husserl's philosophy is radical because the Husserlian phenomenological reduction leads the subject to perpetually return to its subjective foundations (Lauer, 1965).

In Husserl's transcendental *epoché*, a reduction to the ego of consciousness is performed, eliminating all which does not make up the essence of a phenomena, including presuppositions of the appearance. The *epoché* functions to bracket off and suspend judgment and assumptions about the objectivity of the natural world. In the

epoché, the appearance of a phenomenon opens different experiences to the subject. In phenomenology, the subject is conscious of *something*, not everything. In other words, the subject directs consciousness toward something in particular. The directedness of consciousness is an intention of experiences, which Husserl (1964) describes as the opening onto experiences “pregnant”³⁸ in the whole stream of conscious life (p. 125). In consciousness, there is a connection between appearing and existent life, the bond between what is given and ontology.³⁹ Husserl clarifies that phenomenology reduces to the entity that is *there* in the purview of the ego gazing toward it—objects that I perceive through my own subjectivity. Perception itself is not solely sensuous, which may begin one’s phenomenological description, but also of the movement toward non-sensuous intuitions as well. Husserl suggests that our contact with the world are objects of consciousness as opposed to abstract categories or properties. Rather, what we see instead are “coloured things,” not “tone-sensations, but the singer’s song”⁴⁰ (Husserl, 1964, p. 59).

The phenomenologist encounters a problem, however, because phenomenality begins to lose its objectivity in the representative, metaphoric, and unstable use of language to describe that which appears. Husserl recognizes a difference between his early phenomenological reduction to objects of consciousness and where it would eventually move toward. A phenomenon such as time cannot be reduced to an object in a similar way that the idea of selfhood cannot be reduced to an object. Time is not a thing

³⁸ By pregnant, I simply refer to a set of experiences which have many different properties, affects, desires, intentions, and experiences.

³⁹ There is a connection between epistemology and ontology for Husserl.

⁴⁰ Think of the object of consciousness as a red cup or a blue table. What we see is a cup or table which have properties of color.

like a hammer or a pen. Husserl's recognition of this fact caused him to return to the subjective foundations of his phenomenology, and as a result, formulates an understanding of the "objective" nature of phenomenology as intersubjective (Husserl, 1965, p. 151). Intersubjectivity is fundamental to phenomenology because intersubjective experience constitutes us as objectively existing subjects experiencing objects. Husserl's phenomenology attempts to reconstruct the rational structures underneath these constitutive achievements. Time, on the other hand, is an experience that cannot be reduced to an object like a chair. The experience of time is "motionless and yet it flows" (p. 88). Time is experienced as quick or slow, and it is experienced differently in the modern world as it was in the ancient world. In order to think more radically about time, philosophers must move out of the natural, everyday experience of time, and bracket out assumptions about time to move toward an essential understanding of the nature of time.

Within the *epoché*, the transcendental ego begins in the *natural attitude*⁴¹ to impose metaphysical principles into the world. The natural attitude is our everyday attitude of the world. We are conscious of things in the world, but we bypass them, and fail to consider them more deeply because we become used to the world. Our everyday activity lulls our sense of curiosity. The casual, natural attitude assumes or presupposes principles of experience. Rather than think our way outside of the natural attitude, in this sense, phenomenologically, we maintain our principles, no matter if we have considered them or not, because they seem to make sense to us. As a result, the natural attitude becomes a dogmatic way of seeing the world.

⁴¹ The natural attitude is the everyday experience of objects of consciousness that go unquestioned and unexamined.

Husserl's reading of David Hume, for instance, reflects an example of the way intuition helps to ground human experience (Janoušek & Zahavi, 2020). Hume's analysis of causation, for instance, exemplified through the example of one billiard ball which moves and hits another, is indicative of the way causation as a metaphysical principle becomes imposed upon the world through our experiences of temporal relations. When we see a billiard ball hit another ball and cause successive patterns of motion, what we see is a connection of successive temporal events that we *name* causation. Additionally, our presupposition of the sun rising tomorrow morning is a connection to past experience that we impose on the future. This causal working of the mind onto the phenomena that appear to us in experience becomes the formulation of a phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing through a science of *pure* consciousness. Hume's epistemology leads him to what Husserl conceives as a radical subjectivity that has its end in skepticism, however, Husserl seeks to push beyond Hume's skepticism and Kant's dogmatic presuppositions and dualism toward truly *seeing*, or unveiling (Murphy, 1979).

A transcendental subject is not interested in "constructions," but rather a "philosophy of intuitions" (Berger, 1939). Rejecting naturalism as a self-refuting ideology, Husserl takes a transcendental position from Kant, but extends it in a less metaphysical way, suggesting philosophy needs the focus of being in the world⁴² that makes a fundamental break with the natural attitude to grasp the "intentional structures of meaning-constituting consciousness" in a more fundamental way (Moran, 2001, p. 420). Husserl argues for a priority of "absolute consciousness" of the ego who intends a world by which they are constituted and that they constitute. This intentional subject is one who

⁴² Heidegger later uses being-in-the-world to refer to the manifestation of being as a phenomenon of experience.

engages in “perceptions, judgments, feelings as such, and what pertains to them a priori with unlimited generality, as pure instances of pure species” (Dermot & Mooney, 2002, p. 74). Thus, Husserl demonstrates a desire for an objective account of the world that is scientific and satisfies “the principle of freedom from presuppositions,” or a descriptive account of an object that is suppositionless (p. 75). Phenomenology is nothing more than the subject moving *toward* a pure generic essence of knowing and thinking, of coming to an evident understanding. Thus, to come to an object in a natural reflection is the starting point of an intentional act moving toward an intended object that presents itself. That does not always mean, for Husserl, that the object must be “present” physically before the subject, for an object may *present* itself in the mind. Husserl’s call to return to things themselves is imbricated within the history of epistemology, a history that privileges what can be *seen*, as evidenced by the word *theoria*, from where we derive the word theory, meaning a *viewing*, is derived.

Perception, Sense, and the Object

Perception, to extend the *seeing* metaphor, can neither be separated from thoughts nor emotions. Even feelings can be intended, although Husserl seems to follow his mentor Brentano’s understanding of the intentionality of feeling as having “presentations as their foundations” (p. 89). Difficulty arises, however, in the achievement of an objective account of the essence of an intended object from the task of discerning what is really given in experience without regard to “genetic connections, or to extrinsic meaning and valid application” (p. 93). In other words, Husserl does not rely on an analysis of meaning or semantic analysis. Likewise, he is not focused on the establishment of a systematic presentation of formal logic. Rather, Husserl raises questions about the nature

and possibility of epistemological foundations themselves. In his *Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl (1970) characterizes the task of phenomenology as more than simply a task for a professional philosopher or logician. It is the task of all who participate in various vocations—fathers, husbands, citizens—who participate in the “lifeworld,”⁴³ a space in which subjects experience the *given*⁴⁴ together, with Husserl comparing the overturning of traditional forms of thinking toward a phenomenological way of thinking to a form of religious conversion (p. 173). Husserl’s movement in his thinking adopted a framework he identified as the natural attitude, which he suggested we live in most of the time. We experience the world in natural modes of time with regular objects, plants, cars, people, scooters, spread before us. This is an environment. A world. This is a pre-reflective consciousness, to an extent, prior to the domain of transcendental subjectivity. What is needed is a reduction, a suspension of the natural attitude which is infected with prejudices. The phenomenologist must bracket out these things to get at real content. But, of course, real so conceptualized, occurs in a process of intersubjective sense of the object through *noesis* and *noema*, the content as perceived. In contrast to the classic philosophical term—noesis—which is sometimes equated to intellect or intelligence, *noesis* and *noema* refer to the *real* and *ideal* content of an intentional act of

⁴³ Husserl’s lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) should not be confused with Heidegger’s account of the world in his account of *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world. Although I am not certain I agree with the supposed view of Husserl as positing a wordless ego, Sheehan (1997) states that Heidegger’s challenge to the transcendental reduction was that it could not bracket out every and actual part of the world, and could not give an account of the human ego, strictly speaking. He suggests, therefore, that Heidegger conceived of Husserl as participating in a “concrete and ‘immanent’ possibility of ‘factual Dasein’” (p. 52).

⁴⁴ Jean-Luc Marion (1995) uses phenomenology to theorize a “third reduction” to givenness. This is outside of the realm of this dissertation, but what appears in Husserl with the reduction of objectness to objects then manifests itself in the openness of the Being of beings in Heidegger; thus, what is presented in Marion is his determination of givenness and an investigation of the character of the gift. He states, “only a phenomenology of givenness can return to the things themselves because, in order to return to them, it is necessary first to see them, therefore to see them as they come and, in the end, to bear their unpredictable landing” (p. 4).

consciousness⁴⁵ (McNeilly, 2015). In other words, we see an object, but not only a phenomenon which appears, but also the *sense* of the object as well, our apperception of what is immanently given in consciousness *as such*.

Husserl, for instance, gives the example of an apple tree in a garden in the first book of his *Ideas* (1982). We make the distinction between three things: there is the act of perception; the perception itself; and then there is the tree itself. What is perceived is different from the tree itself. Involved in the act of perception is the state of remembering, judging, and believing. The tree as perceived is not the same as the tree “as a tree,” which is to say, the tree as ideal content made immanent object (Husserl, 1982). That ideal or immanent object is not dependent on the actual object itself, but it is also not an image or copy of the real object itself. The goal for a Husserlian phenomenology is not to suggest that the immanent object is a metaphysical addition, but to what is given in the noetic act itself. Thus, I never see simply a thing, but I see something as always already embodying a meaning immanent to consciousness. The natural attitude is the categorization of the subject and the object as twin poles of a movement, but what is opened up in the *noesis-noematic* structure of the intentional act is the givenness of a network of relations between the subject and object, a relation to the world that already “guides” and “directs” the subject toward the world.

The *sense* of the object, and thus, all reality, opens itself to not only the objectness of objects, but to what makes those objects possible. In other words, what does it mean *to be*? In his short essay “My Way to Phenomenology,” Heidegger (1963) states that he arrived at the question of Being after considering phenomenology to be the self-

⁴⁵ It is worth remembering that I am referring to an intentional act as consciousness *of something*, and therefore, an object of consciousness.

manifestation of “what-is present” (p. 254). If Husserl’s question is “what is *there*?” then Heidegger’s question moves to “what *is*?” Or perhaps what is closer is the question, what is the *is-ness* of exists? How do I account for not only what exists as an object of my consciousness, but what is the situated meaning of being human in the world?

Heidegger’s Opening of Being

Heidegger broke with Husserl’s formulation of returning to the things themselves, instead moving toward a reduction of consciousness as embedded to historically lived experience, and therefore to a manifold meaning of being. Husserl did not approve of this move by Heidegger, whose phenomenology Husserl referred to as a philosophical anthropology (Caputo, 1977). Heidegger’s project is somewhat contended, not because we do not understand the question of his investigation, but because it is clear that although Heidegger operates within the tradition of the history of philosophy, he is searching for its enclosure. In his “Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer,” (1959/1971) while speaking with Professor Tomio Tezuka of the Imperial University of Tokyo, they deliberated over why Heidegger did not simply choose another name for the word “*Sein*”⁴⁶ which emerges within the tradition of metaphysics. To this question, Heidegger responds, “How can I give a name to what I’m still searching for?” (Heidegger quoted in Sheehan, 2014, p. 5).

Heidegger, following Husserl’s phenomenological method, moved toward opening up the phenomenological horizon as opposed to the reduction of the object. In the early portions of *Being and Time* (1962/2010), Heidegger makes his critique of the history of metaphysics central to his ontological inquiry. His critique of the history of

⁴⁶ The German word “*Sein*” means “to be.” The phenomenological question for Heidegger examines what it means to be or exist?

metaphysics is that, rather than being an ivory tower discipline, metaphysics gives shape to our historical understanding of “what is,” and determines our presuppositions about the world and ourselves. As opposed to considering understanding as historically contingent, however, metaphysics grounds, frames, and reduces the world in a way Heidegger sees as violent. Heidegger sought to show the way representational thinking is a kind of will to dominate, and that it renders the practice of science and technology as modes of control over humanity⁴⁷. Due to the domination of representational thinking, especially its reduction to math and logic, the innermost possibility of the meaning of being is dimmed and eventually abandoned. The forgetting of being is the fundamental crisis of Western society, according to Heidegger, who points to a nihilism that is embedded into modern life. Heidegger notes that the violence of the modern world is a result of the technological rationality that “devours all materials” (Durst, 1998, p. 95). Heidegger’s project, therefore, offered a rejoinder to the violation of the modern world, seeking to conceptualize a new way of being human.

Ultimately, the new way to be human was the recovery of the question of being which had become forgotten since Plato. We need to take up the question once more, Heidegger (1962/2010) argued, by “letting beings be,” a phrase that suggested the possibility of transcending the violence of modern, representational thinking. For Heidegger (1962/2010), an example of modern, representational thinking is the interpretation of Descartes’ epistemological framework as first philosophy. Descartes is not simply thinking of how one can know the external world, Heidegger (1967) notes, but

⁴⁷ In this sense, we can see traces of Foucault’s thought within Heidegger’s.

is thinking the being of the external world in which knowledge gains its sense.⁴⁸

Descartes' thinking of the being of the external world, therefore, provides the fundamental basis for all thought and the rules that govern reason as such. Heidegger draws the connection between Descartes' thought, what Heidegger calls the "I-principle," and the law of contradiction, which together form the precondition for representational thought in order that the "I" from which all reason is governed remains pure and secured. While Heidegger's critique of the history of metaphysics goes beyond this dissertation, it is worth noting that the decisive aspect of Heidegger's critique is the way metaphysics grounds the preservation of a subject that reduces the world, and thus, subjects the essence of being to the will of the subject. Philosophy as such, then, is grounded by the abstract universal intentional structure of the subject's will, and thus, reduces the world and nature into something that can be harnessed or grasped.

Heidegger's discussion of metaphysics relates to the rise of modern science and the violence of modern technology as being is placed under subjection to the causal world, explained through propositions. The "truthfulness" of those propositions, however, do not give us the "truth" about their objects, but conceal as much as they reveal. Violating the hidden inner force of being would be to foreclose the world, limiting its possibility, for Heidegger. In contrast, he conceptualizes the way being, as a more proper understanding of philosophy, opens itself by exposing or disclosing itself.

The violation of being by enclosing the world dominates particularly because it compartmentalizes and divides the world into entities. We would never know entities, however, if we did not know the way beings and being are structurally interrelated.

⁴⁸ Important within Heidegger's argument is the fundamental interrelationship between being, language, and the world.

Beings are not simply part of the world, they are in the world, and as such, participate in Heidegger's (1962/2010) grand unveiling conceptualization of being. Only when being shows itself can it likewise show itself as that which it is not. Heidegger will explain this in *Being and Time* (1962/2010):

“Here one has in mind certain occurrences in the body which show themselves and which, in showing themselves as thus showing themselves, ‘indicate’ something which does not show itself... Thus appearance, as the appears ‘of something’, does not mean showing-itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does how itself. Appearing is a not-showing-itself” (p. 280).

For Heidegger, appearance is a reference-relation. The “reference-relation” opens up the world beyond a reduction to isolated external abstractions. Going back to the things themselves requires an attention to the way being is constituted in relationship to the world. The opening of being is always interrelated with the world. There is always an involvement with entities in the world, and they exist in reference and relation to other entities. For instance, a hammer and a nail or a paper and pen. These are objects, of course. But their fundamental involvement is not just their relationship to each other, but the way they are used by someone.

Furthermore, the appearance of being is in relation to that which does not appear. For instance, the most famous example of this is presence. If I sit in my classroom, I see who is present. I see the students who were able to make it to class. I also, however, can see as their teacher that they are not altogether present in my classroom. I can see that their thoughts or concerns are elsewhere. Their cares are in another classroom, or their parents shared difficult news to them prior to school. Additionally, the absent students in my classroom also show themselves to the teacher, who must now consider them in their

teaching, planning, and evaluating. In these ways we can see the reference-relation happening within a classroom setting, always already occurring because we experience the world always in relation to another.

Rather than return to the objectivization of the object, as in Husserl⁴⁹, Heidegger argues for an ontological structure of freeing objects from simply being isolated things to become equipment for use. Thus, neither we nor things are the ground of the world, but are *in* the world, even though part of Heidegger's (1962/2010) ontological inquiry is that being-in-the-world is the referential point that constitutes the world and is constitutive of being. Being opens up a "world" as a "pre-ontological *existentiell* signification," which means that one always already has an understanding of being, even if one cannot articulate it philosophically (p. 289). Pre-ontological understanding is the average everydayness of being, which discloses itself to the phenomenologist without utilizing the language of subjectivity, fraught as it is within the modern perceiving self, but he does utilize the analytic of *Dasein*, or Being-in-the-world. *Dasein* is one involved in the world, not separated, as a purveying spectator, but intimately involved.

Dasein cannot escape its own "worldhood," itself constitutive of the existential structure of human being. To speak of a thing in the world suggests Heidegger's notion of Being-with (*mitsein*), an ontological mode of relation. Indeed, what is made manifest in this sense of Being-with is our lack of individuality, which is a turn from the Husserlian transcendental ego.⁵⁰ A phenomenology of *Dasein*, then, is the "hermeneutic in the

⁴⁹ Husserl likewise describes relationship. Objects relate to other objects, especially as the phenomenologist attempts to describe the objectness of objects.

⁵⁰ What I am trying to formulate is not what "I" do in contrast to other persons, but am trying to think through the essence of myself that I share with all other egos—the "pure form" of the I—which transcends difference, such as thinking as such.

primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting” (p. 286). Interpretation becomes the project of existence, for language is the way in which we are conscious of the world. Thus, being, language, and the world are interconnected. The attempt to separate them is considered violent to Heidegger.

In the previous section, what I have explored is Heidegger’s opening up of Husserl’s phenomenological reduction. In this new opening onto the phenomenon of Being, I discussed destruction of the history of metaphysics by directing its aim as positive toward an “arrival at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 44). Heidegger’s destruction, then, is a kind of dismantling which discloses being. Heidegger writes of the “primordial experiences” of Being which are revealed through destruction, yielding a more authentic interpretation of the existence of human being as opposed to philosophy’s misunderstanding. On the other hand, Derrida takes and differentiates Heidegger’s destruction into deconstruction, not as purely negative but which shows reason’s inability to access a pure point of departure⁵¹.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is not a tool of analysis one can apply from a referential point in a concept. Deconstructing something assumes that deconstruction is a method. Rather, deconstruction is a way of reading an *event that happens* from the inside of a concept, finding “the tensions, the contradictions, and the heterogeneity within” (Caputo, 1997, p. 9). Deconstruction is not a destruction of meaning but is a form of reading that

⁵¹ This includes Heidegger’s own formulation of the subsumption of all being.

destabilizes fixed meanings of texts. Instead of the arrival at a stable essence of a thing, a concept, or a text, Derrida points to the neologism *différance* to connote the continual difference of the meaning of a word as well as its deferral. *Différance* signifies the finitude of the subject's ability to preserve what is given to them. Just as water cupped into our hands cannot be contained, so also does deconstruction expose the limits of linguistic expression to represent the world as it is.

In the following section, I outline tenets of Derrida's philosophy, highlighting phenomenology's perpetuation of understanding being as presence. While my discussion of Heidegger's thought focused on the way reductive, representational thinking foreclosed the inner possibility of existence, I show the way Derrida radicalizes Heidegger's thought in his introduction of different concepts such as *différance*, the trace, the differentiation and deferral of the meaning of linguistic structures, and the originary violence of representation or predication. My aim in this section is to show the way these concepts are interrelated in the philosophical movement of deconstruction. Another way of saying this is that these are not concepts that can be simply isolated as in many other philosophical systems, because the point of deconstruction is that it does not function as a system of thought, but as the never-ending dissemination of meaning and the perpetual resistance to totalization.

Derrida's (1997) reading of the history of philosophy as a resistance to totalization is evident in the concept of the trace. In contrast to the suggestion that the trace is a "thing" that represents "things," Derrida (1997) states that "there are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces" (p. 8). The trace of the linguistic sign resides on the border of the difference between one sign and another. But it is not a

difference which maintains its difference *as such* but operates as the trace of the play of difference along the border between signs. This differential relation between signs is not something Derrida invents but receives as a linguistic tradition from de Saussure (2013), who provides insights onto the relational and arbitrary nature of the sign as signifier and signified. If each sign acquires its value because of its differential relation, it can also be said that the sign gains its signification in the deferral of pure signification. Thus, difference and deferral mark language, and are constitutive of experience in a way that resists the language of metaphysics or systematic theories.

The resistance to unification is always already erupted by the trace of the other, which does not exist *as such*, for it is self-effacing. Signifiers viewed as present in Western culture contain traces of absolute signifiers, and thus, can never be fully present. The one is contaminated with the other. The visible is contaminated with the invisible. Such is the reason why in Derrida's now-famous words, "there is no outside-text," he is trying to make the radical point that Rousseau's attempt to circumscribe a transcendental reading of Nature as the self-contained real and natural has never been anything but writing (p. 158). He continues, "there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the 'real' supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus, to infinity, for we have read, in the text, that what is considered absolute present, "has always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearing of natural presence" (p. 159). To say that there has never been anything but writing is to suggest that the self as the place of origin is interrupted by a chain of referential

significations, that we are historical and contextual, that we begin wherever we are haunted by the trace.

The present is always interrupted by the non-present. In *Speech and Phenomenon* (1973), Derrida questions whether Husserl's phenomenological method can indeed remain metaphysically neutral. Husserl's analysis rests upon a metaphysical supposition, Derrida argues, stating that the "principle of all principles" as the "originary giving evidentness" constitutes phenomenology as the "*presence* of sense in a full and originary intuition" (p. 4). This presence of originary evidentness is the living present, indeed, the "self-presence of transcendental life" (p. 6). However, for Derrida the present is always troubled by the non-present. Husserl uses the "living present" to describe the present experience or consciousness of a thing, but also includes within that perception the retention of a concept or presentation in relation to a phenomenon and the anticipation of an approaching future. In contrast, Derrida suggests that the problematization of temporality is inscribed in the moment of difference introduced. That is to say, the condition of possibility for the present is the non-present.

Despite the interruption of the play of *différance*, which I have, following Derrida (1967/1998), formulated as a trace, the attempt to cover over the trace in and as the metaphysics of presence, stabilizes that which is always already unstable, and constitutes a form of exclusionary violence. There is a paradox of signification, namely, that in its mode of inscription always leaves something unrepresented, eliminating the possibility of pure representation, that constitutes an "originary violence" because of the structural uncertainty of an always already "suspect and [corrupt]" representation (p. 106). As a result, the violence of this originary arche-writing is the space of possibility for all forms

of classificatory violences, the violence of difference, the possibility and contamination of representation and misrepresentation. Such a contamination is itself the “loss of the proper” in the idea that one can attain a “self-presence” which has never taken place (p. 112). It is the *mourning* of a dream which has never actually come to fruition, but has always manifested in splits, repetitions, cutting across itself to highlight its own absence.

Presence considered from a pure starting point has been repeated in the history of philosophy as *logos*, or self-presence, which Derrida locates as united to “voice and to breath” (p. 17). That is, the presence of physically speaking, the self-presence of the speaking voice in one’s mind, or the rootedness of *being* in a place. But also in the eyes. As I stated in Derrida’s treatment of Husserl, there stands a metaphorical sensibility which exists in the divine *nous*, the *logos*, which maintains an enclosure of universality and naturalization. A disjunction occurs in the self-presence of the subject, which manifests in the rationalisms of the seventh century and beyond. Attention to the divine voice reaches its climactic point in Rousseau, whom Derrida interrogates. Rousseau’s understanding of writing is that it is secondary, representative, and fallen because it is not the “full and truthful presence” of life (p. 17). It is rather an art or technique, “exiled in the exteriority of the body” (p. 17). Derrida’s deconstruction of structural linguistics of Saussure in the relationship between signifier and signified, and in particular, to dislocate the originary inscription of a transcendental signified, was coupled with a deconstruction of the split found in writing in Rousseau through presence/absence and nature/culture. It would be a mistake, however, to read Derrida suggesting that what his project seeks to do is to collapse these binaries. Derrida neither seeks to destroy, overcome, nor even reject

them. To do so would simply enact what can only be referred to as a kind of Heideggerian hope, the end of philosophy and the full disclosure of Being as such.

Being, however, is not a metaphysical entity stands outside of the world, but rather, in the Heideggerian *destruktion* to reveal what is hidden within the structures of philosophical discourse, is essentially historical, and thus, has no possibility in a “pure point of departure” (Derrida, 2019, p. 90). This ontological difference sets up the possibility for Derrida’s deconstructive project. Derrida’s concern is difference as both finitude and “something other” than finitude. *Différance* is the very possibility of presence as well as the “unperceived, the nonpresent, and the nonconscious” (p. 68). The determination of a present subject is never an operation of pure convention, never an “indifferent gesture in reaction to writing” (p. 69). In fact, to do so, Derrida argues, would be a life without difference, namely death. Wrestling with curriculum as confession, this dissertation must show the way confession and educational experience interrupt and defer pure points of departure in curriculum “understanding,” and notions of objectivity and subjectivity in order to describe the relationality at the heart of curriculum theorizing.

Conclusion and Summary

Derrida’s conception of “originary” violence is at the heart of understanding curriculum, if such an understanding is possible, which traditionally assumes the determination of the certainty of truth. During this chapter, I elaborated on the modes of inquiry employed in this dissertation. Expounding upon a portion of the tradition of phenomenology, I focused on Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida to show both the ways phenomenology reduced phenomena to objects of consciousness and the subsequent

opening up of the horizon of phenomenality in Heidegger. Derrida believed phenomenology, despite remaining within the tradition, was privileged self-presence and the immediacy of experience. Phenomenology valorizes and advances an undivided and unfractured subjectivity. The immediacy of experience and metaphysics of presence is not just an ideology to believe in, or an intellectual exercise for philosophers. According to Derrida, it is the very way we have made the world, a world that has reduced knowledge to certainty and to presence as completion or wholeness.

The metaphysics of presence which reduces the world to completion or wholeness, to facts, data, and certainty, is violent. Derrida's work is often represented as a nihilistic or anarchistic, politically, with the suggestion that Derrida's work on deconstruction negates ethics and politics. Derrida's work does precisely the opposite. His work deeply considers the political and the ethical, concerning itself with the question of justice. Interpretations of democracy, knowledge, justice, politics, schooling, and education rely on the manifestation of an absolute answer for questions at which Derrida refuses to arrive. The construction of answers as writing and violence are never far from one another. They are inextricably linked to each other. I take Derrida's position on violence to be a tension in which we must live and move, because his politics is not the espousal of a certain position of law, but an openness to the force of the law, the force of difference to which curriculum scholarship must attend.

Schools utilize the metaphysics of presence in instruction and evaluation. Tyler's "rationale," which I explored in the first chapter, is a logic of evaluation that has set the trend for curriculum development, organizing, and planning. Tyler's logic of evaluation perpetuates the privileging of presence over absence as many students are cultivated

toward a world of pure meaning, pure epistemological grounding, and certainty over uncertainty. In contrast, experience shows a world of tensions that do not fit neatly on an answer sheet. Pinar (2004) speaks presciently about the “nightmare that is the present” haunting educational institutions committed to an epistemological certainty which feeds the “bottom line” in standardized test scores (p. xii). I turn next to the reactivation of the past by exploring the violence of concepts, especially curricular conceptualizations. I want to think about the nature of violence in constructions, and how deconstruction helps me think through the nature of violence toward confession.

Deconstruction provides a mode of inquiry because ultimately, there is no certainty or justice in the supposedly neat pragmatism of evaluation. The arrival of completion or presence is always deferred. It never arrives, as Derrida (1998) reminds us, because the coming of the force of difference is never complete. Larsen (2012) compares the force of difference to a butterfly, suggesting that if you attempt to grasp it, you actually kill it. The purpose of the butterfly, a metaphor for difference, is not in the grasping as much as it is in the pursuit. In the following chapter, I offer a re-thinking of pursuit as academic study.

Chapter III

The Violence of Conceptualization

“We use language to colonize others in our family and in school. And even as we eradicate one form of violence or cruelty, another cruelty will be there to replace it—and perhaps with more terror and tenacity” (Tarc, 2015, p. 128).

The absolute immediacy of selfhood and its connection to power and violence is what I explore in this chapter. I provide a reading of Derrida’s (1967/1978) essay “Violence and Metaphysics” in which he discusses Levinas’ ontological critique of Husserl and Heidegger. In doing so, I reflect on the violence inherent in conceptualization of curriculum as enacted in schools. To *grasp* curriculum, a seizure which stands at the center of modern history and philosophy, various “stakeholders” have dictated curriculum for the public and institutionalized the “historic mistake” of conflating curriculum and instruction (Pinar, 2006, p. 110). That mistake inscribed curriculum at the “site of the teacher,” the subject who puts on display, through foreclosed and institutionalized knowledges, the various forms of social violence such as poverty, incarceration, deportation, dispossession, war, and “school deform” (Pinar, 2012; p. 59; Burns, 2018). The radical departure from static and linear logics of curriculum in this investigation lie in my consideration of the *trace*, which disrupts ahistorical conceptualizations of curriculum (Derrida, 1967). Derrida (1967/1978; 1967/1973) theorizes that meaning is located within the trace, which is not a place. The trace is the act of difference, the interplay of presence and absence in contrast to the

privilege of origin or presence found in the history of Western philosophy.⁵² I use the concept of the trace to theorize the violence of conceptualization as the inability to reduce what is transcendent in terms of immanence. My inquiry suggests that the way to reduce the world to immanentist conceptualizations is particularly conditioned by the violence of colonial power by the Western, conquering subject inaugurated in the 15th century. Thus, if language is the attempt to put experience into words, and that attempt violates or reduces the other and enacts violence on another, then how can we speak of our experiences? Can we give an account of our experience of a poem or teaching without committing violence or are we reduced to silence? Does silence do justice to educational experience?

In this chapter, I also historically frame the violence of curricular concepts throughout curriculum history. By exploring the role of the proponents of the social efficiency movement, I show how the institutionalization of identity and the erasure of difference through established knowledge constitutes the continuance of colonial domination and seizure⁵³. I further demonstrate the way reconceptualist curriculum scholars used phenomenology to dislodge attempts to naturalize curriculum as “objective” or “scientific” and argue that the reconceptualization does not, however, remove curriculum scholars outside of the economy of violence. Similar to Derrida’s (1967/1978) critique of Levinas in “Violence and Metaphysics,” I argue that the

⁵² The principle of presence is metaphysical, emerging from Aristotle (1981), who thinks of time as the now point, or what is present-at-hand. Aristotle’s conception of time essentially determines subsequent thought on time until Heidegger (1927/2014), who refers to entities as “grasped” in their being as “presence” (p. 26). What Heidegger means is that being is understood in the present.

⁵³ I am suggesting an immediacy of the one who has the concept also having the thing itself. The immediacy of the concept and the thing itself covers over the trace.

reconceptualization was necessary for the curriculum field to open up the horizon of curriculum, but that it, like all language, can fall prey to violence if it overdetermines the role of subjectivity because curriculum exceeds conceptualization. Nevertheless, deconstruction, uncontrolled by a subject, because of the quasi-transcendental movement of *différance*, continually opens concepts such as curriculum to the possibility of future transformation.

Violence and Metaphysics

Phenomenology, as the science of what appears, reduces what appears to a constituting-I, an absolute subject “objectively” performing a reduction that allows the subject to see the object there as it essentially is. The phenomenologist does not act as a solipsist, because Husserl (1982) is clear that experience is intersubjective. To perform a phenomenological reduction valid for everyone, however, the subject must bracket out or disregard anything that relates to other subjectivities (Husserl, 1982). In Husserl’s (2013) *Cartesian Meditations*, he states that a “thematic exclusion of the constitutional effects produced by experiencing something other, together with the effects of all the further modes of consciousness relating to something other” (p. 95). Bracketing out anything that relates to other subjectivities includes any shared social, economic, or cultural constitutions in order to understand an “objective” world existing for all. What is left after the reduction is present to me as my own. Alterity, or, the other, is eliminated for the purpose of grasping or *understanding*.

Phenomenology⁵⁴ and ontology⁵⁵ function to eliminate the presence of alterity, reflecting a form of domination and subjugation of the other by maintaining the absolute sovereignty of the “I.” Ontology maintains unified being *against* the other. Eliminating difference toward the unity of metaphysics, the entire philosophical tradition makes common cause with oppression and totalitarianism of the same (Derrida, 1967/1978). Derrida (1967/1978) agreed with Levinas in his essay, “Violence and Metaphysics,” stating that “ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power” (p. 69). Ontology is a philosophy of power because the study of being opens up being to subsume alterity, making the other an “abstraction,” neutralizing the desire that Derrida (1967/1978) calls the “first violence” (p. 99). Derrida instead points to Levinas’ primary ethical philosophy in the face-to-face encounter.⁵⁶ Language given through writing signifies signs and not the accusative expressions of the face. Yet we cannot speak about the other in terms that reduce the face, because the other is irreducible alterity. The face of the other summons us to an infinite responsibility for the other. The *encounter*, and in particular the encounter which fully *respects* the other would be a world of peace, a world without war, according to Levinas.

Levinas’ ethical system, Derrida suggests, privileges peace over war. Derrida critiques Levinas’ privileging of peace over war as a standard because it mistakes the reality of our historical inheritances in which we all participate differentially. The

⁵⁴ Phenomenology is the study of the structure of appearances.

⁵⁵ Ontology is a branch of metaphysics. It is the study of the nature of being.

⁵⁶ Notice that my re-reading of “Violence and Metaphysics” reads Derrida reading Levinas. My reading is a doubled-reading in that sense. Moreover, Levinas (1969) makes particular focus on the face as the site of ethical encounter. Derrida in large part agrees with Levinas’ critique of phenomenology and ontology, but extends his same metaphysical critique to Levinas.

privilege of war over peace to capture the difference of war and peace resides along a tight border wherein Derrida suggests is where the trace of God, and thus, peace, “plays” (p. 107). The problematic of conceptualization is the reduction of a phenomenon to its essence. Reduction of the phenomenon to its essence is the desire of presence and consequently, the eradication of the trace. Derrida has an affinity with negative theology, although he does not specifically subscribe to it. In negative theology, one goes beyond affirmations or acknowledgments via negations. Meister Eckhart’s (1986) preference is for saying “God is not” rather than “God is” is because the latter is said about entities like you and me. To say “God is not” however, is to suggest that there is a Being beyond Being. This is what Derrida repudiates, to a certain degree. Difference is the refusal of this or that to any givenness to intuition or vision. What can be discerned is through the trace, differing and deferring pure definability. Derrida (1995) explains, “I trust no text that is not in some way contaminated with negative theology, and even among those texts that apparently do not have, want, or believe they have any relation with theology in general” (p. 69). This contamination, recognized in deconstruction, is why the privilege of peace that is reducible to silence in the face-to-face encounter is interrogated.

Derrida borrows the concept of the trace from Levinas (1969), who critiques Heidegger’s ontology as the enclosure, or assimilation, of otherness into sameness. The implications of Husserl’s transcendental “I” to Heidegger’s investigation into the horizon of *Sein* (Being) as ontologically distinct from entities in the world is *ipso facto* a form of violence (Derrida, 1967/1978). Indeed, metaphysics, what Levinas (1969) calls a tradition of enclosure and subsumption as first philosophy, is violence (Derrida, 1978). Wood (2005), likewise, states that our attempts at conceptualization often forget the ethical

demand of *knowing*, and he further urges that the “philosophy of violence must never forget the violence of philosophy” (p. 27). For example, the violence of totalization “dominates Western philosophy” (Levinas, 1969, p. 21). The domination to which Levinas (1969) refers, is not merely a modern story, if by modern one simply means a 16th century phenomenon that signifies the rise of an autonomous, universal, singular self. Such a self is constructed through a collapse in the distinction between knowledge and comprehension. In other words, for one to know, one must comprehend, and thereby acquire a *certainty* that which one *knows*.

Traditionally, philosophy exists as a disciplinary tradition that attempted to fashion itself as secular and value neutral. The presence of an absolute selfhood through which the philosopher understood the world became conditioned by “neutral” reason and became *established* and hegemonic. The gendered language of reason is the condition of possibility for the emergence of European and North American normativity, with knowledge privileging the “positive,” the visible over the invisible, empirical experience over reason. The secular becomes universalized as Eurocentrism as the institutional world expands and advances. Because education, understood as schooling, is an institution that exists within an institutionalized society, we may read the secular as a re-narration of the privileging of the universal, the redefinition of the human into modern, secular Western man through the organization of absolute biological entities in the violence of racially gendered capitalism (Wynter, 1995; Carter, 2008).

Rather than privilege the “regulative idea” fashioned as the absolute being-for-itself, an idea which Dussel (2009) notes is the organizing principle of the “I conquer” in coloniality, Levinas and Derrida offer alterity as the perpetual disruption of being-for-

itself. Alterity is the structural possibility of the movement of time, history, and desire as the “absolute alterity of each instant...without which there would be no time” (Derrida, 1978, p. 91). A pattern emerges, which makes no claim on Being, the meaning of Being, or even whether there is a Being of beings. How then can we continue to speak if our language violates the world?

Violence, Knowledge, and Domination

The logics of totalizing domination in authoritarian discourses around educational assessment reduce curriculum to an instrumental mechanism of domination (Pinar, 2012; Taubman, 2009). High-stakes testing functions as a universal, neutral tool of the state to constitute the subject under the threat of discipline. The measure of knowledge is based on its utility on tests to determine institutional aims and outcomes, and, as a result, knowledge must be reduced to the objective and controllable production of outcomes through testing because the extractive nature of tests are meant to provide proof of the student’s *fitness* within the American national project.

Health, then, is at the heart of the promotion of standardized tests, because tests “prove” whether we have declined as a nation, feeding into racialized and gendered anxieties around masculinity and whiteness as exemplified in the Moynihan Report, which diagnosed educational underachievement due to absent black fathers (Pinar, 2004). The framework of “health,” a word within educational scientific research that hearkens back to G. Stanley Hall’s vision of education as schooling, examines every aspect of the school “from the site of buildings to the contents of every textbook, to the methods of each branch of study...from the standpoint of health” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 40). From this perspective, education is reduced to schooling to reinforce selected norms which are

concerned with “the order of society,” as well as with students, teachers, and scholars who “detach [themselves] from ethical and personal...commitments” (Simons, Masschelein, & Quaghebeur, 2005, p. 821). A lack of commitment to institutionally selected norms constitutes deviant behaviors, opposing rules and standards of truth which guides both American schooling and the structure of American political thought (Foucault, 2007).

An instance of selected norms that has become institutionalized in high school curricula is the new civic curriculum signed into law by the Florida legislature and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis⁵⁷. The effort to “school” children in what constitutes the “traits” of desirable citizenry reflects an attempt to quash efforts at teaching alternative or subjugated narratives to established stories. Educational stakeholders prescribed a story of American culture that does not deal with the necessary questions for deeply thinking citizenry. Florida’s authoritarian law attempts to further marginalize any dissenting ideas that do not conform to a rigid conservatism. DeSantis’ curriculum project is not new, and is part of a number of neoliberal reforms which have turned public spheres into institutions increasingly instrumentalized and subject to the corporate sector (Shore & Wright, 1999). The long-term neoliberal project set the table for resurgent authoritarianism on display by the current political system. Although I have dealt primarily with Republicans in Florida, it should be pointed out that center-right establishment liberals have engaged in their own form of soft authoritarianism, such as in the examples of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s promoted takeover of public

⁵⁷ DeSantis and the Florida legislature’s actions on the new “don’t say gay” bill and anti-CRT legislation is a national trend with many US states targeting curricula at K-12 and higher education levels, including in teacher education. This is a growing phenomenon within the Republican Party.

education in New Orleans and President Obama's Race to the Top Program. These forms of soft authoritarianism function to promote efficiency and "excellence" as a model for ascendant coercive accountability measures.

As part of a larger project of neoliberal reforms since the late 1970s which coincided with the rise of the Reagan administration's discourse on "excellence," K-12 schools became the site of audit technologies of power to normalize hyper-visibility among students, teachers, administrators, schools, and communities. As Burns (2018) notes, normalizing hyper-visibility required the subjugation and subjection of individuals to normative rules by which subjects are constituted. A doubled activity occurs in the process of subjectivation, however, because while subjects are disciplined and made hyper-visible, the subject also is conditioned toward a form of self-auditing which would comply with compulsory "extractions of truth" (Foucault, 2007, p. 185; Taubman, 2009). Imposed accountability measures on teachers and students habituate individuals to accept accountability systems as the norm, existing largely value-neutral, as "objective" facts supposedly separate from social and moral philosophies that perpetuate ideologies. Despite the mythological presentation of accountability measures as value-neutral, individuals existing within an institutional structure can serve to perpetuate the ideology even further by becoming habituated to them and complying with them uncritically.

The violence of conceptualization is discursive, represented through Eurocentric scientific objective knowledge passed through institutions such as the school (Foucault, 1977). Schooling becomes the mechanism for the legitimating transference of normative discourses, and not only in what is deemed "official" curricula, but also in unofficial curricular spaces, what Anyon (1980) called the "hidden curriculum" that has tacitly

prepared students for the process of production, the development of the reproduction of inequitable social classes, and thus, the ways teachers and students make meaning of themselves and the world (p. 90). For example, during my first period in my sixth grade English class, my teacher turned on the television right before a second plane crashed into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. In a classroom where I read *The Giver* (2012), a dystopian novel in which the members of a community are drugged to forget memories and live within strict boundaries, I also witnessed the dissemination of crisis narratives to protect a bounded future through war and dispossession that I had yet to consider, but was being inscribed for me. As Burns (2018) puts it, this future was a “collection of potential crises that must be anticipated, prevented, or, better yet, profitably managed” (p. 97). The perpetuation of crisis narratives is not new American violence, but there are moments of the awareness of violence that I identify as entangled events, assemblages of violence imbricated with multiple intersecting forms of marginalization and oppression (Wozolek, 2020).

The Violence of (Curricular) Concepts

It is not easy for me to be comfortable in the world of curriculum theorizing, and I might add, educational research more broadly. The abstraction of academic words and the naming of “others” and their experiences feels detached, remote, and even, at times, authoritarian. It is perhaps because of the “abyss” that exists between academia and my own lived experience that I am always attentive to the metaphor of “crossing,” as through the movement of history, flesh, geographies, and experiences. Such a movement across the “abyss” is, as Glissant (1990) states, what “made us, the descendants, one people among others” (p. 8). The experience of the abyss is, therefore, an economy or a social

arrangement of relations with formative effect (Reumann, 1959). Self-formation, in which we constitute our subjectivities and by which we are constituted, attempts to grasp a self that is elusive. As Casemore (2005) mentions, as we are attempting to understand, the meanings that bear upon the self “endlessly exceed our grasp” (p. 40). The revelation of one’s self assumes a static knowledge of the construction of the self. What we are given access to is not a static self, but a fragmented one, the point from which I attempt to understand curriculum as confession. Both temporality and life pose a problem for me because part of what I consider education has to do with the naming and gestures of our representations⁵⁸: To what do they point? To what or whom are we confessing as we *experience*? Is confession simply a relation to power, or is it an inward response to power and oppression? Curriculum reconceptualized as confession cannot be simply knowledge transfer for the purpose of assessment that reduces the individual and the world to a set of answers.

Social Efficiency and Violence

Discourses of implementation and design are structured to posit curriculum as an object through which teachers act as dispensers of knowledge to receptive students. Teaching and learning are positioned as a transaction, like the input and output of an automated teller machine (ATM). Transactional modes of learning have an extensive history that dates to the early 20th century. Transactional learning serves institutional values of “efficiency,” a word in which many in the 20th century were fascinated (Knoll, 2009). The London Spectator in 1902 wrote:

At the present time, and perhaps it is the most notable social fact of this age there is a universal outcry for efficiency in all the departments of society, in all aspects

⁵⁸ Representational knowledge is simply a theory of knowledge which holds that a substitute such as a sign stands in place of a thing itself.

of life. We hear the outcry on all hands and from the most unexpected of persons. From the pulpit, the newspaper, the hustings, in the drawing-room, the smoking-room, the street, the same cry is heard: Give us Efficiency (sic), or we die (quoted in Searle, 1971, p. 1).

Efficiency still dominates educational discourses, because of an overarching belief in the power of technology, science, social progress, and the pervasive ideology of the supremacy of Western man.⁵⁹ Educators were just as much part of the efficiency movement. In *The Shaping of the American High School*, Krug (1964) argued that the social efficiency movement mobilized as a result of problems in urbanization, industrialization, and immigration became too much for the existing American governing structures. As a result, citizen anxiety over the decline of the country motivated calls for educational reform (Lasch, 1997). The term “social efficiency” was so powerful that it, Krug (1964) maintained, united conservatives and progressives, and it was even employed by traditional classicists. While the phrase “social efficiency” was not employed as a homogenous concept, the majority of users emphasized the phrase to express “technical efficiency” which would mirror the social (p. 87). Thus, social efficiency was seen as a wildly popular humanistic view.

Kliebard (2002) states that by 1916, the same year as the publication of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*, Thomas Jesse Jones compiled a report from a committee on social studies that determined the “keynote” of modern education as “social efficiency,” and that “all subjects should contribute to [that] end” (p. 34). The appeal to social efficiency was that it coalesced nicely with Frederick Winslow Taylor’s scientific

⁵⁹ I use “man” here to denote the same idea Wynter (2015) uses to refer to the production of a subject which exclaimed its own universality in terms of what it means to be human. Wynter (2015) writes that our “now immensely large-scale systemic injustices, as extended across the planet, are all themselves as law-likely and co-relatedly indispensable to the institutionalization of our now purely secular and therefore Western and Westernized liberal/neoliberal Man’s *homo oeconomicus*’s biocosmogonically chartering origin narrative!” (p. 38).

management in industry, “combining moral uplift with the hard realities of a science defined in terms of precision and predictability” (p. 35). Social efficiency as a movement attempted to get the social order, and particularly, the school, to operate as efficiently as a “modern factory” (p. 35). To operate like a “modern factory,” each member of the society and school would have their “place” determined hierarchically within the social order, a popular idea within a rapidly changing world.

In determining modern education as social efficiency, Jones (1908) outlined goals that functioned as training for the common good and attempted to get the American curriculum to “contribute to...the evolution of the races” (p. 67). The evolution of the races was part of a system of racial classification that Jones deemed as scientific (Johnson, 2000). Jones neither believed that the races were “eternally inferior,” nor that they were “equal,” but that the goal of modern education was to socialize Black students “into the outward manners of the Anglo-Saxon Protestants” (Johnson, 2000, p. 80). Johnson (2000) argues that Jones’ views were the dominant views of society, and that the social efficiency movement was connected to the dominant worldviews of colonialism, situated as Christian altruism, which maintained that “higher” nations and people needed to bring “civilization” to lesser forms of nations or people (p. 81). Of course, by “higher,” what is meant is the practical and economic determination of market-based structures (Giddens, 1984). The aim of social efficiency is another reduction that is not philosophical, despite emerging from a philosophical disposition, but a concern for all that is practical and a bracketing out of what is impractical. The language of “skills” and “competencies” became dominant to satisfy the demands of business and economic leaders (Larabee, 1997).

The social efficiency movement has followed us into the 21st century as neoliberal reforms have dismantled public spaces in favor of further market reforms. James Carville, a strategist for Bill Clinton during his successful 1992 presidential bid, evidently posted signs around campaign headquarters stating, “the economy, stupid,” which became a rallying cry for the campaign. That logic, successful in 1992, took hold in 1996, when a Michigan Jobs Commission stated that “it’s more important to align adult education programs with the needs of employers rather than to educate people for education’s sake” (Cole, 1996). The aim of education continued a trend toward vocationalism, which suggests that schools must play the part of mechanistic vocational training. The logic is compelling for many voters. After all, people’s pensions, their economic well-being, their family’s well-being, and the state of their communities, so the logic goes, depend on the ability of schools to turn students into productive workers for economic societal growth and development.⁶⁰

The relationship between the social efficiency movement, race, and social class is well documented by Howard and Tappan (2009), who suggest that American schooling suffers from an “egalitarian myth” believed by most Americans about the poor (p. 323). They indicate that most people believe that social institutions, due to more pronounced efficiency and accountability measures, are predominantly equal, and actually help people move up the economic ladder. Historically, poverty is seen, in America, as an unfortunate event that is a product of poor people’s decisions (Mantsios, 2001). The dominant belief is that the poor have made decisions which have put them in a poverty-

⁶⁰ Development is a word Dewey (1916) loves to use. It is important to show how Dewey is part of this social efficiency conversation while at the same time showing the nuance of his position, which actively promoted the freedom of the student to develop through educational experiences which would likely look very different from the high-stakes testing often seen in public schools today.

stricken position, and that their decisions can help them get out of it. Ben Carson, President Trump's Housing and Urban Development Secretary who served under President Donald Trump's administration, stated that poverty was "a state of mind" (Fessler, 2017). JD Vance,⁶¹ a prominent author who wrote the bestseller, *Hillbilly Elegy* (2016), later made into a Ron Howard film on Netflix, wrote of his resentment for people using food stamps while talking on cellphones that he could not afford. Dave Ramsey, a prominent evangelical radio host who uses a for-profit curriculum called Financial Peace University that "teaches people how to handle money God's ways," perpetuates the ideology of poverty as a choice by suggesting that there is a "direct correlation" between your "habits, choices" and your "propensity to build wealth" (Held Evans, 2013). I provide these examples to show how pervasive the ideology that poverty is a choice because it is so clearly divorced from the reality of poverty in America.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2020), more than four in 10 children live in a household that struggles to meet basic expenses, while between seven and 11 million children live in households in which they have food shortages. The CBPP also reports that one in seven children are poor, very clearly not a result of the economic choices they have made. Real median household incomes have gone down since the 1970s, with Hispanic and Black households showing significant drops in median household income from 2019 to 2020 (Shrider et al., 2021). While the myth of meritocracy has persisted for some time, Americans born after 1980 have a statistically lesser odds of doing economically better than their parents did (Chetty et al., 2017). The

⁶¹ Vance, after admonishing Trump's rhetoric, has joined Trump's discourse on undocumented immigration and widespread voter fraud. My best attempt at understanding this switch is that he is now running for the Senate seat in Ohio in 2022.

decline of the middle-class in recent years illustrates the failure of public policy to help individuals and families economically, with gaps in income for upper-income and lower-income households rising (Horowitz, Igielnik & Kochhar, 2020). Between 2000 to 2018, lower-tier income has remained largely the same, while the share of income among upper income households has risen from 29 percent of the share of U.S. aggregate income to 48 percent (Horowitz, Igielnik & Kochhar, 2020). Those statistics indicate that the “myth of meritocracy,” which states that poverty is a result of decisions made by lower-income individuals, provides comfort for the upper and middle classes to maintain the status quo while providing hope for the poor to be able to get out of their situation (Boudon, 1990/1994). As a result, the myth continues to be delivered to people via the media, social media, movies, television, and especially, in schools.

Educational researchers generally agree there is a correlation between educational attainment and social class, and that schooling often functions to reproduce the social, cultural, and economic order (Brantlinger, 2003; Metz, 1998; Nieto, 2005; Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Schools, which were seen as “equalizers” among social classes and races, a central premise of the social efficiency movement, were critical in delivering the ideas and habits that best served dominant classes and groups and functioned to control and dominate the poor and oppressed (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1981). If one understands that educational outcomes are determined by dominant classes, “school failure [becomes] a perfectly understandable byproduct of this control” (Nieto, 1996, p. 234).

We can understand the byproduct of the control of social class because it is a constructed lived experience conditioned by specific habits that form particular kinds of

subjects who believe that schools can aid the poor and working class, despite research that discusses the ways middle class culture disadvantages those very students (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu, 1984; Apple, 1996). One recent example of the way that the myth of meritocracy is promoted is through the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), created in 1926 during the height of the social efficiency movement and owned by The College Board, a private organization. The SATs were created after a largescale wave of immigration, and the nation wanted to sort out who would be considered “feeble-minded” or “dumb” and who would be “good people” (Hammond, 2020). Carl Brigham, of Princeton University, wrote a book in 1923 entitled *A Study of American Intelligence*, which showed the superiority of “the Nordic race group” and warned of intermingling of new immigrants which would dilute the established superior race (p. 197). Brigham’s book became a sensation, and he was commissioned to develop the SATs, which has historically served as a gatekeeper for college attendance and indicated which colleges they can attend. A recent study by Kantrowitz (2021) shows that admissions tests such as the SATs have discriminated against minority and low-income students. In fact, success, failure, and meritocracy around the SATs, seen to be a value-neutral test, rise and fall on the basis of income, not intelligence (Sandel, 2020). In fact, Harvard announced on December 16, 2021, that they will not require applicants to submit SAT scores through 2026, joining other colleges that have temporarily or permanently banned admissions tests (Picchi, 2021). The news of Harvard’s dispensing of admissions test requirement comes after nearly a century of SAT requirements, effectively admitting that the test requirement was an effort to discriminate among upper and lower classes and those considered inferior. By controlling the structure of schooling and the parameters of the

education field in service of dominant classes, it is difficult to not see the ways in which curriculum history has used mechanisms such as educational policy, reforms, classroom practice, educational research, compulsory schooling, and textbooks to create established norms of thinking around social class and social efficiency (Baker, 2009).

The Efficiency and Control of Knowledge in Textbooks

In order to exercise control over “curricular” experiences, Miller (2005) notes, information was “squeezed into textbooks” (p. 3). Indeed, the relationship between curriculum and textbooks is one that has much support (Kliebard, 2004; Noddings, 2013). Historically, therefore, the American curriculum has predominantly been conceptualized as a disparate set of books on particular topics driven by particular movements (Casey and McCanless, 2018). Dewey’s (1915) *The School and Society* noted that the educationalist should concern himself with the “utter triviality of subject-matter in elementary and secondary education” due to impracticality of knowledge that did not fit with the student’s lived reality (p. 47). Textbooks served students who did not have the consistency of a plan of study from primary to secondary school and beyond and clarified established and institutionalized knowledges for students and teachers to make instruction more efficient between primary and secondary students.

Bounded knowledge in textbooks became an instrumental archive devoid of historical and social context. Knowledge masqueraded as context-free is ideologically driven, as Kuhn (1962/2012) discusses regarding the development of science. Scientific revolutions, paradigm shifts, and creative science has been covered over in the past in favor of the immutable laws of science in textbooks, delivering a version of science that is unchanging. Students do not receive a historical representation of shifting scientific

paradigms, but rather receive methodologies, facts, and figures of science as a pronouncement of its stasis.

Textbooks appear benign, as just containing facts about the world, but can be tools for governance under the guise of the condensing of knowledge which has most value for the student (McKnight, 2003). Dewey (1991) regarded textbooks inadequate for the child's development and condemned rote pedagogical method as non-educative. To counteract the stultification of schooling, Dewey's (1991) pedagogical principle situates the child in the real world to find what they learn through textbooks. Nevertheless, a focus on the establishment of "valuable" knowledge in relation to texts passed down to teachers and students has become a curricular principle.

The curriculum principle, formulated in Herbert Spencer's (1860) questions, "which knowledge is most worth?," became important to ensure students were learning only what would be practical and valuable for their future lives. Franklin Bobbit (1934) suggests that "curriculum confusion" around what should be learned is a result of "the good life" not being laid out clearly and simply (p. 266). Bobbit (1934) seemed to suggest that to relinquish standardized testing and objectives, we must clearly know what the good life is—which he refers to as a "living, flowing, and elusive process" (p. 266). However, these processes operate through the activities one needs to determine attitudes, habits, abilities, appreciation, and knowledges. For Bobbit, the objectives of the curriculum are the formations of habits and dispositions, which he describes as "the entire range of experiences, both directed and undirected," and the "consciously directed training experiences" conducted by the school (quoted in Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p. 11). For Bobbit (1934), education, which he understood as schooling, should reverse any

“primitive or backward” practices, and must have its *telos*, or goal, in what “ought” to be rather than what is (p. 15). Education, from Bobbit’s (1934) vantage point, should therefore, work toward what is most socially productive. Bobbit’s (1934) description of educational objectives is consistent with progressive and social efficiency movement’s aim to infuse scientific principles, organization, and efficiency for the “moral betterment of society,” looking to the increasing modernization and social development of America (Ratner-Rosenhagen, 2019, p. 108).

The development of the objectification of the curriculum through scientific principles and social efficiency continued through an emphasis of the rationalization⁶² of curriculum development. Bobbit’s student, Ralph Tyler (1949/2012), conceptualized education as an *active* process, the goal of which is to transform the “behavior patterns of people” (p. 5). Tyler’s codification of social efficiency precepts associated with public schooling since the early 20th century, continues to strongly influence curriculum design and educational evaluation today (Pinar, 2011, 2012, 2013). Tyler’s emphasis on data collection and assessment of predetermined learning objectives has reinforced punitive accountability discourses and linear “curriculum development” models that have become the “commonsense” view of effective public schooling (Kumashiro, 2008; Pinar, 2011, 2012; Taubman, 2009). As Kliebard (2004) suggests, Tyler and other educationalists of his era attempted to bring “scientific respectability to the study of education” (p. 179), a historical pattern of justifying the professional legitimacy of education to the public by appraising the extent to which “the objectives of the program are actually being realized” (Smith & Tyler, 1942, p. 12). Tyler (1949) “rationale,” therefore, ostensibly legitimated

⁶² I previously mentioned Tyler’s (1949) four questions, but can briefly summarize them here as objectives, organization, implementation, and evaluation.

public schooling and education research by subsuming both under assessment and data collection, which has further codified the authoritarian demands for action inherent in educational audit culture (Pinar, 2012; Taubman, 2009).

Tyler's (1949) "rationale" further reflects a historical enthrallment to a certain faith in science, or scientism, that promised precision and predictability in schooling and education research, a promise rarely realized (Baez & Boyles, 2009; Carlson, 1982). The faith in educational science has sought to remove the uncertainty from teaching and learning by rendering the curriculum and education foreseeable⁶³ (Taubman, 2000). Predictability has historically promised social, economic, and political stability through the normalization of Western epistemologies and colonial logics of power, relying on disciplinary technologies of the body, which "qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 140). Seen from the perspective that normalization is one of the "hard realities" of "moral uplift," it is, of course, not difficult to see Weber's (1905/2002) thesis at play here: that economic boom is synonymous with an enhanced moral and spiritual life (Kliebard, 2004, p. 35). The relationship between increased economic gain and enhanced moral and spiritual life is consistent with Kliebard's (2002) discussion of the social efficiency movement's understanding of themselves as morally upright and contributing to a "stable and balanced social order" (p. 35).

The violence of conceptualization, therefore, is deployed as power for the development and maintenance of a particular social order. The efforts by modern nation-states to govern populations are explored by Foucault (1975) and Burns (2018) through

⁶³ Part of the role of the reconceptualization of the curriculum field, which helps to inform the reconceptualist approach of this dissertation, is that the "event" of curriculum is one which cannot be foreseeable even while it is anticipated.

the concept of biopower. The effectuation of biopower relies on rationalizing technologies and knowledges produced in modern institutions, including education and include colonial logics and racializations. Watkins (2001) suggests that schooling has historically been central to the state's political and ideological management, which reinforce prevailing relations of power. For example, the "white architects," of Black education in the post-Reconstruction US justified the inferiority of those being dominated through the spread of scientific racism, which included the "science" of eugenics and social efficiency discourses. Watkins (2001) explains that eugenics, like Black education:

Never implied a backward or fascistic movement. Ostensibly, it promoted human betterment and forward-looking reform. Eugenics helped forge a twisted notion of what counts as social reform. Purifying society had a permanent place in the long-term view of refining civilization" (p. 37).

The state's role in the administration of life depended on racialized technologies of the body which fragmented communities, societies, and ultimately decided between "what must live and what must die" (Foucault, 2003, p. 254). Producing a normative society means that state power functions as a racializing force, justifying and carrying a "murderous function" (Foucault, 2003, p. 256). Foucault (2003) connects biopower and racism with the 19th and 20th century conceptualization of the improving evolution of the races. Thus, eugenics, scientific racism, and social efficiency contain an advancement logic or belief in perpetual progress, another form of scientism, that is currently reflected in educational legislation policies such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. Educational policy's influence in the effectuation of disciplinary power and state racism has dominated schooling discourses for the past century. The curriculum field, some reconceptualist-era thinkers believed, had "clearly become more managerial than curricular" in terms of innovation, reflecting a call for "alternatives" in strictly utilitarian

notions of schooling in favor of new forms of curricular language (Kliebard, 1987, p. 98; Huebner, 1999).

The Curriculum Reversal

From the perspective of the reconceptualists, Tyler's (1949) subsumption of education under assessment, although purportedly to propel the individual in society, requires us to question who the "individual" is. Tyler (1949) completely elides significant aspects of class, race, religion, and ultimately the complexities of education as academic study. The individual, for Tyler and Bobbit, dissolves into a "functional category," whose significance lies in their institutional roles rather than their evolving subjectivity (Pinar, 2011, p. xii). The reconceptualists reversed the category of the individual as a "functional category" toward the "autobiographical excavation" and "self-reflexive articulation" of subjectivity in society (Pinar, 2004, p. 22). As such, the reconceptualists helped show the interrelation between subjectivity, history, and society which reflects the ethical commitments and intentions of curriculum theorizing.

For example, during a session of the 2019 Bergamo Conference in Curriculum Theory, I sat in the audience for a panel that would be discussed a book entitled *Troubling Method: Narrative Research as Being* (2018) by Petra Henry, Roland Mitchell, and Paul Eaton. This was my first Bergamo conference, and so I sat at that panel, which began late in the day just prior to the "social" hour, and I hoped to absorb some last-minute thoughts on emergent qualitative methods for curriculum theorizing. Janet Miller offered her own assessment of the usage of the method of *currere* as established by Pinar

(2004) in the method of *currere*.⁶⁴ Miller's reappraisal was a staunch reversal and rejection of the overdetermined role of the syllabus or lesson plan as curriculum, the *object* that defined "the" curriculum. Miller cautioned the audience against using the method of *currere* as a set of steps to implement instrumental understanding. If the method of *currere* is implemented haphazardly, it falls prey to the same instrumental logic of Tyler's "rationale." In contrast to Tyler's instrumental logic, the method of *currere* re-thinks the role of educational experience for the purpose of subjective and social reconstruction, enacting a curriculum discursively defined as a "complicated conversation" as opposed to a static document (Pinar, 2004, p. 8). While the curriculum field, most notably during the apex of the social efficiency movement, was shaped by "administrative concerns," the reconceptualists indicated that public education should be defined by academic study and intellectual cultivation (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 78). In contrast, public education functions as information exchange and the decontextualized communication of data. Specifically, education functions to manage population through the use of "data" as a technology of power, a reduction of knowledge to data that I previously discussed as biopower (Foucault, 1978/1990).

Forms of data collection such as credit scores, birth and mortality rates, literacy rates, and the number of absences one collects throughout a school year are all contribute to the management of population and the production of a particular subjectivity. Data circulates through different institutions as predictive models for future possibilities. For example, a recent *Tampa Bay Times* (Bedi & McGrory, 2020) investigative report found

⁶⁴ *Currere* is the Latin infinitive of the word curriculum, which means "to run" or "the race course." The scholar follows a four-step movement of study: the regressive, the progressive, the analytic, and the synthetic moments

that the Pasco County Florida School District shared data with the county Sherriff's Office including attendance records, disciplinary data, academic records, and even accounts of traumatic experiences the students may have witnessed or experienced. The Sherriff's Office used the data provided by the school district to create a list that would label students as potential criminals without the knowledge of the students or their parents. The management of population requires that institutions such as the schools form specific "fabric of habits" to produce "docile" subjects (Foucault, 1977/1995). Keeping subjects docile allows stakeholders to maintain the myth of meritocracy that suggests data as value-neutral, suggesting that if people wanted to change their condition, they would.

The use of data can reinforce ethical and personal commitments as well as reinforce selected norms. Thus, public policy, shaped by neoliberal rationales, forms the basis on which administrative concerns manifest. The concern of *datum*, literally "something given," is not something static as though it had no historical context or political importance. While numbers can be utilized in service of people, they are not in themselves truth claims to understand the social world, and do not tell us anything with certainty. As I noted previously, we have a system of schooling that purports to interpret numbers on the basis of intelligence when those numbers often tell a partial, historically decontextualized story as it relates to a number of issues including housing insecurity, poverty, sickness, war, death, and child hunger.

The use of "assistive" educational technologies are, like Lexia, No Red Ink, and Reading Plus, used as models to increase reading and writing scores on standardized assessments. They are also used as grades for assignments and assessments of student homework and classwork. Those data are then harnessed to direct teacher lesson plans

and to create educational objectives. Educational technologies streamline and operationalize teaching toward objectives, allowing governments to operate school systems at scale. However, the streamlining of curriculum at the site of the teacher teaching effectively removes the embodied and entangled relationality of the teacher and student, the element of surprise when undertaking the process of study, and the project of subjective and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2004, 2011, 2012). What is effectively diminished is the role of the teacher and student as agent (Pinar, 2019). Despite the educational research establishment's reliance on Dewey (1916) for thinking through education, democracy, and educational experience, schools provide little of self-formation and thinking societally in a way that attends to democratization. Instead, schools rely on products called curriculum to facilitate "learning" in what Pinar (2004) called the "school-as-corporate office" (p. xiv). In schools where the language of data tracking has significantly reduced the role of subjective experience and the political, it is even more imperative that curriculum scholars engage complicated conversations in their classrooms and provide greater space for students to reconstruct their understandings of the self and the world.

Where is the role of the self in the landscape of learning goals and theories? What might we say of *study*? The work of Huebner (1999) and McDonald (1995) was instrumental for the direction of the reconceptualist tradition. Huebner and McDonald's criticism of scientism, learning theories, apoliticism, and the lack of concern for transcendentalism influenced the way some reconceptualists moved from the object of curriculum to the subject of curriculum as lived experience (Carson, 2006). During the 1960s, humanities-based research and existential phenomenology became a more

prominent way of thinking about curriculum. Huebner's (1967) reliance on Heidegger's reflection on temporality and being served as the basis for thinking about curriculum as beyond a set of objectives or a lesson plan, but as man's concern for his own temporality. Grumet's (1988) engages the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in her book to situate herself in a world where women are charged with the task of birthing and rearing children into a society where women's work is devalued and often denigrated. Huebner's (1999) use of Heidegger informed Huebner's thinking of temporality and the harmful effects of thinking about curriculum as a linear phenomenon. Maxine Greene (1971, 1973), although primarily known as a philosopher of education, used Sartre to think about the possibilities unlocked by considering the teacher as a stranger who can look wonderingly about the world around them. I do not suggest that curriculum studies are *de facto* phenomenologies. Pinar and Grumet's important 1976 study, *Toward a Poor Curriculum* established themselves as heirs to the phenomenological tradition by suggesting the method of *currere*, which attunes itself to temporal modes of relation between knower and known and characterizes the "ontological structure of educational experience" (Pinar, 2004, p. 35). The direction the reconceptualist curriculum scholars mentioned above took helped re-think the role of subjectivity in educational experience.

Miller's criticism of the use of the method of *currere* mentioned above illustrates the application of the method in curriculum scholarship. Pinar's method of *currere* was not solely life history or *confessional* tales. Self-display as voyeurism, for Pinar, is a degeneration of the method of *currere* because it forgets an important point that Heidegger (1927) resurrects in his study of the meaning of being: the more the "self" is unveiled, even on the page, the more it is concealed. Rather, *currere* is more closely

associated with literary or cultural criticism, with the foundational question being “what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience?” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 52). Zahavi (2019) refers to unreflected experience as a “blatant and fatal subjectivization” of phenomenology. We are not conscious of “experiences,” even though we may have sets of experiences a phenomenon out of which we must make meaning. Curriculum scholars, therefore, are tasked with making the familiar strange and suspending the natural attitude⁶⁵ about our understandings of curriculum. Overdetermining subjectivity may make the *person* the measure of all things (Kattsoff, 1953).

An individual subject cannot be the measure of all things without committing violence. There is no “I” divorced from context and relationship with others. The “I” gives an account of oneself but finds that the narration of oneself begins exceed its own narration, which suggests a social responsibility for the relationality which cuts across subjectivity. As a result, the subject “of necessity, becomes a social theorist” as opposed to thinking individually (Butler, 2005, p. 8). Do we not then move back from the subject to the object, and thus, risk going back to a form of Tylerism and risk succumbing to the lesson plan or the syllabus as a behaviorist means to habituate people to some instrumental end? I do not think we move back to a static object or subject, because there is no absolute presence or absence that emerges in fullness. Derrida (1967/2011) maintains that avowal, statements of declaration such as “I am,” is “the confession of a mortal” [*l'aveu d'un mortel*] (p. 47). The “I” is not me, for the possibility of an “I” is

⁶⁵ As I stated in the previous chapter, Husserl (1931) distinguishes the natural attitude with the phenomenological attitude. The natural attitude simply takes the world out there as given, experiencing the world without thematizing it or thinking through it.

fiction, or literature. To say the word “I learned” or “I desire” is an I that is already contaminated with an other, one who is represented in the site of memory where learning or desire is expressed, remembered, felt, or perhaps forgotten.

What is forgotten, I might say, is how much of curriculum theorizing has to do with participation with that which is beyond simply words. Recent work in the field of curriculum has emphasized sound, for example, as a way of expressing educational experience (Gershon, 2017). Curriculum, if a text, as it has been known, makes attempts to say something about a concept which is beyond conceptualization (Pinar, et al., 1995). If our conceptualizations via language are troubled by inability to express pre-theoretical experiences, then can we conceptualize outside of the violence of the foreclosure of the concept of curriculum? If conceptualization violates, are we consigned to silence in order to do justice to the other? To think of the concept as a technology of domination is to have a thing in “one’s grasp.” Thus, how does one go on speaking? How does one think without reducing, enframing, or betraying the object of thought (Heidegger, 1927/1962)? In the face of the inadequacy of language, the strategy of confession deals with the incommensurability of revealing one’s interior life, thoughts, or perceptions. Can we, as Derrida (1988) notes, think the concept of curriculum as confession otherwise?

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the violence of conceptualization and curricular concepts in the context of Derrida’s 1967 essay, “Violence and Metaphysics,” which helped to frame my discussion of violence as the metaphysics of presence and the violences it spawns. Thinking of phenomenology and ontology as a “philosophy of power,” I show the way that singular being subsumes alterity, eliminating difference and

relationality (p. 69). I show how Derrida's conception of the trace helps us consider how inscribed violence is at the heart of all attempts to effectuate "right" thinking and living for instrumental ends.

In the next section, I discussed the interrelation of knowledge and power, discussing the role of high-stakes testing and logics of totalizing domination. I use this section to segue into the violence of curricular concepts in which I discussed the social efficiency movement, the reduction of knowledge to textbooks, and the reconceptualization of the curriculum field during the 1970s. I discussed the potential danger of curriculum scholarship as overdetermining the role of the subject in curriculum by eliminating the incommensurability in the translation of the subject's interior life. In other words, educational experience often exceeds conceptualization.

In the next chapter, I want to continue to explore violence through Foucault's analysis of governmentality and its extractive effect on subject formation. I resist attempts to provide prescriptions on readers so as not to instrumentalize activity. Thus, I explore confession not as something which we choose to do or not do, but as something we are always doing. As such, I provide a short genealogy of confession, and proceed to explore Foucault's (1978) early notion of confession and show the way his thinking on confession alters later in his life, culminating in his analysis and development of a politics of the self through *parrhēsia*, or "free-spokenness," suggestive of a form of truth-telling as counter-conduct which subverts and resists extractive disciplinary techniques.

Chapter IV

“A Confessing Animal”:

Governmentality, Subjectivity, and Truth-Telling

“We inhabit a dislocated chronology that has not found its concept” (Kristeva, 1994, as cited in Docherty, 2012, p. 80).

“The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology...” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 26).

Introduction

To introduce this chapter, I consider two ways of culturally thinking about confession. The first is the Catholic confessional booth. The priest beckons the penitent to “tell me your sins,” and the penitent then confesses, recollects actions, intentions, thoughts, desires, avowals, and doubts. The confessant verbalizes their sin in a place to a particular person and admits that they fell short of the standard held by the church. There is a tension in the ritual sacrament of confession in Catholicism⁶⁶ because confession is not effectual simply because of the penitent’s sorrow over sin. In fact, sorrow for sin is inconsequential to forgiveness, for God’s desire to forgive overcomes the confessant’s sorrow for sin. As Žižek (2012) puts it, go and be free to indulge in your pleasures, live your life, because “you are always covered by Big Other.” Žižek’s point is that the sacrament gives a free pass, so to speak, to the penitent who feels the guilt of not living

⁶⁶ I write Catholicism to show the sacrament of confession in Catholicism as a ritual in contrast with Protestantism. Recall that for Kant and Schleiermacher, Christianity was a religion of the heart and faith.

the way they ought to, and that the “Big Other” dispenses forgiveness in the *act* of confession. Confession provides a way of alleviating guilt or shame because telling the truth, or admitting one’s guilt, has a cathartic effect, cleansing the penitent, curing their shame. So long as the penitent comes under submission to the institution and avows the dogmas of that institution, the economy of confession is enacted. Penitents makes themselves more public in exchange for the condition of a new status as forgiven and free from discipline.

A contrasting scene is in the movie *Lady Bird* (Gerwig, 2017) in which a mother and daughter drive together down a California road, listening to Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. What begins as a nice moment quickly becomes a struggle between the two. Christine, the daughter, asserts her distaste for California, wanting to move away from the prospective Catholic high school she will be attending as well as the strict mother she perceives as controlling. “I want to go someplace with culture,” she states, expressing her disdain for the culture in which she grew up. She, of course, does not explicitly say she hates her mother and her life with her parents, but that is what she expressed, acknowledged, between the two of them. A place “with culture” is a place outside the monotony of her youth. Christine’s disdain for her upbringing comes to a point at which not only does she want to remove herself from her location, but she goes on to assert a transformation of her identity when her mother calls her by her given name, Christine. “My name is Lady Bird,” she declares. Christine’s mother protests her new identity, claiming that Christine cannot simply change herself, and “Lady Bird” throws herself out of the car.

To assert her identity and declare herself anew by cutting off the past, Christine seeks to represent her new sense of self as “Lady Bird.” One might think of Christine’s attempt to change her identity as anti-historical or non-historical because to a certain extent it is. In modern fashion, Christine’s desire to form a new foundation of her identity is a re-fashioning of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*⁶⁷ in that she expresses doubt about her surroundings and refigures the world through her own doubts. The ground upon which Christine stands is her own positive assertion of her own identity through the alias “Lady Bird” and her city as “culture-less,” or bland. Her chosen identity is the lens through which she now sees the world, refashioning and constituting it. By choosing to assert Christine’s new identity, “Lady Bird” can be for *herself* the redemption of her situation, reclaiming the agency that she feels has always been located in another. Indeed, Christine desires to be a subject of history who does not inherit her past, but rather attempts to overcome and negate the past through the assertion of a new subjectivity. Upon hearing her mother talk about the sacrifices she has made for her, Christine asks her mother to write down how much it cost her to raise her and stated that she will one day make a lot of money so that she can pay her mother back and never speak to her again. What appears to be simply a spat between mother and daughter unfolds into a dramatic story of a complicated relationship between Christine and her mother and their inability to express their love for one another until Christine finally moves away to college. Christine finds letters that her mother wrote to her and discarded but were salvaged by her father. Finding the letters, she comes to find herself again, or perhaps, is found through her

⁶⁷ *Cogito ergo sum* is the Latin translation from Descartes’ *A Discourse on the Method* (1637/2006). In the face of radical doubt, Descartes provides a ground from which he as a thinking subject can discover further truths.

(m)other, by being able to, in the end, call her mother, and express herself not as “Lady Bird,” but as Christine (Tarc, 2015). “It’s the name you gave me. It’s a good one” she states at the end.

Are these two cultural scenes what comprise the concept and act of confession? It is rather complicated, for a modern understanding of confession is related to the subject’s ability to fully reveal or understand one’s own inner life, that self-revelation has its foundation in the subject’s conception of time and their cutting off the past. It is a present that stands still, a *present* position in which one attempts to achieve certainty and put it on display *as such*. It is a present that assumes one understands oneself in the present and the past.⁶⁸ Self-consciousness, therefore, becomes modernity’s avowal to a subject who understands the world and themselves. Rousseau (1782/1998) illustrates self-identification in his *Confessions* stating:

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself (p. 17).

Rousseau represents himself in a narrative—a “portrait”—which places the subject under exposure to an outside reader looking into his tale (p. 17). The subject undergoes an examination, but it is unclear who is doing the examination. Is the reader doing the examination? Is Rousseau examining himself? What is present-at-hand is not the full self, but a portrayal or representation, of the self in narrative. A literary tradition of confession, while beyond the scope of this dissertation, is often attributed to Rousseau (1782/1998) but should likewise include various textual invocations of subjectivity

⁶⁸ Augustine (397/2007) will later exclaim in his meditation on memory from Book 11, chapter 13 of *Confessions* that memory becomes the mediation of the “images of past time” (p. 192).

through Augustine, the mystical writings of Hildegard of Bingen, and the poetic inquiry of Leggo (2011).

If a literary tradition of confession and its relationship to lived experience extends from the ancient writing practices of a 4th century North African Catholic Bishop, himself carrying on practices that were already in play during earlier forms of Christian spirituality to the poetic writing of a 21st century educational researcher (Leggo, 2011), then the concept and practice of confession cannot simply be one thing statically understood throughout history. Confession has changed in different historical epochs, and yet, the construction of confession as a practice in which modern people have come to understand themselves provides scholars the ability to think about confession and its relationship to education. Part of the significance of this inquiry is the acknowledgement of how confession is discursively written into our understanding of education, learning, and pedagogy. For instance, Adams' *Education*, which meditates on the changes between the 19th to the 20th century and the search for self-education through experiences, takes a similar route to thinking introspectively as Alcott's⁶⁹ (1839) *Confessions of a School Master*. Both texts provide a discursive foundation for educators as autobiographers, dealing with education by talking "back to popular discourse" and attempting to "authentical[e] themselves" through new representations of their subjectivities (Cantiello, 2018). Alcott (1839) advertises his writings as "confessions" because, as he warns his readers in his introduction, he suggests that his "whole conduct" appeared to him as a

⁶⁹ Alcott's importance lies in his speaking back to popular discourses about the apathy of people—Horace Mann's criticism about why schools are not expanding—and the idea that schools are a necessary evil for societal good. Schools must exist, Alcott notes about the common feeling about schools, but "in so far as their mere feelings are concerned, they would very gladly have them out of the way. I speak now of common or district schools only. They cost them trouble and money" (p. 141).

“tissue of blunders” that he must acknowledge publicly (p. 149). Such a conception of confession as an admission of “blunder” continues its discursive relevancy to education historian Larry Cuban (2021) confesses beliefs that he at one time held and later rejected, admitting mistakes and areas of weakness in his own ideologies about education and schooling.

Thus, two representations of confession emerge: the first being the admission of guilt through institutional and disciplinary extractive techniques, and the second being a reclamation of a renewed sense of authentic subjectivity, committing oneself to what Foucault (1978/1991) calls the “internal ruse of confession,” the belief in the relation between power and speech and that freedom is achieved through confession (p. 44). The desire to be free from extractive forms of confession through coercion produced a desire to be trapped by the “frail and transparent ruse of confession” as well (Taylor, 2009, p. 76). The desire for confession to produce freedom necessarily implies an accepted form of surveillance and culture of transparency.

In this chapter, I explore the modern concept of confession as the formulation of identity through extractive techniques of governance that force individuals to posit a static self. Thinking about the confessional impulse to verbalize a static self, I critique modernity’s culture of transparency as both a diminished substitution for truth and the normative foundation for endless surveillance, which is particularly relevant for education. When a culture of transparency becomes the norm, and indeed, becomes good, the “subject” must assent to constant surveillance and accountability and forfeit one’s agency to institutional discipline and shame for not measuring up to the demands of the

neoliberal⁷⁰ order. Thus, the effort to assert one's subjectivity by making oneself public, I claim, actually serves the effectuation of power from the institutional demand to control populations. To make this argument, I utilize Foucault's (2007, 1978/1991) historical analysis of governmentality and biopolitics to theorize extractive forms of confession and curriculum as a collection of institutional power-knowledges on bodies. Such power-knowledges are effectuated on the body as institutional dogmas that often go unquestioned as normative, embedded in the daily life of both the institution and the individuals who make up the institution. As a result, the disciplinary measures of the institution over the individual require the normativity of a "self-auditing subjectivity," which contributes to the sustenance of the institutional order (Shore & Wright, 2000; Burns, 2018). A "self-auditing subjectivity" is a system of surveillance where the subject is often not bound by physical violence, although that sometimes may occur, but is bound by the "inspecting gaze" of the state which causes the individual to internalize surveillance "over and against himself" (Foucault, 1980, p. 155). In other words, we can think of auditing through Foucault's (1978/1994) use of the term governmentality, defined succinctly as the "conduct of conduct," or the attempt to shape human behavior through calculated means, often for the wellbeing of those populations (Li, 2007). Governmentality, understood as the shaping of human behavior, controls at both the macro and micro level, constituting a subject who is regulated and also self-regulating. Governmentality emerges from three processes: 1) the Christian pastorate that had become established by the sixteenth century as an economy of merits and faults, thereby

⁷⁰ Neoliberalism is defined by Saunders (2007) as a socio-economic theory that "holds that the social good is maximized by unregulated market behaviors" (p. 2). As a result, a neoliberal order privileges private property owners and global corporations over societal needs.

being institutionalized as a managerial system of governance; 2) the emergence of military-diplomatic techniques, which were formed around the development of the nation-state and economic development; 3) police power. I discuss governmentality's connection with Foucault's (1978/1990) early conception of confession as a technology of the self.

I focus on three major theoretical movements drawn from Foucault's conception of confession, which I apply to curriculum theorizing. I first provide a short historical treatment of confession from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215⁷¹ and apply that analysis to modern notions of confession in autobiography, "confessional" poetry, and psychoanalysis (Grobe, 2017, p. 21). To make the historical connection, I engage with Taylor's (2009) genealogy of the emergence of the modern "self," what Foucault called the "confessing animal" (p. 77). I then give an account of Foucault's (1998) concept of governmentality and confession as a technology of the self,⁷² which will guide this chapter's discussion of curriculum as confession. Third, I discuss Foucault's (1993) reworking of confession from an extractive disciplinary technology of power toward a "publishing" of oneself through both the act of verbalization and what he calls a "politics of the self," which renounces a modern, static conception of the self in the first place (p. 223).

Confession, then, becomes not simply an extractive technology of power, but, through Foucault's (2011) conception of *parrhēsia*, I theorize curriculum as a site of counter-conduct wherein the pedagogue asserts their own agency to tell the truth, a way

⁷¹ Foucault (1978) discusses the Fourth Lateran Council in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*.

⁷² Confession as a technology of the self is itself already an interrogation of selfhood as a stable concept.

of reconstructing the self and the world. The function of *parrhēsia* as “free-spokenness,” becomes a way of giving an account of oneself as a “form of action” or “way of life,” which exceeds verbalization toward the embodiment of truth (Foucault, 2011; Butler, 2005). I add to the function of *parrhēsia* the decolonial practice of faithful witnessing as a form of truth-telling, which extends my conceptualization of confession as a site of counter-conduct, and then analyze the relationship between curriculum studies and confession.

The Demand for Transparency as Governmentality

Confession historically operated as a strategy of transparency, both individually and collectively. The production of a philosophy of transparency,⁷³ often heralded as honest, fair, necessary, and ethical, supplying much of the impetus for the processes of institutional life in the modern world. Agustín Carstens, a Mexican economist who served as the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, gave a talk in 2005 in which he lauds the role of transparency and accountability for economic development.

He noted:

Transparency and accountability are critical for the efficient functioning of a modern economy and for fostering social well-being. In most societies, many powers are delegated to public authorities. Some assurance must then be provided to the delegators—that is, society at large—that this transfer of power is not only effective, but also not abused. Transparency ensures that information is available that can be used to measure the authorities’ performance and to guard against any possible misuse of powers. In that sense, transparency serves to achieve accountability, which means that authorities can be held responsible for their actions.

⁷³ I use philosophy of transparency here to refer to a framework of thinking as the conditions through which modernity is unveiled in history. The idea of transparency as a philosophy of modernity comes from Docherty’s (2012) book on confession, which interrogates the mediation of confession as a response to a culture of transparency in which everything must be made immediately available for consumption.

The role of transparency and accountability, Carstens (2005) maintained, is for the purpose of economic development, and required that the governed be transparent so the government may carry out its function well. Moreover, he noted that the role of transparency and accountability is for the promotion of social well-being. Under the logic that transparency must be part of daily life in order for the social well-being to flourish, it is difficult to imagine a world in which transparency is not the norm.

The normative power of transparency has become a surrogate for truth, because it assumes that if people and organizations do not have their feet put to the fire,⁷⁴ institutions will simply operate in ways that are unethical or substandard. The claim suggests that humans are always finding ways to do something substandard, unethical, or wrong unless they are accountable to someone who can ensure their behavior is corrected. Of course, those who make such a claim are often in positions of power which use accountability and transparency discourses to achieve predetermined aims and ends for powerful institutions, such as large companies who profit from testing and test preparation materials like IBM, Pearson, and McGraw-Hill (Taubman, 2009). The institutional power that demands transparency subjectivates the public and normalizes transparency as a rule, as a “technology of power” embedded within public and private institutional powers to “qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize” normative societal standards on what it means to be human, citizens, spouses, and students (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 140). In doing so, transparency as a technology of power reinforces the

⁷⁴ The allusion of Jonathan Edwards (1741) from his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” where Edwards directs his congregants to the dire reality of their spiritual conditions, suggesting that God holds them over the fires of hell as one holds a spider—“or some loathsome Insect”—, not in love, but abhorring his congregants because of their dreadful sins (p. 15).

authority of institutions through the inundation of disciplinary tactics to govern and manage populations.

The disciplinary power associated with transparency and “well-being,” as Carstens mentioned, in modern institutions, including education, is a governmental preoccupation that emerged in the seventeenth century (Foucault, 1978/1990). During that time, the human body becomes a “political object of inquiry” in which the individual becomes subject to the surveillance of the state (Burns, 2018, p. 47; Foucault, 1979/1995). Foucault’s analysis of panopticism indicates that the exposure of the self opens the subject to being policed, consistently monitored under the rational guise that surveillance is good for the well-being of society. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979/1995), Foucault explores the benefits of Bentham’s “inspection-house” from Bentham’s Panopticon, making a connection between moral reformation, economic gain, and “health preserved” as the structural architecture of the panoptic mechanism (Foucault, 2008, p. 10). Bentham’s connection between morality, economic gain, and health is linked to Foucault’s (1978/1990) “era of biopower” in which the increasing development of disciplines oversaw the administration and management of life (p. 140). Foucault (1978/1990) states:

During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines—universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations (p. 140).

By seizing “power over the body” in the understanding of the body’s physical functioning, harnessing its potentialities, increasing its utility for economic production, and increasing its surveillance over the “health” of the social body, the nation state

subjects the individual to the violent formation of a racializing and heteropatriarchal biopolitical order (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139). The racializing and heteropatriarchal biopolitical order depend on the discipline of the public and private through the administration of life and its “historical ethos involving the state’s deployment of rights” (p. 209). The formation necessary to produce docile and compliant subjects was aimed at the level of the individual and social body, functioning not only through the threat of physical violence, but also the emergence of disciplinary techniques of power that affect how individuals behave within a populace and also how individuals articulate themselves given a culture that demands transparency.

Transparency is necessary if the emergence of the nation-state is to be effectively formed, utilizing diverse biopolitical institutions, such as medical, carceral, economic, religious, and psychiatric ones, establishing epistemological grounds from which the modern self emerged (Foucault, 2003). The nation-state’s effectuation of power is sequestered in the walls of institutions hidden from public view, rendering power invisible (Foucault, 2015). As a result, the social body, although disciplined and bound by national institutions that control resources and bodies, is subject to the systems of veridiction, or “regimes of truth,” which alter behavior without the pure use of physical force (Burns, 2018, p. 33). Transparency, then, is something that populations are required to give for the social well-being of the population, but not necessarily something that governing structures are required to give to the people. This formulation of transparency, as something extracted from populations, is common sensical, and is a governmental rationalization that is deemed good (Foucault, 2007).

Transparency, the School, and the Christian Pastorate

Foucault (2009) theorized governmentality, or governmental rationalization, as the “relations of power on which the sixteenth century arts of government set their sights,” which suggests that the effectuation of governmental power functioned in the military, hospitals, prisons, and schools (p. 16). Governmentality undoubtedly functions at the level of schools, and more specifically within classrooms among teachers and students who are themselves populations to be governed. The only way to control teachers and students is to have, in some way, the classroom be transparent to stakeholders. Transparency cannot be done through stakeholders being physically present, so whatever presence that governing structures embody in the classroom come solely through the reduction of education statistics (Baez & Boyles, 2009). Individuals are objectified and converted into statistics in order so that educational phenomena can be reduced to “quantifiable, reproducible, and generalizable data” (p. 150). Through small, disciplinary techniques, teachers are treated as a population to be minded and watched over. Teachers and students are watched over through the extraction of high-stakes evaluations which promise neutrality and scientific objectivity, using the language of objectivity to banish the subjective aspects of education within schooling. By demanding endless streams of data that serve as abstracted humans separated from context, administrators can affect power through schools, teachers, and students from afar. Relationships, specifically pedagogical relationships, cannot be reduced to answering a multiple-choice question on a test (Taubman, 2009). Yet, rewards and punishments are given to students who do not perform well on high-stakes tests such as the Florida Standards Assessment, a Florida state test which determines scoring and, thus, funding

for local schools across the state. If we know that high test scores are often correlated with high incomes, the practice of testing to determine the “well-being” of curriculum and instructional delivery functions as classist and racializing for society—all in the name of *health*.

If disciplines such as medicine or schooling determine what constitutes health, then demands the adherence of the population to desire healthiness and fear the possibility of unhealthiness. The fear of being uneducated, low status, illiterate coerce schools into taking on increased tasks despite dwindling resources, and are disparagements lobbed in standards and accountability discourses as missives for teachers and students who are not passing high-stakes tests and also who are not making profound efforts to teach toward passing high-stakes tests. As Taubman (2009) reminds us, “schools can literally be shut down if they don’t comply, school systems can be ordered to privatize, teachers can be denied jobs or merit pay” if compliance is ignored (p. 107). Additionally, teachers are not measured solely by high-stakes tests, but also rubrics used by administrators that accumulate scores to determine whether teachers are “effective” or “highly effective.” The standards and accountability discourse are not simply imposed at the governmental level, but by smaller micro level of the school, the department chair, and the lead teacher. Micro levels of accountability function as middle management in a hierarchical and corporate system to regulate the behavior of students and teachers (Apple, 2004).

Tools of governance, such as accountability measures and institutional norms both subject individuals to behavior modification and constitute self-auditing subjects who follow the institutional norms set in place. By instituting, as Dunn (2005) notes, a

“host of ‘harmonized’ regulations, codes, and standards,” teachers and students become more transparent to corporate producers and consumers (p. 175). However, by making themselves more transparent, teachers and students manage themselves and their behaviors as auditable and subject to the codes and norms established by institutional powers, engendering techniques of power for self-governance (Shore & Wright, 2000). The power of governmentality is deployed through the submission of disciplinary techniques of well-being and health fostered like the pastoral relationship of submission to authority, demanding the obedience of transparency to an established regime of truth. The overseeing relationship that demands transparency, as in Christian pastoral power, is never finalized, always demanding more obedience to “obey in order to be obedient, in order to arrive at a state of obedience” (Foucault, 2007, p. 177). The Christian pastoral power is most notably understood through the imposition of yearly confession in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.

I read the yearly imposition of confession, as I do standards and accountability discourses, through Foucault’s (1980) conception of governmentality, which does not solely concentrate on power directed at people via the state apparatus, but as preceding the nation-state in the governing power of the Christian pastorate. Pastoral authority established a regime of truth for citizens in the late Middle Ages, which by the sixteenth century had evolved into a normative and pedagogical set of relationships. The pastoral relationship extended from the daily vocation of the priest to parishioners, but also to lay ministers who worked under the authority of the formal priesthood. As a result, the pedagogical relationship that existed between priests and parishioners saturated pastoral power with established knowledges, which formed the conduct of the flock. If pastoral

power coerces the conduct of the flock, then, it is a regime of truth that is a “prelude to governmentality,” constituting a “history of the subject” (Foucault, 2007, p. 184). The term “pastoral power” is derived from the shepherd’s practice of watching over sheep. The term eventually applied to other offices such as a king or god who are positioned as shepherds of the people—often referred to as a “flock.” An example of the shepherd’s pastoral power was the practice of the Hebrew shepherd lingering with and directing the behavior of sheep. Bell (2001) notes that whereas the Greeks cast their deity or deities as owning the land, which functioned to mediate the relationship between the people and the deity, the “pastoral image” has the deity owning the people (p. 22). The pastoral image is intimately involved with the processes, decisions, involvements of the flock. Pastoral power is intimately involved in the details of people’s lives, as opposed to a removed or detached imposition of power. As a “prelude to governmentality,” the Christian pastorate needed to demand transparency to keep the people accountable for their actions.

To deploy pastoral power as such, Foucault (2007, 2009) tells us, we must understand that the effectuation of power was exercised for a territory that was not statically established, but shifting, and also for the individuation of the flock for whom the pastor must not only care but extend salvation (pp. 125-130). This presents a paradox for the pastor, who must care for the whole while also providing salvation for each person, stating that there must be a “sacrifice of one for all, and the sacrifice of all for one, which will be at the absolute heart of the Christian problematic of the pastorate” (Foucault, 2011, p. 129). As a result of the pastoral sacrificial logic—one for all and all for one—Foucault (2007) argues that Christianity appropriates and intensifies pastoral power by institutionalizing itself as the “model and matrix of procedures for the

government of men,” which begins with Christianity (p. 148). With Foucault, I argue this was done primarily through the examination of one’s conscience in confession.

The institutionalization of the Christian pastorate provides the foundation for the development of governance in the modern West, and although the methods through which pastoral power has been deployed changes, it is central for individualization of the Western subject who is constituted by “networks of obedience” and subject to “compulsory extraction of truth” (Foucault, 2007, p. 185). As noted above, pastoral power signifies a pedagogical relationship, and the process of extraction and the production of truth is one that “binds” one to the pastor. Foucault (1980) theorized a model of state power modeled on the power of the pastorate:

I don’t want to say that the State isn’t important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, technology, and so forth (p. 122).

Locating power in the state apparatus ignores the multifarious relations of power that comprise societal networks and modern institutions. Institutionalized power via the nation-state only emerges out of networks invested upon the body and boundaries of discovered truths in which the confessant comes to *understand* the self (Foucault, 2005). Confession functions as a technology of power, Foucault (2007) notes, both at the level of domination and likewise a subjectification through which the individual, the subject, makes meaning of the world.

The process of subjectification occurs at the discursive level, through both the extraction of truth and a subject who thematizes the world through discursive techniques.

The extractive force of pastoral power is that the confessor's conscience is bound to the pastor, as Foucault (1978/1990) states, but also that the examination of the subject's conscience and confession as practices became techniques for the discovery and formulation of the truth about oneself. The more one "discovered" about oneself, the more pressure intensified to reveal oneself, functioning as a technology of the self. The subject could freely discourse about the shape of their desire as discovery and self-revelation became more prevalent. Foucault (1988) differentiates four distinct technologies of power:

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or significations; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit the individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (p. 16-17).

These technologies are interrelated and crossing modes "knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings, and spaces bound together by certain pre-suppositions and objectives" (Bell, 2001, p. 21). Governmentality operates within the relation of domination and the self, the play of total and individual power. This "play" between total and individual power is what Foucault (2007) calls "pastoral," which aims to sustain and improve the lives of individuals (p. 110).

Self-examination does not begin with the advent of Christian pastoral power, but emerges from Greco-Roman practices to establish the self, such as in the Platonic dialogues giving way to "literary pseudo-dialogue," or in Seneca and Marcus Aurelius' "meticulous concern with the details of daily life, with the movements of the spirit, with

self-analysis” (Foucault, 1997, p. 232). In the production of writing, a new relationship with the self emerges under the experience of domination and likewise the examination of conscience which coincides with the production of writing, and most especially, epistolary writing. While the ancient Greco-Roman world began to examine themselves through practices such as writing daily activities, Foucault (1988) notes that these practices were an aid to establish oneself and, thus, the truth. Practices of writing daily activities were administrative rather than juridical and were not meant to judge or condemn the self in the way that one might in the examination of one’s conscience. While the ancient Greco-Roman world was concerned with activities, it was not concerned as such with underlying thoughts, intentions, desires that fed into the activities (Foucault, 1993). Christianity, on the other hand, formulated a public practice of confession and penance which functioned as a technology of the self.

“One Confesses—Or Is Forced to Confess”

Confession was as a technology of power, was “extracted from the body,” with torture lurking “like a shadow” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 54). The infinite task of exploring the depths of oneself is the Western condition of man, Foucault (1978/1990) notes, suggesting that Western man “has become a confessing animal” (p. 54). Foucault (1978) writes of confession in the language of habit, which we rely on for the “production of truth,” but also to the central role of the technique of confession to the civil and religious order (pp. 52-53). Confession is a form of governmentality in which the Christian pastorate effectuated power upon the confessant. The confessing subject confesses in an unfolding power relationship between a confessor and an authority hearing the confession and, as a result, “judg[ing], punish[ing], forgiv[ing], consol[ing],

and reconcile[ing]” (Foucault 1978/1990, p. 56). Promising salvation, the authority figure unburdens the confessant by demanding the transparency of the confessing subject, either by threat or actual violence, and cultivates a subject who adheres to behavior modifications.

As the practice of confession moved from a public ceremony to a private divulgence of the interior life, after the Fourth Lateran Council’s decree that confession be offered once per year, the habit functioned for the purposes of social, political, and economic governance. *Omnis utriusque sexus*,⁷⁵ a decree in the thirteenth century that established the pedagogical relationship between the clergy and the laity, was seen to be seen not as much a religious as a legal act (Georing, 2004). The Church could no longer be conceptualized as a collective of priests, nuns, or monks, but must be understood as the pedagogical relationship that established the laity of the church, indicating how laypeople should display their faith, how to pray or nourish themselves with word and sacrament, how to be absolved of sin, and, more importantly, what was necessary for lay Christians to know (Newman, 2010). The production of the private life through the practice of confession became public habits of self-revelation. The confession is the acknowledgement of the self as an “I,” as a historical or secular subject of narration within a complex power relationship. This acknowledgement is an important component of confession, understanding that part of the construction of a confession is about the historical language one uses to translate one’s inner life.

Narrations form our particular worldviews. Foucault (1978/1990) states that the confession is not just something that occurs to a confessor in the Catholic Church, a

⁷⁵ “Everyone of either sex”

phenomenon which, although central to the habits of Catholicism post-1215, plays a part in all aspects of the modern world. Foucault (1978/1990) writes:

It [confession] plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell" (p. 54).

Confession is one of the central techniques for extracting truth as subjects partake in the task of "extracting from the depths of oneself" (p. 54). The dynamic manifestation of power, for Foucault (1980), always stands accusatory, taking on the pure form of "thou shalt not" (p. 140). Through the manifestation of power, the extractive technology of the body is effectuated while a double "subjectivisation" process occurs. The sovereign power imposes upon the subject while also subjectivizing to the point where the "interdict" is accepted and the subject "says yes" to power (p. 140). Confession played this role, wherein the sovereign power of confession also subjectivized the subject, producing a desire or pleasure to confess.

Foucault (1978/1990) suggests that sex is linked to truth in the confession. Confession is the ritual of discourse for the unveiling of the subject to another who has a privileged place of power over the confessor. What is really at stake in the first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978/1990) is not necessarily verbalized confessions as such, but the dissemination of coerced sexual confessions that formed a struggle and project of emancipation against "unifying, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse" in which many outside the boundaries of the normativity were subjugated (Foucault, 1988, p. 110). The function of scientific institutional knowledges to form totalizing discourses both subjugates knowledges and impacts the kind of questions and aporias concerning

Western philosophical practice (Foucault, 2011). Incitements to confess express the power of the scientification and normativity of sex and the emerging counter-conduct of openly talking about sex—even those discourses that may seem beyond the bounds of normativity.

Foucault's (1978/1990) critique of the myth of the rise of repression typically believed in the seventeenth century argues that the time period did not produce silence during the historical rise of confession, but a "veritable discursive explosion" as the disciplinary technique of confession compelled more individuals to reveal themselves and their desires (p. 17). Rather than confession being the historical site of repression or silence, the "institutional incitement to speak about [sex]" and to speak about it in "explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail" caused the ever-encroaching interrelation between state law and private desire (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 18). The interrelationship between coercive imperatives and private desire follows as much within the realm of schools as it does for the confessional. Foucault (1978/1990) gives the example of eighteenth-century schools, noting that sex was a forbidden topic within them, and yet, for the same reason, the preoccupation with regulating sex formed all aspects of the school. Foucault (1978/1990) states:

The space for classes, the shape of the tables, the planning of the recreation lessons, the distribution of the dormitories..., the rules for monitoring bedtime and sleep periods—all this referred, in the most prolix manner, to the sexuality of children (p. 28).

In the regulation of children's sexuality, certainly near the interrelation between state law and private desire that is matured through the imposition of confession, a whole industry of disciplinary experts such as medical doctors, principals, teachers, were consulted on

matters of sex, control, collection of data, and evaluation for the purpose regulating activity within schools.

The accumulation of knowledge-power around questions of sexuality to harness the individual and social body—which Foucault (1978/1990) called biopower—is a curricular issue that constitutes subjects both within schools and outside schools. Embedded within a system of governmentality, individuals are always already functioning within interrelated regimes of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustain both discourses of human sexuality and Western subjectivity. Already within the extraction of confessions, there is an internalization of power and coercion to confess, which manifests in the pleasure and desire to reveal oneself in spite of the justification to seize “power over the body” with respect to sexuality and monitoring the individual and social body (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 139). Despite disciplinary forms of governmentality, the cultivation of a self that consistently examined and measured itself through prescriptive measures given by institutional power helped to verify the pedagogical process enacted within the power relationship (Foucault, 1977/1995). By verifying the pedagogical process of constant examination, collection of evidence, and imperatives for behavior modification, the extractive nature of confession that Foucault (1978/1990) comes to understand as correlative with the *knowing* Western subject, suggesting that the confessional impulse is no longer something to be imposed, but as “a rule for everyone” became the condition for Western subject formation (p. 20).

Confession as the Embodiment of Truth

To make oneself known, in the Greco-Roman world, Foucault (1993) notes, the two great principles of antiquity were to “take care of yourself” and “know thyself,”

meaning to be concerned with oneself as the conditional for the “art of life” (p. 19). But the philosophical tradition has concerned itself less with the care of the self as much as the principle of knowing oneself, with the two operating as a set of distinct technologies of the self. Foucault argues that the two cannot be separated, especially in the ancient world, where the two worked symbiotically with each other. To know oneself is to perpetually practice the care of the self, and vice versa. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, particularly in Alcibiades, the self is a principle not of the body but of the soul. One is not to care for the soul-as-substance, but of the activity of caring. Foucault (1988) states:

How must we take care of this principle of activity, the soul? Of what does this care consist? One must know of what the soul consists. The soul cannot know itself except by looking at itself in a similar element, a mirror. Thus, it must contemplate the divine element. In this divine contemplation, the soul will be able to discover rules to serve as a basis for just behavior and political action. The effort of the soul to know itself is the principle on which just political action can be founded, and Alcibiades will be a good politician insofar as he contemplates his soul in the divine element (p. 25).

Knowing oneself becomes the quest, and perhaps the question, of life. The quest to know oneself is not one taken in isolation. Rather, it is intimately linked with the public as much as the private. The “care of the self” is taken up by the Stoics, Epicurus, and the Pythagoreans become attuned to the “ordered life in common” (p. 26). Pliny, a magistrate in Ancient Rome during the first and second centuries, “advises” a friend to engage in leisurely activity, such as reading, writing, or studying, simply for the purpose of caring for the self (Foucault, 1988). The act of caring for the self? operates as a symptom of something deeper in the soul—passions, desires, emotions, sentiments, and pleasures. The act of self-care helped to translate these “deeper” parts of the soul in writing cultures as administrative structures developed, making way for the increase of

writing in the political sphere, dialectic, and correspondence. “Take care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity,” Foucault (1988) states, suggesting that the Hellenistic practice of writing is not something born in the modern world, such as during the explosive proliferation of manuscripts during and following the Reformation, but is something that was well established by the time Augustine wrote his *Confession* (p. 27).

The production of a writing culture became, as previously mentioned, linked with the obligation to a truth of the self. Foucault (1988) uses the example of Marcus Aurelius’ letter to Fronto, Aurelius’ tutor, which conveyed important things and details that shape Aurelius’ own subjectivity such as what he thought and felt. Aurelius speaks of his body, his health, a sore throat, his eating pattern, which signify a relationship between the cultivation of the self and the body. To cultivate intellectual activities, Aurelius engage in the activity of peasants and “retreat to a house on the countryside,” which suggests that by doing so he put themselves “in contact with [themselves]” (Foucault, 1988, p. 29). Specific to the purpose of this study, Aurelius examines his own conscience at the end of the day by retiring to his room and examining what he did. Foucault (1988) suggests that the major difference between Hellenistic culture and later Christian monastic practices was the importance of what Aurelius *did* rather than what he *thought*. The examination of conscience shifts the “struggle of the soul” during the Hellenistic period of letter writing in which a subjectivity was being formed. The formation of one’s subjectivity began to link what one did with their thoughts that would eventually emerge in the Christian compulsion to tell one’s thoughts, struggles, and desires.

Foucault (1988) wrote of four Stoic techniques of the self: letters to friends and the disclosure of the self; the examination of the self and conscience, which includes a

review of both what was done and what should have been done; the technique of *askesis*, which Foucault (1988) describes as remembering; and the interpretation of dreams. The first two techniques inform the last, and eventually became known as Christian ascetic practices of the body, including fasting, the abdication of possessions, and celibacy (Robert, 2019). Foucault's (1988) conception of *askesis* in the Stoic tradition does not mean renunciation as it does in the Christian tradition. Foucault (1988) states:

Askesis means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth. It has as its final aim not in preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The Greek word for this is *paraskeuazō* ("to get prepared"). It is a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action. *Alethia* becomes *ethos*. It is a process of becoming more subjective (p. 35).

The exercises of *askesis* that Foucault discusses place the subject into situations in which they can test their own preparation for events that present themselves. To this end, the Greeks characterized Hellenistic practices of *askesis* as the process by which a subject becomes more subjective, not less. The process of becoming more subjective, however, situated the subject within the training of oneself in what they did, while also moving beyond actions toward meditation, recollection, and ultimately, interpretation (Foucault, 1988).

Foucault's genealogical inquiry of confession, which predates modern psychoanalysis, becomes a critical historical analysis of subjectivity from antiquity to modernity. Foucault's question—"why are we obliged to tell the truth about ourselves? Which truth?"⁷⁶—moves from an analysis of domination in the history of Catholic

⁷⁶ This question is asked in an unpublished manuscript from the *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Les Fonds de Michel Foucault* in Paris, courtesy of Clements (2021) work on Foucault and confession.

confession as governmentality toward a shift in his understanding of confession as the vital relationship between subjectivity and truth (Clements, 2021). Foucault's (1978/1990) early conception of confession was as an imposed disciplinary technique of domination. By exposing the dominative Christian pastoral power and subsequent state power, he develops possibilities for subjective resistance and counter-conduct.

Foucault (2017) discusses a shift between Hellenistic writing practices during ancient antiquity to late ancient Christianity in which there is less a focus on “the question of doing...than on the question of being, on the way of being...one learns to change one's being, to modify or model one's being to give oneself an absolutely specific type of experience” (p. 30). The shift in the ability to “change one's being” signals not an opposition from Foucault on ancient Greek practice versus early Christian confession, but a historical development in which the subject relationship to truth is changed (Foucault, 2017). Despite the shift, however, Foucault frames modern philosophy,⁷⁷ and thus modern Western subjectivity, as the formation of a split between the care of the self and knowledge of the subject. As Foucault (2005) shows the continuity between ancient Greek and early Christian texts, he determines that “attending to the self is not therefore just a brief preparation for life; it is a form of life” (p. 494). The connection between the art of living, the care of the self, and the truth of the self is evident within the period between ancient Greek culture and early Christian spirituality, until that relationship changes in the Christian monastic period (Foucault, 2010).

⁷⁷ As I read Foucault (2005), the determination I make within this “split” is from Descartes on to the present day.

Truth-telling and the Courage to Reconstitute of the Self

Foucault (2014) makes analytical shifts in his analysis from disciplinary power to governmentality and knowledge to truth by contrasting early Greek forms of “reflexive truth acts” with truth-telling procedures in *exomologēsis* and *exagoreusis* (p. 82). An example of the early Greek truth act is Foucault’s reading of Oedipus as finding truth within himself in relation to cosmic truth. Foucault (2014) contrasts the reorganization of subjectivity and truth through two modes of confession: *exomologēsis*, which is a ritual in which early Christians practiced a converted identity, such as through the practices of baptism and penance, and *exagoreusis*, a connected practice of truth-telling that is done in obedience and contemplation through the verbalization of not only thoughts, but the “smallest movements of consciousness” (p. 47). Each informs the other and cannot be separated in the early Christian understanding. The compulsion to confess, for Foucault (2021), is employed in the process of penance as a renewed sense of the confession, as a kind of demonstration that he refers to as *exomologesis*. *Exomologēsis* is not simply a verbal confession. Indeed, many verbal confessions are subordinate to *exomologesis*. The application of *exomologesis* is a disciplined way of being and living, a “regimen” to render penitence acceptable. The “regimen” was not just one event to admit one’s guilt, but was a life which, according to Foucault (2021), must have played a particular role. Foucault (2021) traces the testimony of early Church writers such as Saint Cyprian, the Bishop of Carnage in the third century, to understand the penitent’s “profession” of repentance, the “manifesting the truth” of repentance, and the emergence of a publication process employed by Tertullian, which was inherent in the penitential process: the *publicatio sui*—the publication of the self as the embodiment of truth (Foucault, 2021).

Foucault's textual analysis of the early Christian Church does not settle for an *exomologesis* that is procedurally verbal. Rather, *exomologesis* is distributed along "different axes," such as the public/private, verbal/non-verbal, objective/subject, and juridical/dramatic. One is expected not simply to "tell the truth" but to "do the truth," but in doing so manifests what he *is* and thereby performs a kind of truth-telling by the way one lives their lives. Like the ancient Cynics, who elucidated a version of biopolitics that situates truth as life itself in the rejection of "pointless obligations" that have no basis in nature or reason, the *parrhesiast*, one who speaks freely, bears witness to "true life" as a revolutionary activity through the way one lived (Foucault, 2011, p. 171). Similar to Foucault's (2011) study of the Cynics, confession becomes rewritten as the act of giving an account of oneself (Butler, 2005). Confession is "a kind of doing, a form of action, one that is already a moral practice and a way of life" (p. 126). Foucault's renewed sense of confession contrasts with his earlier position in which he saw confession as an extraction of sexual truth, as the capacity for, even within systems of governmentality and the prevalence of disciplinary power through institutions such as the Church's imposition of yearly confession in 1215, there exists within confession the possibility of counter-conduct through Foucault's (2011) later analysis of confession in the context of *parrhesia*, or free-spokenness. In the face of the Christian pastorate applying technologies of power, *parrhēsia* suggests the possibility of the subject's reclamation of agency and narration of oneself in public.

One would be mistaken if *parrhesia* was taken to mean simply saying things about themselves in a haphazard way. Just as the pejorative sense of the *parrhēsiast* as "chatterbox" was unable to link what they say to truth in ancient Greece, the abuse of

social media to pontificate about contemporary issues in ways that do not contribute to intellectual discourse or bear any relationship to the search for truth does not constitute free-spokenness. *Parrhēsia* is a form of truth-telling which gives an account of oneself via three conditions (Foucault, 2011). The first is that *parrhēsia* involves a commitment to tell the truth “without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it” (p. 10). Secondly, it binds⁷⁸ the reader to the truths they speak. The final condition is that the *parrhesiast* commits to truth-telling at risk to their political standing, their friendships, and even their life (Foucault, 2011). As such, the *parrhesiast*’s “courage of truth” is an act of free-spokenness as an ethical way of living, an “act of subject formation” in the narration of one’s truth (Burns, 2018, pp. 129-130).

Foucault (2011) was clear in his suggestion that the truth told by the subject differs substantially from modern forms of confession—the truth does not save or define the subject. Although the subject can have a relationship to truth, the importance is not on the content of what is being told, but the performance of truth-telling for and to another (Butler, 2005). As Foucault (2011) reconceptualizes confession as a technology of the self, the goal is not to establish a static, defined narration of truth, but to use narration as the possibility for self-transformation. Foucault (2011) discusses the risk and courage of the *parrhesiast* at length and evokes Socrates’ trial in “The Apology” to exemplify both risk and courage. Foucault (2011) notes, “the target of this new *parrhēsia* is not to persuade the Assembly, but to convince someone that he must take care of himself and of

⁷⁸ It is worth noting here that religion’s etymology is the Latin word, *religare*, which means to “bind fast,” to place an obligation upon, or to bind “between humans and gods.” Foucault does not remove the *parrhesiast* outside of religious discourses, but works within them, something I am attempting to show through confession.

others; and this means that he must change his life” (p. 106). Although discourse is not life, how one speaks and how one lives are related, because speaking is not something that occurs in an isolated setting. Speaking is always already a scene of address that emerges from elsewhere, and as such, “I,” borrowing from Foucault (2011) publish myself-in-relation to another into the realm of appearances. The *parrhesiast* as truth-teller discloses an ethical relationality at the heart of speaking—likely better understood as speaking-with. A speaker always speaks with another, which comes closer to Foucault’s later ethical work and helps disclose confession as the site of speaking-with-another. Confession’s etymology traces the Latin verb *confessus*, which is the past participle of *confitēri*, formed from the prefix *com-*, meaning “with or together,” and the related Latin verb to *fatēri*, drawn from the root word *fari*, which means “to speak.” Thus, confession, when broken down etymologically, means to speak-with, and suggests that the manifestation of the self in the speech act performs the self’s reconstitution (Butler, 2005).

Similar to Foucault’s (2011) discussion of *parrhesia*, confession constitutes the evidence of one’s *metanoia*, or a conversion of one’s change of life. Confession displays its temporal character not by confirming one’s identity in the publication of the self, but I interpret Foucault’s (2011) renewal of confession as the “verbal and bodily scene of its self-demonstration” in that by “speaking it becomes what it is” (Butler, 2005 p. 113). Foucault’s (2011) historical trace of confession signifies not our constancy, but our transiency, meaning that the *act* of confession does not restore the self from a sense of loss, but as a technology of the self, reconstitutes the self through the manifestation of the self. Confession involves the sacrifice of the self. As Foucault (1993) states in a lecture at

Dartmouth entitled “Christianity and Confession,” self-revelation in the form of *exomologesis* is a form of “self-destruction” (p. 215). Yet, this is only one form of confession that Foucault brings to light. He also refers to a second kind of confession in early Church practice, which had to do more with the way one verbalizes and analyzes one’s thought patterns under the direction of a spiritual director. He calls this *exagoreusis*, which primarily occurred in monastic traditions in which one willingly subjects oneself under the “care” of a paternal figure. The self-examination is more about the thoughts one examines rather than the actions one commits under *exomologesis*. Foucault’s does not that consider the two forms of confession as separate. Rather, they comprise a technology of the self that reinforce each other, with penitents needing to publicly narrate? themselves before others in something of a model of martyrdom for the church as the embodiment of the risk and courage to speak truth to power.

Confession, Parrhesia, and Faithful Witnessing: A (Puerto Rican) Aesthetic Interlude

In his autobiographical narrative entitled *Down These Mean Streets*, Thomas (1967) tells the story of a Black Puerto Rican man coming of age from the 1930s to the 1960s. In the narrative, Thomas opens with a scene in which his younger self screams from the rooftop of his Spanish Harlem building, “I want recognition” (p. ix). Thomas offers readers the opportunity to bear witness to the dehumanization of working-poor and racialized communities as a result of the violence and exploitation of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. The migration of working poor Puerto Ricans from the island to the “main” land, a common verbiage denoting the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, especially in the early-to-middle part of the 20th century, was often a trip marked by intense dispossession, debasements, social-economic hierarchies, the

uplifting of Eurocentric epistemologies, and institutional dominations (Flores, 2000; Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Figueroa-Vazquez, 2015). Continued dehumanization and the pathological effect of Puerto Ricans seen as perpetually “dumb,” lazy, and foreign has led to a history of exploitation, theft, and deception (Denis, 2017). One immediate example of this is a hurricane which destroyed the island in 1899, just a few years after the United States acquired control over it in the Spanish-American War. Rather than provide relief, the United States government devalued the island’s currency by 40 percent, causing nearly every individual on the island to lose half their net worth (Klein, 2008).

Not much has changed people’s perception of Puerto Ricans, battered after the 2017 devastation of Hurricane Maria, one of the deadliest natural disasters in US history. President Trump held a press conference in which he stated Hurricane Maria was not a “real catastrophe” like Hurricane Katrina was in Louisiana, bragging about its low casualty count. Trump noted that only sixteen people had died in relation to Katrina where 1,833 people had died, beckoning people to “be very proud” of themselves for working together, failing to acknowledge the U.S.’s role in the dearth of infrastructural issues tied to colonialism. Trump, with a visible smirk so popular in his rallies evoking a calm and collected demeanor, grabbed paper towel rolls to shoot—as in, the way one shoots a basketball—into the crowd clamoring for supplies. Puerto Ricans on the island believed the true number was higher because they had experienced the wreckage and witnessed someone they knew to be badly hurt or dead. By the end, the official death toll accepted by the local government would be 2,975 people, a revised death toll which Trump tweeted was a “partisan conspiracy theory” perpetuated by liberals⁷⁹. The

⁷⁹ It is worth noting that this exact response was Trump’s response when COVID-19 emerged in popular consciousness and as a public health threat.

“aftershocks of disaster” which already existed but became apparent after Hurricane Maria were feelings of displacement and hopelessness, because those who stayed on the island suffer the material conditions of an austerity-wracked island and those who left suffer because the conditions which caused them to leave the island are still in place (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019).

The way my family ended up in the United States is always a matter of mystery for me because there are very few “records” which detail our sojourn, but there are always stories which indicate our migration. As far as I have heard, my mother’s father picked crops in Puerto Rico, but the expansion of urban centered industry decreased agricultural work, once considered the most prominent sector of labor (Ayala, 1996). In 1950, 203,000 workers made up the agricultural sector whereas by 1960 that number had dramatically reduced to 124,000. Of the 51,000 home needle workers in 1950, only 10,000 remained by 1960. The decline in labor opportunities forced migration during this period, with 450,000 Puerto Ricans migrating to the United States (Ayala, 1996). Much of his life, my mother’s life, and my life early on were marked by poverty and all of its accompaniments.⁸⁰ Although our family had emerged from the island to the “main” land, the violences of colonialism continued to oppress our family, even when we did not have the language to refer to it as such.

My father’s father⁸¹ was likewise brought from Puerto Rico via a tragedy. His father was a fisherman, or so I have heard, and was an alcoholic and deeply abusive.

⁸⁰ The accompaniments include poor health such as hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure, government assistance, food insecurity, poor sanitary conditions by enclosing many people to live in one room as possible, domestic violence, and drug use.

⁸¹ I am highlighting my grandfathers in this narrative, but I am not unaware of the lack of representation for my grandmothers. That is not by accident, but the simple truth is that I do not know their stories of migration either because I have never been told or because our family’s story of migration is not really

Despite the physical and emotional abuse inflicted upon the family, my grandfather, the oldest of twelve, woke up mornings to help his father fish for food. My grandfather's father may have developed a form of melancholia, which is consistent with the lament or rage one might feel at the economic reality of poverty, with the continual obstruction of agency in one's everyday life. One day my grandfather woke up and went to fish with his father, perhaps still drunk from the night before, on a cliff near where they used to fish in *Camuy*, a city off the coast of the island. As they continued to fish, my grandfather's father moved too close to the cliff and slipped, causing him to fall and hit his head on the rocks. He fell into the water, a gash spewing its reddish fluid. Overcome with the event, my grandfather ran off to find help to no avail: by the time he had gotten back, his father's body had been carried off into the ocean and sharks circled around the carcass. As the oldest of twelve, one would presume that my grandfather would take on the paternal role his father left for him. That is not what happened. My grandfather ran. His trauma literally took him to the U.S., and always stayed with him, haunting him, causing him to traumatize his kids.

I write of these two stories not to disparage but to try to understand the ways both my parents taught me, my first teachers, in many ways both shattered by their upbringings, attempting to find some reparative cure for their lived experience in and through me and my siblings. Grumet (1988, 1993) notes that the concept of reproduction, whether biological or ideological, is vital to begin to understand curriculum, noting that domestic life is our "first curriculum" (p. 206). Grumet (1993) continues:

known. The only thing I do know from my mother's mother is that her maternal ancestor was a slave in Puerto Rico, freed in 1873, but was required to work for three extra years in order so that landowners could adjust to the new labor costs (Acosta, 2020). Because there were few records kept, the story is difficult to piece together.

The hand that caresses us and then points out the world worthy of our notice is drawing content out of the buzzing confusion to bring to our notice. Days that are punctuated with meals, nap time, story time, play time, weeks that include trips to the store, washing dishes, sweeping floors, putting out garbage, and bringing home the paper provide the first structure and sequence for all of us. For some, the order is regular and predictable. For others, it is approximate, sliding in and around a general scheme. For yet others it is serendipitous, unpredictable, offering endless surprises, occasionally terror (p. 207).

Our ancestors provide us our first curriculum, offering the possibility of structure and terror, of joy or/and trauma. The intimate world of children is violated by attempts to think of language as neutral or objective as opposed to a mediation of experience exceeding mastery. It is not that the child's intimate life is neutral, or that it could ever be neutralized, but that the attempts to do so, via that structure of family life such as in the case of my grandfather's father's drinking, or in the pedagogical framework of teaching towards objective ends, constitutes a violent colonial cruelty that is difficult to eradicate. To eradicate the neutralization of human bodies is the endeavor to overcome the entirety of Western modernity, especially when part of the effects/affects of coloniality is that, as Fanon (1963/2004) reminds us, life simply means not to die, it is a scarcity framework for living through triumph over space, time, capital, and bodies. In schools, the "race to the top," which pervades all educational discourse, is just one aspect of this colonial system that reproduces the society outside of classrooms. Thus, while I work through my grandparents' and parents' stories of colonialism, I cannot help but notice the way that reproduction, while not in itself a bad thing, is often a tool for perpetuating and propagating certain knowledges and ways of being in the world.

As I previously explored utilizing Foucault's thought, colonial systems of governance function to subject individuals using disciplinary techniques. It is important to mark a distinction between colonialism and coloniality, however, because I think the

distinction is relevant for what I am tracing. Colonialism refers to a political and economic relationship in which one sovereign nation has power over another nation, marking the dominant nation as an empire. I regard the United States as a dominant nation that has a colonial relationship with Puerto Rico. Coloniality, however, does not simply refer to that political and economic relationship between a dominant nation and the nation over which it effects power, but the “patterns of power” that define everyday political, social, cultural, epistemological productions, which extend beyond administrative life (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Coloniality emerge from a particular place in time, which is the conquest of the Americas. The travel of Europeans across the Atlantic Ocean and the subduing, killing, and raping of indigenous populations and African slaves in 1492 introduced a particular set of conditions through which capitalism could emerge and be tied to domination and subordination. Colonizing America became the model of power in the modern world, and produced modern identity framed around a system of domination that was distinctly European. However, the framework of European domination is only possible because of colonial subjectivity, with coloniality the continuing outcome of that framework of European, white supremacist domination.

The framework of Eurocentrism in coloniality is a reason that, despite my positive feeling about his theoretical framework around confession, that I must diverge slightly from his conception of confession and *parrhēsia* if only to add slightly new way of thinking about truth-telling that speaks from the “underside of modernity” (Dussel, 1996, p. 129). While Foucault is critical of the European sciences, he still speaks with a European accent, speaking the language of empire under an epistemological register, which emerged out of the colonial system of domination that continues to plague the

oppressed. If we think of the everyday accounting of coloniality in the modern world, especially as I articulated in fragments of my story, whether completely accurate or not, should we not think about the ways coloniality effects schools, pedagogies, and curriculum? The validation and naturalization of racism through the natural and human sciences in the 19th century shaped the racializing elements of the social efficiency movement that would dominate schooling and justify the mistreatment, vanquishing, and shaping of an entire way of being through a paradigm of war (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Modernity's paradigm of war, unfortunately, shapes my pedagogy, my fears, my anxieties, and the way I think about myself. I wish it were otherwise, in fact, I pray it were so. Julia de Burgos' poetry often speaks to the way coloniality shapes my existential concern: "Ser y no querer ser? esa es la divisa/ la batalla que agota toda espera/ encontrarse, ya el alma moribunda/ que en el mísero cuerpo aún quedan fuerzas."⁸² The beginning of the poem discusses the continual question of selfhood that interrupts Puerto Rican subjectivity, existing but always feeling displaced, coming to terms with having to be American, but not really accepted as a citizen. The hybridity of being Puerto Rican and American, Black and Puerto Rican, alive and also feeling the melancholia of existing, could only be expressed in an experience of lingering in the liminality of being.

Liminality suggests a position or play at a boundary, such as a structure that forms a barrier. As Grobe (2017) notes, poetry operates within a structure, which puts up a barrier that one fights to surmount, to overcome, echoing Foucault's (1978/1990) historical link to confession as a "discursive explosion" of confessional talk about sex, noting that "not every barrier, it turns out, is a hindrance" (p. 17). A structure never contains what it

⁸² "To be and not wanting to be, that's the currency, the battle that drains every wait. To find inside the already moribund soul, that within the measly body there is still strength."

means to, something other always sneaks underneath. There is another word for “barrier,” Grobe (2017) suggests, which is “embarrass,” like the root word for “embarrassing,” suggesting that the word “describes both the dam and the flood. Repression and breakthrough, writing and performance. The confessional poem, by design, is just one big embarrassment” (p. 65). I sense, as I read de Burgos’ line, that there is something surprising, even embarrassing, in the way she speaks about life. People are not supposed to talk this way in public. However, using poetic language and autobiography affords de Burgos to, like Anne Sexton after her, “confess” about the images of the grotesque world we live in without resorting to the normativity of acceptable standards (Salvio, 2007). De Burgos gives us a glimpse into how stories, particularly narratives of colonialism and oppression, demand to be told, and engross us, challenging us to work through them.

The strength de Burgos highlights, I think and hope, is a kind of truth-telling that Figueroa-Vazquez (2020) calls “faithful witnessing,” which is bearing witness to the “unknowable effects” of colonialism and coloniality as a decolonial alternative (p. 65). Like parrhesia, “faithful witness” is a political act of “collaborating with those who are silenced,” and perhaps, those who have been silenced throughout history (p. 117). The colonized have always employed faithful witnessing as a tool for resistance and a commitment to narrating themselves, putting themselves in risky positions, even the possibility of death. Faithful witnessing brings a distinct challenge to the witness because colonial systems of domination, such as the system in place in the United States, are threatened by acts of truth-telling that resist capitalistic paradigms of war. It is a subversive act not only because it establishes resistance against the status quo or what is common sensical, but also because witnessing is not bound by accuracy. Witnessing can

be the speech act of testifying to what one has seen and what one has not seen, which carries a religious dimension. For instance, think of the church congregation that witnesses to each other struggle, pain, anxiety— “can I get a witness?” Understood in this way, faithful witnessing does not posit a self, rather the self is undone by the way others disrupt and disturb one’s sense of themselves, rendering the relationship between oneself and others on which moves toward a radical responsibility rather than authenticity.⁸³

If confession and *parrhēsia* mean anything with respect to truth-telling, and I think they do, they must bear witness to a past which is never laid to rest, demand that the truth of the forgotten others of history are not simply told but related to the present through a “living on,” or *survivance*, with the world as it is and bearing witness, or confessing, toward a world that could be. Coloniality signifies complex relations of power because on the one hand, it is oppressive, dominating, and hegemonic, and on the other, it is the world in which we live. Thus, how could we be faithful witnesses or *parrhesiasts* within such a system? To a degree, we might attempt to admit that we are part of a world with the effects of coloniality, itself an increasingly hostile endeavor in education as bills pass to ban books that explore histories of oppression (Jimenez-Garcia, 2022). Additionally, many states, including Florida, have passed bills through state legislatures that prohibit public schools and private businesses from making white people feel “discomfort” while discussing race, racism, or America’s history. It appears that many, particularly in the Republican Party, feel a sense of unease when openly discussing a history of oppression from which they are beneficiaries. I do not blame them for that

⁸³ Maldonado-Torres’ (2007) exploration of “coloniality of being” by examining the way decoloniality has engaged phenomenological and existential dimensions of the work of Heidegger and Levinas is particularly instructive here.

unease. It is not easy to discuss these histories any more than it is easy for children to live through them.

Beyond just acknowledging the deep moral tension of the effects of coloniality in our world, we need to increasingly tell the truth about it as well. Telling the truth about the effects of coloniality is especially true for education scholars who serve teachers and future educational researchers. Those effects have infiltrated every aspect of our lives from the credit system that affects housing, which in turn, affects public schools, to economic instability and debt. Faithful witnessing, similar to *parrhesia* and how I theorize confession, is about the way speakers tell the truth about the complexities of existence. Can we speak this way in schools? Can we teach like this? I suggest that teachers already are, despite governmental attempts to stifle and create barriers to such “complicated conversation.” Everything we discuss, write, or assign testifies about ourselves and the world, allowing teachers to speak from the depths of themselves in ways that they may not even have begun to interrogate, the way a poem or line of prose may speak to one in ways one had never before contemplated. These confessions are difficult to translate from teacher to student, and in fact, may be missed by students. The reality is that translation is not only difficult, but it also occludes just as a translation is meant to open up for others. Teaching, therefore, cannot be reduced to a science if we simply think of science as observable and measurable. But if we think about teaching as a poetic structure or form, an art, we may be able to see the ways that teaching transgresses those forms, showing us what is excluded, pointing to a world calling for our attunement, beckoning us to stop, see, and *study*.

Until now, this chapter traced modernity's demand for transparency as governmentality, utilizing Foucault's conceptual movement of confession from his early thought as a disciplinary technology of power to his understanding of confession as a technology of the self in which the subject reconstitutes the self in relation to the truth. I discussed the connection between confession and *parrhesia* in Foucault's (2011) thought, thinking about the risky relationship between subjectivity and truth as well as the subject's performative agency in their own narration of the truth. Moreover, I problematized *parrhesia* by introducing the way decolonial readings of faithful witnessing might extend my thinking on confession and truth-telling (Figueroa-Vazquez, 2020; Lugones, 2003). In the next section, I bring Foucault's thought on confession into discourse with the field of curriculum studies by suggesting that Pinar's (2004) method of *currere*⁸⁴ reclaims subjective agency through the study of educational experience and, as such, is a form of technology of the self. Through the study of educational experience, both inside and outside of the school, *currere* counters the stasis of "presentism" often effectuated by evaluative logics by enacting the method as a technology of the self for the purpose of subjective and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2012).

***Currere* as "Educational Confession"**

Curriculum, Pinar (2011) reminds us, is a complicated conversation, structured currently in US schools around and by objectives, evaluations, and outcomes.

Standardized assessments, high-stakes testing, and grades are the currencies that fuel the

⁸⁴ The method of *currere* is a series of four steps or moments: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetic (Pinar, 2004). Pinar (2004), drawing from his work with Grumet (1976), states that the steps of *currere* "point to both temporal and cognitive movements in the autobiographical study of educational experience; they suggest the temporal and cognitive modes of relation between knower and known that might characterize the ontological structure of educational experience" (p. 35).

conversation around curriculum design, organization, implementation, and evaluation. Quick to reduce the subject to numbers, education is understood as the transference of established and normative forms of skills and knowledge from teachers to students who then need to be held accountable to stakeholders. While some curriculum scholars view Tyler's (1949) "rationale" as a positive force in the field of curriculum studies (see Wraga, 2017), I follow Kliebard (1970) and Burns' (2018) suggestion that Tyler's influence over curriculum and instruction conflates curriculum and teaching and sublates study as a "complement" of curriculum (p. 72). Tyler's (1949) design process is a reduction of curriculum to a pedagogical template in which schools, districts, and states can utilize to massive scales (Pinar, 2011).

The reduction of curriculum to a set of protocols was, in terms of my Foucauldian analysis of disciplinary power, the "political point of accountability," the forcing of teachers and students to accept new norms, including "docility, dependence, and an unquestioning trust of authorities" (Pinar, 2019, p. 119). Although Tyler is read as someone who cares more about evaluation versus measurement, and as someone who thinks about education as experience, I conclude through my reading of Tyler (1949) that the predetermination of outcomes, the identifying and organization of "educational experiences" to get students to reach those outcomes, and the prevalence and growth of high-stakes testing provides the condition of possibility for the instrumentalization of programming as the function of education. As a result, knowledge is a means to an end, an end articulated in and through test scores. The use and abuse of test scores functions as an extractive disciplinary technology of power deployed onto students and teachers, constituting and reshaping the purpose of education into "a process of changing the

behavior patterns of people,” as formal actions upon which the question of accountability becomes rational (Tyler, 1949, p. 6). Tyler’s answer to the question of accountability makes perfect sense to many education stakeholders: all that is needed for teachers and students is a set of externally imposed disciplinary procedures, and schools will function as intended. Stakeholders, including parents, have succumbed to the truth claims associated with assessment logic, and likewise, teacher education has become dominated by Tyler’s four basic principles (Rodriguez, 2009).

The reconceptualists broke from the constraints inherent in Tyler’s “rationale” and its technical and instrumental model of curriculum by reconceptualizing curriculum as complicated conversation through engagements with phenomenology, psychoanalysis, literary fiction, and Marxist theory (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). The reconceptualists’ emergence from technical and instrumentalized forms of curriculum prompted a return to the self and its inhabitation of a pedagogical world. From reconceptualists, post-reconceptualization curriculum studies understands curriculum as a complicated conversation, utilizing the method of *currere*:

[T]he Latin infinitive form of curriculum meaning to run the course, or in the gerund form, the running of the course—provides a strategy for students of curriculum to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2012, p. 44).

Currere understood as a verb embraces the subjective agency of study. “The running” of the course that defines *currere* provides a rich metaphor for thinking about the lived experience of study, situated in the phenomenological, historical, and autobiographical. Utilizing the metaphor of running the racecourse provides, as Kliebard (1982) suggests, a “potent instrument for seeing things beyond our world of everyday reality” (p. 17).

Kliebard’s metaphor provides rich symbolic language to think about the ways educational

experience exceeds instrumentalization. The purpose of *currere* as a method of study is, therefore, the “working through” of subjective experience for the purpose of understanding and reconstructing “our own subjective and social lives” (Pinar, 2011, p. 2). Just as Foucault highlighted both the way that power subjectivates the individual and is the condition of possibility for the subject to cultivate a resistant self with a new relationship to truth, Pinar (2011) likewise suggests that education is paradoxical in that learning presupposes a subject who is *being* formed while also suggesting that the individual becomes, or comes *into being*, through education.

Previously, I noted that what prompted my study of curriculum as confession was my reading of Pinar’s (2019) statement that “we need educational confession for sake of movement,” and that it was “to create subjective passages out of and away from the historical present” (p. 79). Understanding *currere* as a reclamation of subjective agency for academic study, I suggest that confession functions similar to *currere* because it not only disentangles educational experience from the site of instruction but attempts to reconstruct the perpetual question of educational experience itself (Pinar, 2006; Grobe, 2015). The suggestion that educational experience is a question that needs to be “worked through” borrows from Augustine’s statement that he “becomes a great question” to himself, similar to the “ethics of humility” inherent in study (Block, 2004). The distinctive question of the self is not the attempt to produce a positive sense of self but show how the subject exists in relationship to others through a historically mediated experience of the world.

Currere functions as a technology of the self that complicates our understanding of the self, both simultaneously returning to subjectivity only to go beyond it to others.

The mode of such movement exists in study which is never an isolated task; it always exists with others in conversations and reflections that complicate our conceptions of ourselves and the world. Conversations with others occur with distinctions that bind participants while also keeping us separate. As Silverman (2009) suggests, the binding of conversations that likewise exists as a boundary is a shared experience of finitude, suggesting a relationality that characterizes curriculum because it “connects us to every other being,” (p. 9). When we forget the role of subjectivity within schooling, we forget the ethical need to think about and act in relation to others.

The instrumentalization of the teacher-as-social-engineer, as an agent of the administrative system of public schooling leading classrooms toward predetermined objectives, has been a failure in part because the subjective experiences and interests of teachers and students have been essentially abandoned (Pinar, 2006). Moreover, because the subjective experiences of teachers and students have been abandoned, the subject’s relationship to the truth is offered up to the pastoral power of the teacher to be cultivated and constituted. Educational confession, as Pinar (2019) conceptualizes it, has to do with movement, with change, the risks that come with allowing oneself to be exposed and self-shattered for the purpose of becoming free to remake oneself on one’s own terms (Pinar, 2011). Subjective reconstruction is not simply avowing something from nothing, such as when a person in bad faith states fluidity suggests anyone can be anything at any time. Rather, it is the reconstruction of one’s own lived experience through the “reanimation of the material they study,” the representation of the self as an ethical activity given to another (Pinar, 2010, p. 5). Aesthetics and the ethics of relationality are ever-present in curriculum as people attempt to make meaning of their realities, giving rise to *currere* as

both an “artful process” and ethical practice of the translation of one’s experience to another (Gouzouasis & Wiebe, 2018). If we understand, therefore, curriculum to be a complicated conversation, as the reconceptualists do, then it, like the act of confession, is neither an act of solipsism, nor an arrival of a unified sense of the truth (Pinar, 2011). Rather, it is the contact made with others in our world as well as with our social experiences (Nancy, 1991; Blumenfeld-Jones, 2012). The method of *currere* understood through my conceptualization of confession as a giving to another an account of myself is why hooks (1999) notes her interest in confessional writing which moves into the personal as “a way to go beyond it,” functioning as a “prelude” to the movement which will inevitably follow (p. 67).

What follows, I hope, from my re-working of educational confession, is that curriculum scholars, teachers, and students engage the subjective nature of academic study as opposed to the endless quest for more “efficient” ways of allowing institutions to extract and reduce them to numbers. In line with Foucault’s (2011) analysis of *parrhesia*, the generation of new ways of becoming is the political and ethical work of relational and responsible truth-telling. Reclaiming the subjective nature of academic study, especially in the internationalization of curriculum inquiry, delves into topics as diverse as colonialism, geopolitics, climate change, war, and indigenous education, which suggests there is a richness to the possibility reflected in diverse positionalities among curriculum researchers. Foucault’s (2011) reflection on Cynic true life as a form of public embodiment of the truth in relation to early Christian spirituality as embodying the truth in the way one lived provides a theoretical framework from which curriculum thinkers in all forms—inside and outside the school—may seek the truth in all its complexity,

become truth-tellers, and reimagine ourselves and the world. The risk, as Foucault (2011) notes, of telling the truth is that it is always a critical engagement with the existing society, and is an ongoing effort to begin anew, to “remain deeply within the simultaneity of immediate material relations and historically discursive interactions that make truth-telling possible” (Kuntz, 2015, p. 108). As such, humans are always confessing, beginning anew, critically thinking about our relationship to truth, the possibility of being wrong, or even being lost (Lather, 2007). Foucault (2011) notes that *parrhesia* is “not a skill...it is a stance, a way of being” (p. 14). Study, Block (2004) suggests, is like prayer, the embodiment of an ethics. Will we curriculum scholars have the courage to leave the safe harbors of instrumentalization, certainty, and value that have comforted us in favor of the uncertainty of being in relation with others? Will we problematize and perhaps disavow the governmental structures that perpetuate systems of domination? Curriculum studies scholars must seek to embody the truth at the risk of being exposed at our limits to the other, *appearing* to constitute ourselves *contra* governmental systems, but always within a given scene of address, a pedagogical world we are always already inhabiting.

Summary

I opened this chapter by discussing modern demands for transparency as governmentality, borrowing from Foucault’s (2007) historical discussion of pastoral power and the development of the nation-state. I utilized the demand for transparency to discuss schooling’s extractive disciplinary measures and accountability discourses, which function as a technology of power. Much of my discussion of schooling centered around the use of high stakes testing to reduce individuals to numbers, choking out curriculum as the site of complicated conversations (Pinar, 2011). Through Foucault’s (1978/1990)

analysis of pastoral power, I navigated the historical development of confession that would become both a way of measuring the thoughts, intentions, and desires of the confessants and the conditions of possibility for new discourses around sex to emerge, and thus, new subjective relationships to truth to emerge as well.

I moved from Foucault's (1978/1990) discussion of disciplinary power toward his connection between early Christian confession and *parrhesia*, or free-spokenness. Embedded within *parrhesia* is the commitment to tell the truth at great risk, and then focused on how confession might relate to curriculum and the method of *currere*. I referred to *currere* as the movement of the subject outward and away from the historical present, which Pinar (2019) refers to as "educational confession" (p. 79). I referenced the reconceptualists' relationship to the possibility of curriculum as the site of self and social reconstruction and how confession relates to the pedagogical experience of teachers and students who give accounts of themselves to one another. Giving an account of oneself, like truth-telling, is not just a skill one learns through a set of behavioral imperatives but is a way of being that demands perpetual critical engagement, something I call for at the end of the chapter.

In the next chapter, I provide a phenomenological intervention into my conceptualization of confession, which is interrupted by Derrida's (1967/1998) notion of the trace. In this chapter, I traced the historical and social texts utilizing Foucault. But even this history, or this reading of texts upon and for other texts, is disrupted by the play of difference and the poetics of the "account" of oneself. Texts occurs in language, and therefore function as poetic encounters, which contaminate the scene of address with the language of the West, a point that Foucault rightly notes. The language of the West,

Derrida (1967/1998) states, is metaphysical language, and we must think within and through that metaphysical language to conceptualize confession as well. Confession among Christians assumes an avowal to truth, and therefore leans upon cataphatic suppositions, assuming revelation to existential truth. Derrida (1999) works within this Christian understanding of confession and shows that it likewise is subject to deconstruction. As a result, I will turn from Foucault, who I think wonderfully thinks through the confession in an important way, arguing that Foucault posits domination and resistance as always in opposition, thus, putting forward a duality without negation, or an entirely positive self which is constituted and re-constituted. The self is under governmental systems of domination and also an individual, however historically conditioned, which resists through counter-conduct, always playing within the oppositional drive of power and pleasure, or inclusion and the outside. Utilizing Derrida, I explore the conceptual limits of the “counter” in counter-conduct, gesturing toward the way deconstruction shows the contamination of exteriority and interiority, and ultimately suggest thinking curriculum as confession through the possibility of the event (Caputo, 2016).

Chapter V

“There Is Always Someone Else”: (Cir)Confession and the Event of Curriculum

“I think that the university must provide the milieu for the event and therefore I would prefer not to say a place of ‘formation.’ It must allow the event to happen, which is why I myself would speak of ‘transformation’ rather than ‘formation.’ I think ‘form’ and ‘formation’ work against the event. The coming or incoming of the event... is the occasion of a transformation” (Caputo, 2016, p. 6).

“And this is more than confession I mean I might press the button just so you know my discretion.”

–Kendrick Lamar, “The Blacker the Berry”

Introduction

To think about confession and truth-telling we must think about the truth, particularly in the context of (trans)formation in the pedagogical encounter. The scene of pedagogy between teacher and student is the encounter in which knowledge is dispensed from one to the other, or established forms of knowledge acceptable in our historical context flow from a certifiable instructor to a student sitting in a classroom. In this chapter, I speak “sparingly” of the school as the site of curriculum, and rather to speak about curriculum as all the experiences that exist outside of the school (Pinar, 2004, p. 175). If I speak about education, however, then I must pay homage to the event of pedagogy, or in other words, to think pedagogy as an event.

To do this, I will bring Foucault into conversation with Derrida’s (1978) from his essay, “Cogito and the History of Madness,” in which Derrida discusses Foucault’s engagement with the history of madness. Derrida begins his essay by discussing the ever-changing relationship between teacher and student which highlights a “silent” voice

students already respond to in the process of study and accounts for the presence of the other even when that other is unnamed. Study never begins with a self-identical subject, but a response to another who is not merely authoritative, but transferential (Derrida, 1995). That is to say, before I *am*, the other is there, and I am given myself from, by, and through the other to whom I must respond. I engage with Derrida's essay to show the limits of counter-conduct because of its susceptibility to appropriation for the existing social order, and likewise, maintains a tradition of totality that Derrida (1978) critiqued and called the metaphysics of presence. I bring Derrida's (1978) essay on Foucault in conversation with "Circumfession" (1993), an essay that provides a useful corrective to confession, which assumes a revelation of the truth. Thinking about the inseparability of reason and madness in the production of truth, I suggest that there is always the possibility of fiction at the heart of truth, rendering confession an impossible task.

I then ask what can be done in the wake of such impossibility. In other words, if confession is impossible, why do we continue to do it? Therein lies the heart of deconstruction, stirred with a passion for the impossible, a "passion to go precisely where you cannot go" (Caputo, 1997, p. xix). Thus, I discuss the impossibility of positive, static answers to the question of confession, and suggest that it is, as I previously explored, the witness of the individual who is beyond proof, pledging to invent every moment out of the compulsion of experience with others. Confession, therefore, is about making the truth, not a truth that is veiled or mysterious within the self but as being-in-relation to another through language in a conversation of speakers. I conclude the chapter by hearkening back to curriculum as a "complicated conversation," as beings-in-relation making space for the event of curriculum in study.

The Mad Dialogue

Study is always a response to a given truth that we must re-invent. I use the term “response” because the other who precedes me gives me my sense of self, a truth with which I am in perpetually conflict. As Augustine (1992) confesses, “I became a great question to myself” (p. 272). I become a question because the other questions me or causes me to question myself. What is the truth? For whom do I supply such truth? Is not education the journey for truth? Is this truth something which is hidden, something which needs to be excavated for the public?

As I write, already, my teacher’s voice, James Burns, encourages while also provokes me in his own Foucauldian octave. My teacher, “Jim,” at least in the side he manifests for me, and perhaps in the way I have constructed him, articulates a vision of study which concerns a historical understanding of the truth that is often tragic, but retains a beauty existing as counter-conduct in the world (Burns, 2020). Invoking Baldwin, he notes that the “beauty of writing” is a paradox, in part because there often exists a division between the truth about ourselves and what “we wish ourselves to be” (p. 58). Thus, writing is an art of living which lingers within this tension, wrestling with it in study to consider ethical ways of being.

The tension is a push and pull between his analysis of power and the possibility, and even necessity, of counter-conduct. The notion of counter-conduct appeals to me particularly because it marks me as an outsider, as one who is able to live contrary to the established knowledges of the present. Through the historical impulse to write, one can understand how knowledges have been produced, effectuating power, and then “excavate” knowledges which have been marginalized, “institutionally subjugated” (p.

60). Burns (2018) does a form of writing “from the outside,” which is to say, standing in solidarity with the outsiders, historically situating the myths and idols hegemonic groups lord over subjugated ones. So much of my own thinking as a graduate student, whether he knows it or not, is marked by him in some way, stemming from the first class I took with him on curriculum theory.

What emerges from this relationship is, like Derrida’s (1978) relationship to Foucault, an “admiring and grateful disciple,” and also somewhat “unhappy” within this state of discipleship. It is Burns who challenges me with his voice “that precedes [my] own,” a silent dialogue which “made” me into a disciple, giving me new language for thinking about curriculum. As I enter into the world, engage in new forms of writing, continue my study, things which my teacher pushes me to do, I begin to feel, as Derrida (1978) did, “caught in the act,” anxious about both my teacher’s voice and the voice of the disciple rising within me, the disciple who must, inevitably, respond to the teacher. I utilize my pedagogical encounter with Burns as an echo of the encounter between Derrida and Foucault to highlight a similarity with which I attempt to “break the glass” as it were, responding to the previous chapter’s conceptualization of confession (Derrida, 1978, p. 32).

I depart from Foucault, and as a result, Burns, at the limits of counter-conduct, and in particular, the limits of the “counter” in response to acceptable conduct. What is at play within this problematic is an *aporia*⁸⁵ of what is allowable or justifiable and what is excluded or cut off, relegated to the outside. Derrida highlights this problematic in his “Cogito and the History of Madness” by interrogating the outside position Foucault

⁸⁵ *Aporia* signifies the expression of an insoluble contradiction in a text’s meaning, or a logical impasse suggested by a text.

relegates the mad through an analysis of Descartes and his articulation of the *cogito ergo sum*.⁸⁶ Foucault's (1961/2006) repetition of madness as a historical emergence to a contrary or counter-position to that "other form of madness" which allows others "not to be mad" repeats the opposition between reason and madness, countering each other in their respective historical emergences. Descartes serves Foucault (1961/2006) as a privileged symbolic point of the emergence of transcendental philosophy in the classical Age of Reason, the historical moment of the articulation of the *cogito* and exclusion of the mad as the ill needing to be treated in contrast to a science self-consciously sure that it is not mad. The stroke of *force*, Foucault (1961/2006) notes, is the "rupture" which Foucault maintains is carried in the madhouse.

As a result of the production of the *cogito*, the mad were imprisoned, dehumanized, and relegated to the outside of society. Importantly, Foucault (1961/2006) turns away from philosophy as a science constructed with and by reason, giving metaphysical or epistemological foundations for knowledge, toward a history, not of ideas, but of the "rudimentary movements of an experience," of a "history of madness *itself*" (Derrida, 1978, p. 33). This is where the dialogue between Derrida and Foucault becomes agonistic because Derrida (1978) notes that such a task is an impossibility. Foucault cannot speak for madness *itself*, because he speaks the language of reason, utilizing the grammar of the French intellectual tradition, and Foucault cannot get outside of that tradition to speak for madness, nor can Foucault construct the texts to speak authoritatively as a first-person narrator for the mad. Foucault's attempt is to do a history of madness "before being captured by knowledge" (Derrida, 1978, p. 34).

⁸⁶ Descartes' articulation of the *cogito ergo sum*, famously, is "I think, therefore, I am."

One can see that Foucault is marking a division within Foucault's historical analysis, a divide which blurs more often within Foucault's later work, between reason and madness in Descartes. It is a similar division within Foucault's conceptualization of conduct and counter-conduct as the rejection of universal rationality as the basis for the language of scientific practice, such as in the language of psychiatry, "which is a monologue of reason on madness" (Derrida, 1978, p. 34). The language of psychiatry as the "monologue" of reason suggests that the rationality that guides human sciences, the establishment of the Western human, speaks for the mad and renders madness to silence. Reason is established on the basis of that silence, and Foucault (1995) writes of the experience of madness "without the voice of a subject" (p. 293). Derrida (1978) critiques this "repetition" by Foucault, suggesting that a history of madness as a recovery of the silenced voice of the "Age of Reason" belongs to an order, a project, which Foucault is denouncing (p. 35). European languages make up the course of the "adventure" of Western reason (Derrida, 1978). Derrida (1978) continues:

Nothing within this language, and no one among those who speak it, can escape the historical guilt—if there is one, and if its historical in a classical sense—which Foucault apparently wishes to put on trial. But such a trial may be impossible, for by the simple fact of their articulation the proceedings and the verdict unceasingly reiterate the crime (p. 35).

Foucault's use of order within order suggests a totality at work in historical development, which is to say, a revolt or counter to reason, which Derrida (1978) calls "a disturbance," or more properly called Hegelian. The Hegelian revolt of reason would be the negation of a classical determination of reason which articulates itself as not only rational, but also *within* reason itself. As a result, a history *contra* reason could not be written because, despite Foucault's desire to not do so, the "concept of history has always been a rational

one” (p. 36). The importance of this critique cannot be undervalued, because despite Foucault’s attempt to move away from the ordering language of philosophy which derives itself from metaphysics, Derrida argues that Foucault’s historicity itself relies on a metaphysical closure.

The movement against reason is something Foucault establishes on a necessary link between madness and the possibility of history. In other words, the possibility of history finds its originary point in the exclusion and silencing of madness in which reason locates its subjectivity. As a result, opposition and exclusion is a fundamental structure of historicity in Foucault. This would imply two things: the first is that the fundamental structure of history is the necessity of madness, which would negate the classical Age of Reason as the “archetypical” exemplar of the historical exclusion that Foucault privileges because history itself would then logically contain that exemplar as just one example of a totalizing force of exclusion; the second is that by suggesting one can “write the history of this division,” one, by extension, places oneself into an objectivity to be able to say what has not or cannot be said (Derrida, 1978).

Foucault would deny such a position of objectivity, of course, later deploying a methodological move from archaeology to genealogy, positing an immanence to the resisting and excessive object of analysis which I previously explored, always simultaneously affected by power and likewise excessive of the very discourses which attempt to regulate it. Foucault’s (1966/1973) rejection of phenomenology in the 1971 preface to the original English edition of *The Order of Things* articulates exactly such objectivity. Foucault (1966/1973) continues:

If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority

to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity—which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice” (p. xiv).

Foucault explicitly rejects the phenomenologist as the knowing subject whose experience can be defined by observation toward an attainment of objective consciousness. Rather, it is not the subject but a discursive textual practice that helps us understand things as they have been historically defined in any epochal moment. Different from phenomenology, which studies the structures of experiential appearances, Foucault (1966/1973) notes that “modernity begins when the human being begins to exist within his organism...at the center...” (p. 318). Foucault’s (1966/1973) attempt to dislocate the notion of the center, or rather, that a center is simply the historical understanding of a particular epoch, while not suggesting a center, locates a center in the archive while also rejecting Derridean textuality. Foucault’s rejection of phenomenology is the counter working of someone who rejects phenomenology in theory, but works within a phenomenological tradition in practice, following Heidegger in his rethinking of the historicity of thought and the irreducible temporality of experience. The problem, as Derrida (1973) will later note, is that phenomenology as such and modernity beginning with human beings at the center as such could not and has never occurred, and finding this is not rejecting phenomenology *as such*, but working through it and even *radicalizing* it, questioning the presuppositions of the historicity of thought and the concept of history itself.

I hope that what is plain, then, is that Derrida, rather than rejecting or countering phenomenology, or the Cartesian moment, is simply radicalizing it, working through it, and serves to become a *new* history of textuality which names, exceeds, and disperses

experience. Foucault, despite rejecting philosophy in favor of history, however, later admits his proximity to philosophy, suggesting in his last interview that Heidegger “has always been the essential philosopher...My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger” (Foucault, quoted in Rayner, 2007, p. 4). Although most observe Nietzsche’s prevalence in Foucault’s work, it is Heidegger that informs Foucault’s transformation of Heidegger’s focus on things to selves and how they become subjects (Dreyfus, 1996). It is precisely in Foucault’s “how they become,” we see the attempt to move to an origin point of historicity, of a reliance upon the archive to determine the past as it was, to let the silence speak themselves, without recognizing that the silent always impose themselves upon us in and through texts.

What the archive does for Foucault is provide a mode of understanding something like subjectivity which relies upon the “decision” as “event” of historical rupture between reason and madness. It is one that draws a dividing line, a ratio that creates modern rationalism. Descartes posits a foundation for certainty by not welcoming or being interested in madness, Derrida (1978) writes, interpreting Foucault, thereby reinforcing the silence of the mad. Derrida (1978) contrasts with Foucault’s interpretation of Descartes by “re-reading” Descartes by suggesting that no such exclusion takes place, but rather that Descartes’ *cogito* is valid “even if I am mad” (p. 55). Descartes attempts to push everything to its extreme, and as a result, the *cogito* emerges from this universal doubt. Despite the idea that everything is a simulation, an illusion, a dream, or the workings of an evil demon, Descartes still finds certainty in thinking. However, Derrida (1978) does not read madness to be excluded, but true even if one is mad. Philosophy as such is grounded in this madness because it is not external to it, but it is, of course,

Derrida (1978) reminds us, controlled by this discourse, repressed, always attempting to reassure itself against the dislocation of itself in relation to a *logos*.

The force of the debate, and the point I wish to draw for my analysis, is the way in which Derrida “deconstructs” philosophy, dislocating it from metaphysical conceptualizations of reason, understanding, and madness, and as always reliant upon an external other, but also “deconstructs” attempts to locate a counter-subject outside of philosophy, showing the way that the anti-philosophical—which is to say, a subject engaging in counter-conduct against the discursive normativity of the human sciences—continue to be indebted to philosophy. Thus, the “history of the present,” or the “history of the subject” already assumes the objectivity of the present which marks the excavating writer standing outside. History formalizes and names the formations of institutions, totalizing its reactivations of the past by the writer, dismissing in favor of a condition of possibility the history of difference and the differential history in its very articulation.

The historicizing of the past is not, just like in philosophy, the discursive subject who is nothing more than the historical technologies of their present from the past, but something which is always already a response to the other. What is more mad than the philosopher who reads, is compelled by those texts from the dead, answering those voices within trying to contradict or affirm his logic? Is this mad dialogue which is the interrelation of reason and madness not the writer’s reactivation? Is this not the teacher’s? Whatever “reactivation” occurs with the other, whether in person or virtually, it relies on philosophical categories that attempt to understand by going to a more foundational source for that understanding. Foucault’s point, as I read it, is that there is nothing more foundational than what has been historically conditioned and produced in each epoch. In

other words, there is a negation, a counter to the positivity of the modern era which signifies the division between reason and madness.

Philosophy, for Foucault (1971), does not and could not produce anything foundational to what we know because what we know is contingent upon the institutional powers that dictate the boundaries of normativity. In this sense, there is no secure foundation for knowledge, and certainly no metaphysical ground of being. However, such a “no” is not the apophatic “no” that attempts to determine how things are not, but a positive “no,” an absence determined and assumed by Foucault, and thus, informs his philosophical cadence. The “no” in Foucault attempts to reject transcendentalism, or the subject going beyond themselves, in favor of the immanence of the object that does not seem very different from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) definition of philosophy as *becoming*⁸⁷. I am not totally satisfied with the immanence of historical archives as objects that help us “understand” the present. Additionally, I am an admiring student of Foucault’s, but am also wary of the immanence of counter-conduct as an art of living as a politics of the self that does not attend to the way writing does not reject transcendence as such; writing is a “quasi-transcendental anteriority,” Caputo (1997) reminds us. The suggestion that writing, for Derrida, is a “quasi-transcendental anteriority,” decisively denies that his writing, or any writing for that matter—all writing, all texts—can accurately trace the interconnections of the empirical and non-empirical world. In other words, Derrida denies that his writing can be the archive that “carries” the conditions of possibility. Moving toward either poles of presence and absence assumes the totalization

⁸⁷ By becoming, Deleuze is referring to the “affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation. Both teleological order and fixed identities are relinquished in favor of a flux of multiple becoming” (Braidotti, 2015, p. 44).

of the Hegelian thesis-antithesis which develops history as the real. Absence, negation, exclusion, the counter, are still categories of being which I claim deconstruction resists.

What I mean when I say deconstruction suggests that rather than simply affirming the essential real in contrast to negation, inclusion versus exclusion, conduct versus counter-conduct, events happen with a kind of “anarchic abandon which lets something different come, with a grace or graciousness which unbinds events, lets them loose” (Caputo, 1997, p. 168). The working of deconstruction in *différance* functions outside of the control of a subject, universal or historical, because it is pre-subjective, occurring on a radically textual plane which not only disrupts, but erupts subjectivity (Caputo, 1997). What is needed is, then, not a history of the subject, the unacknowledged “I” in curriculum, but a discussion of the possibility and impossibility—a quasi-transcendental philosophy—of confession and curriculum which resists totalization when we ask the question, “what is curriculum? Confession?” Rather than speaking in the language of the subject, which is how I began this investigation of confession in the previous chapter, I will attempt to instead speak of *différance* as the name of the possibility and impossibility previously mentioned which is not reducible to ontological or theological categories, but “as the very opening of the space in which [metaphysics]—philosophy—produces its system and its history, it includes [metaphysics], inscribing it and exceeding it without return” (p. 7). In other words, whatever critique I am offering of Foucault, and as a result, Burns, in my thinking the limits of counter-conduct, is that it does not go far enough to the conceptual limits of the counter. Like negative theology, counter-conduct seeks a higher modalization of an ontological category of politics, of ways of being and living. It

is, however, another variation of the philosophy of presence, not escaping philosophical discourse, and actually reinforces a politics entangled with metaphysics.

I instead move to the way deconstruction begins in the middle of things by the provoking and calling to something unforeseeable which prompts us, moving us but itself having always been moving, and calling us from the other. Deconstruction resists—and has always resisted—a closure at the height of injustice, concerned with an experience of the impossible (Caputo, 2018). The impossible is the impossible event, such as the impossibility of truth in a full sense. Confession points toward the impossible event, Derrida (1993) states, insofar as any confession with a fixed destination is possible. The experience of the impossibility of confession is my concern in the next section, and especially, I attempt to formulate a confession without confession, which is to say, a confession without truth in any final sense, a truth that always contains the possibility of fiction.

The Impossibility of Confession

As I write this dissertation, I have an idea of where I intend it to go. The words that fill up the pages will be delivered to my dissertation chair and my committee. The dissertation bears my name, it has my signature. It is a kind of extension of myself in words which carry me to the other. But where does this dissertation begin? On page one? Does it end at the conclusion? When I write a letter is what is written the beginning and end of the “life” of the epistle? Where is the origin of this letter which commands my attention? Confession, if understood as the “speaking-with” between two dialoguing partners, going from end to end, speaks to the metaphysical search for origins, and if origins, then also the search for ends as well. Think of Tyler’s “rationale” as the process

or protocol set in motion toward some *telos*, or goal, an end, an objective, something which signifies closure. The confession, like curriculum, is this same metaphysical search toward Truth to understand the real, to reduce the world to its essence, to understand the self, the “I” which stands apart from the world, alone. By reducing the world to its essence, communication delivers the world, carried within the texts themselves, as some, like the New Critics, taught. While my description of intention and communication may seem rational to some, for it is how we have made this world, it does not hold the weight of its assumptions.

My dissertation is not simply the text that makes up this page, it is not even just a research project at the end of a degree. It is an inquiry to which I have been responding to for years, perhaps a lifetime. It is the others which speak through and for me, the others which I may or may not be able to name right now. Even dialogically, however, the dissertation is not only about the others, but the other’s others. I have been thinking about confession for some time but was struck by my advisor’s connection between curriculum and confession, and likewise, his suggestion that this should be the subject of my inquiry. What motivated him to suggest this? What did he respond to? Which others provoked or called him to make such a suggestion? Did he respond to me because I am religious? Is he religious, or perhaps, does he not know whether he is? How far back does the confessional impulse meet us both in that Mexican restaurant in the middle of Dayton, Ohio, drinking a watered-down margarita and eating an enchilada? Even to be there at that moment was strange when just nine years prior my goal was to be a pastor, and the pastor that I served under—a white man from outside of South Florida—told me that I was not smart enough to go to graduate school. This dissertation, this text, as I am

illustrating, could not be static, but even more than that, it is always a response to another that I cannot at once articulate, delivered to another which exceeds my grasp.

Derrida's "quasi-transcendental" anteriority stands in contrast to the "transcendental interiority" that is so common to our understanding of the world (Caputo, 1997, p. 2). Transcendental interiority or exteriority, the movement between the inside and outside which is what I have been illustrating in this section, like the empirical dialogue between one and another as a form of perfected communication, is metaphysical because it privileges presence and excludes absence. Like teachers and students in the classroom, curriculum imbues knowledge with the privilege of presence, by suggesting there is a thing we call knowledge that can be transacted from teacher to student. What we fail to realize, if the example of knowledge as something which can be deposited is our way of thinking about education, is that all that exists "within" the classroom is, as Block (2014) reminds us, just a small part of all that exists outside of it. In other words, the walls of a school do not contain the curriculum as such. Rather, schools participate as the site of the outside world which informs the classroom. Similarly, the interiority of those who inhabit the classroom occurs in language, and is not produced by me, but the other who gives me the language I use. Just as we inherit languages, we inherit a world, and therefore, we inherit a philosophical language, which is simultaneously our adopted framework and one imposed through colonizing violence. In the inheritance of language, we see a structure of the pain of imposition and the pleasure of belonging to a linguistic framework in which I can attempt to know the world around me.

The possibility of knowing the world is an impossibility because it cannot fit into my reduction of it, making it an impossibility. The world exceeds my systematic

reduction, my linguistic caricatures, my propensity to name that which cannot bear a proper name. The confession is impossible neither because there is nothing behind my confession, as if I was speaking of a nihilism, nor because what is needed to combat the language of metaphysics we inherit is a counter-confession. Rather, we must work through the confession in a way that pushes the confession under its own structural possibility, which is to say, that transcendentalism is a structure of thought necessary for the hyperbolization of it to bring it back down to the language of our experience. We need to go through metaphysical concepts such as truth, not attempt to break away from it, because, of course, we never can. To go through them does not mean to go beyond them, or to achieve some sense of closure, but to see the opening upon which meaning continually emerges as we communicate, moving toward the other and welcoming the other in, destabilizing the rigid structures that presupposed unity.

My etymology of confession in the previous chapter already begins to tug at the threads of the unity of confession. The word confession suggests a speaking that cannot be done in isolation, it is always a response to the other. Even in the traditional case of the admission of guilt from sin is a presupposition that the other, namely God, watches over us with the eyes of judgment over them. The other accuses us, to a degree, and the act of confession is the response appropriate to turn away from sin toward God. Von Speyr (1985), a Catholic writer on the topic of confession, notes that confession “catches the sinner in his fall away from God,” (p. 11). Yet, I am also drawn back to the other—God—who calls me, the individual sinner, back to a community of sinners, of “fallen members” (p. 22). It is the fruit of obedience to those who respond to truth. Understood this way, confession is a drive toward knowledge, of seeking truth to respond and be led

by the hand toward it. We confess because the confession presupposes a revelation, a truth located outside of us. As I have previously discussed, this is how we have understood confession because this is how we have understood the world and the nature of truth throughout Western civilization.

That history exceeds the scope of this inquiry⁸⁸, but the drive toward knowledge, of understanding, can be understood here as a gathering of being and of the truth of the object to which the philosopher can know within themselves. The gathering, which can be understood as a movement toward the fulness of presence, is never fully present. It is an impossibility because our attempts at gathering are (re)presented in language, and language attempts to present that which is unrepresentable. The interrelation of language, being, and the world, drawing from Heidegger, is not a gathering, it destabilizes gathering. Think of the confession. Can I confess my sin with the presupposition of my sin? Who understands their sins? Does one know the depths of one's own self? Does one know, or can one plumb the depths of one's thoughts? Can one exhaust the meaning of one's language? Is there one meaning or essence of the world? Is not this the fundamental question of metaphysics by Heidegger: why there is *something* rather than *nothing*? Heidegger draws us toward something that is secret, veiled before us even though we experience it every day. But how would "I" be able to sign my name to the secret of experience, Derrida (1993) asks. How can I sign my name to an experience that speaks to the "is-ness"⁸⁹ of all being?

⁸⁸ I have already discussed this in my chapter on phenomenology, especially in my discussion of Husserl, so I am not going to pursue this further.

⁸⁹ I use the phrase "is-ness" to refer to the existence of being, or the be-ing of being. What does it mean to be? This question was Heidegger's primary one in his book, *Being and Time*.

Confession, assuming a revelation of the truth of being, assumes an immanency to the world, an auto-affectation from which we can draw to *know* the truth. The reality, however, is that “I” cannot sign my name to such a secret, just as I cannot sign a confession that makes me identical to myself. To say, “I” confess is the same as saying “I am what I am,” or to say I know “who I am.” This is a common saying for people to gesture toward, to not know who one is and try to move toward being more authentically themselves, to come to the knowledge of oneself outside of the temporality of existence. To know oneself is an ethics of formation that preoccupies education, and likewise Foucault’s thought. The ethics of formation relate to form and to habits. Formation relies on ritual, such as in the case of the form of writing one’s daily activities to know oneself. The act of writing one’s daily activity constitutes a habit of formation. Likewise, confession is a formative habit, disrupted by an “I” opened by the other who precedes me. The “I” in this case is what problematizes the confession. It is not simply that there is no confession, just like I do not want to give up on the idea of truth contained in a confession. Moreover, the confession for me is not just a performative act. Rather, the impossibility of the confession is a result of the “I” which is not properly mine to give myself. It is given to me by another which is not properly theirs to give⁹⁰. As I brought in Jim, my advisor, his invocation of confession as a study, I may think of the condition of possibility which led him to that point, despite not going far enough into the trace of my conceptualization of confession.

⁹⁰ It is worth noting clearly that Foucault’s thinking does radically evolve from the point where he writes his history of madness in the 1950s to his later work in the 1980s. In fact, he makes a similar argument on the impossibility of an “I” which is properly mine in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

Confession, if there is such a thing called confession, is not about the delivery of truth claims or propositions, nor is it about bringing facts up to cognition and avowing them as such. That tension illuminates a connection between confession and curriculum, which, Tyler (1949) defined as a set of established knowledges to which the student must become habituated and the truth of being a good student or teacher extracted by standardized examinations (Burns, 2018). That form of confession, if by confession we mean simply avowing ostensive truths, is one in which the person confessing knows their destination. They allow for the pragmatic to enclose their thinking, which is how our world has become constructed. The pragmatic is not the truth, it makes a kind of truth by creating a settlement of the matter, a point of arrival at which the student need go no further. That is our issue, however, because truth, confessions, whatever they may be, do go further, and do nothing but go further.

Confessions elude the “I” who avows a confession, just like curriculum eludes the teacher and the student. I may avow my name onto a curriculum for pragmatic reasons, but curriculum is no more mine than my name, Christopher, is. What I mean when I say that confessions, like curriculum, go further is that both are concepts continually deferred in their signification. Saying that a confession is possible is like saying a word captures the essence of a thing or that by looking at a thing I can reduce the thing itself to a description. Confession is an impossibility because whatever is being confessed does not make anything known, just like a word does not make the world known. At least, the word does not make anything known in any essential ontical sense; things can certainly be studied, but what the confession, like language, does make known is less things-in-themselves, facts, or propositions. I mean that just as the word “tree” does not give the

essential nature of a tree, a confession does not give access to the truth of one's inner life. The minute one says "I confess" what is presented to us is the person laying claim to a testimony that we cannot verify because we were not present at the time of the witness. We could not step into the consciousness of the observer to make that confession. We know nothing of their actions, unless of course, we can get a second or third observer, but even then the confession is tainted with these new others who contaminate the confession. Which facts indicate what occurred? We know nothing of the motivations, the guilt, or even the sorrow of the confessor.

Confession is not really about guilt or shame, although those have been used to bludgeon people for centuries. As I said, the other does not know if a confession is genuine. Furthermore, if we just assume that confession is performative then the performance becomes simply another kind of truth which we have to now interrogate. If I perform something, that still leaves question of the truth of the performance, or the truth of the truth. What lies behind the confession? For Heidegger (1927/1962), confession is about facticity, or the "thrownness" of individual existence, which signifies not only that we are born into a particular historical situation, like the fact that I was born a year before Tupac Shakur's (1991) first studio album came out. Facticity is about that which resists explanation and has much more to do with being confronted simultaneously with the incomprehensibility of Being and something that already informs the existential confrontation which demands a response. This encounter, whether one makes the choice to go deeper into that confrontation or to walk away from it, always necessitates a response. That response is a kind of confession, but one that resists the gathering often attributed to confession. The unfortunate result of our facticity is that our attempts to

gather are futile, because we are condemned to, as Derrida (1967/2011) states, “the [confessions] of a mortal” (p. 47). In other words, a confession is always interrelated to the absence of the one confessing, the not-at-oneness of the self as the structural possibility of the gathering, or self-presence. To confess is to claim yourself as “I am,” but the phrase “I am” is always already linked to death, to my own disappearance. Truth, then, is not only subject to factual experience, and thus, is a fictive possibility. However, without the structural possibility of the contamination of truth and fiction, there can be no truth, history, or confession. The contamination of truth and fiction is what makes the confession possible and likewise impossible.

If confession is impossible, or a possible impossibility, then how can we think of confession if we are to proceed further? In the following section, discuss confession as a poetic text that does not give us any facts about the world, but bears witness to facticity, drawing on Derrida’s “Circumfessions” and Augustine’s *Confessions* to make a connection to the curriculum field by tracing curriculum as an event.

The Passions of Confessions—The Confessions of Passions

The act of signing and, thus, writing, as Bennington (1993) writes, is not “to be reduced to the simple inscription of one’s proper name,” writing suggests that the identity of the written sign resists the designation of causes or origins already lost in the name itself (p. 150). The moment I sign, whatever “I” presents itself as a self is lost to the past and future. Lyotard (2000) expresses this in his discussion of the confessions of Augustine, whom he states is marked by the event of grace—a moment of surprise—in a rupture he calls conversion, which marks confessional writing as between what I once was and what I hope to become. Augustine (1992) states, “confessional writing carries a

fracture within itself. Augustine confesses his God and confesses himself not because he has converted, but rather he converts or tries to convert while confessing himself” (p. 72-73). In the confession, then, the confessor is not emptied of an “I” as much as the confessor professes a relation to alterity, those others who “read” us.

The “reading,” however, is done by a kind of writing, a supplement which the reader performs. It is an act of writing, not in an empirical sense, although empirical writing may occur, but prior to the inscriptions placed upon a piece of paper, there is the writing that already occurs in thoughts, associations, metaphors, patterns, experiences, smells, nostalgia, and this list goes on. There is something in the “reading,” which is a writing, that is paradoxical and even a little problematic. In a time in which we are wary of the politics of “post-truth,” it is difficult to take this poetics of confession seriously, especially if one’s straight-forward concern is with concrete answers that removes the contingency of the future. If one seeks predictability, the current discussion of the poetics of confession, or confession as a poetics, seems like a meandering through the insignificant and abstract. To some degree, that is true. Confession is not about proof, and no one can prove that my confession is true, or that I can give something to another with certainty. It may be used toward pragmatic ends, but it cannot give anyone certainty. When someone confesses with the “I” what they are really doing is saying, even silently, is “I think,” not in the sense that Descartes uses to describe the rational subject—although perhaps connected—but to say “I am not certain.” The temptation to assume a lack of certainty results from not having enough information contradicts this radical hermeneutics. A radical hermeneutics attempts to think radically without transcendental justification, which is another way of saying that it is a way of thinking which does not

lean back on the safe harbors of metaphysical grounding (Caputo, 1988). Instead, radical hermeneutics open thinking to the way the world radically resists metaphysical grounding. By resisting metaphysical grounding, the world overwhelms the attempt to reduce it to make sense, and thus, overwhelms and overcomes attempts to reduce experience.

When I use the word “overcome” I am gesturing toward an experience, the experience of not being able to get at an experience accurately or reductively. Even my best attempts are just grasping in the dark, to a degree. Think about the experience of looking at a painting. At first your gaze glosses over the canvas. You notice its edges, the detail, the ridges which appear from the end of a brush stroke. You see someone in the back, perhaps someone you did not see before, looking at you. This person looks a bit impoverished. They have a scraggly beard which hides half of their face. You are not sure if he is smiling or not. What does he want? What does he want of you? You avert your eyes, because you do not want to face the accusations going on in your mind. So you look at the ocean behind him and begin to think about the fish, and then to your trip as a boy to Miami Beach with your mother; you see her laugh, something which she had not done in a while, and you can see, almost as if it just happened, that behind that laugh with her sister, a pain lurks that only you and your brother know, because it is our pain. But she laughs anyway, hoping to feel every feeling before she leaves. You picture her walking slowly into the water, and you tense up. Why? In that moment, you can feel the tension in your body, you feel a constriction, because as she dips her feet in the water, you are worried that she may never come back. You stop looking at the water and look back at the man, staring at you, but now the stare is not an accusation as much as it is a

call. Perhaps a cry. Perhaps in his poverty, he is crying. Or perhaps in your affluence, he appears to you as crying, and he calls you to another way.

The experience I describe above is a basic one, but it is a kind of experience that disperses meaning in a way that exceeds my representation. The problem is that the minute that I attempt to describe this experience, it is always already reduced, and even more than reduced, even fictionalized. The description of the experience must, if it is to be possibly true, include fictionalization, and thus, a kind of poetics. Aesthetic experiences demand a response to participate in the aesthetic work itself, inviting the participant to form new connections and experiences (Greene, 2001). The participation of an aesthetic experience is nothing other than an invention of sorts that defies a given, authoritative system, a program to follow. Participation in an aesthetic experience is a creative activity always related to the imagination, to a passion for new possibilities for meaning. A work of art calls for imaginative interpretation, for invention and the capacity to imagine a world beyond present circumstances (Greene, 1978, 1995).

Interpreting art attempts to pursue truth, but not as the final say about truth. There are glimpses of truth to which we can bear witness. Interpretation never attempts to settle meaning for the interpreter. The “truth” of the witness is a paradox, because witnessing does not produce knowledge in a classical sense through the human sciences, and does not give us information like Google claims to do. The act of witnessing, and confession, has to do with the ability to respond, a responsibility, and thus, a politics as well. Requiring conscience, memory, and communication from the witness, the witness also requires a “you” who participates in the witnessing. As a secondhand witness, the addressee, the “you” who participates in witnessing, is entangled in a relationality that

imposes itself in the act of witnessing. Derrida (2005) states, “witnessing appeals to the act of faith with regard to a speech given under oath, and is therefore itself produced in the space of sworn faith” (p. 188). The act of faith and the space produced between the witness and the witness of the witness is the contact made in the response, the imperative at the heart of the relationality of witnessing.

I add Derrida’s witness to my confession, which I do not want to let go, because of the “act of faith” that is pronounced in both acts—whether verbal or silent. Confession cannot avow anything, because it cannot translate the inner self, nor can it posit a God who exists “out there.” There is an incommensurability in confession, because it requires, as all language does, faith to continue speaking, and we must continue speaking, and writing, if we are going to do justice to the other. To be silent is to commit oneself to a gathering that is violent, or a “bringing to an end” (Kronick, 2000, p. 1007). Therefore, we must continue to speak, to confess, not as a laying bare of the soul, but as an act of faith, a promise, an ethical responsibility to *make* the truth characterized by difference and to account for the presence of the unnamed other. Deconstruction stirs with the religious passion of the experience of the promise. The “promise” does not refer to a Husserlian presence of the given, nor the Heideggerean *nothing*, but the promise is the expectation of something unforeseeable, the experience of the unrepresentable. The promise of the confession to *make* the truth as a response to the other to come is, in this deconstructive (re)iteration, a form of hospitality not satisfied with the establishment of the new or the counter as it is with the welcoming of that which is absolutely foreign (Derrida, 2000). Such a preparation for the stranger is the surprise of the event.

‘There is Always Someone Else’

In Derrida’s (1993) “Circumfession,” a text in which Derrida deals directly with the problematic of confession, he dialogues specifically with Augustine’s *Confessions*, and invokes his dying mother throughout. To do this, he likewise invokes his circumcision, that sign that marks him, prior to his own sense of self, as Jewish, and also a kind of wound in which his mother carries forward her own Jewishness by tradition. Derrida’s text is vastly complicated because Geoffrey Bennington, to whom Derrida affectionately and, perhaps in a tongue-in-cheek manner, refers as “G,” writes at the top of the page a “biography” of Derrida while Derrida responds at the bottom of the page. The page is a disruption, just as the other is temporally dislocated. Philosophy has always operated this way. When a philosopher, for example, Plato, writes, he does not write of himself, and he cannot only write as himself, he writes as Socrates as well. He is more than the Plato in the dialogues, just as there are other selves which exceed even a text I write and sign in my own name.

Remarking to an interviewer about the references of other thinkers, Derrida (1993) states that autobiography is never an isolated endeavor. “There is always someone else, you know,” Derrida (1993) remarks, “the most private autobiography comes to terms with great transferential figures who are themselves and themselves plus someone else” (p. 284). It is perhaps for this reason that Derrida cries “memories,” almost like a chant, before he states that he confesses his mother. He continues, “one always confesses the other, I confess (myself) means I confess my mother means I own up to making my mother own up, I make her speak in me, before me, whence all the questions at her bedside as though I were hoping to hear from her mouth the revelation” (p. 147-148). He

is, of course, saying this while his face is paralyzed,⁹¹ and his mother is passing away, and the incised border that bears an opening between their lives signifies his Judaism, his circumcision, an opening that signifies an opening onto a world of scars, both seen and unseen. What is given in the confession? It is both seen and unseen. There are the symptoms that are on the surface, what is said, and the scars beneath left unsaid. The scar allows us to think the confession as a radical encounter with temporality and finitude. For Derrida, the circumcision, taking place on the eighth day, the fleshly removal, is a reminder of our mortal conditions, that we proceed without seeing, without knowing.

Derrida (1993) reminds us that a “circumfession” is not a Christian confession, and yet it contains these constitutive elements of a kind of Augustinian confession, a hybrid of Judaism, what Derrida calls a monstrosity (Caputo & Scanlon, 1999). Reading the monstrous apart from the scars of experience is an impossibility, for we are drawn into the various pathways of study, diverting us through the metaphor of the scar as a sign of past violence. Scars are also the sign of present trauma, perhaps the reminder of re-traumatization which marks itself upon the psyche. Furthermore, the scar reminds us, especially those of us who are familiar with continental philosophy, that we, to some degree, are concerned with the question of guilt. Wherever we discuss violence, trauma, colonization, racism, economic exploitation, we are bringing up the question of guilt, or more precisely, our guilt about the world which we inherit and in which we participate. That guilt is the tension of Derrida’s (1993) *Circumfession*, because although I have been thrown into a world that I did not create, I am not responsible for participating in creating it anew. What has occurred before “me” is as much myself as it is likewise not, and it is

⁹¹ Derrida (1993) suffered a stroke during the writing of “Circumfession.”

for this reason that “I” do not confess, insofar as this “I” precedes a confession. The confession is a signifier that something was already going on prior to my expression. Attuned to this, Derrida suggests that the confession “marks me, or wounds me” in my attempt to constitute myself (Caputo & Scanlon, 1999). I neither take that to mean that a wound appears in confession, nor that confession sutures wounds, but that confession exposes the wound, one that already comes from the other prior to my confession.

Currere and (Cir)confession

Derrida (1993) engages with Augustine to elaborate how confessions signify wounds, because language itself is wounded. Our attempts to use language to name the world, a process of nomination, also reduces the world, which is simultaneously a process of denomination. I am tracing an ontology of confession which neither wounds, nor sutures, but shows language’s woundedness, its fractured lack of ability to properly name the world as it essentially is.

Understanding is the interpretative task of the reconceptualists after the 1970s (Pinar, et al., 1995). Understanding, for Pinar (2004) is a complicated conversation in which the “subject” actively moves through a process of intersubjectivity. The “subject’s” movement can be thought through using the method *currere*, especially through Pinar’s (2019) suggestion that we need “educational confession,” for the “sake of movement,” “to create subjective passages out of and away from the historical present” (p. 79). Pinar’s (2019) response to the institutional openness to technology suggests a continual habit of educational confession that salvages the subjectivity currently being eroded by technology, especially educational technology. Pinar’s statement quoted above prompted my study in which I attempt to understand what exposes itself behind the name

of curriculum? If curriculum is described by Block (2004) as all experiences that exist inside and outside of the classroom, containing all sorts of experiences that teach us, then naming and interpreting curriculum is impossible. Naming and interpreting curriculum is impossible because my interpretation of curriculum cannot contain all of human experience, and can violently reduce experience to an instrumental tangibility. Have we in the curriculum field adequately accounted for language's woundedness? I am not here referring to the way language wounds us, but the ways in which language is fractured in its ability to say the world, and conversely, our ability to read the world.

The impossibility of discussing curriculum because we cannot talk about all possible experience throws our conceptualization of curriculum back onto the "subject," the individual, burdened with the impossible task of what has been called autobiography, an *invention* of their experience. What I mean by invention is not only that fiction is interrelated with the truth of our experience, but also that truth does not stand apart from belief. A simple example of invention is our experience of day and night, or light and darkness. We draw these distinctions from the sun's movement each day. If I experienced the sun's movement as giving me light yesterday and the day before, I know that tomorrow the sun will give me light. But how do I know? Do I know the sun will rise the same way I know two plus two equals four, or do I believe the sun will come up tomorrow? Are the two in contrast with one another? Derrida and Augustine argue they do not. In fact, just as reason and madness are interrelated, as Derrida (1993) argued, belief and knowledge are also likewise interrelated. Discussing curriculum as a myriad of experiences which happen situates the knowing subject as a believing subject. In other words, autobiographical inquiry in curriculum theorizing is an act of faith, it is, *par*

excellence, the searching that locates and moves itself throughout the depths of one's memory, not knowing where that searching will lead.

Curriculum theorizing, like confession, occurs in the memory, as it appears, going into the past to "understand" the present. But that understanding is *deferred* both for Augustine and in Derrida, who recognize that their confessions are in some sense partial, and yet, they also testify beyond their partiality. Confession, from that perspective, is a kind of impossibility if its aim has a teleology. The language of the *telos* should remind us of the impossibility of evaluative counting to measure curriculum as in the Tyler "rationale." The rationale seeks to perpetuate the *telos* toward a slippery vision of progress that attempts to "heal away" the scars of history. My fear, at times, is that the curriculum field continues this tradition, although it is undoubtedly a tradition that we inherit. The *becoming human* in educational discourse stands in contrast to the non-human *other* marked by their disposability. The other is disposable because they are exposed in evaluation of their supposed lack, their inability to become someone beyond measurability. Although such a becoming always already occurs, thankfully, even without the school's help.

We imagine becoming moving toward predetermined objectives, dreams that we manifest, such as the way the green light hangs over Gatsby's consciousness (Fitzgerald, 1925/2019). In Fitzgerald's novel, Gatsby showcases this "passion" for origins that might heal away his wounds. "If I could just go back to the start," Gatsby suggests in the movie version of *The Great Gatsby*, a confession that his waiting for Daisy is haunted by the past. The other, Nick, reminds him he cannot do so. We cannot do so. It is an impossibility. "So we run harder, faster," Nick states at the end, signaling the American

dream to pursue a predetermined end, and thus, attempt to make ourselves more complete. This way of thinking about curriculum, is, like Tyler, a reactivation of what occurs in the classroom to change behavior patterns based in objectives. Study has no such objectives. It is, as Alan Block (2004) suggests, “like prayer, a way of being—it is an ethics” (p. 2). Evaluation and implementation replace study in favor of finality. Specifically, a kind of finality written into the code of the dominant institutional power which tries to locate itself as the ideological center of society.

The confession, and here I will revert to Derrida’s (1993) *Circumfession*, is therefore a narration set within a narrative structure, which becomes the condition of the emergence of an “I” not remaining as such. The “I,” as Judith Butler (2005) writes, is dispossessed by the social conditions of its emergence, yet that does not mean we have lost the subjective ground for ethics. On the contrary, she states, “it may well be the condition for moral inquiry” (p. 8). The “I” is subject to our inherited, shared world, through which we are constituted, but also one which we are constituting, making, but which is unimaginable and unforeseeable. This seems an abstract point, but I am reminded of the inherited “I” that does not simply arrive at the moment of my birth. This world we inherit and are thrown into is always already doing its work from different intersections of time that surprises me at particular “events.” The “I,” which is the incommensurability between myself and the other, is not qualitatively distinct in a full sense, but bonded through communication.

As I discussed in chapter two, the face-to-face encounter⁹² that signifies an originary⁹³ point of communication or expression, for Derrida, continues the logocentric tradition, needing two people to be present at such an encounter, specifically for there to be an ethical relationship. However, for Derrida and Augustine, expression begins prior to the face-to-face. What is always already occurring in the announcement of the face is the others who announce themselves to me in memory and who provide for me a problematization of myself. Augustine's statement that he became a problem to himself occurs after the death of his friend, this other who gives him a sense of self. Augustine acts as a kind of proto-postmodern, wrestling with the problem of self-knowledge and selfhood. Augustine's investigation into the contours of human experience includes textured analyses of the body, affect, and temporal lived experience. But how do we read confession in various texts on confession? Do we understand them as autobiographical? Should they be understood as theological autobiographies? As literary texts?

Confessions and (Cir)Confessions

What is attractive in Augustine's *Confessions* is the interdisciplinary plasticity of the text, providing for us a glimpse into Augustine's life while also resisting being boxed into a particular discipline. Augustine's confessions resists a "pragmatic" reading, because it does not provide a utilitarian take-what-you-can approach. On the surface, as modern readers, we could be easy to read Augustine's *Confessions* similar to Rousseau's

⁹² The "face-to-face encounter" that I am talking about is Derrida's (1978) engagement with Levinas in his essay "Violence and Metaphysics."

⁹³ There is another time in this dissertation in which I have used the word "originary," to signify a starting point. I am using Derrida's term "originary" as a distinction between the initial use of the word. An example of this can be from Derrida's (2007) remark on "originary mourning," which is "a mourning that does not wait for the so-called 'actual' death" (p. 26).

Confessions, as a form of retreat to solipsism. Confession through solipsism is a radical interiority, which proceeds from the inside-out. Rousseau's (1782/2000) radically presents himself before the reader. Indeed, his self-consciousness, which he states is something he acquired in his first understandings of language was the first time he marked an originary date of "uninterrupted consciousness" of himself (p. 7). Derrida, of course, picks this up in his analysis of language in *Of Grammatology*, stating that, for Rousseau, the initiation of people into language is first originarily metaphoric. Figurative language is primal because it is the closest to our passions, away from the rational which *becomes* abstracted from the world and affects us emotionally. It is the "essence of our language," Derrida (1967/1998) writes, from which Rousseau establishes a problematic between nature and culture (p. 105).

Rousseau's binary between nature and culture emerges from a desire to be authentically natural, that is, to remove the metaphorical chains of society set up in the modern world toward the freedom natural to human persons. The important signifier is that of authenticity, which, for Rousseau, is a function of sociality, and foundationally and immediately present to itself. It is the image of a society that is "within earshot," always *spoken*, and thus, known (Derrida, 1967/1998, p. 136). Social authenticity through the image of the community being together, then, ties knowledge to distance. Space becomes a way for the person to authentically know another through the spoken word, transparency in face-to-face encounters. The "bare" self is signified in such a supposed encounter, essentially given both as a revelation of the self and the immediacy of self's voice that condemns absence and impersonal signs. The immediacy of the voice in Husserlian phenomenology was critiqued by Derrida (1973) who stated that the voice

being present to the self has been related to the objectivity of the subject in Western philosophy going back to Plato.

The confession as a practice within the church, as the encounter of the one with the other connected through the voice is interrupted in several ways: 1) The silence of the other disrupts the expression of the confession; 2) Writing itself confesses by saying something radically about ourselves; 3) The presumption of presence in the confession assumes what I have already disregard, that the person in front of us is revealing the truth. The interruptions of confession listed above problematizes the “facts” of qualitative statements about lived experience. Experience, of course, is always lived, at least as it is made apparent to the subject taking in that experience. Even then, in one’s lived experience, one is bound to the way in which truth becomes disseminated through time and space. The “truth” of the spoken word is incised by the temporal condition which take an experience already represented in signs and translates the truthfulness of the narrative structure into new re-presentations. Prior even to speech, there are always already signs that determine our expressions. What is prior to speech is the attempt to suture the spoken word to thought, to return to an originary united position between speech and thought.

The spoken word is not, however, returned to a united originary position, but manifests itself in representations that bears the trace of writing. Trace, as Derrida (1973) reminds us, is both the difference between signs and it names the way a sign contains what the sign does not mean. An example of the way this plays out is in Derrida’s example of presence and absence. There is no pure presence or absence, but always the opening for the contamination of one and the other. Trace, then, is the “relationship to the

illeity⁹⁴ as to the alterity of a past that never was and can never be lived in the originary or modified form of presence” (Derrida, 1967/1998, p. 70). A self could not emerge from a pure interiority and move outward, but from this relationship between the self and the other which constitutes—even contaminates—each other. Exteriority, another way of saying experience of an outside world, which Derrida refers to as “the most familiar thing in the world,” would not appear without “*différance* as temporalization, or the “nonpresence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present” (p. 71). Thus, even within the face-to-face expression of confession, the expression, the encounter, is reserved, or absent, disrupting the confession as simply a speech act. I do not suggest that the speech act in the confession does not “do” anything. Certainly it does, but we should not mistake a speech act like confession for the truth in the factual sense. Prior to the spoken act, the perennial alterity that structures signs and the psyche is—without origin or end—as Spivak (1967/1998) notes, “always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such” (p. xxxix). Thus, what is commonly considered writing in an empirical sense, is simply a contextual structure of signs on a material substance, like paper.

However, it is the structure always already inhabited by the trace that Derrida calls *writing*. Importantly, inhabiting—otherwise known as contamination—is likewise the condition of possibility for what might be called objective description. And yet, objective description is already questioned by grammatology. Here I want to draw upon Derrida as he engages Augustine. In the *Confessions*, Augustine (1992), speaking about

⁹⁴ *Illeity* refers to the external embodiment of the self, and for Derrida, function as an immanent concept. In the quote I am exploring above, Derrida is noting the way alterity, or the other, opens up the self.

the phenomenon of time, states, “If no one asks me, I know; but if I am asked and want to explain it, I do not know” (p. 345). Interestingly, Augustine is suggesting that what is experienced as other is a form of non-knowledge, not graspable, but is only determined as non-graspable when one tries to articulate the experience of something like time. The experience of time, of the non-knowing knowing is peculiar, precisely because this thing which is no-thing referred to as time is perhaps one of the most familiar things to us, and yet something that is difficult to explain. Nonetheless, what is familiar is what is always already in continual deferral. Indeed, what gives the present its telos--insofar as it has a teleology--is that it ceases to be perpetually. Augustine advises, “So indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence” (p. 346). Augustine does not mean time is forever dislocated; rather, history is inscribed in the “memory” that “produces not the actual events which have passed away but words conceived from images of them” (p. 347). Thus, in the memory, the past is able to be conjured incompletely, indirectly, in waves of images, details, and misremembering.

Not only the past is deferred. The future is deferred as well. For Augustine, confession is an attempt to gather oneself, a concept borrowed from Hannah Arendt. The attempt to recollect, or gather, presupposes the other with whom one is in relation, with whom one desires. In Augustinian terms, remembrance, recollection, and confession, according to Arendt (1929/1996), seem synonymous. Arendt (1929/1996) states, “to recall the past and to recollect myself from dispersion” is the same as to ‘confess’” (p. 49). And this “confession” is an attempt, for Augustine, to rise “to Him who made me” in the “camps and vast palaces of memory” (p. 49).

Augustine had, in his “former” life prior to becoming a Christian, read the Old Testament literally, which he describes as a kind of reading that killed him spiritually. It is a plain, and some might say, modern reading which served the rote function of mining for facts. It was not until the Old Testament was expounded to him allegorically that he was able to open himself, or rather, to be opened to the reading. This is not a search for an originary reading, however. Augustine is adamant that the one who recollects is rising up to the one who created them, but is also conscious that a finite being cannot grasp the ungraspable. In the opening pages of the *Confessions*, he asks, “is there anything in me, lord my god, that can contain you?” (p. 103). Already, the reader is drawn into existential questions from a man whose heart is “restless,” understanding that rest cannot be found until one finds their rest in their creator. In other words, in Pauline⁹⁵ terms, is to depart and “be” with God (Philippians 1:23), which is another way of saying in death. In that sense, we truly *are* in the sense that we are no longer temporal beings⁹⁶. Until that point, being is always in flux. Augustine recognizes, as Derrida will later take into his own writing, that everything that exists is in a mode of becoming. Augustine writes that the “heavens and the earth proclaim that they have become, for they change and alter” (p. 188). There is a dual meaning in *becoming*, for Augustine, which in the Latin *feri* (to become) is likewise also the form of *facere* (to make). Thus, to become and to make are synonymous with each other. Temporal existence is related to the work of art.

I am not discussing simply the work of art as a noun, but the *work* of art, which is disseminated in being’s becoming, “from there to here,” Augustine wrote, signifying

⁹⁵ Pauline is another way of referring to the Apostle Paul of the New Testament.

⁹⁶ In this scenario, for Augustine, being reaches its fulness in death when reunited with God, presumably.

being's movement. But within this *saeculum*, or awaiting of the arrival of death, Augustine becomes a proto phenomenologist, seeing that physical objects "turn back your love to their creator," that they contain an excess of meaning which for Augustine must pass in order for meaning to be disseminated (p. 48). That dissemination is always already caught in an endless chain of significations. But this turning has no teleology, no place to which we return. Indeed, our returning is always late because our desire is always deferred. We come late to love because there is no place in our memory, to Augustine, that we can remember where we first "knew" God. He continues, "we go 'backward' and 'forward' and there is no place. Everywhere and at once, truth" (p. 167). Nonetheless, we are haunted by this delay of the arrival of the event, and in this sense our confession marks us, even wounds us. "See, I do not hide my wounds," Augustine writes, promising to open up aspects of himself left unspoken (p. 167).

In scenes of address, what am "I" saying that is my own? What is it in my communication that makes me—me? Perhaps that is the wrong question. Perhaps it is more accurate, perhaps, to suggest that the event of the play of desire produced in encounters with the other can be likewise referred to as confessional. I am not simply referring to desire as a set of choices or wants, but as a way of describing the play of forces that constitute being's becoming. In this way, confession does not describe that which is occluded or forgotten, but what Docherty (2012) describes as the "elaboration of forces that constitute that subjectivity in the first place" (p. 31). Confessing-to-become, always situated in relation to other confessors, is what gives me the possibility of my being at all. If, as Derrida (1967/1998) suggests, there is no-thing outside the text, then

confession stands in relation to every moment of existence for the individual as we act in the world while we likewise work from a past always in creation.

Derrida (1993) plays with the notion of creation to discuss confession as a form of prayer. Derrida invokes Augustine by asking, “who do I love when I say I love my God?” Derrida (1993) questions what object is conjured when the name of God is invoked. The play between the name of God and what lies behind that name is precisely the point of Derrida’s (cir)cumfession in that the name of God lacks the determinacy we seek in language itself. What lies behind the name of God in confession may be nothing or something. We cannot say with certainty, and there, in that uncertainty, lies the curricular connection. When I ask what lies behind the *name* of curriculum, I am playing within this space of uncertainty, unsure of whether I can properly understand or comprehend the world. Much of what passes for formal schooling is nothing other than the attempt to cover over the space of uncertainty of which I have spoken above. Too much of our educational discourse is predicated upon the certainty of passing rates on assessments or the certainty that students are learning skills and competencies. Then, when we realize certainty is unattainable, we press in further to ensure that students can be programmed to be educated. As I have argued in the previous chapter, however, education is always and everywhere a scene of address, because we inhabit a pedagogical world in which teaching and study always occur. Curriculum cannot be programmed any more than being can be programmed. Programming curriculum, as we have done with great force in the 21st century, covers over the contemplative nature of curriculum and study. Participation in our world through study, Block (2004) states, is like prayer in that study is an ethical way of being in the world. In studying ourselves, we find that there is

nothing properly our own, we encounter the others who give us ourselves. As such, curriculum is less about the certainty of objectives and ends and more like confession and prayer.

For Derrida, prayer is not determinate, and does not supplicate or search out something determinate, for it is not a proposition which is true or false. Like the name of God, *you* cannot be determined by a propositional statement much less a program. The other is not a thing to be grasped. Rather, prayer is the act of addressing the other as other, a welcoming of hospitality. It is a confession, as Caputo (1997) reminds us, “without truth,” to invoke, to call the other to come, “without continuity and without rupture,” open to the event to come.

Confessing the Event of Curriculum

Curriculum as event exposes us to what happens, what constitutes us. Daignault, leaning on Deleuze, thinks the gap that is curriculum. The “gap” refers to the way that curriculum resists representation. There is not a thing that one can point to and say *that* is curriculum, because curriculum does not exist as such, it *happens*. For this reason, the event is difficult for curriculum developers because it requires what Reynolds and Webber (2004) call a “nomadic way of thinking” (p. 16). The event cannot be programmed. Daignault recognizes something about teaching and study that can be recognized by many who have engaged in teaching in schools, which is that what occurs in the classroom is rarely ever a linear set of time from beginning to end. The classroom is a set of divergences, parentheses, and asides. Connections are made between the multivariied openings in the work of *translating* experience into representation. If there is a violence of the concept, or in the conceptualization of things in what Daignault (1988)

calls the “hunt” for knowledge in the Western, rational sense, then are we consigned to no longer speaking? Is not the ethical demand of silence weighing on the entire apparatus of schooling, pedagogy, and living? Daignault (1988) suggests two options: terrorism and nihilism. We may engage in the continuation of violence, or we can step back and opt for an abandonment of attempts to know.

Daignault suggests that despite our inability to fully access an aim or goal, our point is to try, and insofar as we try, we *create an event* (Daignault, 2011). For Daignault, using the example of the flu—apropos of the COVID-19 pandemic—he states that the event is not something that merely happens to you. Rather, “If I have the flu, it’s an accident. It’s happening to my body. Accidents happen all the time, but an accident is not an event. The event is what the accident makes me think about” (p. 530). Indeed, the event is the production of my thought upon an occurrence which is always at danger of producing a static thought. “For instance, having the flu makes me think that I am vulnerable, I am sensitive...” (Masney & Daignault, 2011, p. 530). The “I” is in danger of being defined and known. Reducing the “I” to representation would be a violence, once again. Even a mode of curriculum theorizing—the third space of indeterminacy between the self, the world, and the curriculum, is endangered from what Daignault calls the “wolf’s place” (Daignault cited in Pinar, Taubman, et al., 1995, p. 481). The wolf’s place is the space of definability within the passage of the excluded middle, which is always in danger of attracting new people to reduce it to a form of knowledge. In suggesting that thinking the *event* is a nomadic undertaking, Daignault uses the motif of movement to think the “gap” of curriculum, particularly in the gap that occurs between thinking and practice. He refers to “thinking” as the “incarnation of curriculum as

composition” (quoted in Hwu, 1993, p. 172). As a result, Daignault sidesteps illusions of transcendence by troubling those who think of curriculum by definition, as a plan.

Daignault evades the possible linkage between curriculum as lived experience, as a kind of reflexive constructivism that builds on top of prior knowledge. Despite constructivism’s open-endedness, constructivism misses the way in which knowledge is disrupted, dismantled, erupted, or irrupted by other aspects of experience. Thus, the lived reality of construction is not simply a formative one, constructing and building the subject through a program. That price is the “suspension of a critical relation to the truth regime in which one lives” (Butler, 2005, p. 122). As Butler (2005) suggests, we are not simply effects of discourses, but that discourse constitutes us at a *cost*, meaning that reflection corresponds to and is “limited by what the discourse, the regime [of intelligibility], cannot allow into speakability” (p. 121). Daignault (1992) suggests that in place of “intelligibility” stand subjective participation and continual creation, a “thinking, maybe” which does not focus on the *having* of knowledge creation (p. 202). Illustrating the apprehension to *having* knowledge, Daignault (1992) states rather tongue-in-cheekly, “do not expect me to know what I am talking about here; I am trying to think” (p. 4). It appears as though writing, for Daignault, is a constitutive process by which the “I” creates the event.

Daignault (1992) perceives that one can create an event because curriculum is composition. Daignault mentions, curriculum is “beyond words,” with teachers and students participating in the creation of the event of curriculum. In contrast, the event could not be created because it could not be foreseen. The event is not a program that the teacher moves toward. Derrida notes that the event cannot be known in advance. The

event is an occasion of otherness, something wholly other to my experience. Of course, one can plan for the future, a future for retirement or a plan for what tomorrow might look like when you get up in the morning. Derrida refers to such a future as a “future-present.” But the kind of future that one cannot plan for is a future for which one can only make space. The event is not something you know you are “in,” but what you are inviting to come.

There is not a moment in the classroom in which I can look at around at the students and say, “now,” or “it’s happening.” Neither the teacher nor the student can perceive the event taking place or shape. As such, one cannot “create” the event because the event is not subject to formation. Formation works against the event. Rather, space should be created for the event to come, in whatever anarchic and surprising way it does. Instead of thinking about confession as formation, I end this chapter by proposing a reconceptualization of confession as transformation, or the awaiting of the moment of transformation by the coming of the event in curriculum.

Summary

I began this chapter with a back and forth between teacher and student. Foucault and Derrida provided me foils to be able to think about the need to the way the pedagogical relationship unfolds. Additionally, I wanted to introduce a problematic to the discursive theoretical framework that grounds Foucault’s thought. By suggesting the need to read Derrida with Foucault, I think of subjectivity not only as historically contingent, but as participating in a promise to make the truth. The way I did that was by utilizing Derrida’s singular event of circumcision to discuss confession in conjunction with Augustine’s Confessions. I finish the chapter by discussing the event as the constitutive of being, and discuss openness to the even as a kind of confession. Taking all that I have

developed about deconstruction in this chapter, I draw a point of tension between the event and curriculum and differ with Daignault on creating the event versus making space for the event to happen.

In the next chapter, I seek to articulate what confession look like in light of the dissertation's interrogation of the concept. I make connections between confession and curriculum, showing the way that curriculum ontologically is about responsibility and hospitality. I suggest we move away from the subject, which is overburdened with metaphysical baggage, and return to being as a way of thinking of relationality constitutive of being, and as such, a thing of curriculum which resists totalization, causing one to make truth, to represent, in the midst of a form of blindness, and ultimately, committing one to confession and to prayer.

Chapter VI

Re-Thinking Confession and the Call of the Name of Curriculum

“The world we make for children will never be any better than the world we make with each other” (Grumet, 1993, p. 207).

“Truth is not something grasped, something comprehended. Instead, truth grasps and comprehends us... We dwell in truth. The truth does not dwell in us” (Vallee, 2002, p. 48)

Despite the cliché, the end of things signifies mostly new beginnings. I often tell my students this, and I think it holds true at the conclusion of this study. What I produced in this dissertation was, despite the other who came to my aid, a testimony to my limits, my finitude. Much of this dissertation was written between 2020-2022, which was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic while teaching full-time at a high school in Miami. While I am appreciative of the opportunity to help support my family throughout my writing process, I became painfully aware of my physical limitations. My days were structured to last 9-10 hours at school, and then I would come home to handle the responsibilities of being a husband and father. Additionally, my wife gave birth to our son, Jack, in February of 2021, and with that birth came the sleepless nights, the frustrations, and, of course, the asking of forgiveness for the times those frustrations overwhelmed me. Meanwhile, I found pockets of time, in between classes, early mornings, lunch times, and late evenings into the night to read and write something that has captivated me.

Finitude has been the force that has captivated me, fostering a sense of hope as I work through my philosophical dissertation research. In chapter two, in a methods

chapter entitled “Phenomenology, Deconstruction, and Curriculum Studies,” I developed various modes of inquiry I used in this dissertation. I delineated between social science and humanities-based research, and discussed my engagement with what I call philosophical phenomenology as opposed to qualitative phenomenology. Engaging Husserl, Heidegger, and Derrida, I situated myself within the phenomenological tradition to contest epistemological grounds of certainty for educational institutions. Furthermore, the phenomenological tradition allowed me to open up the phenomenological reduction of objects toward the disruption of the metaphysics of presence in the movement of the trace, showing the way language exceeds conceptualization.

In chapter three, “The Violence of Conceptualization,” I discussed the problem of violence in philosophical conceptualization. The problem of violence in concepts corresponds to the violence of curricular concepts. I discussed the way that conceptualization often reduces the world in ways that commit violence to what is being studied. I further discussed the social efficiency movement that has further sought to reduce curriculum to classroom instruction, and thereby reduced teachers and students to a set of protocols. I argued that those protocols have perpetuated a racist, classist, and hetero-patriarchal system of violences.

In chapter four, “A Confessing Animal: Governmentality, Subjectivity, and Truth-Telling,” I introduced my curriculum inquiry on confession. I engaged Foucault’s concept of governmentality to consider the violence of extractive forms of confession. I analyzed modernity’s culture of transparency in relation to Foucault’s theorization of the practice of confession in which the subject both has a new relationship to truth and commits oneself to a new way of living. I provided an inventive reading of confession

and truth-telling with the decolonial conception of faithful witnessing to think through the “unknowable effects” of colonialism and colonality (Figueroa-Vazquez, 2015, p. 65).

Finally, I ended with a reflection on how to think of the method of *currere* as a form of educational confession, arguing that educational confession is the process of self and social reconstruction toward new possibilities of being and knowing in the world.

In chapter five, entitled, “There Is Always Someone Else”: (Cir)Confession and the Event of Curriculum,” examines Derrida’s take on the concept and practice of confession. Rather than think of confession as a formative, historical process, I begin to think of confession as the process of making space for a transformative event in curriculum. I make this argument by providing a deconstructive reading of confession not reducible to representation and which is provoked by the coming of the event as opposed to a subjective present.

The writing in which I engaged during this dissertation is what I would call autobiography, but perhaps not in the sense that would be traditionally understood. When one calls something an autobiography, the *autos* (self) is described in the events of one’s life. In the strictest sense, one can see this happening in Rousseau’s account of himself. But as we have seen in the preceding chapters, such an account of the self is disrupted by the other, but not simply the other who is present to the self. My very being in the world, which includes an entanglement of being, language, and the world, is interrupted, prohibiting the enclosure I attempt to inscribe onto experience. No such closure comes, and it is that way especially for this type of dissertation. The limit of such a dissertation is that there is always future research, always more which calls us. Thinking about limitation, especially in the body, is to also think about violence. That is, the violence of

trying to render one's own thinking into representations. This is the work of translation, always fraught with difficulties, because it is always interpreted. Referring to the poetry of Paul Celan, Derrida (2005) suggests that translation is always a form of violence. It is both violent and an expression of love. I write in the translation of many different texts from French, German, Spanish, and even English, and just like a body, the body of one's writing is unique. As such, Derrida states, "to translate is to lose the body" (p. 168). The translation is a loss, and also the opening of something new, an invitation to hospitality.

Translation is a form of autobiography but is not self-presentation nor is it self-representation, as though one had pure access to one's own self-consciousness. What gives the condition of possibility for every body of writing is auto-biography, or what Kronick (2000) calls a "response or pledge to what remains outside" (p. 999). In this sense, autobiography, if we see it as a kind of confessional impulse, is actually about the deconstruction of an absolute totality called the self in order to see the other for whom we are responsible. Hopefully this is not read as a definitive turning toward another as the Platonic turn toward the Good, or the conversion of Christianity, which plays upon the old form of confession as the presentation of a self. Although confession has a particularly Christian history, it's worth noting that its application goes beyond simply Christian literature and should not be relegated to this definition. Although Derrida (1993) makes known that "Jews know nothing of confession," he is dislocating a previous definition of confession which assumes a revelatory epistemology—a phenomenon called reason that we can use and demonstrate causally. However, Derrida also points out that confession is concerned with truth, despite truth having little to do with recounting facts, or true avowal. An inauthentic confession, if such a thing exists, is

the confession of a particular thing. A particular thing which I have done or not done. It is the participation in the *confiteor*, or the Anglican Confession of Sin—"Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone." Malabou (2005) suggests, however, that a "confession is only true, and brings about the true, only if it avows that it cannot and must not avow anything," itself a sort of "*ontological* confession" (p. 132).

Once again, we must be careful and recognize the limitations of these definitive definitions, which convert or change, both performing and enacting the ontological confession which I traced in this study. And despite the fact that confession and experience cannot be disentangled, Derrida's (1967/2011) search for himself in the sentence is interrupted also by the "turn[ing] around" of writing as opposed to the saying of confession (p. 147). Turning around proves to be an interesting metaphor, because turning around is similar to the expression of repentance, what in the Greek would be called *metanoia*. Even the terminology of repentance is fraught with the baggage of self-mortification, of the sorrowful penitent seeking to remedy their actions in an effort to be on the right side of the good. That is, one's good deeds outweigh their bad ones if we can atone for the bad ones. I am reminded of Luther's attempt to create a version of himself without sin, but ultimately, he concluded that he cannot cast stones against anyone because of what he called the "great beam in my own eye" (Luther, 2008). This is not what I am referring to, or even what some portions, such as the Eastern Orthodox Church, believe about *metanoia*. It can also be called a "changing of mind," that occurs through study (Branch, 2009, p. 54). Whatever transformation or conversion that occurs in study has no destination, but happens with the recognition that belief is as essential to life as

breathing. In other words, we always believe, always and everywhere, believing in our unbelief, for our unbelief; we are like the father of the boy possessed by a spirit brought to Jesus in the book of Mark, crying out “I believe; help my unbelief!” Is this not a confession? Not as something that centers me, or anchors me, but in which “I”—which is no-thing—am in continual play. Suspended between belief and unbelief.

Although curriculum, as Pinar (2013) notes, can speak to lived experiences, it is worth noting that what should not be taken as confessional—insofar as the way I am using it—is talking solely about myself. Pinar’s point, however, is that we do not commit ourselves to self-study by endlessly talking about ourselves as though we had an immediate access to our subjectivity, what I have earlier called pure immanence of lived experience. Lived experience, if we are not careful, can likewise subsume the other to the same, participating in Heidegger’s (2014) thinking that the “more life lives, the more life *reaches itself*.” In contrast, confession, like language, like being, is always already in the world. Curriculum, if we are to think of it as all experience and not just something that occurs in the classroom, always exists “in the shadow of the other” (Pinar, 2013, p. 61). Such a relationality implies that an absolute lived experience cannot be the measure of justice and truth, but that what invites the event we have been attempting to trace is the promise of an uncertain future for the organization of institutions. The truly destructive is the program which will transform the institution. The program has a foreseeability to it, there are objectives, governing structures. The function of a rigorous logic is at work in the program, and especially the curriculum program, the curriculum-as-planned. That is not to say that the logic works. In fact, very clearly one can see that the logic fails to produce what it *intends*. Within the institution, a certain *aporia*, an expression of doubt or

uncertainty, surrounds the problem of the event, because the only possible program is programming that which you cannot *see*.

Every Responsibility is a Conversion

There is a real risk in encounter of heteronomy, where one is not just producing for the self. Production is not the end of the event, but all the aporias of the event signify the problem of teaching that is a response to the call of the event. Following Caputo (2006), I take this response as an ethics of responsibility, where “responsibility means responding to the other; so the self is not an agent but a patient, an-*archic*, not autarchic” (p. 137). Responsibility is a conversion if and only if it is a welcoming of difference, which is to say, to make the other welcome. The condition of this welcome is always a gift, which involves an excess beyond the economy. If confession or curriculum simply reproduces the economy, the ethical demand is trumped by a rationale or program. Unconditional responsibility is not only in what is said, but also by what is not said. The reversal, however, is that what is said and what is not said is not totally clear to those involved. What we have apparent in this scenario is the many tensions and dispositions of meaning which are excessive.

What the excess of meaning frames is the responsibility of the living for a justice not only for the living, but it is also due to the dead and those not yet born. Derrida (1992) would say that we are haunted by such a responsibility, and indeed, are haunted by those others to whom we are responsible, but to whom we cannot do justice. All the others who are wholly other haunt us by disjuncting the present, by a time which is structural exposed to an outside which prevents closure and does not close upon itself.

This ex-position, this movement, is what we mean by conversion, and has everything to do with responsibility, and thus, confession.

The Wounded Word Against Gathering

However, in (cir)confession, and in the curriculum, which is a complicated conversation occurring in particular times and space—but also through time and space—there is a temptation for scholars, teachers, and practitioners to fall back into an old debate. This is a debate that preceded my own generational entrance into the curriculum field and persists to this day. It is the collapse of the subject into the “we,” particularly through the lens of ideology as the matrix through which power is taken (Pinar, 2011). Pinar (2011) notes that those who participate in theoretical constructions of ideology and critical pedagogy somehow locate—whether consciously or unconsciously in their writings—themselves outside of the ideological formulation of power entrenched in cultural signifiers. In the gap between oppressed and oppressor, what has been and can be constructed in its place is another form of essentialism or fundamentalism, trading one form of conservative fundamentalism for a more liberal one. But even more fundamental to Pinar’s (2011) thesis is that such critical work can often suffer from “delusions of grandeur” because it is split off from subjectivity, because it fails to account for difference, and thus enacts precisely the social and cultural reproduction it criticizes (p. 33-34). By enacting an “image activism,” critical praxis becomes the commodification of figures such as Freire who become caricatures of themselves. The name of figures like Freire becomes a placeholder for any Marxian ideological construction in service of institutions like critical pedagogy, which has been a largely North American construction. Without learning Portuguese or even learning Spanish, Freire becomes segmented, de-

contextualized through pre-packaged ideas such as the so-called banking concept of education, which is not about knowledge transfer. Nor is it about reinforcing students as oppressed by seeing them as empty containers in which knowledge needs to be deposited. For Freire, students are not the bank. They are the currency.

This is particularly important for us to think about with respect to confession and curriculum theorizing because the construction of Freire as simply a revolutionary, or of liberation theology as simply revolutionary God-talk, misses the mark. Perhaps these revolutionary discourses are overrun with a very modern, essentialist form of understanding. Binary constructions abound between theory and practice, mental and physical labor, “paralyzed by reproduction,” and given over to a quest for certainty that can enact traditional colonial violence all the same (Pinar, 2011, p. 35). Leaning upon the “others of modernity” for knowledges which can be “use[d]” in service of a discipline—here, I would even point to curriculum theory—is itself an impossible praxis where “agency becomes illusory” (Pinar, 2011, p. 37). Freire was a much more complex figure, of course talking about his engagement with Marx, but doing so by suggesting that it was peripheral. Which is to say, to read him as a Marxian is to put a distinctly European spin on a Latin American.

Forgotten among the history of Brazil is the colonial rule of Brazil by the Portuguese, and although Freire himself did not grow up in the midst of it, his upbringing was shaped by its legacy that persisted in its social structures. The 1929 stock market crash which caused a global economic collapse shaped Freire’s childhood years, exposing him to suffering and to hunger (Kirylo, 2017). Freire (1996) writes that this hunger was a “real and concrete hunger that had no specific date of departure [and which] arrives

unannounced and unauthorized, making itself at home without an end in sight” (p. 15).

This experience of material poverty, at times glorified in academia, which Gutierrez (1971/1988) called “an evil, a scandalous condition,” moved Freire to sense the other as other, through thinking of the “weak force” of the unconditional claim of the powerless and a consideration of who his neighbor was (Caputo, 2006, p. 168). In a 1997 interview, Freire recollects (confesses) the difference of his work from his interpreters:

“When I was just a boy, a very young boy, I would go to the mangroves of Recife, to the streams and hills of Recife, to the rural parts of Pernambuco to work with the peasants and slum dwellers. With dry eyes I confess that I went there moved by a certain fidelity to Christ who was, more or less, my comrade and friend. But what happened was that, when I would get there, the harsh reality of the favela, the harsh reality of the peasants, the denial of their being as people and the tendency to that adaptation (which we talked about earlier), to that almost inert state before the denial of freedom, that all took me back to Marx. I always say: it was not the peasants who said to me: ‘Paulo, have you read Marx?’ No! They didn’t even read the newspaper. It was their reality that brought me back to Marx. And so I went to Marx. And that is where European journalists in the seventies did not understand my statement. The more I read Marx, the more I found a certain, fundamental basis for remaining Christ’s comrade. So, my reading of Marx and extended understanding of Marx never suggested to me that I should stop finding Christ on the corners of the slums. I stayed with Marx in his worldliness, looking for Christ in his transcendence” (Freire quoted in Kohan, 2021, p. 38).

The reason Freire makes this recollection is because what he sees in the slums is marked by a figure who goes by the sign of Christ to whom he sees located and dis-located through the movement of a mystery. Teaching is “a testimony to the meaning and mystery of life on earth” (Pinar, 2019, p. viii). Indeed, as a result, “curriculum is crucial,” opening study and teaching for conversion for the other for whom I am responsible, to whom I stand accused. Thus, Freire’s “*corpo consciente*”—the Bloomsbury English edition translates this into *conscious being*, but it can also be a conscious body, or even the flesh, with its signification being mendable, pierceable— is re-formed, re-newed, de-

constructed by what Ernani Fiori called being's "ontological kinship," a "*misterio que nos invade e nos evolve*⁹⁷".

I suggest, in conjunction with Pinar's point about agency in the ideology debate, is that such an imposition constitutes a "white mythology" which Derrida (1974) referred to as the de-mythologizing and de-culturalization of whiteness to be able to package it as a transcultural universalizable truth. It is the Truth with a capital T, *punto y final*. This gathering oneself from dispersion to create a unity, an absolute in the form of a community, the Law, Nation, Universal, becomes instrumental, it has no other choice. It is the processional confession, the forced one, the objective, the standardized test, education as schooling, the sign as the reference to the thing itself. As a result, what becomes universalizable seeks to enclose upon difference. But being, and thus, language, identifies itself by opening itself to difference from itself and difference as itself (Derrida, 1993). As we learn in deconstruction, that which is constructed can be deconstructible.

Although the reconceptualists sought to recover the "I" in the ideology debate, have we not been tracing the finitude of such an "I?" That is to say, from the beginning of this investigation, I sought to push confession as much as I can, not to dismantle it, but to find openings for new ways of theorizing curriculum. Pinar's (2019) anxiety about the death of the author—or the subject—is a theological one that must be explored. From his 2004 version of *What is Curriculum Theory?*, Pinar quotes Ronell (1992), who sarcastically states that the "death of God has left us with a lot of appliances" (p. 5). Pinar continues by suggesting that what has appeared in place of watching the sky for the second coming—the *parousia*—is the television, which has filled its viewer with a

⁹⁷ "A mystery that invades and evolves us."

“permanent sense of emergency,” the consistent re-traumatization of the viewer who perpetually re-experiences and anesthetizes the “originary violence” of birth (p. 144). He points to the Rodney King event, but we can make different claims to the death tracking of the COVID-19 pandemic, police murders to George Floyd, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, and countless others. The violence of the debt crisis in Puerto Rico which has ravaged social services on the island (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019), the immigration crisis perpetrated by hundreds of years of colonial law and decades of US imperial rule are put on display on social media in segmented bite-sized videos for millions of Americans to use for talking points against the other side. The other side, represented by whatever political disposition one finds oneself, is not just found in random videos to be found on the internet, but in the media, which has been previously touted for its supposed objectivity. A 2021 analysis published by Axios found that trust in the media hit an all-time low, with CEOs at near the top of the analysis’ trusted institutions. This is likely because, as Taibbi (2021) notes in an interview that “people are actually consuming media more than ever,” but “consume it more as entertainment than as news.” Perhaps Pinar’s anxiety about the advent of technology can be reflected in Postman’s (1985/2007) quip that we are amusing ourselves to death.

Just like Pinar’s critique of ideology, postmodernism is likewise critiqued because of its removal of the subject, which indicates a lack of agency. Although it was emancipatory for feminist scholars such as Lather (1994) and Miller (1990), it could also be seen as a cause for concern for those who see postmodernism’s dispersal of the “I” relativized into a passive subject, particularly in deconstruction. I find that Pinar does not utilize such a description of deconstruction, but through autobiography, seeks to take the

task of deconstruction rather seriously in understanding that the stories we tell are provisional rather than static. In this way, educational confession is not a suggestion that we are the stories we tell, but that “we are the modes of relation to others our stories imply, modes of relation implied by what we delete as much as what we include” (p. 28). I would agree with such an assessment, but provoke it slightly, because if every poem is a body, is not every body a poem? Is not the body also “incorporated, incarnated, in what one used to call the ‘signifiers,’ in the graphemes, which in themselves cannot be translated” (Derrida, 2005, p. 168). Autobiography is then the poetics of translation between experience and language, a translation which Derrida (2005) already suggests is a form of violence. What I mean here though is that such a translation is risky, because it cannot ever negotiate its own closure, for that would be the destruction of the poem, it would be the ultimate form of violence.

The signature of any text, Derrida (2005) suggests, is a wound, and perhaps the “I” is still present but wounded, fractured, “I” have been constituted or radicalized by the event that overtakes me. Thus, rather than continue to posit the “I” that maintains its own sense of autonomy as an agent, perhaps what confession reintroduces is the “me” “in response to the word that comes” from the other, the “subject of responsibility [which] is constituted by a response” (Caputo, 2006, p. 155). The “I” is reconstituted because it is on the receiving end of a call, a disruption by another, not simply a mode of relation, but like Abraham, who hears the call of YHWH, “Abraham!” Abraham responds saying *hineni, me voici*: “here I am, see me standing here,” we respond together in a complicated conversation (Caputo, 2006, p. 152).

The Call of Curriculum

Our responses to the question, “where are you?” are always provisional, in the interim, within the *saeculum*, to use the language of the Middle Ages. But we are not just between past and future, confession is in the name of the truth of the event to come, which means that in our continual confessions—Derrida’s perpetual prayer—we are always already confessing our blindness, that we are responding to the call of the name of curriculum without determinacy. It is an unforeseeable future which we can deliberate over, as Schwab (1969) reminds us, that we can order and re-order like the artist, but over which we have no control. Curriculum, like the name of God, is not something that can be grasped. It is like water running through our palms. What can be said about the curriculum is not even in the language of the gift, because if we give something and know that it is received, the gift no longer remains a pure gift. If we acknowledge it as such, the gift becomes economized.

Perhaps what we no longer need a strong curriculum, either from those who stand for objectives or those who want to re-haul another strong curriculum to heal past wrongs in an answer to Spencer’s (1860) pressing curriculum question: what knowledge is most worth? There is no healing curriculum because curriculum is not a thing, and certainly cannot heal. Curriculum *happens*. Perhaps in curriculum’s happening, we are not healed, but wounded, for all language is wounded. What I have traced in this dissertation is a confession of finitude provoked by the call of the other in what Caputo (2006) characterizes as a weak theology, in what might be called in this dissertation a weak curriculum, which is close to Rocha’s (2020) wounded curriculum. However, in the final analysis, I do not advocate rendering curriculum a thing, even though I am not suggesting

that there are no things. Being, and thus, the inscription of experience in writing as difference, radicalizes the “I,” even a wounded “I,” into a “realm of infinite deferral and non-presence, or finitude” (Luszczynska, 2011, p. 33). The call of curriculum is the call for truth which is not propositional, not a logic or *logos*, but a confession of finitude, a prayer and a faith for the justice that is always *to-come*—always *coming*. Such a call and response to curriculum, what Butler (2005) calls the mode of address, conditions and structures the place in which moral questions emerge, conjured with a host of *aporias* which testify to our relationality, the call of being-with, of the complicated conversation that is curriculum.

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VITA

CHRISTOPHER M. CRUZ

Born, Miami, Florida

2008-2014	B.A. in English Florida International University Miami, Florida
2016-2017	Everest Charter School Tamarac, Florida
2017-2018 Ed.)	M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction (English Florida International University Miami, Florida
2017-2018	Keys Gate Charter High School Homestead, Florida
2018-2022	Doctoral Candidate, Teaching and Learning Florida International University Miami, Florida
2018-2020	Calvary Christian Academy Fort Lauderdale, Florida
2020-2022	Gulliver Preparatory Academy Miami, Florida
2022-Present	The Paideia School Atlanta, Georgia

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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Cruz, C. (2021, October). *Finitude alone is communitarian: Nancy on community and the call of the name of curriculum*. Paper to be presented at the Bergamo Conference of Curriculum Theory in Dayton, Ohio.

Cruz, C. (2021, April). *Without Continuity, But Without Rupture: Impassioned (Cir)Confessions of the Other (In Me)*. Paper presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (AAACS) held online.

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