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Articulating the Teacher: Gottlieb, Dreyfus, and Heidegger on Language

Kenneth Driggers

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation ARTICULATING THE TEACHER: GOTTLIEB, DREYFUS, AND HEIDEGGER ON LANGUAGE, by Kenneth O. Driggers was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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ARTICULATING THE TEACHER: GOTTLIEB, DREYFUS, AND HEIDEGGER ON LANGUAGE

by

Kenneth Driggers

Under the direction of Deron Boyles, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Standardization has become a ubiquitous feature in the field of education both through federal initiatives, such as the establishment of "best practices" distilled from randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and through private businesses and non-profits, such as Facebook and the Gates Foundation, which create and disseminate prefabricated curricula and standardized software programs. Standardization requires, as a precondition, the generalization of research findings from a smaller subset of teachers, students, or schools, to the field of education in its entirety. This dissertation investigates whether generalization of this sort is possible or desirable. After explaining why current critiques of educational generalization are insufficient, the author argues that, though generalizing from RCTs is ontologically precluded, generalization of a different sort is both possible and desirable. The author employs Martin Heidegger's ontological analysis of language to argue for a weak form of generalizability that avoids the extremes of RCT-based best practices while allowing teaching to be discussed across spatial and temporal locations.

ARTICULATING THE TEACHER: GOTTLIEB, DREYFUS, AND HEIDEGGER ON LANGUAGE

By

Kenneth O. Driggers

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To my wife Emily. I promise never to mention the word “ontology” again.

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Our proclivity to details cannot quite degrade our life and divest it of poetry. The day-laborer is reckoned as standing at the foot of the social scale, yet he is saturated with the laws of the world.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson[1]

If there is such a thing as a language of truth, a tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate secrets for which all thought strives, then this language of truth is - the true language.
-Walter Benjamin[2]

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nominalist and Realist," in *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* Brooks Atkinson, ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 2000): 390-402, 393.
[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1,* Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996): 253-264, 259.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In my most recent job in the public school system, I worked as an eighth grade Georgia history teacher. The district in which I worked was the largest district in the state, served the largest student population, and had cultivated a reputation for innovation, progress, and high standards.[3] Over the past two decades, the district instituted a performance-based teacher pay system,[4] a framework of Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies which aggregate "research-based pedagogical strategies" to be used "in every classroom,"[5] standardized, district-wide assessments created by in-house teachers who have undergone an assessment training course,[6] and their own unique set of curriculum standards written specifically for use in their district.[7] In recognition of these initiatives, the district was twice awarded the Broad Prize for Urban Education (BPUE). Created by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, the BPUE, active from 2002 – 2014, purports

[3] Matt Johnson, "Gwinnett County Unveils New High School with a Focus on Artificial Intelligence," *wsb-tv*, August 4, 2022, https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/gwinnett-county/gwinnett-county-unveils-new-high-school-with-focus-artificial-intelligence/ZQYXZQYG2ZFQLMAAIKHCP2OFEA/; Kyle Sears, "STEM Education Innovation Lab Partners with Gwinnett County Schools to Offer Innovative AgSTEM Learning Experience," *The Den*, September 28, 2020, https://den.mercer.edu/stem-education-innovation-lab-partners-with-gwinnett-county-schools-to-offer-innovative-agstem-learning-experience/; Jin-Soo Huh, "How to Create a School Culture Where Teachers Lead Innovation," *EdSurge*, June 14, 2018, https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-06-14-how-to-create-a-school-culture-where-teachers-lead-innovation; Arlinda Smith Broady, "Gwinnett Schools Defy Stereotypes," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 28, 2020, https://www.ajc.com/news/local-education/gwinnett-demographic-shift-doesn-hinder-schools-success/3qI8EWulhOdkDGgW75LieI/; Arlinda Smith Broady, "Gwinnett Schools Find Success Putting Some Teaching Online," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, October 8, 2019, https://www.ajc.com/news/local/gwinnett-schools-find-success-putting-some-teaching-online/bC1ixGSCndxAOyZY0ZCvmI/; Chris Starrs, "Georgia Gwinnett College Partners with Gwinnett County Public Schools for 'Innovative' Tutoring Program," *Gwinnett Daily Post*, March 4, 2022, https://www.gwinnettdailypost.com/local/georgia-gwinnett-college-partners-with-gwinnett-county-public-schools-for-innovative-tutoring-program/article_fdd1fb9e-9a30-11ec-970c-67e0d0fa7dd3.html; Barbara Shelly, "Schools Face a Substitute Teacher Crisis: These Districts are Getting Creative to Fix It," *NBC News*, February 27, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/schools-face-substitute-teacher-crisis-these-districts-are-getting-creative-n1258898; La'Tasha Givens, "Metro Atlanta's Largest School District Making Progress in Summer School, Among Other Districts," *11 Alive*, July 2, 2021, https://www.11alive.com/article/news/education/metro-atlantas-largest-school-district-making-progress-in-summer-school-among-other-districts/85-72d1823d-7437-46f5-9b46-459d230b5ae0.

[4] Gwinnett County Public Schools, "Performance-Based Teacher Compensation," https://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/employment/content/compensation/revise-compensation.

[5] Gwinnett County Public Schools, "GCPS Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies," https://www.gcpsk12.org/domain/11887.

[6] Gwinnett County Public Schools, "Accountability and Assessment," https://www.gcpsk12.org/Page/27668.

[7] Gwinnett County Public Schools, "AKS Standards," https://www.gcpsk12.org/Page/33116.

to award "public school systems that have demonstrated the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement while narrowing achievement gaps among low-income students and students of color."[8] In practice, the BPUE prioritizes increased standardization of curriculum, takes for granted the accuracy and efficacy of standardized testing, values non-union districts, and reifies neoliberal intrusions into education, such as "merit pay" for teacher performance.[9]

While working in this district, I was chosen to participate in a program that trained teachers and administrators to create valid and effective standardized assessments. I subsequently served on a district-wide assessment leadership committee, creating and critiquing standardized assessment questions once a week at the central office. In my capacity as a teacher, I was sent to workshops and conferences to learn new evidence-based pedagogical techniques, after which I shared these techniques with other teachers and administrators. In addition, weekly (if not bi-weekly) professional development training sessions were mandatory. Held during planning period, these sessions were conducted by administrators or external consultants who modeled a teaching strategy to a room full of teachers as if we were students, and then allotted time at the end of the session to think about and discuss how the strategy might fit with our own students.

What struck me as odd was that, in private conversations with co-workers (including both teachers and administrators), it was acknowledged that standardized tests failed to capture what students know, and that standardized pedagogies and curriculum did not reflect the economic,

[8] The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, "The Broad Prize for Urban Education," https://broadfoundation.org/the-broad-prize-for-urban-education/.
[9] Kenneth J. Saltman, *The Gift of Education: Public Education and Venture Philanthropy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).; The Broad Prize, "Gwinnett County Public Schools, Ga.," *The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation,* 2010, https://broadfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1579-tbp-2010-gwinnett-fact-sheet.pdf; The Broad Prize, "Gwinnett County Public Schools," *The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation*, 2014, https://broadfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1945-tbp-fact-sheet-gwinnett-county.pdf.

racial, and ethnic diversity of our students.[10] In every other capacity, however, from department meetings to professional development sessions, it was as if those critical worries were bracketed or hidden. Scrutinizing test data with assistant principals, for example, we categorized students based on their likelihood of scoring higher on the next test. Students who were already past the acceptable threshold, and those whose scores were too low to be significantly improved, were placed outside the scope of pedagogical concern. The focus was instead on the "bubble kids": those who scored right below the threshold. These students became the focus of targeted teaching techniques, with the hope that the interventions would push them over the edge and improve the school's overall testing numbers (and potentially result in a bonus for the teacher). To accomplish this increase in test scores, teachers were encouraged to adhere to the standards and frequently utilize the Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies. Unlike in private conversations, the worries that the test scores might be less than representative of the abilities and situations of our diverse students were not expressed. In situations that mattered for teacher evaluations, school evaluations, and student interventions, teachers and administrators took for granted that a system of standardized testing, pedagogy, and curriculum would accurately reflect student learning.

Research Questions

I begin with this personal anecdote to illustrate the problem that this dissertation explores: the (apparent) disconnect between the generalizing force of standardization and the particular character of individual students, teachers, and local contexts. The central question that I address is whether generalization, defined as the extension of a quality or characteristic to a

[10] Gwinnett County is one of the most diverse districts in the state: Gwinnett County Public Schools, "Shine: 2020 By The Numbers," https://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/wcm/connect/280e3b29-ecd3-4750-819c-9c919b704d10/GCPS_Fact_Sheet_September2015.pdf?MOD=AJPERES; Gwinnett County Public Schools, "Demographic Tables," https://www.gcpsk12.org/Page/31878; U.S. News and World Report, "Gwinnett County School District," https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/georgia/districts/gwinnett-county-106134.

broad range of phenomena, is possible in education.[11] The question of generalizability is pertinent to the anecdote given above about standardization because for standardization to appear logical, there must first be a generalization of some quality or characteristic to the population of concern. For standardized testing to seem logical, there must first be a generalization of the idea that a single, uniform assessment accurately measures learning across space, time, and demographic populations. It must also be assumed (which, arguably, entails a generalization) that language, as well the informational context, is experienced the same way, and will be unproblematically discerned by all students equally. For standardized *pedagogy* to appear logical, there must first be a general notion of the teacher, one that can perform de-contextualized behaviors, or import them unproblematically into their own context, regardless of how or where the original behavior was articulated. By asking whether generalizability of this sort is possible, I am also asking, ontologically, whether teachers and students are the sorts of beings that are amenable to trans-temporal and trans-spatial abstraction. Put simply, I am asking whether it is possible to speak about and make policy decisions for the "teacher" and the "student" in general, rather than particular teachers and students. The former would allow for propositions and disputations that apply to teachers and students in any location and time, while the latter would restrict claims to local contexts, if not preclude propositions about teaching and learning altogether. Since standardization is a by-product of generalization, I will take them to be necessarily correlative phenomena, with their usage being, as a result, synonymous and interchangeable. To repeat, the two (related) questions that this dissertation addresses are:

[11] Bryan Warnick defines generalization as "findings or conclusions that point beyond themselves; they are things evident that point to (and have implications for) the non-evident." Generalization, then, applies not only to quantitative research findings, but to any conclusions applicable beyond the immediate concern of the inquiry. See Bryan R. Warnick, "Educational Research and the Interests of the State: The Divisive Case of Generalizability," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, 2004, 271-279, 273.

1. Is generalization appropriate in education?
2. Are teachers and students the sorts of beings that are amenable to trans-temporal and trans-spatial generalization?

Significance

The topic of generalization in education is vast, covering anything from standardized testing to classroom decorations and school-wide behavioral initiatives such as PBIS.[12] I restrict my focus to the concept of "best practices"[13] as paradigmatic of a theoretically generalized practice that encourages teachers to perform behaviors that have been determined, often through randomized controlled trials (RCTs), to be the most conducive to learning as measured by increases in standardized test scores. There are three reasons for restricting my scope in this way. First, during my public school teaching career, best practices were omnipresent, whether in the form of preferred teaching strategies, disciplinary consequences, or parent communication. On a personal level, my intuitive, though unarticulated, uneasiness with best practices was the deciding factor that motivated me to pursue an academic career in education policy studies. While the restrictions that best practices impose on teachers *seemed* to be problematic, at the time I could not articulate *why*. If we concede that there might be some teachers who, absent the guidance of best practices, would mishandle parent communications and teach in ways that are harmful and abusive, then best practices seem *prima facie* desirable. Teachers also, however, are ostensibly granted academic freedom, which gives them (qualified) autonomy to choose how to

[12] Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, https://www.pbis.org/.
[13] There are several other terms that refer to a similar, if not identical phenomenon: high-leverage behaviors, high-impact behaviors, research-based practices, evidence-based practices, etc. While there may be important and interesting nuances between all of these terms, I will refer to them all with the term "best practices," because all of them aim at the distillation of a set of pedagogical behaviors from experimentation, observation, or random control trials.

teach, and with which curricular materials.[14] Furthermore, teachers and students are far from monolithic, coming from myriad backgrounds, experiences, and motivations. How can standardized behaviors, which seem so rational from certain angles, ever claim to be amenable to such irreducible diversity? Because the threads of these considerations are tangled and difficult to explain, a clear, reasoned case against best practices requires more than an intuitive, gut feeling. It requires, instead, a well-theorized, well-researched, warranted argument that maintains a proximity to both theory and practice. That is what I am to provide in this dissertation.

Second, best practices constitute an example of educational generalization that directly affects the behaviors and experiences of teachers and students, and thus pose an urgent concern, particularly if a question remains about the applicability of generalizability of this sort. Like other forms of educational generalization, best practices, particularly those recommended by governmental agencies such as the What Works Clearinghouse, begin from research findings based on a specific sub-population, then generalize to the population (e.g. teachers) as a whole. It is not that *every* best practice is meant to be disseminated to the practices of *every* teacher simultaneously, but that, were a teacher to adopt an established best practice, the argument is that, based on the available evidence, it would be effective at achieving the predetermined goal. Through best practices, teachers, and teacherly behavior, become the focal point of educational generalization. If the generalizations being made about teachers are justified, then the general, theoretical, teacherly behaviors identified through scientific experimentation should be replicable by all teachers regardless of context, enforced through policy initiatives and administrative directives. Not only, then, does a focus on best practices allow us to examine the specific

[14] U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, "Parducci v. Rutland, 316 F. Supp. 352 (M.D. Ala. 1970)," Justia, June 1970, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/316/352/1951340/.; Daniel Gordon, *What is Academic Freedom?: A Century of Debate, 1915-Present* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

generalizations being made, it also allows for a focus on the methodology of generalization itself and the assumptions that underlie it. The question is not *merely* if generalization is possible in abstract, theoretical contexts – if, for example, it is possible to formulate a purified concept of "teacher" separable from actual teachers. The object of the present inquiry is, instead, the possibility or impossibility of generalizing the *practice* of teaching itself, the concrete teacher in the *act* or *experience* of teaching.

Method

The methods of analysis I employ in this paper are philosophical and conceptual. Frank Ramsey succinctly explains philosophy as "essentially…a system of definitions, or, only too often, a system of descriptions of how definitions might be given."[15] The definitions given by philosophy are not, or not only, meant to merely explain how we have been using concepts all along, but rather "they show how we intend to use them in the future…for meaning is mainly potential."[16] Definitions are intended for use; we do things with them, put them into action, and test their boundaries both in casual conversation and formal argumentation. I recall Ramsey's definition here both because it describes a general "philosophical orientation" as one that aims at getting clear about concepts and their meanings, and because it neatly draws together the threads of epistemology, ontology, and language. Crafting a definition requires an investigation into what (the ontological question) is being defined, how we come to know these definitional and ontological parameters (the epistemological question), and how the concept is understood in different contexts (the question of language). Conceptual clarification is, furthermore, never

[15] Frank P. Ramsey, "Philosophy," in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. D.H. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1-8, 1.
[16] Ramsey, "Philosophy," 1.

"merely" providing definitions. Rather, it is a totalizing project fraught with potential pitfalls and errors.

Philosophical and conceptual inquiry starts when a concept becomes conspicuous, when it fails in its normal function. When a Gates-funded teacher training simulation program proposes to train teachers using methods that purportedly foster efficiency and data-driven results, for example, philosophers of education are right to inquire if the word "teacher" means something different to someone like Bill Gates than it does to John Dewey or Paulo Freire. What exactly does the word "teacher" mean? To what does "teacher" refer when used in everyday conversation? Does it function differently in casual environments than it does in the scholarly literature? In addition to being a question about language, this question must also be an ontological question. What, for example, *is* a teacher such that the word "teacher" can reliably refer or predicate *x*, *y*, or *z* of it? The ontological inquiry entails an examination of what it is that the word refers to "in the world." In this sense, the ontological question of what the teacher *is*, as human, as educated, as leader, etc., has implications for what "teacher" *qua* concept *can be*, both logically and practically. Said differently, the ontological facts of the matter restrict the possible practical uses of a concept. If teachers are also humans, then the predicate "demonic winged serpent" is precluded as one of the potential predications of the "teacher."

The ontological question also leads the philosopher to epistemology. How can we know what teachers are at all? What methods of knowing do we have recourse to in answering this question? Which ones will be effective or ineffective in this particular inquiry? How do we know that these methods yield reliably accurate results? Are we to trust our perceptions, which may be giving us the mistaken impression that what we are perceiving is "out there" in the world, when actually they are "inside" our heads as mental representations? Is empirical investigation the *only*

reliable way of knowing? Might we need to gather a wealth of quantitative data, or is it possible to deduce what teachers are through *a priori* methods? It is important to note that these epistemological questions reciprocally imply important ontological, if not metaphysical, questions. Are humans, for example, brains in vats of jelly, or are we embodied substantial beings in a similarly substantial world? The provision of definitions, then, appears to be caught in a chiasmic circle: to provide a definition, we must first investigate the ontological question, which requires an epistemological investigation, which relies on taken for granted ontological determinations, all of which, finally, require the use of concepts the definitions of which may also be in need of clarification. Ramsey acknowledges this chiasm, claiming that, since philosophy cannot be "an ordered progress to a goal," we must "take our problems as a whole and jump to a simultaneous solution; which will have something of the nature of a hypothesis."[17]

Philosophers test the veracity of a hypothesis by engaging in systematic inquiry using the methods previously described (a priori, a posteriori, formal logic, empirical investigation, etc.). Susan Haack provides an account of the process of inquiry by analogizing the taken for granted, common-sense form of inquiry with a crossword puzzle. If we take the already completed entries in a crossword puzzle to be our background beliefs, and the clues to be the evidence for or against a hypothesis, then the process of filling in the blank spaces is, Haack argues, similar to sound methods of investigation. A good inquirer, when evaluating a claim or hypothesis, for example, will, to the extent possible, take account of all relevant, available evidence, including both experiential and logical evidence (the clues), while cross-checking these against background

[17] Ramsey, *Philosophical Papers*, 6.

beliefs that the inquirer already holds (the already completed entries).[18] The background beliefs allow the inquirer to check for coherence while remaining open to revision if the newly gathered evidence proves strong enough to warrant it. Once a question has a (tentative) answer, or, to keep with Haack's metaphor, once a new entry is completed in the crossword puzzle, the inquirer knows and, when necessary, defends a proposition.

Adequately defending a proposition requires that the claim being made has reasons that support it. For example, the statement that "the concept 'teacher' is an empty concept" is supported by "the concept 'teacher' has yet to be sufficiently defined." The latter statement would serve to support the former claim. The reason itself also requires substantiation, which can either be another reason, or evidence that connects the reason to empirically verifiable facts. The reasons and evidence that support the legitimacy of a claim can come from the type of inquiry outlined above, using experiential evidence while cross-checking for coherence with background beliefs and testing for logical consistency and physical possibility. To warrant the claim, the inquirer should make explicit their own reasoning, and explain how the claim follows from the reasons and evidence provided. Showing that a claim is warranted may also involve providing additional reasons. If the inquirer is asked, for example, "how does the reason 'the concept 'teacher' has yet to be sufficiently defined' support the claim 'the concept 'teacher' is empty'?," there ought to be a further reason that the inquirer provides that solidifies this connection and preserves the argument.

In what follows, I also utilize the phenomenological and ontological methods of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's comments on method, particularly in his later works, are sparse. Being a student of Edmund Husserl, Heidegger accepted a central claim of Husserl's phenomenology,

[18] Susan Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: A Pragmatist Reconstruction of Epistemology* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2009), 126-134.

that "a person's relation to the world and things in it must always be mediated by intentional content, so that one can perform a reduction that separates the mind and its content from the world."[19] Husserl held that inquirers can isolate purified aspects of phenomena, or "pure percepts," by "bracketing the world" and becoming a "disinterested spectator."[20] Phenomenology, for Husserl, "makes no empirical assertions…it propounds no judgements which relate to objects transcending consciousness."[21] Heidegger diverged from this version of phenomenology since it was still beholden to the Cartesian metaphysics of the subject. Heidegger denied both the restriction of the mind to the inner workings of a conscious subject and the possibility of reducing experience to a simple subject-object relationship.[22] For him, there was no "internal" spectator observing an "external" world. Rather, humans are mostly "absorbed" in activity "in such a way that experience does not have any self-referential content."[23] The Cartesian "I," in normal, everyday circumstances, remains, for Heidegger, inconspicuous and irrelevant. Heidegger therefore de-emphasizes what he refers to as the derivative, inauthentic gaze of science, which brackets (as Husserl purported to do) everyday, common-sense interpretations and assumptions in favor of the purified, theoretical approach of the laboratory. Heideggerian phenomenology analyzes, instead, what he regards as the more primordial mode of everyday, "unpurified" experience, or experience as it is *before* it undergoes the purifications of the scientific method.[24]

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[19] Hubert Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality," *Social Research* 60, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 17-38, 19.
[20] Richard Schmitt, "Husserl's Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 20, no. 2 (Dec. 1959): 238-245, 239. Also see Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Volume 1*, trans. by J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 1970).; Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Volume 2*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 1970), 237.
[21] Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Volume 2*, 343.
[22] Whether Heidegger's attribution of these positions to Husserl is fair is debatable.
[23] Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Critique of the Husserl/Searle Account of Intentionality," 37.
[24] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

Heidegger defines phenomenology as a method of investigation that lets "what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself."[25] Whereas traditional metaphysics began with Being and deduced beings from it, Heidegger begins with the beings that show up for humanity in practical experience.[26] Heidegger understands Being to be not some eternal substance added onto beings, or some quality that beings possess which can be identified only in decontextualized inquiries, but to be the time-bound, practical existence of beings. Accordingly, "letting what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" means *being with* beings as they are *in* being. Put simply, Heideggerian phenomenology investigates phenomena through the ways in which they are manifest, used, dealt with, or cared for in everyday circumstances. The hammer, then, is not a bit of hard metallic substance fastened to a separate bit of lacquered pulpy substance, but instead it is simply a hammer: it drives nails into baseboards of a newlyweds' first home, it sits in waiting on the dashboard of the handyman's work truck. What a hammer *is* can only be discovered in these practical contexts, and the concept "hammer" is established and identified through investigations into finite, everyday experiences.[27]

That phenomenology is, for Heidegger, coextensive with ontology is significant for the purposes of this dissertation because the generalizations of best practices take for granted both what teachers are and that what they are is generalizable (or already generalized). I scrutinize these assumptions through a Heideggerian phenomenological investigation into the being of language and of teachers, using their practical, originary manifestations as the starting point of my inquiry. Put simply, I employ philosophical and Heideggerian methods of analysis to

[25] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 32.
[26] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 94.
[27] Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 59.

investigate whether best practices, and generalization more broadly, are appropriate to the "being" of teachers.

After providing a brief history of best practices and detailing arguments in their favor, I survey the existing literature critiquing best practices. These critiques fall into three main, though non-exclusive categories: a critique based on the ineffectiveness of best practices, a critique based on the anti-democratic tendencies of best practices, and a critique based on the ontological, practical, or epistemological impossibility of best practices. I privilege Derek Gottlieb's critique based on the impossibility of generalization. Because it encompasses all three categories (if generalization is impossible, for example, it is also ineffective and undesirable), using Gottlieb's critique will allow me to provide a solution that addresses the effectiveness, desirability, and possibility of the generalizability of best practices. I explain the relevant aspects of Hubert Dreyfus' phenomenology of expertise, upon which Gottlieb's analysis relies, before offering my own critique of educational generalization which, though based largely on Martin Heidegger's analysis of language, also incorporates arguments from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walter Benjamin, and Jean-Luc Nancy. I explain the relevant aspects of Heidegger's analysis and argue that a moderated form of educational generalization, based on a Heideggerian reorientation towards language, would satisfy and correct all three critiques while avoiding both the over-generalizations of RCT-based best practices and the denial of generalization altogether. Finally, I outline the implications of this argument for future inquiries.

CHAPTER TWO: BEST PRACTICES

History and Identification of Best Practices

Though best practices have been federally institutionalized only in recent decades, the idea of best practices is not new. Whether in the 19th century recommendations that students memorize and recite Latin and Greek,[28] the early 20th century "scientific management" pedagogy of Franklin Bobbit,[29] or the 1970s "teaching machines" of B.F. Skinner, the notion that there exist particular, determinable behaviors that teachers can and should replicate is a perennial feature in education policy and practice.[30] Ideally, these replicable practices are expected to lead to greater and more efficient student learning.

The modern idea of institutionalizing such replicable behaviors, pedagogies, and learning activities through rigorous, "scientific," quantitative educational research methods was arguably introduced through governmental initiatives such as the National Defense Education Act of 1958,[31] the Clinton-Era "Office of Educational Research and Improvement,"[32] and the Reading Excellence Act of 1999. As Benjamin Baez and Deron Boyles write, however, it was the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) "that brought this issue of scientific education research to a head."[33] No Child Left Behind, fed by the decades-long push to transform education research into an empirical, progress-oriented field analogous to medicine,[34]

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[28] Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[29] Franklin Bobbitt, "Scientific Method in Curriculum-Making," in *The Curriculum Studies Reader*, ed. David J. Flinders and Stephen J. Thornton (New York: Routledge, 2017): 11-18.
[30] E. A. Vargas and Julie S. Vargas, "B.F. Skinner and the Origins of Programmed Instruction," in *B.F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, ed. Laurence D. Smith and William R. Woodward (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1996): 237-253.
[31] House of Representatives, "National Defense Education Act of 1958," Sept. 2, 1958, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-72/pdf/STATUTE-72-pgl1580.pdf.
[32] Department of Education, "Section F – Educational Research and Improvement," FY 2000 Budget Summary – February 1999, https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OUS/Budget00/BudgetSumm/sum-f.html.
[33] Benjamin Baez and Deron Boyles, *The Politics of Inquiry: Educational Research and the "Culture of Science"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 6.
[34] Baez and Boyles, *The Politics of Inquiry*.

mandated regularly scheduled standardized testing, accompanied by "progress objectives" tracked according to "poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency."[35] The law established that, by the year 2014, 100% of students would "be on track to achieve proficiency."[36] If these yearly progress goals went unmet, the Act triggered tiered consequences that escalated from "hiring an outside expert to advise a school on how to make adequate yearly progress" to "replacing school staff or restructuring the internal organization of a school."[37] Perhaps the most relevant aspect of NCLB for the purpose of this dissertation is the "highly qualified teacher" provision,[38] which required that teachers "demonstrate subject matter

[35] U.S. Department of Education, "Executive Summary of No Child Left Behind," January 2001, https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html. Also see Henry A. Giroux and Michele Schmidt, "Closing the Achievement Gap: A Metaphor for Children Left Behind," *Journal of Educational Change* 5 (2004): 213-228; Scott Franklin Abernathy, *No Child Left Behind and the Public Schools* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007); Rochelle L. Rowley and David W. Wright, "No 'White' Child Left Behind: The Academic Achievement Gap between Black and White Students," *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 93-107; Helen F. Ladd, "No Child Left Behind: A Deeply Flawed Federal Policy," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 36, no. 2 (Jan. 2017): 461-469; Stefan Thomas Hopmann, "No Child, No School, No State Left Behind: Schooling in the Age of Accountability," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40, no. 4 (2008): 417-456; David A. Granger, "No Child Left Behind and the Spectacle of Failing Schools: The Mythology of Contemporary School Reform," *Educational Studies* 43 (2008): 206-228; Michael Heise, "From No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds: Back to a Future for Education Federalism," *Columbia Law Review* 117, no. 7 (2017): 1860-1896; Donna Y. Ford and Charles J. Russo, "No Child Left Behind, Unless a Student is Gifted and of Color: Reflections on the Need to Meet the Educational Needs of the Gifted," *Journal of Law in Society* 15, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 213-240; Ayriel Bland, "No Child Left Behind: Why Race-Based Achievement Goals Violate the Equal Protection Clause," *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal* 24, no. 59 (2014): 59-80; 107th Congress, "Public Law 107-110: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," Jan. 8, 2002; Thomas S. Dee, Brian A. Jacob, Caroline M. Hoxby, and Helen F. Ladd, "The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Students, Teachers, and Schools," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (Fall 2010): 149-207; Susanna Loeb and Luke C. Miller, "A Review of State Teacher Policies: What Are They, What Are Their Effects, and What Are Their Implications for School Finance?," *Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice*, School of Education, Stanford University (Dec. 2006); Jack Jennings and Diane Stark Rentner, "Ten Big Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, no. 2 (Oct. 2006): 110-113.

[36] Ladd, "No Child Left Behind," 461. Also see Granger, "No Child Left Behind and the Spectacle of Failing Schools."

[37] U.S. Department of Education, "Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary," Law and Guidance, July 24, 2002, https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/020724.html.

[38] Karen Eppley, "Rural Schools and the Highly Qualified Teacher Provision of No Child Left Behind: A Critical Policy Analysis," *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 24, no. 4 (2009): 1-11; Barnett Berry, Linda Darling-Hammond, Eric Hirsch, Sharon Robinson, and Arthur Wise, "No Child Left Behind and the 'Highly Qualified' Teacher: The Promise and the Possibilities," Center for Teaching Quality, Oct., 2006, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED498778.pdf; U.S. Department of Education, "State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume II," About Ed, 2007, https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/nclb/execsum.html; Mark W. Neill, "Highly Qualified Teachers: Provisions, Problems, and Prospects," *Catalyst for Change* 34, no. 2 (August 2006): 3-10; Emma Smith and Stephen Gorard, "Improving Teacher Quality: Lessons from America's No Child Left Behind," *Cambridge Journal of*

competency by passing a rigorous state test [and]…have completed an academic major, course work equivalent, or an advanced degree, or have obtained advanced certification."[39] Though "NCLB allows each state to generate its own definition of a *highly qualified teacher*,"[40] the Act forced districts to alter previous practices. For example, since, according to NCLB, teachers "must demonstrate competency in each subject they teach," the practice of "out-of-field teaching" (e.g. when the physical education teacher also teaches social studies) would be prohibited unless the teacher had demonstrated competency in every field in which they teach.[41]

Beyond requiring that teachers be highly qualified, NCLB, along with the U.S. Department of Education's "Strategic Plan" from 2002-2007, the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA), and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), established standards for education research that regulated the behavior of both researchers and teachers.[42] In explaining the new provisions for Title I schools, NCLB stated that children should be ensured access to "effective, *scientifically based* instructional strategies."[43] Again, under a section regarding schoolwide reform strategies, NCLB specified that schools should "use effective methods and instructional strategies that are based on *scientifically based research*."[44] The bill uses the phrase "scientifically based research" 119 times.[45] Similarly, one of the stated goals of the DOE's

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Education 37, no. 2 (June 2007): 191-206; U.S. General Accounting Office, "No Child Left Behind Act: More Information Would Help States Determine Which Teachers Are Highly Qualified," Report to Congressional Requesters, July 2003; Jeffrey J. Kuenzi, "A Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom: Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act," Congressional Research Service, Jan. 2008;

[39] U.S. Department of Education, "State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Volume II."

[40] Neill, "Highly Qualified Teachers," 3. Italics original.

[41] Neill, "Highly Qualified Teachers," 3.

[42] 107th Congress, "Public Law 107-279: Education Sciences Reform Act," Nov. 5, 2002, https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ279/PLAW-107publ279.pdf.; U.S. Department of Education, "Strategic Plan, 2002-2007," March 2002, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/ERIC-ED466025/pdf/ERIC-ED466025.pdf.; Institute of Education Sciences, https://ies.ed.gov/.

[43] 107th Congress, "Public Law 107-110: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," 1440. Italics added.

[44] 107th Congress, "Public Law 107-110: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," 1473. Italics added.

[45] NCTM Research Advisory Committee, "Educational Research in the No Child Left Behind Environment," *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* 34, no. 3 (May 2003): 185-190.

strategic plan is to "transform education into an evidence-based field" by strengthening "the quality of educational research."[46] The Plan begins by stipulating that "the field of education operates largely on the basis of ideology and professional consensus. As such, it is subject to fads and is incapable of the cumulative progress that follows from the application of the scientific method and from the systematic collection and use of objective information."[47] To align education research with cumulative scientific fields (e.g. medicine, more on this below[48]) the Plan states that the DOE will develop and enforce "rigorous standards" that "match those applied by the most respected research journals and scientific research agencies."[49] To increase the ease with which this new, scientific educational research would be applied by practitioners, the Plan proposed the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC),[50] the goal of which would be to "maintain an online database of quality research on topics relevant to educational practice."[51] The WWC, which came into existence in 2002, aggregates educational research studies that conform to the research standards put forth by the DOE, ESRA, and IES. These studies focus on evidence-based teaching strategies that have been shown, through "rigorous" research methods, to be effective at increasing student learning and performance on standardized testing.[52]

The strategies, pedagogies, and behaviors featured in the WWC are determined to be effective mainly through the use of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), in alignment with

[46] Office of the Deputy Secretary, "U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan, 2002-2007," U.S. Department of Education, 2002, 6, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/ERIC-ED466025/pdf/ERIC-ED466025.pdf.
[47] Office of the Deputy Secretary, "U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan," 61.
[48] NCTM Research Advisory Committee, "Educational Research in the No Child Left Behind Environment."
[49] Office of the Deputy Secretary, "U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan," 62.
[50] What Works Clearinghouse, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/.
[51] Office of the Deputy Secretary, "U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan," 64.
[52] "What We Do," What Works Clearinghouse, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/WhatWeDo. The WWC is not the only organization that aggregates evidence-based practices in this way. See, for example, Evidence for ESSA, https://www.evidenceforessa.org/; Best Evidence Encyclopedia, https://bestevidence.org/.

scientific standards set forth in NCLB and the Strategic Plan of 2002.[53] A study that uses a RCT "randomly assigns participants into an experimental group or a control group…the only expected difference between the control and experimental groups" is "the outcome variable being studied."[54] The purpose of RCTs is to accurately attribute causation by isolating an intervention and comparing the difference in outcome between the group that received the treatment and the one that did not. RCTs enable researchers "to evaluate whether the intervention itself, as opposed to other factors, causes the observed outcomes."[55] RCTs are considered the "gold standard clinical evidence" because of their "ability to reduce bias and confounding that may be associated with factors that could otherwise influence both group assignment and prognosis."[56] The assignment of groups at random "balances participant characteristics…between groups, allowing attribution of any differences in outcome to the intervention…so RCTs are considered the reference standard for driving practice."[57]

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[53] NCTM Research Advisory Committee, "Educational Research in the No Child Left Behind Environment;" Robert E. Slavin, "How Evidence-Based Reform Will Transform Research and Practice in Education," *Educational Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2020): 21-31; Tone Kvernbekk, "The Concept of Evidence in Evidence-Based Practice," *Educational Theory* 61, no. 5 (2011): 515-532; Alis Oancea and Richard Pring, "The Importance of Being Thorough: On Systematic Accumulations of 'What Works' in Education Research," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42, no. S1 (2008): 15-39; Gary Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure in Education," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 3 (June 2021): 501-519; Terry Wrigley, "The Power of 'Evidence': Reliable Science or a Set of Blunt Tools?," *British Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 3 (June 2018): 359-376; Peter Hlebowitsh, "When Best Practices Aren't: A Schwabian Perspective on Teaching," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 1-12; Cathay Burnett and Mike Coldwell, "Randomised Controlled Trials and the Interventionisation of Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 47, no. 4 (2021): 423-438; Brian Warnick, "Educational Research and the Interests of the State: The Divisive Case of Generalizability," *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, 2004, 271-279; Thomas W. Christ, "Scientific-Based Research and Randomized Controlled Trials, the 'Gold' Standard? Alternative Paradigms and Mixed Methodologies," *Qualitative Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (2014): 72-80; Betsy J. Becker and Meng-Jia Wi, "Generalizability and Research Synthesis," in *Generalizing from Educational Research*, ed. by Kadriye Ercikan and Wolff-Michael Roth (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[54] Study Design 101, "Randomized Controlled Trial," Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, https://himmelfarb.gwu.edu/tutorials/studydesign101/rcts.cfm.
[55] National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, "Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide," Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, https://ies.ed.gov/.
[56] Simon Dagenais and Scott Haldeman, *Evidence-Based Management of Low Back Pain* (Maryland Heights: Mosby, 2011), 13.
[57] Eduardo Hariton and Joseph J. Locascio, "Randomised Controlled Trials - The Gold Standard for Effectiveness Research," *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 125, no. 13 (Dec. 2018): 1716.

That all of the references in the previous paragraph are from the field of medicine is neither coincidental nor arbitrary. The proponents and policymakers responsible for NCLB, the DOE's Strategic Plan, and the WWC explicitly intended to model research in the field of education after medical research.[58] Robert Slavin points out that, in the field of medicine, "the evidence for a new heart valve or breast cancer treatment or migraine medication is of value to practitioners and patients no matter where they are and no matter what their political or ideological beliefs."[59] "Evidence-based reform could finally apply to education," Slavin argues, "the process that led to dramatic developments in medicine."[60] Valerie Reyna, former deputy of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, similarly explains that "the bottom line here is these same rules about what works and how to make inferences about what works, they are exactly the same for educational practice as they would be for medical practice. Same rules, exactly the same logic, whether you are talking about a treatment for cancer or whether you're talking about an intervention to help children learn. The same logic applies."[61]

By analogy to scientific research in medicine, then, the goal of institutionalizing RCTs was twofold. First, policymakers were attempting to make education research more rigorous, respectable, and certain. RCTs would, theoretically, preclude the "fads" and "ideologies" that rendered education research frivolous in the eyes of policymakers. Second, RCTs would enable educational research to become more practice-oriented. The underlying assumption is that strictly theoretical, conceptual, or, to use the terminology of the DOE, "ideological" research is

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[58] NCTM Research Advisory Committee, "Educational Research in the No Child Left Behind Environment."; Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform."; Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure in Education."; Debra Viadero, "Report Urges Use of Medical-Style Research in Education," *Education Week*, Nov. 27, 2002, https://www.edweek.org/leadership/report-urges-use-of-medical-style-research-in-education/2002/11.
[59] Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform," 21.
[60] Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform," 29.
[61] Scientifically Based Research, "What is Scientifically Based Evidence? What is its Logic? - Valerie Reyna," Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, https://oese.ed.gov/scientifically-based-research-u-s-department-of-education-pg-3/.

not relevant for practitioners. RCTs, on the other hand, were thought to be able to identify (with a degree of certainty supposedly guaranteed by randomization and causal isolation) interventions, treatments, strategies, pedagogies, and behaviors which would effectively increase student learning (as indicated by increased test scores), *and* which teachers could readily implement in their classrooms.

Using RCTs, then, was supposed to make the process of creating and multiplying teaching strategies rather simple. To start, a researcher identifies a teaching strategy or program of instruction either already in use or one that could potentially be used. The researcher then specifies a population of students and divides them, at random, into two groups: one that would receive the intervention, and one that would not. A benchmark test is given to all students before and after the intervention to measure how much students learned. If the strategy increases student learning compared to the control group, then it can be listed on the WWC, adopted at a district-wide level, or labeled a "best practice." The resulting aggregations of best practices were intended for use in classrooms. School districts, state departments of education, universities, non-profit organizations, and schools often recommend or require teachers to implement these practices.[62]

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[62] Colorado Department of Education, "Best Practices for Educators," https://www.cde.state.co.us/learningathome/bestpracticeseducators; Fairfax County Public Schools, "Best Practices for Teaching and Learning," https://www.fcps.edu/node/32193; Announce, "Top 10 Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies," University of Nebraska, https://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/csmce/5272/29630; California Department of Education, "Evidence-Based Interventions Under the ESSA," https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/es/evidence.asp; Minnesota Department of Education, "Repository of Evidence-Based Practices," https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/compass/rep/; Florida Center for Reading Research, "Evidence-Based Teaching Practices," Florida State University, https://fcrr.org/resources/evidence-based-teaching-practices; Center for Teaching Innovation, "Evidence-Based Teaching," Cornell University, https://teaching.cornell.edu/evidence-based-teaching; Center for Teaching and Learning, "Nine Evidence-Based Teaching Practices that Combat Systemic Inequities in a Partially or Completely Online Setting," Brandeis University, https://www.brandeis.edu/teaching/continuity/evidence-based-practices.html; Iowa Department of Education, "Reviewed Evidence-Based Practices and Critical Learning Concepts Resource," https://educateiowa.gov/documents/reviewed-evidence-based-practices-and-critical-learning-concepts-resource; Kansas State Department of Education, "Evidence-Based Best Practices for At-Risk Programs and Instructions," https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-

In the early 2010s, however, going beyond mere "recommendations," the federal government implemented a competitive grant program called Race to the Top (RTTT) to incentivize state adoption of best practices (of the sort featured on the WWC), "rigorous" common standards, and teacher accountability systems.[63] Billions of dollars of grant funding

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Services/Announcements-Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Best-Practices; Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation, "Evidence Based Teaching Strategies," Clemson University, https://www.clemson.edu/otei/evidence-based.html; Arizona Department of Education, "Evidence-Based Practices, Strategies, Programs and Intervention Articles and Resources," https://www.azed.gov/improvement/evidence-based-practices; Ross C. Alexander, *Best Practices in Online Teaching and Learning Across Academic Disciplines* (Fairfax: George Mason University, 2017), https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=2358312&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=gsu1; SUNY Oswego, "Best Practices in Learning and Teaching," https://www.oswego.edu/celt/best-practices-learning-and-teaching; Johns Hopkins University, "Best Practices for Effective Schools," https://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/_PDFs/media/best_practices/effective_schools.pdf; Moody College of Communication, "Best Practices in Teaching & Learning," *The University of Texas at Austin*, https://moody.utexas.edu/centers/center-advancing-teaching-excellence/best-practices-teaching-learning; Center for Research on Learning & Teaching, "Enhancing Student Learning: Seven Principles for Good Practice," *University of Michigan*, https://crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p4_6; Kentucky Department of Education, "Best Practice and Sustainability," February 23, 2023, https://education.ky.gov/school/bpsust/Pages/default.aspx; Teach Remotely, "Pedagogical Best Practices: Residential, Blended, and Online," *Harvard University*, https://teachremotely.harvard.edu/best-practices; Tom Drummond, "A Brief Summary of the Best Practices in College Teaching," North Seattle Community College, https://www.clemson.edu/assessment/documents/best_practices_college_teaching_Drummond.pdf; Texas Education Agency, "Data Driven Instruction Best Practices," https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-learning-assessments/data-driven-instruction-best-practices; Vanderbilt University, "What Are Evidence-Based Practices?," https://my.vanderbilt.edu/spedteacherresources/what-are-evidence-based-practices/; The IRIS Center, "What is an Evidence-Based Practice or Program (EBP)?," Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ebp_01/cresource/q1/p01/; Evidence-Based Teaching, "10 Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies for 2023," http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/evidence-based-teaching-strategies/; Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, "Scaling-Up Evidence-Based Practices in Education," National Implementation Research Network, https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/scaling-evidence-based-practices-education; Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, https://www.sree.org/; Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8, 4th Edition, https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/books/dap-fourth-edition; Core Knowledge Foundation, "Core Knowledge Sequence," 2023, https://www.coreknowledge.org/our-approach/core-knowledge-sequence/; Best Practices Clearinghouse, https://bestpracticesclearinghouse.ed.gov/.

[63] Lorraine M. McDonnell, "Surprising Momentum: Spurring Education Reform in States and Localities," in *Reaching for a New Deal: Ambitious Governance, Economic Meltdown, and Polarized Politics in Obama's First Two Years*, ed. by Theda Skocpol and Lawrence R. Jacobs (New York: Russell Sage, 2011): 230-270; Patrick McGuinn, "Creating Cover and Constructing Capacity: Assessing the Origins, Evolution, and Impact of Race to the Top," American Enterprise Institute (Dec. 2010); Patrick McGuinn, "Stimulating Reform: Race to the Top, Competitive Grants and the Obama Education Agenda," *Educational Policy* 26, no. 1 (2012), 136-159; Elizabeth Powell, "The Quest for Teacher Quality: Early Lessons from Race to the Top and State Legislative Efforts Regarding Teacher Evaluation," *DePaul Law Review* 62, no. 4 (Summer 2013), 1061-1094; Carla E. Aguilar and Lauren Kapalka Richerme, "What is Everyone Saying about Teacher Evaluation? Framing the Intended and Inadvertent Causes and Consequences of Race to the Top," *Arts Education Policy Review* 115 (2014), 110-120; Education, "Race to the Top," Obama White House Archive, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top; U.S. Department of Education, "Race to the Top District (RTT-D)," https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html; William G. Howell,

were awarded to the states that reformed education policies to align with the preferences specified by the federal Department of Education. RTTT constituted a change of direction in federal education policy because it relied on "incentives instead of sanctions to drive state reform,"[64] and "shifted the focus of federal policy from the laggards to the leaders."[65] Put differently, instead of increasing funding to districts with high dropout and failure rates, RTTT rewarded the states that demonstrated a political willingness and capacity to adopt reform initiatives that aligned with the sorts of evidence specified by the DOE. Unlike NCLB, which implemented significant consequences for schools unable to meet yearly progress expectations,[66] RTTT opted for a system analogous to a large-scale version of Skinnerian behaviorism, in which states were incentivized to change their policies (i.e. behavior) with monetary rewards. Moreover, Elizabeth Powell notes that "the experiences of the winning states provide standards and best practices that other states should adopt."[67] The behaviors of the winning states, then, were intended to be disseminated across the entire country. RTTT thus represents a standardization of education both in terms of standardized educational practice, at the local level, and in terms of standardized policies at the state level. It is important to note, however, that the latter policy-based standardization also entails best practices for policy*makers*: through the RTTT incentive program, the policymakers themselves were subjected to behaviorist generalization.

"Results of President Obama's Race to the Top," *Education Next* 15, no. 4 (July 2015), 58-66, https://www.educationnext.org/results-president-obama-race-to-the-top-reform/; U.S. Congress, "H.R. 426 - Race to the Top Act of 2013," https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/426.

[64] McGuinn, "Stimulating Reform," 138.

[65] McGuinn, "Stimulating Reform," 137.

[66] Laws & Guidance, "Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary," U.S. Department of Education, July 24, 2002, https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/020724.html; House Research Department, "Adequate Yearly Progress Under the No Child Left Behind Act," Minnesota House of Representatives, November 2003, https://www.house.mn.gov/hrd/pubs/ss/ssayp.pdf.

[67] Powell, "The Quest for Teacher Quality," 1063.

The Obama administration's second educational initiative, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), constitutes a standardization effort similar to NCLB.[68] Although Eloise Pasachoff calls ESSA's modification of NCLB's evidence-based requirements "permissive rather than mandatory" and "not that significant,"[69] these requirements are relevant for the purposes of this dissertation. ESSA requires that evidence-based "school improvement plans" be implemented both for low-achieving student subgroups[70] and for low-achieving schools as a whole.[71] The interventions schools are directed to choose from in creating their plans are categorized into tiers based on the strength of evidence in their favor:

1. Experimental study - at least 350 participants, no strong negative findings, meets WWC standards
2. Quasi-experimental study - at least 350 participants, no strong negative findings, meets WWC standards with reservations
3. Correlational study - no strong negative findings
4. Logic model - provides a rationale[72]

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[68] Maria Ferguson, "The Opportunities and Challenges of ESSA's Evidence-Based Requirements," *Phi Delta Kappan* 101, no. 2 (Sept. 2019): 60-61; Derek W. Black, "Abandoning the Federal Role in Education," *California Law Review* 105, no. 5 (Oct. 2017): 1309-1374; Patrick McGuinn, "From No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act: Federalism and the Education Legacy of the Obama Administration," *Publius* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2016): 392-415; Eloise Pasachoff, "Two Cheers for Evidence: Law, Research, and Values in Education Policymaking and Beyond," *Columbia Law Review* 117 (2017): 1933-1972; Alyson Klein, "Districts Aim to Wield Evidence-Based Tools in Satisfying ESSA on School Turnarounds," *Education Week* 37, no. 25 (April 2018): 9-11; Stephanie Hirsch, "Federal Impact on Professional Development," *School Administrator* 73, no. 10 (Nov. 2016): 30-33; Janice Poda, "What Does 'Evidence-Based' Mean, According to ESSA?," *The Learning Professional* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 2019): 12-14; Laurie A. Sharp, "ESEA Reauthorization: An Overview of the Every Student Succeeds Act," *Texas Journal of Literacy Education* 4, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 9-13; Maddie Fennell, "What Educators Need to Know about ESSA," *Educational Leadership* (Summer 2016): 62-65; Adam Kirk Edgerton, "The Essence of ESSA: More Control at the District Level?," *Phi Delta Kappan* 101, no. 2 (Sept. 2019): 14-17; U.S. Department of Education, "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)," https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn; Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, "What is the Every Student Succeeds Act?," U.S. Department of Education, https://oese.ed.gov/families/essa/; 114th Congress, "S.1177 - Every Student Succeeds Act," U.S. Congress, https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177; Maine Department of Education, "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)," https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/ESSA.

[69] Pasachoff, "Two Cheers for Evidence," 1940-1941.

[70] Such as economically disadvantaged students and students from minoritized backgrounds.

[71] Pasachoff, "Two Cheers for Evidence," 1941-1942.

[72] Regional Educational Laboratory at American Institute for Research, "ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know," U.S. Department of Education, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/blogs/RELMW-ESSA-Tiers-Video-Handout-508.pdf.

Interventions must qualify for one of these tiers to be included in "the school improvement plans and related state activities for the lowest-achieving schools and student subgroups."[73] Because "experimental study" refers to "randomized controlled trials," tier one is considered to include the most reliable and well-evidenced interventions, with tiers two, three, and four containing less well-evidenced, though still potentially viable or promising interventions. The WWC standards list the required attributes studies must have to be included in the two strongest recommendations. The standards specify characteristics of acceptable study designs, including randomization, baseline equivalence, etc.[74] What is important to note is that, under the specifications listed above, school improvement interventions must conform to the narrow definitions of "evidence" provided by the DOE and the WWC. Though RCTs are not the *only* type of approved study, they are elevated to the highest, most trusted evidential tier. Additionally, while theory and conceptual analysis may play a role in any of the tiers, none of the approved study designs are theoretical or conceptual in the strict sense. Instead, empirical and practice-oriented methods are given privileged status. This preference for the practical and behavioral continues the federal trend begun by NCLB.

The Technological Turn

Throughout the history of best practices, technology appears as a recurring theme in the literature. Whether in the form of the Army Alpha tests that employed a standardized assessment to measure intelligence,[75] or Skinner's teaching machine which automated the pedagogical process to minimize human error,[76] educational technology has played a role in the creation and

[73] Pasachoff, "Two Cheers for Evidence," 1943.
[74] U.S. Department of Education, "What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards for Reviewing Studies, Version 1.0," May 2008, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/wwc_version1_standards.pdf.
[75] Jim Horn and Denise Wilburn, *The Mismeasure of Education* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2013).
[76] William D. Romey, "The Curriculum-Proof Teacher," *Phi Delta Kappa International* 54, no. 6 (Feb. 1973): 407-408.

implementation of best practices and the standardization of education more broadly.[77] In the 21st century, as these technologies have become increasingly digitized, significant portions of teaching and learning have been relocated online. Consider Learning Management Systems (LMS).[78] LMSs provide "the infrastructure that allows teachers to design and deliver content, supervise learning progress, communicate with learners and create learning experiences in an online environment."[79] "Used mainly for asynchronous interaction"[80] (but also in synchronous courses), LMSs allow teachers to upload course readings into a web-based platform that is accessible by students from any computer, at any time. Teachers can also create multiple choice and short answer assignments, discussion posts, and videos within the LMS.[81] Though providing

[77] Deron Boyles and Kip Kline, "On the Technology Fetish in Education: Ellul, Baudrillard, and the End of Humanity," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 49 (2018): 58-66; Morgan Anderson, "'Quality Matters' and Matters of Quality: COVID-19 and the Techno-Rationalization of Teaching," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 52 (2021): 15-25; Dan Mamlok and Kathleen Knight Abowitz, "132 Words: A Critical Examination of Digital Technology, Education, and Citizenship," *Technology, Knowledge, and Learning* 27 (2022): 1237-1257; Michael O'Leary, Darina Scully, Anastasios Karakolidis, and Vasiliki Pitsia, "The State-of-the-Art in Digital Technology-Based Assessment," *European Journal of Education* 53 (2018): 160-175; Neil Selwyn, "'It's All About Standardisation' - Exploring the Digital (re)Configuration of School Management and Administration," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 41, no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 473-488; Irina Tal, Eva Ibarrola, and Gabriel-Miro Muntean, "Quality and Standardization in Technology-Enhanced Learning" (paper presentation, Kaleidoscope: ICTs for a Sustainable World, 2016); Rikard Lindgren, Lars Mathiassen, and Ulrike Schultze, "The Dialectics of Technology Standardization," *MIS Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Sept. 2021): 1187-1212; Vincent Baribeau, Jeffrey Weinstein, Vanessa T. Wong, Aidan Sharkey, Derek N. Lodico, Robina Matyal, Feroze Mahmood, and John D. Mitchell, "Motion-Tracking Machines and Sensors: Advancing Education Technology," *Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia* 36 (2022): 303-308; Kenneth J. Saltman, *Scripted Bodies: Corporate Power, Smart Technologies, and the Undoing of Public Education* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[78] Examples include 360Learning, https://360learning.com/?utm_source=adwords_g&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=US_GA_LMS_SEA_Brand_Brand_RSA&utm_term=360%20learning&utm_content=652019143324&utm_campaign_id=147594792375&utm_ad_id=652019143324&gclid=CjwKCAjwyqWkBhBMEiwAp2yUFshnczveG085Sp-fDUznyZY1JDZvZHPEMc97dH7eH3HtZ7kuCmiG_xoCtvAQAvD_BwE; Adobe Learning Manager, https://business.adobe.com/resources/demo/adobe-learning-manager-lms.html?sdid=K7SLVLSM&mv=search; and Talent LMS, https://www.talentlms.com/register-eldir/aff:eldir?utm_source=eli&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=lms&utm_content=createfree.

[79] Qian Liu and Susan Geertshuis, "Professional Identity and the Adoption of Learning Management Systems," *Studies in Higher Education* 46, no. 3 (2021): 624-637, 624.

[80] Golchehreh Ahmadi, Seen Mohammadi, Shadi Asadzandi, Mahsood Shah, and Rita Mojtahedzadeh, "What are the Indicators of Student Engagement in Learning Management Systems? A Systematized Review of the Literature," *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* 24, no. 1 (Feb. 2023): 117-136, 118.

[81] Amir Hossein Ghapanchi, Afrooz Purarjomandlangrudi, and Yuan Miao, "Exploring the Influence of Online Learning Management Systems and Student Perceptions of Students' Adoption of Block Mode Teaching in Tertiary Sector," *Journal of Educators Online* 20, no. 3 (May 2023): 11-22; Andrea Cristina Miccelucci Malanga, Roberto Carlos Bernardes, Felipe Mendes Borini, Rafael Morais Pereira, and Dennys Eduardo Rossetto, "Towards

a platform for course content appears rather innocuous, Epp et al. point out that the structure of LMSs are not pedagogically neutral.[82] "Independent of course type," they write, "the instructor acts as a manager through their communication of explicit expectations"[83] and their role in structuring the course. Some LMSs direct instructors towards transmission-oriented pedagogies, in which the teacher gives information to students, by focusing on "content-delivery tools that are often heavily text-based."[84] Others place more emphasis on constructivist conceptions of knowledge by allowing students to collaborate, create, and interact with course materials in unique ways.[85]

Not all digital educational technology is as flexible as LMSs, however. IXL, for example, a scripted curriculum platform (used in the district described in the introduction) which "helps students master essential skills at their own pace,"[86] aligns sets of questions with skills based on grade and subject. For kindergarten math, IXL lists skills such as "put together numbers using cubes - sums up to 10,"[87] and "Make teen numbers: words."[88] Clicking on the latter skill leads to sets of practice questions: "10 + 9 = ?," "10 + 5 = ?" These questions are presented in the abstract; there is no connection with a practical application for the math problems. Like Skinner's teaching machine, IXL gives students instant feedback through simple "correct" or "incorrect" responses based on the student's answer. Where the best practices featured on the

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Integrating Quality in Theoretical Models of Acceptance: An Extended Proposed Model Applied to E-Learning Services," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 53 (2022): 8-22; Muyesser Eraslan Yalcin and Birgul Kutlu, "Examination of Students' Acceptance of and Intention to Use Learning Management Systems Using Extended TAM," *British Journal of Education Technology* 50, no. 5 (2019): 2414-2432.

[82] Carrie Demmans Epp, Krystle Phirangee, Jim Hewitt, and Charles A. Perfetti, "Learning Management System and Course Influences on Student Actions and Learning Experiences," *Education Technology Research and Development* 68 (2020): 3263-3297.

[83] Epp et al., "Learning Management System," 3264.

[84] Epp et al., "Learning Management System," 3266.

[85] Epp et al., "Learning Management System."

[86] IXL, https://www.ixl.com/math.

[87] IXL, "Kindergarten Math," https://www.ixl.com/math/kindergarten.

[88] IXL, "Kindergarten Math," https://www.ixl.com/math/kindergarten.

WWC distills teaching down into discrete behaviors that teachers can perform, programs such as IXL perform a similar operation on learning, distilling the process of learning down into abstracted, discrete mechanisms and "skills" that students can practice in isolation. The practice and drill style of learning, then, first goes through a process of generalization, through which it is deemed to be applicable and effective to a large population of students, regardless of location. The program is then standardized across this same population, such that students learning in different states (or, conceivably, countries) will experience the same problems presented in the same way.[89]

Funding from private, non-profit organizations contributes to the multiplication of transmission-oriented online programs like IXL. The previously mentioned Broad Foundation is one example of non-profit education funding that incentivizes the adoption of standardized educational practices. Similarly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) invests in research and development for K12 education with a focus on math.[90] The BMGF aims to provide "teachers with high-quality instructional materials…that keep their students engaged, professional learning to support their work, and practices that help drive a common vision of excellent instruction across a school system."[91] This promotional material implies either that teachers, school administrators, and district officials do not create instructional materials at all, or that the materials they do create are inadequate, generating the need for an external organization to create and distribute them. Another example is the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI), which

[89] A similar program, called "Classworks," "enables teachers to quickly take action on assessment and progress monitoring data by automatically delivering instruction matched to each student's needs." The program touts its "research-based learning progression" that "included direct instruction to reteach or review" skills. See Classworks, https://www.curriculumadvantage.com/classworks#Instruction.

[90] "K-12 Education," Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, https://www.gatesfoundation.org/our-work/programs/us-program/k-12-education; Philip E. Kovacs, ed., *The Gates Foundation and the Future of US Public Schools* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[91] U.S. Program, "K-12 Momentum October 2022," Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/news-and-insights/newsletter/k12-momentum-october-2022.

claims to take account of the "whole child" in seeking to "identify, build, and support teaching practices and school cultures that…center a student's well-being in support of academic development and success."[92] Like the BMGF, CZI claims to identify effective teaching practices and provide teaching tools for more effective instruction. To do so, CZI develops technology platforms that aim to foster positive teacher-student relationships and "empower students with agency and accountability for their own learning."[93] One of their programs, called "Along," is an online communication platform that "allows teachers to choose from a selection of research-backed reflection questions – or to create their own prompt to draw out students' interests or thoughts on important classroom topics."[94] Another CZI initiative, called "Summit Learning," allows teachers to assign and grade student work through an LMS where students and parents can immediately review feedback and track progress.[95] Both Along and Summit Learning mediate the teacher-student relationship through online platforms and prefabricated communication methods, while claiming to facilitate more authentic, organic classroom interactions.

Teacher education programs are also trending in the direction of standardized digital learning.[96] TeachLivE, a virtual teacher training program, utilizes virtual reality technology to inculcate "high-leverage behaviors" (a synonym for best practices) in student teachers.[97] To be counted as a "high-leverage behavior," these pedagogical skills must "improve the achievement

[92] "CZI: How We Support Education," Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, https://chanzuckerberg.com/education/.
[93] Summit Learning, https://www.summitlearning.org/.
[94] Along, "What How We're Building Technology That Transforms Classrooms," Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, March 28, 2023, https://chanzuckerberg.com/blog/building-tools-teacher-student-connections/.
[95] "What is Summit Learning?," Summit Learning, https://www.summitlearning.org/approach/learning-experience.
[96] Mursion, "Providers and Partnership," https://www.mursion.com/providers-and-partners/. TeachLivE is commercialized under the name "Mursion."
[97] Carmen M. Pena, Pauli Badenhorst, and Denise M. Love, "Using TeachLivE to Foster the Development of High-Leverage Practices in a Teacher Education Program," in *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference*, ed. D. Schmidt Crawford (Online: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, 2020), 1816-1821

of all students, occur frequently in instruction, and be learnable by novice teachers."[98] Examples of high-leverage behaviors include "explicit modeling of instructional skills," "behavior specific praise," and "academic specific praise."[99] Once these behaviors are identified, TeachLivE places prospective teachers in front of a digital classroom, projected on a whiteboard, with digital representations of students controlled by adult actors. The behaviors are then practiced in controlled, timed environments until the teacher-in-training has "mastered" the skill by, for example, appropriately responding to a misbehaving child, providing quality oral feedback, etc. Expert facilitators (typically professors of education) give feedback and the exercise is repeated as many times as is necessary for the student teacher to master the behaviors.[100] In terms of teaching practices, TeachLivE is in alignment with organizations such as the WWC: both subscribe to the premise that good teaching behaviors can be identified through deliberate experimentation and disseminated to teachers in different locations.[101] Whether implicitly or

[98] Pena, Badenhorst, and Love, "Using TeachLivE to Foster the Development of High-Leverage Practices in a Teacher Education Program" 1817.
[99] Kate Zimmer, Melissa Driver, and Patricia Alvarez McHatton, "Performance Feedback in Teacher Preparation: Improving Preservice Teachers' Use of High Leverage Practices Through Mixed-Reality Simulation," *GATEways to Teacher Education* 11, no. 1 (2020): 8-18, 9.
[100] Lisa Dieker, Charles Hughes, and Michael Hynes, "Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Final Report," UCF TLE TeachLivE, 2016, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_k1unqCNLwfgOw_u7WqH2UC6CYsRwLZX/view.
[101] Zara Ersozlu, Susan Ledger, Alpay Ersozlu, Fiona Mayne, and Helen Wildy, "Mixed-Reality Learning Environments in Teacher Education: An Analysis of TeachLivE Research," *SAGE Open* (July-September 2021): 1-10; Lisa A. Dieker, Charles E. Hughes, Michael C. Hayes, and Carrie Straub, "Using Simulated Virtual Environments to Improve Teacher Performance," *School-University Partnerships* 10, no. 3 (2017): 62-81; Luminita Hartle and Tara Kaczorowski, "The Positive Aspects of Mursion When Teaching Higher Education Students," *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 20, no. 4 (2019): 71-78; Carrie Straub, Lisa Dieker, Michael Hynes, and Charles Hughes, "TeachLivE National Research Project: Year 1 Findings," TeachLivE; Tara Dalinger, Katherine B. Thomas, Susan Stansberry, and Ying Xiu, "A Mixed Reality Simulation Offers Strategic Practice for Pre-Service Teachers," *Computers and Education* 144 (2020); Jamie N. Mikeska and Heather Howell, "Simulations as Practice-Based Spaces to Support Elementary Teachers in Learning How to Facilitate Argumentation-Focused Science Discussions," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 57, no. 9 (2020): 1356-1399; Claire Donehower Paul, Caitlyn A. Bukaty, and Lisa Dieker, "Teacher Professional Learning using Simulation: A Delphi Study," *Teacher Development* 24, no. 1 (2020): 21-32; Sara E. Luke, Deana J. Ford, S. Michelle Vaughn, and Angelica Fulchini-Scruggs, "An Online Field Experience Using Mixed Reality Virtual Simulation," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* 55, no. 2 (2023): 324-343; Jean-Luc Lugrin, Marc Erich Latoschik, Michael Habel, Daniel Roth, Christian Seufert, and Silke Grafe, "Breaking Bad Behaviors: A New Tool for Learning Classroom Management Using Virtual Reality," *Technology Report* 3 (2016): 1-21; Roghayeh Barmaki and Charles E. Hughes, "Providing Real-Time Feedback for Student Teachers in a Virtual Rehearsal Environment," International Conference on Multimodal Interaction (Nov. 2015): 531-537.

explicitly, then, the increased use of technological educational tools results in the funneling of teacher practice toward particular, determinable behaviors that, presumably, result in greater, more efficient student learning. Put simply, technology, at least partially, constitutes an extra-governmental reification of best practices.

The purpose of this brief historical narrative is to provide background and context for the following analysis of the possibility (or impossibility) and desirability of best practices, and of educational generalization more broadly. There are two points of emphasis to note. First, after examining these historical examples, it should be evident that the field of education has been the subject of multiple standardization initiatives, some of which were motivated by research standards and expectations external to the field of education. Second, educational standardization and convergence onto predetermined, definite behaviors continue into the present, and, considering the standardizing tendencies of education technology, it is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

Best Practices in Practice: Examples

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will adopt an expansive definition of "best practices" that includes any evidence-based intervention, behavior, structure, or procedure that governmental agencies, local schools, non-profits, or academic researchers recommend teachers perform. Under this definition, the scope of best practices ranges from scripted lesson plans[102] to general, less rigid frameworks of lesson plan design. On the extreme end of scripted curriculum packages, an organization called Success for All provides schools with "detailed manuals" that

[102] Success for All, https://www.successforall.org/; Open Court Reading, https://www.mheducation.com/prek-12/program/microsites/MKTSP-THA19M01/comprehensive-curriculum.html; Direct Instruction Reading Intervention Program, https://www.readingrockets.org/article/direct-instruction-di-reading-intervention-program. Indiana Department of Education, "The Science of Reading," https://www.in.gov/doe/files/3-science-reading.pdf; Heather Hollingsworth, "Why More U.S. Schools are Embracing a New 'Science of Reading," *PBS*, April 20, 2023, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/why-more-u-s-schools-are-embracing-a-new-science-of-reading; Core Knowledge Foundation, https://www.coreknowledge.org/our-approach/core-knowledge-sequence/.

"enable teachers to easily plan and execute lessons."[103] Success for All also provides professional development to train teachers on how to use the materials, as well as data organization tools so that teachers can monitor their students' progress. The creator of Success for All, Robert Slavin, laments that "in education, for some reason, we've resisted the idea that good practice can be replicated."[104] Slavin compares education to business and medicine, arguing that, as in those fields, education should examine correlations between practices and results, generalizing the successful practices to other schools. He explains that "you don't just give it your best shot and hope for the best…we want every minute of the school day used for productive activities that we know from research to be the most effective things we can provide."[105] Success for All's website emphasizes that its methods have been proven to be "replicable" and effective through controlled trials.[106]

Lucy Calkins' "Units of Study" is a similar, if less rigid, example of scripted curriculum. The curriculum package includes a "Reading and Writing Bill of Rights" that details elements that *all* reading and writing lessons should include, such as that "reading and writing need to be taught like other basic skills, with direct, explicit instruction," and "readers and writers need teachers to read aloud to them."[107] Reading lessons, which Calkins provides materials for, should be "predictable," with a five-part framework:

1. Begins with a mini-lesson - less than 10 minutes
2. Independent work - 35-45 minutes
3. Teachers meet with small groups during independent work
4. Mid-workshop teaching point - 3-5 minutes
5. Share - 3-5 minutes[108]

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[103] Success for All, "Our Approach," https://www.successforall.org/our-approach/.
[104] Sarah Colt, "Do Scripted Lessons Work - Or Not?," *PBS*, https://www.pbs.org/makingschoolswork/sbs/sfa/lessons.html.
[105] Colt, "Scripted Lessons."
[106] Success for All, "Based in Research," https://www.successforall.org/our-approach/research-base/.
[107] Lucy Calkins and Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, *Units, Tools, and Methods for Teaching Reading, Writing, and Phonics: A Workshop Curriculum, Grades K-8* (Heinemann), 7.
[108] Calkins et al., *A Workshop Curriculum*, 8.

Behaviors for both teacher and student are specified for each part of the framework, and the "teaching point of the day" is explained to students explicitly and upfront.[109] During the teaching portions of lessons, teachers are provided with blocks of quotes, which can be read to students, demonstrating the "step-by-step way to do something introduced in the teaching point."[110] Like Success for All, Calkins emphasizes that the curriculum is evidence-based and has a long track record of effectiveness.[111]

At the other end of the spectrum, a curriculum design framework called Understanding by Design (UBD) purports to give teachers more creative freedom while reorienting their lesson planning habits towards more effective design principles. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe explain that, traditionally, teachers proceed from a general topic, choosing activities and materials that broadly align with that topic, and writing assessment questions that cover the material. Such an "approach," they argue, "is more 'by hope' than 'by design.'"[112] Instead, UBD asks teachers to clarify what they expect students to be able to *do* as a result of the lesson: "all the methods and materials we use" should be "shaped by a clear conception of the vision of desired results."[113] The materials and activities of a UBD lesson should be "logically inferred from the results sought,"[114] such that the understanding necessitated by the desired outcome informs the teacher's decisions regarding how students achieve the goal. Teachers, Wiggins and McTighe claim, can infer the appropriate activities and materials by considering what type of

[109] Calkins et al., *A Workshop Curriculum*, 10.
[110] Calkins et al., *A Workshop Curriculum*, 11.
[111] Lucy Calkins and TCRWP Colleagues, "Research and Results," https://www.unitsofstudy.com/research.
[112] Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005), 15.
[113] Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 14.
[114] Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 14.

evidence would be required to sufficiently prove student learning based on the pre-stated goal. The three stages of UBD thus include

1. Identifying desired results
2. Determining acceptable evidence of learning
3. Planning learning experiences and instruction.[115]

McTighe, one of the creators of UBD, offers resources on his personal website for teachers implementing UBD. Teachers can download blank design templates that break lesson planning into sections such as "transfer" of knowledge, "evidence and assessment," and "learning plan." Teachers can type their plan into each section of the template to make designing UBD lessons more organized and convenient.[116] Similar frameworks and templates are offered for creating assessments, student tasks, and writing assignments.[117] Like the other programs detailed in this section, UBD emphasizes its firm evidentiary foundation.[118]

The "Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies" (QPTS) discussed in the introduction constitute an intermediary example, between the scripted teaching of Success for All and the general framework of Understanding by Design. The QPTS include specific, evidence-based behavioral actions and strategies that teachers are encouraged to perform in their classrooms. The strategies are organized into categories such as "vocabulary," "collaboration," "background and prior knowledge," etc. Under the "problem solving" category, the QPTS specifies that teachers will "explicitly model and engage students in a problem solving process through relevant and real

[115] Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 18.
[116] Ryan S. Bowen, "Understanding By Design," Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, 2017, https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/understanding-by-design/; McTighe & Associates Consulting, "Downloads," https://jaymctighe.com/resources/#1521225059547-6b53d411-2ed8.
[117] McTighe & Associates Consulting, "Downloads."
[118] Jay McTighe and Elliot Seif, "A Summary of Underlying Theory and Research Base for Understanding by Design," McTighe & Associates Consulting, https://jaymctighe.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/UbD-Research-Base.pdf.

world problems or challenges to demonstrate mastery."[119] Under the "comparison and contrast" category, teachers are instructed to "model comparative thinking with students demonstrating how to make clear connections by identifying similarities and differences that lead to deeper understanding," and "engage students in activities that require comparison, classification, creating analogies, and/or creating metaphors."[120] Further resources for each strategy, such as video clips of model lessons and journal articles (i.e. evidence in favor of the strategy), are made available to teachers and administrators through the district's website.

Similarly, the WWC also outlines best practices that avoid the extremities of, on the one hand, scripted lessons, and, on the other, general frameworks. In a practice guide on how to implement a strategy on supporting "reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade," teachers are encouraged to "develop awareness of the segments of sound in speech and how they link to letters," "explicitly engage students in developing narrative language skills," and "teach regular and irregular high-frequency words so that students can recognize them efficiently."[121] In a similar recommendation about mathematics education, teachers are encouraged to "assist students in monitoring and reflecting on the problem solving process" by providing "students with a list of prompts to help them monitor and reflect during the problem-solving process," "model how to monitor and reflect on the problem-solving process," and "use student thinking about a problem to develop students' ability to monitor and reflect."[122] Though the recommendations from both the QPTS and the WWC direct teachers towards specific

[119] Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies, "Problem Solving," Gwinnett County Public Schools, https://www.gcpsk12.org/Page/25735.
[120] Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies, "Comparison and Contrast," Gwinnett County Public Schools, https://www.gcpsk12.org/Page/25864.
[121] Educator's Practice Guide Summary, "Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade: Practice Guide Summary," What Works Clearinghouse, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/wwc_found_reading_summary_051517.pdf.
[122] Educator's Practice Guide, "Improving Mathematical Problem Solving in Grades 4 Through 8," What Works Clearinghouse, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/MPS_PG_043012.pdf.

behaviors, such as providing lists of prompts, they also remain vague enough for teachers to interpret in myriad ways. Words such as "modeling" and "assisting," for example, while still qualifying as a prescriptive best practice, fall short of the scripted speech characteristic of Slavin and Calkins.

The commonality that links these best practices together is twofold. First, all of the programs that I include in the category of "best practices" are explicitly introduced as "evidence based." As mentioned above, "evidence" here typically means RCT. Second, all best practices, once identified through experimentation, are generalized to different locations and environments. Perhaps, however, it is more proper to say that the field in which these best practices are meant to operate must undergo this process of generalization *before* best practices can be generalizable. Put differently, the generalizability of best practices must appear unproblematic in order to be appealing to policymakers and practitioners. The field of education and its participants must be perceived to be sufficiently general such that, when best practices are identified and disseminated, their applicability is guaranteed. Though the generalizability required by best practices will be revisited below, it is important, first, to survey existing arguments for and against best practices.

Arguments For and Against Best Practices

1.) Arguments For Best Practices

Considering that best practices are not new, it is not surprising that there should be a similarly long tradition of arguments both for and against them. I will emphasize analyses from the 21st century, beginning around the time of NCLB. This restriction is justified on the grounds of relevance. NCLB's reorientation toward RCTs, in the effort to render the field of education more like the field of medicine, arguably inaugurated a fundamental alteration in the nature of

best practices that continues into the present. NCLB's guidelines institutionally restrict which behaviors can be labeled a best practice and how best practices are established and disseminated. Because the early 21st century constitutes such a pivotal period in the history of educational best practices, critiques of them prior to this period might not be as relevant (though still interesting and informative) as those operating on premises familiar to 21st century observers. For these reasons, while research from every era will be cited below, a particular emphasis will be placed on those analyses from the most recent decades.

Though arguments in favor of best practices vary, they typically point to the success of RCTs in fields such as medicine and agriculture while, either implicitly or explicitly, endorsing quantitative measurements of learning with which rival practices can be compared.[123] Robert Slavin,[124] for example, laments that "education lacks a tradition of looking to evidence for program adoption decisions," and argues that, like "medicine, agriculture, and technology," education should cultivate a "vast R&D enterprise" that "works to continuously improve" the

[123] Tone Kvernbekk, "The Concept of Evidence in Evidence-Based Practices," *Educational Theory* 61, no. 5 (2011): 515-532; Calvin D. Smith and Chi Baik, "High-Impact Teaching Practices in Higher Education: A Best Evidence Review," *Studies in Higher Education* 46, no. 8 (2021): 1696-1713; Bodil Svendsen, "Inquiries into Teacher Professional Development - What Matters?," *Education* 140, no. 3 (2020): 111-130; Antony D. Norman, "Assessing Accomplished Teaching: Good Strides, Great Challenges," *Theory Into Practice* 49 (2010): 203-212; Paul Joseph-Richard, Timos Almpanis, Qi Wu, and Mohammad Golam Jamil, "Does Research-Informed Teaching Transform Academic Practice? Revealing a RIT Mindset Through Impact Analysis," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 1 (Feb. 2021): 226-245; Thomas J. Kane, Eric S. Taylor, John H. Tayler, and Amy L. Wooten, "Identifying Effective Classroom Practices Using Student Achievement Data," *The Journal of Human Resources* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 587-613; Cathay Gassenheimer, "Best Practice for Spreading Innovation: Let The Practitioners Do It," *Phi Delta Kappan* 95, no. 3 (Nov. 2013): 39-43; Robert E. Slavin, "How Evidence-Based Reform Will Transform Research and Practice in Education," *Educational Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2020): 21-31; Beth C. Rubin, "Tracking and Detracking: Debates, Evidence, and Best Practices for a Heterogeneous World," *Theory Into Practice* 45, no. 1 (2006): 4-14; Marek McGann, Marie Ryan, Jennifer McMahon, and Tony Hall, "T-Rex: The Teachers' Research Exchange: Overcoming the Research-Practice Gap in Education," *TechTrends* 64 (2020): 470-483; Robert J. Marzano and Tammy Heflebower, "Grades that Show What Students Know: Best Practices Suggest Four Ways to Make the Most of Standards-Based Grading and Reporting," *Educational Leadership* 69, no. 3 (Nov. 2011): 34-39; Chris Brown and Dell Zhang, "Is Engaging in Evidence-Informed Practice in Education Rational? What Accounts for Discrepancies in Teachers' Attitudes Towards Evidence Use and Actual Instances of Evidence use in Schools?," *British Educational Research Journal* 42, no. 5 (Oct. 2016): 780-801.

[124] Founder of Success for All, mentioned above.

pedagogies in use today.[125] Though Slavin acknowledges that using quantitative evaluations of learning to make inferences from a controlled trial poses problems of generalizability, he argues that a good research design can mitigate these concerns. "In an experiment with, say, 25 schools in the experimental group and 25 controls," he writes, "it is unlikely that unusual characteristics of individual schools (such as outstanding principals or staffs) will restrict generalization to other schools."[126] Other safeguards, such as aligning the research design to the type of question being asked and ensuring that results are replicated in a variety of settings, help to ensure that generalizations are applicable in diverse student populations: "it is rare that a program found to be effective on average would have zero impact, or even a negative impact, for any subgroup with significant representation in schools."[127]

Another advocate of best practices, Tone Kvernbekk, argues that many of its critics rely on a misunderstanding of how evidence works to support theories. He points out, first, that there is nothing in the concept of evidence-based practices that inherently precludes qualitative, philosophical, or local professional judgment from counting as evidence. Unlike Slavin, then, Kvernbekk is endorsing qualitative and philosophical research as potential catalysts for best practices. He also argues that many critics of evidence-based practices relativize evidence such that, no matter how correlative a data set is with a theory, evidence will never be able to conclusively confirm one theory over another. For these critics, there will always be other theories for which the same data set will be equally confirming or disconfirming, meaning that the only arbiter between rival theories is the social, political, or cultural background of policymakers and practitioners. Kvernbekk argues that this "underdetermination theory" is

[125] Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform," 24-30.
[126] Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform," 26.
[127] Slavin, "Evidence-Based Reform," 28.

fallacious because it is not the case that rival theories will be *equally well supported* by the same data sets, and if they are, what is needed is more research, not a subjective or emotive value judgment between them. Though he acknowledges that "effectiveness and truth are not the same thing,"[128] Kvernbekk argues that "practice is something that generally stands in need of justification," explaining that several types of evidence are needed to do so.[129] He also points out that advocates of best practices often qualify that generalizing these practices requires local, professional judgment in application.

Kvernbekk is arguing on the basis of a theory of evidence that is inductive. i.e. one which collects empirical evidence through repeated experimentation or experience. For Kvernbekk, the confirmation of inductive hypotheses is "not an all or nothing affair, but a matter of degree; and this degree increases with more evidence."[130] This is different from the notion of evidence most critics assume, which he claims is based on deduction, starting from unsubstantiated first premises, and drawing necessary consequences and conclusions for education policy and practice. The problem, he explains, is that multiple hypotheses can be equally confirmed or disconfirmed through this method, lending undue credence to the underdetermination theory which the critics use as a cudgel against research into best practices.

Taking a different angle than either Kvernbekk or Slavin, Brian Warnick offers a qualified argument in favor of the use of best practices based on the pragmatics of the political and educational structures in the United States. He argues that, because of the institutional nature of education, we must assume that federal and state governments are going to fund education and education research to some degree. Consequently, "it is naive to think that the state can be

[128] Kvernbekk, "Concept of Evidence," 521-522.
[129] Kvernbekk, "Concept of Evidence," 522.
[130] Kvernbekk, "Concept of Evidence," 520.

neutral with respect to funding educational research."[131] Generalizability is a mandatory requirement that qualifies states and researchers as eligible for government education funding because, he points out, "the state is usually concerned with issues of a *general* welfare."[132] Generalizability, then, functions, or *must* function, as a sort of meta-standard which education researchers must adhere to if they are to receive funding from federal or state governments. Warnick argues that this standard is not only necessary, but that it is also *good* insofar as it offers a sound epistemological basis for democratic decision-making. In a democracy, "knowledge claims are not legitimized through authoritative decree."[133] Rather, arguments must be put forth and defended with sound logic and evidence. The critics of generalizability, who Warnick refers to as "radical particularists," "violate this democratic ethos" of argumentation by relying on non-replicable, unverifiable, authority-based findings which apply *only* in singular locations.[134] For democratic dialogue and policymaking to be possible at all, Warnick argues, research findings must be repeatable, communicable, and applicable to situations outside of the original context.

2.) Arguments Against Best Practices

Critiques of best practices can be grouped into three broad categories: 1.) Critiques Based on Effectiveness, 2.) Critiques Based on Democracy, and 3.) Critiques Based on Impossibility. The first category, Critiques Based on Effectiveness, takes for granted the underlying premises of evidence-based practices, namely that learning can and should be monitored and measured for the purposes of comparison. These critics doubt, however, that the *existing* versions of best practices are effective or beneficial. They argue in favor of best practices that differ from those

[131] Brian Warnick, "Educational Research and the Interests of the State: The Divisive Case of Generalizability," *Philosophy of Education*, 2004, 271-279, 278.
[132] Warnick, "Educational Research," 274.
[133] Warnick, "Educational Research," 275.
[134] Warnick, "Educational Research," 275.

currently available, while implying that the basic structure of education research should remain intact.[135] Critics in group two argue that best practices are undemocratic because they infringe on the academic freedom of practitioners. Best practices are curated by groups of academic researchers and institutionalized by bureaucratic policymakers, district administrators, or private sector corporations – none of which are open to public scrutiny and accountability. If these practices are mandated through teacher evaluation systems or scripted curriculum, then the creative freedom teachers ought to enjoy will be infringed upon.[136] Category three includes

[135] Diane Ravitch, "2014 John Dewey Lecture: Does Evidence Matter?," *Education and Culture* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 3-15; John T. Spencer, "Bad Policy, Bad Practice," *Phi Delta Kappan* 94, no. 7 (April 2013): 72-73; Jal Mehta, *The Allure of Order: High Hopes, Dashed Expectations, and the Troubled Quest to Remake American Schooling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Kenneth R. Fleischmann, "Standardization from Below: Science and Technology Standards and Educational Software," *Educational Technology & Society* 10, no. 4 (2007): 110-117; Emmanuel Manalo, *Deeper Learning, Dialogic Learning, and Critical Thinking* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Thomas C. Reeves and Lin Lin, "The Research We Have Is Not The Research We Need," *Education Tech Research* 68 (2020): 1991-2001; Tricia A. Seifert, Benjamin Gillig, Jana M. Hanson, Ernest T. Pascarella, and Charles F. Blaich, "The Conditional Nature of High Impact/Good Practices on Student Learning Outcomes," *The Journal of Higher Education* 85, no. 4 (July/August 2014): 531-564; Jennifer M. Gore, "The Quest for Better Teaching," *Oxford Review of Education* 47, no. 1 (2021): 45-60; Nicole Mockler and Meghan Stacey, "Evidence of Teaching Practice in an Age of Accountability: When What Can be Counted Isn't All That Counts," *Oxford Review of Education* 47, no. 2 (2021): 170-188; Sarah Randall Johnson and Frances King Stage, "Academic Engagement and Student Success: Do High-Impact Practices Mean Higher Graduation Rates?," *The Journal of Higher Education* 89, no. 5 (2018): 753-781; Bradley A. Ermeling, James Hiebert, and Ronald Gallimore, "'Best Practice' - The Enemy of Better Teaching," *Educational Leadership* 72, no. 8 (May 2015): 48-53; Robert V. Bullough Jr., "Testing, Best Practices, and the Teacher Intellectual," *Phi Delta Kappan* 101, no. 7 (April 2020): 17-21; Mike Dappolone, "Making Best Practices Better," *Educational Leadership* 70, no. 6 (March 2013): 69-72; Geert Kelchtermans, "Keeping Educational Research Close to Practice," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 6 (Dec. 2021): 1504-1511; Peter Knight and Leslie Smith, "In Search of Good Practice," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 21, no. 5 (1989): 427-440; Eline Vanassche and Geert Kelchtermans, "Facilitating Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices: Toward a Pedagogy of Teacher Educator Professional Development," *Professional Development in Education* 42, no. 1 (2016): 100-122; Dominic Wyse, Chris Brown, Sandy Oliver, and Ximena Poblete, "Education Research and Educational Practice: The Qualities of a Close Relationship," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 6 (May 2020): 1466-1489; Gary Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure in Education Inquiry, and Why it Keeps Failing," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 3 (June 2021): 501-519; Cathy Burnett and Mike Coldwell, "Randomised Controlled Trials and the Interventionisation of Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 47, no. 4 (2021): 423-438.

[136] Alis Oancea and Richard Pring, "The Importance of Being Thorough: On Systematic Accumulations of 'What Works' in Education Research," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42, no. S1 (2008): 15-39; Julie Fitz and A.C. Nikolaidis, "A Democratic Critique of Scripted Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52, no. 2 (April 2020): 195-213; Gert Biesta, "School-As-Institution or School-As-Instrument? How to Overcome Instrumentalism Without Giving Up on Democracy," *Educational Theory* 72, no. 3 (June 2022): 319-331; Katariina Tiainen, Anniina Leiviska, and Kristiina Brunila, "Democratic Education for Hope: Contesting the Neoliberal Common Sense," *Studies in Philosophy & Education* 38, no. 6 (Nov. 2019): 641-655; Ian Hardy, "Practising the Public? Collaborative Teacher Inquiry in an Era of Standardization and Accountability," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 50, no. 2 (2018): 231-251; David Gamson, "Historical Perspectives on Democratic Decision Making in Education: Paradigms, Paradoxes, and Promises," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 106, no. 1 (April 2007): 15-

arguments based on the very nature and structure of teaching and learning. Because teaching and learning is irreducibly plural and complex, these critics argue, best practices, particularly if they are applied non-selectively, are not generalizable. Ontologically, teaching is not amenable to codified and generalized behaviors, and subjecting teaching to best practices renders practice inauthentic or ineffective.[137] These three categories of critiques are not exclusive, and authors often take more than one of these angles in a single text. The categories are useful, however, for the purposes of analyzing, organizing, and critiquing the existing arguments against best practices.

45; Gert Biesta, "Why 'What Works' Won't Work: Evidence-Based Practice and the Democratic Deficit in Educational Research," *Educational Theory* 57, no. 1 (Feb. 2007): 1-22; Jim Hordem, "Why Close to Practice is Not Enough: Neglecting Practice in Educational Research," *British Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 6 (Dec. 2021): 1451-1465; Derek Gottlieb, "On Democratic Accountability in Education," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 51 (2019): 94-104; Peter Hlebowitsh, "When Best Practices Aren't: A Schwabian Perspective on Teaching," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 1-12.

[137] Austin Pickup, "Embodied Phronesis: Conceptualizing Materially Engaged Practical Wisdom in Teaching, Teacher Education, and Research," *Journal of Thought* (Spring/Summer 2020): 4-22; Elliot Eisner, "Objectivity in Educational Research," *Curriculum Inquiry* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 9-15; Elliot Eisner, "Standards for American Schools: Help or Hindrance?," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 10 (June 1995): 758-760; Jack Schneider and Derek Gottlieb, "In Praise of Ordinary Measures: The Present Limits and Future Possibilities of Educational Accountability," *Educational Theory* 71, no. 4 (2021): 455-473; Elliot Eisner, "No Easy Answers: Joseph Schwab's Contributions to Curriculum," *Curriculum Inquiry* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 201-210; Aaron Stoller, *Knowing and Learning as Creative Action: A Reexamination of the Epistemological Foundations of Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Gert Biesta, "Why 'What Works' Still Won't Work: From Evidence-Based Education to Value-Based Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 29 (2010): 491-503; Richard Smith, "Proteus Rising: Re-Imagining Educational Research," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42, no. S1 (2008): 183-198; John Wilson and Nicholas Wilson, "The Subject-Matter of Educational Research," *British Educational Research Journal* 24, no. 3 (June 1998): 355-363; James M. Magrini, "Phenomenology and Curriculum Implementation: Discerning a Living Curriculum Through to Analysis of Ted Aoki's Situational Praxis," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 47, no. 2 (April 2015): 274-299; Cristian Simoni, "Wisdom and Care as the Two Faces of Educational Action," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 54, no. 1 (2020): 95-106; Joel B. Judd, "Democratizing the Science of Teaching Through Practitioner Research," *Educational Research: Theory and Practice* 33, no. 1 (2022): 14-21; Norm Freisen and Hanno Su, "What is Pedagogy? Discovering the Hidden Pedagogical Dimension," *Educational Theory* 73, no. 1 (2023): 6-28; Steven A. Stolz, "A Genealogical Analysis of the Concept of 'Good' Teaching: A Polemic," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 52, no. 1 (2018): 144-162; George Koutsouris and Brahm Norwich, "What Exactly do RCT Findings Tell Us in Education Research?," *British Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 6 (Dec. 2018): 939-959; Ian J. Hardy, "Researching Professional Educational Practice: The Case for 'Dirty Theory,'" *Educational Theory* 62, no. 5 (2012): 517-533; Derek Gottlieb, "Beyond a Rule-Following Model of Skillful Practice in Teacher Development," *Educational Theory* 62, no. 5 (2012): 501-516; Lynn Fendler, "Why Generalisability is Not Generalisable," in *Philosophy, Methodology and Educational Research*, ed. by David Bridges and Richard Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 185-198; Terry Wrigley, "The Power of 'Evidence': Reliable Science or a Set of Blunt Tools?," *British Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 3 (June 2018): 359-376; Peter Hlebowitsh, "When Best Practices Aren't: A Schwabian Perspective on Teaching," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 1-12.

Critiques Based on Effectiveness

Focusing on the RCT model of educational research, including the analogy to the field of medicine, Gary Thomas argues that experiments of this sort have, historically, been perpetually unsuccessful, failing to show positive results when experimental findings were generalized to the broader field.[138] He points out that, in educational research, controlled trial experimentation went through periods of acclaim and ridicule before being institutionalized through federal policy in the early 21st century. The difference between the new form of experimentation and the older, discredited forms was the addition of randomization, which purported to eliminate allocation bias, through which the imperfect selection of experiment and control groups convoluted the findings. Thomas doubts, however, that allocation bias was an issue to begin with. If it were, he points out, it ought "to have favoured [sic] positive findings about intervention."[139] The persistent failure of controlled experiments in the 20th century suggests that allocation bias was a negligible issue. Not only are RCTs ineffective, then, but their institutionalization at the governmental level encourages researchers not to pursue other, potentially more productive methods of inquiry. As a corrective, Thomas offers qualitative, and intuitive methods of research and experimentation from which valid inferences can nonetheless be drawn. "The most potent ingredients of inquiry in education," he writes, are "the reservoirs of knowledge that practitioners have by virtue of their experience."[140] Utilizing these non-quantitative, localized methods, Thomas claims, will result in best practices that are more qualified, applicable, and successful than those resulting from RCTs and other overly generalized, rigid designs.

[138] Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure."
[139] Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure," 504.
[140] Thomas, "Experiment's Persistent Failure," 515.

Differently, Jennifer Gore begins with a premise similar to those levelled by critics in category three, namely that current efforts to improve teaching, based on value-added interventions and quantitative measurements, are "reductive" and dismissive of the complexity of teaching, holding teachers "to account for the performance of their students in ways that discount context and a host of other factors that mitigate a simple relationship between what teachers do and their students' academic achievement."[141] Her argument departs from the ontological, however, when she claims that the central issue in conversations about teacher quality is a tendency to see teach*ers* as the problem, which implies that "the solution is to fix them – through, for example, the specification of standards, hours of professional learning," etc.[142] Gore proposes, by contrast, to reorient these conversations toward teach*ing*, with an emphasis on a holistic view of what it means to be a teacher. Her pedagogical model, an alternative to the best practices detailed above, "distills the knowledge base for teaching…provides a comprehensive conceptualisation [sic] of good teaching," and "provides teachers with powerful strategies for engaging in collaborative analysis and refining their individual and collective practice."[143] Gore clarifies, however, that her "distillation" of teaching does not entail the discrete teacherly behaviors of programs such as Units of Study or Success for All. Instead, her program, called "Quality Teaching," "is a representation of the practice of good teaching through the core principles of 'intellectual quality,' 'quality learning environment,' and 'significance.'"[144] She argues that, because this system is comprehensive and focused on teach*ing*, it "honours [sic] teaching's complexity"[145] and operates on the assumption that "all teachers are capable of good

[141] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 47.
[142] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 48.
[143] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 49.
[144] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 50.
[145] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 50.

teaching with the right kinds of support."[146] Because Quality Teaching is founded on non-prescriptive, non-specific conceptual principles, Gore claims that it is scalable to schools in diverse contexts. Paradoxically, she points to successful RCTs of her program that "have demonstrated significant positive effects on the quality of teaching."[147]

Critiques Based on Democracy

Alis Oancea and Richard Pring privilege concerns over democracy in arguing against RCT-driven best practices. They argue that policies and initiatives such as NCLB and the WWC neglect to scrutinize and clarify the connection between conclusions and evidence. During the political push to codify scientific experimentation in education, "'evidence,' ceased to be an open concept, and became increasingly regulated and weighted, as well as systematically reviewed."[148] The institutionalization of a specific kind of evidence creates "hierarchies of knowledge" and narrows "the contribution of research to policy and practice to a purely instrumental role."[149] Oancea and Pring hold that there are *kinds* of evidence and knowledge, and that all but *one* kind is omitted from policy discussions. "There is no reason," they write, "why evidence should not include 'previous judgments' (as in legal research), documents (as in historical research), arguments that have survived critical scrutiny (as in philosophical research), personal accounts (as in narrative research), identification of implicit social rules and norms (as in ethnographic research), and expert judgments."[150] What counts as evidence should, for Oancea and Pring, depend on the question being asked. Similarly, they recognize alternative, excluded forms of knowledge, such as "non-cumulative, divergent, or non-teleological" knowledge, and

[146] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 48.
[147] Gore, "Ques for Better Teaching," 51.
[148] Oancea and Pring, "Systematic Accumulations," 17.
[149] Oancea and Pring, "Systematic Accumulations," 19.
[150] Oancea and Pring, "Systematic Accumulations," 24.

knowledge "of the world as 'taken' by the person, rather than 'given.'"[151] Because education is largely a social, ethical, and normative field, the authors claim that it requires interpretive, practitioner-oriented, social evidence, rather than the RCTs characteristic of federal policy. Still, the authors contend that standardized policies have a crucial role to play as long as they maintain a fallibilist and contingent orientation. They conclude that what is required is a democratization of knowledge and deliberation, by which they mean the inclusion and acknowledgment of different types of knowledge and evidence, the maintenance of a fallibilist humility, and the inclusion of practitioners in judging, creating, and critiquing the policy and purpose of education.

Foregrounding the analogical argument made by proponents of RCTs comparing education to medicine and agriculture, Gert Biesta argues that the narrowing of viable research methods creates a "tension between scientific and democratic control over educational practice and educational research."[152] "The focus on 'what works,'" he writes, "makes it difficult if not impossible to ask questions of what it should work *for* and who should have a say in determining the latter."[153] Biesta points to the role played by the concept of "effectiveness" in discussions of "what works" as a crucial nexus through which democratic dialogue and decision making are nullified. "Evidence-based practice" focused on "effectiveness" takes for granted what it is effective *for*, assuming "that the ends of professional practice are given, and that the only relevant…questions to be asked are about the most effective and efficient ways of achieving those ends."[154] Like Oancea and Pring, Biesta categorizes education as an interpretive, social field, qualitatively different from medicine, implying that, in education, "there is always the

[151] Oancea and Pring, "Systematic Accumulations," 21-22.
[152] Biesta, "What Works," 5.
[153] Biesta, "What Works," 5.
[154] Biesta, "What Works," 8.

question as to whether particular interventions are *desirable*."[155] Crafting policy under the assumption that education operates under causal principles similar to those that govern biological processes, then, makes "an unwarranted leap from 'is' to 'ought,'" and denies "educational practitioners the right *not* to act according to evidence about 'what works' if they judge that such a line of action would be educationally undesirable."[156]

Critiques Based on Impossibility

In a follow-up to the argument detailed above, Biesta makes a correlative, though different argument based on ontological and epistemological considerations. He claims that the "what works" model of scientific educational research "relies on a representational epistemology in which true knowledge is seen as an accurate representation of how 'things' are in 'the world.'"[157] By contrast, Biesta cites John Dewey in arguing that "the knowledge we can gain through experimentation is knowledge about *relationships* and, more specifically, about relationships between (our) actions and (their) consequences."[158] This type of knowledge is neither objectively present, disconnected from humans, nor subjectively created from our imaginations, but "it rather is knowledge about the world *in function of* our interventions."[159] Put simply, because our actions in the world *change* the world, there is no eternally stable, "external" reality about which we can have total, absolute knowledge. All humans can achieve is a Deweyan "warranted assertability" that cannot "provide us with rules for action and even less with dictates for action."[160] Epistemologically, Biesta says that there exists an irreducible "knowledge deficit" because reality isn't accessible by knowledge in the unproblematic way

[155] Biesta, "What Works," 9.
[156] Biesta, "What Works," 11.
[157] Biesta, "Still Won't Work," 494.
[158] Biesta, "Still Won't Work," 495.
[159] Biesta, "Still Won't Work," 495.
[160] Biesta, "Still Won't Work," 496.

imagined by representational, scientific thinking. Ontologically, he argues that education is an open, semiotic system that gets closed off by evidence-based thinking, circumscribed to a few, deliberately chosen parameters. He clarifies that "whereas closed systems operate deterministically, open systems operate at most probabilistically."[161] Since Biesta categorizes education as a social field, he denies that it operates according to causal, deterministic principles. The "non-linear" and "probabilistic" connections in education defy the "mechanistic" assumptions of RCTs and best practices. Practically, then, Biesta points to Bruno Latour to argue that scientific, experimental results cannot be transported out of the lab and applied in the world, but that the world is politically altered to be more amenable to laboratory conditions. Through this process, there is a narrowing of reality such that reality resembles the laboratory, which cuts off and prevents other ways of doing and thinking.

Making a similar argument, Derek Gottlieb argues that best practices inevitably fail to capture the most crucial aspects of good teaching. Drawing on Hubert Dreyfus, Gottlieb argues that becoming an expert in an endeavor like teaching requires cultivating an absorbed, skillful, noncognitive disposition that defies the propositional, cognitive, theoretical set of prescriptions characteristic of best practices. "The attempt to atomize skillful practice into its barest components," he writes, "*necessarily* causes the observer to distort the observed practice in the process of atomization."[162] Put differently, expert teachers are absorbed in the "flow" of teaching, and any interruption of this flow pulls the teacher away from absorption. Any attempt at articulating the nature of this "flow" will, then, irreparably remove the practitioner from the activity which the articulation is meant to capture. Expert practice must instead be taken as a *whole*, and it must be in the process of enactment to be experienced and understood. Teaching is

[161] Biesta, "Still Won't Work,"496.
[162] Derek Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 504.

a "second nature" for the expert teacher, analogous to standing the appropriate distance from an interlocutor in American culture. Though there *are* rules for these skills, Gottlieb, along with Dreyfus, argues that these rules are merely propaedeutic, meant to aid the initiate in cultivating expertise, after which the rules are no longer necessary. For Gottlieb, expert teachers do not, and *cannot*, operate based on a prescriptive rule book. Codified behaviors therefore cannot play a *deterministic* role in an *expert* teacher's practice.[163] Expert teaching, in other words, is a dispositional and phronetic practice – a practice that requires the development of good judgment, and one in which the behavioral rules are helpful only for the beginner.

Each one of these categories of critiques, though not precisely *incorrect*, are, at least, incomplete. The critiques based on effectiveness, for example, take issue with existing versions of best practices while leaving intact the presuppositions upon which best practices, RCTs, and the requirement for generalizability are founded. Both Thomas and Gore seem to imply that, were best practices to be reformulated along broadened qualitative, principled, and local lines, then they would be politically, epistemologically, and ontologically more acceptable. For critiques based on effectiveness, effective best practices should continue to be generalized as long as they are identified through qualitative and conceptual methods. A singular focus on the "effectiveness" of RCT-based best practices, then, suggests an acceptance of the basic idea of applying a method in a particular environment for the purposes of generalizing the discrete, behavioral results to a wider field. The basic structure of education research need not change. There is, for Thomas and Gore, no scrutiny of what best practices are effective *for*, or whether generalizability is an appropriate goal in education. The question is merely methodological. Critiques from this angle therefore fail to scrutinize whether generalized best practices are

[163] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 507.

desirable or possible at all. Without further inquiry into the nature of generalization and teacherly behavior, there is no reason why qualitative and philosophically-based best practices should necessarily avoid the reductionism and behaviorism of randomized, quantitative approaches. It is not clear, in other words, that rectifying the *method* of identifying best practices is enough to avoid those aspects that Thomas and Gore determine to be ineffective. If there existed a qualitatively or philosophically identified best practice, its generalized application across disparate places and times could, conceivably, still be reductionistic, rigid, and decontextualized. Critiquing actually-existing RCTs and best practices in terms of effectiveness alone is, then, not enough. A more complete critique requires addressing generalizability itself, rather than the methods of achieving and instituting it.

Critiques based on democracy and critiques based on impossibility are both similarly insufficient. Critiques based on democratic concerns, for example, do not dispute that generalizability, best practices, and RCTs may be effective and representative of reality, but merely question whether utilizing them in an institutionalized, codified manner is politically or morally desirable. Biesta makes the argument, for example, that "even if we were able to identify the most effective way of achieving the particular end, we might still decide not to act accordingly."[164] Some "effective interventions," such as taking "children away from their parents at an early age" and putting "them in an 'ideal' environment"[165] might be emotionally and socially repulsive, and would, for those reasons, be undesirable. Put simply, effectiveness, for Biesta, should not be the only consideration in deciding whether to adopt a best practice. There are social, emotional, political, professional, and cultural factors that should also contribute to the decision making process. By construing best practices as scientifically neutral and

[164] Biesta, "What Works," 9.
[165] Biesta, "What Works," 9.

implementing them through measures that are immune to challenge, policymakers and researchers diminish the extent to which the desirability of best practices is democratically disputable. Like the critiques based on effectiveness, the argument from democracy emphasizes one particular angle, in this case desirability and democracy, at the expense of questioning the foundational assumptions of best practices. As Biesta points out, behavioral, normative best practices may, in fact, be *possible*, even if not socially or politically palatable. Again, barring an investigation into the nature of the *possibility* of best practices, critiques from democracy both presumptively ascribe characteristics to the teacher (i.e., that teacherly *behaviors* are generalizable in *x*, *y*, and *z* ways), and leave open the theoretical potential for a politically and socially acceptable best practice.

Of the three lines of critique outlined thus far, critiques from impossibility arguably offer the most complete critique of best practices. Where those from effectiveness and democracy isolate one facet for criticism, critiques from impossibility scrutinize the structure of best practices as a whole. Doing so also places the effectiveness and desirability of best practices in question. When Biesta and Gottlieb question whether generalization is ontologically and epistemologically possible, they answer in the negative. They argue that either the structure of teachers, students, and education eludes the generalizations of best practices, or that the limits of knowledge prevent humans from arriving at objective conclusions. Generalizability, in other words, is not possible in education research. If it is ontologically and epistemologically impossible to generalize teacherly behavior, doing so would also, presumably, be ineffective and undesirable. Generalized best practices would be, for Gottlieb and Biesta, an unwarranted and inappropriate imposition on the being of teachers such that their practice *as* teachers would be harmed. Critiques from impossibility, then, subsumes all three critiques.

The holistic nature of critiques from impossibility does not, however, necessitate their correctness or acceptance. That critiques from impossibility scrutinize the generalizability of best practices as a whole does not mean that the "Impossibility Thesis" (the thesis that generalizing teacherly behavior is ontologically and epistemologically impossible) is the only, or the best approach. As will be argued in more detail below, the implications that follow from the Impossibility Thesis are no less dire and problematic than those that follow from RCT-based best practices themselves. On the one hand, RCT-based best practices threaten to hypostatize teaching into formulaic behaviors that can be (and, arguably, are intended to be) unproblematically copied and pasted from one situation to the next, diminishing the extent to which teachers need to be skilled or knowledgeable at all. On the other hand, the Impossibility Thesis threatens to deny that generalization *of any sort* is applicable to teaching (or, for Gottlieb, to expert teaching), including communicable articulations of what teaching *is* or *should be*. Crucial elements of education, such as teacher education programs, would be hamstrung, unable to instruct prospective teachers in what it means to *be* a teacher. Critiques from impossibility thus risk identification with Warnick's characterization of the "radical particularists" who rely on authoritarian and unverifiable claims. For Gottlieb, expert teachers are non-cognitively absorbed in the practice of teaching, meaning that any articulation of what they are doing and why they are doing it is doomed to be an anterior rationalization which need not bear any causal relation with the practice itself. Because expert teaching would be *inaccessible* to articulation, discussing, interrogating, and *teaching* teaching would also fall prey to inarticulability, particularly if expert teachers are the model and source for structural and foundational claims about teaching. How, if the apotheosis of teaching, the "expert" teacher, is inarticulable, can instructors of education be expected to communicate what teaching *is* or what it means to teach well? How ought we

interrogate problematic policy initiatives with direct implications for teachers? In what ways can the inarticulable teacher be evaluated and judged for quality? These questions all appear to be grist for the mill of Gottlieb's Impossibility Thesis. Critiquing generalizability by claiming ontological and epistemological inarticulability and inaccessibility entails consequences that are logically, experientially, and politically undesirable.

Because Gottlieb explicitly makes the case for the Impossibility Thesis, the remainder of this dissertation employs an analysis of language that scrutinizes his claim that teaching structurally precludes generalization. Gottlieb's argument is my sole focus for three reasons. First, because Gottlieb makes an ontological claim about the nature of teaching *itself*, the Impossibility Thesis provides the most explicit and comprehensive argument against the structural assumptions of best practices. The structural preclusion of generalizability subsumes all three critiques: generalization, particularly in the form of best practices, would be impossible, undesirable, and ineffective. Second, I argue that the implications that follow from Gottlieb's Impossibility Thesis are socially and politically undesirable. By claiming that teaching is unamenable to best practices *because it is inarticulable*, Gottlieb threatens to preclude the ability to characterize, discuss, or identify what teaching is at all. For the practical purposes of identifying good teaching and teaching future teachers, defining teaching in a way that allows for discussion about education that transcends particular locations (i.e. generalization) is crucial. If teaching is to become, for example, a public object of critique, scrutiny, and learning, as it does (or, at least, *ought* to) in teacher education programs, then a generalized definition of teaching in the form of an articulation of the teacher is necessary. Without such a definition, there would be nothing to differentiate the object of student teaching from that of medicine, engineering, or art – all of its particularity would be lost or obscured due to the inarticulability of the expert teacher.

Third, focusing on Gottlieb's Impossibility Thesis, particularly the aspects that follow from the phenomenological arguments of Hubert Dreyfus, allows me to offer a corrective that addresses all three variables: effectiveness, desirability, and possibility. Critiquing the "medical analogy" of best practices and educational research using only one of these variables – *either* effectiveness *or* desirability *or* possibility – is insufficient. Where the first two approaches, critiques from effectiveness and desirability, fail to address what I argue is the central issue, i.e. the nature of generalizability itself, the last, critiques from impossibility, effectively precludes critique altogether by emptying teaching of communicable, articulable content.

Though much of what follows will seem far removed from the day-to-day duties of teachers and policymakers, the aporia that has resulted from a survey of existing critiques of best practices should point to the need for such a theoretical inquiry. Moreover, both proponents and critics of educational generalization are already implicitly embroiled in theoretical disputes and presuppositions, even if the conversation remains ostensibly practical. Slavin, for example, evidently feels no need to offer a substantive justification for the analogy of students to patients and medicine. Critics like Thomas, Gore, and Oancea and Pring, similarly, take for granted what "effectiveness" means, failing to interrogate what best practices are effective *for*. To explain why there seems to be an impasse between generalizability, non-generalizability, and generalizability through different means, it is necessary to make these presuppositions explicit and to get clear about the nature of generalizability itself. I provide such a clarification through a Heideggerian reorientation of language, arguing for a moderated form of generalization that would satisfy and correct all three critiques while avoiding both the over-generalizations of RCT-based best practices and the "radical particularity" of the Impossibility Thesis. I first provide an overview of Hubert Dreyfus' theory of skillful practice, upon which Gottlieb's Impossibility Thesis relies for

theoretical support. I then detail existing arguments against Dreyfus before explaining Heidegger's conception of language and drawing implications for policy and practice

CHAPTER THREE: GOTTLIEB, DREYFUS, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY THESIS

Gottlieb argues that becoming an expert teacher requires cultivating an absorbed, skillful, *nonrational* disposition that defies the propositional, rational, theoretical set of prescriptions characteristic of best practices.[166] For Gottlieb, the abstracted and generalized behaviors recommended by, for example, the What Works Clearinghouse, do not and cannot play a role in the expert teacher's practice, precisely because expert teachers are absorbed in the "flow" of teaching, and any interruption of this flow, such as engaging in metalevel deliberation about whether to apply best practice *a* or best practice *b*, pulls the teacher away from absorption. Consequently, any attempt at articulating the nature of this "flow" will be irreparably alienated from and foreign to the activity which the articulation is meant to capture. In Gottlieb's account, for example, if we observe an expert teacher in the process of conducting an historical simulation as part of a lesson on the stock market crash of 1929, it would be inappropriate to articulate and distill this behavior into a replicable technique. This essentialized best practice would be but a specter of what the teacher was *actually* doing. It would, therefore, be inappropriate either to require other expert teachers to implement the distilled behavior or to use the behavior (and those like it) as part of an evaluation of teacher quality. Instead of breaking expert teaching into such discrete parts, it must, Gottlieb argues, be taken as a *whole*, and it must be in the process of enactment to be understood. Teaching is a "second nature" for the expert teacher, analogous to standing the appropriate distance from an interlocutor in American culture, or knowing intuitively when it is appropriate to interject in a conversation. Still, Gottlieb concedes that it is both possible and desirable to cull best practices from expert teachers, though he qualifies that

[166] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice."

their use should be restricted to the beginning stages of learning.[167] Put differently, while there *are* rules and procedures that apply to the skill of expert teachers, Gottlieb argues that these rules are merely propaedeutic, meant to aid the initiate in cultivating expertise, after which the rules are no longer necessary. For Gottlieb, expert teachers themselves do not, and *cannot*, operate based on a prescriptive rule book. Codified behaviors, while useful for teaching teachers, cannot play a *causal* or *evaluative* role in an *expert* teacher's practice.[168]

Much of Gottlieb's analysis draws its theoretical foundation from the phenomenological work of Hubert Dreyfus, who formulated a theory of practical expertise in the context of examining why attempts at creating Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) have failed, and, according to Dreyfus, will likely continue failing. At the time of the publication of Dreyfus' book on AI, titled *Mind Over Machine*, attempts at AGI were based largely on "using programs or rules to impart 'knowledge' to machines."[169] Programmers assumed that, if they wanted to create an AI chess player that could beat a grandmaster, all that was needed was to mathematically aggregate all of the possible moves allowed in chess and program them into the algorithm along with the rules of the game and the potential successful responses to opponents' moves. This attempt to "formalize common-sense understanding,"[170] much like the best practices detailed above, conceptualizes intelligence as a set of causal, rule-based principles that can be abstracted from human behavior, converted into algorithmic equations, and applied through digital mechanisms.

[167] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 515.
[168] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 507.
[169] Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 5.
[170] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 7.

Intelligence, however, does not, according to Dreyfus, consist in the behavioral conformity to pre-articulated rules. Skillful, intelligent action is instead characterized by what Dreyfus refers to as "knowing how," rather than "knowing that."[171] Where the former is intuitive and non-articulable, the latter is reflective and propositional. Examples of "knowing that" include my reflective knowledge *that* a guitar has twelve frets for every octave, that Nirvana's "Bleach" was released in 1989, and that death metal is a genre characterized by rhythmic bass chords accentuated by aggressive tremolo picking. Examples of "knowing how" include placing one's fingers on the fretboard in the shape of a G chord *without* having to first deliberate thirds and fifths, or intentionally contorting one's fingers in the correct position. This sort of know-how is, Dreyfus claims, ubiquitous both in everyday life and in rare, expert performance. When expert participants in American culture intuitively "cope" with standing the acceptable distance from each other in conversation, they are not operating according to a set of rules, but according to their unreflective, dispositional absorption in a situation. Similarly, if we asked a grandmaster chess player to give a reason for their lightning-fast strategies, any answer they provide would be, Dreyfus argues, a post hoc rationalization, rather than an account of what was *actually* going on in their absorbed practice. To use a guitar-based example again, when the guitar virtuoso Yngwie Malmsteen was asked the question "how do you hold your pick?," he responded "that was the first time that I ever looked down at my hand…I never thought about it."[172] Though explanations and prescriptions can undoubtedly be given by Malmsteen, Dreyfus' argument is that such rationalizations are absent when Malmsteen is in the *act* of playing. Being an expert at something is, for Dreyfus, cultivating a "know-how" in which rules, rational justifications, and

[171] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 16.
[172] Rick Beato, "Yngwie Malmsteen Talks about Picking," Youtube Video, Oct. 11, 2023, https://youtu.be/7yZAY0hRCyw?si=aDrhzVBkGpjN9g9L.

concepts are structurally unnecessary. Insofar as an expert *is* employing rules and reasons, they are not acting in their capacity as an expert, but actively hindering their expertise. It is important to keep in mind that, in Dreyfus' account, the *post hoc* rationalizations provided by the expert are new constructions that *were not present* during the expert activity itself. The attempts at creating a rules-based AI "expert," similar to a teacher whose pedagogy is based entirely on best practices, would be, accordingly, doomed to failure, precisely because such a program would be attempting to force an "expert" to use rules and prescriptions (i.e. "knowledge that"), thereby erasing whatever "know-how" might have existed. Expert practitioners, for Dreyfus, do not deliberately employ rules based on explicit analyses of situations, but intuitively respond to situations without utilizing a sequential, cause and effect calculation.

Learners do not start out as experts with intuitive know-how, however. Students must first go through what Dreyfus calls the "five stages of skill acquisition," the goal of which is expertise. Students at the first, "novice" stage are assumed to have no knowledge of the skill to be learned. Despite the inability of *expert* practice to be conceptually or rationally articulated, Dreyfus, like Gottlieb, argues that learners at this beginning stage of development require the assistance of context-free rules and objective facts that can be "recognized without reference to the overall situation in which they occur."[173] Similar to the primitive AGI programs Dreyfus critiqued, novice learners deliberately follow the objective, context-free rules provided by the teacher.[174] At this stage, students are merely "consumers of information," learning the "facts" through "drill and practice."[175] In the category of non-situational, consumable information, Dreyfus includes knowing the speed at which to shift gears while driving and knowing what to

[173] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 21.
[174] Hubert Dreyfus, *On the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 27.
[175] Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, 28.

do when blood pressure gets too high.[176] The former are, purportedly, objective facts (i.e. "knowledge that"), the appropriate response to which, Dreyfus claims, requires merely the application of pre-given rules.

After the novice stage, learners in Dreyfus' model go through four more stages, each based on progressively gaining more experience than the previous stage. At each successive stage of development, the learner converts ever larger portions of the target skill into noncognitive know-how, until, finally, the expert can carry out their practice without the need to revert to rule-based deliberations at all.[177] "What should stand out," Dreyfus writes, "is the progression *from* the analytic behavior of a detached subject, consciously decomposing his environment into recognizable elements, and following abstract rules, *to* involved skilled behavior based on holistic pairing of new situations with associated responses produced by successful experiences in similar situations."[178] As the learner becomes more experienced, they cultivate an ability to intuitively, immediately recognize and respond to a quantity of situations so "immense" that we could not possibly have the capacity to verbalize or articulate them all individually.[179] As the expert driver makes their way down the Atlanta interstate at five o'clock on a Friday afternoon, for example, they will likely have to respond, in real time, to the erratic behavior of other drivers: abruptly cutting into their lane without a turn signal, crossing four lanes of traffic to frantically make the John Lewis Freedom Parkway exit etc. – any of which (and infinitely more) could happen randomly. The expert driver responds to these obstacles immediately and instinctively: jerking the steering wheel to the left just hard enough to avoid the

[176] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 22.
[177] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*; Hubert Dreyfus, *On the Internet*; Stuart E. Dreyfus, "The Five-Stage Model of Adult Skill Acquisition," *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 24, no. 3 (June, 2004): 177-181; Stuart E. Dreyfus and Hubert L. Dreyfus, "A Five-Stage Model of the Mental Activities Involved in Directed Skill Acquisition," Operations Research Center - University of California Berkeley, Feb. 1980.
[178] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 35.
[179] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 32.

inconsiderate F-350 Super Duty but not so hard as to tailspin into the next lane. If the expert driver were asked why they took that action, and how they knew to take it, it is conceivable that they would, at least, have a difficult time providing an answer other than "I have been driving for a very long time." This example, like the ones provided above, appears to support Dreyfus' claim that reasons play no causal role in expert practice.

Dreyfus' concern is, again, to show that reasons, justifications, and deliberations are not only not conscious, but are entirely absent when the expert practitioner is absorbed in coping.[180] When Malmsteen is improvising twenty notes per second over Paganini's "Caprice No. 24," he does not have time to deliberate the angle of his plectrum, which blue notes to play, or what scale is appropriate over the transition from A minor to D minor. If, through some break in concentration, he were pulled away from this absorbed practice, forced to reflect on his performance, his playing would, Dreyfus claims, suffer due to the intrusion of deliberation and prescription. It is important to remember, again, that Dreyfus is referring here to the expert practice *itself*. He is not saying that justifications and reasons for the expert's actions *do not exist*, merely that they play no role in the expert's practice *qua* absorbed coping. The expert driver's maneuvers to remain wreck-less on the interstate were, in the example above, successful. Upon reflection, then, we can formulate explanations for them in the context-free way characteristic of the beginning stages of Dreyfus' taxonomy. The expert's practice *as an expert*, however, would be immediately destroyed by the introduction or imposition of rules and rationalizations. Gottlieb's argument against best practices in education hinges on this sharp distinction between absorbed practice and concept-dependent, rule-based behaviors. For Gottlieb, expert teaching is a

[180] Joseph K. Shear, ed., *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 35.

Dreyfusian nonconceptual, arational act in which best practices, which require teachers to deliberately apply cognitive rules in the course of practice, would necessarily be absent.

Though Dreyfus' distinction categorizes absorbed coping as "prelinguistic,"[181] and therefore inarticulable, he does provide a loose characterization of how expert practice works. Expert absorption, he says, is an "unmediated relation" to the circumscribed world of concern that "directly solicit[s] our responses."[182] Because there is no "content" present in absorbed, skillful coping, there are no disaggregated parts (including the self) that the expert could possibly have reflective, conceptual ideas about.[183] Absorption is directed instead towards the situation as a whole – as when, for example, Malmsteen is concerned not with his picking technique *and* his fingering position *and* his note choices, but with simply playing the guitar. These holistic situations are constituted by "attractive and repulsive forces that directly draw [the expert] to cope."[184] It is as if absorbed experts directly perceive *situations*, rather than elements of situations: the expert chess player can "see" that a situation calls for the move *m* in a manner analogous to the way in which a non-expert chess player sees black and white squares on the chess board. Dreyfus refers to these solicitations as "affordances" – they *afford* the expert opportunities to act in skillful ways. When I walk into a room, as an expert in the norms of my culture, I see the comfy chair as an "affordance" to sit, the doorway as an "affordance" to enter, etc. If I were to ask my host "is this chair for sitting?," not only am I likely to receive a confused look in return, but I would also be ripped from the absorption of an expert cultural practitioner.

[181] Shear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World*, 24.
[182] Shear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World*, 17.
[183] As I am typing, for example, this is the first time that I have consciously thought about the individual keys on my keyboard, and how my fingers are striking them. For what it is worth, I did not feel that my typing became any worse as a result of this reflectivity (assuming, that is, that I qualify as an expert).
[184] Shear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World*, 33.

Instead of directly responding to the affordance by either sitting or not sitting, I would be reflecting on the disaggregated, objective conditions of the situation.

Despite the characterization of expertise as absorption, Dreyfus qualifies that, sometimes, the expert engages in activities *other* than absorbed coping. One such situation is when noncognitive action seems to be failing. When the expert chess master is losing, for example, breaking off intuitive reactions might result in a reevaluation of the situation (again, as a whole) and a reinstitution of intuitive action on different grounds or assumptions.[185] Creativity is another way that experts might benefit from engaging in actions other than sheer absorption. Dreyfus points out that "the fine-tuned response to events based upon the lessons of concrete experience…ignores the truly imaginative act for which there is no detectable historical precedent."[186] Creating something new, for Dreyfus, requires "unconventional and unexpected interpretations of past events."[187] Such unconventional creativity, however, like absorbed expertise, requires an intuition separate from logical calculations. Quoting Einstein, Dreyfus claims that creativity comes from "intuition, supported by being sympathetically in touch with experience."[188]

Several relevant implications follow from Gottlieb's and Dreyfus' characterizations of expertise. First, as Dreyfus himself points out, "if learning is to occur, some part of the mind must remain aloof and detached."[189] The early stages of learning, for Dreyfus, require both an indifferent theoretical attitude and the atomized behaviors of the expert. The beginning stages of teacher education would thus not only be amenable to best practices, it would *require* them. As

[185] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 39.
[186] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 40.
[187] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 41.
[188] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 41.
[189] Dreyfus and Dreyfus, *Mind Over Machine*, 40.

Gottlieb explains, best practices culled from expert teachers are "perfectly adequate for the inculcation of competent teaching practice, and thus necessary to the development of excellent teachers."[190] Arguably, sanctioning the use of best practices for beginners is also *itself* a best practice: it specifies a particular course of action that teacher educators (teachers who teach teachers) *should* reproduce. Put differently, Dreyfus and Gottlieb imply that it is "best practice" to instill best practices in beginner student teachers is. Student teachers would simply climb this bite-sized behaviorist ladder, only to kick it away once they reached the pinnacle.

However, as behaviors or rules that teachers are expected to intentionally apply in the course of teaching, best practices are antithetical to the sort of expert, absorbed coping that Dreyfus and Gottlieb argue for.[191] "Mastery is achieved," Dreyfus writes, "only when the master ceases to base his actions on reasons and instead is absorbed into a field of attractive and repulsive forces that directly draw him to cope."[192] A second implication would therefore be that expert teachers, because they have transcended the necessity of best practices, should not be evaluated based on mandatory, rules-based expectations and pre-determined learning outcomes. Gottlieb points out that the standardized assessment policies and best practices introduced by NCLB and RTTT attempt to impose a definition of quality that assumes that teaching is merely a series of identifiable behaviors that lead to predictable results. If he and Dreyfus are correct that expert teachers function without such prescriptions, then reductionistic teacher evaluation systems of this sort would be inappropriate, particularly when they are applied to expert teachers.

Finally, the Dreyfus-Gottlieb analysis of teaching and expertise suggests that emotional involvement is necessary for, rather than preventative of, the development of teaching expertise.

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[190] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 515.
[191] With the possible exception of the expert teacher educator, who must follow the best practice of instilling best practices in student teachers.
[192] Shear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World,* 33.

Dreyfus argues that progressing towards expertise requires the emotional involvement of the learner, which follows from the eventual necessity of "choosing a plan." Once learners attain a level of competence at which they no longer have to blindly follow context-free rules, they are forced to personally adopt a plan, or a "hierarchical procedure of decision-making" which "organize[s] the situation" based on the chosen system of valuation.[193] Choosing a plan circumscribes the mass of possible situational factors that learners might take into consideration, rendering possible concrete actions and patterns of behavior. Student teachers at this stage of learning, for example, might choose to teach a unit using simulations, discussion, and student research, rather than PowerPoints and guided notes. Doing so means that the choosing teacher is not strictly or wholly following the prescriptions of a mentor, but taking responsibility for their own actions, and, through the priorities that follow from their system of valuation, making available further potential courses of action. Once a plan is chosen, in other words, the learner becomes "responsible for, and thus emotionally involved in, the product of his choice."[194] This emotional involvement introduces a push/pull dynamic: joy in the face of success and disappointment in the face of failure. Dreyfus argues that learners are motivated, through this dynamic, to pursue more often those actions which result in joy (i.e. successful actions) than disappointment (i.e. unsuccessful actions). Emotional involvement is, therefore, for Dreyfus and Gottlieb, a requisite element in the cultivation of expertise. "Further skill development," Gottlieb explains, "relies upon the nonrational and fundamentally hazardous element of emotional involvement, a factor that conceiving of skillful practice solely as a rationally governed process actively precludes."[195] Any translation of the emotional involvement of the learner into

[193] Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine*, 24.
[194] Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine*, 25.
[195] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 515.

"articulable 'features and aspects'...will actually inhibit further skill development."[196] For Dreyfus and Gottlieb, learners, when they have reached the relevant stage of Dreyfus' graduated learning model, ought to be freed from the strictures of decontextualized rules and allowed to choose their own perspective for navigating a situation. Only then will expertise be allowed to mature. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of existing critiques of the Impossibility Thesis put forth by Dreyfus and, by extension, Gottlieb. I then propose, through an analysis of Martin Heidegger's ontology of language, a moderated form of generalizability that avoids the rigidity of RCT-based best practices while still allowing for the discussion, scrutiny, and articulation of teaching.

Critiques of Dreyfus

While critiques of Dreyfus' account are numerous and varied, there are four approaches worth explaining in some detail for the purposes of this dissertation:

1. The Awareness Approach
2. The Access Approach
3. The Cartesian Approach
4. The Language Approach

The Awareness approach is exemplified by the observation that, where Dreyfus valorizes noncognitive coping in the world of concern, Heidegger, from whom Dreyfus draws inspiration, sees such coping as one – potentially dangerous – mode of human being. Lee Braver, for example, argues that Dreyfus over-emphasizes embodied, mindless coping at the expense of the critical awareness that Heidegger (whom Dreyfus cites in support of his position) often advocates. Though Dreyfus is correct that, in Division I of *Being and Time* Heidegger appears to privilege mindless coping, Braver points out that Division II's appeal to authenticity and anxiety reconciles the binary between mindless coping and rational theory. "Living authentically" he

[196] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 515.

writes, "entails a Kierkegaardian change in the *way* we are in-the-world from mindless going with the flow to explicit, passionate choosing."[197] Dreyfus' exclusive focus on Division I (evidenced by his *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time*, Division I*[198]) blinds him to the fact that Heidegger "consistently worries about familiar behavior's tendency to lull us into autopilot."[199] Particularly in Heidegger's later career, his explicit concern is to think "into that nearest nearness which we constantly rush ahead of, and which strikes us as strange."[200] Put differently, everyday coping often results in taking for granted experiences that reveal things like truth[201] and language,[202] leaving humans susceptible to the sorts of inappropriate metaphysical presuppositions which render best practices, ideology, and technology so problematic.[203]

Perhaps the more troubling consequence of Dreyfus' alleged exclusion of mindedness from embodiment, beyond the danger of falling into the amorphous and uncritical "they,"[204] is that his argument renders the "nearest" phenomena, mentioned in the previous paragraph, inarticulable, if not altogether invisible, due to the nonconceptuality and inarticulability of the expert's practice. It is as if, for Dreyfus, theoretical objectification and embodied coping are the only two (mutually exclusive) options, the choice between which is merely ethical. If we choose

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[197] Lee Braver, "Never Mind: Thinking of Subjectivity in the Dreyfus-McDowell Debate," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, Joseph K. Schear, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013): 143-163, 146. Italics original.
[198] Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's* Being and Time*, Division I* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991).
[199] Braver, "Never Mind," 146.
[200] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz (New York: Harper Collins, 1971): 1-57, 12.
[201] Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and* Theaetetus, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2002).
[202] Martin Heidegger, "Language," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial, 2013), 185-209.
[203] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. William Lovitt and David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 307-343.
[204] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial, 1962).

the former, then the theoretical gaze will inevitably distort the phenomenon in question, while choosing the latter sunders it from language altogether. The authentic and real objects of experience therefore would be, for Dreyfus, inaccessible to reflection, language, and articulation. This argument, that Dreyfus threatens to preclude our ability to identify and interrogate aspects of experience, is characteristic of the The Access Approach, exemplified by Joseph Rouse[205] (and John McDowell[206]).

Before explaining Rouse's argument, it is important to recall Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition detailed above. Dreyfus emphasizes the *progression* from novice to expert, and his central concerns are (A) *how* to convert the rules-based behavior of the novice into the intuition of the expert, and (B) "'how rationality and language grow out of nonconceptual and non-linguistic coping.'"[207] There are, for Dreyfus, two nexuses: one between the novice and the expert, which is bridged via emotional involvement, and another between the expert and the articulations of the expert which, presumably, result in both everyday conversation about actions performed in embodied coping as well as the rules and context-free features utilized in the early stages of learning. Gottlieb implies similar nexuses when he acknowledges the need for rules-based learning for novice teachers while also arguing that "we will need at a certain point to leave the rule following model" to "bring…competent teachers to excellence."[208] The specifics of this argument are as follows:

1. Expert practice should be the goal
2. Novice learners begin with context-free rules and facts
3. These context-free rules and facts should be similar or amenable to the actions of the expert practitioner

[205] Joseph Rouse, "What is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?" in *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, Joseph K. Schear, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013): 250-272.
[206] John McDowell, "The Myth of the Mind as Detached," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, Joseph K. Schear, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013): 41-59. I deemphasize McDowell's critique here to avoid devolving into a commentary on the McDowell-Dreyfus debate.
[207] Quoted in Peter Dennis, "Was Heidegger a Nonconceptualist?," *Ratio* (March 2012): 108-117, 116.
[208] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 516.

4. Because expert practice is nonconceptually embodied, it is also inarticulable

Rouse's iteration of the Access Approach identifies points 3 and 4 as particularly problematic. If expert practice is inarticulable, how are context-free features and rules expected to be derived from it? If I, as an outside observer, record the actions and behaviors of an expert practitioner for use in teaching beginners, how am I to be sure that my observations accord with the subjective experiences of the expert? Particularly considering that both reflective rule following and articulability are absent in the expert's practice, there is no guarantee that my reconstruction of their actions resembles their *actual* actions. Again, Dreyfus holds that any explanation an expert gives of their practice is merely a *post hoc* rationalization, rather than an exact replication of their thought process. It would be unknowable, for Dreyfus, whether any teachable features gathered from these reconstructions would apply to the expert's practice *as* practice. Rouse goes further, arguing that, if expert practice is truly nonconceptual and inarticulable, then Dreyfus must take "for granted that grandmasters are playing *chess* at a rapid pace, but he is not entitled to that claim unless their play is informed by and accountable to the conceptually articulated norms of the game."[209] Chess simply *is*, for Rouse, the combination of all possible consequences of the rules, the pieces, possible movements, and the board. If expert practice no longer features rules and rationalizations, however, then upon what basis can we identify expert chess players *as* chess players? While Rouse's argument about chess can be analogized with teaching, there are key differences that complicate the analogy. If expert teaching, like expert chess playing, involved no conceptualization, then it would be impossible to identify teachers as expert teachers or, indeed, as teachers at all. It would be similarly impossible

[209] Rouse, "What is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?," 254. Italics original. Also see Barbara Montero and C. D. A. Evans, "Intuitions Without Concepts Lose the Game: Mindedness in the Art of Chess," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 10 (2011): 175-194.

to cull context-free features from expert practice. The difference between teaching and chess is that, where the rules and features of chess are pre-determined and largely unchangeable, teaching does not feature the firm, codified structure of a board game: consider, for example, that teaching undergoes vast temporal and spatial changes in purpose and pedagogy while still remaining "teaching."[210] Accessing what teaching *is* is, accordingly, much more difficult. Rouse's point is that, if Dreyfus is correct in arguing that expert practice is nonconceptual, then the expert chess player could just as well be moving the pieces around the board through sheer coincidence - there would be no way to know if the nonconceptual expert's practice *actually* conformed to conceptual rules and regulations. Still, as outside observers, we can, arguably, achieve *practical* certainty that the chess player *is* playing chess when the rules and regulations *are* followed with fidelity, even if the exact processes by which the expert manipulates the pieces remains obscure. In teaching, however, though there may be rules and standards by which teaching is identified and evaluated, these rules and standards are fungible and dependent on time and place. Though it would be possible to identify and evaluate teaching within these localized parameters, the kind of universally applicable rules that make chess *chess* are absent in teaching. The localized parameters that identify teaching as teaching, in other words, remain ungrounded and seemingly only arbitrarily correlated with what "teaching" happens to be at any given moment. The external observer in the case of teaching would, then, lack the practical certainty afforded to the observer of chess, at least insofar as this certainty transcends contingent, circumstantial contexts. The problem is complicated further if expert teachers *themselves* have no access to their own

[210] See, for example, Harry S. Broudy and John R. Palmer, *Exemplars of the Teaching Method* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1965) and C. J. B. MacMillan and Thomas W. Nelson, eds., *Concepts of Teaching: Philosophical Essays* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1968).

practice. The nonconceptuality of expert teaching would foreclose any possibility of determining that what the expert is doing is "teaching."

Rouse's analysis also suggests that, paradoxically, Dreyfus' exclusion of conceptuality from expert practice lends itself to the reductionistic forms of Artificial Intelligence and educational best practices that he and Gottlieb might otherwise critique. "If Dreyfus were right that expert chess play were nonconceptual," Rouse writes, "there is nothing that a 'normal' grandmaster's blitz chess play could mean other than what grandmasters normally do in various actual board configurations."[211] Because Dreyfus (and, by extension, Gottlieb) cannot account for errors as errors (as opposed to, for example, merely "responses that are abnormal for grandmasters"[212]), and cannot, according to Rouse, justifiably attribute "teaching" or "chess playing" to experts, the only recourse for external observers is to describe expert behavior in terms of the behavior itself, without reference to meaning structures that transcend mere behavior. Importantly, "external observers" also refers to the experts themselves, since their explanations are not direct articulations of their practice but secondhand rationalizations and mediated explanations. Because we are limited, under Dreyfus' conception, to examining surface level, arational behaviors, the atomized best practices of teaching that follow from observing expert practitioners is doomed to a reductionistic behaviorism. The problem is, again, particularly acute for teaching, considering its lack of fixed rules and features characteristic of more structured tasks such as chess.

The critique that Dreyfus' embodied coping renders expert practice wholly inaccessible to thought and language also points to the Cartesian Approach, proponents of which argue that, by interjecting this sharp split between embodied coping and rational reflection, Dreyfus reifies

[211] Rouse, "What is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?," 254.
[212] Rouse, "What is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?," 254.

the dualistic metaphysics which Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (all of whom Dreyfus leans on for theoretical support) wish to overcome. Dreyfus assumes, writes Timothy Nulty, "that mental coping is fundamentally different than embodied coping in the sense that the former is characterized by mindedness…while the latter is not."[213] The mental, for Dreyfus, is relegated to the subject's awareness, wholly segregated from embodied coping. This schema assumes that the defining characteristic of conceptual activity is that it is *prima facie* "introspectively available."[214] It is possible, however, "that conceptual coping can itself be characterized by a lack of interiority," when, for example, "the master logician's use of her conceptual tools reaches a point where the tool itself becomes invisible as it functions."[215] Rather than a sharp separation, there is a "subtle gradation"[216] from consciously conceptual to fully (though, for Nulty, disputably) nonconceptual. Such a gradation throws into question Dreyfus' quasi-Cartesian division between body and mind.

Similarly, Peter Dennis corrects what he claims are Dreyfus' misinterpretations of Heidegger's *Being and Time* – misinterpretations that implicate the mind/body distinction upon which Dreyfus relies. Besides mentioning the body only occasionally throughout his entire career, Heidegger explicitly "supplants the traditional distinction between body and mind with his notion of *Dasein*," or the type of being of human beings as "in" the world.[217] Though the German "da" implies a "there" which *Dasein* is, this "there" need not be entirely spatial, and refers more to a holistic structure of meaning that *includes* spatiality, rather than *merely* an embodied spatiality.[218] In other words, the bodily, for Heidegger, is not blind, non-mental

[213] Timothy J. Nulty, "Hubert Dreyfus and the Last Myth of the Mental," *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, 14, no. 40 (2014): 49-64, 50.
[214] Nulty, "Hubert Dreyfus," 57.
[215] Nulty, "Hubert Dreyfus," 55.
[216] Nulty, "Hubert Dreyfus," 57.
[217] Dennis, "Was Heidegger a Nonconceptualist?," 110. Italics added.
[218] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.

material, and the mental is not immaterial, abstract thought set over against a separate, external reality. To explain this point, Dennis focuses on the terms "understanding" and "interpretation" as used by Heidegger, both of which play a role in Dreyfus' theory of embodied coping. These terms, "understanding" and "interpretation," are what Heidegger calls "*existentialia*,"[219] or "existentials"[220]: necessary, constitutive aspects of "Dasein's existence-structure."[221]

Heidegger defines "understanding" as the ever-present "previous disclosure"[222] of a world of meaning in which humans are always-already involved. Through understanding, a meaningful world is disclosed to humans as something to be concerned with, something for which there are myriad possible ways of being and acting. Understanding (which Heidegger uses synonymously with "Being-possible"[223]) refers to the way in which *Dasein* is (i.e. *must be*) ontologically *in* the world with others, able to engage in practical activities because the default state of the world is, for *Dasein*, significance. "The understanding," however, "does not grasp thematically that upon which it projects."[224]

The making-explicit of understanding, in which things are taken *as* something, Heidegger calls "interpretation." "The *as*," Heidegger writes, "makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation."[225] In everyday dealings with the world, humans do not first see "bare givens,"[226] but notice first and foremost familiar items that have a purpose: a shoe for walking, a couch for sitting, a guitar for playing. Every entity we encounter is necessarily taken *as* something specific and determined. This interpretative "as-

[219] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinon, 70.
[220] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 44.
[221] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 70.
[222] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 118.
[223] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson,183.
[224] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 185.
[225] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 189. Italics added.
[226] Schear, ed., *Mind, Reason, and Being-In-The-World*, 67.

structure" is so original that taking entities as bare somethings, pure sensory material, requires "a peculiar inversion"[227] of the default way in which humans are in the world.

Dennis argues that, considering Heidegger's characterization of interpretation as the ever-present, ontological as-structure of human existence, "it is incoherent to say," as Dreyfus does, "that some portion of experience is nonconceptual, yet nevertheless possesses that structure."[228] To answer Dennis' rhetorical question in the title of his paper ("Was Heidegger a Nonconceptualist?"), Heidegger implies that conceptuality is not something foreign to everyday, embodied coping, but is, instead, constitutive of it. The sections of *Being and Time* that deal with interpretation as an existential, ontological aspect of *Dasein* seem to support this point, albeit with some qualifications. Heidegger explains that what the understanding understands "gets Articulated when the entity to be understood is brought close interpretatively."[229] This Articulation "lies *before* our making any thematic assertion about it."[230] The interpretation, in other words, articulates aspects of the understanding (when, for example, I take the shoe *as* a shoe) without necessarily making these aspects explicit for theoretical analysis. Ontological Articulation, then, occupies a middle ground in which it still performs a conceptual function without necessarily devolving into the sort of detached, reflective, theoretical analysis that Dreyfus pits against embodied coping.

In these sections of *Being and Time*, Heidegger is concerned with critiquing the presuppositions of natural science, which position the pure sense perceptions of uninterpreted matter as the primordial, original state of existence. Where the default state of *Dasein's*

[227] Martin Heidegger, *Logic: The Question of Truth*, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 122.
[228] Dennis, "Was Heidegger a Nonconceptualist?," 113.
[229] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 190.
[230] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 190. Italics original.

experience sees the rain that ruins my day in the park, the natural scientist sees collections of hydrogen and oxygen molecules falling to earth at an exact velocity due to gravitational pull, caused by fluctuating pressure systems in the atmosphere. Heidegger points out, however, that in thematic, theoretical assertions about entities in the world, like the example of "scientific" rain, "the 'as' does not turn up for the first time; it just gets expressed for the first time, and this is possible only in that it lies before us as something expressible."[231] Similarly: "if the 'as' is ontically unexpressed, this must not seduce us into overlooking it as a constitutive state for understanding, existential and *a priori*."[232] Understanding and interpretation, the conceptuality of which is based on the as-structure, are the base state upon which the theoretical aspirations of natural science and mathematics construct their inquiries. The theoretical gaze is, as Leslie MacAvoy points out, a privative, subtractive attitude: it seeks to suspend aspects of the as-structure characteristic of what Dreyfus refers to as everyday embodied coping.[233] This critique of science, however, cuts both ways. If theoretical propositions *subtract* from and *narrow* understanding and interpretation, then rationality and conceptuality cannot be dispositions different in kind from the original, "inauthentic"[234] everydayness that Dreyfus prioritizes. The articulated "as" is ever-present, *not* ever-explicit.[235] Dreyfus errs, then, when he claims that concepts and rationalizations are wholly absent from the grandmaster's expert practice. Dreyfus' argument implies that the "as" is *added* onto the inarticulable "flow" of expertise. As MacAvoy and Dennis argue, Heidegger's analysis suggests first that the "as" is ever-present and not

[231] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 190.
[232] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 190. Italics original.
[233] Leslie A. MacAvoy, "Heidegger, Dreyfus, and the Intelligibility of Practical Comportment," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 50, no. 1 (2019): 68-86. Note that, for Heidegger, it is impossible to *completely* suspend the as-structure.
[234] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 189.
[235] It is important to note that Heidegger is not being derisive towards natural science as a field, only the presumption by natural scientists that being is primordially the detached, theoretical phenomena of their experiments.

inevitably theoretical, and, second, that the theoretical attitude is subtractive, rather than additive, towards embodied coping.[236]

If conceptuality, via the as-structure, is a constitutive aspect of experience, then the notion that aspects of experience might be inarticulable in principle is suspect. This argument, that Heidegger's ontology of language characterizes articulation as a primordial aspect of experience, constitutes the Language Approach to critiquing Dreyfus. MacAvoy, exemplifying this approach, argues that the practical comportment, which Dreyfus characterizes as nonconceptual, depends upon a prior discursive articulation that Heidegger calls "discourse,"[237] defined as "the Articulation of the intelligibility of the 'there.'"[238] As an existential like understanding and interpretation, discourse is "constitutive for Dasein's existence," and first makes "anything like language ontologically possible."[239] That discourse is defined as ontological means that it does not refer to specific instances of articulation or moments of speech, but rather to the fact that the world, and humanity's existence in it, is originally articulated into discursive meanings - through, for example, the interpretative as-structure. "Dasein, as discursive Being-in," Heidegger writes, "has already expressed itself."[240]

MacAvoy points out that if discourse, as an articulation that has always already taken place, is an ontological feature of humanity, then absorbed coping cannot be in principle inarticulable. Humans are only able to deal with entities practically and skillfully because entities show up not only *as* a determinate thing, but as a determinate thing that exists in a web of

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[236] Assuming, that is, that "embodied coping" exists as articulated by Dreyfus. See MacAvoy, "Intelligibility of Practical comportment."
[237] MacAvoy, "Intelligibility of Practical comportment."
[238] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 204. As Françoise Dastur has pointed out, however, "this does not mean that [discourse] comes after comprehension as a kind of post-structuration of what has been already understood." See Françoise Dastur, "Language and *Ereignis*," in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, John Sallis, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993): 355-370, 358.
[239] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 204-206.
[240] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 208.

connected meanings, uses, and significations. When I use a hammer, I use a hammer for a *purpose*, not to hammer any arbitrary loose board for any arbitrary reason, but to hammer *this* loose board because if the board remains loose, someone may stumble on it. Furthermore, if the theoretical attitude is subtractive, rather than additive, then theoretical predications and concepts must have already been present, if implicit, in practical comportment. "Talking about what the blitz chess player is doing" MacAvoy points out, "seems only to be drawing out and rendering in a different form the interpretation that is already there in the action itself."[241] If "conceptuality is connected to the as-structure,"[242] and if the as-structure is irrevocably present in human experience, then it follows that "conceptuality is not extraneous to or secondary to practical comportment; it is rather a condition of its possibility."[243]

MacAvoy's Language Approach can be extended in two ways. First, Heidegger employs, in his early writings, the method of formal indication to refer to concrete experience. Formal indication, "which seeks a middle ground between abstractly strict universal definition…and concrete experience,"[244] brings "life to show itself"[245] not by assigning predicates to phenomena and entities in the world, but by using language that would turn the listener toward the phenomena themselves. Language, that is, would "indicate" the formal features of phenomena, allowing the speaker to avoid over-determinations and over-generalizations. Arguably, the existentials of *Being and Time*, including understanding, interpretation, and discourse, are formal indications of this sort, as are Heidegger's later, being-historical concepts such as "clearing" and "event." The formally indicative method is, however, incredibly obscure. What, for example, is

[241] MacAvoy, "Intelligibility of Practical comportment," 77.
[242] MacAvoy, "Intelligibility of Practical comportment," 77.
[243] MacAvoy, "Intelligibility of Practical comportment," 69.
[244] Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 233.
[245] Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, trans. Richard Rojcewics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

"formal" about formal indication? Is it the method of access to phenomena? Is it the necessary features of phenomena that are formalized? Where is the line of demarcation between "indicating" and "predicating?"[246] These questions are made more difficult to answer by the fact that formal indication is explicitly mentioned only sparingly by Heidegger in early lectures.[247] I argue that Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* analysis of ontological Language (as opposed to discourse) presents a clearer, more practical approach than formal indication for two reasons. First, where formal indication is treated rarely and briefly in Heidegger's texts, leaving its interpretation to be worked out in the secondary literature, Heidegger devotes several essays, lectures, and books to his ontological analysis of Language.[248] There is, as a result, a wealth of primary sources in which this subject is treated by Heidegger at length (though, admittedly, at times quite esoterically). Second, Heidegger's later treatment of Language makes explicit what was left largely implicit in his writing on formal indication - he makes explicit, that is, the nature of Language, the connection between words and things, and the role played by humanity in the

[246] R. Matthew Shockey, "What's Formal about Formal Indication? Heidegger's Method in *Sein und Zeit*," *Inquiry* 53, no. 6 (2010): 525-539.; Leslie MacAvoy, "Formal Indication and the Hermeneutics of Facticity," *Philosophy Today*, 2010, 84-90.; Søren Overgaard, "Being There: Heidegger's Formally Indicative Concept of "*Dasein*," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 5 (2005): 145-163.; Jonathan O'Rourke, "Heidegger on Expression: Formal Indication and Destruction in the Early Freiburg Lectures," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 49, no. 2 (2018): 109-125.; Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Method: Philosophical Concepts as Formal Indication," *The Review of Metaphysics* 47, no. 4 (1994): 775-795.; Ryan Streeter, "Heidegger's Formal Indication: A Question of Method in *Being and Time*," *Man and World* 30 (1997): 413-430.; Matthew I. Burch, "The Existential Sources of Phenomenology: Heidegger on Formal Indication," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (2011): 258-278.

[247] See, for example, Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*.; Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).; Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

[248] See, for example, Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971).; Martin Heidegger, *On The Way To Language*, trans. by Peter D. Hertz and Joan Stambaugh (New York: HarperOne, 1971).; Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper Perennial, 1966).; Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).; Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. by Richard Rojcewics and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012),; Martin Heidegger, *On the Essence of Language*, trans. by Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 1977).

application of language*s*. Using Heidegger's analysis of these questions affords an examination of the way in which, and the extent to which, Language articulates things (e.g. the teacher), and how, or whether, human language has real, direct, or authentic access to objects of experience. In the following chapters, I first detail Heidegger's ontological analysis of Language in *Poetry, Language, Thought, On the Way to Language*, and "The Origin of the Work of Art." I then argue that this conception of Language allows for a critique of Dreyfus that (1) renders dubious the claim that expert teaching is inarticulable in principle, (2) suggests possibilities of non-reductionistic articulations (i.e. generalizations) of teaching, and (3) does so while avoiding the ontological errors of critiques that reify the mind-world gap. A non-reductionistic articulation of the teacher also suggests a generalization of the teacher such that evaluating, identifying, and discussing teaching across space and time becomes possible, though, again, without *necessarily* converting teaching into discrete behaviors or quantified metrics.

CHAPTER FOUR: HEIDEGGER, LANGUAGE, AND BEING

The extended version of the Language Approach that I am arguing for scrutinizes, as does MacAvoy, Dreyfus' and Gottlieb's claim that expert teaching is inarticulable *in principle*. Because the Impossibility Thesis inserts a gap between mind and body, human and world, the only characterization of language available to it is the one Dreyfus and Gottlieb rightly criticize, a language in which words are imposed from mind, on one side, to world, on the other. If mind and world are as separate as this thesis implies, then mental language could function only through arbitrary labels fastened onto disparate material objects. Language and the mind would be left to "imitate" and "represent" reality in mental images – a situation in which "there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it."[249] Under this nominalistic conception of language, Gottlieb would be correct: expert teaching would be either incapable of articulation, or capable only of ontologically inappropriate articulations that impose mental items like concepts onto embodied, material beings, such as those characteristic of best practices and scientistic conceptions of schooling. This feature of Gottlieb's account mirrors the problem that Heidegger came to detect in *Being and Time*, namely that characterizing discourse as an aspect of *humanity's* being implies that there need not be any inherent connection between the words[250] that humans use and the world in which these words are to operate. Because of the ever-present as-structure, humans may hear first and foremost "the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling,"[251] rather than abstract, meaningless noises. If discourse is fundamentally *human*, however, then these phenomena might just as well be *a priori* impositions of consciousness onto a neutral, ambivalent reality. The articulation of experience

[249] Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 256.
[250] Though the usage of "words" here is, essentially, referring to "concepts," I will continue to call them "words" to maintain fidelity with the translations of Heideggerian texts.
[251] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, 207.

into the tapping woodpecker and the crackling fire, in other words, might be an articulation only for the particular way that humanity perceives and cognizes the world, while in themselves these descriptions need not bear any resemblance to them.

As I explained in the discussion of understanding and interpretation, Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that humans are *in* the world such that what is primarily encountered are meaningful beings, rather than context-free objects which only secondarily acquire a significance for humans. It is not as if, after contemplating the possible uses for a random wooden stick with a bit of metal at the end, I can, if I happen to be quite savvy, nail in a loose board. Rather, the hammer originally appears *as* a hammer.[252] This phenomenological analysis of the always-already meaningful being of human beings reorients metaphysical inquiry towards the evidence of experience, and away from the theoretical, scientific attitude. Where theoretical, scientific investigations start by attempting to break through the familiar articulation of the hammer to access its chemical structure, atomic weight, physical properties, etc., the "Heideggerian" investigation would begin with the familiar experience of the hammer itself: how does the hammer "show up" for humanity? How do humans interact with the hammer? What makes the hammer the hammer? An analysis of these experiences suggests, for Heidegger, that the functional, pragmatic being of the hammer *is* its primordial being. He points out that "only because equipment has *this* 'Being-in-itself' and does not merely occur, is it manipulable in the broadest sense and at our disposal."[253] Only because, in other words, the hammer shows up as a meaningful hammer does the possibility of examining its weight, its chemical structure, etc. present itself. To "lay bare" these decontextualized elements, "cognition must first penetrate

[252] Not that we are primordially familiar with a Platonic form of "hammer," but that humans are the type of being for which things can and do make sense. Even unfamiliar things exist *as* things to be curious about, things from other cultures, things from nature, etc.
[253] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinsin, 98. Italics original.

beyond"[254] the pragmatic equipment that we are initially and for the most part concerned with. Humans, then, are originally in and with the world such that a relationship with *things* in the world is already established. There is, accordingly, no justification for inserting an ontological gap between humans, human language, and other worldly entities such as hammers, dogs, etc. The column on the march and the useful hammer *are* the primordial things to which the words of human language are related. Words do not need to span a chasm between mind and world; they cannot be alien impositions on a self-enclosed realm.

How, then, must language be if it is not to be merely a set of subjectively-created labels for empty, opaque entities – particularly considering that humans, linguistic beings,[255] are *in* the world in such a way that things always already have a meaning? If, as MacAvoy argues, the world is pre-articulated in a way that first makes human languages possible, is it justifiable to ascribe the genesis of language to humanity alone? These considerations lead Heidegger to think about language beyond its use as a tool wielded by humanity for expressing inner perceptions and representations. As a consequence of this new way of inquiring into the being of language, Heidegger shifts his focus from humanity to being itself.[256] As Magda King writes, "Being is no longer approached through man's understanding, but rather it is man's understanding that is approached through the manifestness of being."[257]

Like the "discourse" of *Being and Time*, the "Language" of later Heideggerian texts refers not only to the letters and sounds of Latin, Greek, German, etc., but to the sorts of pre-

[254] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinsin, 101. Italics original.
[255] Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008): 139-213.
[256] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 90.; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 188.; Dastur, "Language and *Ereignis*," 363.; Krzysztof Ziarek, "Giving Its Word: Event (as) Language," in *Heidegger and Language*, Jeffrey Powell, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 102-119, 109.
[257] Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's* Being and Time, John Llewelyn, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 24.

articulated meanings and possibilities that are available for humans, the meaning structure that always seems to simply exist, without the need for humans to intentionally bring it into being. Where discourse is a human faculty, however, Language is the "relation of all relations,"[258] the temporal "happening in which beings first disclose themselves to man each time as beings."[259] Language is the "unfolding,"[260] or coming-into-being of the originary articulations from which human languages are derived. By characterizing Language as a temporal process of articulatability, Heidegger is emphasizing its constitutive historical and dialectic features.

Language happens, for Heidegger, insofar as world, as the always already existing web of relations in which things have a meaning (the as-structure), appropriates earth, as the possibility out of which things are articulated into their meaning (the potentiality of existence).[261] "A stone is worldless," Heidegger explains, "Plant and animal likewise have no world…The peasant woman, on the other hand, has a world because she dwells in the overtness of beings."[262] The world in which the "peasant woman" dwells is a coherent whole that has already appropriated, through local, historical accidents and the deliberate projects of humanity, latent possibilities of earth into structures of meaning that are barred to stones, plants, and animals. These appropriations happen for specific purposes, such as sheltering from inclement weather, growing enough food, etc. Only through the situated activities of humanity are wood and metal appropriated into "hammer;" only through the local, time-bound need to write do the color-fast properties of lead (or granite) become meaningful as a pencil. Language in the ontological sense is, for Heidegger, this appropriative, ongoing process through which things become things -

[258] Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper Collins, 1971): 57-111, 107.
[259] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 199.
[260] Dastur, "Language and *Ereignis*," 364.
[261] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art." Notice how this maps onto, and expands, the difference between understanding and interpretation detailed above.
[262] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art,: 170.

through which, that is, things are *articulated*.[263] The relation between world and earth is, in other words, a process called Language which "bethings"[264] things.

Heidegger holds that Language, in the expanded sense, "nominate[s] beings to their Being."[265] The process of appropriation through which things become articulated (i.e. Language) allows things to first become the things they are. This "bethinging" does not mean that words in the ontic, practical sense are relativistically, culturally, or subjectively "tacked on"[266] to pre-existing neutral matter awaiting a form. It is not as if, without the words of ontological Language, the rock on the ledge will cease to impose itself. It simply would not *be* a rock. The non-linguistic "rock" would be immersed in a meaningless darkness of non-thingliness. With the manifestation of Language, the myriad latent possibilities of the rock *as* a rock can become evident and meaningful. Articulating things like rocks and trees into works of art, for example, allows the *being* of rocks and trees to "come forth for the very first time."[267] Constructing a temple of large stones allows their "massiveness and heaviness" to become evident, carving a canoe allows "the firmness and pliancy of wood"[268] to manifest itself. These sorts of "appropriations" Heidegger writes, "move[s] the earth itself into the open region of a world and keep[s] it there."[269] Earth needs "some being" – in this case, humanity – in which it "attains its

[263] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art."
[264] Martin Heidegger, "Words," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Collins, 1971): 139-159, 151.
[265] Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008): 139-213, 198.
[266] Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," 62.
[267] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 171.
[268] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 171. Notice the similarity with Schopenhauer's analysis of art in Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation, Vol. 1*, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969).
[269] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 172.

constancy."[270] In order to be *something*, earth needs a being for which to be, for which earth is appropriated into a world of thinghood, language, and meaning.[271]

Rather than being a symbolic, nominalistic system that must bridge an unbridgeable gap between mind and world, Language allows humans access to regions of experience and being that, absent Language, would be concealed.[272] Charles Taylor gives the example of leadership: though animals, such as apes or wolves, can subjugate themselves to dominant members of the group, they cannot identify or acknowledge "king, president," etc.[273] Types and gradations of leaders are real things in the world, and Language enables humans to access these varieties of experience that are barred to non-linguistic beings. Language, similarly, does not *create* granite, pine, and pig, does not cordon off arbitrary sections of reality into these particular, culturally-bound substances. Rather, Language first *allows* granite, pine, and pig to *be* granite, pine, and pig, by appropriating and articulating them as such into structures of meaning. Heidegger puts this relationship succinctly in a quote from Stefan George: "Where word breaks off no thing may be."[274] Where there is no "word" in the ontological sense, where there has been no worldly appropriation (i.e. articulation) of earth, there is no thing. Articulation constitutes the genesis of thinghood, the placing of things into a public realm for utilization, discussion, disputation, and observation.[275] It is only *after* this process of Language has taken place that human language*s* exist.

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[270] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 186.
[271] That humans happen to be the being to appropriate earth into worldhood is irrelevant. What is important, for Heidegger, is that worldliness, meaningfulness, and Language are possibilities that exist whether humans (or some other being prone to meaningfulness) are here to realize it or not.
[272] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 198.
[273] Charles Taylor, "Heidegger on Language," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2005): 433-455, 437.
[274] Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," 82.
[275] Charles S. Peirce puts forth a similar argument, claiming that it is only because humans are interested in certain features of the universe at any given time that those features become salient. The others are left in darkness. See

Language, Teaching, and the Impossibility Thesis

Thus far, Language has been discussed in its ontological form, as the historical, context-dependent articulations of world and earth that give things their being and make human languages possible. What is still not clear is how human languages derive from, interact with, and maintain the fidelity of, ontological Language. Heidegger explains this relation in a lecture on the essence of truth.[276] Using the example of the Feldberg Tower in the Black Forest, Heidegger explains that, when we come across the tower on a hike, we *have* it present before us in our immediate vicinity. When we talk about the tower in the classroom, however, we *make* it present by "orient[ing] ourselves to the thing."[277] By focusing on what we are *doing* in the instances (i.e. having, making) in which we talk and think about the Feldberg Tower, it becomes conspicuous that we are not, as traditional metaphysics and epistemology would have it, oriented towards representations and images, but to the tower itself. If I think or talk about "how it is snowing at Feldberg," Heidegger writes, "and how the snow is falling on the tower, do I think that a representation is covered with snow, or that an image of the tower is snowed in?"[278] Even when humans are using language to make present geographically distant entities, there is an element of immediacy, of "with-ness," that Gottlieb, Dreyfus, *Being and Time*, and, if Heidegger is to be believed, the philosophical tradition *in toto* failed to capture.[279] This immediate with-ness suggests, again, the need to rethink the conception of words as denoting, signifying, or

Charles S. Peirce, "Pearson's Grammar of Science," in *The Essential Peirce, Volume 2*, The Peirce Edition Project, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 57-67, 64.

[276] Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth.*

[277] Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, 236.

[278] Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, 236.

[279] Heidegger is not arguing that language never operates through representations, but that representative language is a derivative, objectifying use of language that is absent in human comportment towards entities as meaningful things in the world. The representation is, for Heidegger, an unnecessary addition, imposed between the thing and the human, whereas, without this imposition, the relation with the thing is direct and immediate. See Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, 75.; and Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 32.

representing wholly separate, pre-existing things. Because humans are always already *in* the world, rather than external masters *over* the world, the function of words need not be to act as a bridge that spans the divide between humans, on one side, and things, on the other. Words do not act as symbolic mental images or representational stand-ins for disparate entities. Instead, the function of human words is to make present, to show, the things articulated in ontological Language.[280] Human words make present and orient speakers to *the thing itself*, rather than an imitation of the thing in a mediating consciousness. Indeed, it is only through the articulateness of ontological Language that things *become* things, such that their presence and articulation in, for example, human language*s*, is unproblematic. While not reliant *solely* on humanity, the induction of earth into world, i.e. the process of Language, requires beings *like* humanity to open latent regions of meaning through appropriative and meaning-making activities. Through this process, the pre-meaningful potentialities of earth become meaningful things which can be made present and pointed out by human languages. That ontological Language primordially articulates things means that the conceptual labor required of human languages is considerably lightened – things have already been "conceptualized" through practical dealings in and with the world. The implication for Dreyfus and Gottlieb is that, if the function of Language is to articulate and "bething" things, then the proposition that some things could be in principle inarticulable is rendered dubious.

It does not necessarily follow from this characterization of Language, however, that *all* aspects of experience *can* and *should* be subjected to the "making present" of human language. Might Gottlieb or Dreyfus object that, even if ontological Language is the primordial articulateness of things, it does not guarantee that human language*s* can capture *all* aspects of

[280] Heidegger, "Language."

these primordial articulations? There is, presumably, some physical, tangible feature of experience that will inevitably escape human language. Is this physical aspect equivalent to the "absorbed coping" of the expert teacher? Is expert teaching, Gottlieb might continue, not also qualitatively different from rocks or trees? The latter are things in the strict sense, material objects which can be passively manipulated and put to use in myriad ways, depending on need or desire. Expert teaching is precisely *not* an object, and therefore may elude the "bethinging" power of ontological Language such that its articulation might be significantly more difficult, if not impossible. Treating expert teaching as an object, via overgeneralized best practices, is precisely what Gottlieb is, after all, arguing against. This objection can be answered in two parts:

1. Expert teaching is a thing in the broad sense in which Heidegger uses the term "thing."
2. Human languages can and should aim to articulate ontological Language

Expert Teaching is a Thing

In an essay appropriately called "The Thing," Heidegger interrogates "thinghood" by examining a commonplace, everyday item: a jug for holding and pouring liquid. Existing methods of characterizing the thinghood of the jug, he argues, are inadequate. Plato's *eidos*, for example, "characterizes the jug solely in the respect in which the vessel stands over against the maker as something to be made."[281] The *eidos* of the jug does not give any indication of why we take the jug to be a "thing," rather than merely an aspect, outward appearance, look, or idea. For Heidegger, because these predications fail to capture the jug in its function *as* a jug, rather than as an object of production or as a visual form, they are too narrow and abstract to be considered coextensive with the thinghood of the jug. Scientific explanations impose similarly exclusionary circumscriptions that preclude the experience and identification of thinghood. Though we might

[281] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971): 161-185, 166.

be tempted to attribute the jug's thingliness to the atomic, geometric, and physical features that enable it to hold and pour liquid, for example, Heidegger cautions against this tactic. "When we fill the jug with wine," he writes, "do we pour the wine into the sides and bottom?...At most, we pour the wine between the sides and over the bottom"[282] and into empty space. For the scientist, however, the empty space is not, strictly speaking, empty, but is filled with air, which is swapped for liquid when the jug is filled. "Considered scientifically," then, "to fill a jug means to exchange one filling for another."[283] The phenomenological, experiential relation with the jug is thereby lost.

Both of these explanations, the Platonic and the scientific, because they remove the jug from its meaningful context as a jug, "annihilate"[284] any possibility of articulating what it means for a jug to be a thing. If one assumes that these two options exhaust the possibilities of articulating things, then one would be justified in ascribing inarticulability to some, if not all, things. Fortunately, for Heidegger, the way of access to things remains open. When people use a jug *as* a jug, it "refreshes their leisure. It enlivens their conviviality…it stills and elevates the celebration of the feast."[285] The way to access thinghood is to examine the jug in this meaningful, practical context. What makes the jug a thing is, then, its placement in situations of refreshment and conviviality. Does expert teaching have similarly meaningful contexts?

Gottlieb provides a clue when, drawing on (and critiquing) Lee Shulman's work on teaching, he writes that "a teacher must consider the specific requirements of the subject matter, the needs of the learners, and the aims of society."[286] Teaching is inseparable from the contexts

[282] Heidegger, "The Thing," 166-167.
[283] Heidegger, "The Thing," 167.
[284] Heidegger, "The Thing," 168.
[285] Heidegger, "The Thing," 170.
[286] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 505.

in which teaching happens, including the cultures of students, the policy environment that places restrictions on what and how teachers teach, the political controversies that complicate pedagogical and curricular decisions, etc. When teachers teach, they establish relationships with students, they make things in the world present and evident for students, and, as midwives, they bring students' curiosity into being. Because of these contextual, constitutional meaning structures, teaching would qualify as a "thing" in the Heideggerian sense, and would, accordingly, be subject to the same ontological articulations that allow the jug, the rock, and the tree to attain their being. Still, Gottlieb could object that simply being a "thing" in this sense, being *ontologically* articulated, does not guarantee the possibility of being *ontically*, or practically, articulable. The fact that teaching is ontologically meaningful (i.e. that teaching is a *thing*), in other words, does not *logically* or *necessarily* mean that it can be articulated into *human* languages in a manner similar to the jug and the rock.

Human languages can and should articulate ontological language

I argue that objections of this sort, which preclude human languages' access to ontological Language, continue to rely on a separation between humans and the rest of existence, as if humans were something alien, whose very existence was an imposition on a passive, foreign terrain. As I emphasized above, humans are *in* and *of* the world, meaning that any such separation, including the exclusion of human languages from ontological Language, is unwarranted. Indeed, Heidegger holds that humans not only *can* articulate ontological Language, but that we *must*. As Wolfram Eilenberger explains, Heidegger's "objective of describing

[*Dasein's*] situation…in the most precise and structurally revelatory manner goes hand in hand with [*Dasein's*] transformation of the conduct of his life."[287]

As I have explained, humanity plays an important, if not a privileged, role in determining how the possibilities of earth come to appear through historically appropriative actions. Historical peculiarities can also, potentially, make apparent a world in which the true phenomenological, ontological structures of being get covered over. Heidegger gives Descartes' subject-object dualism[288] and Plato's equation of Being with beings as examples.[289] That error and oversight are definite possibilities can be traced back to the ontological constitution of humanity. Because humanity has such an inherent, taken for granted familiarity with the world, "Dasein can lose itself in what it encounters within-the-world world and be fascinated by it."[290] Elsewhere, Heidegger refers to this dynamic as "tranquilizing,"[291] due to its tendency to enrapture *Dasein* into uncritical, ontic notions of truth and being that overlook the historical, appropriative way that beings and things come to presence.[292] This ontologically free tendency to error leads to undesirable consequences, such as the over-instrumentalization of technology that converts "the earth" into "a coal mining district" and views the "soil as a mineral deposit."[293] It follows that correcting these ontological misconceptions would (or *should*) result in the mitigation of such consequences and an alteration in humanity's comportment.

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[287] Wolfram Eilenberger, *Time of the Magicians: Wittgenstein, Benjamin, Cassirer, Heidegger, and the Decade that Reinvented Philosophy*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), 230. I have altered the text to insert "Dasein" where the original uses the word "subject."
[288] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson.
[289] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008): 307-343.
[290] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson, 107.
[291] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson, 222.
[292] Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008): 111-139.
[293] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 320.

Because of the behavioral implications that ontology entails, it is imperative to get clear about the ontological nature of humanity, world, and earth. Heidegger even subjects Being itself to this sort of articulation: "Of course 'Being' has been presupposed in all ontology up till now, but not as a *concept* at one's disposal – not as the sort of thing we are seeking."[294] In a fictional dialogue on language, Heidegger and a Japanese friend both note the difficulty of grasping these ontological aspects of being (e.g. language), while affirming the necessity of doing so:

> I: To guard the purity of the mystery's wellspring seems to me the hardest of all.
> J: But does that give us the right simply to shun the trouble and the risk of speaking about language?
> I: Indeed not. We must incessantly strive for such speaking…[295]

Though seemingly obscure and ephemeral, it is necessary to articulate the ontological and experiential aspects of being into (human) language. Failing to do so leaves humans susceptible to implicit, uncritical, and inauthentic interpretations which lead to the over-generalizations and over-instrumentalizations characteristic of technological "innovations" such as institutionalized best practices.[296] The project of phenomenological, ontological description that I am arguing for would, accordingly, correct the Cartesian assumptions implicit in accounts such as those of Dreyfus and Gottlieb.

The sorts of linguistic characterizations and definitions that Heidegger refers to "cannot, of course, take the form of a scientific dissertation."[297] As with the example of the jug above, scientific descriptions would disperse the phenomenon, the thing, into its component parts and remove them from their meaningful context. Such a scientific approach to describing expert teaching would, as Gottlieb correctly points out, cause "the observer to distort the observed

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[294] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson, 27. Italics original.
[295] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 50.
[296] Heidegger, "Question Concerning Technology." Though it is important to note that, for Heidegger, "inauthentic" does not mean "unreal." These inauthentic interpretations are distinct, real, and historical possibilities.
[297] Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 50.

practice in the process of atomization."[298] The mistake, for Gottlieb and Dreyfus alike, is in the assumption that atomic descriptions are the *only* ones available, that the impossibility of *scientific* definition equates to the impossibility of definition altogether.

One way that Heidegger avoids this difficulty is by pointing to poetry as an example of a method of articulating experiences, worlds, and things without reducing them to their disparate parts or over-generalizing them into inappropriate categories. "Poetry," for Heidegger, is "a mode of being in the world that discloses what is there to be seen, whereas science and technology conceal things by imposing a conceptual framework upon them."[299] Referring to Georg Trakl's "A Winter Evening," Heidegger observes that the poem "does not picture a winter evening occurring somewhere…it neither describes a winter evening that is already there, nor does it attempt to produce the semblance, leave the impression, of a winter evening's presence where there is no such winter evening."[300] Though the poem may do all of these things *in addition*, its main function is not to attempt a scientific definition or reproduction. Instead, the poem contextualizes things – the vesper bell, the snowy window, the table prepared with food – into presence[301] such that "they may bear upon men *as* things."[302] Like the arranging of stones into the temple, the poem allows things to become the things they are, as meaningful, earthen, and worldly. By maintaining the winter evening *as* a winter evening, the poem allows it to become present as such. Similarly, C.F. Meyer's poem titled "Roman Fountain" does not portray or explain the Roman fountain, but it does, Heidegger holds, "*say* the Roman fountain."[303] By

[298] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 503-504.
[299] Ronald P. Morrison, "Wilderness and Clearing: Thoreau, Heidegger, and the Poetic," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 143-165, 143.
[300] Heidegger, "Language," 194-195.
[301] It might be interesting for the reader to know that Google's automated editing software attempted to correct the word "presence" to "existence."
[302] Heidegger, "Language," 197. Italics added.
[303] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 181. Italics added.

making apparent the contextual, imposing, thingly character of the fountain, Meyer discloses an experience of the fountain in its worldly being. Through Meyer's poem, the fountain itself is *said* in its thingliness. Ronald Morrison explains that Heidegger's purpose, in turning to poetry, "is to recover 'things as things' by seeing them not as objects appearing in the mind but as appearances that come to light in a clearing that is *outside* the mind, but not independent of thought."[304] Like the function of ontological Language more broadly, poetry complicates the distinction between mentality and reality by establishing "being in words."[305]

Importantly, Heidegger qualifies that poetry is not the only way in which things can remain things through language. He explains that "the opposite of what is purely spoken, the opposite of the poem, is not prose. Pure prose is never 'prosaic.' It is as poetic and hence as rare as poetry."[306] In addition to poetry, then, the founding of a state, the creation of material art, and philosophy can also make things present and allow them to be what they are. The important thing is that the latter are responsive to, preservative, and critical of the historical situation, as well as attentive to the earthly possibilities. Art and language can illuminate, or "make present," an experience by preserving context and making worldly aspects manifest. The artist must account for the peculiarities, desires, and presumptions of a historical situation as the necessary starting point and catalyst for artistic creation and thingly articulation. By remaining attentive both to this worldly starting point, and the earthly underpinnings which support it, the artist, as in the examples of the temple and the canoe, establishes and makes present worlds, things, and experiences.

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[304] Morrison, "Wilderness and Clearing," 146.
[305] Robert Bernasconi, "Poets as Prophets and as Painters: Heidegger's Turn to Language and the Hölderlinian Turn in Context," in *Heidegger and Language*, ed. by Jeffrey Powell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 146-163, 149.
[306] Heidegger, "Language," 205.

"It would be the worst self-deception," however, "to think that our description, as a subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into"[307] the work of art. That the artist must start from local, historical, particularized circumstances does not render the work subjective, relative, nominalistic, *causa sui*, or untrue. It is, rather, only the historical, finite "openness," or *articulateness*, "of beings that first affords the possibility of a somewhere and of sites filled by present beings."[308] It is only through, in other words, localized spaces of meaning that things show up at all. This "open" presence of things, in turn, only happens through the appropriations and depictions of the artist, the statesman, the philosopher, the human, etc., which first lets things be the things they are through the historical necessities and contingencies of worldly appropriation. If we take seriously the repeated mantra that humans are *in* the world, then it becomes apparent that subjectivity is not *merely* subjective, but is, rather, the gateway, the mode of access, to an objective, real, "external" existence. Instead of private, inner experience, subjectivity is a public, shared method of exploiting possibilities and appropriating things, making them available for questioning and scrutiny. Insofar as the appropriation of things into a world is a way of being constitutive of humanity, "artist" becomes synonymous with "human."

A few examples should make this dynamic clear. First, despite Hunter S. Thompson's professional title as a "reporter," he is not typically known for strictly factual journalistic accounts. His narrative of an experience at the Kentucky Derby certainly does not "report the facts" of the Derby, or even simply describe the scene around him, yet it still preserves and annunciates the worldly context he experienced:

> Hell, this clubhouse scene right below us will be almost as bad as the infield. Thousands of raving, stumbling drunks, getting angrier and angrier as they lose more and more money. By midafternoon they'll be guzzling mint juleps with both hands and vomiting on each other between races. The whole place will be jammed

[307] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 161.
[308] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 186.

> with bodies, shoulder to shoulder. It's hard to move around. The aisles will be slick with vomit; people falling down and grabbing at your legs to keep from being stomped.[309]

Though the aisles of the Derby stadium's bleachers were almost certainly not nearly as vomit-drenched as Thompson suggests, and the spectators almost certainly not as zombie-like, the depiction allows the reader to "be somewhere else than we usually tend to be,"[310] and to understand an experiential element of the Derby that might otherwise be missed in a picture or a stenographic, analytic account. Thompson's exaggerations expose us to the wild electricity, the excitement, the nervousness, the claustrophobia, and the Old South degeneracy experienced by an attentive attendee.

Similarly, Henry Miller's characterization of a proofreader, like Meyer's Roman fountain, "says" an experience of professional proofreading:

> This life which, if I were still a man with pride, honor, ambition and so forth, would seem like the bottom rung of degradation, I welcome now, as an invalid welcomes death. It's a negative reality, just like death - a sort of heaven without the pain and terror of dying. In this chthonian world the only thing of importance is orthography and punctuation. It doesn't matter what the nature of the calamity is, only whether it is spelled right…Nothing escapes the proofreader's eye, but nothing penetrates his bulletproof vest.[311]

Miller exposes the reader to the circumscribed, resigned reality of the proofreader, which excludes all stimulation other than the formal, grammatical task that is ever at hand. That Miller has accepted such cold, bureaucratic drudgery as if it were death suggests to the reader how comfortingly banal proofreading is, how easy it is to abandon responsibility, emotion, and sociality in favor of the neutral, gray world of grammar. Under the Gottlieb-Dreyfus conception of language and expert practice, Miller's proofreader would, presumably, be inarticulable,

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[309] Hunter S. Thompson, "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved," in *The Great Shark Hunt: Gonzo Papers, Volume 1* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979): 24-38, 30.
[310] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 161.
[311] Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 148.

especially if he were an "expert" proofreader. Miller's action as a proofreader would be embodied and nonconceptual. If Heidegger is correct, however, that humans are in the world, and that the world, along with the things in it, have always already been articulated, then Miller's characterization would be an unproblematic, if hermeneutic, articulation of proofreading.

Nowhere in the above passage does Miller actually *describe* the process of proofreading or detail the specific behaviors he engages in through his capacity as a proofreader. He offers us instead proofreading *as a thing* – as it is in its practical, meaningful, experiential context. Even though Miller's and Thompson's "fictional" examples are exaggerated and scientifically inexact, they are truthful insofar as they preserve things and experiences as meaningful, contextual wholes, resisting the "atomization" of scientifically rigorous endeavors such as best practices.[312] They do so because they are, arguably, "original appropriations"[313] of language in which "the completion of the speaking that is proper to what is spoken is, in its turn, an original."[314] Thompson and Miller, in other words, preserve the experiential situation, letting it be the experiential situation that it was.

It would be no objection to point out that the authors in question were merely recording their *own* experiences. It was *the authors* who experienced these situations (or things), but they were experiences inevitably in, of, and with the world and with others. These passages and the experiences themselves are, furthermore, imbued with an articulated and public Language that constitutes that world. The genius of Thompson, Miller, Trakl, and Meyer does not consist in an intellectual capacity to bend the natural world to a linguistic will, but in an ability which Ralph Waldo Emerson calls "self-reliance": the capacity to comprehend and make apparent the shared,

[312] Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art."
[313] Heidegger, "Dialogue on Language," 20.
[314] Heidegger, "Language," 192.

public life of Language and world. As Emerson writes, "we first share the life by which things exist and afterwards see them as appearances in nature and forget that we have shared their cause."[315] Similarly, Heidegger's conception of Language requires the participation of humanity. Through our taken-for-granted activities in the world there arises the illusion of distance from, ownership of, and dominance over Language and world, precluding the possibility of originary, authentic, and real articulations of the sort Emerson and Heidegger advocate for. Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance is a concession neither to rugged American individualism nor to the relativism characteristic of a segment of modern academia.[316] It is, rather, an acknowledgement that the public and the individual, the objective and the particular, Language and language, are mutually constitutive and complementary. It need not present a contradiction, then, that Miller can articulate what proofreading is *out of* his experience as a proofreader.

Beyond the literary, Heidegger's own use of language offers an additional method which enables human language to remain authentic and originary while avoiding reductionism. His writing style, particularly in the later years, puts to philosophical use the "strangeness," plurality, and unfamiliarity inherent in language.[317] Krzysztof Ziarek explains that Heidegger effectuates this attentiveness to unfamiliarity by utilizing hyphens in his writing to emphasize latent meanings in otherwise familiar words.[318] Though the structural features of the German language are, admittedly, more amenable to the method of hyphenation (as Ziarek's examples show: *Er-eignis, An-fang, Ge-stell*), a similar procedure can be performed in English. The word "dispose," for example, can be rendered as "dis-pose" to emphasize connotations of posing and

[315] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Brooks Atkinson, ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 2000): 132-154, 141.
[316] See, for example, Kenneth Driggers and Deron Boyles, "Epistemology as Pragmatic Inquiry: Rorty, Haack, and Academic Relativism in Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-023-09909-0.
[317] Dastur, "Language and *Ereignis*," 363.
[318] Ziarek, "Giving Its Word."

displacement that the word contains, as well as its implicit connection to the word "disposition," or "dis-position." Similarly, the hyphenation of words such as "dif-ference," "con-ference," and "re-ference" illuminates the aspects of these words that imply a relational, "bearing," naming function stemming from the Latin *ferre*.[319]

By "listening" to and employing language in this sense, humans can remain attentive to the way in which "language speaks" by hinting at aspects of the phenomena captured by language that might otherwise remain hidden.[320] Characterizing teaching as "dispositional," for example, might imply a sort of inarticulability similar to Dreyfus' "absorbed coping," particularly if this dispositional teaching is a phronetic, practical wisdom of the sort that eludes formalization.[321] If it is understood that teaching is a "dis-position," however, then already much more is being said than merely "*phronesis*" or "practical wisdom." Contrary to absorbed coping and noncognitive practice, a teacherly "dis-position" implies that the teacher is dis-placed, de-positioned from some previous position. Further inquiries would be required to determine whether such a teacherly dis-placement implies an unfamiliarity, or uncomfortability condition, such that teaching (and, presumably, learning) would require a sort of suspension of the familiar, the comfortable, and the taken for granted.

Though hyphenation, poetry, and fiction may be ways in which language can avoid reductionism, their use in policy environments is unlikely. Fortunately, the above analysis suggests that any variety of deliberate, attentive prose can be used non-reductionistically. "Poetry proper," Heidegger explains, "is never merely a higher mode of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem."[322] Though he does

[319] Hans H. Ørberg, *Latin-English Vocabulary* (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1998).
[320] Heidegger, "Language," 207.
[321] Pickup, "Embodied Phronesis."
[322] Heidegger, "Language," 205.

not specify exactly *how* everyday language can avoid reductionism and remain authentic, there are hints implicit in his treatment of language that suggest a possible way forward (or, at least, a way out of the Cartesian quagmire). First, it is clear that dissecting phenomena, such as teaching and learning, into disparate parts, aspects, or divisions should be avoided. When Dreyfus delineates the "Five Stages of Skill Acquisition," for example, he precludes access to learning. If it is kept in mind that subjectivity, historicality, and interpretation are the starting points, rather than the summation, of truth and experience, then the "non-situational aspects" of Dreyfus' early stages are rendered dubious. Put differently, it is doubtful that "non-situational aspects" exist *at all*, particularly considering the structurally ubiquitous, situated articulations that must happen before anything can *be* a thing. When I first learned to play an F power chord on guitar, followed by the chords Bb, Ab, and C#, I was not learning abstract finger shapes and note clusters, but the chords to "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana. Similarly, I do not learn simply "the dative case," but I learn "the language in which my favorite philosophers speak and write." Aspects are always already situational and historical - they are, in fact, originally present as such.

The rest of Dreyfus' stages of skill acquisition are similarly suspect, particularly considering that, phenomenologically, while learning may have "moments," it is doubtful that they can be identified as definitive stages or categories which each have their particular characteristics. Attempting such a taxonomy covers over the phenomenon of learning and makes itself amenable to the sorts of over-generalized best practices that Dreyfus and Gottlieb might otherwise critique. Categorizations and taxonomies should be used sparingly and more critically, de-emphasized in favor of taking and experiencing phenomena and things as they are, as contextualized wholes.

Second, Heidegger urges us to experience language in a new way.[323] Because language "bethings" things, and because language is always historical and situational, any attempt at absolute, eternal, neutral linguistic descriptions must be forgone. This renunciation amounts to neither an acquiescence to relativism nor the annihilation of scientific endeavors, but is a practical reorientation towards both the situational foundation of truth and the primordial, inner-worldly externality of *Dasein* that removes subjectivity from the sole possession of the subject. Heidegger's plea for a new relationship with language is an appeal to reinvigorate everyday language with the richness, unfamiliarity, and fecundity of experience usually reserved for poetry. Doing so, I argue, would have direct implications for the policy and practice of education.

[323] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The arguments thus far considered point to serious concerns about Dreyfus' conception of expert practice as well as his stages of skill acquisition. There is no time in which the novice learner, or any learner, can maintain a detached, disinterested comportment toward context-free information. Even the scientific gaze, for Heidegger, is an engaged, intra-worldly disposition that is motivated in temporal, situational, local contexts.[324] The individuated pieces of expert practice cannot be ripped from context so much as given a new context, at which point care must be taken to maintain the identity of the task to be learned. Learning, at any rate, must remain situational. Gottlieb hints at this condition when he qualifies that "emotional involvement" is a necessary aspect of converting decontextualized information into noncognitive practice, but he errs when he reserves such personal involvement for specific stages of learning. The context-dependent, "emotional involvement" of the learner necessarily and ontologically pervades *all* aspects of learning. Beyond this initial observation, there are four implications of the above argument for the possibility of articulability and generalizability in education:

1. Articulating the teacher is possible
2. Best practices ought to be avoided
3. Generalizing is possible through a deliberate use of language
4. A non-reductionistic generalization of teaching implies an alteration in the current conception, orientation, and comportment towards teaching

Articulating the Teacher is Possible

By denying articulability to expert teacher practice, Gottlieb and Dreyfus effectively deny articulability to teaching altogether. If the expert teacher's practice is completely devoid of reasons and concepts, then, as Rouse argues, it is not even clear that what the expert teacher is doing qualifies as *teaching*, particularly if teaching is a specific act distinguishable from chess

[324] Note that this does not mean that the "accuracy" or "factuality" of science is being called into question.

playing and motorbike riding through reasons and concepts. That teaching is subject to the same articulateness as chess playing and motorbike riding - an articulateness which enables expert teaching to be identified *as* teaching - is evidence for Heidegger's claim that the articulations of Language are ubiquitous and originary. If things only *are* to the extent that they have been articulated in Language, then it follows that, if teachers exist, then they are always already articulated. It is, I take it, thoroughly uncontroversial to suggest that teachers *exist* in some capacity. Furthermore, considering Heidegger's argument that articulating seemingly impenetrable phenomena such as being and Language into human language is possible and desirable, it would seem that articulating teaching, too, is possible and desirable. *Pace* Dreyfus and Gottlieb, then, it *is* possible to articulate expert teaching, and teaching *simpliciter*, and to do so without devolving into the reductionism endemic to randomized controlled trials and best practices. There exists a middle ground, between scientific behaviorism and unarticulated embodiment, in which things attain to their being authentically *through* articulation. Articulation in this sense is not an unwarranted imposition but an attentive appropriation that lets the appropriated thing be what it is. The methods amenable to this middle ground include poetry, de-familiarizing hyphenation, and prose fed from circumspect experience.

Best Practices Ought to Be Avoided

In the policies and best practices explained above, the emphasis placed on "effectiveness" suggests a conception of teaching in which clear, determinable inputs can cause clear, determinable outputs in the form of higher test scores. Slavin's contention that education is analogous to medicine further indicates that the "patients," or "students," are imagined to be entities similar in kind to spleens and livers. Though still complex biological systems, spleens and livers function according to definite causal mechanisms. A patient in a medical setting can

be put to sleep using anesthetic chemicals, after which spleens and livers can be cut, sewn, or removed at will, usually with a set of predictable results that entail further responses with further predictable results, etc. To Gottlieb's credit, the question, for educational philosophers, should be how, and why, students came to be seen as manipulable and as mechanistic as spleens and livers. It is not that this causal conception is non-functional: the best practices identified by the What Works Clearinghouse do, in fact, accomplish the goal of raising test scores, just as the technologies that Heidegger critiques effectively harness and store energy. As Kvernbekk points out, however, "effectiveness and truth are not the same thing."[325] The WWC, along with NCLB, RTTT, and ESSA take for granted that teaching and learning necessarily entail mechanistic processes determinable and manipulable through quantitatively generalized behaviors and metrics. The fact that teachers and students *can* be subjected to mechanistic processes in this way does not mean that they *should* be so subjected, or that teachers and learners are inherently, ontologically mechanistic beings. Even without yet having conducted a thorough analysis of what teaching and learning are, it seems warranted to question whether this cause-and-effect model has not fallen prey to the uncritical oversights inherent to the taken-for-granted human existence *in* the world; whether, that is, the medical analogy fails to be attentive to the actual, experiential phenomena of teaching and learning.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of best practices, however, is their tendency to thwart access to the thinghood of teachers. Like the scientific depiction of the walls and the sides of the jug, or the "traditional" reporter's account of the Kentucky Derby, best practices "atomize"[326] the teacher into its barest discrete parts, preventing access to the teacher *as* a teacher. Because the identification of best practices starts from the assumption that what is required is to look for the

[325] Kvernbekk, "Concept of Evidence," 521-522.
[326] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice."

best singular, isolatable practices of teaching, the possibility of perceiving teaching as a whole, as a thing, is precluded from the beginning. Part of Heidegger's goal is to strip away metaphysical preconceptions such that the phenomena themselves can become manifest – so that, in other words, they can be grasped or appreciated more originally and authentically. Though teaching does, as Gottlieb argues, evade the over-generalized atomization of best practices, it does so not out of any inherent inarticulability of *teaching*, but through the inability of best practices to capture and maintain things as things.

Generalizing is Possible Through a Deliberate Use of Language

Policy initiatives such as NCLB's "highly qualified teacher" provision and ESSA's emphasis on achievement confine conversations about teaching to a set of preconceived, quantitative parameters which are construed as scientific, neutral, and unproblematically given. Administrators and teachers are encouraged, through monetary incentives and harsh sanctions, to accept these parameters and work within them to accomplish the goals set forth by policymakers and the DOE. The result is a closed system which effectively crowds out scrutiny over what teaching *is*. Without these institutional impositions, space would open for discursively placing the teacher in explicit, publicly available, context-dependent situations, from which and into which teaching can emerge into thinghood. I am not, however, arguing for a purely local, ungeneralized and ungeneralizable teacher. I am not critiquing NCLB, RTTT, and ESSA *because* they generalize teaching. It is not that these policies are ineffective, nor that they generalize a phenomenon that is inherently ungeneralizable. Because we can identify teaching *as* teaching, and discuss teaching in casual conversation (i.e. through language), the teacher is necessarily and primordially a generalized being. The problem, rather, is the *nature* of the

generalization in question. What I am disputing is not *whether* teachers are generalizable, but *how*.

I propose that a context-dependent, articulated appropriation of the teacher would constitute a *weak* form of generalizability, as opposed to the *strong* form of generalizability instituted in federal education policy. Where the former generalizes through a linguistic articulation of what teaching is, the latter imposes an ontologically inappropriate generalization on teaching that, at best, renders context of secondary importance while leaving the ontology of teaching implicit. Re-articulating the teacher through authentic and originary uses of language would generalize what teaching is without reducing teaching to a set of discrete behaviors or mathematical valuations. Generalization was previously defined, with support from Brian Warnick, as "the extension of a quality or a characteristic to a broad range of phenomena." Extension and characterization from finitude is, I argue, precisely how both Language and language function. Not that humans subjectively project conceptions and characterizations from their closed-off interiors – I have shown, with the examples of the temple and the proofreader, that a simple inner-outer imposition is an impossibility. As Walter Benjamin writes, "The existence of language…is coextensive not only with all the areas of human mental expression in which language is always in one sense or another inherent, but with absolutely everything."[327] "There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not," for Benjamin, "in some way partake of language."[328] Humans are always already in and with the world, in and with the articulated, public Language that makes possible the speaking, writing, and

[327] Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1*, Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004): 62-75, 62.
[328] Benjamin, "On Language," 62.

communicative functions of human language. The world is humanity's "own exteriority,"[329] neither separate from nor created solely by humanity. The projections of the Cartesian subject should, then, be precluded, along with the skeptical epistemological consequences that it entails (e.g. that things may be inarticulable, or that things in themselves are unknowable).

The "finite point" from which the generalizations of Language proceed is, instead, the historical, local (and therefore not eternal), primordially "externalized" subject. It is only through the (non-)subjective, situated, historical appropriations of art, philosophy, and thinking that things first become public and available for critique. It is only through the finite articulations that appropriate earth into world that truth becomes something questionable. Miller did not qualify his "fictional" characterization of the proofreader by saying that "proofreading, *for me* is…" Heidegger, similarly, did not say "*for our age*, Dasein is *x*, *y*, and *z*," or "*for me*, language is…" The historical situation of the (non-)subject is, rather, the *mode of access* to truth and meaning, not the restriction of the subject to the *merely* subjective. Attributing generalization to the articulations of Language is justified insofar as these articulations both originate from a local, determinate situation and are extended "beyond themselves," they are "things evident that point to (and have implications for) the non-evident."[330] The experience of proofreading is one that points to a transcendence beyond the individual, towards publicly available structures of grammar, towards readability, towards the anonymous Others who will read, preferably without noticing, the proofreader's handiwork. Miller, as does humanity more broadly, "lies in the lap" of Language, "which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity."[331] Because Miller is externalized into this publicity of articulated Language, the transcendent aspects of experience

[329] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 18.
[330] Warnick, "Educational Research and the Interests of the State," 273.
[331] Emerson, "Self-Reliance," 141.

can become evident, available for an Emersonian self-reliant articulation into the language of prose. The characterization of the proofreader is not a personal, private affair, but a mode of access to the generality that bears upon experience from all directions.

This generalizability is, furthermore, no rigid clinical imposition. That truth and meaning remain historical and situated means that the generalizations of language are, as Heidegger's hyphen method shows, suffused with possibility and open to revision. The sorts of generalizations that I am advocating for would be attentive to experience such that inappropriate metaphysical preconceptions, such as the medical analogy and ESSA's quantitative "achievements" of teaching and learning, would be bracketed in favor of a phenomenological and linguistic sensitivity to the worldly, contextualized thinghood of things. That poetry, such as Meyer's Roman Fountain, is infinitely interpretable is no argument against its generalizability. The fountain *itself* is also infinitely interpretable: as a place for picnics, as the object of scholarly study, as a reservoir for pennies, as the background decoration of an Instagram photo, etc. A poetic s*aying* of the fountain that preserves this interpretability is, for that reason, all the more authentic. Again, disputations about the fountain can only become disputations *after* its articulations and interpretations have been put forth. Like Thompson's Derby, or Miller's proofreader, an original articulation of the teacher would reorient policy discussions away from the behavioral presumptions of best practices, and toward the way in which teaching *actually* appears as articulated in Language. It would, put simply, place the teacher into the open, free teaching from the constraints of institutional rigidity, and make it possible to think about what teaching is, can be, and should be.

A Non-Reductionistic Generalization of Teaching Implies an Alteration in the Current Conception, Orientation, and Comportment Towards Teaching

Ontology, particularly for Heidegger, is about comportment and conduct. Actions are based on conceptions and expectations about the world, conceptions that take the world to be this or that way. If I take the world to be a potentially unknowable realm distinct from my own inner consciousness, I am likely to be concerned about figuring out how it is that I can know anything at all. Assuming that it can be taken for granted that it *is* possible to know real things, then knowledge becomes something to obtain, to possess, to transmit, and to lock away in the cupboard of the mind. If humans are cut off from each other and from the world, then there need to be tech-niques, special pedagogical tech-nologies meant to transfer knowledge to the mind of the teacher, from the mind of the teacher to the mind of the student, and, finally, from the mind of the student towards the world. The "best practices" resulting from this conception of the world could be, and are, tested for effectiveness and efficiency by providing opportunities for the student to read from and reproduce the contents of their mind on an assessment.

The problem is not that these pedagogical technologies are ineffective. The proponents and exemplars of best practices uniformly emphasize RCT-based and standardized test-based evidence of effectiveness. The problem is rather that the conception from which the medical image of teaching and learning arises, because it disperses and atomizes whole phenomena, is not *appropriate* to the being of teachers, students, knowledge, and world. Covering over and taking for granted the being of the things under examination precludes any possibility of the scientific exactitude and "rigor" claimed by proponents of the medical analogy of education. It is not even clear, in other words, that RCTs are examining *teachers and students*, rather than some other beings appropriated and established through quantitative methods and scientific

conceptions. Because humans are externalized into the world, knowledge cannot be something that must be internalized, consumed like bits of food. Best practices cannot transmit or transfer *knowledge* (as opposed to, say, "information") from point *a* to point *b* any more than can the objects of knowledge be forced inside of the skull (without, of course, resulting in serious harm).[332]

What is required is a rearticulation of teaching that conforms to the phenomenological, experiential reality in which humans are always already exteriorized into a meaningful world. Such a rearticulation would require a transformation in our entire approach to instituting, evaluating, and practicing education. The focus of education should be neither the internal furniture of the students' mind, as in standardized testing, nor the bare, surface-level behaviors of the teacher, as in best practices. Education as a whole would need to shift towards the inner-worldly constitution of humanity, the fact that things are "bethinged" by Language and knowable in and through their overt articulateness, the multiplicity and inexhaustibility inherent in the relation between world and earth, and the perpetual interpretability of things. Such a reorientation would require, in short, a completely new conception of education. Education as it is currently known would cease to exist.

What is Called Teaching?: Implications for Future Research

I argue that the task facing education, if it is to escape the quagmire of metaphysical presuppositions that encapsulate it in the sterile overgeneralizations of best practices, is to articulate a more appropriate conception of the teacher rooted in experience. One objection, at

[332] Nesra Yannier, Scott E. Hudson, and Kenneth R. Koedinger, "Active Learning is About More Than Hands-On: A Mixed-Reality AI System to Support STEM Education," *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education* 30 (2020): 74-96.; Michael J. Reiss, "The Use of AI in Education: Practicalities and Ethical Considerations," *London Review of Education* 19, no. 1 (2021): 1-14.; Sang-Eun Lee, "Otherwise Than Teaching by Artificial Intelligence," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 57 (2023): 553-570.

this point, might be that, having just spent well over one hundred pages reading about how the current conception of teachers is ontologically inappropriate, there would seem to be no *actual* teachers in existence from which to draw such a new articulation, particularly if the experiences of actually-existing-teachers conform to the inappropriate, status quo conception. This objection points to one reason why Heidegger turned to the pre-Socratics, poetry, and phenomenology: to rid his thinking of the preconceptions of society that threaten to restrict language (and Language) at every turn. Heidegger wanted to find new ways of thinking, articulating, and appropriating that were qualitatively different from those available to him in twentieth-century European, and specifically German, culture.

Now that we know what teaching *is not* and *should not* be, it is the job of a future inquiry to follow a path similar to Heidegger's, which means searching the annals of poetry (which also means literature and fiction of all sorts), history, and experience for ways of thinking differently about teaching. One potential pitfall endemic to this line of questioning is beginning with a search for "*good* teaching," which would place the inquiry on the familiar path towards best practices because it inevitably assumes the nature of the thing that it seeks to attribute predications to. Moreover, if the search for *good* teaching neglects to inquire into *teaching* itself, then this line of questioning prevents all assurance that what is being identified as "good" constitutes teaching of any sort. NCLB's "highly qualified teacher" provision, for example, takes for granted that the ability to get a student to pass a standardized assessment in a particular content area is equal to the ability to teach that content area. To the extent that "teaching" is left unclarified, however, such an assumption is unwarranted, particularly considering that the same bill encourages the use of easily replicable best practices, which would seem to mitigate the need for extensive content-specific knowledge. The result is a logically contradictory set of

prescriptions that would, I argue, be cleared up with an explicit definition of teaching. Instead of "what is *good* teaching," the appropriate, necessary question is, accordingly, "*what is teaching*?"

Furthermore, getting clear on what teaching *is* would entail an inquiry into the "good" inherent in education itself. Such an inquiry would ask whether education articulates its own "good" such that establishing a separate inquiry into the abstracted "good" of education would be superfluous. The previous discussions of the being of wood and stones will serve as examples. Articulating the stone into a temple allows the stone to be a stone not in isolation, not in a mental imposition on formless matter, but it allows the stone to be a stone *in virtue of* the heaviness and magnitude (the "stoniness") of the stone. Miller also articulates the inherent goods of proofreading when he locates the being of the proofreader in an exclusive orthographic concern, one that disregards emotional content and personal opinions. Insofar as a proofreader is a *good* proofreader, they will adhere to this circumscription of attention. Similarly, Walter Benjamin's definition of advertisements suggest to the marketer what a good advertisement is:

> Today the most real, mercantile gaze into the heart of things is the advertisement. It tears down the stage upon which contemplation moved, and all but hits us between the eyes with things as a car, growing to gigantic proportions, careens at us out of a film screen. And just as the film does not present furniture and façades in completed forms for critical inspection, their insistent, jerky nearness alone being sensational, the genuine advertisement hurls things at us with the tempo of a good film.[333]

Advertisements are not thoughtful, critical presentations of events and things, but attention-seeking, shocking, accelerated imagery untainted by scruples, depth, or context. Insofar as advertisements conform to such manic flip-book animation, they will be good advertisements.

Two things must be kept in mind. First, the depictions provided by Miller and Benjamin are not eternal, but fallible, debatable, and temporal. Without depictions of this sort, however,

[333] Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 1*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1996): 444-489, 476.

proofreading and advertisement will remain taken for granted, and, potentially, implicitly mischaracterized through (inappropriate) policy and conduct. Second, in examining poetry, history, and experience, what is being searched for is the thing itself - in our case, teaching itself, rather than the disaggregated qualities or aspects of teaching that suggest that a particular teacher is teaching well. While searching for the latter alone is doomed to incompleteness and ontological naivete, an inquiry into the thing itself will result in the correlative, and inseparable, inquiry into the *good* of that thing.[334]

Knowing where to look for the articulation of the teacher represents a second potential pitfall in this line of questioning. Rouse's critique of Dreyfus suggests that things, such as chess playing and teaching, are distinguishable as the specific things they are through the conceptual determinations that pick them out. Chess, for example, is distinguished from motorbike riding through the rules, physical pieces, possible moves, etc. that constitute it. If teaching is a similarly determined or determinable thing, then it, too, has a conceptual distinction that separates it and particularizes it from other things. Because teaching is not strictly predetermined in a manner similar to board games, its identification is more obscure. Furthermore, if knowledge cannot be characterized as transmissible bits of knowledge passed from one mind to the next, then traditional conceptions of the teacher implied by best practices and standardized testing stand in need of revision.

One possible solution suggested by my analysis is to begin the search for the teacher in the situated, local contexts in which teaching occurs. Gottlieb, for example, notes that "it is axiomatic that a teacher must consider the specific requirements of the subject matter, the needs of the learners, and the aims of society."[335] Insofar as this is intended to be a characterization of

[334] See also Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues," *The Hastings Center Report* 11, no. 2 (1981): 27-34.
[335] Gottlieb, "Skillful Practice," 505.

what teaching *is*, however, it would miss the particular site at which teaching happens. The proper articulation of the teacher is not to be found *solely* in the cultural background in which the teacher operates, the political situation that influences the teacher's curricular decisions, or the behavioral moves that teachers make. All of these factors, plus myriad others, might influence and impose on the teacher, they might vastly alter what teaching looks like, but they are not *the* teacher.[336] These contextual factors, in other words, might qualify teaching as *a* thing, but fall short of identifying the *specific* thing that the teacher is.

Any description of teaching as simply a form of "communication"[337] similarly fails to identify what it is that distinguishes teaching as teaching, as opposed to talking, preaching, or proselytizing. Also precluded are totalizing aggregations of teacherly activities, which, when looked at as a whole, are intended to be an adequate characterization of teaching. Harry Broudy and John Palmer embody this approach when they list the seven "phases of the teaching method":

1. Preparation for Instruction
2. Motivation
3. Presentation of the Learning Task
4. Inducement of the Trial Response
5. Correction of the Trial Response
6. Fixation of Response
7. Test response and Evaluation[338]

Broudy and Palmer stipulate that these phases "presumably occur regardless of the particular style of teaching," and can therefore be used to compare "teaching exemplars"[339] throughout history. Still, because the authors' focus is on the separated aspects of what teachers *do*, the

[336] These factors, in other words, may collectively be what makes the teacher a thing, but they are not what makes the teacher the thing that it is.
[337] Sang-Eun Lee, "Otherwise than Teaching by Artificial Intelligence."
[338] Harry S. Broudy and John R. Palmer, *Exemplars of the Teaching Method*, 9-13.
[339] Broudy and Palmer, *Exemplars of the Teaching Method*, 9.

discrete behavioral actions that teachers take, the list of phases does not provide an indication of what teaching *is*.

The direction of inquiry is, then, the deciding factor in whether teaching can become present for the inquirer. I suggest that the location in which this inquiry should direct its attention is that of the relation between the teacher and student. Though teaching is not *solely* communication, and though teaching might not require an exact, mathematically correlated ratio of learning, what is clear is that teaching requires students. Socrates standing in a field conversing with his daemon does not a teacher make. To become a teacher, Socrates needs a Meno, a Euthyphro, and a Polemarchus. It should also be noted that this student-teacher relationship is expected to be fruitful in some way. The student (if not also the teacher) is to benefit from this relationship, to become more knowing.

My analysis of Language suggests a conception of knowledge as something that need not be, and perhaps cannot be, transmitted from one internal mind to the next. But if the teacher is to teach the student such that they become more knowing, then what exactly is the character of this "becoming"? What, precisely, is going on at the nexus of teacher, student, knowledge, world, and Language that qualifies one to talk about and identify "teaching" in terms of "knowing"? One option is to characterize this "between" as a sort of showing or pointing. The teacher, in this conception, would point to the world, point the student towards the world, or show the student the world.[340] This characterization, like those above, fails to be decisive. I can, after all, show you my new sneakers, or point you towards the nearest toilet, without me having "taught" you anything. That there must be something different and special about *this* kind of pointing suggests

[340] Kenneth Driggers and Abbey Hortenstine, "On the Impossibility of Vigilance: A Phenomenological Re-Articulation of the Teacher," *Philosophical Studies in Education* (2023): 70-80.; Neil, "Approaching Education from the Inside Out (an Interview with Gert Biesta)," *Critical Studies of Education & Technology*, January 2022, https://criticaledtech.com/2022/01/11/approaching-education-from-the-inside-out-an-interview-with-gert-biesta/.

that the characterization of teaching as pointing misses what is crucial in the being of teaching. What, exactly, does it mean to "teach" someone something? It is this "between" constitutive of the teacher-student relationship which must become the subject of future inquiries into teaching. In other words, it is the hyphen in "teacher-student" that should be the target of investigation. Though the present inquiry will leave the site of this between unarticulated, it will do so with the assurance that, considering the nature of Language and humanity, articulating and appropriating the teacher is possible, desirable, and necessary.

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