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RETRIEVING IMMORTAL QUESTIONS,  
INITIATING IMMORTAL CONVERSATIONS

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It is because the *parrhesiastes* must take a risk in speaking the truth that the king or tyrant generally cannot use *parrhesia*; for he risks nothing.

—Michel Foucault<sup>1</sup>

AN INTRODUCTION, AND/OR A PREFACE

In his presidential address, which is included in this collection of papers, Kip Kline suggests that the time has arrived to redirect the work of philosophy of education away from the path of critical theory, and thus to depart from what he described as the discourse of *parrhesia*. Little or no tangible changes in the day-to-day life in schools can be linked to the work of critical philosophers of education, Kline observes, and, thus, our energy would be more productively exerted within other discourses, such as the postmodern pragmatism of Rorty. As an audience member during Kline's thought provoking address, I wondered if Kline's observation and subsequent arguments wouldn't be more appropriately deployed as a critique of the discursive practice of philosophy of education. In anticipation of my own paper that I would present during the conference, and which appears below, I wondered if the matter at hand wasn't so much whether or not critical philosophers of education had made any "real" contributions to the practice of education in schools, but, rather, whether or not critical philosophers of education had made any real contribution to the practice of writing and thinking in the field in general?

And this wonder led me to ask Kline during the Q&A if in fact the practice of *parrhesia* was one that when taken up was meant to *enact* the structural or organizational difference in its very performance. Put otherwise, perhaps critical philosophy of education as *parrhesia*, the act of free speech, or "fearless speech," as Foucault describes it, might be better understood as the enactment of politics, or what Rancière calls redistribution of the sensible, an

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Some sections of this piece appear in the preface to my book *Being and Learning: A Poetic Phenomenology of Education* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012).

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 16. Unedited transcripts of the lectures comprising this volume are available at <http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia>.

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interruption of the normative.<sup>2</sup> With the disruption of the conventional, this kind of critical philosophy offers a demonstration of an alternative, of a “possible world.”

While all this may sound familiar, I contend that it has yet to be understood insofar as it has yet to be practiced. In other words, I take Kline’s critique of critical philosophy of education to accurately indicate a failure amongst those who have taken up the tradition of *parrhesia* to take up the risk-taking venture of *parrhesia*, i.e., to speak freely and fearlessly, or as Nietzsche exhorted, “to live dangerously!”<sup>3</sup> And thus I propose that the time has arrived for *parrhesia* to be enacted as a practice of politics in the discursive field of philosophy of education through disruptive forms of writing that interrupt the conventional arrangement of communication within the arenas, or public realms, where the field is rooted and propagates itself.<sup>4</sup>

The following is an attempt to perform *parrhesia*. The piece that appears below is part of the ongoing effort to take up an original philosophy of education, here and now, through revelatory forms of writing that might best be described by what Walter Benjamin calls “collection”: “The true, greatly misunderstood passion of the collector is always anarchistic, destructive. For this is its dialectics: to combine with loyalty to an object, to individual items, to things sheltered in his care, a stubborn subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable.”<sup>5</sup> What is offered below is philosophy of education as *parrhesia*: thought arranged freely, and outside the current convention of writing philosophy. It is “destructive,” in the sense that it is a momentary interruption and redistribution of the discursive field. And, at the same time, it does not seek to act under an over-arching principle, nor to re-establish, nor reform the field. Hence, it is an-archic. As *parrhesia*, it is political free speech, which, to borrow from Arendt, characterizes it as nothing more, or less, than

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2010). I’m indebted to my colleagues David Backer, Daniel Friedrich, Tyson Lewis, and Mike Schapira from the NYC metro area Radical Philosophy Recherche Group for guiding me to new insights on Rancière’s work, and for enabling me to make connections with my project of ordinary/original thinking and writing differently.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 228.

<sup>4</sup> With the preface I am offering the reader an introduction to the “drama” of the work that unfolds in the main body with the poetic philosophy. It might be analogous to the famous preamble made by Socrates at the beginning of the *Apology* where he informs his judges that he will be speaking in the manner that is natural to him. In other words, Socrates speaks in safe, diplomatic and conventional terms before taking up his defense and speaking with the voice of a *parrhesiastes*.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Lobb der Puppe,” *Litterarische Welt* (January 10, 1930), quoted in Hannah Arendt, “Introduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 45.

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human “action”: “To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, ‘to begin’ . . . indicates), to set something into motion.”<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the piece is an attempt to initiate, to begin something and, here in this context, to begin by re-collecting what has been forgotten so as to renew the conversation of philosophy of education. In turn, while claiming to initiate, it does not claim to be “new,” because it is by design anachronistic. Its form is conspicuously of another epoch, indeed, of the era when philosophy was initiated, and in this sense, as a work of (re)collection it is, to put the matter audaciously (again, *parrhesia* = fearless), an attempt to be an authentic, genuine, and original work of philosophy of education. Working within, and thereby recovering, the ancient form of Parmenides in order to initiate something new. Or, as Benjamin writes: “The genuine picture may be old, but the genuine thought is new. It is of the present.”<sup>7</sup>

The larger project, of which the following is an example, is also an attempt to take up what Reiner Schurmann calls the “phenomenology of the original”: a thinking enacted through a writing that interrupts the present arrangement of the field of work and welcomes the return of “classical” representations of perennial or immortal questions. Thus, the piece is enacting *parrhesia* as an interruption of the current conventions of writing philosophy of education by (re)collecting ancient philosophic formulae: verse, aphorism, allegory, epistle, parable. Like the critical work of Benjamin’s collector, the phenomenology of the original proceeds on two fronts: “it recalls the ancient beginnings and it anticipates a new beginning, the possible rise of a new economy among things, words and actions.”<sup>8</sup> In turn, the piece is a work of “original thinking,” or one that recalls the iconographical forms of the past in order to open up gaps, breaks, and spaces of possibility in the arrangement of words, concepts, and ideas in the current field of work.

To summarize: the form of the piece is a per-formance of original thinking, an en-actment of *parrhesia*. Hence, it is not an “argument” but a “demonstration” of the possible and alternative forms of practicing philosophy of education. Here, in this instance, the demonstration is a reconfiguring of “original” connection between *logos* and *mythos*. That is, the form of this demonstration recovers Parmenides’ retention of *mythos* and *logos* in order to enact the *parrhesia* that interrupts the normative and, in doing so, calls attention to what is established as the conventional, compelling a questioning of the governing forms of writing philosophy of education today. Heidegger, in one moment of remembering Parmenides, says “Myth means the telling

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<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 177.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Schriften* II, 314, quoted in Arendt, “Introduction,” 44.

<sup>8</sup> Reiner Schurmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 133.

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word...*mythos* is that appeal of foremost and radical concern to all human beings which makes man [*sic*] think of what appears, what is in being...*Logos* says the same.”<sup>9</sup> By re-collecting Parmenides’ poem the “form” of my piece is a method or formula, a relationship between the symbolically represented concepts, that is intended to respond to the question concerning the immortal conversations in philosophy of education. To work in a “poetic” form, and to describe this as a demonstration of original thinking, is to describe the writing as not simply a “translation” of an aesthetic experience, or even an artistic expression, but, rather, as an attempt communicate freely in response to a question posed to the community of philosophers of education: Are there immortal questions in philosophy of education?<sup>10</sup>

As Foucault tells us:

The *parrhesia* comes from “below,” as it were, and is directed towards “above.” This is why an ancient Greek would not say that a teacher or father who criticizes a child uses *parrhesia*. But when a philosopher criticizes a tyrant, when a citizen criticizes the majority, when a pupil criticizes his or her teacher, then such speakers may be using *parrhesia*.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not it “counts” as an example of *parrhesia*, the writing that enacts original thinking, which carries the force of critique and confrontation, also bears the burden of risk for those articulating it. And this brings to mind Foucault’s reading of Kant’s essay on enlightenment, where the emphasis is placed on the so-called motto of the enlightenment: *Aude sapere*: “dare to know,” “have the courage, the audacity, to know.”<sup>12</sup> It is no small matter to have one’s non-conventional and, by design, disruptive writing “dismissed,” “ignored,” “rejected,” and rendered “out of bounds.” Indeed, the risk involved in the demonstration is the risk that the writing will, in being recognized as

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 10.

<sup>10</sup> I’m indebted to the ongoing email exchanges with Larry Green, who was also present at OVPES 2011, and heard the reading of my piece at the conference. Larry’s comments and questions after a close and careful reading of my piece helped me to clarify and articulate the theoretic “backdrop” of the piece. The present introduction and/or preface unfolded first from responding to Larry.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> When we replace “know” with “write” we do nothing to violate the spirit of Kant’s challenge. In fact, we may have sharpened it insofar as writing, specifically the kind we are referring to, is exemplary of “scholarship” or public use of reason that Kant has in mind, and is himself exemplifying. Cf. Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?,” in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1986), 263-269; Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 32-50.

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non-conventional, fail in its attempt to create new discursive space. Put otherwise, there is no guarantee that the writing will *demonstrate*, that the thinking appears as “original.” But therein lies the paradox of writing “freely”: one is compelled to take the risk to “say something,” but there is no guarantee that a new space will be initiated. Writing is always a leap of faith that one has readers.

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Thanks to the radicalism of his propositions and the acuteness of this challenge, Parmenides was the great point of departure. Through him thought achieved self-awareness as an independent power; compelling in its conclusions, it unfolded its potentialities and so attained to the limits where thought incurs failure—a failure which Parmenides did not discern, but which he invited with the enormous demand he made upon thought.<sup>13</sup>

Language is also a place of struggle. . . . For me this space of radical openness is a margin—a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a “safe” place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance.<sup>14</sup>

This is what happens to us in music: First one has to learn to hear a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate it and delimit it as a separate life. Then it requires some exertion and good will to tolerate it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindhearted about its oddity. Finally there comes a moment when we are used to it, when we wait for it, when we sense that we should miss it if it were missing; and now it continues to compel and enchant us relentlessly until we have become its humble and enraptured lovers who desire nothing better from the world than it and only it. But that is what happens to us not only in music. That is how we have learned to love all things that we now love.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Karl Jaspers, “Parmenides,” in *The Great Philosophers*, vol. 2, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: HBJ, 1966), 27.

<sup>14</sup> bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Place of Radical Openness,” *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1990), 145.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 262.

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## BEGINNING

It, begins with Parmenides' Poem.  
 It begins with Parmenides' "Way of Truth"  
 This "it" being the immortal  
     Conversation of philosophy.

This conversation that is the  
     Journey of our "becoming  
 Human together,"  
     to paraphrase the timeless message  
 we hear from Gilgamesh, that  
 oldest of epic tales.

Philosophy, the immortal conversation,  
 which recounts, like a  
 grand epic pilgrim's tale,  
 the story of our  
     becoming human together.

This story, in which we all partake in,  
 has a beginning, or beginnings,  
 and one of these  
 beginnings occurs in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE  
 Greece, at Elea, with Parmenides.

Most of you know the tale told  
     by Parmenides.  
 For me it is one of the most  
 powerful allegories of philosophy,  
     the immortal conversation,  
 as initiated by a  
     transcendent moment,  
     a stepping back before  
     moving forward,  
     and of philosophy as  
 a journey of learning,  
     as education.

Parmenides poem, his Way of Truth,  
 Is a tale of a young man,  
 a "youth" transported to the  
 heavens in a chariot  
 guided by Sun Maidens  
 to the gates of Night and Day

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where Justice, holding  
 the keys to the gates  
 is persuaded by the  
 Sun Maidens  
 to let the youth, the  
 young Parmenides,  
 pass through and  
 arrive at the  
     center of all things  
 where he is greeted with  
     hospitality by the  
         Goddess (Thea)  
     who welcomes this  
     young stranger,  
 telling him he has arrived by no Ill Fate  
 but by the Path of Necessity.

Here, with her, she tells him,  
 he will learn of the  
     truth  
 of Being and Thinking  
     unified.  
 Of presencing,  
     existence and existing.  
 Of the Immortal Way of Truth,  
 and the path of mortals,  
 which he must avoid.

The Way of Truth, she teaches him,  
 Is the path of unity.  
 Where all is the perceived in its  
 Proper togetherness together.  
     To think and to be are  
     The Same,  
 She instructs him,  
 and you must think  
     this unity,  
 think the unity of Being,  
 or what I am calling “the becoming of human together.”

The way of mortals, she teaches  
 Him, is the way of opinion,  
 perishing thoughts,  
 words and deeds,  
 forgettable and forgotten.

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The way of non-being.

The Goddess dwells at the center  
of all things, steering the universe.  
She is Eternal  
Stands in eternity,  
Guiding the immortal conversation of thoughts,  
Words and deeds worth remembering, remembered.

OF RETURNING AND RETRIEVING

So this is the poem of Parmenides.

In this tale of transcendence, the  
young Parmenides must return.  
Return to the houses of the night  
with the teaching he has  
received of the two paths.  
Taking up one, understanding  
the other.

We might understand this return  
as the life and travels of Parmenides,  
taking up the immortal conversation  
travelling through the world of Greek antiquity,  
visiting mighty Athens with  
his student Zeno, as we are  
told by Plato in the dialogue  
he wrote in tribute to Parmenides.  
In the Parmenides, we see a  
young Socrates engaging in  
dialogue with an older Parmenides,  
the teaching of his poem  
at the center of  
their conversation.

The sudden appearance of Socrates, here,  
reminds us that the conversation  
of philosophy begins, again, anew,  
with the rejoining of the  
teacher and student, and with the  
latter posing the First question,  
the basic question, regarding the  
teaching, of the teacher:

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Who are you? What are you telling me?  
With this question, the conversation  
begins again.

We hear this questioning at the  
beginning of each school year,  
each semester, and if we  
listen attentively, at the  
beginning, middle and end  
of every lecture, every seminar.

Who are you?  
What are you telling me?

The questions remain present.

I'm not so much interested  
in the grammar of the question  
as I am in its ontology:

What the question says about us,  
and who the question is  
that begins the conversation  
of philosophy.

Who is this question that begins  
again the conversation of  
philosophy?

The Question is identified, recognized  
as the speech of the stranger,  
the one who arrives  
from abroad.

Jacques Derrida in his seminar lecture  
"Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad/  
From the Foreigner"  
offers us an important context for this Question.

Derrida:  
the question of the stranger is a question of the stranger,  
addressed to the stranger...As though the stranger were

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being-in-question or being-in-question of the question.<sup>16</sup>

Derrida goes on to remind us  
of the arrival of the  
question-as-stranger,  
making appearances, first and foremost,  
in Plato's dialogue  
the Sophist.

Here the name given to this  
Stranger by Plato is...stranger (*xenos*)

As stranger, he begins, again,  
the conversation, by being  
the question, by  
questioning Parmenides  
telling of the tale  
of the first teaching  
of the Way of Truth  
i.e., overturning, deconstructing  
the logos of Parmenides.

Derrida reminds us next of Socrates  
Being the question  
Identifying himself as  
the stranger, the outsider  
on that day he defended  
himself, offering his  
apologia in his own speech.

Derrida:

Sometimes the [stranger] is Socrates himself, Socrates the  
disturbing man of question and irony...the man of the  
midwifely question...In The Apology of Socrates (17d), at  
the very beginning of his defense, Socrates addresses his  
fellow citizens and Athenian judges. He defends himself  
against the accusation of being a kind of sophist or skillful  
speaker. He announces that he is going to say what is right  
and true, certainly, against the liars who are accusing

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<sup>16</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad/from the Foreigner," in  
*Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000),  
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him...He declares that his is ‘foreign’ to the language of the courts, to the tribune of the tribunals: he doesn’t know how to speak this courtroom language, this legal rhetoric of accusation, defense, and pleading; he doesn’t have the skill, he is like a [stranger].<sup>17</sup>

What is significant here is that Socrates’ request was based on the cultural and social norm, convention, and practice of hospitality (*xenia*)

Here we recall this hospitality as always present at the beginning of the conversation, we recall the Goddess welcoming the young Parmenides.

Said Socrates to the Court:  
 Welcome me as stranger,  
 as outsider.  
 Listen to me as I  
 speak in my usual  
 strange way, that  
 way you have come  
 to know as mine, so you  
 are familiar with it,  
 although you have always  
 found it defamiliarizing  
 and disruptive.

Hence I have been  
 brought here today.

#### REMEMBERING AND RETRIEVING

Derrida does not, however, recall the Strangeness of the young Parmenides, the youth, changed, transformed and altered, who returns to the houses of the night, where we must imagine he was welcomed back like Odysseus upon his return to Ithaca, unrecognized yet familiar.

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<sup>17</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Foreigner Question,” 15.

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But unlike Odysseus, warrior, who  
 slays the suitors, and allows the  
 bard and messenger to go free,  
 for he holds the song of the  
 singer to be beyond human value.

Unlike Odysseus, the stranger returning  
 as the transformed youth  
 returns bearing the question,  
 as the question—who is this?  
 compelling the question—  
     who are you?  
     what are you saying?

The young Parmenides, the youth,  
 Returns, a stranger, one who  
 Bears the question by being  
 the stranger.

    But his strangeness is of a  
 particular kind of ontology/modality  
     like Socrates later, the young Parmenides  
 has become a question  
     to himself, beginning a  
     conversation, with himself,  
     *eme emauto*, the silent  
     dialogue of the self,  
     thinking.

Herein we recall the strange identity  
 of the learner as philosopher, philosophy as  
 education. Here too we  
     find ourselves becoming  
     human together (on a path)  
 that always finds us  
     discovering and recognizing ourselves  
     both unknown to ourselves, yet familiar.

When we recall the initial  
 return of the young Parmenides  
 we recall the modality of  
 the stranger, of discovering  
 oneself to be the stranger,

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no longer the one  
who others recall.  
A modality, so central to  
the immortal conversation of  
philosophy, recounted again  
and again.

An important example of this  
Discovery of the self as stranger  
in the aftermath of receiving an  
education is the persona

John Jones, in W.E.B. DuBois'  
"On the Coming of John," from  
*The Souls of Black Folk*.<sup>18</sup>

In this tale of a youth transported  
away from his home  
to receive a transformative education  
about the "way things work,"  
the hero, John Jones, returns  
finally to his home town of  
Altamaha, after one final  
"lesson," while attending a  
performance of a Wagner Opera.  
Crashing down to earth after  
Transcending to the heights  
with Wagner, Jones announces  
his return.

Returning home, Jones discovers himself  
to be a stranger to the community,  
familiar but wholly changed, different.

Jones recognized himself to now be  
capable of one and only one  
practice, the vocation of teaching,  
an educator, or one who  
can alter the course of events,  
disrupts the arrangements of  
things.

Jones discovers himself, as  
stranger to be the teacher.

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<sup>18</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1903).

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But he quickly discovers what  
 Hannah Arendt will say later  
 about the difference between  
     education and politics:  
         one cannot educate  
         adults.<sup>19</sup>

Jones discovers this first when he  
 rises to speak to the gathered congregation  
 of his community, speaking  
 to them of what has been,  
 what is, and where they ought  
 to go, together, relinquishing  
 sectarian borders that  
     keep them apart. The  
 gathered congregation understands  
     nothing of what Jones has to  
 say, for he is now a deconstructed  
 son of the community, a stranger  
 to the adults.

But in this state of strangeness,  
 he is recognized by his young sister,  
 who asks him if  
 learning makes one different,  
 and she says she  
 would like to be different...

    Thus he becomes aware that  
 as stranger, outsider, as one  
 capable of disrupting and altering  
 the arrangement of things,  
 Jones is positioned to  
 be a teacher, and this  
     implies working with  
     children.

#### TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE ORIGINAL

So what might we call the deconstructed  
 self now ready to enter the

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<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Education," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1968), 177.

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conversation of philosophy, to teach?

Reiner Schurmann calls this modality of thinking “the phenomenology of the original,” for it “lays bare formations of presencing that govern being in the world.”<sup>20</sup>

Here today as we raise the question concerning the presence of the immortal conversation in and of philosophy of education, we take up the formations that govern our field, the being of a philosopher of education in the world today.

Thus, we raise the questions concerning the possibility of teaching this or that but in doing so we remain too close to what is familiar, and thus too far from retrieving thinking because we remain too familiar to ourselves.

Thus, we must find a way out, a *poros*, a way out of our abode we call philosophy of education—an academic discipline—

learning to speak, write in strange new ways so as to retrieve the ontology of questioning that initiates again the conversation.

The phenomenology of the original proceeds by way of deconstruction locating the right, the gap the in-between, the way out that will also serve as a way back in.

Schurmann: the phenomenology of the original by way of deconstruction raises

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<sup>20</sup> Schurmann, *Heidegger*, 132.

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the question of the  
 origin ontologically  
 or  
 turns the condition of thinking back  
 upon the thinker so that this phenomenology,  
 that receives the same as other  
 the familiar as unfamiliar  
 is a break in the perception  
 of the arrangement of things.

The old appears new,  
 And the thinker as newcomer,  
 learner,  
 the insider positioned momentarily  
 outside the formations  
 that govern the field  
 of knowledge.

Call this position one of transcendence,  
 And thereby retrieve the moment  
 of Parmenides' poem, his  
 Way of Truth.

Transcendence: vertical, first,  
 Then, horizontal,  
 when the thinker returns  
 inevitably, to the horizon,  
 to the field to initiate  
 the conversation.

The vertical transcendence via  
 deconstruction, the outward as  
 upward, the return as a  
 retrieval and a forging ahead,  
 towards original thinking.

Schurmann: the phenomenology of the original  
 by way of deconstruction that  
 catapults us, a transporting transcendence  
 toward a "retrieval of the 'original'  
 would require an occurrence,  
 a happening..."<sup>21</sup> a reversal of our

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 132.

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history, tradition:  
a turning around that moves  
us towards a retrieval of the original.

RE-ARRANGING THE PRESENT

DuBois, in arranging *The Souls of Black Folk*  
sought to disrupt the  
formations that governed  
the field of social knowledge  
by initiating his thinking,  
each chapter  
with music and lyrics,  
specifically the lyric and  
music of “sorrow songs,”  
spirituals, or what  
we might call The Blues.

In disrupting the current and  
thereby opening a space  
for the future, the new,  
DuBois retrieved what he called  
the original gift of  
African Americans to  
the world.

The strange and unusual arrangement  
of his writing moved towards  
original thinking.

What remains, for us, here, in philosophy  
of education, today, is a  
thinking expressed or communicated  
in a way that deconstructs  
the order of things

and thereby locates a gap  
or break, a portal that  
will make way for a  
departure and return.

I began with Parmenides, and so I  
conclude by retrieving a  
question posed by another persona  
from ancient Elea, that stranger

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from Plato's *Sophist* who  
wondered: "Are we today  
even perplexed at our  
inability to understand  
the expression 'to be'?  
not at all."<sup>22</sup>

A question in the form of an assertion,  
we retrieve a rhetorical set of questions:

Should we not be perplexed at our  
question whether or not there  
are immortal questions in  
philosophy of education?

Should this not cause us to  
step back and wonder at  
the formations that govern  
our field, arranging  
what and how can be  
said, where and when?

Should not the strangeness of what  
is familiar cause us to think,  
again, about what we are doing,  
saying, teaching?

Should not the familiarity of it all not  
compel us to move outside what we take  
to be philosophy of education, so as  
to renew and initiate, again, a thinking,  
a questioning, which would evoke and inspire  
learning?

And if we should heed that call  
to deconstruct  
so as to move beyond the  
given,

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<sup>22</sup> Plato, *Sophist* 244a. This quote appears in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and subsequently in Schurmann's *Heidegger*. The movement of this question, i.e., from Plato to Heidegger to Schurmann and, finally, to this piece, is an example of the two-front movement of original thinking (retrospective, prospective).

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will we not “experience the  
perplexity” and confess ignorance  
at what we are  
doing and why,  
and  
in doing so look not to the past  
for recovery, or the present  
for renewal, but to the future  
for retrieval of the  
thinking that will  
inspire learning.

We look to find that opening  
to move toward original thinking  
by experiencing the strangeness  
of the familiar, the present.

As Schumann puts it: “Original thinking—  
the thinking in which  
the origin is understood as  
inception—proceeds on  
two fronts, retrospectively  
as well as prospectively.  
It recalls the ancient beginnings  
and it anticipates a new  
beginning, the possible  
rise of a new economy  
among things, words, and actions.”<sup>23</sup>

#### AN AFTER-WORD ON POETRY AND IMMORTAL QUESTIONING

And so, on our way toward thinking, we hear a word of  
poesy. But the question to what end and with what right,  
upon what ground and within what limits, our attempt to  
think allows itself to get involved in a dialogue with poesy,  
let alone with the poetry of this poet—this question, which is  
inescapable, we can discuss only after we ourselves have  
taken the path of thinking.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Schumann, *Heidegger*, 133.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 18.

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