

# Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain

## GREGYNOG CONFERENCE 2017

Monday 24th July – Wednesday 26th July  
(Monday 6 p.m. to Wednesday 11.30 a.m.)

### **ABSTRACTS**

(in alphabetical order by author)

#### **Academic Integrity and the Dis-integration of Pedagogy**

**Dr Amanda Fulford**

**Leeds Trinity University**

This paper takes as its starting point the issue of academic integrity, particularly as it tends to be understood in higher education. While acknowledging the emphasis in much published literature - where academic integrity tends to be concerned in the main with issues of (student) academic misconduct - I turn to consider academic integrity in terms of pedagogical judgement. I first explore how 'integrity' - commonly defined as rectitude, decency, or probity - is also related, etymologically, to ideas of wholeness and completeness. We speak of integers (whole numbers) in mathematics, and of, for example, the structural integrity of a (whole) building. I use this idea of 'wholeness' to argue that, in a culture in many universities where approaches to teaching and learning are increasingly prescribed – and proscribed – in line with student preferences, and with what passes for teaching excellence, teachers' options in terms of pedagogical judgement are curtailed. This results in what I call a fragmentation or 'dis-integration' of pedagogy, and in a diminution of academic integrity. In exploring these ideas further, I undertake a reading of Polish director, Andrzej Jakimowski's 2012 film, *Imagine*. I consider the character of Ian (played by Edward Hogg), a new teacher at a Lisbon institute for the blind. The film portrays Ian, who is himself blind, working with the students, and introducing an experimental technique of echolocation. In resisting the pressure from the

school's director to revert to teaching the students the more conventional skills of using the traditional white cane, the film raises questions about the role of risk in education, of pedagogical judgement in matters of teaching and learning, and so of teacher authority. However, I show how the film's denouement also suggests an understanding of academic integrity that goes beyond those currently dominant in much educational literature. It resists interpretations that make a case for academic integrity conceived only in terms of holistic approaches to teaching and learning, or indeed in terms of teachers' authority in pedagogical judgements. Rather, I argue that the film shows that the integrity of the teacher (here, Ian) is ineluctably bound to the extent to which he opens up the subject, and the world, to his students. This develops both Pádraig Hogan's (2003) idea of teaching and learning as a way of life with an integrity of its own, and Christiane Thompson's (2015) reading of the film as imagining ways of engaging with the world. It concludes with the idea that the fragmentation of pedagogy is a denial of the teacher's integrity to open up the world. In this sense, the limits of pedagogy are a limiting of the world.

### **In Support of Evaluative Close Reading**

**Dr Andrew Klevan**

**Associate Professor in Film Studies, Faculty of English, University of Oxford**

The aesthetic evaluation of artworks – by which I mean the assessment, based on detailed examination, of the merits (or demerits) *of the form* of an artwork – is no longer a central academic and pedagogical practice. There are many cultural, ideological, and institutional reasons for this, and it will not be the purpose of my paper to explore them. I will, however, given that it is no longer a familiar practice, explain what I understand an evaluative activity based on close reading to be; try to illuminate its benefits with the help of some film sequences; and suggest ways in which it can be re-integrated in teaching and learning.

## **The hermeneutical limits of pedagogical representation and reduction**

**Dr David Lewin**

**University of Strathclyde**

Drawing upon philosophical hermeneutics, this paper considers the interpretive condition of human being. It offers an account of education which understands the reduction, interpretation, and representation of the world to the young as essential features of our hermeneutical condition. The paper explores the limits of pedagogical representation and the general problems of reduction by way of contrasting pedagogical texts: Comenius' 'Orbis Sensualium Pictus,' and the Zen Buddhist training text 'The Ten Bulls'. How do we relate pedagogical reductions to phenomena or experiences that are, if not irreducible, resistant to reduction? In the field of religious education, for instance, how are we to mediate between the simplification or reduction of a tradition, and some notion of an authentic encounter? If religious literacy entails some recognition of hermeneutic complexity, where does this leave the pedagogical reduction? An important dimension of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics appears to be the development of historical consciousness, but this development might also be understood to be in tension with pedagogical reductions. In these contexts, I want to raise the general question of the extent to which reduction supports understanding in education.

## **Risky Subjectivities in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights***

**Dr Áine Mahon and Elizabeth O'Brien**

**School of Education, University College Dublin**

This paper engages the philosophical concepts of subjectification and acknowledgment in conversation with Philip Pullman's young adult novel, *Northern Lights*. Our particular focus is Pullman's central character, Lyra. Precarious in her vulnerability and her unknown significance, we read Lyra as usefully negotiating the dangerous transition from childhood to adolescence. We are interested particularly in the importance of risk and recognition to Lyra's story. Enacting her subjectivity as best she can – against a backdrop of flawed relationship, fantastical happening, and unlikely alliance – Lyra models those difficult-to-define moments encountered by children as they learn to be in and of the world. Situating our reading in a Philosophy of Education discourse, we draw theoretically from the work of Gert Biesta and Stanley Cavell.

## **Aversive Education: Emersonian Variations on 'Bildung'**

**Claudia Schumann**

**University of Stockholm**

The paper discusses Emerson's thought in relation to the German Bildung tradition. For many, Bildung still signifies a valuable achievement of modern educational thought as well as a critical, emancipatory ideal which, frequently in a rather nostalgic manner, is appealed to in order to delineate problematic tendencies of current educational trends. Others, in a sometimes rather cynical manner, claim that Bildung through its successful institutionalization has shaped vital features of our present educational system and has thus served its time and lost its critical potential. When thinking through Emerson's variations of Bildung I argue against the nostalgic appeals to Bildung that the criticism against it has to be taken seriously. Against the cynical assessment of Bildung having run its course, I will hold that with Emerson we can develop the idea of an "aversive education" as a call for Bildung to be turned upon itself, which allows to revive it as a conceptual tool for transformation, drawing particular attention to its political dimension.

## **Leonard Bernstein as educator: Towards an ontology of passionate teaching**

**Dr Joris Vlieghe**

**Liverpool Hope University**

In this presentation I focus on the figure of Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990). Next to being a conductor and a composer, Bernstein was also a television personality who hosted a series Young Peoples Concerts, broadcasted on CBS (1958-1972). In that regard he was a teacher of a mass audience. Bernstein directed the attention of a whole generation to the beauty and perfection of classical music, never giving in to simplification or cheap sentiment, but all the more making people attentive to the (often complex) theoretical and technical dimensions of composition and music performance. On the basis of an analysis of Bernstein's performance as a music teacher, I will develop a particular account of what educating is all about – *an ontology of teaching*. The theoretical background for doing this is the post-critical pedagogy framework Naomi Hodgson, Piotr Zamojski and I have recently developed. I also turn to the work of Alain Badiou, and especially to his reflections on art and education. I argue that Bernstein, as an educator, embodied a passionate commitment to his subject matter (music). His teaching is a

matter of an internal necessity, in the sense that the 'event' of falling in love with music leaves him no choice but to profess, and to make clear, why the object of his passion matters ('fidelity'). At the same time, his teaching puts publicly to the test the 'truth' of the event that defines the teacher as such. Music is, as Badiou wants it, an 'affirmationist' affair – its greatness is not dependent upon any external justification, but is something to be approached immanently. In his performance, Bernstein turns music into a 'thing', which is a gift set free to everyone (in the meaning of no one in particular, which Badiou, provocatively, calls a gesture of 'proletarian aristocratism'). His appearance as a teacher is to be considered as a 'performance' in the sense that it is dependent upon an 'arrangement' of things – viz. a careful planning of each television episode with a precise theme, a particular script, a combination of instruction and live orchestra music, etc. This arrangement is, as Badiou argues, what makes education educational (and which prevents us from falling victim to 'romanticism', i.e. the belief that music is in and of itself a direct and immediate revelation of the Truth). Moreover, Bernstein-the-educator is also a performer in the sense that his bodily presence and his particular gestures (both as conductor and teacher) make all the difference. This testifies to the idea that the profession of the teacher is ultimately an embodiment of 'virtue' in terms of care of the self.