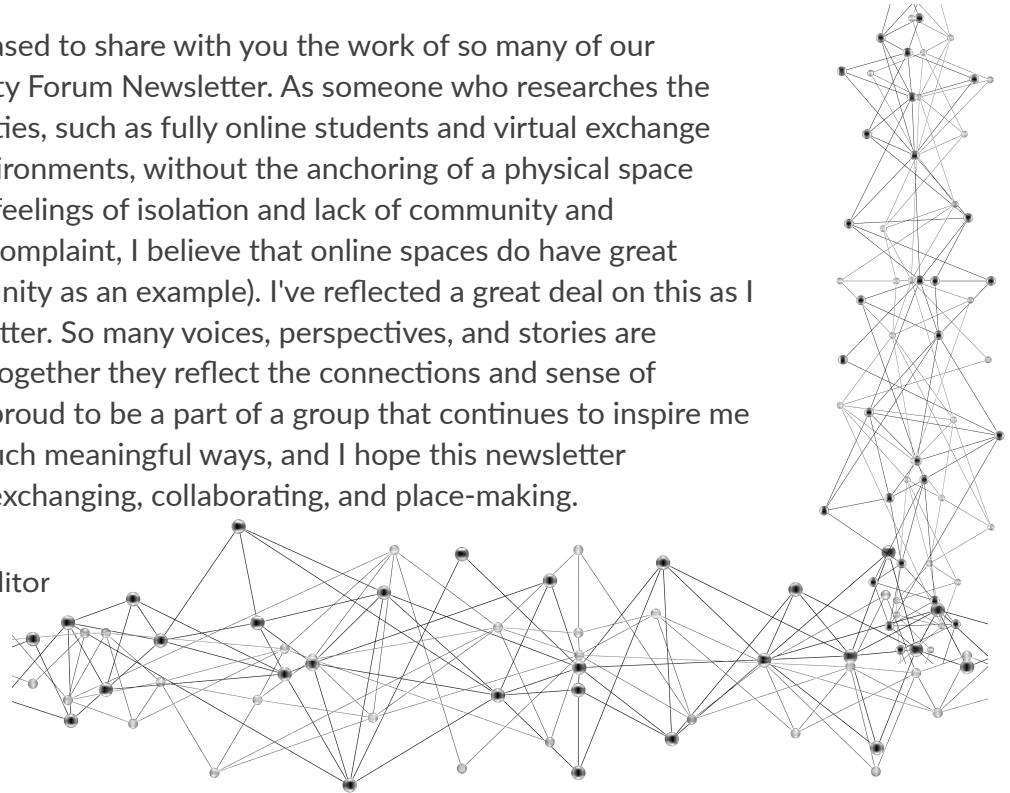


WELCOME

Hello, PaTHES friends! I am very pleased to share with you the work of so many of our members in Issue 8 of the Community Forum Newsletter. As someone who researches the meaning of place in online communities, such as fully online students and virtual exchange students, I often see how online environments, without the anchoring of a physical space such as college campus, can lead to feelings of isolation and lack of community and engagement. Despite this common complaint, I believe that online spaces do have great potential (look at the gaming community as an example). I've reflected a great deal on this as I put together this issue of the newsletter. So many voices, perspectives, and stories are present in the following pages, and together they reflect the connections and sense of community within our society. I am proud to be a part of a group that continues to inspire me to think about higher education in such meaningful ways, and I hope this newsletter continues to be a place for sharing, exchanging, collaborating, and place-making.

Happy reading!

Catherine Esposito, Editor



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Nuraan Davids

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Laugh like a Medusa: Reflections on Laughter in the Academy

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Kirsten Locke (University of Auckland, New Zealand)

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We're told it's "the shortest distance between two people" (Victor Borge) ... the human race's "one really effective weapon" (Mark Twain) ... the "sun that drives winter from the human face" (Victor Hugo) ... one half of "the beauty of the world" (Virginia Woolf) ... the "only cure for vanity" (Henri Bergson) ... a "spiritual and subversive" act ... and a necessary invention given how deeply humankind must suffer (Friedrich Nietzsche). Why, then, is laughter so rarely present within the academy? Surely in the midst of managerial, neoliberal, and performative pressures, we need lightness and release to keep us balanced. And surely our deep work of thinking, reasoning, experimenting, exploring, challenging, and questioning is best done when we are at our most human.

We have been thinking with Hélène Cixous's idea of the beautiful, laughing Medusa, pondering how this character might empower us and teach us to be—and be better—within the academy. Whereas the original Greek legend positions Medusa as sinister and dangerous, turning all who gaze upon her to stone, Cixous offers a feminist re-reading of a Medusa who is fully herself: liberated, powerful, joyful, and unrestrained:

"You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (Cixous, 1976, p. 885)

For a forthcoming book chapter, we commissioned this illustration to help us inhabit the idea of bringing this joyful, laughing freedom into our identities as two women/mothers/scholars in academia. We find it compelling; we find her compelling. This Medusa—who looks, in subtle ways, like each of us—is clearly in the midst of a complex juggle that spans personal, family, and professional commitments. The landscape of her life is serious; the snakes that weave through her world are frowning severely. There is constant motion with a complex configuration of balls always/already in the air. And yet, in this moment, she closes her eyes and laughs. Does she laugh at her snakes? With them? About them? In spite of them? In resistance to them? Perhaps all of these; perhaps none. Surely it is not a naive, girlish, simpering laugh—we could not aspire to this. We don't think it's a cruel, crazed, or cutting laugh, either. We imagine a laugh that has integrity: the laugh of a person whose insides match their outsides and who is fully, freely herself.

We are far from the first to be thinking about laughter in either philosophy or the academy:

Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes ... believed that we laugh because we feel superior; Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer ... argued that comedy stems from a sense of incongruity; and Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud ... suggested that comedians provide a form of much-needed relief (from, respectively, 'nervous energy' and repressed emotions). (Herring, 2020, para. 3)



Acknowledgement: We are very grateful for the skill and humour of the amazing artist, Andrew Thompson, who created our Medusa image.

Nietzsche (1999) explores laughter as one side of an essential duality, with the other side being tragedy: the price of being humans who can laugh and feel joy is that we can also grieve, feel pain, and shed tears. Bergson (1911) echoes this point as he reminds us of the humanness of laughter and its role as a counter to darker or sadder emotions. Bergson also highlights laughter's social meaning as something that both arises and carries meaning and connection when people are together; Bryant and Bainbridge (2022) extend this thinking by pointing out the huge variation in laughter's social functions in different cultures and contexts. In the academy, laughter's social functions may include generating or reinforcing connection, solidarity, safety, and trust. However, as Billig (2005) teaches us, laughter can also be weaponised as a disciplining mechanism to make others conform—a social function that can undoubtedly be harnessed in academic settings.

We suggest, then, that while in one sense laughter constitutes one half of Nietzsche's laughter–tragedy duality, laughter itself is also dual—or, to return to the ways Cixous invites us to think, multiple. Like the many snakes surrounding the Medusa, laughter in the context of higher education has many manifestations, many uses, many intents, many interpretations. It may enhance pedagogy (Chowdhury, 2022) or leadership (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019); it may boost student engagement, wellbeing, and affect (Erdoğan & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Sharma et al., 2022); it may be used to insult or dismiss individuals, groups, or fields of scholarship (Cabrera, 2014; Kanyemba & Naidu, 2022; Pereira, 2013); it can be subversive and intersect with the complexities of identity, power, and privilege (Pailer et al., 2009); and it can liberate or moderate difficult experiences in the academy (Grosland, 2019; Lipton, 2020).

We have found thinking around laughter helpful for our own wellbeing and practice as well as for our ongoing critical engagement with the university. It's made us tune in to where we encounter laughter (or its absence) as we go about our work, and the roles that laughter is playing in the social milieux of the modern-day academy. It has reminded us to keep aspiring to balance, wisdom, and perspective, and it has given us a new vision (encapsulated in our beloved Medusa illustration) of how this might look. We would love to hear what our reflections may have sparked in others!

Further reading:

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Introducing some of our newest members



Robert Curry

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<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert-Curry-2/research>

I am an Academic Librarian and educational researcher. For the past ten years I have worked as Associate Director of Learning Resources at Oxford Brookes University (UK), leading Academic Librarian Faculty teams, Digital Education services and Special Collections. My research interests include how academic libraries scaffold learning across disciplines, including through new technology-enabled learning (TEL) services. For my Doctorate, my focus was a makerspace case study through the lens of critical pedagogy and Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). From this research, I built an ethical-maker-learning concept, Critical Material Literacy, to help academic libraries and other cross-disciplinary workers support ecologically focused maker projects.



A succinct introduction to my maker-learning thought can be found in this recent Staff and Educational Development (SEDA) blog:

<https://thesedablog.wordpress.com/2023/09/06/the-matter-with-digital-literacy/>.

I am very pleased to join PaTHES as I have always approached my work in Higher Education through a strong interest in theory and philosophy, including CHAT, critical theory and phenomenological perspectives. I look forward to connecting with other like-minded educators as well as discovering diverse and challenging perspectives, as we all need critical friends to maintain a meaningful praxis in these troubled times.

Marissa Lally

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Marisa Lally is a doctoral candidate at the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, USA. Her research interests include educational diplomacy, national identity, and history of higher education. She joined PaTHES to engage with colleagues interested in exploring the purposes and futures of higher education.



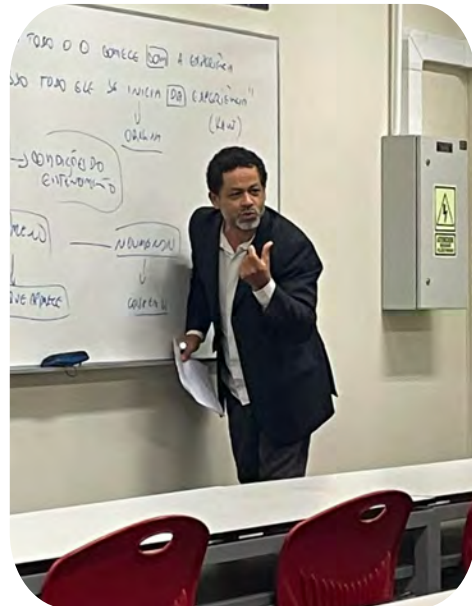
Introducing some of our newest members



Samuel Mendonça

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Samuel Mendonça is a Full Professor at the PUC Campinas, Main researcher of the CPTEn - São Paulo Center for Energy Transition Studies, Researcher of the CNPq, Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, Vice Coordinator of the REDPEEL - Red de Posgrados en Educación en Latinoamérica, and Editor-in-chief of the Education Journal of PUC Campinas. He completed his undergraduate studies in Philosophy, completed a Masters in Ethics at the PUC Campinas and a Phd in Philosophy of Education at the Campinas State University. Samuel is the founder and the president of the Latin American Philosophy of Education Association and the president of the Brazilian Philosophy of Education Society.



"I am very excited to be part of the Pathes after my participation in Gdansk, Poland. I met very special people there and my presentation resulted in many dialogues. I believe Pathes is the location for those who want to be engaged in a special Society."



PaTHES 2023 Board Election

Thank you all for your votes and engagement in the PaTHES 2023 Board election, which was completed on September 18. Your participation in this election was vital for the continuing success and growth of our society.

Get to know our newly elected Board members in the next pages!

Vice-Chair: Carola Boehm

Secretary: Andrew Gibson

At-large board members: Krystian Szadkowski,
Luca Morini, Kirsten Locke



Meet the Newly Elected Members of the PaTHES Board

Carola Boehm, Vice-Chair

**Professor of Arts and Higher Education,
Staffordshire University, UK**

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I am so delighted to play a role in the next phase of PaTHES journey, as Vice-Chair, a role I had the honour of holding in an acting capacity for the last few months

Just a few words about me, in case you have not come across me yet, in which case I would invite you to one of our next events and say Hi!



I am a Professor of Arts and Higher Education at Staffordshire University and the lead of its Research Centre for Creative Communities and Creative Industries. I have held positions in various institutions, including old research-intensive universities, new vocationally-oriented universities and specialist institutions such as music conservatoires. Having worked, researched and studied in the UK, Scotland, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Finland and the US, I am thus able to understand what it feels like to be part of the higher education sector in different parts of the world. PaTHES has also helped with this, allowing me to be embedded in a network of international scholars and supporting my research journey through our collective networking power.

I am specifically proud to say I was a member right from the beginning of the Society for Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education and have been supporting the board as a co-opted member for that time. I have run our Twitter account (@PaTHES_Society) and was for several years the lead for our online club meets, facilitating others to debate and discuss timely issues. Together with various PaTHES members, I was also involved in developing two special issues that emerged from these discourses, one about academic activism and one that is about to be published, about coloniality and “whiteness” in HE.

I am specifically proud that our ecosystem of events and initiatives directly supports PaTHES members in their desire to publish quality articles on matters that concern us all in the Society. Many of these start as discussions and conference presentations, to move on to season themes or webinar series, to finally move towards publication and special issues.

I have found no other learned society is as good as we are in connecting international scholars towards common themes and supporting collaborative efforts to get our critical insights and research into the world. And this can also deal with sensitive themes. Thus, PaTHES represents to me also the formalisation of structured safe-spaces, where we can come together and debate how our sector should/might/need/will look like in the future and ensure that there is the critical mass of critical underpinnings needed to leverage the future we need.



Meet the Newly Elected Members of the PaTHES Board

Andrew Gibson, Secretary

Assistant Professor in Education, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

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My name is Andrew Gibson, and I'm an Assistant Professor in Philosophy of Education in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. Prior to taking up this position I was a postdoctoral fellow based in Aarhus University in Denmark. It was here that I was fortunate to be introduced to the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society by Søren Bengtsen.



PaTHES has quite simply been a revelation to me, as an open community of creative and critical thinkers of higher education researchers who rightly regard theoretical issues as being as pressing as the 'practical' challenges we face. In PaTHES I feel like I have found a research 'home', and so I have been spreading the good news to colleagues and friends!

My aim, if I was to be elected Secretary, is to build on the foundations built by the board and members, to maintain and strengthen the unique culture that PaTHES has developed since its foundation. As such, while supporting the Chair, and keeping people informed of the society's activities, I hope to facilitate the conversation we have as a community about where we go next. There's something special about PaTHES, and I would like to contribute to how it evolves, to help to engage with those already involved, and to help those newer to the society and philosophy of higher education to develop and hopefully find a research 'home' in PaTHES as many of us have.

Kirsten Locke, Board Member

Associate Professor, University of Auckland, New Zealand

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Kia ora koutou (hello everyone). Ko Kirsten Locke toku ingoa (my name is Kirsten Locke). I'm delighted to be joining the PaTHES Board and advocating for theory and philosophy in the Higher Education scholarly field. My great passion is to creatively engage with the way we think, see, breathe, and articulate the university—broadly conceived—as a living and liveable project. I see my contribution to the PaTHES board as contributing to a community of scholars who create space to explore the possibilities of the university as a collective project that nurtures epistemological and ontological diversity through the many public events and forums that PaTHES offers. I bring my interest in feminist theory/ising, music, and quest to resist stupidly narrow conceptions of the university to my board position and look forward to bringing these to bear on what we do as a society. Ngā mihi – thank you.



Meet the Newly Elected Members of the PaTHES Board

Luca Morini, Board Member

Assistant Professor, Coventry University, United Kingdom

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Though my degree certificate reads “Psychological Sciences”, this is only because the founders of that course didn’t think that “Epistemology of Living and Social Systems” would attract many students. It’s this possibly unusual disciplinary framing, further specified by a focus on education and knowledge production, that I always found closer to my academic identity, and that I see closely embodied in PaTHES’s conversations and community.



What I find particularly resonant is a re-centring of deeper philosophical conversations in the Higher Education debate, which has been recently taken up by short-termism and instrumentalism, or by legitimate but often self-referential resistance to those. The depth and breadth of theorisation hosted by PaTHES is most closely represented by the plural conversations around Higher Education’s ecological, systemic implications with its larger contexts, its potential for far-reaching societal good and transformation and its possible distortions.

Aside from this underlying ethos, it’s hard for me to align to any thematic focus, which is exemplified by the plural directions of my involvement with PaTHES. In 2019’s Leuven conference I contributed a discussion of the “game-like” competitive mechanisms in global Higher Education systems, in 2020, with Fadia Dakka and Carola Boehm, I helped to launch an “Academic Activism” sub-theme for weekly and a Special Issue of Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education, and in 2022’s Uppsala conference I contributed, with Arinola Adefila, a presentation focussing on the urgent need of decolonising academia. On a less academic note, since 2020, together with Dagrún Engen, I also curate and update the society’s website.

As board member, I will continue supporting a critical, decolonial and activist stance in PaTHES, so that we don’t just interpret the current Higher Education landscape, but endeavour to find rigorous and collective ways to promote radical and imaginative change.

As a relatively early career researcher, and due to my role in supporting doctoral communities, I will also help PaTHES remain rooted in what are the often complex and precarious materialities of researchers’ career trajectories under the current regime of commodified, neoliberal Higher Education. As board member I will be able to represent less established scholars, and formally encourage more of them to join PaTHES, ensure the development of a diverse and inclusive community.



Meet the Newly Elected Members of the PaTHES Board

Krystian Szadkowski, Board Member

Researcher, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland

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The first PATHES conference in Aarhus immediately caught my attention - as a philosopher by training and a social scientist involved in university research as well as policy work, collaboration with student movements and trade unions, I was looking for a place and people where and with whom I could productively resolve the identity contradictions plaguing me. I have been a regular member of the Society since 2017 and have been trying to successively and regularly increase my efforts in working for the Society.

Last academic year I co-organised a seminar on Ontology and the University for our members, as well as got involved on behalf of PATHES in the organisation of the annual conference. As a at-large member of the Board, I plan to intensify these activities and organise further events in dialogue with the members, as well as putting efforts into expanding our base to include members from post-socialist countries.

I am a Marxist philosopher of higher education, and I developed the foundations of my theory most recently in my book *Capital in Higher Education: A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sector* (Palgrave 2023). I am currently leading a major research project entitled „Origins and development of the peripheral academic capitalism in Poland(1990-2021)“. I work in the Scholarly Communication Research Group at the Faculty of Philosophy, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Poland.



Join us at the next PaTHES event: Academic research in the global knowledge economy: boundaries and power

Eliel Cohen – The Policy Institute, King's College London

November 15, 2023, 2 GMT

with Ron Barnett as discussant

Register at PaTHES.ORG

The global knowledge society promotes the greater interaction and integration of universities with a range of non-academic actors and sectors, especially economic. Some see this as a desirable situation that allows academia to realise and enact its distinctive value and values. But others see this as evidence of universities' subservience to powerful political and industry actors. Does the intensified crossing and blurring of academic boundaries suggest an undermining of academia's true identity, distinctiveness and autonomy? Or is it evidence of the kind of flexibility and porosity that academic boundaries must be able to demonstrate if they are to thrive and survive in an age where universities must necessarily share power and control over the production and distribution of knowledge? In this presentation, I approach this debate through the metaphorical lens of academic 'boundaries', drawing on neo-Durkheimian concepts advanced by Mary Douglas and especially Basil Bernstein, with his conceptual triad of 'boundaries', 'power' and 'control'. I also suggest a future line of Bernsteinian theory-building that supplements his notion of 'power' – which is explicitly grounded in the construction, reproduction and regulation of social boundaries – with Arendt's notion of power in *The Human Condition* (Chapter 28).



News from...

Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education

by John Petrovic, Executive Editor



Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education officially came to being in February of 2017. In fall of that same year, the Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education Society (PaTHES) was born in Aarhus. It was not quite coincidence, but serendipitous nonetheless, and the journal and Society have enjoyed an important partnership ever since. The inaugural issue of the journal, 'The Anthropocene in the Study of Higher Education', was published in April of 2019. The journal has come out three times a year since.

In the Editor's introduction of the debut issue, I noted a number of pressing matters we must face as scholars in the world of higher education. I pointed out and strongly believe that "Philosophers of higher education are increasingly needed to sift through these issues, revealing the contradictions, the pitfalls, and the promises." The journal, with your help, has served and will continue to serve that purpose. In open issues, we have engaged such problems as 'The Neoliberal Logic in Higher Education' (v2n1) and 'Eroding Academic Freedom through the Assessment of Academic Practice' (v2n2). We have contemplated 'A Theory of the Study of Higher Education' (v3n1) and 'A Responsibility to Seek the Truth' (v3n1).

Building on the inaugural special issue, we have worked through a number of important themes including 'Student Being and Becoming' (v2n3), 'What is Studying' (v3n3), 'Academic Activism' (v4n2), and 'Critical Race Theory' (v4n3). Upcoming topics for special issues include 'Coloniality and Whiteness' (v5n3), 'Foucault' (v6n1), 'Academic Solidarity' (v6n2), and 'Higher Education as Public Good' (v6n3). Despite some delays and other publishing challenges, we should all be proud of the quality of thought and engagement contained within each and every issue.

Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education has benefited from authorial contributions of a global scholarly community from Hong Kong to South Africa to Italy, New Zealand, Brazil—among many others. The journal works to bridge philosophic and theoretical dialogues across borders and has enjoyed much success.



The following countries have been represented in the journal: Denmark, England, United States, Brazil, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Scotland, Cyprus, Australia, Ireland, Colombia, Canada

Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education is an international refereed scholarly journal committed to advancing understanding of the role(s) and purpose(s) of higher education. Submissions are informed by diverse philosophical and theoretical orientations, including, but not limited to, critical theory, existentialism, feminism, queer theory, post-colonialism, Marxism, liberalism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and posthumanism are welcomed. The journal is published three times a year in April, July, and November.

Please feel free to contact the Editors directly:
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The importance to me of PaTHES as an intellectual community

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Few people are unaware of the current crisis of higher education. Analyses abound including the political economy of cost and elitism, rightwing hostility to told unpleasant truths, knowledge in silos, and culture wars. Other takes emphasize organizational pathologies while still others decry the disconnection from the world beyond higher education and its consequent loss of support. I have held some version of each one of these views and written about all of them. What I had not contemplated was bringing them together into an overall framework for positive action. This is what my relationship with PaTHES has made possible.

My own relations with philosophy has been spotty at best. Until I found James and Dewey, I could not be bothered with philosophy. Then there my 5 major institutional attempts in 44 years as a professor at Cornell University to build and support transdisciplinary programs, all metabolized into nothingness by the administrative disciplinary dynamics of the fordist university.

In the early 1980s, I shifted to Action Research as a personal solution to my own desires to balance collaborative analytical understandings with collaborative actions driven by basically social democratic ethics. From that point forward, I simply had to find my own way and accept marginality in my university.

Eventually my interest in university reform and action research eventually brought me into the orbit of Sue Wright and the Centre for Higher Education Futures and through Sue, I met and began to interact with Søren Smedegaard Bengtsen. Søren brought me into the orbit of PaTHES, renewed my acquaintance with Ron Barnett's work. I quickly found myself invited into a collegial group of philosophers including Søren, Paul Gibbs, Giorgio Tavadze. Interactions with them have produced many new ideas for me, access to a whole group of thinkers working on the problem of transdisciplinarity, and stimulating discussions.

What have I learned in the process has been very valuable. Of the variety of takes on the problems and pathologies of higher education, no one in particular is wrong but no one alone is sufficient. More than a set of discrete problems, I have come to understand that, at base, the problems of higher education are a knowledge problem that has not been properly addressed.

This more holistic perspective is what PaTHES has offered me along with encounters with thinkers and readings on these knowledge problems I would not have found on my own.

I now better understand mismatch between the complex, interacting systems problems of the Anthropocene and the knowledge schemes built into the structures and operations of contemporary higher education. Complex interactive systems problems require complex interactive understandings and their synthesis of knowledge that is actionable. As it is now, higher education cannot address these problems because it cuts human knowledge into discrete disciplinary bits.

Ultimately, though PaTHES and my colleagues, I have come to understand that, while deep expertise in particular subjects is crucial, orchestrating it into transdisciplinary and actionable understandings is a fundamental and unresolved problem. As a result, I am left with the problem of how to organizationally and philosophically to continue to generate deep expertise needed to address global systems problems without reproducing the disciplinary structures and reward system that make transdisciplinary knowledge/action possible.

This is what I have found my colleagues in PaTHES willing to discuss and work on. While I do wish I had understood this 40 years ago rather than now in my 81st year, understanding better now is certainly better than the alternative.

THOUGHTS

FROM
OUR
MEMBERS



PaTHES and the modern university

DAVID J HORNSBY
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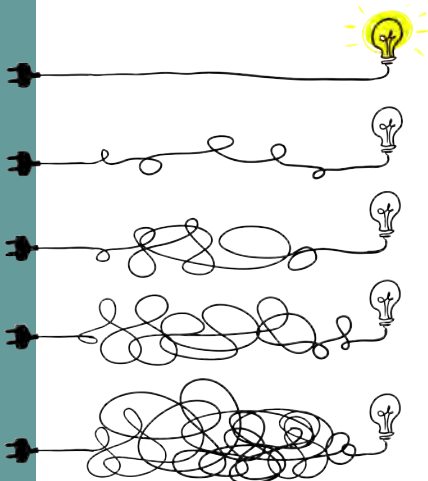
bell hooks once said that “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy.” I’d like to adapt that and argue that the university remains the most radical space of possibility within society. Universities are meant to be sites for societal transformation but to achieve this they need to be oriented and enacted purposely. Universities are not automatically emancipatory places but require careful consideration, design, debate, and principled intent. I say this not to diminish or negate the value that institutions of higher education bring through the knowledge production process. But I do believe that the notion of a university existing simply to serve an intrinsic value proposition of knowledge production has never been fully true across the history of higher education. Universities have always been enacted for some reason and for some purpose, which was often tied to a societal need or expectation for knowledge but not solely.

And this is where I believe PaTHES makes a critical contribution: considering the notion of the university, its role in societal transformation and knowledge production, and its design and intent all which requires debate and contextual reflection. Lave and Wenger (1991) taught us that learning is situated not only in time and space, but also in relation to social context. Arguably so too are universities and it behooves us to reflect and build understanding of the different social conditions that influence university design and inform their principled intent.

As someone who has the privilege to play a leadership role in my institution, I am regularly thinking about the purpose of the university and why we are doing things the way we are. It is critical for university leaders not to lose sight of such conceptual considerations as they influence the architectures (metaphorical and physical!) that we put in place to constitute our university spaces. The existence of PaTHES provides a rich and critical thinking space through which to move beyond the pressures of the moment and to engage in bigger questions and rasion d’etres associated with the contexts from which we emerge. To be clearer (and more transparent) about what motivates and informs our understanding of universities is of real benefit to all who play leadership roles. Whilst the academic leader will never be able to escape the need to react or adapt to changing conditions, the chance to learn and engage with a diversity of conceptions of the university help in thinking through what are, in fact, priorities and options.

To carry on with Lave and Wenger (1991), PaTHES is a community of practice of sorts that brings together those interested in exploring what a university is and means. It does not discriminate on the basis of place, age, stage or conceptual orientation but draws strength from engaging a diversity of participants and thereby ideas. The opportunity to explore, discuss, test and debate in collegial ways, helps academic leaders gain clarity on purpose and intent of higher education. I derive enormous benefit from engaging in PaTHES and can draw direct lines back to learnings taken from PaTHES spaces which have informed my own practice and efforts.

“Universities are meant to be sites for societal transformation but to achieve this they need to be oriented and enacted purposely.”



A Latin American in the PaTHES

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I am Samuel Mendonça, Brazilian, full professor in the Postgraduate Program in Education at PUC Campinas and researcher at CNPq. I have a degree in philosophy, a master's degree in ethics and my doctorate was in philosophy of education and I studied the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). In introducing myself to the PaTHES academic community, I would like to take this opportunity to also say how pleased I am to have met people willing to engage in frank and incisive debate on the occasion of the 5th Annual Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Conference, held in Gdansk, Poland.

I was a founding member and President of the Latin American Association of Philosophy of Education, ALFE, President of the Brazilian Society of Philosophy of Education, SOFIE and I am vice-coordinator of the Latin American Postgraduate Education Network, RedPell. In September, the aforementioned RedPell congress was held in Lima, Peru, and I took advantage of the opportunity to speak, at a board meeting, about the beautiful work carried out by PaTHES and the possibility for other Latin American colleagues to also join this renowned institution. I believe that colleagues from other Latin American networks may be interested in PaTHES' agenda of activities.

In addition to the conferences and debate tables, the cultural activities planned and experienced in Gdansk were very important for those living in Latin America. In fact, it is one thing to learn about a reality lived by Poles through books, but another thing to learn from so many colleagues who were willing to talk about their customs, their culture, their history of struggle, resistance, defense of freedom and a dignified life.

In addition to my presentation entitled *Geoethics and the University: the urgency of solidarity*, which generated a formidable debate, whether because I sought to demonstrate the importance of authentic dialogue based on the book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire, however, I inserted a human difficulty, expressed in a question that Nietzsche asks in his *The Antichrist*: Is there any actual difference between a lie and a conviction? It is evident that Nietzsche lived in the 19th century and Paulo Freire in the 20th century in very different contexts. There was no attempt to compare one author with another or even to say that the problems they faced were similar. No. What I did was problematize Freire's idea of authentic dialogue and I used Nietzsche's arguments in this exercise.

Through these two theoretical references, I argued that Paulo Freire's defense of authentic dialogue presents problems, after all, what can we know about other people's positioning? How can we guarantee that our interlocutor's speech is true and not just empty speech? I considered that we do not have the elements to ensure that a dialogical relationship takes place, whether due to the difficulties in accessing what the other thinks, but also due to the difficulties in accessing what we think, what we formulate.

The idea of controlling discourse or being aware of what is produced seems to me to be a dead end. If we are not fully aware of who we are because we are in the process of changing until we die, we may not be able to admit to others what we are, what we think, what we desire. Much less are we able to capture what the other thinks, wants or says.

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Internationalising PaTHES: gains and challenges

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One of the core departure points of PaTHES is to establish and position itself as a society inclusive and reflective of wider philosophical communities. This means inviting and being hospitable to a kaleidoscope of differences, whether geographical, social, or political. It also means crossing borders metaphorically in terms of histories and identities, as well as intellectually in terms of ideologies and values. In many ways, establishing this kind of space is much easier than cultivating and sustaining it. This is because the challenge is less about how we constitute an internationally inclusive society, and more about how we enact the principles of inclusion.

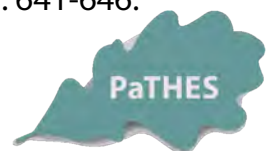
On the one hand, the inherent diversity of an international society lends itself to new forms of engagements, debates, and perhaps most importantly, a break from the familiarity of echo chambers. On the other hand, it also ushers in different expectations, experiences, questions, as well as tensions. These include not only how diverse voices and interests are treated and included in the structural functioning of PaTHES, but also how the society advances the interests and concerns of diverse identities and international communities. Peters (2015), for example, points out that racism rarely figures on philosophy of education conference agendas and papers. For him, one of the difficulties has been that western philosophy itself has been part of the problem rather than part of the solution. And while many would agree with Peters (2015) that of all disciplines, western philosophy has seemingly been most resistant to taking race seriously, we also know that race is not the only overlooked topic. In a world of increasing exception and othering, there is evidently no shortage of what could and should occupy the attention of philosophers of education as individuals or societies.

Generally, disciplinary societies are formed around geographical identities and interests. Most education societies in South Africa, for example, seldom include members outside its borders, which also means that topics up for debate seldom move beyond the local. South Africa is not unique in this regard. PaTHES, however, self-identifies as an international society. Importantly, its success in attaining this identity and reputation relies extensively on its capacity to attract both the membership and trust of international communities. It also relies on the society's openness to not only step out of normative frameworks and discourses, but its willingness to venture into the peripheral and marginalising experiences of certain academic identities.

There are several avenues through which PaTHES can venture into unfamiliar discourses and sites, thereby ensuring international perspectives. On a practical, and perhaps easier level, there are webinars, symposia, special issues in its journal, *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education*, and the locations of conferences. On a more complex and philosophical level, its international positioning is contingent on the extent to which PaTHES, firstly, becomes aware of the disparate nature and realities of international academic communities and the barriers (intellectual and political) which their scholarship encounter both within local and international contexts. And secondly, whether the society sees itself as adopting a responsibility in relation to the incongruity of the world in which we find ourselves, so that it also responds to the intricacies of internationalism, rather than only representing it.

References

Peters, M.A (2015) Why is My Curriculum White? *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(7): 641-646.





En Passant

by Ron Barnett

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‘Can you give me an example?’

I want in this En Passant to explore a topic that has only recently come into my awareness but I would like to start with a personal reflection.

I pursued the main part of my postgraduate studies by producing a lengthy MPhil thesis followed by an even lengthier PhD thesis. I began under the supervision of a rising star who had little interest in my work - in the philosophy of higher education – such that my own motivation level took a dip. Fortunately, that person left, having gained a promotion at another university, and I was given a new supervisor.

That person was Terry Moore, who was quite the most splendid supervisor. Terry was a highly experienced member of staff in the powerful philosophy of education department at the London Institute of Education. Terry neither knew anything about the philosophy of higher education – why should he? The field did not exist! – and nor, as was common in those days, did he possess a PhD himself. Yet Terry was just what I needed.

Terry both encouraged me, and gave me space, but he also imparted a discipline into my writing, which has stood me in good stead ever since. He was also a lovely, gentle and wise person and I have been grateful to him ever since and remain so.

When I started producing draft chapters for Terry, I assumed that one had to write in a certain way, which I have come to regard as pretentious and cumbersome, using fancy technical terms when plain English is readily available. One aspect of that style of my writing then is that it was excessively abstract, and it would prompt Terry to say to me ‘and what’s the cash value of that, Ron?’, or ‘can you give me an example of what you have in mind?’

Those admonitions have had a tremendous impact on my writing. Not only do I try to refrain from using complex words and formulations if a simpler expression is to hand but I try frequently to insert examples into my texts. Characteristically, I will have a paragraph that is philosophical and/or theoretical but the last sentence will take the form of a practical example or a reference to a hypothetical setting, to help the reader see what I am getting at.

I have regarded this way of writing – especially in my books – as a good way of reaching out to and connecting with the reader. I have wanted never to leave the reader scratching their head, wondering what I am driving at (although I am sure that that happens!). Rather, I have striven to provide the reader with textual resources to summon imaginary situations in their own minds and so travel with me.

However, I have become aware fairly recently that the matter of exemplarity is a live issue in the mainstream of philosophy. By and large, that debate is pretty sniffy about examples, raising all manner of difficulties in the way of this manner of conducting philosophy.

(Continued on next page.)



En Passant

by Ron Barnett

'Can you give me an example?' (cont'd)

The overriding concern is that any use of examples in a philosophical or theoretical argument immediately begs questions about the relationship between the abstract and the concrete. Any use of examples, we are told:-

- may be smuggling in an undisclosed normative strand into a text
- is problematic as to their status: are they actually characteristic of the matters under discussion or are they, to the contrary, atypical?
- may be a subtle way of imposing one's own culture onto the reader (and even be a continuation of some form of coloniality)
- have an ambiguous ontological status: are they really real, having their existence in the real of the world or are they imaginary, split off from the world?
- can be a delusory device, produced out-of-the-hat to dupe the reader
- examples always muddy the pitch, injecting contaminating and question-begging material into what should otherwise be a pure text, and so on and so forth.

In short, all my efforts to write well are now undone, it seems, since those efforts are full of rhetorical flourishes, all possessing a highly dubious - if not to say illicit - status. I should never have listened to Terry Moore in the first place. Rather, I should retrace my steps and return to writing in a purely abstract way.

But I decline to do so. For me, there are fundamental issues at stake here in the writer-reader relationship and in the academy-public sphere relationship. To be a writer is to reach out and connect with a reader and one can no longer assume that one's readers has one's own background. Especially in the matter of books on universities and education, readers may be in any country, and in manifold occupations and situations. They are busy people, over-stretched in a crazy world. Why should they be reading our stuff in their arduous lives?

Moreover, the academic world is rightly urged to engage with the wider society but how can we as scholars engage if we do not write attractively and in ways in which non-expert readers can intuit and can see - in their mind's eye - what it is that we are driving at?

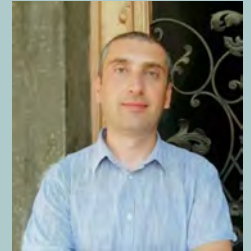
I shall, therefore, continue to use examples and my imagination in doing my best to bring my arguments alive for my readers. Is there not a responsibility on us these days to do that?

Check out PaTHES Occasional Pieces at pathes.org

Places and spaces in and outside of the university

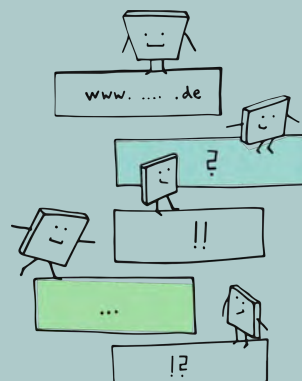
by Giorgi Tavadze
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"A place is also where unexpected encounters and the discovery of the other happen. When we demonstrate openness, we are exposed to new acquaintances, ideas, and objects, which can lead us to perceive the world differently. Through contact with the other, we rediscover ourselves."



The Occasional Pieces series (formerly the PaTHES blog) is a space for members to submit a broad range of contributions in a personal voice. The PaTHES community is invited to use this space to share more from their own projects or ongoing work in a variety of forms. If you are interested in learning more about the series, or would like to submit something, please get in touch with Dagrún Astrid Aarø Engen at dagrun.engen@ntnu.no.

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? IDEAS?



We would love to feature you in the next edition. Please send any items, including letters to the editor and personal news, to: catherine.esposito@gmail.com

