The Pedagogy of Existential Questioning

by

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My thesis examines existential questioning as a method towards becoming pedagogical. I argue that a pedagogy of existential questioning, as an experience of a distinctive moment characterized by growing uncertainty, is the complete opposite of what we understand the role of pedagogy in the culture of learning to be. As a result, existential questioning is uncomfortable and often unbearable. I argue through Heideggerean and Sartrean questioning, that it is precisely this feeling of discomfort that signals the beginning of becoming pedagogical. I then proceed to articulate the process of existential questioning as hopeful, developing my concept of “hopeful despair” and “desperate hope” to argue for the ambiguous and pedagogical nature of hope. I proceed to look at ways in which existential questioning can be “played” in higher education, and the ways in which the uncomfortable work of becoming pedagogical can in fact be full of wonder, gratification and utter delight.
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"Man has such predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic" - Dostoevsky

“But, then, what is philosophy today—philosophical activity, I mean—if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known?” - Michel Foucault

The title of my thesis, “The Pedagogy of Existential Questioning: Finding Hope through Despair,” was carefully chosen to emphasize the temporo-spatial dimension, which I will argue is essential for becoming pedagogical. It is meant to highlight the blind flight and imply a non-linear dynamism that characterizes the pedagogical potential of existential questioning. My thesis aims to understand existential questioning as a method towards becoming pedagogical, as an experience of a distinctive moment characterized by growing uncertainty. This character of uncertainty is the key to understanding the pedagogy of existential questioning as boundless, unpredictable and therefore indeterminate. In fact, it is the complete opposite of what we understand the role of pedagogy in the culture of learning to be. Unlike the common understanding of education as a linear process from ignorance to knowledge, the method of existential questioning aims to sustain the moment of indeterminacy, unfamiliarity, and unknowing long enough for one to become aware of one’s experience and one’s becoming. It is an awareness of ignorance, a contradictory and unusual experience, which contains an element of prolonged anticipation. What I mean by this awareness, and most existentialists would agree, is the opposite of Kant’s notion of awareness as a priori. The kind of awareness that I am articulating in terms of becoming pedagogical, is more about creating a way to see the world as opposed to confirming an empirical idea. Or to be more exact, it is about simultaneously
creating awareness through becoming aware of the falsity of our culturally inhabited knowledge, or what I will refer to as “bad faith.” Existential questioning, as a practice, has the potential to create an experience of emancipation from our cherished beliefs and from what we think we know, and can allow for new and different ways of thinking. Existential questioning, as I will demonstrate through my thesis, can create the possibility of engaging with indeterminacy and the courage to move forward with the critical work of finding meaning in the unknown, pedagogical dimensions that are concealed by the stultification of inauthentic questioning. Not only can the practice of existential questioning bring the inquirer and her inquiry into an interdependent relationship, simultaneously revealing the questioner as well as the subject under question, but it must. Through an analysis of the culture of learning within higher education, I will argue that room needs to be made, or rather, a space needs to be opened up for the practice of existential questioning to necessarily occur. Its necessity, as I will argue, lies in reawakening the essence of education and its responsibility of creating, through awareness, pedagogical moments of uncertainty.

Already, we can see that existential questioning as a method towards becoming pedagogical is an altogether different way of thinking than what we have grown accustomed to in our culture of learning and through our formal education. Because it is different and unusual, existential questioning is uncomfortable and often unbearable. This feeling of discomfort, I will argue, is the starting point of becoming pedagogical. To feel discomfort is to know that we do not know, and the role of pedagogy and education is to find meaning in the unknown. Discomfort signals that we are doing something right, that we are on our way to becoming. It also signifies the deep-seated problem in the culture of learning and explains why
we favour more comfortable modes of interpretation. It is thus “difficult” to begin to question existentially, and therefore, requires some kind of justification, reasoning and meaning in order to commit to becoming pedagogical. Existential questioning is thus hopeless without a willingness to commit. But how do we confidently accept the invitation to philosophize?

The willingness to engage in this questioning is a sure prerequisite. Thus, to begin to question existentially, we must first locate and/or develop a will to question. When can we willingly begin to question differently? Where can we willingly question the determinate and habitual practice of questioning and learning that we have grown so comfortable with? How do we willingly bear witness to our ignorance? Who and what can willingly help us endure the experience of indeterminacy long enough for us to become pedagogical? In terms of finding the beginning of existential questioning, the interdependent relationship between hope and despair needs to be equally and at times simultaneously explored. The pedagogy of existential questioning constantly begins and becomes through a perpetual movement between despair and hope. Facing indeterminacy and becoming pedagogical is a kind of wilful disposition and willing experience that is both desperately hopeful and hopefully desperate. What is essentially characteristic of educational questioning is the beginning of its beginning. In other words, existential questioning is a method that signals and calls attention to the crucial moment in becoming pedagogical: the will to begin. So what needs to happen? What needs to be felt in order to will? This question alone is an existential one as it asks what causes beings to feel the need to search for meaning. This need, as I will argue, is called upon in desperate situations. The beginning of the beginning of existential questioning finds itself in despair.
In the pages that follow, I will focus on the concept of despair as both a problem of and solution for consciousness. To this end, the first chapter of my thesis will look at the concept of despair as signifying two different yet connected states of being, specifically within the culture of learning in higher education. First, I will look at despair as a state of “bad faith,” falsehood, and self-deception. To explain despair as the result of unawareness or the refusal of acceptance, I will turn to Chapter two in Part One of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, where he sketches his theory of consciousness through his analysis of negative attitudes. I will then proceed to look at despair as an awareness of and struggle with facing and accepting one’s ignorance. The former concept of despair understands despair as stultification, and the latter as emancipation. Hope is located somewhere in-between and signifies a moment of transition, the beginning of becoming, and the force that propels the willingness to dwell in and learn from indeterminacy. Hope will be understood in temporal terms; it is both an anticipation towards and movement away, as well as an arrested wonder of and dwelling in. After articulating the despair and the correlative hope within the culture of learning in higher education, I will proceed to show how to desperately question towards hopeful despair by examining two similar yet different examples of existential questioning.

Chapter Two will demonstrate Sartre’s method of questioning as a way towards becoming estranged and facing nothingness. To this end, I will turn to sections of *Being and Nothingness* to analyze what Sartre means by non-being, a crucial element to understanding his method of questioning, as non-being conditions our questions and limits the reply. In showing the way towards nothingness as the flight of becoming pedagogical, I will show how Sartre’s method of questioning and becoming pedagogical is more of an outward movement towards a
hopeful despair, a flight that is methodologically different from Heidegger’s inward dynamism of questioning. With Heidegger, we begin questioning as strangers, with Sartre, we leave the question as strangers.

Chapter Three will put into appearance Heidegger’s way of questioning as a way towards uncovering that which is covered up, or what he terms as *aletheia*. As a method of revealing, Heidegger’s way of questioning is similar to peeling the outside of an onion towards its core. The concluding section to Chapter Three will show how both modes of existential questioning, although different in their *way towards* becoming pedagogical, share the same hopeful despair which locates the moment of transition from ignorant awareness to awareness of ignorance. Both modes of questioning are interested in what occurs during these movements. I will explain how the will to question, whether it is the will to become estranged or the will to uncover what one thinks one knows, is what makes this mode of questioning existential.

The concluding chapter will highlight the path that my thesis took, and is left with the pressing responsibility of thinking about ways that existential questioning can become educational. How can we learn to *engage* in our own ignorance within the culture of learning? Can a willingness to do so be taught? Equally important, and maybe one way to answer these questions, is to understand why existential questioning matters in higher education. My hope is that my concluding chapter is able to show that the path of existential questioning, similar to the critical and creative process of art making, is an affective, playful and aesthetic experience that emancipates learning from its designed and determined boundaries. By looking at
Dewey’s concepts of “doing” and “underdoing,” Nietzsche’s notion of a “release into appearance,” and providing examples of corporeal pedagogy and other arts-based methodologies, my goal is to illustrate the ways in which existential questioning can be playful. I will argue that these methodologies, like existential questioning, can transform the culture of learning by transforming the way we think and feel. I will point out that what is unique to existential questioning is that it provides methods of interpretation that emancipate through play, and that playing with existential questioning gives us hope that there is a practice that we can use to guide us through the indeterminate dimension of becoming pedagogical.

Throughout my analysis, I will turn to Jostein Gaarder’s international bestseller *Sophie’s World* (1991) to illustrate some rather abstract and theory-heavy concepts. Based on the character of Sophie, who undertakes an unusual correspondence course in philosophy, this book takes the reader on a similar journey of becoming pedagogical and illustrates the corresponding affective experience of finding hope through despair. Literature, as I will demonstrate through Sartre’s fictional work and Heidegger’s appraisal of *poiesis*, has the potential to move us towards indeterminacy, into new potentials, and new beginnings. It allows us to play with an imaginary other, creating an experience of meaning-making that moves us along the affective path of existential questioning.
“Sadly, it is not only the force of gravity we get used to as we grow up. The world itself becomes a habit in no time at all. It seems as if in the process of growing up we lose the ability to wonder about the world. And in doing so, we lose something central—something philosophers try to restore. For somewhere inside ourselves, something tells us that life is a huge mystery. This is something we once experienced, long before we learned to think the thought” (Gaarder, 2007, p. 61)

### Beginning the Beginning: Becoming Desperately Hopeful and Hopefully Desperate in the Culture of Learning

The beginning of becoming pedagogical, as a movement towards an experience of uncertainty, should be understood as a form of action and choice as opposed to an invented place or determined point of departure. For lack of a better word, “beginning the beginning” is meant to direct attention to the temporospatial dimension of taking flight, becoming, or being on the way. Instead of simply (and therefore problematically) designating a place of departure from which one begins one’s journey towards knowledge, we need to think about what prompts this departure in the first place. Instead of falsely assuming and accepting the beginning of pedagogy as something always already there, as some kind of immaculate conception, we need to think critically about the origin of the beginning. In terms of

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1 Jostein Gaarder’s international bestseller *Sophie’s World* (1991), follows the events of Sophie Amundsen’s correspondence course in philosophy. Through successive letters from a mysterious philosopher, Sophie learns about the history of western thought from Socrates to Sartre. At the same time, Sophie receives letters addressed to another girl named Hilde, and comes to learn that there is somebody out there controlling her fate. As the correspondence course continues, Sophie must use the philosophy that she is learning to unravel the riddle of these mysterious letters and to escape the limitations that these letters impose. Written in the form of a teenage mystery novel, Gaarder engages the reader in an intellectual game of questioning similar to what I articulate as becoming desperately hopeful. The more Sophie learns and questions, the quicker she realizes that her fate lies in the hands of the “author,” or creator of the story. This realization activates a despair that puts hope into play as she schemes of ways to escape her fictional existence. Her philosophic journey is one of emancipation.

2 Gaarder (through the mysterious philosopher Albert Knox) begins Sophie’s journey with two questions that are sent to her: “Who are you,” and “where does the world come from?”

3 Initially, I articulate this movement towards becoming pedagogical as “temporospatial,” meaning that is a movement that is felt as time and space. Towards the conclusion of my thesis, “temporospatial” will be rearticulated as an aesthetic experience.
existentialism, beginning the beginning is understood as something that follows existence, meaning that the beginner begins beginning the beginning. What does this mean? It means pedagogy is not something predetermined. It is not something that can be set out for display and then mastered. It means that beginning the beginning is undetermined, and as a result, it is not an act that can be prescribed or followed, but rather it is a process of familiarizing oneself with the unfamiliar. One way to understand beginning the beginning, and the ways to begin in this way, is by thinking about it as an introduction, as a process of introducing and the state of being introduced.

In his book The Philosophy of Wonder, first published in 1967, Verhoeven articulates the process of introduction through a comparison between the “extra-duction of wonder” and the feeling of being at home. He explains that one can truly be introduced to a subject or situation only if one is capable of feeling at home in it afterwards. Key to this explanation is the

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4 What I term “Beginning the beginning” is meant to be understood as an act and a conscious choice. It is also a play on Heideggerean terminology and is meant to both show the dual nature of the term and to show the limitations of western language and thought which splits up object and subject: beginning the beginning is the consciousness of consciousness of something. Essentially, it is an act of creating new beginnings through active reflection.

5 I first came across the scholarship of this late-twentieth century Dutch philosopher and writer at a graduate conference on philosophy and education. The presenter introduced his book The Philosophy of Wonder as an original work on wonder, and as a work that is more poetic than philosophical. When I read this book for the purpose of this thesis, it became clear that Verhoeven privileges philosophizing over developing a systemic articulation of wonder. His Philosophy of Wonder is explored as wonder, allowing us to recognize philosophy as a mode of wonderment. In other words, his mode of writing is where we can find his argument for wonder as the mode and experience of philosophy. Like most Dutch scholars, Verhoeven’s mode of thinking was heavily influenced by the seventeenth century Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza whom he references at length in his book. In addition to Spinoza, Verhoeven was also familiar with the work of German phenomenologists and French existentialists who he acknowledges generously throughout. His connection to existentialism is made evident in the titles of his sections, for example: “Wonder and Openness,” “Bewilderment,” “The Panic Moment” and “Dwelling and Deferment.” However, unlike his colleagues, Verhoeven engages with an audience who is not necessarily an expert in philosophy and systemic thought, but to an audience who is seeking something to wake them up from their “alienation,” “deferment,” and “panic.” For this reason, he favors poetic language over systemic precision and paradox over strict distinctions. Perhaps it is for these reasons that Verhoeven has been underrated by philosophical discourse. Having said that, he invites the reader to share with him his philosophical experience of coming to know something. This is a quality that I recognize in Sophie’s World, and is a quality that “begins the beginning.”
incentive of engaging in an introduction and becoming introduced. The incentive of feeling at home denotes the beginner’s initial feeling of homelessness and being “extra-duced,” and her desire to move away from that feeling. Thus, introduction is motivated by a promise of gaining something that one lacks. According to Verhoeven, this is what gives introduction the quality of wonder: it is something that needs to be aroused. Moved by the desire to “feel at home,” engaging in the process of introduction never coincides with being at home. Verhoeven (1972) explains:

...the nature of the house to which the introduction gives access and the manner in which it must be lived in. Some houses are readymade whereas others must first be built by the occupant, and only become homes by the fact of occupation. A person can be at home in the first house once he is introduced there, but this “feeling at home” only attains a certain degree of intensity, roughly comparable to that experienced in a hotel. He knows his way around, but he is not the occupant. In the second house a person is not yet at home on being introduced; in actual fact the home does not yet exist. It becomes a home only when he feels at home there and in the measure in which he is capable of being at home in it. At most then the introduction can merely hope to have inspired the person introduced to make his home in the house (p. 13).

Feeling at home is thus a process inspired by the introduction. Or in other words, the process of introduction is one of inspiration. Becoming pedagogical, existential questioning, and ‘beginning the beginning,’ are not homes in which it is possible to live, for the condition of these experiences and possible practices requires one to be “extra-duced from his sense of being home” (Verhoeven, 1972, p. 13). So what does this mode of wonder mean for education? How does Verhoeven’s philosophy of wonder contribute to other more renowned debates on wonder amongst philosophers of education? Wonder is more popularly understood
as a “state of mind that signals” or a “shock” that brings awareness. What Verhoeven focuses on is not what wonder can produce, but how its movement and modality is a “new” and “unfamiliar” mode of thought in itself. Philo Hove (1996), a contemporary artist, independent writer and researcher on wonder, recognizes Verhoeven’s contribution to understanding wonder as a thought process, as something “situated in the middle of movement...a gap in language and thought” (n. pag.). Hove recognizes Verhoeven’s engagement with wonder as critically distinct from popular notions of wonder, and distinguishes it by referring to Verhoeven’s “wonder” as wondering, as an active reflection within the shock of “wonder,” and as a method of “absorbing the shock that wonder causes” (qtd. in Hove). In this way, “wondering” moves away from “wonder,” constantly striving to be understood. Wondering about wonder is a process of being introduced after the initial extra-duction of wonder.

Wondering, or an ethic of wonder, urges us to explore the limits of our understanding and to begin to learn anew. In other words, in order to begin the beginning, in order to be aware of “being introduced,” we must remain extra-duced in order to be constantly moving away from the feeling of not-feeling-at-home. Beginning the beginning is a process of constantly being

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6 Paul Martin Opdal, a Norwegian philosopher of education, looks at wonder as something distinct from curiosity. Unlike curiosity, Opdal argues through R.S. Peters that wonder is not a motive, but an experience or state of mind signifying that something that so far has been taken for granted is incomplete or mistaken: “Wonder is the state of mind that signals we have reached the limits of our present understanding...this could generate a research interest, a probing into the frames that so far have been taken for granted. Fully developed this interest turns into philosophy, into the critical examination of our basic concepts, ways of reasoning, and our fundamental assumptions” (Opdal, 2001, p. 332). Similarly, Maxine Greene understands wonder through Virginia Woolf’s articulation of “shocks of awareness” and reflects on the place for wonder in her own work as an educator: “I tried to invent situations that would shock me enough to make me see more and feel more...I tried to figure out how to shape language in such a way as to cause a jolt, a deep noticing on the part of the reader” (Greene, 2007, p. 657). Wonder is a process of “signaling” and “inventing,” it happens by us, not to us, therefore it is motive-driven. Wonder is not simply an interest that is further developed into philosophy, wonder is a mode of philosophy.

7 Another way that Verhoeven describes this is in terms of connoisseurship. The connoisseur can never begin the beginning because “he is bound by tenets of good taste which prevent him from being creative...he criticizes instead of enjoying, and talks instead of acting” (p. 14-15).
introduced\(^8\), it is a perpetual action which moves from extra-duction towards the possibility of feeling at home.\(^9\) This search for “feeling at home” comes at the cost of “being at home,” however, it offers a pedagogical reward. According to Hove (1996), the practice of wondering as both not-being-at home and moving towards feeling at home allows us to bear the uncertainty that necessitates becoming pedagogical (n. pag.). To learn to bear this uncertainty allows us to build an:

...attunement to wonder (which) might allow us more truly to hear questions that arise from it, and to respond with sensitivity to the emergence of wonder in others, and therefore has significant implications for the way in which we can be pedagogically oriented towards students. An alertness to these lucid moments of ‘seeing’ may reveal a new richness in those modest, commonplace moments which compromise some part—perhaps a large part—of each day. To be receptive to the persistent possibility of wonder may cultivate a manner of being present for students that encourages ‘true wondering,’ and wonder, in them (n. pag).

Wondering, as a mode of “attunement,” “alertness,” and “receptivity” to “the persistent possibility of wonder,” is a stimulus for learning. It makes us pay attention to the banal and

\(^8\) This perpetual beginning and continual introduction is similar to Hannah Arendt’s concept of “natality.” In The Human Condition, Arendt captures the relation between beginning, freedom, action and birth in “natality,” a term that is central to her understanding of political life: “…action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer posses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting...newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth take initiative and are prompted into action” (Arendt, 1958, pg. 176). Natality, as something that is inherent in our human condition, must be sought out. Natality, as a mode of beginning the beginning is initiated and transformed into action. What Arendt fails to articulate is what conditions prompt this initiative. This is why I find Verhoeven’s concept of “extra-duction” as a prerequisite to introduction more helpful in terms of understanding the conditions that “give birth” to beginning.

\(^9\) This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three where I explore Dasein’s existence in terms of possibility.
“commonplace” moments of our everyday lives, revealing a new “richness” and transforming our everyday experiences. It allows us to begin the beginning by transforming our relations to our everyday world. This transforming is a mode of becoming pedagogical.

To the end of understanding beginning the beginning as a form of hopeful despair, a perpetual movement towards something one can never grasp, it is useful to concentrate on the German translation of “feeling at home:” heimlich. Although there are different shades of meaning to this word, the word itself is of interest because it holds two sets of ideas. In his 1919 essay The Uncanny, Freud explains the dual nature of the adjective heimlich in relation to unheimlich:

...the word heimlich exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, unheimlich. What is heimlich thus comes to be unheimlich...In general we are reminded that the word heimlich is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight (Freud, 1919, pp. 224-225).

Heimlich, to be at home, is also unheimlich, to be concealed and kept out of sight. In other words, to be at home also means to be concealed. Although it is a familiar place for the occupant, it is unfamiliar and inaccessible to others. To feel at home is to be familiar with the unfamiliar. The idea that feeling at home is not being at home, or that the unfamiliar is in fact something that once was familiar but has become alienated from us, is a kind of trade off between meaning and being. I am familiar with unfamiliarity, and am unfamiliar with
familiarity. This trade off is most popularly referred to as the uncanny, “something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (Freud, 2003, p.271).

This “coming into light” as “beginning the beginning” is a moment of confrontation. For example, consider the moment when a stranger walks into your home. This uncanny confrontation helps us to understand the flight and motion towards becoming pedagogical as a process of being reintroduced to what has once been familiar to us. As a moment of confrontation, it halts the process of being introduced and offers a moment of reflection. I argue that the process of familiarizing oneself with the unfamiliar (or reacquainting oneself with that which has been concealed from us) begins as a conscious choice to move away from the despair of being extra-duced towards the hopeful feeling of being at home. To be conscious of this process and understand it as a choice requires sudden confrontations with the uncanny. These confrontations signal that we are becoming familiar with the unfamiliar.

Certainly, becoming familiar is mixed with unfamiliarity, and it is different from uncritical notions of “being familiar.” Becoming familiar “leads to something, sets somebody in motion, may even startle him...It has to be aroused” (Verhoeven, 1972, p. 13).

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10 Plato’s metaphysics describe this process in similar terms. As described in The Allegory of the Cave (2007), the intellectual journey of stepping out of the cave, as a movement towards the unfamiliar, is a painful one as it requires the cave dweller to learn to see his familiar world in a new light. This confrontation with the blinding light is similar to an uncanny confrontation in the way that it signals an introduction, and signals that we are well on the way of beginning the beginning.

11 This is similar to Julia Kristeva’s concept of the abject as the liminal space between object and subject. In her book Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982), Kristeva locates this space as being on the border between the familiar and the unfamiliar. However, she does not articulate the abject as a process, but rather, as foreign place that is located in all of us, a “radical exclusion where meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2)

12 The following section will explore this uncritical feeling of being familiar as a product of “the culture of learning” and “general education.”
But how do we begin to begin? What has to happen in order to introduce oneself to the act of becoming familiar with the unfamiliar? How does one arouse the beginning required to becoming pedagogical? As Verhoeven suggests, the despair that comes from being extra-duced moves us towards being at home. This movement is what I will refer to as a *hopeful despair* and desperate hope, an affective event which perpetually moves towards feeling at home but is never at home. A hopeful despair is located in a perpetual exile and desire to be at home. The pedagogical potential lies in creating a home in exile, on the border between the familiar and the unfamiliar. This requires a will to begin, and subsequently, a faith in the will to begin. As an act of desire, the will to begin creates a new beginning within a desperate situation. If we understand a desperate situation as “being-extraduced” and beginning the beginning as a process of becoming introduced, then we can locate a hopeful despair between the boundaries of the familiar and the unfamiliar. A hopeful despair is thus feeling at home in exile. It is a home that the beginner has created. It is porous and is constantly threatened by the unfamiliar. It is this threat that leaves the home open, porous and exposed to the blinding light of introduction.

So we have to think about a desperate situation as something different from what we are accustomed to. It is not to be confused with a tragedy or accident, which is certainly full of despair. Desperate situations do not happen to us in the way accidents do. They are created by us. They are willed by us in order to begin the beginning. To create a desperate situation is

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13 The will to begin in a desperate situation is a topic that is examined in depth in Holocaust literature. For example, Viktor Frankl’s book *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2006) explores the will to meaning (as opposed to Nietzschean will to power or Freudian will to pleasure) as the ability to change a situation by changing ourselves.

14 Hubert Dreyfus’s interpretation of Heidegger understands this exile as being at the heart of the human condition and authentic existence, and that our discontent with this “radical anxiety, unhomeliness and estrangement” makes us turn away from it and deny it through inauthentic and escapist modes of exiting (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 37).
to begin to question towards uncertainty. The “beginning of the beginning” is therefore a choice and willingness to see/feel/think differently.

Like the dualistic meaning of the term heimlich, what I will call the “culture of learning” can be understood both as a kind of house in which we feel at home and also as a place in which we feel uncannily estranged. The potential for feeling at home in the culture of learning lies in the practice of acquiring and mastering mandated modes and patterns of knowledge. It is this practice that Verhoeven (1972) understands as being the opposite of what philosophy does, and instead, is something that leads to what he calls “general education:”

...General education wants to know immediately, no matter how; and all it wants is to know, to get results. It is not interested in the way these results are achieved. It presupposes the absence of any form of wonder or even of curiosity. Its motives lie outside things and outside the subject. They are handed on in splendid isolation by a social code in which, by an interesting process, knowledge has somehow become power and thus influence and prestige (p. 16).

There are two features in this passage that stand out: the what of general education and the how of general education. According to Verhoeven, the content of a general education is result-oriented as opposed to process-based. As a result, the knowledge that one acquires from a general education is a form of “power” and simply asserts prescribed forms of knowledge and knowing. This prescribed form of knowledge is “handed on in splendid isolation

Verhoeven’s term “general education” is not meant to reference a particular educational system and does not relate to a kind of “schooling,” but rather, it is meant to denote a way of knowing that reflects the values “of the organization and institutionalization of culture” (Verhoeven, 1972, p.16). Considering the social and cultural uprisings of the 1960’s and 1970’s, general education can be understood as a term that criticizes organized culture.
by a social code.” It is this form of knowledge and knowing that the practice of beginning the beginning challenges. “The culture of learning,” which more often than not takes on the form of general education, generates modes of learning and modes of knowing that are meant to be mastered and made familiar. But this is only one potential of the culture of learning. As a site that generates knowledge and modes of learning, and a place that practices familiar and predetermined modes of knowing, it holds great potential for “extra-duction,” allowing one to create a desperate situation. In providing limits to learning, it inherently provides a place from which one can escape towards a practice of wondering. The culture of learning, as something familiar, provides the beginner with a space from which to create a desperate situation, a precedent to becoming pedagogical.

By introducing the concept of “beginning the beginning” before critically engaging with and defining what I mean by “the culture of learning,” my goal is to understand the latter in terms of lacking the former. In other words, in exploring the process of becoming introduced to the unfamiliar, a process which creates a desperate situation that one desires to move away from, I hope to show how “the culture of learning” has the potential to “extra-duce” us from our familiar modes of knowing and inspire us to learn anew. To this end, the first section will define the culture of learning as a place of dual potentiality, as a dialectical space and place that has the potential for both despair and hope. I will argue that this dual potentiality can be felt and is the aiding tool for understanding that we are moving towards the unfamiliar. The second section will examine how an uncritical attitude in the culture of learning has the potential to cause despair and a state of “bad faith,” falsehood and self deception that is void of any feeling of and potential for hope. The third section will reveal how the state of despair, a mode of
being and a disposition which results from the unwillingness to admit to one’s feeling of “not feeling at home,” is a site where the beginner has the potential to understand her desperate situation from which a hopeful despair is opened up. The concluding section will locate the moment of transition from being desperate to feeling desperately hopeful, the educative moment when beginning begins, within existential praxis. In this section, I will explain why existentialism and existential questioning, as a method of recording (and thus understanding) the feeling of transition towards becoming unfamiliar, is crucial to developing an emancipatory practice within the culture of learning.

What is the Culture of Learning?: Questioning the Phenomenon of Education

So what exactly do I mean by the culture of learning? One way to think about it is in terms of space, a particular location where learning takes place. To this end, many places come to mind. In fact, it can be argued that the culture of learning is everywhere. From advertisements to tabloids, museums to galleries, hospitals to nursing homes, shopping malls to grocery stores, the culture of learning as a place that offers predetermined ways and methods of reading, looking, knowing and consuming, offers us a feeling of being at home. But how do these places “offer” particular ways of learning? The best way to explore this question is to first ask: what is culture? If we look at historical and disciplinary notions of “culture,” we can

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16 Inherent in this question is the question of beginning. In Sophie’s World, Sophie reflects upon the question “where does the world come from? It was possible that space had always existed, in which case she could not also need to figure out where it came from. But could anything have always existed? Something deep down inside her protested at the idea. Surely everything that exists must have had a beginning?” (p. 9).
17 Althusser refers to these sites of pedagogy as “State Ideological Apparatuses” (Althusser, 2007, p. 79).
18 This feeling of being at home is a passive understanding and resists the pedagogical potential of being “exiled.”
recognize that culture is in fact something that has been and continues to be contested. Culture has been understood as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society” (Tylor, 1871, p. 41). Since these kinds of early understandings, culture as a “complex whole” has been questioned and scrutinized through different approaches and by various thinkers. With its growing role in contemporary life, our cultural environment has become the site through which we can understand and consequently control our lives (Durham and Kellner, 2006, p. xi). The different theoretical and methodological approaches towards understanding culture, and consequently, our cultural environment, is too wide-ranging for me to explore within the constraints of this thesis. To this end, I will focus on a specific school of thought which will help me to articulate the dual potentiality of the “culture of learning.”

The culture of learning, as I am attempting to articulate, is a place of dual potentiality, a dualism that is situated within a dialectical relationship between despair and hope, extrduction and introduction, feeling at home and being at home, heimlich and unheimlich. The “culture of learning” as a place of dual potentiality is therefore best articulated through a neo-Marxist understanding of culture and ideology, an understanding which comes from a dialectical analysis of culture and ideology. This specific approach to structural analysis of culture highlights the ways in which culture functions as an ideological apparatus as well as the ways in which culture is a product of social interactions. In showing how cultures flows between structures of power and class, we can begin to understand culture as something that

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19 Edward B. Tylor, a late nineteenth century English anthropologist, understood culture as something universal, therefore refusing the theory of degeneration (a social theory of evolution that believed human development was no longer fixed and certain) which was popular in anthropology studies at the time.
creates limits to the ways we engage with learning, as well as something that has the potential to begin the beginning.

In order to explore neo-Marxist articulations of the “culture of learning,” it is essential that we first understand Marx’s and Engels’ definition of ideology and their analysis of cultural production. In *The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas*, Marx and Engels (1845/1976) understand ideology as “dominant material relations grasped as ideas:”

...The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it...The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations. The dominant material relations grasped as ideas (p. 59).

In this opening passage, Marx and Engels show how the ruling ideas (ideology) are dependent on class relations. In other words, in order for ruling ideas to exist, one class must dominate another. Thus, ruling ideas are dependent on a class that “lacks the means of mental production,” a class which in turn is subject to it and reproduces it “because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves” (60). This critique of bourgeois ideology reveals ideology’s dependence on the dominance over a class who sustains the ruling ideas through reproduction. In other words, ruling ideas are sustained, through a false consciousness, by the “non-ruling” class. Further,
This passage suggests that culture, as a mental production, happens at the level of the ruling class through the means of production that happens at the level of the non-ruling class:

...This whole appearance, that the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas, comes to a natural end, or course, as soon as class rule in general ceases to be the form in which society is organised, that is to say, as soon as it is no longer necessary to represent a particular interest as general or the “general interest” as ruling (p. 61).

This passage highlights two concepts that help me to articulate the “culture of learning.”

Firstly, Marx and Engels recognize ideology, “the rule of certain ideas,” as an appearance. In other words, ideology is not an absolute truth, but a kind of phenomenon,20 a form in which society is organized. The culture of learning, as “the rule of certain ideas,” and as a form that organizes human activity, has the potential to create false consciousness. In fact, it relies on this false consciousness to sustain its dominance. Secondly, this passage shows that culture is a “particular interest as general” or the “general interest as ruling” and that it is a “form in which society is organized.” Further, the “appearance of culture” as “the rule of certain ideas,” changes depending on the particular interest of the ruling class. Culture is thus something that is produced at the bottom and practiced at the top.21 Marx’s structural analysis of culture shows the ideological function of culture. In assigning culture as a production of ideas that happens exclusively at the level of the ruling class, Marx’s analysis of culture does not articulate

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20 Phenomenon is another word that I am using to interpret Marx’s articulation of “the appearance of ruling ideas.”
21 In Raymond William’s (1980) analysis of Marx’s *Grundrisse* (1939), he rearticulates Marx’s illustration of different modes of production: “...the man who makes a piano is a productive worker...Yet when it comes to the man who plays the piano, whether to himself or to others, there is no question: he is not a productive worker at all. So piano-maker is base, but pianist superstructure. As a way of considering cultural activity, and incidentally the economics of modern cultural activity, this is very clearly a dead-end” (p. 133).
the dual potential of the culture of learning. In his structural analysis, culture does not flow, but rather, it remains static and a symbol of dominant culture. According to neo-Marxist scholars, the interdependent relationship between “ruling ideas” and the “non-ruling class” is overlooked precisely because the existential situation of the “non-ruling” class is overlooked.

Raymond Williams (2007) understands this oversight as being perpetuated throughout Marxist critical analysis and locates it within the misunderstanding of the word “determine” which misunderstands the relationship between the “Base” (“non-ruling class”) and the “Superstructure” (“ruling class/ideas”):

...in the transition from Marx to Marxism and in the development of mainstream Marxism itself, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure has been commonly held to be the key to Marxist cultural analysis...the term of relationship which is involved, that is to say “determines,” is of great linguistic and theoretical complexity...it is fair to say, looking at many applications of Marxist cultural analysis, that the notion of prefiguration, prediction or control has often explicitly or implicitly been used (p. 130).

The popular understanding of “determine” as an act of prefiguration, prediction and control plays a big role in our understanding of the relationship between the base and superstructure, and as a result, affects the way we (mis)understand Marxist analysis of culture. According to Williams, this misunderstanding of the term of relationship designates the “superstructure” as

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22 Neo-Marxism is a critical engagement with Marxist theories, and Marxist theories are interpretations of Marx’s theories. For example, Raymond Williams critically engages with Marxist cultural analysis and Marxist interpretations of Marx.
the place of cultural activity, which means that the base has come to be considered as an object, “in essentially uniform and usually static ways “(p. 132). For this reason, the relationship between the two has been understood as a model of totality which describes culture as happening within the “superstructure” using the products produced at the “base.”

Through this analysis, Williams argues that the relationship between the two is far more complex, that in fact, culture circulates. This circulation of culture allows us to understand the dual potential of the culture of learning. According to Williams, in order to revalue this relationship as “determination,” we must revalue the “base:”

...away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction and towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process (p. 132).

It is within these social activities, which contain “contradictions” and “variations,” where “dominant systems of meaning” are “organized and lived” (p. 135). It is here that culture can be understood; it is on this level where the “ruling ideas” are played: “we can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social process on which it depends” (p. 136). He calls this process “incorporation.” This mode of incorporation is a mode of culture that sustains and reproduces the dominant ideas. To this end, if we want to understand culture, we have to understand it on the level that it is practiced.

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23 William provides us with Marx’s example of the piano and the pianist to illustrate his critique: “…the man who makes a piano is a productive worker…the man who plays the piano, whether to himself or to others, there is no question: he is not a productive worker at all. So piano-maker is base, but pianist superstructure” (Williams, 2007, p. 133).
Williams’ criticism of Marxist cultural analysis shows the potential of the “superstructure” revealing itself as merely an appearance that depends on the base. In terms of the culture of learning, this analysis of culture as something that happens in the act of living dominant ideas shows the potential for the culture of learning to be a place of emancipation. In other words, the culture of learning can be revealed to us through a reflection on the activities that happen within it. Yet in other words, the process of incorporation within the culture of learning has the potential to reveal to us the dominant ideas that control our learning, and to reveal to us that we participate in our own domination. Thus, to reflect on the process of incorporation that we take part in, we can begin to feel unfamiliar in the familiar and begin to hope in despair. Although Williams’ analysis allows us to begin to think about this potential, he falls short on articulating the transformative potential of incorporation. To understand ways to act on the process of incorporation, to understand the process of incorporation as both a place of despair and a place of hope, it is important to look at it in the context of an ideological apparatus where dominant ideas are recycled within culture. This is what is so unique about the culture of learning: it has the potential to be unlearned. To this end, we should look at a couple of examples of critical pedagogy which help articulate the transformative potential of developing hope in despair.

In his book *Life in Schools* (1984/1989), Peter McLaren surveys the emergence of critical pedagogy as a “radical theory and analysis of schooling” through which “new categories of inquiry and new methodologies” are developed (p. 168). He defines critical pedagogy as

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24 Louis Althusser defines Ideological State Apparatuses as ideologies of ideology, “a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (Althusser, 2007, p. 79).
challenging the “often uncontested relationship between school and society...critical theorists are dedicated to the emancipatory imperatives of self-empowerment and social transformation” (p. 189). According to McLaren, critical pedagogues ask the question what it means “to be schooled” and the ways in which liberal democracy and its privileging of individualism and autonomy at the expense of social engagement affect ways of knowing and perpetuate social injustice. Thus, similar to neo-Marxist critique of Marxist structural analysis and concern for the “flow” of culture, critical pedagogues seek to empower and transform the social conditions of subordinated and marginalized groups. They do so by questioning and thus revealing the ideological function of school curricula, knowledge and policy. Critical pedagogues, like neo-Marxists, seek to articulate the dual potential of the culture of learning, demonstrating that the key to emancipatory learning is in questioning the ways in which learning in general or general knowledge get in the way of this emancipation. Thus, the culture of learning has the potential of indoctrinating students with dominant ideologies which perpetuate inequalities, but also has the potential to be transformed through critical questioning.

Critical questioning can disrupt the symbolic action of incorporation that takes place within education, and can begin to search for meaning, a search that takes place when the familiar becomes unfamiliar. McLaren recognizes this potential for transformation within a cultural political approach to curriculum “by which students learn to question and selectively

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25 This is also an example of dialectical thinking which is used by critical theorists and is defined by McLaren (1998) as a way of helping us focus “simultaneously on both sides of social contradiction” (p. 193). He cites Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis to describe dialectical thinking: “Dialectical thinking involves searching out...contradiction...it is an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth between elements like part and whole, knowledge and action, process and product, subject and object, being and becoming, rhetoric and reality, or structure and function” (p. 193-194).
appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming, rather than merely serving, the wider social order” (p. 1914). This search is a pedagogical one where we can perform our own self-emancipation (Freire, 2010, p. 50).

One way to begin to think about the dual potentiality of the culture of learning is to consider how and why this duality is “difficult” to understand. What is it about the culture of learning that reiterates stultifying modes of understanding? What is it about the culture of learning that resists the potential for emancipation and a hopeful despair? Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman (2003) explore what makes knowledge difficult and how to narrate this “difficult knowledge,” or in other words, how to reflect on the experience of difficult knowledge so that it is hopeful rather than desperate, through psychoanalysis. According to Pitt and Britzman, knowledge is difficult “when one faces new knowledge that requires something significant of the learner” and that this face-off is “felt before it can be understood” (p. 758). Thus, it is difficult because it cannot be understood and is difficult to narrate. Difficult knowledge, like poetry, “resists interpretation,” and “this struggle is an important aspect of experiencing the strange demands of that (knowledge)” (p. 757). Difficult knowledge is difficult because there is a “gap between experiencing (it) and recounting its meaning” (p. 757). In terms of the culture of learning, to dismantle the ways in which dominant ideas are incorporated through questioning while at the same time finding meaning within this process, is difficult to do. It is difficult because it is unfamiliar but struggles to become familiar through narration. The hope lies in the pedagogical potential of the struggle to narrate and to engage with the despair of the unfamiliar.
The culture of learning is both a place where learning takes place and where culture is generated through interpretations of that place. But we have to do the work to bring out the potential of the culture of learning so that it does not generate meaning for us. We have to generate meaning from it, no matter how difficult it may feel, or else the culture of learning will remain as a place that creates paths of “learning,” where its only potential is in reiterating patterns of understanding, which consequently limits learning. So when I use the term culture of learning, it implies both the stultifying potential of culture and the emancipatory potential of learning. The culture of learning has the potential to “do learning” for us through the process of incorporation (where we engage in our own oppression), a mode which has the potential to be understood, offering new ways of questioning, and understanding what we know and how we come to know. The culture of learning can therefore be something positive or negative, emancipatory or stultifying, creative or predetermined. The culture of learning, as a place that is “already knowing,” “comfortable,” and “taken for granted,” has the potential to become “not knowing,” “uncomfortable,” and “reordered.” The first phenomenon of the

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26 Ivan Illich (1971) understands this path of “learning” as “schooling,” where students who have been “schooled down to size let unmeasured experience slip out of their hands. To them, what cannot be measured becomes secondary, threatening ... Under instruction, they have unlearned to “do” their thing or “be” themselves, and value only what has been made or could be made” (p. 23).

27 An important point needs to be stressed here in terms of the potential for dual potentiality, or transformative potential. The ability to open up the dual potential of the culture of learning lies in activating our ignorance and oppression through questioning in a way that does not simply reproduce new forms of oppression. McLaren (1998) explains: “...the passion for ignorance that has infected our culture demands a complex explanation... Ignorance, as part of the very structure of knowledge, can teach us something. But we lack the critical construct with which to recover that knowledge which we choose not to know” (p. 196).

28 Stuart Hall and James Donald view ideology in a similar way. They define ideology as “the frameworks of thought which are used in society to explain, figure out, make sense of or give meaning to the social and political world... without these frameworks, we would not make sense of the world at all. But with them, our perceptions are inevitably structured in a particular direction by the very concepts we are using” (Donald and Hall, 1986, ix-x). Similarly, Giroux defines ideology as “the production, consumption, and representation of ideas and behavior, which can either distort or illuminate the nature of reality. As a set of meanings and ideas, ideologies can be either coherent or contradictory; they can function within the spheres of both consciousness and unconsciousness; and, finally, they can exist at the level of critical discourse as well as within the sphere of taken-for-granted lived experience and practical behavior” (Giroux, 1983, p. 145).
culture of learning is passive, whereas the latter is active. Both have elements of despair, but it is the latter, in its action and movement, that is hopeful. So at the core of understanding what I mean by the culture of learning, is the transformative potentiality that the culture of learning has to offer. But to understand both the stultifying and the emancipating potential of the culture of learning, we must understand them in relation to one another. Key to articulating this transition is to locate where emancipatory learning begins and how to sustain this “transition” so that it becomes a perpetual movement. As I explored earlier in the chapter and will continue to do throughout, this transition happens between two modes of being in the culture of learning.

In his analysis of the postmodern condition, Frederic Jameson offers a way of articulating the dual potentiality of the culture of learning, and allows us to understand our

29 The two phenomena are interdependent in their dialectical relationship. This dialectical view of the culture of learning is one of the main principles that underlie a critical pedagogy. According to Antonia Darder, “a dialectical view stresses the power of human activity and human knowledge as both a product and a force in shaping the world” (Darder, 2005, p. 92).

30 To move from despair to a hopeful despair begins with ideology, or a framework of thought. According to Darder, in her explanation of critical pedagogy, “ideology is used to unmask the contradictions that exist between the mainstream culture and the lived experiences and knowledge that students use to mediate school life. Hence, ideology is an important starting point for posing questions” (p. 92).

31 This transformative potentiality has been explored as emancipatory learning by radical pedagogues. A leading example is Henry Giroux’s “theory of resistance,” a radical pedagogy that is “drawn from a theoretically sophisticated understanding of how power, resistance, and human agency can become central elements in the struggle for critical thinking and learning. Schools will not change society, but we can create in them pockets of resistance that provide pedagogical models for new forms of learning and social relations” (Giroux, 2006, p. 40). His theory of resistance is understood as a struggle for critical thinking, a struggle which provides new forms of learning.

32 This is not only supported by critical pedagogies of emotion, but it is something I personally experienced and witnessed others experiencing. I locate my transition in my graduate studies in Art History, where I began to sense the discomfort of moving away from the “already knowing” mode of being that I experienced in undergrad. This transition, although felt, was not emancipating. Upon reflection, I recognize the potential of beginning the beginning. However, at the time of what I can now recognize as “transition,” the feelings of discomfort and despair were anything but hopeful, and as a result, prevented me from moving towards the emancipatory space of not-knowing. Something was happening, but my inability to name it and “move” with it stunted “beginning the beginning.” Not fully “extra-duced” and not yet “introduced,” I remained in comfortable familiarity as best I could, even though I sensed the despair of knowing that I know that I don’t know. I felt the “beginning”, but did not know how to begin. I felt the despair, but did not know how to make it hopeful.
resistance to doing the work of subverting and questioning our learned identities. He adds to the discussion by sketching the postmodernist experience as a correlation between the emergence of a new economic order and a new type of social life:

...I believe that the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late consumer or multinational capitalism. I believe also that its formal features in many ways express the deeper logic of this particular social system (Jameson, 2009, p. 20).

Postmodernism, a term that is widely contested by different disciplines, is understood by Jameson as both coming out of the social system of late consumer capitalism and adapting to it. Thus, the postmodern condition is shaped out of the social systems in capitalist culture, and can therefore be considered as a social phenomenon. As products of this social phenomenon, Jameson describes two significant features of the postmodern experience: pastiche and schizophrenia. He understands pastiche as an imitation and capitalization on the peculiar and unique style of something original (Jameson, 1998, p. 4-5). Like pastiche, the experience that the culture of learning produces is a blank parody, or what Baudrillard would call an empty signifier.

Jameson understands schizophrenia as the result of the end of individualism as such, or, ‘the death of the subject’ (Jameson, 1998, p. 5). This death can be understood as the death of the modern subject, that the age of corporate capitalism has killed the unique and creative subject, but more radically, this death can also be understood as revealing the myth of the “unique subject”, that it never really existed in the first place (Jameson, 1998, p. 6). Jameson is
not so much concerned with what position is correct, as he is with the dilemma of a subjective experience which he articulates as an aesthetic dilemma:

...because if the experience and the ideology of the unique self, and experience and ideology which informed the stylistic practice of classical modernism, is over and done with, then it is no longer clear that the artists and writers of the present period are supposed to be doing. What is clear is merely that the older models do not work anymore (or are positively harmful), since nobody has that kind of unique private world and style to express any longer (Jameson, 1998, p. 7).

In terms of the culture of learning, the “learner” must “speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum” (Jameson, 1998, p. 7), or risk the psychological and social consequences of doing otherwise. According to Jameson, schizophrenia is a failure and inability to individuate, or the failure to break free from or subvert our constructed identities. The schizophrenic sees her constructed identity but is unable, or rather unwilling, to take on the risks that are involved in giving it up.

In his analysis of the postmodern condition, Jameson offers a way of articulating the dual potentiality of the culture of learning, and allows us to understand our resistance to doing the work of subverting and questioning our learned identities. Although he does not provide us with ways in which we can move towards addressing this resistance, he locates the potential to do so in the felt anxiety of the schizophrenic subject who feels unfamiliar in her home. He illustrates this felt anxiety as a crisis of expression in his analysis of Munch’s *The Scream*:
...it seems evident that *The Scream* subtly but elaborately deconstructs its own aesthetic of expression, all the while remaining imprisoned within it. Its gestural content already underscores its own failure, since the realm of the sonorous, the cry, the raw vibrations of the human throat, are incompatible with its medium. Yet the absent scream returns more closely towards that even more absent experience of atrocious solitude and anxiety which the scream was itself to “express” (Jameson, 2007, 491).

The inability to express the content is a struggle against form. Thus, the subject feels unfamiliar in her home, struggling for a meaning that resists form. This struggle becomes the content of a transformative resistance, and of hope.

The culture of learning, as I mentioned in terms of *Heimlich*, is something that has the potential to be felt. To feel unfamiliar within what used to be familiar is a sign that we are beginning to move away from the imposed limits of learning towards an interpretation of those limits. The feeling of *Heimlich* helps us to feel the dual potentiality of the culture of learning. To feel the familiar limits of the culture of learning is an unfamiliar feeling and a feeling of unfamiliarity. The willingness to explore these unfamiliar feelings opens up a new and emancipatory mode of learning that tries to make sense of the new potential that has opened up. This feeling of dual potentiality is felt by Hilde, Sophie’s narrative double, at the moment that she realizes that what she is reading is the same thing that Sophie (for Hilde, Sophie is the protagonist in her notebook) is reacting and experiencing. This sudden realization opens up a new way of understanding what she is reading and her relationship to the reading:
...What she wondered about most of all was Sophie. Sophie—who are you? Where do you come from? Why have you come into my life? Finally, Sophie had been given a book about herself. Was it the same book that Hilde now had in her hands? This was only a ring binder. But even so—how could one find a book about oneself in a book about oneself? What would happen is Sophie began to read that book? What was going to happen now? What could happen now? There were only a few pages left in her ring binder (Gaarder, 1994, p. 466).

Through questioning, Hilde begins to sense the absurdity and existential dilemma of being both inside and outside of the text, and as a result begins to understand the new potential of “what could happen now?”

The potential for feeling the ideological limits of the culture of learning, for feeling the unfamiliar within the familiar, is a radical concept that provides us with a lot of company, especially in the field of education. The critical cultural theorist Sara Ahmed provides philosophers of education and critical pedagogues with great examples of the ways in which emotions, as products of an ideology, “stick” to us, and as a result, have the potential to become “unstuck.” In her introduction Feel Your Way, Ahmed (2004) uses the example of a child and a bear:

...The child sees the bear and is afraid...Why is the child afraid? The child must ‘already know’ the bear is fearsome. This decision is not necessarily made by her, and it might not even be dependent on past experiences...It is not that the bear *is* fearsome, ‘on its own,’ as it were. It is fearsome to someone or somebody. So fear is not in the child, let alone in
the bear, but is a matter of how child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome (p. 7).

The first thing that is important in this passage in terms of “feeling ideology,” is the statement that “the child must ‘already know’ the bear is fearsome. This means that emotions are prescribed and in a sense controlled by ways of knowing. These ways of knowing are “shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present.” “Already knowing” is a mode of thought that is constructed by ideological structures. These structures are “unavailable (to us) in the present.” Therefore, we cannot see the beginning of these emotional attachments, which causes us to have faith in our emotions and become “stuck” to them. “Already knowing” as a product of the culture of learning, neglects the emotional intensities that have the potential to question the familiar. However, the sticky nature of emotions suggests that these emotions can become unstuck. Ahmed affirms that “attention to emotions allows us to address the question of how subjects become invested in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death” (p. 12). In other words, by paying attention to our emotions, in questioning that which has become familiar, we become “extra-duced” from our emotional attachments. This “extra-duction,” or movement away from the familiar, is felt as “a kind of living death,” a sensation not unlike the uncanny which signals that we are “beginning the beginning.”

A similar attention to emotions is called upon in Megan Boler’s book *Feeling Power* (1999), specifically in her concluding chapter where she maps out a “pedagogy of discomfort.”
Here, she explores the discomfort that accompanies letting go of our cherished values and beliefs as well as the discomfort that is felt in learning to inhabit a more “ambiguous self.” Discomfort, an emotion that signals that we are on our way towards the unfamiliar, allows us to feel our way around the ideological nature of the culture of learning. Boler explains:

...A pedagogy of discomfort offers an entrée to learn to in-habit positions and identities that are ambiguous. Once engaged in the discomfort of ambiguity, it is possible to explore the emotional dimensions and investments—angers and fears, and the histories in which these are rooted...the first sign of the success of a pedagogy of discomfort is, quite simply, the ability to recognize what it is that one doesn’t want to know, and how one had developed emotional investments to protect oneself from this knowing (Boler, 1999, p. 198, 200).

In this sense, discomfort signals an “extra-duction,” a moving away from familiar “habits of inattention” towards beginning the beginning. In terms of a pedagogy of discomfort, beginning the beginning starts with recognizing what we do not know as well as why we do not know. Discomfort is thus something that is aroused through a process of being introduced to a more ambiguous self. Unlike an uncanny feeling that we run into, discomfort is a feeling that we create. Uncritical notions of discomfort would understand this emotion as negative, unproductive and full of despair. However, if we understand discomfort in the way Boler is asking us to, we can see that in fact it is a hopeful despair. To live on “the edge of our skin,” to experience the despair that comes from being “extra-duced,” we can begin to “revision ourselves” (p. 200).
Both Ahmed and Boler critically engage with emotions as products of a “structure” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 7) and as “habits of inattention” (Boler, 1999, p. 180). Key to their emancipatory pedagogies is the notion that these emotions allow us to feel our way towards new beginnings. These emotions, although seemingly negative, are in fact productive. It is here that I locate the problem within the “culture of learning.” As a mandated and result-driven practice, it favours knowing over not-knowing, answering over questioning, comfort over discomfort. It creates a particular canon of education, sets up boundaries and develops a path towards “knowing.” These “knowing” and “knowable” practices create boundaries of familiarity, and as a result, make beginning the beginning and the process of becoming pedagogical difficult if not impossible. However, these boundaries are responsible for the despair and feelings of discomfort that, if embraced, emancipate us from tailored ways of “knowing.” In this way, the culture of learning has the potential to make feelings of despair hopeful. In other words, the culture of learning creates boundaries which have the potential to become porous and opening up the space to become “extra-duced” from the familiar and introduced to the unfamiliar. The ideological structure of the culture of learning creates the boundaries from which we can find emancipation, and are what make critical pedagogies possible.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970/2010), Paulo Freire looks at the contradiction between the oppressors and the oppressed and how it is overcome. In the first chapter, he explains the phenomenon of being oppressed as a structure conditioned by the oppressed themselves:
...But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become the oppressors, or “sub-oppressors.” The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. The phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of “adhesion” to the oppressor (Freire, 2010, p.45).

Two points in this passage bring to light the desperate nature of the culture of learning. First, the oppressed understands herself in terms of the conditions that shaped her “existential situation” of oppression, and as a result, reifies these oppressive conditions through such understandings. Freire elaborates that the existential situation of the oppressed denies her the perspective necessary in objectively understanding her relationship to her oppressor: “...under these circumstances they cannot ‘consider’ him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him—to discover him outside” themselves” (p. 45). Second, in understanding herself within these boundaries, she misunderstands liberation and the ways to become emancipated from these boundaries. Freire explains that the oppressor’s perception of himself as oppressed

...is impaired by his submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, this perception of himself as opposite of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome he contradiction; the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole (p. 46).
The culture of learning has this potential of providing false notions of emancipation, notions that we have faith in because they are located within the learning situation that is provided. As a result, we identify with and situate ourselves within the culture of learning in the hopes of mastering as opposed to overcoming it. To illustrate this phenomenon, Freire gives the example of the peasant’s situation:

…It is not to become free that they want agrarian reform, but in order to acquire land and thus become landowners—or, more precisely, bosses over other workers. It is a rare peasant who, once “promoted” to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself. This is because the context of the peasant’s situation, that is, oppression, remains unchanged (p. 46).

Mastering our oppression is not the same thing as freeing ourselves from it. In fact, mastering our oppression merely reifies and recreates the conditions which oppress. However, we believe this, and it is what we place our hope in and direct our actions towards. This misunderstanding of our freedom is the result of our unchanged situation. In order to free ourselves from the dialectical conflict between the culture of learning and the existential situation that it creates for us, in order to “extra-duce” ourselves from these familiar modes of being and understanding, we must introduce ourselves to the unfamiliar. The culture of learning, like oppression, is “domesticating.” Thus:

…To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 2010, p. 51).
The idea of praxis as something that can “extra-duce” us from the domestication of the culture of learning is certainly attractive, however, considering the dialectical conflict between the culture of learning and our existential situation within it, how can we be certain that the “reflections and actions that we take upon the world” are not modes of mastering it? How do we know that we are freeing ourselves from our oppression and not reifying it? This is where Boler and Ahmed’s pedagogy of emotions can greatly contribute to Freire’s emancipatory pedagogy: emancipatory praxis is felt.³³ In other words, emotions (for example, discomfort) signal that we are moving away from our existential situation of oppression towards transformation.

In her book *Teacher as Stranger* (2001), Maxine Greene looks at what is gained by “extra-ducing” yourself from “the culture of learning.”

...To take a stranger’s vantage point on everyday reality is to look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world in which one lives. It is like returning home from a long stay in some other place. The homecomer notices details and patterns in her environment she never saw before (p. 93).

In this passage, extra-duction from everyday reality is of value only upon return. In other words, to “take a stranger’s vantage point” means that one must return to a place of extraduction.³⁴ Thus, it is not a movement away from the familiar towards the unfamiliar, but rather, it is a back-and-forth action. To look “inquiringly and wonderingly” at the world

³³ Megan Boler explains in *Feeling Power* that “a pedagogy of discomfort aims to invite students and educators to examine how our modes of seeing have been shaped specifically by the dominant culture of the historical moment” (p. 179).

³⁴ In *Sophie’s World*, Sophie’s correspondence course allows her to engage with a reality outside of her own. After finishing a lesson, Sophie returns to the daily activities of her reality, but sees things anew.
requires one to first become “extra-duced” and subsequently reintroduced to it. This process of reintroduction, or “returning home,” is where Greene locates something similar to “beginning the beginning:”

...Now, looking through new eyes, one cannot take the cultural pattern for granted. It may seem arbitrary or incoherent or deficient in some way. To make it meaningful again, she must interpret and reorder what one sees in the light of one’s changed experience...(p. 94).

After being extra-duced, we see the things that were “habitually considered real” anew (p. 95). “Interpreting” and “reordering” comes after being “extra-duced,” and thus, it is a mode of being reintroduced. This is different from the previous emancipatory pedagogies that were explored: “beginning the beginning” as a mode of interpreting, reordering, inquiring, and reflecting, is a coming back from “extra-duction” as opposed to a movement towards “extra-duction 35.” The culture of learning is thus understood as a place that is taken for granted but has educative potential if one is willing to leave and come back with a stranger’s vantage point. Although the benefits of a stranger’s vantage point are articulated well, especially in terms of teaching, Greene’s focus on “the return” overlooks the important question of what causes one to leave and how one makes their way back.

35 A “stranger’s vantage point” is realized only when one returns from being extraduced. It is upon return where the benefits of being extraduced are reaped. Greene explains: “If one is willing to take the view of the homecomer and create a new perspective on what one has habitually considered real, one’s teaching may become the project of a person vitally open to one’s students and the world” (p. 95).
The culture of learning has the potential to become unfamiliar, opening up a space for “beginning the beginning.” This potential is created in realizing the stultifying conditions of the culture of learning; it is realized by feeling unfamiliar with what one has always been familiar to. The following section will ask why the feeling of hubris is different from, and more importantly, how it disables, a feeling of hope. To question why I feel confident but not hopeful is to reveal what Sartre calls a state of “bad faith,” a mode of self-deception and falsehood that is comparable to the postmodern concept of schizophrenia.

Why Do I Not Feel Hopeful?: Questioning Despair as Stultification

As mentioned in the introduction, I identify two modes of despair in the culture of learning: a feeling of despair that results from being in and performing the conditions of the culture of learning, and a feeling of despair that is hopeful and moves towards an understanding of one’s ignorance. The former is a feeling of stultification, the latter is a feeling of emancipation. This section will look at despair as a feeling of stultification which results from deceiving oneself. It is a feeling of recognizing the conditions of the culture of learning, but not knowing how or not wanting to reveal it or to bring it forth into appearance. It is a despair that comes from knowing, but not doing. It is a feeling of hopelessness. In order to move from this stultifying despair towards a movement of desperation, towards becoming

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36 The culture of learning, as a semiotic space, can be a critical place as it had the potential to reflect on the ways it represents itself as a reflection of reality. As a system of signifiers, it has the potential to be questioned: whose reality is the culture of learning reflecting? Or to borrow Judith Butler’s question, what does transparency keep obscure?

37 This has been articulated by Nietzsche as a distinction between passive nihilism and active nihilism, a distinction he discusses in Book III in The Will to Power. Kierkegaard articulates this kind of dualism in his definition of anxiety, where he distinguishes between an unfocused fear and a focused fear (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 206-207).

38 This can also be explored in terms of the limits of language and the sublime, or what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls the aporia in human reason, or the edge of our conceptual powers (Lyotard, 1991, p. 117).
desperately hopeful, we need to create and make apparent a desperate situation from which to move from. Vital to the understanding of these movements is locating hope as a point of transition between the two modes of despair. But first, we need to understand the kind of despair that prevents hope from happening.

In terms of my own experiences in the culture of learning, my feeling of despair was a product of both realizing the stultification of the culture of learning, and performing and consciously reproducing the very conditions which are responsible for my feeling of stultification. This conscious reproduction can be understood as a passive resistance, or a form of resistance that reiterates the ideology that is the source of oppression. McLaren (1998) explains this form of resistance in terms of our inability to find meaningful knowledge “out there,” “in the world of prepackaged commodities, (where) students resort to random violence or an intellectual purple haze where anything more challenging than the late night news is met with retreat or despair” (p. 196). The sense that there is no way out, that in order to succeed I must limit myself to these conditions, is what characterizes the stagnant feeling of despair. The feeling of having no real agency is a feeling that many philosophers and theorists of education have associated with disaffection and alienation which are manifested in academic failure and indifference. These feelings of alienation have been understood in terms of Marxist concepts of alienated labour, suggesting that schooling, authority, and standardization alienate the student from their labour, taking away “man’s ability to produce himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually,” alienating him from his ability to “contemplate himself in a world he himself has created” (Marx, 1959, p. 41). In his article In the Event of Learning: Alienation and Participative Thinking in Education (2004), Alexander Sidorkin argues
for a central mechanism of alienation “that has something to do with both what students are doing and how they are doing it. Learning in schools is associated with a fundamentally unproductive activity, and for this reason, it brings its own unique form of educational alienation” (p. 255). Further, he argues that alienation as a phenomenon has always been present, but has recently become more prominent in today’s societies whose “economy, politics, mass consumption, and mass culture demand that more and more people be educated at ever-higher levels” (p. 255). This demand certainly increases the growing alienation between the producer and the product.

But alienation is something more than the non-relationships between the producer and the products and the system of production. Sidorkin argues through Bakhtin’s notion of participative thinking that alienation, at its core, is grounded in a “corrosion of the human ability to act, to partake in the eventness of Being” (Sidorkin, 2004, p. 259). This is very similar to the stagnant despair that I am attempting to articulate. Certainly, the concept of despair that I am exploring finds its underpinnings in Marxist thought, as a feeling of being alienated from the product of one’s labour. It is a feeling that comes out of the seeming inability to do anything about it. For this reason, it has become easier to live a deceitful life than a hopeful one. It is precisely this kind of surrendering to the feeling of despair that has become a habit of “bad faith,” one that we refuse to kick. The feeling of being in control of one’s learning and the confidence that comes from knowing the outcome and being familiar with the path of learning is highly addictive, and as a result of this hubris-enabling habit, we have become numb to the feeling of hope, the critical force that gives us the courage to take flight towards becoming pedagogical.
In Part One of Chapter Two of *Being and Nothingness* (1943/1999), Sartre sketches his theory of consciousness through his analysis of negative attitudes. In terms of a stultifying despair, Sartre’s analysis helps to show this despair as something that I do not wish to see, and that my unwillingness to see it demonstrates that I was first acquainted with the despair that I wish not to see. Sartre understands this as veiling our anguish, and reveals that in fact:

...I *am* what I wish to veil...I can in fact wish “not to see” a certain aspect of my being only if I am acquainted with the aspect which I do not wish to see. This means that in my being I must indicate this aspect in order to be able to turn myself away from it; better yet, I must think of it constantly in order to take care not to think of it (p. 143).

In other words, despair is recognizing that I do not know what I know, *but*, pretending that I do not know that I do not know. In other words, despair is a willingness to live a deceitful life.

This attitude, this mode of lying to oneself, is what Sartre calls *bad faith*. Sartre explains that *bad faith* is more about hiding the truth from oneself than hiding the truth from others. In fact, the deceiver and the deceived are one in the same person, “which means that I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived” (Sartre, 1993, p. 151). The culture of learning as “bad faith,” as a culture that deceives us, teaches us how to be the deceiver. This duality stands in the way of comprehending *bad faith*, since any attempt to understand it simply reifies the lie. Therefore, Sartre proposes that if we want to understand the conditions of *bad faith*, we have to examine the pattern of *bad faith* as a phenomenon. In terms of despair, in order to move out of its stultifying conditions, we must first attempt to describe the conditions of this despair and the
various procedures which maintain this mode of despair. According to Sartre, we must understand the despair that comes from falsehood and bad faith as “an art of forming contradictory concepts which unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea” (p. 162). He considers a waiter in the cafe:

...his movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes towards the patrons with a step a little too quick...We need not watch long before we can explain it: he is playing at being a waiter in a cafe. There is nothing there to surprise us. The game is a kind of marking out an investigation. The child plays with his body in order to explore it, to take inventory of it; the waiter in the cafe plays with his condition in order to realize it (p. 167).

This phenomenon is understood as one’s ability to see how one is represented. However, this representation is not who I am. This representation is that which I am not. If we understand despair as hiding the truth, and therefore representing a lie, despair as a representation is a place where we are not! But I am getting ahead of myself, for this is something that will be discussed in the following section. However, it has its place in this section since the possibility of despair and the possibility of becoming desperately hopeful share the same conditions, both involve not quite believing. Sartre explains: “I decide to believe in it, and to maintain myself in this decision; I conduct myself, as if I were certain of it—and all this is in the synthetic unity of one and the same attitude” (p. 183). Herein lays the possibility of hope, within maintaining the position to believe which implies the awareness of the way in which one presents oneself. It is

39 Sophie realizes this towards the middle of her journey when the mysterious letters addressed to Hilde begin to coincide with the present events of her life. With the help of the philosopher, Sophie realizes that she is a character in in a story written for by Hilde’s father for Hilde. After this moment in the book, the following chapters are narrated by Hilde. This switch in narration symbolizes a moment of transition in consciousness (Gaarder, 1994, p. 211).
this awareness that allows us to move towards becoming desperately hopeful. To recognize one’s agency in creating the stultifying conditions of despair is to move towards understanding how we condition our own ignorance. It is here where “beginning begins.” The following section looks at feeling desperate as opposed to feeling despair. It explores how feeling desperate is a form of being hopeful, and how feeling desperately hopeful and hopefully desperate can often be felt and misrecognized as despair.

**Why Do I Feel Desperate?: Questioning Despair as Emancipation**

Up to this point, we have discussed the culture of learning as a place that produces familiar modes of learning that are reified and reproduced by the learners. In recounting my different experiences in the culture of learning, I showed that it is possible to move from a state and mode of *hubris* towards despair. I identified this movement of feeling unfamiliar within the familiar as both a death of the all-knowing learner and the birth of a “schizophrenic” learner. In exploring this movement, my hope is that a connection between *Heimlich* and the culture of learning was recognized. The “schizophrenic” learner becomes a stranger in her own home, and thus, is in constant state of despair, unable to *do* anything about knowing that she does not know. Out of despair, the learner engages in an attitude of *bad faith*, a deceptive habit which protects the learner from admitting to the knowledge of ignorance. This habit represents the stultifying conditions of despair, and therefore, has the potential to reveal the learner’s agency. This revelation is where “beginning begins.” In this section, I will explore what it feels like to become desperately hopeful, and how this feeling constantly struggles against the *bad faith* of
despair. With the help of different articulations of critical theory, I will situate the feeling of becoming desperately hopeful within emancipatory pedagogy.

As mentioned earlier, a space for becoming desperately hopeful is opened up once we have done the work of revealing, and taking the responsibility for, the stultifying conditions of despair. But how do we know when this space opens up? What changes? Certainly, the death of the all-knowing learner, the loss of the learner’s identity and the consequent mourning, is a very affective experience that calls attention to itself. Boler (2004) shares with us her experience in being able to identify this loss in a student’s angry protest, an affective reaction that was due “not necessarily because (he) cannot see how power operates but because (he) needs something to replace what I am threatening to take away” (p. 126). This affective reaction signalled that the student’s identity was at risk, consequently signalling the potential for understanding the identity that is under threat. The potential lies in the learner’s capability to feel her own death. This provides us with great hope if we are willing to do the work of rewiring out senses: discomfort and resistance is good, it is hopeful, it begins emancipation.

Alison M. Jaggar (2009) recognizes that these uncomfortable feelings of resistance provide the first indication that something is wrong. Thus, the feeling of despair becomes hopeful. Jaggar calls these emotions “outlaw emotions”:

... Only when we reflect on our initially puzzling irritability, revulsion, anger, or fear may we bring to consciousness our “gut-level” awareness that we are in a situation of coercion, cruelty, injustice, or danger. Thus, conventionally inexplicable emotions, particularly, though not exclusively, those experienced by women, may
lead us to make subversive observations that challenge dominant conceptions of the status quo (p. 69).

Similarly, in her articulation of a pedagogy of discomfort, Megan Boler (1999) reveals the emancipatory potential of, and therefore what is gained from, the discomfort felt when we question our cherished beliefs. She writes:

...the first sign of the success of a pedagogy of discomfort is, quite simply, the ability to recognize what it is that one doesn’t want to know, and how one has developed emotional investments to protect oneself from this knowing...in so doing one gains a new sense of interconnection with others (pg. 200).

Both Jaggar and Boler agree that outlaw emotions or feeling discomfort are spaces of hope. These feelings are anything but comfortable or familiar precisely because they disrupt and contradict our constructed selves. These feelings are desperately hopeful in their call to action from an initial feeling of despair towards an empowered understanding of the conditions of despair. The feeling of being desperately hopeful allows one to let go of the conditioned self and move towards a self that is becoming.

The feeling of being desperately hopeful, as both an experience of death and rebirth, is a process of recognizing the resistance that makes emancipation so painful. For this reason, it is a desperate feeling that precedes a feeling of liberation. To give an example, the feeling of being desperately hopeful is similar to the resistance one faces and eventually recognizes when aging and dying, or in other words, the ultimate unknowns. This resistance is often felt as fear, a fear which is conditioned by a fear of life. In other words, this resistance as fear is

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The dualism of death as birth and birth as death is at the core of mystical thought as a philosophy of transformation through self-negation (Bataille, 1986, p. 43).
experienced as such because of our conditioned modes of living. The way we die reflects the way we lived. Although this statement can be read as pessimistic and full of despair, it is in fact very hopeful. It makes us reflect on our relationship to knowing and our limits of being. Anyone who has ever brushed shoulders with death, or experienced the event of death, can agree that death gives life its reality. There is hope in the tragically unknown if we recognize our resistance to it. To be desperately hopeful is to recognize our death in life and our life in death. It is to recognize the non-being of being, and the being of non-being.

**How Can Beginning be Practiced?: Questioning how to be Desperately Hopeful and Hopefully Desperate**

Up to this point, I have argued that the culture of learning as I experienced it in higher education, is something both familiar and unfamiliar. As an extension of neo-liberal ideology, our postmodern experience of learning and coming to know is a form of pastiche, constructing an identity that is false and void of meaning, which creates a schizophrenic reality where the “learner” is disconnected from her being. Similar to the concept of pastiche, the culture of learning as Heimlich conceals the unfamiliar, rendering the familiar empty of any signification, and outlawing the unfamiliar as something uncomfortable. Similarly, the culture of learning as an attitude of bad faith, as pretending to not know that one does not know, both deceives us, and in so doing, produces deceivers out of us. The culture of learning as Heimlich, pastiche, and bad faith, constructs, manages, and limits our experiences as something familiar. To exist in

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41 Freire explores the fear of resistance in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2010), as a duality from which the oppressed suffer from: “They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it” (p.48). Specifically, what they fear is “being divided” (p. 48).

42 Heidegger understands this foresight as “death as a possibility-of-Being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 294).
these limits, to learn within these constructs, often produces a feeling of despair that comes from recognizing these stultifying conditions, but not knowing what to do about it. It is a feeling of complete hopelessness. But if we learn to acknowledge despair as a place to begin the beginning towards emancipation, we can create a desperately hopeful situation. If we learn to trust our feelings, even in blind faith, we can begin the work of revealing the unfamiliar dimension of uncertainty, a space where we confront the non-being of our being, that liberated being within us all.

So what does existential questioning have to do with this? What can existentialism offer that other schools of thought cannot? Existentialism proclaims that we cannot escape our constructed modes of being not because we are unable, but because we are unwilling. We are able to find the non-being of being, make unfamiliar the familiar, and reveal the familiar as unfamiliar is we are willing. Existential questioning is a mode of willing, and it is thus essential to understand its mode in order to find hope in despair and move towards becoming pedagogical. In other words, existential questioning feels despair, recognizes it and works towards hope and an authentic empowerment, towards resistance and becoming pedagogical. Existential questioning is both a beginning in and a becoming from. In his essay *Existentialism is a Humanism*, (1947/2007) Sartre understands the beginner and the questioner as the existent. What is meant by that is that:

...man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterwards defines himself...man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives himself only after he exists, man is nothing more that what he makes of himself (p. 22).
So what can existential questioning do for the culture of learning? Why do I argue for its urgency? What can existential questioning teach us today? Building on the ways in which existentialism has been taken up in educational theory existentialism is more than just a quality or disposition.\textsuperscript{43} It is a practice. It teaches us a way towards learning, a way towards becoming pedagogical. In this way, existential questioning can reveal the essence of the culture of learning and reawaken essence of education. The following two chapters will demonstrate two different, yet essentially similar, methods of existential questioning. What will quickly become clear is that learning about existential questioning is doing existential questioning.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} The first philosophers of education who explored existentialism and education at length were George Kneller and Van Cleve Morrison. Kneller focused on using existentialism in training teachers to become more authentic. Claims such as “If there is anything that the existentialist teacher can do for his students, it is to bring them to more critical analysis and understanding of the meaning and purpose of existence, so that with time man may become more than a mere appetitive creature perpetuating the bestial habits of simian ancestors” (Kneller, 1964, p. 113) are made throughout his book. Morris also applied existentialism to a model of teaching, however, his guidelines were more specific: “Life comes from life and the teacher is the living agent in the school. The teacher must not abdicate the human dimensions which he can communicate to the child: respect for his individuality, recognition of his particular interests, needs and directions, encouragement of honest expression of feelings and growth in self identity” (Morris, 1966, p. 9). Both Kneller and Morris take existential qualities and virtues and prescribe them to teachers as ideals that they should develop without actually providing them with existential ways of developing this disposition. Because existentialism does not specifically reference educational policy, curriculum or schooling, Kneller and Morris’ texts became foundational in (mis)understanding existentialism within education.

\textsuperscript{44} Gaarder shares the same form of praxis in Sophie’s World. Although the philosopher teaches Sophie about different schools of philosophy through letters and later through direct conversations, Sophie does not actually begin to learn about the different schools of thought until she recognizes the ways in which these lessons are affecting her everyday life.
...Sophie told her about everything, about the mysterious philosophy course as well. She made Joanna swear to keep everything secret. They walked for a long time without speaking. As they approached Clover Close, Joanna said. “I don’t like it.”

“Nobody asked you to like it. But philosophy is not a harmless party game. It’s about who we are and where we come from. Do you think we learn enough about that at school?”

“Nobody can answer questions like that anyway.”

“Yes, but we don’t even learn to ask them!”

-Sophie’s World

**Sartrean Questioning: Moving Towards Estrangement**

As discussed in the first chapter, beginning is both a response to and an element of despair. In other words, beginning is conditioned by a culture of learning and our habits of bad faith. Thus, to begin to question is to begin to change the familiar conditions that condition our being. To begin to question is to create new conditions, new experiences, and new modes of being. Of course, to question and thus create does not begin from scratch. Beginning is always already related to the conditions that allow beginning to happen. Beginning is at the same time a reaction to, a reflection on and an extension of these conditions. This active inquiry is certainly nothing new to us. It is something that we once knew how to do. This chapter will explore the active inquiry of Sartrean questioning, a mode of inquiry that I argue is similar to curiosity in the way that it willingly inquires towards the unknown and as a result, beings the beginning. So before I explore the movement of Sartrean questioning in more detail, I think it is helpful to first situate this movement in terms of curiosity and a curious disposition in order to demonstrate how an engagement with the unknown can be willed.

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45 This dialectical relationship was explored through Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2010): “The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped” (p. 45).
Beginning as curiosity or wonder is a way of being in the world that is fearless, spontaneous and carefree. Children ask real questions, questions that they do not know the answer to, all the time. Curiosity, as both a drawing of attention towards something and a desire to know (Schmitt and Lahroodi, 2008), comes naturally to children. Perhaps more specifically, curiosity seems to be a mode of being, a kind of disposition, for children. Children are not necessarily curious to know something about an object, but to experience something about the object. Children are more curious about opening Pandora’s Box than they are about knowing what is inside of the box. It seems as though children are more motivated by a desire to experience than a desire to know. In this way, childhood curiosity is open to indeterminacy rather than guided by an end result. As Dewey puts it, children “reach, poke, pound, pry...objects are experimented with until they cease to yield new qualities,” and engage in these activities “without real reference to the business in hand” (Dewey, 1997, p. 34). Furthermore, it is a curiosity that “degenerates or evaporates” with maturity (p. 39).

46 Sophie’s age is symbolic in understanding her journey as a transition from childhood to adulthood. The correspondence letters are thus timely and foreshadow Sophie’s journey as one that fights against “the triviality of everyday existence.” In his second introductory letter, the philosopher explains to Sophie: “To children, the world and everything in it is new, something that gives rise to astonishment. It is not like that for adults. Most adults accept the world as a matter of course” (p. 19). Because the transition into adulthood is inevitable, the philosopher, through his correspondence with Sophie, wants to make sure that she does not become “one of those people who take the world for granted” (p. 18). Instead, he proposes that Sophie take on a philosopher’s disposition, “who never gets quite used to the world. To him or her, the world continues to seem a bit unreasonable—bewildering, even enigmatic,” and asks her to choose: “Are you a child who has not yet become world-weary? Or are you a philosopher who will vow never to become so?” (p. 20).

47 The philosopher explains this natural curiosity to Sophie through an analogy: “A white rabbit is pulled out of a top hat. Because it is an extremely large rabbit, the trick takes billions of years. All mortals are born at the very tip of the rabbit’s fine hairs, where they are in a position to wonder at the impossibility of the trick. But as they grow older, they work themselves ever deeper into the fur. And there they stay. They become so comfortable they never risk crawling back up the fragile hairs again. Only philosophers embark on this perilous expedition to the outermost reaches of language and existence” (p. 20).

48 This statement comes from my personal experience working with children as a docent at the Bata Shoe museum.
But how exactly does this curiosity “evaporate?” What happens during this transition that curiosity as an experience “degenerates?” One way to explore this question is to look at what developmental theory understands “development” to be, specifically in the transition from adolescents to adulthood. Erik Erikson, the first clinical psychologist to address the transitional journey from adolescents to adulthood, maps out this development in eight stages, where each stage is distinguished by a psychosocial crisis that the individual must resolve by balancing the internal self and the external environment (Erikson, 1968). Although these stages span a person’s entire life, what concerns us in terms of childhood curiosity as a mode of beginning is the development from stage two to stage four. In stage two, the child begins to develop and explore autonomy, such as walking and talking. Erikson argues that this stage is most prone to crisis as there are more opportunities for the child to experience shame for not performing expected skills. At this stage, the child’s exploration is critical in finding a balance between impulsive acts and compulsive acts. In stage three, the child works towards making their fantasy a reality. Erikson identifies this stage as the imagination stage, where the child recognizes that what they imagine can be wrong or unacceptable in reality. This crisis of consciousness, or what Erikson identifies as the capacity for moral awareness, transitions into stage four, where the child learns to master different skills to be useful to others (Erikson, 1968). Somewhere between stage two and stage four, the child stops exploring his autonomy and begins to focus on how to develop skills that others view as contributions. What is developed is a commitment to establishing a stronger competent identity. It is a development from introversion to extroversion. Curiosity, as an exploration of autonomy, is something that is acceptable only at an early stage and as a place of transition. Curiosity as an exploration of
autonomy is understood as a means towards developing self-determination, allowing for a successful transition into the subsequent stage of development. As a result, curiosity is understood as something that serves a purpose in the initial stage of transition. Therefore, holding onto “the exploration of autonomy” would postpone the transition into adulthood and would signify the inability to develop or successfully resolve a crisis. In terms of Erikson’s identity development theory, curiosity as an exploration of autonomy is productive at an earlier stage, and it something that the adolescent must learn to move away from in order to successfully develop and transition into adulthood.

Childhood curiosity as a form of beginning is more of a disposition, a mode of being, than a conscious inquiry. For these reasons, it is often considered as an immature curiosity that only children are “allowed” to do. To understand curiosity in these developmental stages is to identify it as something that goes away in adulthood. To understand curiosity as a an experiential stage, we can begin to understand how it can be something that can be easily manipulated or displaced. In his book Consuming Schools (2011), Trevor Norris demonstrates how consumerism, as a growing part of socialization and the culture of learning, is altering and shifting childhood experiences. He argues that consumerism teaches values based on consumption, and as a result, children are more focused on “stimulation and extrinsic material rewards” which causes them to “devalue their own curiosity and learning” (p. 65). Norris reveals an interesting paradox when he discusses how consumerism impedes the struggle to mature by idealizing youth. Curiosity in this sense becomes something that is captured in a commodity and sold as an ideal (p. 61). The paradox is that the ‘nature’ of being young, and the careless curiosity and wonder that is often associated with this nature, is displaced as an
idealization in adulthood, and abandoned in childhood for other stimulated experience. Immature curiosity, the essence of an inquiring disposition, becomes an empty signifier. It means nothing either in childhood or adulthood.

It is important to have briefly located curiosity as a stage in childhood, as well as its “degeneration and evaporation,” so that we can think about curiosity as a force that has productive potential in adulthood. The fearless disposition of experiencing something unknown is something that we were all once capable of, whether we remember it or not. In this sense, curiosity as a mode of “beginning the beginning” is similar to Heimlich; it is both familiar and unfamiliar. So one way to ask about how to “begin to begin” is to ask how we can recover a curious disposition. We must take care in understanding that to recover curiosity is not the same thing as a return to curiosity, for we can never actually regain our immature curiosity or authentic childhood curiosity. We cannot do what Rousseau proposes, and simply escape from ‘civilization’ and return to ‘nature.’ Even the statement that a child should be allowed to remain in its ‘naturally’ innocent state as long as possible is paradoxical. Who allows the child to remain natural? Doesn’t this ‘allowance’ obliterate anything ‘natural?’ We can even go as far as to argue that this ‘return to childhood’ shares a similar ideology to consumerist idealization and the correlative destruction of youth. The longing for childhood innocence signals the desperation of the impossible ‘return.’

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49 Trevor Norris (2011) writes about the possibility of this “return” in terms of consumerist beliefs, arguing that consumerism allows us to believe that this return is in fact possible and can be regained. He references what psychologists call the “Peter Pan syndrome” as an example of an inauthentic return as opposed to an authentic recovering (pg. 61).

50 This impossible return to childhood innocence is explored and praised in western modern art. Artists such as Gauguin, Matisse and Kandinsky explored both “primitive” subject matter and aesthetic modes in their work. This avant-garde turn away from realism is understood as a reaction to modern and more “civilized” advancements in
become hopeful, but only if it remains critical as opposed to something that can be easily consumed. Questioning seeks an outlet for despair, and in doing so, has already absorbed a piece of the despair while moving away from it. Questioning is an expression, and as an expression, has the potential to allow a conscious understanding of the despair that initiated the expression in the first place. Thus, questioning can be compared to a mature curiosity, and as a form of play that encourages an experiential curiosity. It is a mode of being hopefully desperate, a revamped version of curiosity.

This chapter will look specifically at Sartre’s major work *Being and Nothingness* (1943) in order to show his mode of questioning as a form of curiosity in its movement towards estrangement, towards becoming familiar with the unfamiliar. To this end, the first section will explore Sartre’s concept of non-being and nature of nothingness as a way to see the conditions and consequent limits of questioning. By going over these concepts and understanding their limitations, it will hopefully become clear how they find their source in Sartre’s ontological interrogation. The second section will look at the qualitative way of Sartrean questioning. By making the quality of this particular movement of questioning apparent, we can then look for these qualities and experiences of questioning in our own practice. The key qualities that I hope to make apparent are temporospatial and dynamic, qualities of movement that render a

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51 I will look at critical notions of play in the concluding chapter to illustrate the playful dimension of existential questioning, and its pedagogical potential.
52 Escapism as a revamped version of childhood curiosity is widely explored during the industrial revolution as an element of emancipation from the new forms of reality. This form of escapism can be found in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century literature, such as the H.G. Wells science fiction novel, *The Time Machine*, and J.R.R. Tolkien’s critical essay *On Fairy-Stories*.
feeling of estrangement and vertigo. In the third section, I will look at the pedagogical benefits as well as educational risks of questioning towards estrangement.

**What is Non-Being?: Questioning the Conditions and Limits of Questioning**

To think about non-being or nothingness is paradoxical and is difficult to characterize. The very act of talking or thinking about it “fills in” nothingness and changes its character. To talk about or think about something that is not a thing requires a different way of thinking.

How do we access this concept? How can we engage with something that is not fully present to us? From its beginnings, the tradition of philosophy has been concerned with the limits to what we know, whether that knowledge is constituted by what we can reason, see or experience. This concern with the limits to what we know constitutes what is known and what is not, what is grasped and what is not. Sartrean questioning works through these conditions and develops an ontological understanding of the questioner’s position with that which conditions her questions. In this way, as the questioner moves towards the limits of the question, the questioner moves towards estrangement. The question and the questioner share

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53 This struggle between form and content is a similar dilemma I experienced researching avant-garde performance art. I was faced with the question: how can I ever know the content of the performance if its temporospatial form is no longer present to me? Any attempt to comprehend the form of the performance felt as though I was “filling in” or adding content.

54 Certainly, this dilemma is a common theological issue. How do we within the world speak of that which is beyond? For the rationalists, the beyond is outside of reason. We cannot know the World of Ideas, the perfect Entity, or the inner cause of Substance, they are all ‘beyond’ our reason. For the empiricists, the beyond is outside of our senses, more specifically, outside of what we see. We cannot see the Final Cause, the tabula rasa, or the First Mover, it is something 'beyond' our senses (Aristotle, Locke, Hume).

55 In Sophie’s World, the analogy of the white rabbit, as something that is brought into the world by a magician and whose fur we inhabit, is used to explain to Sophie the possibility of something existing beyond her knowledge of it. In fact, Sophie’s journey is one of coming to terms with realizing that her existence and knowledge of the things around her are in fact governed by something that is beyond her comprehension.
the same ontological field. The questioner enacts the conditions of the question. Questioning thus precedes the question. The questioner creates the question.\textsuperscript{56} The questioner creates her own conditions to what she can know. In other words, the questioner is faced with non-being.

Let me explain by going over Sartre’s concept of non-being and the nature of nothingness in order to demonstrate how these concepts reveal the conditions and consequent limits of questioning.

In his major work, \textit{Being and Nothingness} (1943/1993), Sartre sketches his theory of consciousness through a phenomenological investigation of being in relation to the world. As stated in his introduction, he attempts to show the ways in which being is conditioned by the world in which it finds its being, a project which he calls “phenomenological ontology”:

...If the being of phenomena is not resolved in a phenomenon of being and if nevertheless we can not say anything about being without considering this phenomenon of being, then the exact relation which unites the phenomenon of being to the being of the phenomenon must be established first of all (Sartre, 1993, p. 9).

As we can gather in this passage, Sartre’s “phenomenological ontology” is not easy to access. It requires a particular way of reading that we are not necessarily used to. But if we take the time to slow down and think about the interdependent formulation of the phenomenon of being as phenomenological ontology, we can begin to understand the duality that is essential to understanding our being in the world, a duality that is at the core of what I define as culture of learning. So let us think about the first half of the passage. What Sartre is articulating is that

\textsuperscript{56} One of Sartre’s most famous quotes that is referenced in secondary literature has allowed me to make this connection: “The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness” (Cox, 2006, p. 3).
the phenomenon of being and the being of the phenomenon are interdependent. The phenomenon of being is our world, and thus being of phenomenon is our being in relation to the world. The second half of the passage highlights the relationship between the two as something that must be explored in order to understand being. But we can already begin to see that being is “situational,” in that it is something that shows up in the world and finds its meaning in relation to it. He understands being as being thrown into the world, and as a result of being thrown in, being understands itself in its relationship to the world. As a result of this mutually constitutive relationship, Sartre explains that there are two structures and modes of being: being-in-itself and being-for-itself. We can understand being-in-itself as an existence that simply is, and a mode of being that is not conscious of its being. Or to put in another way, it is a being that does not have consciousness. But what does it mean to have consciousness? Sartre explains in his introduction, and reiterates throughout Being and Nothingness that a being that has consciousness is “a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself” (p. 147). So being-in-itself refers to everything that is not consciousness, and in terms of beings, it is a mode of being that does not reflect upon its being, it does not question its being, and as a result does not move outside of its being. It is a choice of being-for-itself that pretends that it is being-in-itself. This mode of existence is a conscious choice, what Sartre terms “bad faith”:

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57 Being-in-itself is a pure objecthood that we can’t say much about because it is outside of our way of knowing. In his book Understanding Existentialism, Jack Reynolds offers us help in understanding this term more clearly: “...being-in-itself is a “pure plentitude” and, according to Sartre, we cannot properly speak of it...For Sartre, we can talk about and describe our facticity, but we cannot speak of the object as it is in-itself: that is, as it is outside certain human ways of understanding and comprehending the object” (Reynolds, 2006, p.59).
...bad faith in its primitive project and in its coming into the world decides on the exact nature of its requirements. It stands forth in the firm resolution not to demand too much, to count itself satisfied when it is barely persuaded, to force itself in decisions to adhere to uncertain truths...one puts oneself in bad faith (p. 182).

So being-in-itself is a mode of being that does not question its being, but rather, believes in its being and conducts its being according to that belief. Sartre recognizes this mode of being as “a lie to oneself...the liar actually is in complete possession of the truth which he is hiding...it is played, imitated, it is the intention of the character which he plays in the eyes of his questioner” (p. 149). The mode of “lying to oneself” is a form of deceit intended to not only deceive oneself in order to “count itself satisfied,” but also, it is a mode that deceives others. According to Sartre, it is this mode of being that modern society has submitted to.

Sartre’s critique of being-in-itself reveals the ways in which being can be freed from its deception by “fusing the in-itself with the for-itself” (p. 626). Being-for-itself, as a mode of being that questions the inauthenticity of being-in-itself, is the being of consciousness. Being-for-itself faces the deceit of being-in-itself and admits to its bad faith. In facing this deceit, being-for-itself supposes a “self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted.” So being-

58 Being-in-itself is a mode of being comparable to indoctrination. In her short chapter What Is Indoctrination?, Charlene Tan understands indoctrination as “the paralysis of one’s intellectual capacity, characterized by the inability to justify one’s beliefs and consider alternatives...such a person is incapable of critically inquiring into the worthiness of the beliefs (Tan, 2005, p. 51).
59 Being-in-itself as a mode of deceit turns away from questioning one’s being towards making oneself appear as a being who knows. “Playing” and “imitating” the truth can be understood in terms of specialization, which according to Nietzsche, is a form of knowledge that dehumanizes the subject: “A specialist in science begins to resemble nothing but a factory workman who spends his whole life in turning one particular screw or handle on a certain instrument or machine” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 39).
60 Sartre references the concept of “self-recovery” as an authentic mode of being in a footnote at the end of part two in Being and Nothingness.
for-itself is a mode of being that questions the in-itself, and as a result of its questioning, liberates being from its deceit. Being-for-itself can thus be positively understood as “continually determining itself not to be the in-itself” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 59). To question and to reflect upon one’s being, one’s “objecthood,” is a mode of determination and willing to be something that it is not. This is the place where Sartre locates human freedom. In its determination, being-for-itself cannot not choose and thus cannot not be free. Even “not to choose is, in fact to choose not to choose” (Sartre, 1986, p. 481). To reflect on one’s being, to be-for-itself, “condemns” the for-itself to freedom. According to Sartre’s description of being-for-itself’s response to this condemnation, there is evidence of both hope and desperation. Sartre explains:

...I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limit to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free (p. 439).

The for-itself, as freedom and as consciousness of freedom, is a constant transcending and fleeing away from the bad faith of being-in-itself. It means that it must constantly move away from its situated being.

Thus, being-in-itself shows evidence of a despair that has the potential to become hopeful through questioning. Being-for-itself is an example of a hopeful despair in the way that it relies on the deceit of the in-itself in order to become the for-itself-in-itself. To better
illustrate the authentic project of for-itself as a project that challenges being-in-itself, Sartre gives the example of sport and play:

...Sport is in reality free transformation of a worldly environment into an element which supports the action. Thus sport is creative, like art. Suppose the environment is a field of snow, an alpine slope. To see it is already to possess it. In itself it is already grasped by sight as a symbol of being...I have a special relation of appropriation with the snow: sliding...Sliding appears to be assimilable to a continuous creation. The speed is comparable to consciousness and here symbolizes consciousness. It gives birth to a deep quality in the material which lives only as long as the speed lasts—a sort of fusion which conquers the indifferent externality of the material which then falls back in a diffused spray behind the moving slider (p. 583-584).

In this passage, the snow symbolizes being-in-itself. It deceives and is deceiving in its appearance, and as a result, is not understood in terms of it possibility (as something that supports an action). The act of sliding on the surface of the snow puts the in-itself into play. Being-for-itself is the act of sliding on the surface of the in-itself which supports and allows the act of sliding. Being-for-itself enacts, and through action gives consciousness to, being-in-itself. Being-in-itself supports the activity of being-for-itself. Thus, “sliding” is the fusion of the in-itself with the for-itself.

So in order to understand Nothingness as something that moves us away from the inauthentic mode of being-in-itself, we must raise a new question: what is it about being-in-itself that allows us to move towards Nothingness? What is it about our human condition that
can bring into appearance the Nothingness which conditions it in return? How can we slide on the surface of despair?

In the first chapter of part one, Sartre locates the origin of negation as a way to recognize how being-in-itself pushes away being-for-itself. To understand how the in-itself pushes away the for-itself, we can begin to see why it is difficult to begin to take on the questioning mode of the for-itself. Sartre locates this “push away” within the patterns of bad faith:

...If candor or sincerity is a universal value, it is evident that the maxim “one must be what one is” does not serve solely as a regulating principle for judgements and concepts by which I express what I am. It posits not merely an ideal of knowing but an idea of being; it proposes for us an absolute equivalence of being with itself as a prototype of being. In this sense it is necessary that we make ourselves what we are. But what are we then if we have the constant obligation to make ourselves what we are, if our mode of being is having the obligation to be what we are (p. 166).

The conditions for the possibility of bad faith are located in the maxim “one must be what one is.” This rule of conduct is a pattern of bad faith in the way that it obligates us to be and understand our being a certain way. But where does this obligation come from? How do we develop these patterns of bad faith? Sartre goes on to explain that these obligations are

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61 In her essay Teacher Education as Uneven Development: Toward a Psychology of Uncertainty (2007), Deborah Britzman understands bad faith as a pattern that develops in schooling: “we have grown up in school, have spent our childhood and adolescents observing teachers and our peers...Growing up in education permeates our meanings of education and learning; it lends commotion to our anticipations for and judgments toward the self and our relations with others. It makes us suspicious of what we have not experienced and lends nostalgia to what
...not different from that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor, of the auctioneer, by which they endeavor to persuade their clientele that they are nothing but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor. A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer. Society demands that he limit himself to his function as a grocer...There are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he is, as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition (p. 168-139).

These obligations and maxims that society imposes “imprisons” man in being-in-itself and pushes away the possibility of being that which he is not. Questioning these obligations and patterns of conditioning, to be for-itself, requires one to take on the risks that are involved when attempting to elude one’s condition. Similar to Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed, being-for-itself is a hopeful despair precisely because its freedom is tied to the fear of losing the only identity one has ever known.62

Perhaps the best way to understand the difficulty of being-for-itself is to understand it in terms of temporality or existential absence, since being-for-itself is something that flees being-in-itself. It projects itself towards being in the future, making the present being-in-itself past. In other words, being-for-itself is futural and illuminates the present and past through its

62 Freire articulates this as a fear of freedom that comes from the existential conditioning of the oppressed.

has been missed. Simply put, our sense of self and our sense of the world is profoundly affected by having to grow up in school. And this means that both the experience we have and the having of experience are problems of education” (p. 2).
forwards movement. This is where the freedom of being-for-itself is found, it is found in being’s futural orientation:

...The future is revealed to the for-itself as that which the for-itself is not yet, inasmuch as the for-itself constitutes itself non-thetically for itself as a not-yet in the perspective of this revelation, and inasmuch as it makes itself to be as a project of itself outside the present towards that which is not yet (p. 126).

In this temporal explanation, we can see how being-for-itself, as a flight away from being-in-itself, depends on the bad faith of being-in-itself. Sartre explains:

...nothingness, which is not, can have only a borrowed existence, and it gets its being from being. Its nothingness of being is encountered only within the limits of being, and the total disappearance of being would not be the advent of the reign of non-being, but on the contrary the concomitant disappearance of nothingness.

Non-being exists only on the surface of being (p. 98).

Key to this passage in locating non-being is Sartre’s reference to “on the surface.” What is the surface of being where non-being exists? How can the surface surface? If we think about the phenomenon of our being, how we appear can only be seen by others. We can never see our own surface, we cannot get outside of our bodies and see ourselves as we appear. However, we constitute and support the surface that we cannot access63. This idea of “on the surface” is similar to time, as we can never really be present since it always escapes towards the future.

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rendering the present past. Like the present, “on the surface” (where non-being is found) cannot present itself to us; it is constantly escaping and projecting our being as appearance. That does not mean that non-being and presence do not exist. They exist in absence. Sartre explains:

...what we falsely call the Present is the beginning to which the present is presence. It is impossible to grasp the Present in the form of an instant, for the instant would be the moment when the present is. But the present is not; it makes itself present in the form of flight (Sartre, 1986, p. 123).

Thus, the present is conceivable as not being the past and not yet being the future. In this way, the present can only be understood as a movement away and towards. The present projects, it is futural, it is a movement and not a phenomenon. This projection temporalizes the present as the past. To comprehend presence and being in terms of non-being is transformative. It awakens our consciousness and allows us to exist authentically as beings-for-ourselves. To have consciousness of our bad faith is to be aware of our flight towards nothingness, towards the uncertainty that both defines and emancipates us from the limits and “obligations” of our being.

So how do we know that we are moving? How do we know that we are sliding on the surface of our being-in-itself? How can we consciously experience the perpetual movement towards non-being? We already know that it is paradoxical and difficult to think about non-being since it is something “beyond” the world in which we find our being. But according to Sartre, the question can move us towards questioning the question, it is where we “begin the
beginning.” Questioning, as a perpetual forward movement towards nothingness, is desperately hopeful in its movement towards finding, but never arriving at, meaning in negation. We can never be the non-being of nothingness, for it is not to be what it is and is to be what it is not. Like the present, it is impossible to inhabit, both temporally and spatially. In this way, it is “beyond,” but it does exist in its absence. It is what conditions our being. We can move towards it away from our conditioned being. We can emancipate being by making it our past. It is a matter of letting go of our cherished beliefs towards uncertainty. But how do we let go? What do we look for to tell us that we are moving in the right direction? What are the qualities of moving towards non-being?

The following section will address these questions in the attempt to outline the qualities of Sartrean questioning as a movement towards non-being. In order to be able to practice this movement, we need to recognize the feeling of moving towards and moving away. Crucial to developing a pedagogy of existential questioning is being able to identify a feeling of being hopefully desperate and desperately hopeful. In terms of Sartrean questioning, the feeling of estrangement and a sensation of vertigo are key qualities in recognizing that we are on our way towards becoming pedagogical.

How Do I Know I’m Moving?: Questioning as Vertigo and Estrangement

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64 Megan Boler (1999) explains the difficulty of this and its pedagogical rewards in *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education.*

65 This movement is characterized as being-for-itself. It a movement away from being-in-itself.
As stated previously, to begin to question is to begin to change the familiar conditions that condition our being. In other words, to change the familiar is to make unfamiliar the familiar. By exploring Sartre’s concept of non-being and nothingness in temporal terms, we came to recognize that the familiar way of being-in-itself as simply present is in fact an inauthentic way of existing, for both presence and being-for-itself are not what they are and are what they are not. Upon further exploration, we can see that just because something is not there does not mean that it does not exist. In fact, to put something under question is an act of negation which reveals the non-being of the thing that is under question. To say that something does not exist or to question the existence of something calls upon the nothingness that conditions and temporalizes that which is under question. This means that the thing under question can never coincide or be co-present with the non-being that gives presence or brings into being that which is under question. To question is thus temporal. To question is to move perpetually forward, away from that which is under question towards that which conditions it. It is perpetual because it has an impossible aim, in other words, there is no “answer.” There is only a future possibility of being with non-being, as it is always impossible at present. Thus, in the process of questioning, the questioner is present in her futural movement towards non-being, which temporally speaking, is impossible to ground. But as we have learned, just because it is impossible, it does not mean that it does not exist. It is what Sartre calls an existential absence, and it something that can be experienced as movement through questioning. However, this movement of questioning needs to be authentic as opposed to being a pattern of bad faith. This brings us to the question that this section will explore: how can we recognize that we are moving towards emancipation? It is a question that moves us
from Sartre’s ontological concern towards thinking about a possible ethics of his ontology. This is crucial not only to become aware or have consciousness of that which conditions our being, but most importantly, to be able to develop an emancipatory process of questioning. This section will look at two key qualities of being aware that one is moving away from one’s being-in-itself. The first is a feeling of vertigo, and the second is a feeling of estrangement. Both of these qualities are characteristics of anguish. Thus, it is necessary to first go over what Sartre means by saying that consciousness of being is found in anguish.

In his section *Origin of Nothingness*, Sartre develops a concept of freedom as the being of consciousness. If freedom is the being of consciousness, Sartre asserts that consciousness ought to exist as consciousness of freedom (Sartre, 1993, p. 119). He then proceeds to ask: “what form does this consciousness of freedom assume” (p. 119)? This is a similar question that I am asking in terms of looking for characteristics that bring attention to our awareness and consciousness. In other words, it raises the question: how do we know that we know? Sartre explains that the form of consciousness is a mode “of standing opposite his past and his future, as being both this past and this future and as not being them” (p. 119). Again, we are faced with the paradox of the presence of absence, being with non-being, and the form of formlessness. The impossibility to be with the being that we move toward causes anguish. Sartre agrees with Kierkegaard that anguish is felt when one faces one’s own lack, as well as with Heidegger who considers anguish as the apprehension of nothingness (p. 119). However, it is more than simply an apprehension of or confrontation with nothingness. It is a fear of
losing oneself and the determined modes of one’s being. Fear, according to Sartre, is a choice. Thus, anguish is provoked by being. Sartre gives an example of the soldier:

...The artillery preparation which precedes the attack can provoke fear in the soldier who undergoes the bombardment, but anguish is born in him when he tries to foresee the conduct with which he will face the bombardment, when he asks himself if he is going to be able to “hold up” (p. 120).

Therefore, what Sartre means to highlight is that anguish is a fear of fear. Interestingly enough, his concept of anguish in *Being and Nothingness* is expressed differently in his essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* that was published only three years later. In this essay, Sartre describes anguish as the feeling that arises from having to choose, and bearing responsibility for that choice. In this essay, Sartre gives the example of a military leader:

...when a military leader takes it upon himself to launch an attack and sends a number of men to their deaths, he chooses to do so, and, ultimately, makes that choice alone...In making such a decision, he is bound to feel some anguish. All leaders have experienced that anguish, but it does not prevent them from acting. To the contrary, it is the very condition of their action, for they first contemplate several options, and in choosing one of them, realize that its only value lies in the fact that it was chosen (Sartre, 2007a, p. 27).

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66 This is the fear of freedom that Freire references in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2007), and the discomfort that Boler describes when one’s “cherished beliefs” are challenged.
In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, anguish is felt in the capacity to act, whereas in *Being and Nothingness*, anguish is understood as a moment of reflection, and therefore, as something that stands in the way of action. Certainly, Sartre’s choice of the examples he provides to illustrate both the former and the latter raises an eyebrow. Does a soldier experience anguish differently from the military leader? The soldier fears nothingness, and in fearing fear, is conscious of his being. The military leader is responsible for the choice of his actions, and in realizing and accepting the consequences of his actions, he is conscious of his being. Most definitely, Sartre would argue that the soldier’s anguish is the same as the military leader’s, that both men realize their being in non-being, and that the soldier’s consciousness is just as authentic as the military leader’s. In Sartre’s defence, the anguish that he describes in *Existentialism is a Humanism* is meant to highlight choice, responsibility and other humanistic qualities as a response to the criticism he received after writing *Being and Nothingness* (such as accusations of being a non-humanist, atheist, materialist). Although the anguish is expressed differently (and we should be critical of these differences), similarities between the two descriptions can be found. The most notable similarity that concerns our attempt to understand what it feels like to move towards non-being, is the futural quality of anguish. Anguish, in both definitions, is a feeling of anticipation, indeterminacy and uncertainty. Although the modes of anguish are different, the perpetually growing feeling of incertitude is a characteristic quality in both examples.

One way to understand this fear of fear is in temporospatial terms. Anguish, as fearing the fearful future, fears what is to come because it is an unknown. It is a fear of being where we are not. This fear and anguish takes up a particular perspective of being stationed in one
place while feeling movement. It is a moment of disassociation between being and being-in-the-world, or between being and the precipice. Sartre uses the example of vertigo to explain the quality of movement experienced in anguish. Sartre explains:

...Vertigo announces itself through fear; I am on a narrow path—without a guard-rail—which goes along a precipice. The precipice presents itself to me as to be avoided; it represents a danger of death. At the same time I conceive of a certain number of causes, originating in universal determinism, which can transform that threat of death into reality; I can slip on a stone and fall into the abyss; the crumbling earth of the path can give way under my steps (Sartre, 1993, p. 121).

We can therefore begin to see how questioning can be a mode of vertigo. If we understand questioning as an act of understanding the limits and conditions of the question, as a movement towards non-being, than we can see how questioning is a movement on a “narrow path—without a guard-rail—which goes along a precipice.” Questioning, like vertigo, is a movement into the unknown. The precipice becomes key in understanding the temporospatial quality of vertigo. The precipice is the boundary between the known and the unknown, between being and non-being. The precipice is what it is because being moves along it. According to Sartre, being precedes the precipice. In other words, through anguish, being creates it precipice. Being creates its own fear of “falling over.” This feeling of vertigo is a reflective movement, it is an awareness of the limits of our being. Sartre explains:
...At this moment *fear* appears, which in terms of the situation is the apprehension of myself as a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendence, as an object which does not contain in itself the origin of its future disappearance (p. 121).

This apprehension of moving away from being-in-itself, the familiar and inauthentic mode of being, is a form of disengagement, which according to Sartre, is felt as anxiety:

..Anxiety springs up from the negation of the appeals of the world; it appears when I disengage myself from the world in which I engage myself...In anxiety I perceive myself both as totally free and able to make *the meaning of the world come only from myself* (p. 39-40).

Vertigo is thus an anxious feeling of being aware of the non-being that conditions its being, an awareness that causes disengagement with being-in-itself.67 This awareness is a feeling of anticipation, indeterminacy and uncertainty, feelings that characterize the anguish involved when being is disengaged from itself:

...Anguish...springs up from the negation of the appeals of the world; it appears when I disengage myself from the world in which I had engaged myself...In anguish I perceive myself both as totally free and able to make the meaning of the world come only from myself (p. 77).

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67 Disengagement is mostly associated with terms such as “alienation, isolation, separation, detachment, fragmentation, and boredom,” associations that are undesirable in educational settings. John Portelli suggests that a lack of inquiry into the very foundations of the conceptions of student engagement does not allow for critical reflection on disengagement, and as a result, does not recognize disengagement as a critical form of engagement (Portelli, 2005, p.76).
Anguish, like vertigo, discloses being as a “being through whom values exist” (p. 77). It is a feeling of knowing that values arise only through our choice. We do not simply stumble upon vertigo, we create it as we are the source of our own limits. Sartre explains that “at the very moment when I apprehend my being as horror of the precipice, I am conscious of that horror as not determinant in relation to my possible conduct” (Sartre, p. 123). Consciousness of being as a feeling of vertigo is also a consciousness of freedom. To understand my being as the fear of fear, I am emancipated from that fear! The fear of fear moves me forward, it projects me towards the self that I will be, in the mode of not being it (p. 124). Thus, vertigo is understanding that my being depends on the being that I am not yet. It is a moment that being can play with its possibilities and decide what it will become.

So what are the symptoms of vertigo? Traditionally, symptoms include dizziness, nausea, inability to move, altered level of consciousness, etc. So are we expected to experience motion sickness as we question towards non-being? Or is it simply a fear of falling over the precipice that characterizes vertigo? Perhaps it is both. But both imply that it is a reflective movement rather than a physical one. So what kind of motion sickness can we experience from not moving physically? Certainly, it is because this motion is experienced as sickness and fear that we are able to feel and therefore recognize that we are moving towards the non-being that is constantly conditioning our fear. But is it gut-wrenching? Or is it more of a feeling of

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68 This clarification was made possible with the help of Dr. Lauren Bialystok, who encouraged me to question my analysis of anguish in relation to action and choice.

69 Philosophers of education have explored this emancipatory place in various ways. Deborah Britzman calls this place of vertigo a “difficult knowledge,” a place where we encounter the self “through the otherness of knowledge” (Britzman and Pitt, 2003, p. 755). Nicholas Burbules understands this place of vertigo in terms of aporia, “a crisis of choice, of action and identity, and not only of belief. When I have too many choices, or no choices, I don’t have a choice; I’m stuck. I don’t know how to go on” (Burbules, 2000, p.173). Vertigo, as a feeling of not knowing where to go next, signals that we are “beginning the beginning.”
abandonment which comes from making the choice to move, and the fact that we can never really know the results of our choices until we act? Vertigo can very well mean that one can choose either to pass the precipice, or turn away from it. The precipice is a place of decision, choice, and a faith in the unknown. It is a feeling of having to abandon one “place” towards another. It is a willingness to be exiled from the comfort of one’s home and to dwell in the unknown. Certainly, movement always implies abandonment and direction. Inherent in movement is thus choice. Sartre explains in *Existentialism is a Humanism*: 

...I can say that I love my mother enough to stay by her side only if I actually stayed with her. The only way that I can measure the strength of this affection is precisely by performing an action that confirms and defines it. However, since I am depending on this affection to justify my action, I find myself caught in a vicious circle (Sartre, 2007a, p. 32).

Vertigo can be compared to this vicious circle of developing an ethics of choice, which we have been taught is a prerequisite for action, but realizing that a justification of my act cannot be developed until I have gone through the movements of that action. Vertigo is having to choose in the face of indeterminacy. It is a choice to abandon our conditioned being so that we can move towards non-being.

The choice to abandon one’s cherished beliefs, a choice that is provoked by a sensation of vertigo, can be felt as estrangement. Although Sartre does not develop a theory of estrangement per se, he alludes to this existential situation as evidenced in *Existentialism is a Humanism*. He explains:
man is always outside of himself, and it is in projecting and losing himself beyond himself that man is realized; and, on the other hand, it is in pursuing transcendent goals that he is able to exist...The link between transcendence as constitutive of man and subjectivity is what we call “existential humanism.” This is humanism because we remind man that there is no legislator other than himself and that he must, in his abandoned state, make his own choices (Sartre, 2007a, p. 52-53).

Thus, estrangement is to remove oneself from one’s conditioned being in order to live authentically within the world. But how does it feel to be a stranger to oneself? In terms of Sartrean questioning, because he does not outline a theory of estrangement in his philosophic essays, I will turn to his novel Nausea (1938, 2007b), and his commentary on Camus’ Stranger (1942) to get a better grip on the quality and form of estrangement.

Sartre’s story Nausea is a great oeuvre to try to understand what the movement towards non-being feels like. This experimental metaphysical novel is a story of Antoine Roquentin, a writer who catalogues his every feeling of being horrified by his existence. Each journal entry documents Roquentin’s existential anguish and social anxiety in his everyday life. The opening paragraph of the novel explains Roquentin’s desire to document the changes that he is experiencing:

...The best thing would be to write down events from day to day. Keep a diary to see clearly—let none of the nuances or small happenings escape even though they might seem to mean nothing. And above all, classify them. I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since those are the things which
have changed. I must determine the exact extent and nature of this change (Sartre, 2007b, p.1).

From the very beginning it is made clear that his journal entries will be ontological investigations of phenomena, and that this investigation will reveal why the things around him are changing. The desire to investigate changes in the objects around him comes from his fear of the possibility that he may be mad. Roquentin recalls an incident where he could not make sense of the things around him:

...Day before yesterday was much more complicated. And there was also this series of coincidences, of *quid-pro-quo*s that I can’t explain to myself. But I’m not going to spend my time putting all that down on paper. Anyhow, it was certain that I was afraid or had some other feeling of that sort. If I had only known what I was afraid of, I would have made a great step forward. The strangest thing is that I am not at all inclined to call myself insane, I clearly see that I am not: all these changes concern objects. At least, that is what I’d like to be sure of (p. 2).

There are two things that concern us in this passage in terms of identifying what it feels like to move towards non-being. First, Roquentin’s insistence that he is in control of these changes he is experiencing is an example of turning away from vertigo. Although he acknowledges that there was a strange occurrence, he chooses not to “put it down on paper.” This would be a perfect example of Sartre’s concept of bad faith: knowing that there is something that we do not know, but continuing to have faith in our false knowledge. Second, Roquentin recognizes a fear, and that if only he could know what it was that he feared, that he would be able to make a
“great step forward.” His fear of the unknown, his fear of becoming insane, keeps him in bad faith. His awareness of this is evidence that he is already estranged from his being. He has thus already started the process of questioning. The qualities of moving forward appear to be both a feeling of self-deception, a struggle for control, and the fear of uncertainty.

As the story progresses, Roquentin becomes more estranged from himself:

...there is something new about my hands, a certain way of picking up my pipe or fork. Or else it’s the fork which now has a certain way of having itself picked up, I don’t know (p.4).

...an immense sickness flooded over me suddenly and pen fell from my hand, spluttering ink. What happened? Did I have the Nausea? No, it wasn’t that, the room had its paternal, everyday look. The table hardly seemed heavier and more solid to me, nor my pen more compact (p. 96).

...my whole life is behind me. I see it completely, I see its shape and the slow movements which have brought me this far. There is little to say about it: a lost game; that’s all (p. 157).

What is clear in these passages is that estrangement, as a movement away from oneself, cannot be explained, but only described in the moment of experiencing it. Sartre’s definition of estrangement, as something that can be described in the moment of experiencing it, is

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70 In his analysis of Sartre’s ethics of play and freedom, Joseph Fell explores Roquentin’s expression of estrangement as play, “in which man escapes his natural nature and liberates subjectivity” (Fell, 1979, p. 144).
explored further in his commentary on Camus’ *Stranger*, where he argues that it is not a book that explains anything, but rather, is a book of observations of the present:

...all that counts is the present—the concrete. He goes to see his mother when he feels like it, and that’s that (Sartre, 2007a, p. 81).

However, as Sartre notes, it is much more complex than that. The feeling of estrangement is something that the protagonist can describe, however, Camus has brought the estrangement to light by making the reader empathize with the estrangement. Sartre recognizes Camus’ cleverness in the way he structures his narrative:

...on the one hand there is the amorphous, everyday flow of reality as it is experienced, and, on the other, the edifying reconstruction of this reality by human reasoning and speech. When first brought face-to-face with simple reality, the reader confronts it without being able to recognize it in its rational transposition. This is the source of the feeling of the absurd—that is, of our inability to *conceive* using our concepts and our words, what occurs in the world (p. 86).

Estrangement, like the absurd, is a moment of divorce, and disorientation. Estrangement is both a mode and feeling of transposition, an alteration of the temporospatial dimension of being. To this end, estrangement is a moment of incommunicability. Sartre’s Roquentin struggles with the same inability to communicate the change that divorces him from his conditioned being. In this way, estrangement is felt as a struggle to communicate the being that is moving away from being. Estrangement never gives up. It is futural in its desire to coincide with being. It moves forward in its desire to be known.
As stated in the first section, there are two modes of being that are involved in Sartrean questioning: being-in-itself and being-for-itself. The desire to remain being-in-itself is a desire to simply exist, avoiding the precipice at all costs. This avoidance of the precipice and therefore the fleeing of our freedom puts us in bad faith. Being-in-itself does not engage in questioning, but rather, it pursues answers. Being-for-itself gives consciousness to being-in-itself through questioning. It moves towards the non-being, engages with the precipice and as a result is in perpetual anguish. Since being-for-itself can never coincide with itself, its movement is felt as anguish. It can never coincide with being because being and nothingness are interdependent. In temporal terms, the present relies on the future to temporalizes it (and therefore give it an existence), and the future relies on the present to pass through it (and therefore give it an existence). This is evidence that just because something does not appear to us, does not mean that it does not exist. In fact, we move towards that which is not yet. Nothingness and non-being moves us, and it is our choice if we want to engage with this movement and be conscious of it. As noted in the second section, it is not an easy choice to make. To consciously move towards non-being, to practice questioning, is anything but comfortable. In the movement away from our conditioned being towards a negation of that being, the movement is propelled by indeterminacy. For that reason, it is experienced as anguish. Anguish, as understood through Sartre, is futural. It is a feeling of anticipation that is never satisfied. It wants but it cannot have. For this reason, anguish is the engine of the perpetual flight towards non-being. During this flight, there are characteristic sensations that we can identify. The first is vertigo; a feeling that is more than just a fear of fear, it is a feeling of unrest in having to choose in the face of indeterminacy. The second example of what characterizes this movement and brings
awareness to our flight is estrangement. Since this feeling in itself has not been developed by
Sartre, it is a feeling that he implies and alludes to as evidenced in his novel *Nausea*, and his
commentary on Camus’ *Stranger*. Estrangement, as a mode of becoming a stranger to oneself,
is characterized by the frustration experienced when wanting to communicate something
incommunicable. It is a space between being and non-being that struggles to move forward.

This struggle is defined by the desire to be with non-being and the contradictory desire of
grounding and controlling the non-being. It is a mature curiosity. So it is not a stationary
feeling of despair, it is constantly hopeful and in the process of becoming.

So how can anguish, vertigo and estrangement be educational? Although the
pedagogical benefits are more apparent, the educational risks cannot be ignored. The
concluding section will explore the pedagogical benefits and the educational risks of
questioning towards estrangement in order to argue that Sartrean questioning as a practice is
possible and necessary.

**What Makes Estrangement Hopeful?: Questioning Sartrean Questioning in Education**

In terms of becoming pedagogical, through Sartre’s concept of non-being and
nothingness, we have seen how the movement away from being-in-itself towards being-for-itself emancipates being from its known and conditioned existence. Questioning is a mode of
perpetual movement towards nothingness. Questioning negates being-in-itself, the being that
we are accustomed to and comfortable with, and moves along the precipice of non-being. For
this reason, the movement away can be fearful and uncomfortable. These feelings and experiences of uncertainty signal that we are moving. Like Jaggar’s outlaw emotions, these feelings and emotions become hopeful in the way that they signal that we are beginning to learn something new. In the case of existential questioning, becoming pedagogical is a balancing act between what we “know” and what we don’t “know,” between who we are and who we are becoming. The precipice, as the place where meaning and being interact, is an affective space that moves away from our conditioned modes of knowing and plays with possibility. It is here that we experience growing pains. By understanding how we are situated in this pain and what it has to offer, we are more willing to accept it. The more we practice questioning, the more we have faith in discomfort. To learn to be hopeful from the seemingly hopeless is to learn to move forward with the desire to know the unknowable. Becoming pedagogical is learning to find hope in the not-“knowing.” Learning to find hope in the hopeless rewrites our senses, makes outlaw emotions radical and transformative, and creates new and therefore emancipatory modes of thought and action. It is a mode of learning that is always becoming, it can never be and can never become. For this reason, it is not something that can be articulated, but rather, is a felt pedagogy that can be felt and expressed by modes of questioning. Because questioning is always in the process, it can never be captured by consumerism, colonized by neoliberalism, or controlled by the culture of learning. It is forever emancipated, and therefore, emancipating.

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71 This has been articulated by many educational practitioners and philosophers, such as Roger Simon (2011) and Deborah Britzman (2007), as “difficult knowledge.”
The inability to capture and articulate a mode of existential questioning allows for the questioner to become pedagogical. It allows the questioner to struggle for meaning while simultaneously situating herself within the struggle. The ability to situate oneself in despair, to understand one’s movement of thought, provides hope. But how can it be applied in education? Can questioning be educational? Or more specifically, can Sartrean questioning be an educational practice? The best way to explore these questions is to ask what the risks of questioning in higher education are, and to see if these risks outweigh and therefore negate the pedagogical benefits.

The first risk that comes immediately to mind has to do with the affective dimension of Sartrean questioning. Anguish and becoming a stranger to oneself is an emotion and experience that is not generally part of education’s mission to empower the student, nurture confidence, and instil a secure sense of self. Articulation and clear ideas become crucial in developing these qualities. In fact, the culture of learning in higher education ensures that students do not have to experience the anguish that comes from estrangement and facing the unknown. To this end, the culture of learning in higher education “protects” students from the seemingly negative attitudes and emotions that are associated with questioning towards estrangement. This is evidenced in educational research which mostly focuses on locating why students feel anxious, unmotivated and apathetic in order to “fix” the system that has seemingly failed to protect its students. The plethora of research which attempts to identify “at risk” students, from “visible” to “non visible” minorities, symbolizes a common need to classify and diagnose “these” students in order to develop systems, methodologies and policies that can support and protect the students who seemingly cannot do so for themselves. Perhaps I
am being too harsh. I do not mean to disregard or disvalue the attempts to understand the experiences of “these” students, and I agree that there must be some effort on behalf of schooling to ensure that “these” students do not get “left behind.” However, I am concerned with what this research does in terms of classifying and establishing a hierarchy of experiences. To say that a bilingual student is “at risk” is to dismiss and conceal the student’s unique strength and insight. To identify a student from a lower-class home as “at risk” simple makes the student more visible in her invisibility. In effect, this kind of research does the opposite of what it attempts to do. By developing a category of “at risk,” this kind of research makes us misrecognize outlaw emotions and conceals the hope that can be found in despair.

The culture of learning which takes its direction from similar quantitative research, attempts to create a false sense of security, making sure that no student is “left behind.” To this end, ability is idealized, knowledge is fragmentized and confidence is heroicized. It is no wonder that when students enter higher education, they perform these qualities as to disassociate with the “at risk” qualities. This is what Sartre means when he says explains beings in bad faith. Students recognize what “not to be,” and through avoidance, perform qualities that are not necessarily their own. In this context, estrangement is not favoured precisely because it brings to light the construction of, and false knowledge within higher education. The “risks” of questioning towards estrangement are only apparent in the bad faith of higher education.

For example, the pedagogical potential of estrangement can be misrecognized as alienation or apathy in higher education. Because we have learned to associate such feelings
and experiences as negative, antisocial or eccentric, we avoid them at all costs instead of questioning them. Our unfamiliarity with these experiences keeps us in bad faith. This is the real risk to education: the inability to become estranged. The seeming risks of Sartrean questioning towards estrangement symbolize the deep-seated problem within higher education. Our discomfort with the unknown is a symptom that something is very wrong. Instead of questioning towards the sickness, we mask the pain through performance. For this reason, questioning towards estrangement is possible because it is in dire need. Who we are to be depends on questioning who we are not. To this end, the only risk that we have is the risk of losing our conditioned being. Before we know it, this “risk” becomes redefined as something emancipatory and emancipating.

However, there are areas in Sartrean questioning that require critical reflection. The best way to bring these elements to light is through a comparison with another mode of existential questioning. The following chapter will look at Heideggerean questioning, which moves inward as opposed to outward. Where in Sartrean questioning we leave as stranger, in Heideggerean question we enter as strangers.
“The new and the old all jumbled together...”

“Yes. Because the very questions we started our course with are still unanswered. Sartre made an observation when he said that existential questions cannot be answered once and for all. A philosophical question is by definition something that each generation, each individual even, must ask over and over again.”

-Sophie’s World

**Heideggerean Questioning: Moving Towards Unconcealment**

Sartre’s critique of presence and the phenomenon of being in the world are greatly indebted to Heidegger’s radical approach to phenomenology. Heidegger, like Sartre, questioned the appearance of things and put forward that things do not simply appear as they are, but rather, that they are partially withdrawn into nothingness. In other words, he asserts that we see things in their partiality, and as a result, we assume their wholeness. If I were to place a cup in front of you and asked you what you see, you would surely say a cup. Both Heidegger and Sartre would argue that you only see what is presented to you, that is, the front of the cup. You do not see its backside, inside or underside, you do not see it in use either. Yet, you affirm that it is a cup. According to both Heidegger and Sartre, this filling-in what we do not see and privileging what appears demonstrates that we have habitual modes of seeing and understanding things, modes that are false and inauthentic. Sartre, like Heidegger, was highly critical of things as we see them, and blames bad faith for its unwillingness to question and struggle against the phenomenon of being towards an authentic consciousness. Although Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* was published sixteen years after Heidegger’s magna opus *Being and Time*, it would be false and uncritical to assume that Sartre’s ontological orientation is a direct development from Heidegger’s. Many introductory handbooks on Sartre and
existentialism assign phenomenology and Heideggerean ontology, or what is now popularly termed “existential phenomenology,” as the beginning and theoretical force of its school of thought. Some interpretations go as far as to imply that without Heidegger’s preoccupation with the particular ontological problem of being, Sartre’s concept of non-being and nothingness could not have been possible (Barnes, 1973; Grene, 1983; Olson, 1962; Reynolds, 2006; Cox, 2006). Although Sartre’s concept of being is certainly indebted to Heidegger’s concept of Dasein, I would like to argue that both Heidegger’s and Sartre’s interrogations were symptomatic of the modern Western tendency to seriously pay attention to the subject. For that reason, I recognize both Sartre and Heidegger as crisis philosophers, philosophers who reveal to us a crisis which requires a revolutionary response, a response which depends on the reawakening of the subject’s consciousness. To this end, I have decided to explore Heideggerean questioning after having explored Sartrean questioning. My intent for this sequence is to disrupt the traditional dialectic, and to focus instead on the method of questioning. However, key differences and important similarities between the two movements of questioning will be explored in the concluding section of this chapter.

But first, allow us to focus on unconcealment as a method of questioning. According to Heidegger, unconcealment is a mode of remembering what has been forgotten (Heidegger, 1962, p. 20), bringing into light that which has been kept in the shadows (p. 23), and bringing into the open that which has been obscured (p. 24). Thus, to unconceal requires something to be concealed, something that is always already there, but has not yet appeared. Unconcealment implies that there is something we do not know that we know. To remember what has been forgotten implies that we need to first recognize that we are in fact estranged
from ourselves. To unconceal is to say that there is something that I have forgotten, there is something that is hidden from me, that there is something that I cannot see. Herein lies the key difference between Sartre’s and Heidegger’s movement of questioning. With Sartrean questioning, we leave as strangers; with Heideggerean questioning, we enter as strangers. In other words, Sartrean questioning moves us towards estrangement, whereas Heideggerean questioning begins by admitting that we are estranged from what is under question. To illustrate this, the first section of this chapter will look at Heidegger’s introductory chapter to *Being and Time* (1927/1962), in order to familiarize ourselves with Heidegger’s concept of Dasein, and to explore how he interrogates, explicates and analyzes Dasein’s way of being. His mode of interrogation is the key to understanding questioning as unconcealment. Section two will explore Heidegger’s later works, specifically *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950/2001), and *The Question Concerning Technology* (1949/2010), as these texts specifically deal with unconcealment, or what we will come to know as *aletheia*, and the so-called steps of questioning towards unconcealment. The concluding chapter will compare Heideggerean questioning to Sartrean questioning, outlining their commonalities that I will argue are existential in their praxis, and that although it may seem that unconcealment has less educational risks than estrangement, both modes of questioning share similar challenges that are pedagogical.

**What is Dasein?: Questioning what has been Estranged**
Heidegger’s work is infamously complex and perplexing at best. For these reasons, it is no surprise that first encounters with Heidegger are daunting, intimidating and bewildering. Although this makes it difficult to motivate students, or any readers for that matter, to engage with his writing, once one surrenders to his writing something transformative happens. In fact, I envy those who are reading Heidegger for the first time, for it is an encounter that embodies the feeling of perplexity which compels a new mode of thinking. To read Heidegger for the first time is to feel desperately hopeful. To engage in his paradoxes and seeming contradictions, we are able to get lost in thought in the hopes of finding a clearing. After leaving his texts, we may never be the same again. I remember the first time I actually read a work by Heidegger. Although already familiar with his contributions to philosophy and his impact on postmodern thought through undergraduate courses in philosophy, actually reading one of his works was never something that appealed to me. In fact, even in a senior level seminar on Continental philosophy we were only introduced to his writings via excerpts. It was not until my final year of undergraduate studies, as I was grappling with a paper on the performance artist Marina Abramovic, when his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* fell into my lap. Actually, it was less a “falling into my lap” than my father placing it there. Assuming that I had already embarked on the journey of thought, that I had already experienced the perplexity of being a beginner to Heidegger, he was surprised to hear that I had in fact never read one of his works from beginning to end. I will never forget what he said to me when he learned this news: “No wonder you’re afraid of your own questions!”

To this day, I remember where I was sitting when I first realized what Heidegger meant by origin. I remember what I was wearing when I realized that half way through the essay we
had to detour the argument back to the beginning. The excitement of not knowing where Heidegger’s thoughts were going to take you is comparable to riding a roller coaster for the first time. In a complex way, my first encounter with Heidegger was like being a kid all over again. By that I do not mean that it fulfilled a nostalgic desire, or that it left me ignorant to all things around me. Rather, it reawakened a new form of curiosity and faith in things that are seemingly complex. It guided my through a new way of thinking, a newness that I can only compare to my memories of childhood experiences.

Having said that, in familiarizing ourselves with Dasein and how Heidegger interrogates its being, this section will not, because it cannot, substitute actually reading his work and going through his movements of thought. What concerns us in terms of developing an existential practice of questioning is understanding the “steps” that Heidegger takes us on towards unconcealment. To this end, it is crucial to look at how and why Heidegger unconceals Being, and the best way that I know how to do that is to look at his introduction to *Being in Time*, where he raises (through a careful formulation) the necessary and forgotten question of Being.

His introduction titled *The Necessity, Structure, and Priority of the Question of Being*, opens by stating that “this question has today been forgotten” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 21). This does not mean that it is no longer asked, but that it has become trivialized, superfluous and empty. In other words, the question of Being has become something determined, something that we readily have an answer to. He explains:

...It is said that ‘Being’ is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such, it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence
indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method (p. 21).

Because Being has become something already “known,” it has been forgotten. Most importantly, what this passage demonstrates is that an interrogation of Being is considered unreasonable. Because the question of Being has been neglected, it has been appropriated as something known, and any attempt at reawakening the question faces the danger of being “erroneous.” What Heidegger argues in this excerpt is that Western thought ever since the classic philosophers, has stopped asking the question of Being, or has taken it for granted as something that simply is. As a result, any attempt to question Being is unreasonable, causing negative feelings and false assumptions, which in turn push away the question. Already from this introductory paragraph, we see that Heidegger claims that the question of being has been forgotten by Western thought, and as a result, we have lost our ability to inquire about something that is seemingly evident. According to Heidegger, Western thought has taken away our ability to ask questions and to truly philosophize. It is an observation that I believe holds true today concerning our culture of learning and habits of bad faith. It is not that we cannot ask these questions, but rather, we fear being “erroneous” and continue on “knowing.”

72 In fact, it is something he makes explicit in the very first sentence of the introduction: “This question has today been forgotten” (Heidegger, 1962, p.21).
73 The very fact that Being has “taken on a clarity” and has become “self-evident” signals an “error” in the way we question. Being, according to Heidegger, has been taken for granted.
74 For a detailed discussion on how Western thought has forgotten the question of being, read Glenn J. Gray’s “Heidegger’s ‘Being’,” The Journal of Philosophy 49 (1952): 415-422.
As a result of Western thought obscuring the question of Being, Heidegger stresses that we must reawaken the question with great care. To this end, “the question of the meaning of Being must be formulated” (p. 24). In order to formulate the question of Being, Heidegger proposes that we must first look at the universal quality of a question so that we can see how the question of Being is a special kind of question. So he starts off his interrogation by stating that “every inquiry is a seeking” (P. 24). He then states that seeking is determined by what is being sought: “Inquiry is a cognizant seeking for an entity both with regard to the fact that it is and with regard to its Being as it is” (p. 24). This means that the question takes its flight from a place of knowing, and controls the flight towards its known destination. Certainly, the question takes its flight from the questioner which, according to Heidegger’s structure of inquiry as seeking, means that the questioner controls the question. Thus, the character of the question is a reflection of the questioner. According to Heidegger, this is the structure of the question that needs to be reformulated if the question of being is to be reawakened. In other words, we cannot question Being without first reformulating the way we question things. However, we cannot reformulate the question of Being without first developing the concept of being. Thus, Heidegger takes another direction by acknowledging that “if we are to obtain the clue we need for Interpreting this average understanding of Being, we must first develop the concept of Being” (p. 25). The question of Being began with an explanation of the universal quality of the question, which revealed to us that the question is determined by seeking which is characterized by the questioner. The question of Being is unique because the questioner questions its questioning. Thus, in order to formulate the question of being, we must reorient our direction, and develop the concept of Being.
In order to develop a concept of Being, we must first understand that it is not an entity, and thus it cannot be approached in a standard way. Heidegger explains:

...If we are to understand the problem of Being, our first philosophical step consists in not ‘telling a story’—that is to say, in not defining entities as entities by tracing them back in their origin to some other entities, as if Being had had the character of some possible entity. Hence Being, as that which is asked about, must be exhibited in a way of its own, essentially different from the way in which entities are discovered (p. 26).

Because being is not an entity, because it is something that determines entities as entities, the concept of Being must be developed in a different, and even unfamiliar way. So what is this way? Well, according to Heidegger, we cannot find “the way” without first interrogating entities, since “Being lies in the fact that something is” (p. 26). In other words, since Being determines entities as entities, these entities reflect Being. But which entity should we choose considering that we are dealing with something as unique as Being? Heidegger explains that our choice constitutes the mode of Being of that entity under question:

...Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it—all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves (p. 27).

Therefore there is a particular entity to interrogate when asking the question of Being: the being of the questioner! Heidegger terms this entity “Dasein.”
The question of Being began with an explanation of the universal quality of the question, which revealed to us that the question is determined by seeking, which is characterized by the questioner. The question of Being is unique because the questioner questions its questioning. Thus, in order to formulate the question of being, we must reorient our direction, and develop the concept of Being. Since Being determines entities as entities, we cannot develop the concept of Being without first interrogating an entity. Since Being is unique, the entity that we should interrogate must be considered carefully. Given that the question of Being questions the questioner, the entity that must be interrogated is the questioner. This brings us to Dasein, or rather, “Dasein has announced itself” (p. 28). Why have we chosen Dasein to be the entity that we will interrogate? To answer this question is the next step towards reawakening the question of Being. Heidegger explains:

...Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein’s Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being (p. 32).

It is here that Heidegger begins to develop a hermeneutic relationship between the questioner and the question. The questioner, as the entity of Being, questions the Being that designates the Being of its entity. In other words, as questioners, we are the principal resource of formulating the question of Being, and “answering” it. So how do we understand the entity of our Being? How do we understand ourselves as questioners who question questioning.
Heidegger explains that we cannot define Dasein’s essence because its Being is always to be. It is always “to be” because it is questioning. If it ceases to question, it loses its relationship with Being. This rings a Sartrean bell! We cannot catch Dasein’s essence because it is found in the process of questioning. Just like the pursuit of non-being, the pursuit of Dasein’s essence is perpetual and cannot be caught precisely because it is on the surface of being, or on the surface of the questioner who questions. So how can Dasein understand itself? Heidegger subsequently explains that Dasein can only be expressed in its mode, in its questioning, or more explicitly, in its existence. It can be understood in the way that it is expressed. Heidegger explains that “the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself” (p. 33). So Dasein is more than an entity that can be considered ontically. In other words, it is an entity that is not only considered by its characteristics, but also, it is an entity that can be considered ontologically, in the way that it exists. It is not enough to ask what is Dasein. We must also ask how is Dasein. More importantly, the what and the how of Dasein are interconnected, meaning that to ask how is to create what, and to question what is to question how. In other words, to question the what of Being is a mode of existence, a mode of existence which creates Being as it interrogates. To question is to exist, and to exist is to create. Heidegger explain in the last paragraph of his introduction:

...If to Interpret the meaning of Being becomes our task, Dasein is not only the primary entity to be interrogated; it is also that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask this question (p. 35).
Therefore, in accordance to Heidegger’s premise, if we have forgotten the question of Being, we have simultaneously forgotten about how we are. To have forgotten the question of Being means that we have become estranged from our existence. Therefore, to ask the question of Being is a mode of becoming pedagogical. To ask the question of Being is to create Being and to reacquaint ourselves with the Being who we are becoming.

Already, in his introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger maps out a path of questioning, a path which brings Dasein into unconcealment. He starts by questioning the qualities of a standard question, which revealed to us that the question is determined by seeking, which is characterized by the questioner. The question of Being is unique because the questioner questions its questioning. This revelation redirects the interrogation towards questioning the concept of Being and reveals to us that Being determines entities as entities. As a result of this revelation, we need to ask about the entities which Being determines. We quickly realize that we need to consider carefully which entity to interrogate in relation to Being. Questioning which entity to question reveals that since the question of Being questions the questioner, in its questioning, the entity that must be interrogated is the questioner. In asking the question of Being, we have unconcealed the questioner (Dasein) as creating the meaning of Being in its modes of questioning. To ask the question of Being is to create, through unconcealment, the Being that is under question. Heidegger explains:

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75 There are many philosophical debates on and translations of Heidegger’s use of Dasein. Marcuse understands Dasein not as a self-questioning subject, but as a being who understands itself through labouring. Similarly, Arendt argues that Dasein is a being who understands itself through action. In these articulations, Dasein is understood through praxis as opposed to self-questioning and reflection. For an excellent survey of how Heidegger’s ambiguous concept of Dasein is rearticulated by scholars who were most familiar with his work (his students), read Richard Wolin’s “Heidegger’s Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Lowith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse” 2001, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
The very asking of this question is an entity’s mode of Being; and as much as it gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely, Being (p. 28).

Being is thus understood through the process of questioning it. Heidegger makes a note that this is a new way of looking at Being:

...‘Being’ has been presupposed in all ontology up till now...This ‘presupposing’ of Being has rather the character of taking a look at it beforehand, so that in the light of it the entities presented to us get provisionally Articulated in their Being. This guiding activity of taking a look at Being arises from the average understanding of Being in which we always operate and which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of Dasein itself (p. 28).

Heidegger’s questioning of Being is a response to the “average understanding of Being.” What is unique in Heidegger’s question of Being is that Being is understood as a process of understanding Being through questioning. This mode of questioning is both pedagogical and existential. By questioning the essence of the thing in question, the questioner creates new questions that reveal the structure and limitations of the question and therefore the questioner. Questioning in this way creates an experience outside of the culture of learning where we learn to express ourselves authentically. To question towards unconcealment

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76 Sartre’s phenomenological ontology offers the same understanding of being, that being is understood through an understanding of its situationality (position within a situation).

77 This mode of existential questioning is similar to the goal of emancipatory learning in the way that it attempts to free the learner from stultifying conditions and give them room to use their intelligence. Claudia Ruitenberg articulates emancipatory learning using Ranciere’s understanding of relational aesthetics and the ways in which the participation in works of art emancipates the viewer from merely “spectating”. For a detailed analysis of how emancipatory learning is a mode of activating the learner, read Claudia Ruitenberg’s “Art, Politics, and the Pedagogical Relation.” Studies in Philosophy of Education 30 (2011): 211-223. Another excellent article which
simultaneously unconceals the questioner, allowing her to be-*for*-herself. According to Heidegger, it is something that we once practiced, but have slowly forgotten. Through our forgetting, we have become estranged from our Being and our coinciding mode of existence. Therefore, to reawaken the question of Being, to practice unconcealment, is to begin the pedagogical path of existing. Therefore, to question Being is to bring into appearance the essence of Being. It is a movement from the outer layers of appearance into the core. It is an inward movement that struggles against the blooming and coming into appearance of a bloom.

This mode of questioning as unconcealment of essence is explicitly mapped out in Heidegger’s later works The Origin of the Work of Art (1950/2001), and The Question Concerning Technology (1949/2010). By exploring the steps of questioning towards essence, we will come to understand his concept of aletheia. In exploring the concept of aletheia, we will begin to understand how it can be practiced, and most importantly, why it should be practiced.

**How do I know I’m Getting Closer?: Questioning Towards Essence**

I mentioned earlier that reading Heidegger is necessarily perplexing. In fact, to be perplexed while engaging with his work is a sign that you are doing it right. However, there is a fine line between being perplexed and being confused. How do we know that when we are questioning with Heidegger? How do we know that we are moving towards essence, and that

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78 This is similar to curiosity and the “evaporation” of a curious disposition that I explored in Chapter One.
we are not simply lost? Although by exploring Heidegger’s introduction to *Being and Time* we can see the steps that he takes in questioning Being, I am afraid that exploring his mode of interpretations it is not enough to formulate a practice of Heideggerean questioning. In formulating a practice, there has to be recognizable elements within our movement towards the unknown. Otherwise, we run the risk of losing our way towards becoming pedagogical. Without signposts, it is difficult to keep moving. Therefore, I believe that another section is required to explore explicit references to the path towards unconcealment within Heidegger’s work. By going over his concept of aletheia in *The Origin of the Work of Art* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, we can begin to understand what to look for on our way towards unconcealing essence. In recognizing the signs along the unpredictable route towards unconcealing essence, we can begin to feel perplexed in a productive way. These signs ensure that we are moving the right way, reminding us that the despair that is associated with the process of uncovering our inauthentic modes of being is pedagogical. In other words, these signs allow us to become desperately hopeful and hopefully desperate, and as a result, gives us the will to keep moving. Unlike other theories of emancipatory learning, Heideggerean questioning provides us with a methodology that guides us towards emancipation and *keeps* us there.\(^79\)

In examining Heidegger’s method of questioning in both *The Origin of the Work of Art* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, I hope to show what these signs look like and how they move the questioner towards becoming pedagogical. Central to both works is the

\(^{79}\) Arendt examines the possibility of this emancipatory and emancipating space within her articulation of a “public sphere” (Arendt, 1998, p. 50).
question of the question, however, *The Origin of the Work of Art* is less explicit and self-referential about its modes of questioning than *The Question Concerning Technology*. Published nineteen years after *The Origin of the Work of Art*, *The Question Concerning Technology* revisits the question of the question in order to clarify and make more explicit not only the practice of questioning, but the urgency of such a practice. I will look at these two works side by side, not only as a way to focus on the explicit steps towards unconcealment, but also to reveal their timeless quality and importance. Because I will be discussing the two texts simultaneously, I will refer to them in abbreviated form.

Both works begin with an explicit explanation of what will be questioned:

...*Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is* and as it is.

What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature. The question concerning the origin of the work of art asks about the source of its nature (OWA, 2001, p. 17)

...*In what follows we shall be questioning concerning technology*. Questioning builds a way...We shall be questioning concerning technology, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free is it opens our human existence to the essence of technology (QCT, 2010, p. 100).

In both entries, it is evident that we are about to take root towards finding the origin and essence of the which is under question. This implies that the way towards the origin and essence is of primary concern, as this way constitutes the essence that will become opened up for us. What will be questioned therefore depends on the way it will be questioned. As
Heidegger makes clear, we must follow a circular path, and that entering this path “is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming that thinking is craft. Not only is the main step from work to art a circle like the step from art to work, but every separate step that we attempt circles in this circle” (OWA, p. 18). It is a path that we must pay heed to “and not to fix our attention on isolated sentences and topics. The way is one of thinking... (and) leads through language in a manner that is extraordinary” (QCT, p. 100). Thus, the first step in Heideggerean questioning is to understand that we are beginning a movement towards revealing the origin and essence of the thing that is under question. It is a thing (whether the work of art or technology) that has called upon our questioning towards its essence. The next step is to differentiate between the thing under question, and its thingliness that we are attempting to reveal through questioning.

In order to recognize the difference between the thing and its thingliness, we must question the instrumentality of the thing, or in other words, how it appears to us and how it makes itself familiar to us. In terms of an artwork, Heidegger explains that “there is something stony in a work of architecture, wooden in a carving, colored in a painting, spoken in a linguistic work, sonorous in a musical composition” (OWA, p. 19). Since the instrumental, or “thingly” elements of the thing are irremovable from the art work, “we are compelled rather to say conversely that the architectural work is the stone, the carving is in the wood, the painting in color, the linguistic work in speech, the musical composition in sound” (OWA, p. 19). In terms of technology, it appears to us as something technological, as a means to an end. Heidegger explains that “the manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, and the needs and ends that they serve, all belong
to what technology is” (QCT, pg. 101). Because this is how we understand technology to be, as a means to an end, there is a human will to master it: “the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means” (QCT, pg. 101). The instrumentality and the thingly element of a thing makes it appear. Not only do we have faith in the appearance of the thing as constituting the thing, but this faith gives us the belief that we can master the thing. We can know the painting through its colours, we can master technology by manipulating its means. It is this faith and will to master that conceals the essence of the thing. It is precisely this kind of attitude of knowing that Sartre calls “bad faith,” and is an attitude that gets taken up in the culture of learning. This faith in the appearance of things results in stultification and merely reaffirms and reiterates our learned modes of being. As a result, we lose ourselves and the question of our being. However, as argued in chapter one, in asking about the instrumentality of the thing that we will to master, a hopefulness opens up. In questioning the instrumentality of the thing, in questioning the appearance of the culture of learning, we are able to “seek the true by way of the correct” (QCT, 101). Therefore, we must take the next step away from the appearance of the thing towards its essence by asking “what is the self-evident thingly element in the work of art?” (OWA, p. 19) or “what is the instrumental itself?” (QCT, p. 101).

The third step is to understand the thing as appearing as the correct, as an allegory and as a symbol. The correct is the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology and
the public appearance of a work of art. The true is the essence that is covered up by the correct. Therefore, to get to the true, we must seek it through the correct. The correct and the true are interdependent of one another: the correct cannot be correct if it does not hide the true, and the true cannot be true if it is not covered, hidden, or veiled by the correct. So we have to question the correct way of understanding a thing, which means that we have to question the traditional interpretation of things. To question the instrumental itself is to question our habitual ways of seeing. To question means to get to the bottom of something, to understand what causes something to be as it is. To question the instrumental is to move towards the cause of its appearance. It is to move towards what is behind, inside or hidden from the appearance and the materiality of the thing which appears. This movement towards what is concealed never abandons the instrumentality of the thing in question, it always moves through it. Therefore, instrumentality and the appearance of things constitute the movement towards its essence.

Therein lies the hope. Within the stultification of despair lies an uncharted field that is ours to discover. To question is to move through it. Questioning turns despair into hope. Questioning seeks the true by way of the correct. Understanding this movement gives us the hope that we are moving through something towards what we do not know. The stultifying despair that comes from the culture of learning becomes hopeful when we critically engage with its limitations through questioning. To know that we are questioning our blind spots in order to move through them, we can commit to the flight of becoming pedagogical. This is a

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80 Richard Cohen (2010) provides a great discussion of “the correct” in relation to Heidegger’s concepts of “Ready-to-Hand” and the “Totality of Equipment” in his essay *Heidegger’s Dasein-Analytic of Instrumentality in Being and Time and the Thinking of the “Extreme Danger of the Question of Technology*.
crucial affective signpost denoting that we are getting closer.\textsuperscript{81} To keep moving towards essence, the next step is to ask about what causes something to appear. Heidegger turns back to Aristotelian thought and uses the four fundamental causes which result in the appearance of a thing: form, matter, purpose, and agency.\textsuperscript{82} However, he takes the next step closer to essence and questions the four causalities by asking what they do in relation to one another. In other words, to question the instrumentality or the appearance of a thing, we cannot simply ask about its form, or about its material etc. In order to move closer to the essence of a thing, in order to unveil what instrumentality veils, we must ask what these things do, and in order to ask what they do, we cannot ask about the causes separately. Each cause is responsible for the other in making the thing appear. For example, if we question the culture of learning as a thing, as something that appears, we would have to question the information that is provided (material), how that material forms the curriculum (form), how the curriculum is distributed (agency), how the distribution of the curriculum teaches the student (purpose), how the results of the distribution of the curriculum effect the material, etc. In other words, we cannot get to the essence of the culture of learning by questioning the material without considering how the material is responsible for the form, how the form is responsible for the moving cause, how the efficient is responsible for things purpose, etc. To not question in this way, or rather, to question in a traditional way, we “make an assault” upon the essence of thing (OWA, p. 25) and

\textsuperscript{81} In her reflection on the role of emotions in feminist politics, Sara Ahmed’s book \textit{The Cultural Politics of Emotion} (2004) articulates how emotions move us, and how this movement involves interpretations of sensations and feelings. She argues that in learning to read our emotions, in “doing the work of translation,” these emotions can be transformed.

\textsuperscript{82} He turns to the four causes in both \textit{Question Concerning Technology} and \textit{The Origin of the Work of Art}: “What technology is, when represented as a means, discloses itself when we trace instrumentality back to fourfold causality” (QCT, p. 101) and
allow it to remain “obscure and groundless” (QCT, p. 102). More problematically, to not question the interdependency of the causes that are responsible for bringing something into appearance, we reiterate “the long-familiar mode of thought” which “preconceives all immediate experience of beings” (OWA, p. 30).

To question a thing is to move towards its essence. To move towards its essence we must move through its instrumentality. Thus, we must ask what causes it to appear, and how each cause is interdependent on another cause in its responsibility to bring forth into appearance the thing. This is a unique way of questioning, an unfamiliar mode of thought which opens up both the questioner and the thing in question. To question towards essence, to reveal what appearance conceals is to create$^{83}$. Heideggerean questioning is a mode of existing, experiencing and creating. It paves a path in an unfamiliar dimension. It struggles to move away from familiarity and preconceived notions. It moves against the unfolding of appearance, it counteracts the blooming bloom$^{84}$. The movement towards essence presses against the force of instrumentality, and as a result, Heideggerean questioning experiences pressure points. These pressure points tell us that we are moving against concealment, and on our way towards uncovering. They signal that we are beginning towards unconcealment.

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$^{83}$ Revealing as creating can be understood in terms of poiesis, which Heidegger describes in his lecture An Introduction to Metaphysics (2000) as the link that merges poetry and philosophical thinking. Poiesis, as a simultaneous mode of existing, experiencing and creating, is explored in Veronique Foti’s book Heidegger and the Poets: Poiesis/Sophia/techne, 1992, New Jersey: Humanities Press International.

$^{84}$ Koichi Tsujimura compares this tension between concealing and un concealing to east asian metaphysics in his essay Martin Heidegger’s Thinking and Japanese Philosophy, Epoche 12 (2008): 349-357.
It is at this point that we have arrived at *aletheia*. It is also at this point in the steps towards essence that Heidegger offers the reader a resting spot, where he reflects on the path that has taken us this point:

...We seek the reality of the art work in order to find there the art prevailing within it. The thingly substructure is what proved to be the most immediate reality in the work. But to comprehend this thingly feature the traditional thing-concepts are not adequate; for they themselves fail to grasp the nature of thing...this is why we had to take this detour...the road toward the determination of the thingly reality of the work leads not from thing to work but from work to thing. The art work opens up in its own way the Being of being. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work (OWA, p. 38).

And:

...But where have we strayed to? We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at *aletheia*, at revealing. What has the essence of technology have to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing. Bringing-forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning—causality—and rules them throughout. Within its domain belongs end and means, belongs instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology. If we inquire step-by-step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing (QCT, p. 104).
After this working break, we take the next step towards unconcealment: questioning the bringing-forth of unconcealment from concealment as a “setting-upon that challenges” (QCT, 105). To question _aletheia_ as the “setting-upon that challenges,” we must question who accomplishes bringing-forth unconcealment from concealment. According to Heidegger, in questioning how things appear is a mode of setting-upon that challenges. We are able to accomplish _aletheia_ precisely because we are conditioned by the instrumentality that we are challenging:

...if the nature of the unconcealedness of beings belongs in any way to Being itself, the Being, by way of its own nature, lets the place of openness happen, and introduces it as a place of the sort in which each being emerges or arises in its own way (OWA, p. 59).

...Since man drives technology forward, he takes part in ordering as a way of revealing. But the unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never a human handiwork, any more than is the realm man traverses every time he as a subject relates to an object (QCT, p. 106).

These two passages are key to understanding unconcealment as being conditioned by concealment. Furthermore, they demonstrate the interdependent relationship between the structure that conceals and the unconcealment of essence. This reiterates my earlier remark that we cannot move away from instrumentality and the appearance of things, since they ground the dimension for questioning. We can only move through them towards the place where unfolding and setting-forth begins. In other words, we can unconceal precisely because
we share the same instrumentality as the thing under question. Unconcealment is the
revelation of the limits of concealment, not a going beyond. It is in our quest for the essence of
the thing under question that we moved from the outside layers of appearance towards the
modes of appearance, to discover that the essence of the thing in question is in fact a
constitution of its appearance. The essence of the thing in question (technology, art, culture of
learning, etc.) is what Heidegger term *Gestell*, a “framing or framework as which the work
occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth” (OWA, p. 62). It is an “ordaining of destining”
(QCT, p. 108).

The path of Heideggerean questioning has brought us to the point where we can
understand unconcealing as revealing the limits of our understanding. What has been revealed
to us is that the limits of questioning are conditioned by the instrumentality of the thing in
question. In other words, we are endangered by this destining and framing, that is, if we do not
do the work of questioning. Within this destining “the saving power is said to grow” (QCT, p.
112). The saving power lies in challenging that which the ordaining of destining, or the framing
of unconcealedness, “grants” us. Challenging this danger lies within questioning:

...Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone
can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power
must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time
kindred to it (QCT, p. 112).

This human reflection is a kind of knowing that does not “consist in mere information and
notions about something. He who truly knows what is, knows what he wills to do in the midst
of what is” (OWA, p. 65). In bringing into appearance the essence of the thing in question, the framing of the essence is revealed to us. In bringing into appearance the framing that ordains destining, the framing that conditions our questioning, we witness the coming into presence of the thing in question. To witness the coming into presence of the thing in question is to become pedagogical. It is this mode of thinking, this kind of movement that saves us from becoming mere appearances and instruments. Heidegger explains in his concluding remarks in both works:

...The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought (QCT, p. 113).

And in the conclusion to OWA, Heidegger turns to the poetry of Holderlin:

...Reluctantly, that which dwells near its origin departs (OWA, p. 76).

As we have seen, Heideggerean questioning departs from the appearance of the thing in question towards its essence. This movement towards the causes of unfolding into appearance is a mode of aletheia. In its movement, it differs from Sartre’s outward questioning towards estrangement. However, does not uncovering require the same relationship to nothingness? And if so, how is unconcealment different from estrangement? The following section will highlight the similarities between the different movements of Heideggerean and Sartrean questioning, similarities that I will argue are essentially existential, and that although it may seem that unconcealment has less educational risks than estrangement, both modes of questioning share similar challenges that are pedagogical.
Isn’t Unconcealment Similar to Estrangement?: Questioning the Similarities between Heideggerean and Sartrean Questioning.

At first, Heideggerean questioning is a movement away from estrangement towards the unconcealment of the thing in question, an unconcealment which simultaneously unconceals the questioner. In other words, Heideggerean questioning moves from what we think we know about ourselves, our inauthentic and unconscious beings, towards an awareness of our ontological limits. Heideggerean questioning is a unique mode of being, meaning that the movement of questioning is a mode of existing, but a mode of existing that is aware of itself existing. To move toward unconcealment is a mode of becoming reacquainted with our authentic being, the being that is aware of its limits. However, does not this awareness of our limits, the awareness of being enframed, remind us that we are in fact always already estranged from our being? Does the awareness of these limits emancipate the questioner, or do these limits stultify the movement of constantly becoming and as a result estrange us from the being who we are becoming?

These questions reveal the difference between Heideggerean and Sartrean questioning. Estrangement, as an affect, means one thing for Sartre, and another for Heidegger. For Sartre, it is something that we move towards, and is an affective sign that we are becoming desperately hopeful. For Heidegger, it is something that we move away from, and is an

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affective sign that we are in a despair void of hope. For the latter, estrangement emancipates and keeps us moving; for the former, estrangement stultifies and keeps us from moving. However, as we have seen with Heidegger’s concept of Gestell, moving away from estrangement towards essence reveals to us the limits of our being. According to Sartrean questioning, this is ultimately a place of estrangement, the precipice between where I am and where I am not. Therefore, we can say that Heideggerean questioning towards unconcealment of essence reveals to us the precipice of our being. Heidegger would say that these limits in fact signify nothingness, and that it is this nothingness that our limits depend on. Whereas Sartre would say that these limits are the source of nothingness, the place where I am not. In other words, Heideggerean questioning as unconcealing depends on nothingness, on that which we cannot see, in order to move; Sartrean questioning as estrangement is the source of nothingness, it creates a place of estrangement towards which it moves. For Heidegger, nothingness exists before questioning, causing us to move towards uncovering it. For Sartre, nothingness is created by questioning, causing us to move towards estrangement. As a result, their idea of intellectual freedom, cultural emancipation and imagination are different. For Heidegger, to unconceal the limits of our being reveals to us the range of finite possibilities. As a result, the consciousness of these limits allows us to move more freely and allows us to

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86 What Heidegger means by nothingness is “being-towards-death”: “…if Dasein ‘exists’ in such a way that there is absolutely nothing more outstanding for it, it has also already thus become no-longer-being-there. Eliminating what is outstanding in its being is equivalent to annihilating its being. As long as Dasein is as a being, it has never attained its ‘wholeness.’ But if it does, this gain becomes the absolute loss of being-in-the-world. It is then never again to be experienced as being” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 220).

87 In The Dialectic of Freedom (1988), Maxine Greene explores freedom through Heidegger’s notion of unconcealment: “To “unconceal” is to create clearings, spaces in the midst of things where decisions can be made…when one choses to act on one’s freedom, there are no guarantees” (p. 58).
imagine beyond. For Sartre, the negation of being creates estrangement. As a result, estrangement allows us to transcend nothingness and project ourselves into the future.88

For both Heidegger and Sartre, whether it is the movement towards or away from “estrangement,” it is a movement that is transformative. It is the process that counts. It is in questioning that we truly exist, and it is the arrival to essence or vertigo that reveals to us a world that requires constant questioning. Both Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning move towards a self awareness, an awareness that catches consciousness “in the act.” In other words, both modes of questioning reveal to us our inauthentic ways of being by engaging with our habits of seeing. This engagement is felt as a struggle, as something unfamiliar and therefore uncomfortable. It struggles against inauthentic habits of thinking, struggles with the unknown, and struggles towards making meaning of the struggle. This struggle moves. It moves because it struggles. The struggle struggles towards an unanswerable answer. It is perpetual in its impossible struggle for an answer. Meaning lies in the process of struggling, it lies in the will towards finding meaning. To be aware of this movement gives meaning to uncertainty. It is the hope within despair. Thus, the movement as an awareness of its movement finds within it a hopeful despair and a desperate hope. The will for awareness is a hope that comes out of the despair of being. It is this desperate hope and hopeful desperation, as explored in Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning, that I argue is essentially existential. In other words, both modes of questioning are existential in their qualities and values.

88 In The Dialectic of Freedom (1988), Maxine Greene understands estrangement in terms of creation: “For Jean-Paul Sartre, the project of acting on our freedom involves a rejection on the insufficient or the unendurable, a clarification, an imagining of a better state of things...It is his/her interpretation or reading of the situation that discloses possibility” (p. 5).
So what are existential qualities and values anyways? What is it about Heideggerean and Sartrean questioning (even though Heidegger refused to call himself an existentialist) that is existential? One way to understand these values is to contrast them to classical philosophy, which concerned itself with finding a universal and eternal truth.⁸⁹ According to Kierkegaard, often considered and called the founder of existentialism, truth lies in subjectivity. He claimed that because of our obsession with objectivity and totality, that we have forgotten how to exist. What he means by having forgotten how to exist is that we have forgotten how to take the risks necessary in making choices and decisions. Each decision is a risk because it requires one to face uncertainty and indeterminacy. Risks and choices are movements into the future where we do not yet exist. To leap towards where we are not is an essential existential quality.⁹⁰

The concern for the subject and individuality is also central to the existential project. However, there is an equal existential concern for experiencing totality. A key existential quality and value is individuality and its relationship to the world. As a result, existentialism is concerned with phenomenology and ontology, or in other words, with the way in which existence appears and desires to be. In other words, we cannot ask about the subject without asking about the ways in which the subject exists within and interacts with the world, in the same way that we cannot ask about nothingness without first exploring how and why things appear to be as they are. The concern for the subject is a simultaneous concern for the world. As a result of this hermeneutic concern for the subject-in-the-world, existentialism advances an

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⁸⁹ Marjorie Grene (1948) traces the rise of existentialism in her book *Dreadful Freedom*. Similarly, the continental philosopher Robert Solomon (2005) traces existentialism’s “sensibility” throughout the history of Western thought in his introductory book *Existentialism*.

ethical principle: our existence depends on the choices and risks that we make, choices and risks that ultimately depend on and consequently effect the world around us.

The anguish and struggle that results from facing indeterminacy, the ontological concern for the subject and its coinciding world and the ethics of responsibility are key existential qualities and values that both Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning share. These existential qualities remind us what all great philosophy has tried to teach us: that how the world appears and what we see cannot be reduced to empirical formulations and verification. Existential questioning moves towards an awareness that there are realities that cannot be observed. This awareness causes an anguish and despair that allows us to feel the reality of nothingness and wills a search for meaning. Becoming hopefully desperate is an awareness that moves. It is an awareness that keeps questioning. This awareness that moves, becoming hopefully desperate, and feeling our way through the darkness of uncertainty is essentially pedagogical. It is pedagogical because we are both learning to let go of our habits of bad faith, and learning to trust ourselves within indeterminacy. In learning to trust ourselves within the unknown, in learning to feel our way through indeterminacy, we develop the will to bear the despair that opens up hope.

But can this pedagogical practice be educational? If existential questioning is a movement that embraces the ambiguity and despair of moving away from the familiar, how can educational practice propel this movement? Is it even possible for educational practice to create and support a space for this movement, or is the contradiction of learning ignorance,

91 In The Courage to Be (2000) Paul Tillich explores the will to search for meaning as an expression of “absolute faith,” where one experiences meaningfulness meaningfully.
teaching indeterminacy and creating nothingness too heavy for this pedagogical flight towards becoming?\footnote{Philosophers of education who use existentialism in their work mostly focus on teacher education. Maxine Greene is a famous example, but there are many others who use existentialism to articulate teacher qualification. For example E.F. Kaelin looks compares the qualities of an art educator to existential values: “In summary, the teacher artist is concerned primarily with the universe of the student, of coming to an understanding of the student’s expression, of guiding and of offering clear alternatives to the student’s means and manners of expressing himself” (Kaelin, 1974, p. 60). Similarly, David Denton explains that “what all of this has to say regarding our explication of that mode of being called teaching is that certain phenomena of that teaching-world can be immediately grasped and will be understood immediately, for the context is also immediately given along with the phenomena” (Denton, 1974, p. 113).} The concluding chapter will explore these questions in the attempt to show the possibility that existential questioning has in being educational, and the possibilities that can open up for higher education in embracing a pedagogy of hopeful despair. To this end, the following chapter will look at art methodologies, relational aesthetics and corporeal pedagogy to demonstrate that existential questioning is in fact accessible, and more importantly, playful.
“Without hope there is no way we can even start thinking about education” (Freire, 2007, p. 87).

“Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take care not to experience it in a mistaken form” (Freire, 1995, p. 9).

**Hopefully Questioning Despair and Desperately Questioning Hope: The Ontology of Hope in Higher Education**

So here we are. We find ourselves at the conclusion of the beginning. However, as we have seen in Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning, the pedagogical flight towards uncertainty is a perpetual and ceaseless mode of existing. To conclude the beginning, to determine the final destination of the blind flight of existential questioning, would in fact be a fallacy. Yet, it is in actuality the last section of my project, and as a result, holds the rather daunting responsibility of reflecting on the path taken and imagining what lies ahead. Up until now, my thesis has located where and when we can begin to question existentially, and has provided two different approaches to existential questioning that we can take up in educational practice. Tied to this understanding of existential questioning is the relationship between hope and despair, and what I term hopeful despair and desperate hope. Hopeful despair signals both a place to begin to question existentially and the consequent process of becoming pedagogical. I have argued that it is a constant force that is born in and moves away from despair. In Chapter One, I located this force within the dual potentiality of the culture of learning and compared it to the concept of *Heimlich* and its correlating term *Unheimlich*. Similar to the ambiguous nature of *Heimlich*, a hopeful despair constantly moves towards something that it cannot coincide with, for if it did, it would become hopeless. As explained through Verhoeven,
to be hopefully desperate means to be extra-duced from one’s familiar understandings. However, there are moments of wonder that allow us to pause in the movement of being hopefully desperate, or rather, shock us into awareness of the path that is becoming. These moments of wonder within a hopeful despair can teach us to pay attention to the banal and often over-looked moment of our everyday lives. I then moved on to locate the beginning of becoming hopefully desperate within the dual potential of the culture of learning. Through a structural analysis of culture and an engagement with neo-Marxist understandings of culture and pedagogy, I showed how the culture of learning both creates desperate situations and opens up the potential to begin the beginning.

Chapters Two and Three provide ways in which we can use existential questioning as a pedagogical mode of becoming hopefully desperate. Both Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning, although formulated differently, are experiences of hopeful despair. Both forms of questioning are unyielding searches for a home in exile, for meaning in uncertainty and for rest in anticipation. They are existential in that these modes of questioning are constituting, meaning that the questioner is ontologically dependent on her mode of inquiry. This of course means that the questioner can never “catch” herself, but is always already in the pursuit of doing so. In this way, questioning is a mode of hopeful despair, it is a constant willingness to know that never catches thought. It is in this struggle to catch thought, to crystallize the question with the questioner, where meaning is found.

Up to this point, my thesis has articulated hopeful despair as a state of becoming which requires active reflection and questioning. For these reasons, hopeful despair is an existential
concern as it reflects upon an ontology of emancipation that is interdependent on the subject who reflects. Hopeful despair, as an awareness that perpetually moves away from despair, is an affect that searches for a meaning that is constantly deferred. Hope thus lies in the process of searching, and despair in the impossibility of attaining “meaning.” This does not mean that becoming hopelessly desperate is not meaningful, but rather, asks that we think about meaning in more emancipatory and creative ways. Since hope is tied to meaning, and meaning to hope, we must critically engage with “hope” so that it does not lose its pedagogical bearings.

To this end, the final chapter of my project will focus on rearticulating the temporospatial dimension of hopeful despair to ensure that “hope” as we know it is not mistaken for something else. The first section asks: what is hope? In raising this question, I will attempt to show how “hopeful despair” questions the naive understanding of hope, a (mis)understanding that I argue the culture of learning has adopted. It is this critical engagement with our misunderstanding of hope that allows us to understand the despair that makes hope hopeless. In other words, this section will articulate hope through despair, a process that I argue is pedagogical. The second section asks: how does hope play? In looking at Dewey’s (1934/2005) *Art as Experience* and Nietzsche’s (1872/1995) *Birth of Tragedy*, this section explores how existential questioning, as a playful space where we can collectively create meaning out of seeming meaninglessness, is a field of experience where the collapse of meaning becomes meaningful. The final section wonders: how can we play with existential questioning? To this end, the section will reflect on the ways in which existential questioning can be played in higher education, and the ways in which the uncomfortable work of becoming
pedagogical can in fact be full of wonder, gratification and utter delight. Concepts such as critical hope and metaplay will be discussed in relation to existential pedagogy.

**What is Hope?: Questioning Hopeful Despair and Desperate Hope**

One way to articulate hopeful despair is as an awareness that moves. The movement of hopeful despair is something that is felt throughout Sophie’s philosophical journey in *Sophie’s World*. From the very beginning of the novel, we already begin to feel the momentum of questioning and understand it as a unique form of questioning:

...*Who are you?* She had no idea. She was Sophie Amundsen, of course, but who was that? She had not really figured that out—yet...She jumped up and went into the bathroom with the strange letter in her hand. She stood in front of the mirror and stared into her own eyes. “I am Sophie Amundsen,” she said. The girl in the mirror did not react with as much as a twitch. Whatever Sophie did, she did exactly the same. Sophie tried to beat her reflection to it with a lightning movement but the other girl was just as fast.

“Who are you?” Sophie asked. She received no response to this either, but felt a momentary confusion as to whether it was she or her reflection who had asked the question. Sophie pressed her index finger to the nose in the mirror and said, “You are me.” As she got no answer to this, she turned the sentence around and said, “I am you” (Gaarder, 2007, p. 5).
The seemingly simple question “who are you” moved Sophie towards further questioning, and as a result, complicating the seeming simple question. Her engagement with her own reflection illustrates how this question (if one is committed to exploring it) puts her in a place of hopeful despair. This is signaled as “a momentary confusion as to whether it was she or her reflection who had asked the question.” This “momentary confusion” illustrates the moment of angst and vertigo described by Sartre in Chapter Two as “the apprehension of myself as a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendence, as an object which does not contain in itself the origin of its future disappearance,” (Sartre, 1993, p. 121) an apprehension that is felt when one disengages oneself from the world in which one had engaged oneself (p. 77). This “moment of confusion” also illustrates the moment of unconcealment described by Heidegger in Chapter Three as an event that belongs to Being itself, that “the Being, by way of its own nature, lets the place of openness happen, and introduces it as a place of the sort in which each being emerges or arises in its own way” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 59). In other words, Being has the potential to open up, to be brought into unconcealment, and therefore has the potential to be explored. This exploration is not passive, but rather, it is an exploration that activates and creates a new understanding of Being. The question “who are you” sets up nicely the existential dilemma of freedom and the despair that comes from understanding that who you are is determined by what you do and how you act. This existential angst is carried throughout Sophie’s journey and is intensified the more she moves towards understanding the ways in which her actions are responsible for what is happening around her. This awareness that moves is essentially pedagogical. It is pedagogical because we are both learning to let go of our habits of bad faith, and learning to trust ourselves within indeterminacy. In learning to trust ourselves within the
unknown, in learning to feel our way through indeterminacy, we develop the will to bear the despair that opens up hope. Of course, as illustrated by Sophie’s interaction with her reflection, the hope that is opened up is always already tied with the despair that creates it. The questions that are sent to her push her to question further and deeper, “jolting Sophie out of her everyday existence” (p. 9) leaving her “mind in turmoil” (p. 10). In the process of questioning these seemingly uncomplicated questions is disorienting for Sophie, but it is this disorientation that she recognizes as rescuing her from “everyday existence” and (re) opening and engagement with indeterminacy:

...She had never thought so hard before!...Sophie realized that she has already begun to crawl into the cozy rabbit’s fur, the very same rabbit that had been pulled from the top hat of the universe. But the philosopher had stopped her. He—or was it a she?—had grabbed her by the back of the neck and pulled her up again to the tip of the fur where she had played as a child. And there, on the outermost tips of the fine hairs, she was once again seeing the world as if for the first time. The philosopher had rescued her. No doubt about it. The unknown letter had saved her from the triviality of everyday existence (p. 21).

The metaphor of being pulled back up to “the outermost tips of the fine hairs” where one is “once again seeing the world as if for the first time” helps me to articulate becoming pedagogical as a process of emancipating oneself from the familiar. Becoming pedagogical requires a force that “pulls one up from the back of one’s neck,” it is a force that pulls one away from the comfort of a lie towards the discomfort of seeing things anew. Like hopeful despair,
this force is a mode of struggling towards new meaning. Sophie’s pondering over her position within “the cozy rabbit’s fur” as a place that she needed rescuing from, illustrates a place where the force of hope has the potential to brew but has not yet become desperate enough to move. In articulating hopeful despair as a mode of questioning, as a mode of becoming pedagogical, I am at the same time critically questioning a naïve concept of hope. Hope, I will argue, is not a wish, it is not something that offers a definite answer, but rather, it is a movement that is perpetually engaging with the despair that allows it to move. Roger Simon (1992) makes a similar distinction between hope and a wish, asserting that a wish, unlike hope, is passive and does nothing:

...In wishing there is not yet the dimension of activity. The wishful dream with no possibilities for action is self-consuming. It is an impoverished dream, merely a diversion that provides a “temporary release from routine and character (but) never threatens to unravel them because it never occupies their home ground of everyday vision, community, and work” (p. 3).

Wishing, an activity that happens within “the cozy rabbit’s fur,” indulges in imagining what could be, and as a result, it diverts any effort to enact and make possible these imaginings. Hope on the other hand is:

...a predisposition to action rather than merely a foretaste of pleasure. It grows from commitment to responsibility and not from a passive yearning for ultimate peace and resolution. As a particular crystallization of desire, hope is constituted in the need to
imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the present as if this alternative had already begun to emerge (p. 4).

Hope, in other words, takes work. It acts on a wish, and as a result, grounds the “not yet dimension” in the present. Hope, like the process of existential questioning, engages with the uncertainty of possibilities. It is a mode of becoming pedagogical, moving us to the “outermost tips of the fine hairs.”

Another way to understand naïve concepts of hope, is to question hope’s “instrumental” and “inauthentic” ways of being, in other words, the ways in which hope appears to us and our belief in this appearance. As famously expressed by Freire (1994), hope is so important to our individual and social well being, that we “must take care not to experience it in its mistaken form” (p.3). So what is our (mis)understanding of hope? How do we experience it in the culture of learning, and how can the ways in which we understand hope provide the potential to think of it more critically? When do we rely on hope, and what does it promise to give? In questioning the ways in which hope is ready-at-hand, we can begin to recognize hope not as a form, but as a force. So how does hope appear to us? Where and how is hope housed?

93 One way to think about hope is in the form of Sartrean and Heideggerian questioning. If we question hope in the same manner as Heidegger questions technology, or investigate hope in the same way that Sartre investigates nothingness in relation to Being, the way in which hope appears is revealed to us.

94 Hope as a form of reliance on something that can change the circumstances of one’s life is a popular way of understanding the face value of hope: I hope to win the lottery. In *The emerging bases of hope*, George McLean describes the danger of this naïve hope: “It may lift one up; but then in an instant it can turn contrary and dash one to destruction” (McLean, 2005, p. 23). This naïve hope is external to one’s identity, it cannot be controlled, it is fictitious but at the same time has the potential to be real. But this potential is outside if one’s control, and as a result, it is what Sartre would call the in-itself.

95 In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Paolo Freire makes a crucial point in engaging with the “form of hope” or the instrumentality of things, or what he call “the common knowledge of things”: “What is impermissible is disrespect
In stating that “we must take care not to experience (hope) in its mistaken form,” Freire suggests that hope is something that requires a critical engagement. This suggests that hope is something that is at risk if a critical engagement is not initiated. What he means by critical engagement can be understood in his definition of progressive education. With progressive education, “respect for the knowledge of living experience is inserted into the larger horizon against which it is generated—the horizon of cultural context” (p. 85). Critical engagement, as an example of progressive education, understands living experience within the larger horizon of cultural context. In other words, critical engagement pays attention to lived experience and the interdependent relationship lived experiences have to dominant culture. Therefore, critical engagement is similar to neo-Marxist analyses of culture that I discussed in Chapter One. It is a method of thinking dialectically, and understanding culture as happening between dominant culture and society as opposed to a top-down model. A critical engagement with the term culture can allow us to see the ways in which we are stultified, and the ways in which we can be emancipated. A structural analysis, as a mode of critical engagement, reveals to us the responsibility we have in making choices that can determine the conditions through which we live our lives. If hope is not engaged in this way, if we do not critically engage with it, it becomes lost in “ideological propaganda and political ‘sloganization’” (p. 105) and instead, takes us on the route towards “hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism” (p. 8).

Thus, hope is understood by Freire as a phenomenon, something that appears in “popular knowledge,” and consequently has the potential to disappear or be “forbidden to

for the knowledge of common sense. What is impermissible is the attempt to transcend it without starting with it and proceeding by way of it” (Freire, 1994, p. 83). This is similar to Heidegger’s statement “seeking the true by way of the correct” that was explored in chapter 3.

Hope as a force as opposed to merely a thing shares the same ontological concern as the for-itself.
know” (p. 105). It is up to us to question how it appears within popular knowledge, and thus, how it generates our (mis)understanding of hope, a form of hope that is in fact a hopelessness, “a hope that has lost its bearings” (p. 8). In doing so, we can begin to understand hope as an “ontological need.” (p. 8). It is an ontological need because it is “based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle” (p. 9). The need for hope, or hope as a need, finds its bearings in practice and action that Freire articulates as the act of struggling:

...Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair...Hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism (p. 9).

Thus, Freire provides us with a good place to begin thinking about “hope” as something that makes itself appear, as something that is available to us, and that it is this appearance of hope that requires our care and critical engagement so that we can recognize the ways in which we have misunderstood it. Our willingness to engage with and question the ways in which hope is ready-at-hand, our willingness to struggle against our attachments and familiar ways of knowing, reorients hope as an ontological need. So how is hope ready-at-hand? Again I ask, how does hope appear, or rather, when and why do we call hope into appearance?97

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97 According to Freire (1995), the task of the progressive educator is “to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacle may be” (p. 9).
One way to look at the form and instrumentality of hope is to understand its political nature. What I mean by political nature specifically is the way in which hope offers and provides a sense of faith. What I mean by faith is the belief in the future and a will to live. So how does political discourse articulate and give form to a hope that provides us with faith? In an interview with political theorists Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, Mary Zournazi asks about global notions of hope and emancipation. When asked about the mobilization of hope, Mouffe references the way in which right-wing movements provide hope in desperate circumstances in which the future seems bleak for people:

"...recent studies about the rise of Hitler in Germany, for instance, have shown that one of the attractions of his movement was that he was the one who was offering German people a new idea about what Germany could be; he was bringing hope to German people...So right-wing movements can come and capture the imagination of the people because they are the ones who say now, ‘We are going to be able to make you proud of being Russian again’ (Zournazi, 2002, p. 127).

Laclau adds to the discussion by pointing to the importance of understanding the structure of hope as a type of discourse. Hope, he explains “is always related to something which is lacking” (p. 127)

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98 This is different from what Freire is proposing in terms of the political. Freire (1995) explains that “a serious, correct political analysis” opens up opportunities for hope (p. 9).

99 Freire (1995) implies an element of faith in hope when he explains the necessity of hope: “After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless or despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal” (p. 9).
...for instance, you hope for order if you are confronted with a situation of radical disorder. You hope for justice if you are confronted with a situation of radical injustice. It is always related to a certain lack which is the reverse of the discourse of hope (p. 127).

What both Mouffe and Laclau are arguing is that this lack is understood only because it was once not-lacking. In other words, one can experience lack only if one had what is now lacking. Thus, lack is the desire to have what has been lost. Hope, as it were, signals a lack, and in its signalling, reflects a particular discourse. For example, I hope for something that I do not have (but know exists). Ernst Bloch (1959) asserts that “we practise the art of talking about what we have not yet experienced,” (p. 24) and that this practice “inserts itself into the gaps” of the lack (p. 29). This is another form of wishing, or naïve hope, that Bloch articulates in terms of consumerist desires and “excess:”

...There is enough happiness in the world, only not for me: the wish tells itself this, wherever it goes. And it thus also demonstrates, of course, that it merely wishes to break out of the world somewhat, not that it wants to change it...the petit bourgeois contents itself with the needs which are awoken by the window-displays dressed for it (p. 33).

This is similar to Simon’s distinction between hope and wish, where wish is a self-consuming diversion and “temporary release.” Bloch adds to this distinction by recognizing that this act of diversion is consumerist in nature, meaning that the object of our lack is understood through the desire for commodities, a desire which is perpetual because it is “unsatisfiable”: “nothing that exists gives it proper satisfaction. In all of this, drive as definite striving, as a desire for something, remains alive” (p. 47). Because a wish can never be satisfied, it is what
Simon calls an “impoverished dream.” For these reasons, a wish is hopeless. Thus, a wish signifies.

So what does this distinction between a wish and hope mean in terms of recognizing how hope appears to us? According to Mouffe and Laclau, hope (in the guise of a wish) is wanting something that you know already exists. It is wishing for something that exists in the world that one does not yet grasp. In other words, hope as wish comes into appearance as something that wants what it does not have. Hope as wish is wanting not to lack. Herein lies the danger of misunderstanding hope as a wish, as something that exists and is available for us to have. Hope as wish offers consolation and feeds our desires, it is exactly the opposite of the kind of hope that Roger Simon (2006) advocates for, a hope which resists the “allure of inscribing events with consoling transcendent meanings that erase a complex and contradictory finitude, one that can neither be escaped nor overcome” (p. 202). According to Simon, we must resist the consolation of “hope” or the belief that hope can fill-in a lack so that we do not overlook the reasons why we feel the lack in the first place. This requires a critical approach to hope. By challenging the way it is understood instrumentally, we can rescue hope from a stultifying despair, a despair that covers up the source of its despair.

In his essay “Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Concrete,” Jeff Duncan-Andrade identifies three forms of “false hope” in urban schools: hokey hope, mythical hope, and...

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100 In his book *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (1974), William Lynch argues that the object is the necessary condition for the act of wishing: “...a man who is really wishing needs nothing but the object of his wish. For the willful act the object only happens to be there and is of no value save as an instrument for the satisfaction of his willful needs” (p. 154).

101 Duncan-Andrade, both a professor of Educational Administration and Interdisciplinary Studies and a high school teacher, explores hope through theory and practice. His contribution to the debates on hope lies in...
and hope deferred. The first of these false hopes, hokey hope, is aligned with the concept of
the “American dream,” what Duncan-Andrade defines through Martin Luther King Jr. as “an
individualistic up-by-your-bootstraps hyperbole that suggests if urban youth just work hard, pay
attention, and play by the rules, then they will go to college” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 182).
What is hokey about this hope is not that hard work can create change, but rather, that this
hope as a form of the “American Dream” ignores the inequities of urban youth and their under-
resourced schools. Hokey hope is a perfect example of how hope appears when one
experiences lack, and that the pursuit of this false hope only reinforces uneven playing fields
and reifies the despair that comes from misunderstanding the source of its own despair.

The second “false hope” identified by Duncan-Andrade is mythical hope, which he
defines as “a profoundly ahistorical and depoliticized denial of suffering that is rooted in
celebrating individual exceptions” (p. 184). In other words, mythical hope, as a form of false
narrative of equal opportunity informed by privilege, fails to acknowledge the suffering of the
oppressed, and as a result, is based on and reflects the ideology of a particular class which
serves to “fill” the lack of another.

The third “false hope” identified by Duncan-Andrade is hope deferred, a form of hope
felt by teachers who teach in urban schools. He explains:

...these teachers have a critique of social inequality but cannot manifest this critique in
any kind of transformative pedagogical project. They “hope” for change in its most

showing how a theory of hope not only fails in educational practice, but also problematizes it (Duncan-Andrade,
2010, 2006).
deferred forms: either a collective utopia of a future reformed society or, more often, the individual student’s future ascent to the middle class (p. 184).

Unlike the other two “false hopes” which lead to a reification of despair, hope deferred seems to come from a place of despair, from a place of utter hopelessness. Where hokey hope and mythical hope can be described as a kind of naïve hope, hope deferred is a hope that knowingly self-deceives. In relation to the two forms of despair that I described in the first chapter through Sartre’s articulation of bad faith, hokey and mythical hope cause a despair that begins from the unwillingness to recognize its inauthenticity, and hope deferred causes a despair that begins from recognizing but not accepting the falsity of hope’s promise. In other words, hokey hope and mythical hope are hopeless because they are ideological and are understood instrumentally. Our faith in this naïve hope can easily set us up for a hopeless despair. Hope deferred recognizes the hopelessness in hokey and mythical hope, but chooses to “hope” anyways. This causes a different form of despair. It is what Sartre calls the “faith in bad faith” where I am both the deceiver and the deceived (Sartre, 1993, p.151). All three identified forms of hope are false in their ideological construct, and as a result, lead to a deferral of hope which ultimately results in the denial of hope. Because of these acts of bad faith, we stop moving towards a becoming. With this static understanding of “hope,” hope cannot be practiced, and thus, our ontological need for hope loses all bearing. However, there lies potential in “wishing” in these ways and having faith in the three kinds of “hopes” outlined by Duncan-Andrade. In recognizing the myth and hokeyness of our hopes, in realizing our faith in wishes, we can reveal a despair that propels us to hope in these ways. In revealing the reasons why we have faith in wishes, we can see hope through despair. In order to practice a hopeful despair, in order for
hope to be hopeful, it must move through despair. In other words, the movement of hope is located in the interdependence between hope and despair. This interdependence is illustrated in *Sophie’s World* when Sophie questions life itself:

...Sophie stood on the gravel path, thinking. She tried to think extra hard about being alive so as to forget that she would not be alive forever. But it was impossible. As soon as she concentrated on being alive now, the thought of dying also came into her mind. The same thing happened the other way around: only by conjuring up an intense feeling of one day being dead could she appreciate how terribly good it was to be alive. It was like two sides of a coin that she kept turning over and over. And the bigger and clearer one side of the coin became, the bigger and clearer the other side became too. You can’t experience being alive without realizing that you have to die, she thought. But it’s just as impossible to realize you have to die without thinking how incredibly amazing it is to be alive (Gaarder, 2007, p. 7).

The interdependence between life and death, like the interdependence between despair and hope, understands these seeming opposing terms as movements. In other words, life cannot be fully understood without first “conjuring up an intense feeling of one day being dead.” This temporal understanding that is brought out through questioning something in relation to its “opposite” is crucial in order to critically engage with the subject of our questioning. In other words, to understand life in relation to death, hope in relation to despair, an element of ontological urgency is reawakened.
Hope, as something that appears for us in moments of lack, can be misrecognized as something that will provide an end to despair. It becomes a desire that is not met. This is the danger of naïve concepts of hope: “it is external to one’s real identity and person. When good it may generate excitement, but does not make one a better person. The changes it works are external, rather than internal” (McLean, 2005, p. 23). To understand hope as a way of imagining what our future could be in terms of what it is not, we run the risk of reifying the very desperate conditions that call upon such a false hope. Sartre would call this reification in the guise of hope “the faith of bad faith,” or the fear of falling over the precipice:

...With bad faith appears a method of thinking, a type of being which is like that of objects; the ontological characteristic of the world of bad faith with which the subject suddenly surrounds himself is this: that here being is what it is not, and is not what it is...It stands forth in the firm resolution not to demand too much, to count itself satisfied when it is barely persuaded, to force itself in decision to adhere to uncertain truths (Sartre, 1993, p. 182).

In other words, we have faith in the appearance of “hope” because it prevents us from falling into nothingness and experiencing the angst that is felt when we realize that we are responsible for creating hope: “in anguish I perceive myself both as totally free and able to make the meaning of the world come only from myself” (p. 137). In bad faith, “hope” defers the despair that comes from angst as opposed to doing the work of addressing and emancipating ourselves from it. According to Sartre, it is this faith-as-refuge-from-angst which reifies inauthentic ways of being in the world. Similarly, Heidegger would call the appearance of hope, how hope makes
itself appear, as “ready-at-hand” or the “thingly element of the thing,” meaning that it is understood as a means to an end: “the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means” (QCT, pg. 101). To believe in “hope” on the instrumental level, to mistake hope for a wish, we run the risk of forever being endangered by “Gestell,” and unable to uncover our “saving power.”

Thus, I argue that hope begins in understanding the despair that comes from misunderstanding hope as wish. It begins by doing the hard work of questioning why things appear as being good and why they make us feel good. This does not mean that we must remain in despair, but on the contrary, we must seek hope through despair. In questioning our faith in hope, or our faith in bad faith, we can begin to feel the despair that is necessary for us to begin to move towards becoming pedagogical. The concept of hope that I am articulating here is both a balancing act between hope and despair, as well as a mixture of hope and despair. It is a process of becoming pedagogical, a process that is taken up in existential questioning.

As I have explored in the concluding sections of each chapter, existential questioning is hard work. As a result, pedagogical rewards that come from existential questioning are easier to identify than the rewards that are gained in actual educational practice. Through an engagement with theories of affect, I have come to the conclusion that we know we are learning when we are feeling, and that we know we are feeling when we are learning. It is an

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102 To understand hope naively, as something external to ourselves, we run the risk of being enframed by it. See discussion on “enframing”/“gestell” and “saving power” in last section of Chapter Four.
awareness that strikes us in our gut. Within these sections, I proposed some reasons why existential questioning can be seen as being too risky of a practice in educational settings (risk of apathy, risk of feeling anguish and the risks of being estranged). Existential questioning as a process that questions one’s cherished beliefs and sense of self can be dangerous within an educational setting, unleashing negative emotions and other negative forms of resistance. Existential questioning, as an “ethic of shattering world views” (Boler, 2004) can leave students and teachers stranded within ambiguity and discomfort. However, I would like to argue that these risks are risks if we don’t keep moving. To question in the face of ambiguity, to keep moving through uncertainty, is what Sartrean and Heideggerean questioning can teach us to do. To keep moving requires continual questioning and coming to terms with the fact that there are no answers per se. There is no rainbow at the end of the road, but rather, it is an endless variegation where questions both bleed and transform into new questions. Certainly, not knowing where we are going is discomforting, but we can seek comfort in the happening of becoming. This is illustrated in Heidegger’s example of *physis*, a bursting open of something from out of itself, in relation to *poeisis*, that which brings something forth:

...*Physis* is indeed *poeisis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself. In contrast, what is brought forth in by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another, in the craftsman or artist (Heidegger, 2010, p. 11).
What Heidegger is distinguishing here is the difference between the natural bringing-forth of *physis* which we can find in nature, and the material bringing-forth, or the handwork, of the artisan. The former comes into appearance from out of itself, whereas the latter is brought into appearance through an agent. The act of *poiesis* is a combination of both modes of bringing-forth. Questioning can make something appear from out of itself. In order to bring-forth something, we must first experience the not-being-there of that something. The not-being-there, the unknown, opens up the potential for an act of *poiesis*. If we accept that from the beginning, if we find meaning in taking a road towards the unknown, the will to question will trump these educational risks. So how do we accept these terms and find meaning in them before we begin the work of existential questioning? How can we assure ourselves that our despair will mingle with hope? The following section will look at ways that existential questioning can become more playful by articulating this mode of questioning through art methodologies.

**How Does Hope Play?: Questioning Different Modes of Existential Questioning**

In his essay *Pedagogy of Play* (2005), Roberto Farne\textsuperscript{103} explores play as a field of experience, and its educational value. He begins by looking at the historical features of play in education in order to demonstrate how play was optimised, exploited and colonized by adults. He references the “playground” as an example of the pedagogical project of controlling and

\textsuperscript{103} Roberto Farne is an Educational Science Professor at the University of Bologna. His article *Pedagogy of Play* is one that I came across in a general search on the pedagogical potential of play and the limitations that such a pedagogy puts on the spontaneous nature of play. Farne discusses both of these potentialities in his article.
designing play, not only by controlling the appropriate time of use and space, or by building paths, materials and structures, but also by manipulating play through evaluation. Although seemingly natural, Farne argues that this kind of pedagogical project is in fact designed to use play as a learning device, and as a result leaves little room for actual discovery. In other words, play in these terms is understood as an added value to learning, which creates a dichotomy between play and work, pleasure and mandatory duty. Essentially, Farne demonstrates how “play” in education is an activity that is set apart from daily life, an activity “confined within some precise space and time limits” (p. 179). By showing the way in which play has been misrecognized as a supplement or addition to learning, Farne is able to show the importance of understanding play as a field of experience. He suggests that if we take the time to recognize how play is not necessarily an activity that happens in childhood, that in fact it is an attitude that can be life-long, we can understand play as something that both encourages and signals experience, allowing us to look at the world through the category of the possible.

Although his historical account of play as a kind of device that facilitates learning reveals the ways in which we misuse and consequently misrecognize the existential function of play, Farne fails to show us how to play in this way in an educational setting. For me, this raises an important question: is paying critical attention to the way we do things enough to correct our inhabited modes of attention? Can revealing be a doing? And if so, what form of play replaces our false understanding of it? How can “playing” become playful? A better articulation of the ways in which play can be a field of experience is found in John Dewey’s (1934/ 2005) Art as Experience, specifically in the chapter on Having an Experience where he explores the
aesthetics of experience as a relationship between doing and undergoing. To explain, he provides examples of the artistic process of creating a work of art:

...An engraver, painter, or writer is in process of completing at every stage of his work. He must at each point retain and sum up what has gone before as a whole and with reference to a whole to come...The series of doings in the rhythm of experience give variety and movement; they save the work from monotony and useless repetitions. The undergoings are the corresponding elements in the rhythm, and they supply unity; they save the work from the aimlessness of a mere succession of excitations (Dewey, 2005, p.58).

Dewey understands the aesthetic experience of the artist doing his art as always being in the process of completing. He understands it as a process of creating and thinking about the next act in relationship to what has been done prior and imagining what it can become. This implies that it is an experience without an end in the way it makes past acts futural. The artist’s act is to “retain and sum up what has gone before as a whole and with reference to a whole to come” meaning that his aesthetic experience is at once an act of retaining, summing up the past with reference to something that is not yet. Having an experience is an act of retaining and summing up the past acts in the context of the future. If we were to imagine this movement, we might envision the spiral movement of back-stitching, a mode of sewing in which individual stitches loop backwards half way through the previous stitch, then continue forward as a half stitch. “Doing,” like standard stitching, is a series of acts that move the work forward, whereas “undergoing” is a process of reflecting on past “doings” in relationship to the futural whole.
“Undergoing” gives “doing” its meaning, and “doing” makes “undergoing” possible. In describing the reciprocal relationship between these two acts, Dewey is able to articulate what is means to “have an experience.” To have an experience is different from experiencing. “To have” implies that one is aware of the experience that one is undergoing. So having an experience is not merely doing things, but rather, thinking about the things that one is doing. Dewey explains that to have an experience, to harmoniously bring together doing and underdoing, is very much a work of intelligence:

...the idea that the artist does not think as intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd. A painter must consciously undergo the effect of his every brush stroke or he will not be aware of what he is doing and where his work is going. Moreover, he has to see each particular connection of doing and underdoing in relation to the whole that he desires to produce. To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought (p. 47).

He goes even further to privilege the aesthetic experience as a mode of thought by stating:

...the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being “intellectuals” (p. 47).

Thus, Dewey claims that there is something unique in art making which allows one to have an experience. Or in other words, to have an experience is aesthetic, meaning that it concerns itself with reflection and perception. (Under)doing, the work of making connections between doing, is the act of making experience perceptible. To make something perceived concerns
itself with making references to the perceiver. In having an experience, one is attempting to make that experience understood to oneself through the way in which it is perceived by others. This line of thought argues that the artist is not the only one who is capable of having an experience. The one who perceives necessarily has an experience as well:

...For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreating, the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place (p. 56).

What Dewey means by making experience perceptible is that we can perceive experience through the creation of experience. Creation and perception of experience are interdependent. This interdependence illustrates Heidegger’s concept of poiesis, meaning that the creation of an experience is a bringing-forth of something from out of itself. To have an experience (in terms of understanding an experience) is to create an experience, and to create an experience is to bring it into appearance. Hopeful despair is located within the bringing-forth of experience. It moves towards an understanding of its movement, through which it creates the grounds for a
coming-into appearance. Within the uncertainty of extra-duction, from which the despair that
breeds the potential for hope is found, an “ordering of elements” is happening as experience.

In terms of existential questioning, to answer questions through questioning is to create
an experience. In Dewey’s words, existential questioning goes through “the process of
organization the creator of the work consciously experienced.” In existential questioning, the
questioner is invited to question. Questions become questioning, and as a result, become “acts
of recreating.” Existential questioning, like a work of art, is not possible without a process of
(re)creating. It is not something that merely happens, but rather, requires work both on the
part of the artist and the perceiver, the questioner and the questionee. This process can be
understood in terms of bringing together art and life, an aesthetic practice that was of
particular concern to mid twentieth century artists. In merging life with art, these aesthetic
practices create an environment where people come together, encounter one another, and
create meaning collectively.

Playing Between Art and Life: Existential Questioning as an Aesthetic Encounter

I want to suggest that the work of doing and underdoing as a mode of bringing
awareness to our temporospatial dimension of experience is in fact playful. According to

— Most notably the Fluxus group and artists performing “happenings,” such as Kaprow, Cage, Schneemann and
Rauschenberg (O’Dell 1998).
— Stephanie Springgay, an art-based researcher, explores the ways in which students can engage in this aesthetic
practice in the context of education. In the conclusion of her essay Cookies for peace and a pedagogy of corporeal
generosity, she raises the question: “what might become of pedagogy if we were to consider it from the
perspectives of relationality, generosity, and corporeality?” and argues that in order to establish ways in which we
might rethink pedagogy, “we need to investigate the body’s participation in learning and knowing...pedagogy
seeps into the cracks in-between the bodies of the students, in-between their artistic interventions, and in-
between the spaces of learning and knowing” (Springgay, 2009, p.89).
Dewey, to have an experience is the process of becoming aware that one is experiencing. One becomes aware by making one’s doing and underdoing perceivable in such a way that the one who perceives can undergo the same process of doing and underdoing. Having an experience is playful in its creative interaction with an imagined other. Having an experience anticipates reception and exchange in order to have a necessary awareness of one’s experience. This is illustrated nicely in Sophie’s World. In order for Sophie to understand her unfolding experience, she constantly relates her “doings” to the imagined philosopher, and later in the book when she realizes that she is a character in a book for Hilde, understands her “doings” as actions for Hilde to read:

...“Now we know that we are living our lives in a book which Hilde’s father will send home to Hilde as a birthday present. You heard what I said? Well, it wasn’t ‘me’ saying it.”

“If what you are saying is true, I’m going to run away from the book and go my own way.”

“That’s exactly what I am planning. But before that can happen, we must try and talk with Hilde. She reads every word we say. Once we succeed in getting away from here it will be much harder to contact her. That means we must grasp the opportunity now” (Gaarder, 2007, p. 352).

With this new revelation, Sophie’s “doings” become direct interactions with the imagined Hilde. In order for Sophie to escape from the predicament of being written into a book, her “doings”

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Maxine Greene interprets Dewey’s “having an experience” as an imaginative capacity: “For Dewey, experience becomes fully conscious only when meanings derived from earlier experience enter in through the exercise of the imaginative capacity” (Greene, 1988, p. 125).
must be organized in such a way as to influence Hilde. Sophie’s emancipation lies in the hands of Hilde, however, Hilde’s actions are influenced by Sophie’s “doings.” The plot is further complicated when Hilde reads the above quotation:

...Hilde let the big ring binder fall to the floor with a heavy thud. She lay on her bed staring up at the ceiling. Her thoughts were in turmoil...Poor Sophie and Alberto! They were just as defenseless against the major’s imagination as a movie screen is against the film projector...Hilde could certainly teach him a lesson when he got home! She could already see the outline of a really good plan (p. 356).

After recognizing that her “doings” will inform the “doings” of Sophie, Hilde’s plan and subsequent choices are acted out in relation to Sophie’s world. Both Sophie’s world and Hilde’s world become interdependent of one another, bringing awareness to the experiences that they are both “doing” and “underdoing.” One does and underdoes in the hope that it can be shared and recognized. This anticipation is a form of hope that plays with uncertainty towards recognition.¹⁰⁷

Nietzsche explains this way of playing in *The Birth of Tragedy* as a characteristic of the Dionysian artist who surrenders his subjectivity:

...Insofar as the subject is the artist, he has already been released from his individual will, and has become, as it were, the medium through which the only true existent subject celebrates his release in appearance...Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic

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¹⁰⁷ “Playing with uncertainty” can be interpreted through Dewey’s “logic of inquiry”: “...in the Deweyan view all thinking is a response to some difficulty that cannot be surmounted by instinct or routine. The student encounters such difficulties all the time, for he is always learning something new” (Kneller, 1971, p. 91).
creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art; for in this state he is, in a marvellous manner, like the weird image of the fairy tale which can turn its eyes at the will and behold itself; he is at once subject and object, at once poet, and spectator (Nietzsche, 2000, p. 52).

The “release into appearance,” like play, is a suspension of time and meaning, freeing the subject from its embodiment towards a collective individuation.

Lawrence Hinman, whose earlier research focused on modern and contemporary thought and epistemology, also recognizes this form of play and argues that it is situated at the very heart of Nietzsche’s analysis of man and the his world. In his essay *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Play*, Hinman (1974) shows five ways that play is constant in Nietzsche’s philosophizing:

...(1) that play is the highest form of human activity, (2) that it is the only type of activity which allows one to go beyond nihilism, (3) that the fundamental meaning of the will to power is to be seen as play, (4) that the Overman then becomes the symbol of the most powerful of players, and (5) that the eternal recurrence of the same is the highest expression of the creative play of the Overman’s will to power, one in which he impresses upon existence the quality of being *his* play (p. 106).

In terms of Dewey’s articulation of having an experience, and the ways in which play (as an artistic process of being “released into appearance”), is a playing-with which is hopeful, Hinman’s second argument is what concerns us in regards to identifying the ways in which hope

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108 Hinman’s scholarly work in philosophy and ethics, particularly in relation to academic integrity, situates this analysis of Nietzschean play within educational ethics, inviting us to think about ways in which Nietzschean play can be a form of existential questioning.
plays. Play, according to this analysis, is the only type of activity which allows one to go beyond nihilism, and is thus similar to hopeful despair. Certainly, in the same way that it is true for despair, this depends on the way one defines nihilism. In other words, in order to go beyond nihilism, we must first understand the conditions of nihilism. Just as I have explored two different modes of despair, (inauthentic) despair as a state of not-knowing and (authentic) despair as a state of accepting one’s ignorance, Nietzsche also makes an important distinction between active and passive nihilism. In the same way that an (inauthentic) despair begins an authentic (hopeful) despair, active nihilism is not possible without a passive nihilism. In other words, an active nihilism requires overcoming passivity by engaging with it through play, in which case play is a will to power, a form of strength that allows one to continue living in a world that is lacking in justification. In other words, in order to emancipate oneself from cultured “truths” and meaningless values, one has to create new ones through play. This concept of play is a will to power, a form of strength that Hinman summarizes eloquently:

...nihilism is overcome by recognizing and affirming the play-character of existence and by creating our own play. If one accepts the critique of existence contained in the experience of nihilism, creative play is the only alternative to despair (Hinman, 1974, p. 106).

In recognizing the playful potential of the culture of learning, in critically engaging with the familiar ways of being within the culture of learning, we can begin to reveal its dual potential as both stultifying and emancipating, both desperate and hopeful. Through existential questioning, we can reveal the conditions of our despair, allowing us to begin to learn to play
with possibility. Through this analysis, we can understand the ways in which the culture of learning can become a playing field, where the becoming of experience is “doing.” To play in this way requires rules that need to be broken or overcome. Thus, play is born out of desperate situations of the rules of bad faith. For example, both Sophie and Hilde recognize their agency in the “doing” of their situation, and challenge the fate that has been pre-established by the author. Hope is born out of recognizing the desperate situation of having someone else tell the stories of our lives. In understanding the ways in which the culture of learning is a doing and undergoing, we can begin to recreate our experiences. The will to power that is required to not give in to the meaninglessness of life, comes out of recognizing that the world is a playing field that can be played. In playing together, in doing and underdoing, we experience our possibilities and move forward through uncertainty along the precipice. It is in this way that hope plays and the way in which existential questioning, as a will to power, plays with hope and allows hope to play.

I have introduced these concepts of play to show that existential questioning is not merely a mode of philosophizing and passive thinking, but a mode of playful creation that finds meaning in the seeming meaninglessness of “unconcealment” and “nothingness.” Play, as a field of experience, is a temporal engagement, meaning that it is a process of creating and thinking about the next act in relation to what has been done prior, and imagining what it can become. Play, like angst, vertigo and unconcealment is affective and therefore can signal a disengagement with the familiar, which in turn signals an ‘openness’ where we can begin to create meaning. Thus, another way to articulate hopeful despair is as play. There is an ontological need for both a hopeful despair and play. Hopeful despair, like play, struggles
towards meaning. With both concepts, there is an ethical quality to the struggle, what Nietzsche calls “a release into appearance.” Play, like hopeful despair, is attached to the despair that it must overcome. In this way, it is a mode of playing that engages with the limits of specific modes of thinking, and because of its ability to question these limits, existential questioning can be played in many disciplines and can make disciplines playful. In perceiving the doings and underdoings of a discipline through existential questioning, in questioning how we see and understand the ways in which we ask questions, we overcome the despair that comes from the culture of inauthentic questioning and can begin to play.

Playing with Existential Questioning: Becoming Pedagogical in the Culture of Learning

One way to better understand the interdisciplinary nature of existential play is to understand it in terms of art methodologies and arts-based research. Existential questioning as a mode of inquiry that plays with uncertainty, runs into the limits of the thing in question, and as a result transcends them and opens up new ways of perceiving the world. The artistic process, in Dewey’s terms, is a similar mode of creating through inquiry and a mode of engagement with the limits of material practice. In both modes of practice, the individual realizes “that he is free to shape his existence and that he is responsible for every act in which he is involved” (Mounier, 1949, p. 56), a realization that is signalled by feelings of angst and propelled through a playful engagement with this new found responsibility of action.109 What would be helpful in understanding the ways in which existential questioning and art practice share similar modes of

109 This interdependency of angst and play is one that Dewey explores with his critical engagement of imagination, warning us that imagination should not merely “build castles in the air” and should not be “a substitute for an actual achievement which involves the pains of thought” (Dewey, 1916, 404).
playing with uncertainty, is to look at the ways in which existentialists have turned to art to illustrate their modes of analysis, and the ways in which artists have turned to existential modes of inquiry to facilitate their practice. To this end, I will briefly explore Sartre’s philosophy of aesthetics, and the artistic practice of arts-based research to show how existentialism plays between disciplinary borders.

Sartre’s essays on aesthetics extend his phenomenological ontology and reflect on how the art work and thought are linked by imagination. In *The Role of The Image in Mental Life* (1993), Sartre explains:

...The image serves neither as illustration nor as support for thought. It is in no way different from thought. An imaginative consciousness includes knowledge and intentions, and it may also include words and judgements. And by this we do not mean that a judgement can be made on the image, but that, in the very structure of the image, judgements can enter in a special form, namely in the imaginative form (p. 257).

The idea that judgements can enter in the structure of the image in an imaginative form is similar to Dewey’s concept of doing and undergoing as an act of recreating the artistic process. Sartre would agree with Dewey’s argument that without “an act of recreating, the object is not perceived as a work of art” (Dewey, 2005, p. 56). Key to understanding how thought can coincide with the structure of the image, as well as what the image can show about thought, is understanding and unpacking what Sartre means by “imaginative consciousness:”
...In a word, an imaginative consciousness is always a part of a temporal form to be described, in which consciousness takes a certain position in relation to its object. It is this position we must ascertain; we ask ourselves for which intentional attitude of consciousness comprehension will operate in the imaginative way and what is the functional relation of the symbolic scheme to that attitude (Sartre, 1993, p. 265).

This passage helps to show how consciousness/thought is represented in the image, how the image generates consciousness/thought, and where play finds its place. Firstly, imaginative consciousness is always a part of “a temporal form to be described.” This suggests that imaginative consciousness is something that unfolds in the present, and that it is an unfolding that is to be described from a certain position. Imaginative consciousness is thus very similar to Sartre’s temporal definition of being-for-itself as a being that flees being-in-itself, an act that temporalizes the in-itself as present: “It is impossible to grasp the Present in the form of an instant, for the instant would be the moment when the present is. But the present is not; it makes itself present in the form of flight” (Sartre, 1986, p. 123). It is this flight that we must “ascertain,” or in other words, it is a flight that we must question. Imaginative consciousness is a process of understanding how we understand things through our “intentional attitude of consciousness.” The image from which we take on a position has a “functional relation” to how we interpret our position. The image is responsible for the ways in which we understand ourselves understanding the image. In this way, the image initiates a mode of questioning and invites us to play with the ways in which we understand ourselves understanding, it allows us to play with uncertainty.
Similarly, there is a history of artists who concerned themselves with “relational art,” an aesthetic term coined by Bourriaud in 2002 meaning "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 113). I would like to argue that this aesthetic has existentialism to thank. To understand a work of art as a collective process, a coming into being, or an event, is to understand creation as a mode of being-for-itself\(^{110}\). But what I would like to focus on is arts-based research as both a pedagogy and an art practice, to show the ways in which this practice plays with existential questioning.

Like the avant-garde artists who merged art with life, art-based research is process based, meaning that it takes its meaning from the interdependent process of creating and understanding. Like “imaginative consciousness,” arts-based methodologies are modes of interpreting one’s position of understanding. Elliot Eisner, one of the major pioneers in the field of arts-based research, describes this type of inquiry as an artistic method of constructing meaning through experience: “those who are called artists as having for their subject matter the qualities of things of direct experience” (Eisner, 1993, p. 73). In other words, their subject matter has the quality of experience. In representing experience, one engages oneself and others in a new experience. Robert Donmoyer, another leading arts-based researcher argues that arts-based modes both accommodate and express the direct aspects of experience (Donmoyer, 1990).

\(^{110}\) If we take for example the avant-garde work of The Situationist International, a group of young revolutionaries founded in 1956 in Paris, we can see the connections between existential ontology and their interventions on daily life through “constructions of situations.”
So what does this mean in terms of existential questioning? Certainly, we can begin to understand that arts-based research, as a practice that experiences and is experienced, or experiences experiencing, is similar to the quest towards being-for-itself and walking along the precipice. The perpetual journey towards being-for-itself is a process of learning to admit to one’s bad faith and the deceit of being-in-itself. It takes place along the precipice, where meaning simultaneously collapses and is reworked through play. Like arts-based research, the practice of existential questioning allows us to reflect on our experiences as we are experiencing them. It provides us a way to leave our preconceived notions of self and ways of being in the world and move towards experiencing estrangement as well as encouraging us to play with our freedom, no matter how angst-ridden it is. It opens up a space for what Donna Haraway calls “boundary work,” a playful space where we can begin to collectively create meaning out of the seeming meaninglessness.\footnote{She gives the example of training her dog: “I think that training my dog is boundary work for both of us because it provokes through the practice of us coming to learn how to focus on each another, and do something that neither of us could do before and can’t do alone, and do it in a rule-bound way by playing a scientific game that has arbitrary rules which allow you to play, or to invent something new, something beyond functional communication, something open. In fact, that’s exactly what play is: a game given a safe enough space to do something that would be dangerous otherwise” (Gane, 2006, p. 20).}

Existential questioning, like art making and having an experience, plays in-between boundaries. Questioning towards indeterminacy, where language as we know it fails us,\footnote{The place of incommunicability is explored by Roquentin in Sartre’s (2007) Nausea.} follows a certain mode of thinking that is characteristically existential. To develop a method of thinking, creating, experiencing and playing is a form of hopeful despair, an essentially
pedagogical search. Hope plays in this movement towards uncertainty in its search for meaning.

In showing how hope plays in the challenging work of finding meaning in despair, and how this work is similar to having an experience, my goal has been to demonstrate the ways in which hopeful despair is a mode of coming to terms with our culture of learning and responding to it in playful ways. In critically examining “play” as an activity that goes beyond purpose and function towards a search for meaning, my goal was to show how play is a field of experience that is at constant play. To understand how hope plays, to locate hope within despair, one has to learn to perceive. To learn to perceive is to learn to perceive through as well as with another. A hopeful despair is thus born from an interdependent relationship to an other. Sophie could not become hopefully desperate without Hilde, and Hilde could not become hopefully desperate without Sophie. Although their worlds never met, they played together by thinking about how one’s actions would influence the other’s world. Brian Massumi (2011) would call this interdependency a “relation of nonrelation,” meaning that:

...the relation between different experiences is purely effective: on the creative level of effect. Their relation is the creative playing out of a nonrelation effectively expressing the inexpungeable difference between the sheer individuality of events of experience, by virtue of which each is absolute (p. 21).

Learning to perceive is played in the in-between space of a nonrelational relation. Sophie and Hilde will never play together per se, rather, they play together on “the creative level of effect.” Although this may sound lonely or individualistic, Massumi would argue that it is
this concept of nonrelational relations which “makes ‘elbow room’ in the world for an experience to come absolutely into its own production of novelty, uncramped by the constraint of connectively fitting in” (p. 21). Similar to having an aesthetic experience, whether it is creating a work of art or looking at one, hope becomes playful when we follow the doings and underdoings of the other. To perceive another’s mode of perception opens up a space where hope plays and where the collapse of meaning becomes meaningful. The concluding section will look at the ways in which existential questioning can be played in higher education, and how the challenging work of becoming pedagogical can in fact be delightful.

**Concluding the Beginning: Becoming Pedagogical in the Culture of Learning**

In Megan Boler’s (2004) chapter *Teaching for Hope: The Ethics of Shattering World Views*, she looks at the implications of challenging students cherished beliefs, and most importantly, asks what we can offer the newly annihilated self. Through an overview of “pedagogy of discomfort,” a pedagogy that “emphasizes the need for both the educator and student to move outside of their comfort zones,” Boler shares with us her realization that a pedagogy that threatens to take away one’s sense of “self” requires a particular compassion to replace this “loss” (Boler, 2004, p.126). She proposes “critical hope,” which she explains through Maxine Greene and Paulo Freire is a “willingness to be fully alive in the process of constant change and becoming” (p. 128). This willingness implies that one must first realize that one is in the process of becoming. One must experience oneself experiencing. One must
become estranged from one’s patterns of bad faith. The process of becoming implies that one is no longer who one thought one was, and instead, is moving away from inauthentic being towards non-being. It is a willingness to be in constant exile, constantly experiencing oneself experiencing. In *Critical Pedagogy of Hope*, Ramin Farahmandpur, critical hope is understood in terms of a critical reading of the world which involves:

...*denouncing* the existing oppression and injustices in the world. At the same time, it involves *announcing* the possibility of a more human and just world. Thus, the pedagogical act of reading the world as a dialectical process involves denouncing the existing world and announcing the possibility of a new world. Reading the world is both a pedagogical-political and political-pedagogical undertaking (Farahmandpur, 2009, p. 114).

Critical hope as a way of reading the world dialectically is similar to existential questioning in the way that it opens up authentic ways of being in the world through questioning and uncovering inauthentic modes of being and patterns of bad faith. The dual act of denouncing and announcing plays between annihilation and creations, and thus provides hope in the difficult work of “denouncing the existing world:”

...Denouncing the world is an act that involves criticizing, protesting, and struggling against domination and domestication. On the other hand, the act of announcing a new world entails hope, possibility, and envisioning a new democratic society (p. 114).

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113 Ramin Farahmandpur is a philosopher of education whose research focuses on pedagogy and praxis within the context of commercialization and corporatization.
Critical hope, as a mode of announcing the world by denouncing it, is a tool that can help develop a radical reorientation towards the world and that can allow us to “make and remake ourselves” (Freire, 2004, p. 34). It is about not giving up. It is relentlessly futural in its desire to give the newly annihilated self meaning. As a reflective practice, it is what Heidegger calls saving power:

...human reflection is a kind of knowing that does not consist in mere information and notions about something. He who truly knows what is, knows what he wills to do in the midst of what is (Heidegger, 2001, p. 65).

Thus, hope that is critical is an approach that one takes in one’s movement towards non-being; it never arrives to a final destination. In other words, as an attempt to communicate the incommunicable, critical hope is a constant striving towards the impossible.114

Existential questioning, as a particular mode of thought, provides us with rules and regulations that we can begin to play with. Whether we are inspired by Sartrean questioning or Heideggerean questioning, both modes question our familiar ways of knowing and being in the world, and offer an ethics of moving through the discomfort and despair that arises when our world views are shattered. As a way of questioning, it can be particularly useful in higher education, a place where we can begin to challenge the culture of learning and what Boler calls

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114 Another important way to interpret critical hope is through Simon O’Sullivan’s (2006) articulation of the minor as a model which “deterritorializes” dominant systems of significations. In her essay *The Chinatown Foray as Sensational Pedagogy* (2011), Stephanie Springgay outlines three characterizations of O’Sullivan’s minor: “First, the minor involves a kind of stuttering, or what he refers to as a becoming stranger...Second in the minor everything is political, meaning that the individuals who are imbricated by the minor are always linked to larger social spaces...Third, the minor is always collective. There is less emphasis on the autonomy of the artist, for instance, and more importance placed on the collective production of work and meaning” (p. 652-653).
our “inscribed habits of inattention.” Whether it is a mode of questioning that moves outwards towards estrangement and non-being, towards the “apprehension of myself as a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendence” (Sartre, 1993, p. 121), or a movement inwards towards essence and unconcealment, towards “destining and framing” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 113) existential questioning offers us a way to become desperately hopeful. It allows us to play with uncertainty, encouraging us to create new ways of seeing ourselves and the world around us.

Most importantly, existential questioning is a mode of thinking that invites a beginning in the midst of inauthenticity. In other words, it can be used in moments of our deepest despair, and is strong enough as a method to move us towards a hopeful despair. Although existential questioning is not taken up in Sophie’s World per se, both Sophie’s and Hilde’s journeys are played out existentially—that is, played out through a process of moving outside of their familiar world. Both Hilde and Sophie do so by engaging with the unfamiliar, questioning the things around them that have been taken for granted, and by having faith in their intuition. These modes of engagement are signalled as moments of wonder, moments of pause within the text when both Sophie and Hilde reflect on the shock of their experience. Although the book does not reference existential questioning, it illustrates is through the movements of the journeys that are becoming. The plot develops existentially through a reflection of its own becoming. This is symbolized in Hilde’s and Sophie’s nonrelational relation. In moments of recognizing that their lives are governed by an outside force, Sophie and Hilde find hope as they move closer to the limits of the book. In understanding that their existence precedes essence, meaning that Hilde’s and Sophie’s actions determine their
existence, they can create new meanings, possibilities and ontologies. It is within these limits of reflection, the precipice between the “doings” of the characters and the “doings” of the book, where Sophie and Hilde play towards emancipation. The perpetual movement towards hope from despair is more than just pedagogical, it is educative. In other words, existential questioning as a method that strives for meaning, is a mode of learning to learn.

Existential questioning is thus a form of metaplay, allowing us to perceive our doings and underdoings while we are experiencing them. This is particularly relevant in higher education where more often than not we do not have an awareness of where our ways of thinking come from, and as a result, do not consider the responsibility we have to becoming pedagogical. Similar to Boler’s pedagogy of discomfort, existential questioning shatters our cherished beliefs in order to inhabit a more ambiguous sense of self, giving us the daunting freedom to begin to understand what constitutes our learned boundaries of knowledge. Most importantly, existential questioning offers a sense of direction that we can cling to when we feel like we are falling over the precipice of our being. The perpetual movement and endless questioning keeps us in flight. In this way, existential questioning has the potential to catch us right before we fall, and it pulls us out right before we get too close inside the essence of things. It is a constant mode of thinking-feeling-questioning that plays on the margin of being, and as a result, allows space to create perpetual meaning and an experience of becoming pedagogical. So let us go ahead and ask ourselves “Who are we?” Let us understand ourselves as “a destructible transcendent in the midst of transcendence, as an object which does not contain in itself the origin of its future disappearance,” (Sartre, 1993, p. 121). Let us embrace “moments of confusion.” Let us “jolt” ourselves from our everyday existence. Let us hope
through despair towards a place of openness, “a place of the sort in which each being emerges or arises in its own way” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 59). Let’s be relentless. Let’s keep moving.

“A true philosopher must never give up. If we could just...get it loose...” (Gaarder, 2007, p 507).
Reference List for Chapter One


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Reference List for Chapter Two


Reference List to Chapter Three


Reference List to Chapter Four


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