

## Chapter 12

# Rethinking Authority in Educational Leadership

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**Abstract** Our first experiences with authority, Luxon reminds, are profoundly personal. As children, we experience authority in relationships of varying degrees and orders of intimacy, i.e. parents and other caretakers, teachers, physicians, religious leaders, among others. Invoking elements of Freud and Foucault, I attempt to rethink authority in educational leadership. Freud offers a system supporting the negotiated reconstruction of one's interpretive architecture that is at once personal and professional. His version of psychoanalysis privileged the relationship, not the roles, of analyst and patient, ritualizing subjective and social reconstruction through ongoing and often complicated conversation that questioned the very terms that communicated lived experience. Like psychoanalysis, teaching is a collaborative if structured dialogical encounter across asymmetries of authority. Like Freud's psychoanalysis, Foucault's truth-teller (*parrhesiastes*) links individual projects of self-formation with collective practices (Luxon). Like psychoanalytic free association, *parrhesia* is candid conversation that does not coincide with structures of power. Whereas Freud developed interpretative acumen so as to support – even synthesize – the psyches of individuals in the distress of disintegration, Foucault cultivates its potential to intervene in an over-stabilized and socially submerged self. The link between Freud and Foucault lies in their insight that self-formation can result from encounters with authority, under certain specific mutually constituted conditions, even as these encounters simultaneously renegotiate and rewrite the terms of authority that initiate them. Can such conceptions of subjective and social reconstruction contribute to our understanding of how educators can be subordinated subjects and yet nonetheless become authorial agents of educational leadership?

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M. Uljens, R.M. Ylimaki (eds.), *Bridging Educational Leadership, Curriculum*

*Theory and Didaktik*, Educational Governance Research 5,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-58650-2\_12

## Introduction

“What is it to lead?” (Ted Aoki 2005)

Educational leadership involves (even as it cannot be reduced to) the exercise of authority (often institutionally conferred) to enlist faculty and students in realizing educational objectives, often institutionally conceived and now almost everywhere quantified. This profound depersonalization of education does not eradicate the personal character of curriculum conceived as complicated conversation, the leadership of which is enacted not only by policymakers and administrators but by parents, students, and, especially, teachers<sup>1</sup>. Complicating these conjunctions (see Phelan 2015) of curriculum and leadership acknowledges educational processes of recognition, summoning, *Bildsamkeit*<sup>2</sup>, as Michael Uljens and Rose Ylimaki (2015) underscore. These processes occur within relationships to authority and its exercise institutionally and educationally. Ted Aoki’s<sup>3</sup> insight that one instance of an education leader – the “principal” – once meant principal teacher, reminding us that authority could be exercised personally and pedagogically. So understood, educational leadership becomes the ongoing opportunity to engage colleagues in complicated conversation that renders experience within relationships educational.

That is my motive here: to engage colleagues in a complicated conversation regarding educational leadership by detaching the concept from its exclusively institutional affiliations and associating it with personal relationships rooted in early often imprinting experience, thereby invoking traditions of study and understanding associated with psychoanalysis,<sup>4</sup> with its emphasis upon infancy, during and after which dependence becomes renegotiated over time into (relative) relationships of reciprocity. The structures of these early relationships often remain (if modified) into adulthood, transferring patterns of relationality from caregivers to colleagues

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<sup>1</sup> “[U]nderstanding educational leadership [is] a *multi-level* project,” Michael Uljens and Rose Ylimaki (2015, 2) point out.

<sup>2</sup> While in English the term – defined as plasticity or malleability – implies liability to undue influence, Roth (2014, 168) opposes the two: “Conformity is the enemy of learning because in order to conform you restrict our capacity for experience; you constrict our plasticity.” What Roth is terming plasticity I would characterize as subjective reconstruction, the phrase underscoring one’s capacity – often associated with the concept of agency – to remake what others have made. Such movement – from being imprinted by significant others (persons, ideas, events) to subjective and social reconstruction through academic study – implies the psychoanalytic subtext of education.

<sup>3</sup> “A principal of a school at one time,” Aoki (2005 [1987], 350) reminds, “was understood as the principal teacher, a leading teacher. In this sense, the principal was a specially recognized teacher, but first and foremost, a teacher. How the word ‘principal’ became detached and turned into a noun is a bit of a mystery. But we can see how the separation was a prelude to the linking of ‘principal’ to ‘administration,’ a term *au courant* in the world of business.” Here Aoki was referencing the managerial discourse that continues to influence educational leadership, a discourse that depersonalizes teaching into its organizational functions.

<sup>4</sup> There is a century of psychoanalysis in education; its primary practitioner today is Deborah P. Britzman (see, for instance, 2015). For a U.S. history see Taubman 2011 and Cremin 1961, 207–215.

whose institutional obligations can inadvertently invoke efforts to re-enact (including contest) dependencies from decades earlier. Through the encouragement of candid encounters – *parrhesia*<sup>5</sup> or “frank speech” – both expressivity and communication might become clarified personally as well as professionally, enabling educational leaders to work with teachers and students more pedagogically.

## Relationships

The classroom is a space in which the personal is magnified, not diminished. (Bryant Keith Alexander 2005, 251)

I emphasize relationships because moving curriculum online threatens to destroy<sup>6</sup> them, not only students’ relationships with teachers, parents, and other significant others, but students’ relationships to themselves, and to what they study, and how they work. Relationships are forever fragile; they occur over time and allow for the establishment of trust and intimacy through free even fearless speech. They are structured according to circumstances: time, place, and point (pedagogical, professional, erotic) constitute “circumstance” but also does each participant’s relationship history (including the history of the specific relationship itself), one’s private situations and states of mind, themselves not unrelated to school climate, curriculum content, and teachers’ conduct. Relationships are specific to those engaged in them, and they shift in scale and significance according to the specificities of situations and the singularities of those involved. Today there is much emphasis on relationality – Sam Rocha terms it “irreducible”<sup>7</sup> – but often it remains an abstraction to which we pledge allegiance, not a concrete reality questioned in our lives. To appreciate the specificity of relationality we might study autobiographically the history of our relationships, with school subjects, ideas, teachers and other educational leaders, and with ourselves.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The standard Greek word for freedom of speech (see Pagels 1989, 171 n. 97), *parrhesia* here emphasizes “frank” or even “fearless speech,” a key concept from Michel Foucault’s unpublished lectures on ancient ethical practices as these are discussed by political theorist Nancy Luxon (2013, 2), who juxtaposes such speech to the candour of psychoanalytic encounter in order to think through conflated issues of authority and relationship, personal and political.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to replacing face-to-face embodied encounters, moving curriculum online destroys relationships by failing to protect students’ privacy. There are “widespread lapses in student data protection across the education technology sector;” Singer (2015, B7) reports. “Insecure learning sites, apps and messaging services could potentially expose students, many of them under 13, to hacking, identity theft, cyber-bullying by their peers, or even unwanted contact from strangers,” Singer (2015, B7) warns. When paranoia represents a prudent replacement of trust, relationships end.

<sup>7</sup>Not only do “we arrive, at birth, in relationship, covered in blood,” Rocha (2015, 100) writes, but subjective singularity is always already a multiplicity: “the human person is a public onto herself, from womb to tomb.”

<sup>8</sup>Forty years ago Madeleine Grumet and I (2015 [1976]) argued for making curriculum technologically “poor” in order to forefront subjective presence and thus experience from which one could learn, e.g. that could be educational.

Over the twentieth century and not only in the United States “professionalism” seems to have stripped the personal from student-teacher relationships, rendering them almost anonymous, even when cordial. Intimacy is suspect, due less to rare but sensationalized instances of pedophilia than to fears of the corruption of assessment.<sup>9</sup> Even when stripped of specificity, the relational bond between teacher and student can be emotionally charged, even exploited.<sup>10</sup> Students too have been stripped of singularity, often no longer conducting themselves as students but as customers or clients, e.g. schooling as shopping.<sup>11</sup> For teachers and students, anonymity may be requested, even required, but to preclude the formation of relationship – especially when requested or advised – seems, well, unprofessional.

Despite conceptions of professionalism that strip specificity from teacher-student relationships, it would be easy to assemble anecdotal evidence for the significance of teachers and other educational leaders in students’ lives.<sup>12</sup> There can be imprinting qualities to especially early relationships.<sup>13</sup> Such imprinting portends – if unpredictably – forms of relationships later. The work of political

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<sup>9</sup>The fear of teacher bias in grading has been replaced by fears – justified on occasion – that teachers may alter results on standardized tests. Among the most infamous instances of this corruption of assessment occurred in Atlanta. The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, or Fair Test, Fausset (2014, A19) reported, announced that manipulating scores of standardized tests has occurred in “at least” 39 states and Washington, D.C. “Unfortunately, Atlanta is just the tip of a test cheating iceberg,” the organization’s public education director, Bob Schaeffer, said in a statement (quoted in Fausset 2014, A19). For additional details regarding the scandal in Atlanta see Severson and Blinder 2014, A9; Blinder 2015, April 2, A12.

<sup>10</sup>“Manage” is the verb Labaree (2004, 12) uses, but the distinction is lost on me, as his specification of using an “effective” and “authentic teaching persona” to “manage” a “complex and demanding emotional relationship” undermines both concepts: “relationship” and “authentic.”

<sup>11</sup>On this point I am able to cite Labaree appreciatively. “An even bigger problem with the market-based economic solution to the organizational problems in American education,” Labaree (2000, 121) notes, “is that it is radically antisocial. By making education entirely subject to the demands of the individual consumer, it leaves no one looking out for the public interest in public education.”

<sup>12</sup>I am excluding correlational studies of teachers and student test scores, less a matter of relationship than of outright manipulation and misrepresentation. See Pinar (2013, 17) for an egregious instance of correlation misrepresented as causality.

<sup>13</sup>Relationships can be imprinting in negative ways of course. Beginning in 2002, two economists – Victor Lavy of the University of Warwick in England and Edith Sand of Tel Aviv University in Israel – studied three groups of Israeli students from sixth grade through high school, concluding that in math and science their teachers “overestimated the boys’ abilities and underestimated the girls’, and that this had long-term effects on students’ attitudes toward the subjects” (Miller 2015, A10). Ignoring the small and very specific sample size, ignoring how such a variable (such as “estimating”) could conceivably function independently of other variables (such as home, religion, class, culture, gender), ignoring their confusion of correlation with causality, Lavy assured the reporter that “similar research had been conducted in several European countries and that he expected the results were applicable to the United States” (Miller 2015, A10). I am thinking of “imprinting” in more subtle and individualistic senses, as psychoanalytic practice demonstrates.

theorist Nancy Luxon – focused on Freud and Foucault, on which I rely here – suggests as much.<sup>14</sup>

Referencing psychoanalysis – wherein intimacy is encouraged by the authority of the analyst and the dependency of the patient – Luxon (2013, 126) is interested how in the “repeated recurrence” of “rupture” and “repair” within the “transference” relationship<sup>15</sup> “prepares” persons for the complexities of relationships in “other domains of activity.” Those “other domains of activity” include public domains, and Luxon is suggesting that, as in psychoanalysis, political life – I add educational life – is structured personally.<sup>16</sup> “Political theorists,” she judges, “missed the turn to ‘relationships’ among practicing psychoanalysts to orient a self-formation over –determined neither by trauma nor dominant social conventions” (Luxon 2013, 12).<sup>17</sup>

These three categories of formation – relationship, trauma and convention – are intertwined. Within object relations theories – those summarized and extended by

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<sup>14</sup>Efforts to link early experience with later forms of public conduct – from political dispositions to forms of prejudice – have failed to provide definitive empirical evidence. Dewey, for instance, abandoned his faith that public school classrooms could be laboratories of democracy. (“By the eve of World War I,” Robert Westbrook (1991, 192) reminds, “Dewey was more fully aware that the democratic reconstruction of American society he envisioned could not take place simply by a revolution in the classroom, that, indeed, the revolution in the classroom could not take place until the society’s adults had been won over to radical democracy.”) Thirty years later imprinting became focused on prejudice, first on anti-Semitism (after the Holocaust) and soon, in the U.S., on what was termed racial prejudice. “Attributing prejudice to social learning or mislearning makes it seem a superficial matter,” Young-Bruehl (1996, 12–13) points out, spread across all cultures in somewhat the same way that perceptual illusion and historical misinformation are. It normalizes prejudice. The obvious next step is to conclude that proper education can eliminate prejudice, that tolerance can be taught. Just say no to prejudice. Just say yes to the historically victimized. Or, as many social scientists said – ‘let them all learn social science! This hope epitomizes the confident ‘just fix it!’ attitude of many American educators since the 1950s. The attitude has been able to perpetuate itself because it has dictated the instruments for measuring prejudice – the statistically analyzable questionnaire and the opinion poll – and for judging the results of educational programs.” Sixty years on, the terminology has changed, the prejudice – not only racial but methodological – has shifted in form but not in substance.

<sup>15</sup>“In psychoanalysis,” Grumet (1988, 126) explains, “transference refers to the process wherein the feelings and attitudes attached to persons involved in the traumatic events in the analysand’s history are displaced onto the analyst.” These feelings and attitudes from a person’s past rarely remain there, re-emerging, maybe in modified forms, when interpersonal circumstances (often inadvertently) stimulate them. For some psychoanalytic theorists, all relationships are, in some measure, transference relationships, as the very capacity to bond with another person requires relational experience that begins in infancy. One project of psychoanalysis is to make these relational trajectories conscious. “We repeat,” Sarup (1992, 9) notes, “sometimes compulsively, what we cannot properly remember.”

<sup>16</sup>Freud, Luxon (2013, 128) reminds, noted that one’s “first experience with authority is a personal, and not obviously political, one.” It was Freud who explained how relationships with others – to “family, teachers, perhaps even a nation” – can have lasting “significance” and “obligation” (2013, 128). For a recent review of Freud’s significance to education, see Britzman 2011.

<sup>17</sup>While socialization theories have been eclipsed by more specialized determinisms, “relationship” remains undertheorized in education too. For exceptions see Grumet 1988; Dimitriadis 2003; Waghid 2010, Handa 2011.

Nancy Chodorow<sup>18</sup> and Jessica Benjamin<sup>19</sup>, for instance – the internalization of those early life relationships becomes refracted through gender and race, two structuring forms of possible “trauma” and decidedly “dominant social conventions” that Luxon references. Structuring yes, but sources too for “subjective and social reconstruction” (Pinar 2012, 207), within relationships, including within oneself as well as with others. “Uniquely,” Luxon (2013, 70) writes, emphasizing the point, “psychoanalysis privileges the *relationship*, not the *roles*, of analyst and patient.” Privileging relationship *over* roles seems prescient for a professionalism to be restructured, in part, by relationality, wherein institutional roles inform but not definitively define relationships, including within the exercise of leadership.

Not only in psychotherapy do such personal relationships of authority and dependency – and their ongoing renegotiation<sup>20</sup> and repair through complicated conversation – matter. Family life can underline how “dominant social conventions” and even “trauma” can be the beginning, not the end, of the story. How parents and other caregivers, including teachers (including the “principal teachers” upon whom institutional authority has been conferred), bond with children matters to their formation as persons, students, and as citizens. Political and cultural conservatives emphasize “character,” but platitudes depersonalize relationships as they overestimate predictability. Character is no template to be installed; it is to be threaded through the specificities of relationship, study, and circumstance, including the affective as well as material conditions that prevail at home, school, and society.<sup>21</sup> For children character becomes constituted within the accumulation of experience.<sup>22</sup> Through its reconstruction one can convert private passion into public service.<sup>23</sup> Luxon (2013, 292) emphasizes this point:

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<sup>18</sup>“Women’s mothering in the isolated nuclear family of contemporary capitalist society” Chodorow (1978, 181) argued, “prepares men for participation in a male-dominant family, and society, for their participation in the capitalist world of work” (1978, 181), a world that exploits the nurturance of women to perpetuate men’s dominance. (Grumet [1988] documents this history in her study of women and teaching.) “It is politically and socially important” Chodorow (1978, 214) insisted, “to confront this organization of parenting.... It can be changed.” The organization of professional relationships – specifically the exercise of educational leadership – can likewise be changed, as this chapter suggests.

<sup>19</sup>“Owning the other within,” Benjamin (1998, 108) suggests, “diminishes the threat of the other without so that the stranger outside is no longer identical with the strange within us – not our shadow, not a shadow over us, but a separate other whose own shadow is distinguishable in the light.” Anti-racism, hospitality, cosmopolitanism: a series of historically and professionally urgent concerns cannot be reduced to attitudes or virtues, as they are embodied in singular individuals formed through relationships (Pinar 2009).

<sup>20</sup> “[N]egotiation is not a bargaining across clearly defined positions,” Luxon (2013, 42) explains, “but a ‘working-through’ that proceeds any real change to belief, value, or practice.”

<sup>21</sup> See Pinar 2011, 9–12. Anderson (2006, 48) defines *Bildung* as “the self-reflexive cultivation of character,” a definition that shifts, including historically (see Bruford 2009; Løvlie et al. 2003), and cross-culturally (see Horlacher 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Lived embodied experience that is, not virtualized, as while staring at screens: see Pinar 2015a.

<sup>23</sup> Regarding the relationship see Pinar 2009, 153.

The attention to relationships, however, signals that for all that our ethical institutions rely on individual responsibility in different ways, they further contain an expressive dimension – one that touches on courage, generosity, solidarity, among other qualities – inseparable from commitment to public context.

Specifically Luxon (2013, 16) points to the “culturally salient figures of psychoanalyst and truth-teller” – I would add teachers and other educational leaders – as the “nodal points” that “bind self– and political governance.” These scales of governance are not the opposite ends of a spectrum, but intertwined subjectively, as Foucault notes: “There is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself” (quoted in Koopman 2013, 173).

Like many of Foucault’s ideas, this one is ancient, reminiscent of MacIntyre’s (2011, 11) reminder that “Aquinas says that we only learn adequately when we are on the way to becoming self-teachers.”<sup>24</sup> Such a pedagogical mode of self-self relationality reminds us that experience becomes educational only when we manage to learn from it. One studies and learns not necessarily to realize one’s potential – at least when that potential is construed only as human capital<sup>25</sup> – but for the sake of self-formation the process of study itself supports: an openness to alterity that grappling with whom and what one does not know or understand can encourage.

Ethical self-formation<sup>26</sup> may not be predictably related to specified structures of pedagogical relations, but even the suggestion of a reciprocal relationship resonates with traditions of liberal learning in the U.S., as Michael Roth makes clear. A “liberal” education has been considered “liberating,” Roth (2014, 3) reminds, because it both requires “freedom to study” and aspires to “freedom through understanding.” In that sense, liberal education is also “useful,” he suggests, as the “free pursuit of knowledge” encourages the formation of “free citizens” (Roth 2014, 33).

Historically at least, the emphasis upon utility has been less intense in Canada, but similar ideas have been in play, as George Tomkins documents.<sup>27</sup> “Nobody is capable of free speech,” Northrop Frye (2002 [1963], 93) argued, “unless he knows

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<sup>24</sup> Here MacIntyre is raising the question of the “relationship between character formation, being able to learn from experience, and being open to political and moral argument.” The self-self relationship – specifically the capacity for educational experience and the subjective reconstruction that follows – makes every relationship at least a *ménage-a-trois*.

<sup>25</sup> The almost universal commodification of humanity as human capacity means, as Lewis (2013, 4) appreciates, that “self-knowledge and self-study become forms of self-management and self-governance within an overall biotechnological framework concerned with optimization of life-resources.” See, too, Phelan (2015, 28–30).

<sup>26</sup> For a helpful explication of the concept, see Moghtader 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Practicality was not taken for granted, as Tomkins (1981, 160) records: “Thus the issue of curriculum differentiation was joined in the form of policy debates about the relative emphasis to be given to the traditional academic curriculum and a more practical education suited to a new age.” That “practical education” was decoded as “American.” As a result, “All these trends [occupational and vocational demands on the curriculum] developed more slowly in Canada, and curriculum differentiation occurred at a slower pace,” Tomkins (1981, 163) notes. Even Sputnik sounded differently in Canada, as Canadian educators reacted in a “similar, albeit characteristically cautious and typically derivative, manner” (1981, 164).

how to use language, and such knowledge is not a gift: it has to be learned and worked at.” While “free speech is cultivated speech ... cultivating speech is not just a skill,” Frye (2002 [1963], 93) emphasized: “You can’t cultivate speech, beyond a certain point, unless you have something to say, and the basis of what you have to say is your vision of society.” Reciprocity is implied in Frye’s pronouncement, relationship between the personal and the public, between self and society.<sup>28</sup> Frye’s (2002 [1963], 95) “subject” was “the educated imagination.” Accordingly, he emphasized education as “something that affects the whole person, not bits and pieces of him. It doesn’t just train the mind: it’s a social and moral development too” (2002 [1963], 95).

Not only in North America but also in North Europe do these definitions circulate (if differently), as Michael Uljens and Rose Ylimaki (2015) reference.<sup>29</sup> Gert Biesta (2003, 62) traces self-formation to southern Europe, to ancient Athens and Rome, defining *Bildung* as “the cultivation of the inner life, that is, of the human soul, the human mind and the human person; or, to be more precise, the person’s humanity.” Contrary to twentieth-century progressivism, “content” was key, as it was constitutive of the process.<sup>30</sup> In the vernacular one might say you are what you know.<sup>31</sup> Since Herder and Humboldt, Biesta (2003, 62) asserts, “*Bildung* has always also been self-*Bildung*.” That may be so, but “always” took different forms in different historical eras.<sup>32</sup> In our time, potential tethered to employability threatens to end such education. In such circumstances what forms can educational leadership take?

## Parrhesia

Simply, *parrhesia* is frank speech irreducible to power or interest. Nancy Luxon (2013, 133)

<sup>28</sup> Reciprocity includes tension, which can be generative as Aoki noted. On this point (if in a different context) Tomkins (1974, 16) quotes Frye: “The tensions between this political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality is the essence of whatever the word ‘Canadian’ means.”

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed study of the convergences of North European and North American traditions see Autio 2006.

<sup>30</sup> “After all,” Biesta (2003, 66) comments, “Herbert Spencer’s famous question ‘which knowledge is of most worth?’ suggests that the criterion for decisions about what to include in the curriculum is the quality of knowledge.” In Rocha’s terms, that “quality” is less epistemological than ontological. In my terms, it is also a matter of relevance, personally and historically, themselves not necessarily separate domains.

<sup>31</sup> In my juxtaposition of *Bildung* with *currere*, I emphasize this point, ending by associating self-formation with “becoming historical” (2011, 126).

<sup>32</sup> Writing in 1934, Robert Musil (1990, 259) complained that “classicism’s ideal of education [e.g., *Bildung*] was largely replaced by the idea of entertainment, even if it was entertainment with a patina of art.”



While a form of truth telling, such speech is not necessarily equivalent to truth, nor is it independent of time, place, and relationship.<sup>33</sup> While no panacea, *parrhesia* might provide one passage through the present. For Freud in fin-de-siècle Vienna, Luxon (2013, 133) notes, *parrhesia* encouraged the cultivation of interpretative skills that might stabilize patients facing psychic “disintegration”; for Foucault almost 100 later in Paris, its “potential” was the contrary: disrupting an “over-stabilized self.”<sup>34</sup> The “link,” Luxon (2013, 134) suggests, is “their insight that self-formation results from a confrontation with authority, under certain conditions, even as this confrontation simultaneously negotiates and rewrites the terms of authority.” *Parrhesia* is communication that could reconstruct the circumstances in which it occurs: complicated conversation in service to subjective and social reconstruction.

The emphasis on what Luxon (2013, 134) characterizes as the “irreducible relationality of *parrhesia*” enables her to posit that people can be “subordinated subjects” and “yet nonetheless become authorial agents of change.” It is within networks of relationality – including relations of subordination – that one, through truth telling (even if only to oneself), participates in subjective and social reconstruction, even through institutional reorganization.<sup>35</sup>

For Luxon (2013, 136), the point is that the cultivation of “liberty” occurs within “personal relationship to authority.” No doubt she would also acknowledge that anonymous authority depersonalizes; intense or extreme personal authority can crush. One prerequisite of leadership, then, is an institutionally encouraged willingness to work through in relationship the educational situation one faces. For Luxon (2013, 141) “risk” – intensified in situations of unequal power – can become articulated as engaging with a specific “authoritative *interpretation*” rather than resisting “all authority,” suggesting how the “broader relations of political hierarchy” could “come to be re-interpreted, challenged, and exploded from within.” Those “broader relations” can also be reconstructed, I add, if apparently accepted, through acts of dissimulation and intransigence Luxon does not here allow.

For Foucault, Luxon (2013, 141) points out, *parrhesia* implies both a kind of “speech” and a “set of practices,” not mutually excluding categories. For Foucault, Luxon (2013, 142) continues, *parrhesia* “encompasses a broader set of personalized

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<sup>33</sup>“In Foucault’s usage,” Luxon (2013, 141–142) explains, “*parrhesia* denotes both a particular category of speech as well as the set of practices that govern its usage. Foucault distinguishes it from other types of speech: from the flattery of a sophist, from the too-free flow of chatter, and from coercive persuasion and rhetoric. Yet *parrhesia* is also more than verbal utterances; by Foucault’s reading it also encompasses a broader set of personalized ethical practices that finish by constructing relationships to oneself, to authority, and to truth.” Truthfulness – rather than persuasion or, say, entertainment – animates *parrhesia* (Luxon 2013, 142).

<sup>34</sup>Certain academic knowledge – systematized *parrhesia* – in the service of self-shattering could, I argued, disrupt the white racist self (Pinar 2006, 181).

<sup>35</sup>Despite drawing a sharp distinction between reconstruction and reorganization (Pinar 2011, 87–90), I am acknowledging here that reconstruction can conceivably occur through reorganization, provided the latter enables – rather than substitutes for – the former (as it so often did in the Eight-Year Study).

ethical practices that finish by constructing relationships to oneself, to authority, and to truth.” Crucially, she (2013, 142) concludes, *parrhesia* “aims at truthfulness rather than at persuasion or entertainment.” The relationship is not only or even primarily about itself, but about the truth of the educational situation in which the relationship is embedded.

Truth is, in part, what in curriculum studies we have characterized (often dismissively) as “content.” In Luxon’s (2013, 142, emphasis added) reading, Foucault associates the practices of *parrhesia* with “context” and “manner of speech, rather than in the matter, or content of that speech.” Surely content is at least as (if not more) important as context and manner, a point driven home by civil rights the patina of *No Child Left Behind*.<sup>36</sup> Of course context and manner matter, but so do the facts.<sup>37</sup> As style and substance, *parrhesia* is a medium of subjective and social reconstruction that, as Luxon (2013, 155) notes, an “obligation one bears to oneself, absent any reinforcement from political context; while *parrhesia* can occur in a democracy, in a monarchy, or in a dictatorship, it cannot be compelled.” Monarchies and dictatorships are surely more restrictive than many – maybe not all, especially in this age of accountability and surveillance – schools, a point of comparison that could discourage teachers and other educational leaders from claiming institutional climate as disabling *parrhesia* altogether. In authoritarian regimes, intransigence<sup>38</sup> relocates *parrhesia* to the private sphere where private plotting replaces public planning.

Luxon’s final point in the quoted passage above – that *parrhesia* cannot be compelled – acknowledges agency. For *parrhesia* to be experienced subjectively as ethical obligation implies a wedding of relationships. Let’s call it a commitment ceremony that becomes public however private its history, invisible its participants and singular its subjective formation. Whoever, wherever, and whatever comprises the present circumstances in which one works, fidelity<sup>39</sup> to those no longer physical present informs – indeed may structure – one’s engagement in the present, including those persons occupying it. Autobiography provides one means to issue invitations, register who is present, what vows are made, and how they might be honoured.

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<sup>36</sup>While claiming to include all, especially poor, children in the upward mobility schooling in America presumably promises, what NCLB achieved was the reduction of black bodies to their economic potential, realizable only when children complied with an authoritarian regulation of their education through test-taking.

<sup>37</sup>Of course they can be intertwined as well as distinct, as Luxon (2013, 149) points out: “*Parrhesia* stages and so attests to an individual’s relation to truth and the political field that enables or constrains this relationship.” The great public pedagogue and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells is an exemplary instance, as she combined calm (against white audience expectations of “black” in the late nineteenth century) with facts (black men were not raping white women) to persuade the British public to protest the “peculiar” American practice of castrating then killing young black men (Pinar 2015b, 137–151).

<sup>38</sup>See Pinar 2012, 238.

<sup>39</sup>Luxon (2013, 179) emphasizes that: “Solitary individuals are not to be taken as starting point; the relations that bind them to one another are.”

While one is wedded to others, fidelity is finally personal. The “ethical” obligation of *parrhesia*,” Luxon (2013, 156) acknowledges, “draws on the speaker’s capacities to bear alone the burden of speaking truthfully.” Such subjective coherence<sup>40</sup> is prerequisite for the struggle – social and subjective – that speaking frankly can entail, “life lived in relation to truth,” as Luxon (2013, 164) summarizes the matter. It is truth constantly uncovered, critiqued, and reasserted, truth “underwritten by relations of care” (Luxon 2013, 175), care for others and oneself through care for truthfulness.<sup>41</sup>

While relations of care can structure speech within classrooms and with colleagues, including figures of authority, it also inspires engagement with persons no longer present, with ideas past as well as present, and with oneself. Noting that the practices of *parrhesia* enable us to rethink conceptions of “free speech,” “democratic contestation, and “rhetorical persuasion,” Luxon (2013, 180) points out that “these” are not the practices Foucault invokes. Rather, she (2013, 180) continues, Foucault’s *parrhesia* “schools” one to recast “these practices from within.” Working from within<sup>42</sup> means, as Luxon (2013, 159) appreciates, that “freedom” is to be “exercised rather than attained.” (Or conferred, I might add.) Such exercise is less in the service of getting it right as much as it is, Luxon (2013, 177) notes, the “shakiness” accompanying efforts to “orient” and “steady oneself” within relationships with “oneself, to others, and to truth-telling.” For *parrhesia* to inspire “ethical self-governance,” Luxon (2013, 177) continues, its “practices” must contribute to the formation of “coherent subjects,” without “objectifying the individual into a ‘body of knowledge’,” or, I might add, a “role-defined” professional. Roles may be contractually specified, but learning and leadership are personal.

## Conclusion

Self-government without authority is a sham, and site-based management programs can be a hoax when it comes to enchanting professionalism. (David Berliner and Bruce Biddle 1996, 339)

Relying on Luxon’s linking of Freud and Foucault, I have worked to “rethink” the relationships between “ethical self-governance” and “political governance” as threaded through “personal relationships” (Luxon 2013, 186). The scale, intensity,

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<sup>40</sup>Luxon (2013, 191) prefers a “steadiness,” but our point seems the same. “Yet if agency is pried away from any strong sense of self,” Luxon (2013, 176) cautions, “then the only political engagement possible is resistance from within the field of power.” Non-coincidence is cause and consequence of such subjective coherence (see Pinar 2015b, 113–116).

<sup>41</sup>“The *parrhesiastic* promise,” Luxon (2013, 177) explains, “is that through a relationship to a truth-teller, students of *parrhesia* develop their own authorial capacities” that “care” for the “self” as well as “others.” Regarding the relationship between the two, see Jung-Hoon Jung (2016).

<sup>42</sup>That idea is a constant theme in my professional-personal life: see Pinar 1972.

and intimacy of such relationships alter according to time, place, and circumstance, but in each instance affect is acknowledged, singularity affirmed while privacy is to be protected. Working through the complicated conversation of classrooms – saturated as such conversation is with class, culture, and the unconscious<sup>43</sup> – requires personal enactments of expressivity, parrhesia, tempered by professional discretion and animated by psychological courage.

By situating individuals within relationships, Luxon (2013, 186–187) reminds, Foucault made relationships the domain of “ethical experience,” provoking “action” as they provide “structural constancy” supporting “stable ethical norms binding one individual to another.” Indeed, she (2013, 187) adds the “dynamics” of specific “personal relationships” can “educate individuals to the arts of ruling and being ruled.” These – “ruling” and “being ruled” – may seem overstatements in schools in democratic societies, but such words are also unadorned instances of *parrhesia*, frank speech that, recontextualized within discussion of leadership, spell out the subjugation educators risk when leadership is reduced to administration or management.

In our era of endless collaboration, leadership practiced instrumentally in the service of implementation can become an Orwellian dissimulation of enforcement. Exercising authority transparently, within acknowledged relationships, relationships with histories and characterized by candour, committed to truth telling, enables “principal teachers” to demonstrate leadership as seeking the truth of the present situation. Seeking and articulating what is found affirms the relationships through which ethical governance – of oneself with others – can recast those patterns of professionalism our predecessors have produced and that we can summon the courage to reconstruct.

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<sup>43</sup> Psychic material – the sphere of the personal – includes sexual content, as Gilbert (2014, x) affirms: “There can be no education without the charge of sexuality; love, curiosity, and aggression fuel our engagements with knowledge.”

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