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# PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY IN ARTS EDUCATION

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## Abstract

*The theme of this book is 'arts education as philosophy', and it is to teachers working in whatever capacity, from early childhood to tertiary level, to researchers, artists in the community, or those studying arts in education that this combined text is aimed. The art forms addressed include: art, dance, drama, music and film studies, with case studies from early years' practice to the conservatoire. This introduction outlines the two primary philosophical points of reference and how, in this arts education text, these philosophical positions are discussed by each author, together with an outline of each chapter.*

## Introduction

Art, artists and pedagogy are too often treated as separate and sometimes irreconcilable activities. This book makes good on the promise of bringing these three key creative capacities together by deploying philosophy at its most impactful, as truly creative thinking 'in the now'. The theme of this book is 'arts education as philosophy', and it is to teachers working in whatever capacity, from early childhood to tertiary level, to researchers, artists in the community, or those studying arts in education that this combined text is aimed; it has been brought together to generate new ideas and to provoke discussion on what constitutes arts education in the twenty-first century, both within the institution and beyond.

There are two primary sources that form philosophical points of reference in this arts education text. Gert Biesta provides the first chapter from his book *The Rediscovery of Teaching* (2017) a phenomenologically informed work, that is questioned and reworked in each chapter through the introduction of the second philosophical stream that works through the text, that of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995). Deleuze's philosophy of immanence provides a theoretical platform for a shift in thinking around the arts in education in terms of the conceptual. Biesta's work enables educational thought connected to concepts that he introduces such as

‘grown-up-ness’ and ‘the middle ground’. Each chapter, building on these philosophical streams, is designed to be informative and challenging, offering ways to re-think arts education from these two intellectual perspectives.

### **Deleuze and Guattari: curriculum and affect**

Deleuze wrote many texts with Félix Guattari (1930–1992), and their combined work has become the basis for studies in the reconceptualisation of pedagogy as they offer alternative, shifting bases of relationality. This is in part a reconciliation of any perception of ‘the child’ seen as a potential ‘unit of production’ (de Alba et al., 2000), or subject in the field of capitalist exploitation of surplus value. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) provide us with a sophisticated analysis of the ways in which capitalism captures the imagination from an early age and potentially commodifies the arts as part of this ‘apparatus of capture’. The juxtaposition of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) with Gert Biesta’s (2017) chapter in the same volume, creates a unique opportunity for a provocative rethinking of the arts along philosophical lines by reconciling art, artists and pedagogy.

For those unfamiliar with Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it is valuable to first consider one of their key concepts, ‘territoriality’, and think through how it relates to arts education. In education, the notion of territoriality has been usefully employed by such writers as Olsson (2009) and Sellers (2013), when observing children creating their own versions of a song or inventing make believe characters in their own dramatic play. Deleuze invented the term *de-territorialisation*, which explains the process of taking a territory and remaking it differently, such as the song or characters, to suit the child’s context. Having *de-territorialised* the song or dramatic play, children then *re-territorialise* as they settle on a new set of characters or new version of the song, as they invent and reinvent, often with others, before the process begins again. While capitalism decodes, recodes and distributes products for sale through the exploitation of surplus value, including those psychic codes present in education as learning, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) simultaneously present *de-territorialisation* as a potentially singular and/or collective form of engagement, that can be characterised as inquiry of a multiple nature leading to social, political and personal change. In effect, the term, *de-territorialisation*, which is central to capitalist functioning, has many levels, and is not solely exploitative, therefore opening up the concept as a potential arts based fulcrum for understanding key processes in the world from an innocent and playful perspective.

This small example of the concept of territory serves to show how Deleuze and Guattari (1987) ask educators to think with and deploy new concepts, and to constantly exercise their imaginations in coming to terms with a philosophy which is always in flux. What is especially valuable for teachers and researchers is the idea that Deleuzian scholars are determined to remove and deny the constant reiteration of binaries in education. For example, labelling children as successful or failing, correct or incorrect: in art – ‘a good likeness’ or ‘not a good likeness’; in music – ‘in time’ or ‘not in time’; in drama – remembered your ‘words’ or forgot your

‘words’; in dance – the ‘correct step’ or the ‘incorrect step’. Instead, the application of Deleuzian concepts to arts education allows for a connected middle ground to emerge, around the ‘and ... and ... and’, instead of the ‘either ... or’.

Another problem faced by arts educators and the various curricula are the strict definitions and hierarchies produced for the student in assessment. For example at the launch of the ‘Task Group on Assessment and Testing’ (TGAT) in 1988, a dance teacher asked Professor Paul Black who was chair: ‘How can you evaluate a dancer moving to the floor in the terms of the National Curriculum?’ His answer was simply to reiterate the curriculum orders, to reduce the dancer and her actions to a simplistic description of the ‘elements’ height, speed and duration, and to add the teacher’s own reflection. This short exchange typifies the way in which at the outset – since the TGAT report became the basis of the National Curriculum for England, the *affective* in the arts has been removed. One could say that *affect* and to be affected could have interfered too much with the assessment process. Thus the *move* to the floor was not seen as *affect*, but became, as Deleuze would describe it, an ordered, *striated* response, that could only be seen in terms of a curriculum descriptor, and by proxy as maintaining the legitimacy of the State machine.

What Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer is a means to reinstate *affect* and to be affected in arts education. Not to close doors on what the artwork can be, but to go beyond it. Rather than work always ‘within boundaries’, a favourite riposte by those seeking closure, Deleuze and Guattari see the arts as going beyond boundaries, where new *striations* or limits form within new territories, in part through the concept of *immanence* (1994) – a state of constant change where there is no beginning, or end, and only a coming from the middle.

The primary set of philosophical ideas in this book comes from Gert Biesta, who provides not only two chapters and an extended interview in this publication, but a set of ideas to which each author responds. Biesta (2017) comes to the task from a different but complementary philosophical position from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which sets up an anomaly and disjunctive synthesis within the same book, as a productive difference or philosophical position is offered. To acknowledge difference fosters debate, something with which arts educators are starting to engage far more readily. Biesta elaborates on philosophical ideas taken from Dewey, Levinas, Foucault, Arendt, Derrida and Heidegger. His work has been widely read and valued by practitioners seeking a philosophical means to stem the tide of global standardisation and the capitalist enfeeblement of education.

What does this book have to offer by way of insight into the role arts can play in education? *Art, Artists and Pedagogy* is not a literal ‘how to teach’ the arts book; the ideas presented here are to encourage the educator to question practice and to reinvent pedagogy along philosophical lines. The book is not a philosophy text *per se*, in that the concepts do not remain in a space of pure philosophy; it is philosophy applied to arts education. Different theoretical framings by each contributor show what they see as productive and critical in the context of the twenty-first century and arts education. Above all, this book consistently works with difference to (un)recognise how we view the world, and sets up a new, arts-based thinking practice

that informs art, artists and pedagogy, without embracing what is tired and/or what has gone before.

Gert Biesta, in Chapter Two reflects on the absurdity of education locked into an endless cycle of measurement and competition. Biesta produces an argument for the arts that avoids the pitfalls of individual *expression* and *creativity*. Referring to ‘creativity’, Biesta shows how the arts have been instrumentalised – to ‘only’ be seen as serving some other attributes, be it mathematical skill or other area of learning. Biesta continues by maintaining that the view of art as a place to ‘express yourself’, is a deception, when the reality is an insignificant amount of time offered to subjects in diminishing supply. Bound by rigid assessment procedures this ‘express yourself’ lobby achieves little for the student. The choice of what the student engages in as art and the quality of that art are taken up by Biesta who asks, how do we ensure quality, and what or who governs such quality? In turning to the *subject*, Biesta suggests the *we* becomes in and with the world. This implies an acceptance of living with others, acknowledging our own as well as others’ desire. Lkening this *existing* to a dialogue with the world, Biesta touches on the need for resistance in how we engage with others, where to be *grown up*, we must accept a ‘middle ground’ in coming to terms with desire. As a corollary, to not undertake this task is characterised as ‘infantile’. This chapter usefully begins our discussion of *Art, Artists and Pedagogy* in education, confronting two of the most pressing claims that educators face on a daily basis: how to resist the repeated mantras that amount to a fabrication such as ‘creativity and expression’, and the courage necessary for teachers to take a risk, and encourage students to an encounter *with* the world.

In Chapter Three, ‘Dicing the meat’, David R. Cole undertakes a detailed analysis of several Deleuzian concepts in the context of art taught in school. Taking as a point of reference *Portrait of Michel Leiris* by Francis Bacon, Cole considers Deleuze’s concept of ‘rhythm’. Rhythm is the ‘dynamic movement’ between space and process, providing for ‘co-constitution’ or the opposite, the potential to disintegrate. Rhythm is not easily quantified or measured, it is something that is felt, in the onlooker and artist. This depiction of rhythm includes the myths and legends that may surround a subject, brought into play in Bacon’s portrait. Cole then employs the concept of the ‘body without organs’ where the sensation of the artwork is felt, a process, Cole suggests, that can form practice in the classroom – looking for the affective in a painting through unconscious feelings. This working with art removes the predictable, to see what may come next. In a reference to Deleuze, Cole suggests that examining a painting such as Bacon’s Michel Leiris, is a chance to engage with and not to deny sensation. Finally Cole produces a number of recommendations for what can be done at this point in schools given the curriculum restraints. These include working with teachers to examine Bacon’s paintings to see what might work in extraordinary ways, with extraordinary objects, in a cross-disciplinary context.

The theme of visual and tactile art forms the basis of Chapter Four by Mary Ann Hunter. Although there might be conventional attitudes to artists working in schools, Hunter carefully observes how the two artists that she selects, Selena De

Carvalho and Laura Hindmarsh, work in a quite a different manner, not aiming to bring something *to do* with the students, but looking to engage with students in the school environment. The presence of the artists and how the artists work with the students holds a fascination for Hunter, who looks at the way that *interruption* – taking her cue from Biesta – absorbs her in what makes education *good*, beyond curriculum frameworks. This area of the work process that the artists engage in has received little attention according to Hunter, who follows the artist moving from a teacher, and multi-purpose individual, to one who is in the school being an artist rather than performing a *teaching-instructor-training role*, allowing for the potentialities of what may arise in the school space, and allowing for *change* and *to be changed* by what occurs. In a discussion of the tensions between the valuing of personal knowledge and the school, Hunter cites the pressures of the high stakes testing regime, and the need for a counterbalance in line with an understanding of ‘grown-up-ness’. Countering the terms of achievement, Hunter asks if the curiosity aroused by the artist is the gift that is offered, which makes the interruption matter.

Turning from visual art, Christopher Naughton, in Chapter Five, looks at Deleuze and Guattari’s last book, *What is Philosophy* (1994). Identifying the three areas that form the subject of the book – ‘percepts, affects and concepts’ – Naughton examines the non-human impact in the derivation of the artwork. Percepts are seen as the primordial, the before man, Deleuze and Guattari seeing the materiality of the artist’s engagement with an as yet unclear work. This first process leads the artist to the experience of ‘becoming’ as the material envelops the artist, as in Cezanne’s landscapes or Thomas Hardy in his depiction of the moor in his novels. Affect is the transformation of the initial percept into a form, and here ‘blocs of sensation’ become recognisable. At this point the recognition of *affect* occurs so that colours, feelings, mood – create *affect*. An illustration is given that places dance in a context where making is allowed to become, with the material interaction of the dancers. The impact of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy in relation to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is examined, where the conditions for making are linked to profound thinking in relation to fixed and non-hierarchical states of being. This argument is then worked back to pedagogy and the impact immanence may have on what it is to teach beyond the imposition of curriculum taxonomies.

A pedagogy of improvisation becomes the theme in Chapter Six on jazz improvisation, by David Lines. Citing his own experience in playing jazz, Lines, with reference to the *refrain* in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) by Deleuze and Guattari, discusses the act of improvisation and the sense of not knowing where the improvisation will go. Affirming a form of making that can be seen as an apprenticeship, each player unsettles the taken for granted in responding to each other in the music. Seeing free jazz as a way of life, an embodiment, Lines refers to this as ‘cultural work’, stimulating movement. Alluding to Biesta, Lines sees an act of responsibility played out in free jazz improvisation, where players lose their sense of direct control, or as Lyotard described it a ‘synchronic’ relation connecting to the music requiring an openness and a ‘grown-up’ approach. As in Biesta, Lines suggests that we be alert to the ‘middle ground’ where resistance is actioned between others. With

reference to the origins of jazz, Lines sees the politics in the rhizomatic, nomadic movement away from capitalist enslavement transforming the educational process. It is through art that Lines suggests we may challenge educational theory, exemplifying this through his illustration of musical elements. Lines calls for a re-appraisal of relations in education, an alertness to the political and cultural educational space and the unforeseen, so that a new image of thought may arise to capture transformation as it occurs.

The subject of dance, in Chapter Seven, forms the discussion of art in Nico de Vos' writing on connectedness and intercorporeity. De Vos writes that it was Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) who first saw the body in relation to a pre-reflective level of consciousness – while the subject remained at the centre. De Vos leads from Merleau-Ponty to Jean Luc Nancy (1940–), in whom he finds meaning only in the gathering of more than the one – where the body becomes singular and plural, touch emphasising the materiality of the dance. De Vos then refers to Jean Francois Lyotard (1924–1998), and how the affective is explored as the observation of the artwork, occurring before thought, having a physiological effect on the reader of the work. The final point from de Vos is to assert the value of the relationship in contrast to the 'I' and 'we' of Cartesian thought, to advance that for students, it is vital to learn the value of the *inter* in relations, the 'between' that physical movement in dance can achieve.

In a paper entitled 'Thinking school curriculum through Country with Deleuze and Whitehead: a process based synthesis', David R. Cole and Margaret Somerville, in Chapter Eight, consider the parallels between Deleuze and Alfred Whitehead (1861–1937) in the context of an Australian Aboriginal perspective and the restrictive curriculum that diminishes the Aboriginal culture. Employing Deleuze, Cole and Somerville explain a 'flat ontology', where forces and the underlying human and non-human identities are recognised as relational, without creating hierarchy, looking for 'real experience' or the 'world as it is lived'. This ontology has been termed 'immanent materialism'. The story of Chrissiejoy Marshall and how she undertook her PhD offers an interesting account of how a recognition of Country became her methodology. Cole and Somerville describe Aboriginal ancestral rites and the connection to place and spirituality and how this became a series of paintings in Chrissiejoy's thesis. This chapter explains how an Aboriginal Australian might embark on a sophisticated enquiry true to her own cultural process, with linkages to Deleuzian theory being explained in detail, to verify the significance of the encounter between two very different worlds and spiritual views.

Chapter Nine references many texts within Deleuzian scholarship, as Jan Jagodzinski embarks on a response to the overt humanism that does not recognise the inherent problems facing the world today. With reference to the *Anthropocene*, Jagodzinski outlines the impact of the degradation of the world's resources, climate change and the attendant natural catastrophes that have been wrought by capitalism. In a plea to look no longer at fabled humanist solutions, Jagodzinski undertakes an instructive text in how to re-fashion arguments in the face of technologies that threaten our survival as a race. Looking to Deleuze and Guattari, their

characterisation of the avant garde is seen as working below the level of consciousness, disrupting our sense of orthodoxy and conventions in art. Recognising the Earth as Nature, we find the most profound reality, asserts jadogzinski, referring to passages in *What is Philosophy*. He continues by distinguishing the elemental in how the artwork is formed through percepts and affects in a molecular fashion to become blocs of sensation. In taking the sense of *What is Philosophy* the artist becomes the scientist, artist and philosopher – a new ‘thought brain’. As a result of the inheritance of the artist, jadogzinski sees life creation and its survival, endurance and death as the key concerns of the artist. Citing Paola Antonelli, the senior curator for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, jadogzinski links hidden arguments in her exhibitions mimicking nature through use of nano-technological processes using biodegradable materials, acting as a critique of current global abuses. Works by Catts and Zurr, the TC&A, and Cohen and van Balen are cited as they create a capitalist critique while exploring problematic natural questions. Ending with his own position jadogzinski looks to the educator, to question the use of synthetics from new ‘materials and proto cells’, to embrace the difficult task of looking to a future with ‘little certainty beyond a felt conviction’.

Robyn Ewing and John Saunders, in Chapter Ten, report on a drama project working with primary school age children, developing drama workshops from literature. They see this process as embodying both Biesta’s ‘grown-up-ness’ and Maxine Greene’s call for looking at the world through another’s eyes. Advocating a whole school approach to developing an arts rich curriculum, Ewing and Saunders relate to Dewey in the use of drama to open possibilities by creating an empathetic environment for children. Some of the insights in the dialogue between the children and the interviewers reveal an intensity in the exchange as the children discuss their process of making. For the teachers, the act of co-creating drama work with the children, not knowing in which direction the story will go, creates a new openness, as they join with the children in solving the problem, developing *resilience* through the task.

Juillianne Moss and Anne-Marie Morrissey in Chapter Eleven place Biesta’s existence, between ‘my’ existence and the world, in the context of global performative based teacher education. Focusing on an example of ‘authentic’ practice, they examine the changing theorisation of *subjectivity* as opposed to *identity*, pointing out that the relation to oneself developing a curiosity about how *subjects* are formed is an essential component of the emerging teacher. After relating the official text regarding authentic learning Moss and Morrissey provide examples of a ‘still life’ art class undertaken by a student and her commentary revealing how her desires as a teacher had to match the desire of the children. Through the account of the teacher we see her coming to terms with herself, her desires, and those of her class as she learns to mitigate her own knowledge and skills with those of her class.

Beier and Wallin repeat Deleuze’s observation that what we lack is belief in the world. In Chapter Twelve they delve into the premise of the world as it is already given, denying any variation in contemplating the future. In pedagogical terms

they see this as curriculum reform, based on the existing dominant discourse with a pervasive sense of having ‘seen it all before’. The overriding sense is that anthropocentric (*human centred*) and anthropomorphic (*human representation*) thinking presupposes the reality of human thought and cognition, without any doubt being expressed. Looking for new ways to believe in the world, Beier and Wallin, through a reading of Deleuze, turn their focus on film as a way to see beyond our ‘ordinariness’, and our usual way of being. The cinema, they maintain, acts as a means to reflect on our current pre-occupations, to be critical; a way to re-think the world. How then, Beier and Wallin ask, might we envision cinema as a means to re-think the educational task with reference to Biesta? Taking examples from cinema an exploration of the potential of film to re-think subjectivity, to ‘disrupt’, and seek new approaches to believing and existing in the world, is undertaken. Using *Ant-Man* (2015) and previous cinematic techniques, such as Vertov’s space and time displacement, reference is made to Biesta in how *suspension* can be considered as a facet of re-learning. Here it is not teachers telling the child which desire is desirable, for this becomes a question the child must answer. Reflecting on the *Anthropocene* we are asked how education might then proceed, when we consider the future of human survival. The question is posed as to how can we, as educators, adjust to an Earth without us?

Beginning with the reaction of early childhood teachers to ‘letting go’, John Roder and Sean Sturm, in Chapter Thirteen, address *otherness* and the task of teachers to challenge and provoke. This is signified in the recognition of the other and the act of ‘grown-up-ness’ in making this acknowledgement. The task of the teacher becomes one of opening up spaces, where the student can engage their desire, which in turn requires the teacher to allow for a suspension in time. Roder and Sturm indicate how just as Deleuze demands much of the reader, the student must engage in struggle to comprehend ways of being. Using the reference to suspension, Roder and Sturm cite Deleuze’s seminars, where *suspension* was used to allow the thought of the lecture to dwell and so allow ideas to evolve. This concept is exemplified in an account of a teacher creating an *interruption*, an unsettling event, in children’s dance. Roder and Sturm play out a sequence from a video featuring the dancer Adrian Smith, scripted as a story board for the reader to create their own suspension in following their text. In so doing Roder and Sturm exemplify Biesta’s claim for the role of the teacher, in their account of the dancer’s interruption of children’s work.

In an interview with Gert Biesta, John Baldacchino, in Chapter Fourteen, explains his research on ‘unlearning’. This term is discussed with reference to John Dewey and many others, while considering how students are allowed to err to ‘break into the unknown’, allowing them to form a representation of their own reality. Touching on art and *aporia*, or contradiction, an argument is made that art engages between what may be perceived as existing, and different kinds of reality. Continuing this argument Baldacchino states that the *real* is perceived by our aesthetic response to engaging in ‘illusion’, to transcend from which we can then



unlearn by creating a critique of certainty. In a useful comparison of new and old technology a discussion around *mannerism* is conducted in which it is urged we seek a place in which to remove ourselves from our immediate context, to 'roam' back and forth to seek art through unlearning and removing any 'expectation' in the art event.

Chapter Fifteen is a discussion chapter in which Gert Biesta reflects on the book through the analogy of visiting an art gallery. Likening the act of reading the book chapters to seeing an exhibition Biesta observes how some paintings may appeal in different ways, while we are not so sure about others. Biesta sees how this may be the reaction of readers to the chapters in this book, where recognition might invite a certain sense of joy, or raise our curiosity to go back and revisit the text. After putting his case for accuracy in those 'portraits' that depict himself, Biesta comments on the ways in which the different concepts he has contributed to the book are taken up by the authors. This is an absorbing, at times humourous, though scholarly account of the main arguments that Biesta has presented, undertaken in an improvisatory style of writing, touching on art, dance, music, film and drama, and bringing the book to a lively and audacious end.

## Conclusion

Rethinking philosophically around art, artists and pedagogy does not offer one simple way forward in the field. Rather, it seeks to avoid the imminent threat to the arts in education, which may be figured in myriad ways, such as those practised by financially motivated, techno-bureaucratic machines that often run schools, colleges and universities. In the end, to avoid the harsh reality of being sidelined in the curriculum because the arts do not return sufficient profit, or because they are too messy and their processes are too difficult to evaluate, educators have to reinvent new means of resistance to a dominant and often unasked for reality. As Deleuze (1994) has said about repetition, 'we die a little every day without the arts' (p.45), talking about the capacity of drama to be more than a representation of life, but to have the capacity to stir up the very forces of life. Education in its many guises has become 'the' exemplary practice reduced to repetitions of the same, and is therefore in dire need of the arts. Hopefully, this book can provide an antidote to the ubiquitous use of textbooks (now often uploaded and stored in e-clouds), to outcomes based educational scripts with aims and pre-given methods, to standardised testing, to teachers not questioning their lessons, and producing student responses that are robotic and disengaged. When Deleuze (1994) says that we need the arts to stave off death, he is not making a relative statement, for death is apparent in the universal culture produced by current global capitalism. In many ways, thinking with the arts is about saving education from the repetition of the same; it is about changing the fear of experimentation, of the unknown and risky; it is about doing something new which truly engages with the life forces of the locale (Cole, 2011).

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