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**Teaching Without Explication: Pedagogical Lessons
from Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* in
The Grand Budapest Hotel and *The Emperor's Club***

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Abstract

How can one teach what one does not know? Most film depictions of teaching follow a satisfying (and it would seem endlessly entertaining) Aristotelian dramatic structure. But what if the teacher does not know what she is summoned to teach? And what if there were a theory of pedagogy that celebrated a teacher's *ignorance* rather than her authority (power, position, privilege, pre-established role) or expertise (knowledge, experience, judgment)? How or why, in Jacques Rancière's parlance, an 'ignorant schoolmaster' may have a talent for teaching – that is, an efficacy and influence on student learning that trumps antecedent knowledge – becomes a locus of inquiry in these pages. Several of Wes Anderson's films can be said to include an ignorant schoolmaster, or 'New Master'. Arguably, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) features the highest achievement of expression of the ignorant schoolmaster in Anderson's work: M. Gustave teaches without knowing, teaches inadvertently as he learns what needs to be taught. By way of contrast – that is, as a way of illuminating M. Gustave's representative qualities as an ignorant schoolmaster – I will also consider the character of the professional, authoritative, and knowledgeable preparatory school teacher, or 'Old Master', William Hundert in *The Emperor's Club* (2002).

Contributor Note

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How can one teach what one does not know? Most film depictions of teaching follow a satisfying (and it would seem endlessly entertaining) Aristotelian dramatic structure: sagacious teacher faces ignorant student, teacher endeavors to teach student, student struggles to understand teacher, and finally obstacles are overcome – student learns from teacher, and to enhance pathos, usually teacher is said to ‘learn more’ from student. But what if the teacher does not know what she is summoned to teach? And what if there were a theory of pedagogy that celebrated a teacher’s *ignorance* rather than her authority (power, position, privilege, pre-established role) or expertise (knowledge, experience, judgment)? How or why, in Jacques Rancière’s parlance, an ‘ignorant schoolmaster’ may have a talent for teaching – that is, an efficacy and influence on student learning that trumps antecedent knowledge – becomes a locus of inquiry in these pages. As will become clear, ‘ignorance’, as it is invoked on this occasion, is very far from an epithet or a slander: just the opposite, ignorance becomes a harbinger of a novel mode of teaching; and this teaching seems to reveal a methodology that itself constitutes a kind of content. The ignorant schoolmaster, whomever she may be, is a transformative – even transgressive – figure heralding an alternative to education as we have known it, and believed in it.

Several of Wes Anderson’s films can be said to feature an ‘ignorant schoolmaster’ – someone who teaches (and who learns) from a place of ignorance. Once pointed out, this figure seems a leitmotif of nearly all of Anderson’s films, but especially *Rushmore* (1998) (which also takes place at a school, in the fraught relationships between teachers and students), *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) (especially in the figure of the paterfamilias, Royal, whose compromised authority becomes a prerequisite for the poignancy and efficacy of his wisdom), *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) (where the question of Ned’s paternity becomes the

condition for Steve to ‘father’ him anew, or at last – and then, after Ned’s death, to be fathered by him), *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) (as a couple of youthful runaways force a cloistered community of parents, police officers, social workers, and boy scout leaders to reassess their conceptions and implementation of knowledge and power over the young – and themselves), and more recently in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) (in which concierge M. Gustave H. [Ralph Fiennes] is the reluctant mentor of lobby boy, Zero Moustafa [Tony Revolori/F. Murray Abraham]). Arguably, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* features the highest achievement of expression of the ignorant schoolmaster in Anderson’s work – a first clue to which is that Zero begins at zero (a first position, an emptiness, a lack) and M. Gustave does not impose authority from *knowledge* but from *sensibility*. This is to say, M. Gustave is a figure who is at once preoccupied with propriety (the normative standards befitting the finest hotels, that is, with exemplary service and as part of an institution with a tradition worthy of upholding), with taste (being a man of taste), but also with acceptance – or reservation of judgment about – human frailty, weakness, contradiction, and difference. M. Gustave may rant, but he can also (and genuinely) recant. He may offer moral admonishment to another, such as Zero, and yet chastise himself in the next breath. By these turns, Mr. Gustave exemplifies hallmark traits of the ignorant schoolmaster: for he teaches without knowing, teaches inadvertently as he learns what needs to be taught.

For the present essay, I will focus on the ways in which Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* offers illustrative contours for understanding a pedagogical theory expressed by Jacques Rancière in his *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. M. Gustave seems a compelling incarnation of Rancière’s figure who can ‘teach without explication’, who can illuminate knowledge without prior awareness of it. In this respect,





Rancière's commendation antagonizes prevailing education trends that support the cult of the 'expert' and cultural habits of deferring to the established, institutionally credentialed and sanctified 'authority in the field'. On this dominant model (indeed, old, old account), the student is a vessel for imbibing the teacher's accumulated wisdom – as if such hard-won insights could be passed along this way, as if a student would benefit from them without critique or question. Moreover, a contemporary fixation with scientific assessments of 'effectiveness' has left realms such as the humanities scrambling to justify and defend 'learning outcomes' and explain how such learning can be 'scalable'. Neoliberalism has intensified the perception of education-as-commodity, and in the process made the humanistic impulses of learning a liability. The con-catenation of asymmetrical authority (imposed from on high) coupled with a quantitative approach to comprehension would be funny if it were not dangerous, at times harmful, and thus so often, tragic.

With Rancière, however, we discover a transgressive critique of the overlapping domains of power and knowledge that yields instead empowerment *prior to* knowledge. As such, the conditions for learning are immanent, ever-present, accessible – and, perhaps most un-cannily, *dependent* on ignorance. Teaching is practiced not as an inculcation of knowledge predicated on the asymmetry of (higher) teacher and (lower) student (by way of explicating the text), but instead through a fundamental *equality before the text* – where teacher and student stand shoulder to shoulder as they read. Rancière's radical scheme for emancipating how we learn – and from whom – provides crucial, essential lessons for contemporary pedagogical theory across disciplines.

By way of contrast – that is, as a way of illuminating M. Gustave's features as an ignorant schoolmaster – I will also consider the character of the professional, authoritative, and

knowledgeable prep-aratory school teacher, William Hundert (Kevin Kline) in *The Emperor's Club* (2002). Hundert, like M. Gustave, is poised to educate young men – teenagers, in fact. However, the similarities between Hundert and Gustave fade as we recognize Hundert aspiring to the role of sage: a person for whom the history of other persons (their biographies, their 'examined lives') may impart lessons for ourselves; the 'activity of the soul' in accord with virtuous habits contributes to one's character; and the 'molding of character' among his students is his self-appointed charge; Hundert is very much the model of an Aristotelian. And not surprisingly, the kinds of students he has – or is it creates? – reflect his modeling and his presumptions about their status as students (as lower, as lesser, as standing in need of his instruction). The obedient student grows up to be respectful, if somewhat milquetoast, whereas the recalcitrant student matures boldly and defiantly, and in part by ratifying his condescension to Hundert as a 'beacon of virtue'.

Unlike Zero, who responds favorably to M. Gustave's bumbling, unrehearsed remarks on life, service, and personal conduct, Hundert's pupil Sedgewick Bell, bridles before and rebels against Hundert's attempts to correct and form/reform his behavior. Hundert's idealism and Bell's incorrigibility (and values that stand in stark contrast with those of his mentor) are meant to give us pause: to make us wonder if Hundert is foolish or naïve, or if his pedagogical methods are flawed, and how we can find our allegiance with Hundert given his self-described 'failure' as a teacher of Bell. And so we come to see that though Hundert failed his student, *The Emperor's Club* itself teaches its audience *through* this illustration of ostensibly failed teaching. Despite his defeat with Bell (or is it *by* Bell?), then, we are nevertheless persuaded to believe that Hundert remains the wise and knowing one – the teacher whose deep knowledge of human conduct is unmolested, unchecked, even as it is incapable





of being imparted to his pupil. (Even his name – *Hundert* – German for ‘one hundred’ evokes the perilous ideal of perfection familiar to any student: how 100% promises a wholeness and completeness and rectitude that makes anything less feel like a referendum on one’s *personal* value – not just that one *knows* less but that one is *worth* less). Hundert is a great teacher who, it would seem, cannot teach; perhaps also of relevance, Hundert is a teacher who cannot write (he is blocked). This irony – of a teacher who cannot teach (for example, a teacher who cannot reach all of his students, or a teacher who succeeds in imparting lessons of soon-forgotten facts instead of ideas of lasting impact) – is something we are meant to learn from Hundert (especially through his illustrious failure with Bell) and from the film’s framing of this pedagogical impasse.

By no means, however, do I intend to employ William Hundert as a straw man (for I admire the moral and pedagogical preoccupations of his story, including his touchstones for teaching, among them Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero); rather I wish to draw attention to his re-presentative status – part of a long history and robust cycle of films that feature teachers-as-sages, teachers-as-reposit-ories-of-wisdom, teachers-as-gurus. From ‘Petite Feuille’ in *The 400 Blows* to the anonymous elementary school teacher in *Cinema Paradiso*; from Charles Kingsfield in *The Paper Chase* to Frank Bryant in *Educating Rita*; from Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda in *Star Wars* to Ra’s Al Ghul in the *Dark Knight* trilogy, we are familiar with the teacher who *knows*, the teacher who transforms, the teacher who he teaches by imparting knowledge with or from authority – often by way of professionally credentialed training and sanctioned practice. Such teachers are ‘authorized’, and in this context, one can spot the double-entendre. It’s not for nothing that the sage emerges from an ‘order’. The occluded premise of such narratives, and the presumed incentive of their spell, lies precisely in the hope that, in time, after much

suffering and shame, as the clichéd phrase renders it: ‘the student becomes the master’. Hundert is part of this lineage – a noble tradition, to be sure – but one that does not account for all types of pedagogical intervention with students. Hopefully, M. Gustave – in the company of Anderson’s stable of similar figures – will provide some orientation to another, lesser-known form of pedagogy.

That Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* provides an exemplary incarnation of Rancière’s theory is at once a striking and a compelling discovery. M. Gustave’s confidence, cleverness, self-awareness, and humane apprehension of the motives of others make him an unexpectedly effective mentor for the young Zero. Partly we, as viewers, learn how this is so by the autobiographical story recounted by the elder Zero – in effect, a narrative of learning from his beloved ignorant schoolmaster. Through a close reading of selected scenes and portions of dialogue from the film, I aim to habilitate Anderson’s cinematic creation – especially in the compelling representative figure of M. Gustave – as a worthy articulation of Rancière’s uncanny and counterintuitive pedagogical model.

Rancière’s Model: Exemplarity without Authority, Insight without Explication

Jacques Rancière had a famous teacher in the figure of Louis Althusser, and in 1964, Althusser wrote: ‘The function of teaching is to transmit a determinate knowledge to subjects who do not possess this knowledge. The teaching situation thus rests on the absolute condition of *an inequality between a knowledge and a nonknowledge*’ (1964: 152 in Rancière 1991, italics in original). Althusser would seem to be articulating and reinforcing the most straightforward, even prosaic, definition of education as such: in short, teachers are smart, students are dumb, and when they meet in a classroom, the ambition is for the teacher to





transmit – by myriad methods – the smart content to what Paolo Friere described (unsympathetically) as ‘empty vessels’ (1970 [1968]: 66). Friere, of course, famously in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, believed this picture of pupils as ‘empty’ was dangerously inaccurate, and as a result, also terribly harmful to the integrity and potentiality of students. In his own way, Friere has contributed a hugely influential argument on liberating the ‘oppressed’ and ignorant by means of questioning the asymmetry and inequality at the heart of the Althusserian classroom. Kristin Ross offers this cogent account of some lessons of the unequal classroom:

Each [theorist – namely, Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jean-Claude Milner], that is, by beginning with inequality, proves it, and by proving it, in the end, is obliged to rediscover it again and again. Whether school is seen as the reproduction of inequality (Bourdieu) or as the potential instrument for the reduction of inequality ([Alain] Savary), the effect is the same: that of erecting and maintaining the distance separating a future reconciliation from a present inequality, a knowledge in the offing from today’s intellectual impoverishment – a distance discursively invented and reinvented so that it may never be abolished. The poor stay in their place (Ross 1991: xix).

And by the logic of this asymmetry, the ignorant too remain in their place: forever at a distance from the (knowing, powerful) pedagogue, and perpetually at a lower level of the entrenched hierarchy. Rancière has described our inherited problem as a challenge posed by a prevailing educational ethos that implicitly validates the ‘opinion of inequality’ (Rancière 2016: 26). As things stand under this regime of ‘learning’, the opinion of inequality ‘is the very framework within which we get educated and acquire knowledge’ (Rancière 2016: 26). With Ross, and with Rancière, as earlier with Friere, we quickly suss out the political and socio-economic

implications of the unequal classroom (as well as, not incidentally, the ‘inequality of the social order’ [Rancière 2016: 26]); and this valence of interest will bite at our heels throughout this investigation, though it remains a broader context – something like a background condition, whereas our attention can be said to seek after some of the resonant effects of this conditioning structure, in this case, a more emphatic and conscribed attention to the epistemic and ethical dimensions of the literal classroom with its teachers and students and texts.

Rancière, ever-mindful of the political and socio-economic implications of his resistance to the model of inequality, draws our attention to a classroom in which the inherited hierarchies are dissolved and a new order emerges. Rancière highlights the case of Joseph Jacotot, a lecturer, in the early nineteenth century, charged with teaching French to Belgian students. ‘Among those who wanted to avail themselves of him’, Rancière tells us at the outset of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, ‘were a good number of students who did not speak French; but Joseph Jacotot knew no Flemish. There was thus no language in which he could teach them what they sought from him’ (1991 [1987]: 1). (Flemish is Belgian Dutch, which is spoken in Flanders, northern Belgium). How, in short, could Jacotot find a way to teach French under the condition of his ignorance of Flemish, in effect, to teach what he did know in the face of what he did not know? The question prompts a first moment or reorientation to the question of teaching and learning – namely, who is doing what to whom, and how, that is, by what means? We may hazard replies by thinking anew about the ends of education: where do we begin and where do we hope to arrive? As Ross, again, adroitly glosses the situation with another question: ‘What would it mean to make equality a *presupposition* rather than a goal, a *practice* rather than a reward situated firmly in some distant future so as to all the better explain its





present infeasibility?' (1991: xix). Jacotot provides a concrete response precisely because he affirms equality as a presupposition of his classroom. For Jacotot, 'knowledge is not necessary to teaching, nor explication necessary to learning', (1991: xix) as Ross puts it. Or as Rancière tersely consolidates the insight: '[E]xplication is the myth of pedagogy' (Rancière 1991 [1987]: 6). It is a myth that stunts the development of pupils, and gives teachers a poor estimation of their own knowledge, and thus power 'over' students (note the hierarchical shape of such an expression).

Rather than counteract ignorance and inequality, explication sustains them – reinforces and enhances them; this phenomenon is described by Ross as a 'homology of delay', namely, that the unequal classroom ensures that the student will always be behind the teacher, and thus never catch up, much less exceed the scope and power of the knowledge-keeper (1991: xx). The 'pedagogical myth' that Jacotot identifies 'divides the world into two: the knowing and the ignorant, the mature and the unformed, the capable and the incapable' (1991: xx.). But when the schoolmaster is ignorant (unsettles her claims to knowledge and power), the world is one again – all stand on the same ground, as equals before the text. What does the text say? How should we understand it? These are questions that arise from the text and are addressed to its audience: teacher and student alike, since, on this reading, they are alike.

In Jacotot's classroom where equality is a presupposition of inquiry, the teacher is not expected to explicate the text precisely because he cannot! Jacotot doesn't understand Flemish, so what could he tell his Belgian students about his own language? Instead of explication, then, the teacher joins the inquiry at the same time as his students are empowered to claim themselves accomplices in the mission. The scenario reflects Rancière's sense that Jacotot experienced an 'intellectual

adventure'. What preceded the adventure, however, was a prior, familiar, habitually held belief in the asymmetrical nature of instruction:

He had believed what all conscientious professors believe: that the important business of the master is to transmit his knowledge to his students so as to bring them, by degrees, to his own level of expertise. [...] In short, the essential act of the master was to *explicate*: to disengage the simple elements of learning, and to reconcile their simplicity in principle with the factual simplicity that characterizes young and ignorant minds. To teach was to transmit learning and to form minds simultaneously (Rancière 1991 [1987]: 3, italics in original).

Clearly this inherited model for teaching would not work for the French Jacotot and his Flemish students. Instead, Jacotot discovered a bilingual French/ Flemish edition of *Télémaque* (a 24-volume novel about Telemachus by François Fénelon, originally published in 1699). The novel would serve as 'the minimal link of *a thing in common*' (Rancière 1991 [1987]: 2, italics in original). Jacotot's proposal was that the students 'learn the French text with the help of the translation'. What would be the result of this unconventional intervention in the standing order of language education? As Félix and Victor Ratier wrote in 1838:

[Jacotot] expected horrendous barbarisms, or maybe a complete inability to perform. How could these young people, deprived of explanation, understand and resolve the difficulties of a language entirely new to them? No matter! He had to find out where the route opened by chance had taken them, what had been the results of that desperate empiricism. And how surprised he was to discover that the students, left to themselves, managed this difficult step as well as many French could have done! Was wanting all that





was necessary for doing? Were all men virtually capable of understanding what others had done and understood? (Ratier and Ratier 1838: 155 in Rancière 1991 [1987]: 2)

From his intellectual adventure, Jacotot discovered – what the Ratiers re-cognized and Rancière reconstitutes for our attention – that ‘the logic of the explicative system had to be overturned’ (Ratier and Ratier 1838: 155 in Rancière 1991 [1987]: 6). Rancière glosses this claim by saying:

Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such. To explain something to someone is first of all to shown him he cannot understand it by himself (1991 [1987]: 6).

One thinks of Alex Jurel’s (Nick Nolte) post-conversion pronouncement to the administration in *Teachers* (1984), after he abandoned his wish to resign from teaching: ‘The damn school wasn’t built for us, . . . it wasn’t built for your unions and lawyers and other institutions. It was built for the kids. They’re not here for us, we’re here for them. That’s what it’s about’. Jurel’s re-commitment is labelled ‘crazy’ by the superintendent, to which he replies rhetorically: ‘What can I say? I’m a teacher’. And in that casual essentialism, Jurel confirms the secret tragedy that lurks in the heart of this ‘inspirational story’, namely, that when he returns to the classroom – perhaps with only half of the school’s students in attendance, having written off the rest – he will most likely recuperate the habits of the asymmetrical classroom. He will be there for them – but as what? A kind of savior? Yet, by what powers – the powers of the knowing over the ignorant? Dedication to teaching (for example, faith in its form), we fear, is not sufficient for what may be

possible within the *event* of teaching. Jurel may be restored to his prior position in the classroom, but will his students be any better off? With the explicative model, the teacher – even one who is ‘knowledgeable, enlightened, and of good faith’ – will inadvertently ossify inequality and render an ‘enforced stultification [*abrutir* – to render stupid; to treat like a brute]’ (1991 [1987]: 6).

In the explicative model we find the teacher as a ‘mediating intelligence’ between the text and the student: like a priest between believer and holy spirit! With Jacotot’s experiment (and in Rancière’s emancipatory model based on it), however,

a pure relationship of will to will had been established between master and student: a relationship wherein the master’s domination resulted in an entirely liberated relationship between the intelligence of the student and that of the book – the intelligence of the book that was also the thing in common, the egalitarian intellectual link between master and student (1991 [1987]: 13).

Now instead of the student having to pass through the mediating influence of the teacher in order to read the text, the ‘student was linked to a will, Jacotot’s, and to an intelligence, the book’s – the two entirely distinct’ (1991 [1987]: 13).

The crux of Jacotot’s radical pedagogy, however, is not simply or strictly the ignorance of the schoolmaster – that, like Socrates, he could (and did!) call out ‘I must teach you that I have nothing to teach you’ – but that ‘one can teach what one doesn’t know if the student is emancipated, that is to say, if he is obliged to use his own intelligence’ (1991 [1987]: 15). Where the Old Master pedagogue is an explicator (for a powerless student), the New Master pedagogue must be an emancipator (for an empowered student). By this rationale and reordering, Rancière concludes: ‘Whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies. And





whoever emancipates doesn't have to worry about what the emancipated person learns'. Whereas the explicator was positioned as a gatekeeper – a priest of knowledge to be incrementally, but never totally dispensed with (for if totally, then the explicator becomes useless, unnecessary, a remainder deserving her own dismissal from the classroom), the emancipator is not responsible for content but for the *conditions* of learning. The New Master is called to teach the event of education, not to program what it will contain, what it will mean. The student 'will learn what he wants, nothing maybe', but that is not the emancipator's concern – liberation is his mandate, not control and dissemination.

M. Gustave: Humane Responses to a Humanitarian Crisis

It is in the spirit of the emancipator pedagogue – one who frees his student to the power(s) of her own reason – that we turn to Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, a film noted at once for its 'archness and deliberation' as by its 'sense of foreboding and menace' (Itzkoff 2014). As we follow the contours of the *mise-en-abîme* or (given the imagined geography, perhaps more fittingly) the Russian-doll approach to regressive temporal placement (from present day to 1985 to 1968 to 1932), we land, at last, in a Stephen Zweig-inspired alternate Eastern Europe – in the 'farthest eastern boundary of the European continent, the former republic of Zubrowka, once the seat of an empire' – and meet M. Gustave H., concierge at one of the continent's finest hotels. The first thing we are responsible for addressing is the very obvious fact that M. Gustave is, well, not a teacher. This is, of course, literally true. After rehearsing Jacotot's intellectual adventure, and Rancière's pronounced celebration of it, I seem to have found myself without a teacher, students, or a classroom. Yet this absence makes my point before I can make it! For the subgenre of films we might describe as 'teacher films' or 'school

films' or 'films about education' by and large lack a New Master pedagogue. From *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* to *The Browning Version* to *The Paper Chase* to *The Karate Kid* to *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* to *Good Will Hunting* to *Miracle* to *Whiplash* – and very pro-minently in *The Emperor's Club* – we continually, perpetually encounter the Old Master explicator; and despite a broad range of demonstrated techniques (instruction, inspiration, indirection, and not to be overlooked – sadistic rule, etc.), teachers in these films remain the sources of order and orientation, and the keepers/dispensers of knowledge (even when they fail to teach, and many of them do fail). So, it is something of a surprise, and an edifying accident – not unlike Jacotot's discovery of the bilingual *Télémaque* – that suggests *The Grand Budapest Hotel* as a candidate for illustrating the qualities and credentials of the pedagogical emancipator, the New Master, in the figure of M. Gustave. Perhaps it is a satisfying, for some even a logical outcome, since it would appear we need to leave school in order to learn. Not incidentally, though, my pursuit of what Stanley Cavell has called 'themes out of school' involves an attempt to find a way back in – yet in a new register of relation to the task (the calling, even) of teaching and learning, and the place and space in which they are said to occur. What teacher hasn't concluded a rigorous and demanding semester feeling low, and wondering hopefully, if also asking in anguished solicitation, about the next term, 'How can I do things differently – better – next time?'

We begin with a job interview. Zero is not enrolling in school, though he might as well be. M. Gustave asks 'Who are you?' – 'Zero, the new lobby boy' comes the quick reply. And it appears that his name is also an adjective for his pedigree and credentials: 'Experience?' – 'Zero'. 'Education?' – 'Zero'. 'Family?' – 'Zero'. (Note the radical inversion of numbers and values: if we have a teacher named Hundert [100], we also have a 'student' named Zero [0]. That such meanings lay on the surface of the





text does not diminish their impact.) 'Why do you want to be a lobby boy?' – 'Because the Grand Budapest is an institution'. After many inauspicious replies, this was the right answer for it appealed to M. Gustave's Aristotelian sense that service is a kind of practice and an institution is the context for its exercise (albeit, as neo-Aristotelian Alasdair MacIntyre has written, necessarily underwritten by 'competitiveness' and the 'corrupting power' of institutions [MacIntyre 1981: 181]).

The elder Zero reports in retrospect: 'And so my life began', and in this new life, the practices of running a fine hotel and the institutional nature of the operation are framed as an educational and moral endeavour: 'I became his pupil', Zero says, 'and he was to become my counsel and guardian'. Note that Zero doesn't match 'pupil' with the expected tandem-term, 'teacher', but instead words befitting a mentor or an accomplice. Nevertheless, the film begins with an asymmetry familiar to the teacher-student relationship – the first 'lesson'? 'Keep your mouth shut, Zero' – followed by M. Gustave's nightly sermon (including pithy bromides: 'Rudeness is merely the expression of fear'). Yet the trend of the film moves the Gustave-Zero relationship progressively from hierarchy to equality. When M. Gustave is on the train, sitting across from Zero, seemingly poised to offer the boy another 'sermon', he interrupts himself: 'It's what we provide in our own humble, insignificant . . . oh, fuck it'. Here M. Gustave undermines his own authority, mocks his sententiousness and (attempted) grandiloquence, and punctures his false modesty, thereby turning a sermon into a confession. And who was there to hear it? No one other than – none other than – Zero, now seated in a position of equality (seated at the same level, not spoken 'down' to); as such, in this mode of relation, Zero has a chance to learn from Gustave's unexpected revelation of character. In the midst of a dawning humanitarian crisis – the outbreak of war – Gustave slowly shifts away from a strident

authoritarianism and toward a more unvarnished humanism. He teaches indirectly, by virtue of his own vulnerability, his own exposure. In the throes of his own ignorance, he is making himself known.

Moments before claiming his bequest from Madame Céline Villeneuve Desgoffe und Taxis – Madame D. (Tilda Swinton), the painting *Boy with Apple* – Gustave pauses to offer Zero a lesson on the aesthetics of representation, and in the process makes an inadvertent parallel between his charge and the subject within the frame: a 'portrayal of a beautiful boy on the cusp of manhood'. When, not long after, Gustave writes from prison (for having stolen the painting), he seems painfully aware of such transitions, and the loss of his former position: 'a great and noble house is under your protection'. Despite Gustave's ordeals – how he might be used or harmed or wronged by others – he doesn't harbor jealousy or resentment, and says as much when interviewing Agatha (Saoirse Ronan), offering her a lesson that not she but Zero needs to learn: 'Never be jealous in this life, not even for an instant'. Zero's affection for Gustave, as it might be for any suave and compelling teacher, leaves him vulnerable to fears of betrayal. But time and again, Gustave doesn't become another such cliché, but instead admits his errors, and confounds Zero – and we alike – with his humility.

After Gustave has escaped from prison –with help from his band of prison-mates, and on the outside from Zero and Agatha – he scolds Zero for making a mistake, as a teacher might – 'But it's not how I trained you' – and rants against and insults the boy who just risked his life to free him. Yet after Zero shares more details about his early life – his family murdered in the war, his refugee status – Gustave doesn't entrench, but instead softens: 'I suppose I ought to take back everything I just said. What a bloody idiot I am, a pathetic fool, a goddamn selfish bastard. This is disgraceful and it's beneath the standards of the Grand Budapest.





I apologize on behalf of the hotel'. Here, still sustaining the Aristotelian outlook, Gustave blends an accounting of his personal behaviour with his practice as a concierge within an institution. And importantly, he diminishes his sense of control and expertise by claiming idiocy and foolishness, and acting below the conventions (of the hotel) he aspires to maintain (through embodied performance). Zero, to his credit, accepts the apology without fuss or recrimination: 'It's okay'. But Gustave protests, aiming to make sure Zero truly knows the genuineness of his apology: 'Don't make excuses for me. I owe you my life. You are my dear friend and protégé. I am very proud of you'. Zero interprets the further erosion of hierarchy and authority with a sentimental appeal to shared experience: 'We're brothers'. And M. Gustave nods his acknowledgment of this proposed consanguinity. These two men – unequal in age, experience, education, national origin, citizenship, race, rank, and much else – find new terms to express their relationship: a friendship (of equality), a companionable mentorship (with Zero as 'protégé'), and a brotherly bond (if only, but importantly, brothers in the fraternity of hoteliers, such as The Society of the Crossed Keys).

As M. Gustave is intent on preserving the standards and traditions familiar to the Grand Budapest, and befitting a fine hotel, he must find ways of training his staff, and, in time, for ceding his power to them. A brief vignette, about ten minutes from the end of the film, shows Zero, now promoted, passing on a bit of Gustave's advice (given to him early on, as the first lesson of the lobby boy, viz., keep your mouth shut), to Otto, the new lobby boy: 'Well, you haven't been trained properly, Otto. A lobby boy never provides information of that kind. You're a stone wall. Understood?' In this moment of instruction, Zero, himself still aware of his former position, and now possessed of relevant knowledge, draws young Otto into the fold and fray of the fraternity. Proper training, in this context, is a form of mentorship, of

brotherhood. Like the Russian-doll time sequencing that brings us into the film and takes us out of it, the generations of hotel staff encode lessons that are embodied and imbued from person to person, in the practice of running the place: from Gustave to Zero to Otto, and beyond down the line (and sometimes at odd angles, as when Agatha joins the circle of 'fraternal' relations). All the while, we are meant to remember – as Gustave admits of himself, 'of course' – he too was once a lobby boy at the Grand Budapest. In so far as he notes this homology, Gustave finds another way to inscribe his equality with Zero. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder before the grand ambitions of the Grand Budapest – what service within the esteemed institution might mean for them as its dedicated keepers and practitioners.

When the mature Zero Moustafa reports of Gustave's fate to his dinner-guest, the anonymously named 'Author' (Jude Law/ Tom Wilkinson) over supper in 1968, he doesn't admire Gustave's authority or appeals to prestige, but rather, his flaws: 'He was the same as his disciples [namely, the lady-guests he serviced]: insecure, vain, superficial, blonde, needy. [...] In the end, [because Madame D. made him her successor], he was even rich'. Gustave, illustrating Zero's point, and undermining it at the same time with generosity, said of his protégé: 'This one [viz., Zero] finally surpassed me [as concierge], although I must say he had an exceptional teacher'. Zero confirms the assessment: 'True'.

As the young Zero repeated Gustave's lesson for the younger Otto, so does the mature Zero repeat Gustave's sober train commentary (from Part II) to his dinner-guest: 'There are still faint glimmers of civilization left in this barbarian slaughterhouse that was once known as humanity'. In the final moments of the film, Zero makes sure the Author knows that Gustave was 'one of them' – that is, one of those 'faint glimmers of civilization'. And concludes definitively: 'What more is there to say?'





Gustave shows that no matter how different he is from Zero – and how unformed Zero is, especially at the beginning – ‘the minimal link of a *thing in common*’, as Rancière put it, is their humanity. And their humanity, in this depiction, is something that emerges through their practices within the institution of the hotel – the thing in common that they discover they *share* as part of their institutional commitments. Each occasion of their practice as hoteliers is a chance to be humane, or not – that is, to fail at being human, or sufficiently humane. As the mature Zero says to the Author, ‘We shared a vocation’. And this sharing makes all the difference when appreciating how M. Gustave H. was, in the sense drawn from Jacotot and Rancière, an ‘ignorant schoolmaster’. Even in his moments of explication, Gustave seldom lost sight of his humanity and that of his quarry: even as he was prone to the habits of power and hierarchy that defined his profession, he actively diminished his earned or granted authority as concierge, and cultivated the powers of those with whom he ostensibly ‘oversaw’. These are all traits of the New Master pedagogue – the emancipator – who teaches not from on high, but on level ground, in the intimacy of the face-to-face, re-orienting attention to the shared object of inquiry or interest (in this case, the performative traits of exemplary hotel staff, perhaps especially vital in wartime, when the threats to civilization – its qualities, its virtues, its values – descend in most acute attack), and where among other things, he is exposed for his common humanity, and thus vulnerability, ignorance, and error.

Gustave and Zero both struggle with ‘the results of that desperate empiricism’ they were forced to contend with not just during wartime – the people who killed Zero’s family and exiled him; the people who would deny Gustave Madame D.’s bequest (and when claimed [stolen!]), and also his freedom, his station at the hotel, etc. – but more generally, in the troubled state of their profession. As the mature Zero recounts it to the Author: ‘To be frank, I think his world

vanished long before he ever entered it’. But what ‘world’ is this? Not just the ordered and elegant world of fine European hotels, but the world where the ‘faint glimmers of civilization’ were more pronounced, where a shared humanity and a shared vocation were the daily conditions for expressing and reinforcing the best of such civilization. Without being unduly sentimental, though perhaps just such feeling is what is called for, learning how to be human was an honourable vocation. If Philosophy from antiquity made its task ‘learning how to die’, and die well, so perhaps this modern condition – fraught as it is with warfare and attacks upon humanity – demands the mission of ‘learning how to live’, and live well. The mature Zero’s reflections on life with Gustave, at the Grand Budapest and beyond it, are surely prone to nostalgia – a force that commonly distorts the past and distracts us from its realities. Yet Zero’s affection for Gustave – and for the hotel that became the shared site of their life’s work, the context for their sharing of a vocation – is based on Gustave’s error-laden humanity, not his perfection; on his confirmation of equality, not his stubborn insistence of his own privilege and priority. Zero learned more from Gustave, and loved him more, not because of his powers as a teacher, or explicator, of grand lessons, but because Gustave joined Zero in friendship, in fraternity as experimenters engaged in a mutually undertaken professional endeavour. Zero’s unyielding affection for Gustave rests not on his experience of instruction *from* him but of emancipation *by* him.

Mr. Hundert: Teacher of Facts, Molder of Character?

If we have found in M. Gustave an unexpected New Pedagogue – an emancipatory figure, the New Master – we find in Mr. Hundert, an Old Pedagogue, a confirmed representative of the (still) dominant class of Old Masters. Yet Hundert doesn’t stand in a posture of menace and sadism, a teacher using (or abusing) his height in the hierarchy (as in *Whiplash*; or for





that matter, any war film that features a drill instructor – such as in *Full Metal Jacket* or *G. I. Jane*; and any sports film, where the coach draws from punishment-as-training, e.g., as in *Rocky*, *Miracle*, or *Warrior*), but rather appears as an earnest figure caught up in a mood of pathetic bewilderment. Hundert means to do well by his methodology, so he is surprised – shocked and saddened – when it proves ineffective, especially for one of his students, Sedgewick Bell. While many other pupils may attest to Hundert’s positive effect on their lives, *The Emperor’s Club* becomes a meditation on the student who remained fractious in the face of the teacher’s lessons: the student who seemed convicted by a rejection of and condescension to his teacher’s approach to education – an approach that dep-ends on *imparting* a lesson, as if from history, from authority, from reason. When Bell remains unreceptive to Hundert’s pronouncements of propriety, delivered early and late in Bell’s life (for example, as in the ‘one last lecture’ he gives in the bathroom at story’s end), we, like Hundert, are given an occasion to reflect on the role of the teacher as such. What is it that teachers are supposed to do for, or with, their students?

In the opening scenes of *The Emperor’s Club*, in a montage of dual time registers, we hear Mr. William Hundert speak in voiceover – ‘I am a teacher, simply that’ – while taking stock of his knowledge: ‘I’m certain of only two things: days that begin with rowing on a lake are better than days that do not; second, “A man’s character is his fate”’. It matters little that he elides giving Heraclitus credit for the sentiment, but it is quite consequential for our glimpse of Hundert’s certainties that *character* is of paramount concern. If character is, indeed, fate, then we must rush to ask: is character itself fated, or is one free to create one’s character, which in time, registers one’s fate? It becomes clear that Hundert is Aristotelian on this front, that character is the short word for all the actions we undertake, the habits we abide by,

and more generally, the ‘activity of the soul’ in accordance with excellence (*arête*) and human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) (Aristotle 1941: 1098a15, 943).

Hundert is a teacher of history, more precisely ancient Greek and Roman history, and he operates his classroom under the unspoken (but hopefully evident) claim that learning the facts of history – especially the acts of particular, exemplary men – becomes the condition for the student’s moral education. The venerable tradition of *imitatio* is in full effect.

Hundert reveals his Aristotelian credentials by emphasizing two kinds of virtue familiar to the *Nicomachean Ethics*: intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue can be taught directly (through lessons, by means of facts), while moral virtue cannot – it must be inculcated, slowly, steadily, and surely from birth onward; the school motto is ‘the end depends upon the beginning’. Since St. Benedict’s, where Hundert teaches, is a boarding school for boys, he, quite naturally, nurtures their intellectual virtue during class time and their moral virtue in the canteen, the ball field, and the dorm room. A childless adult (who never expresses any interest in having children of his own, or remorse for lacking them), Hundert carries himself as someone who, nevertheless, is capable of attending to the kinds of emotional details of character that a parent would otherwise address (whether they be minor modes of discipline, such as lights out; or severe infractions, such as cheating and lying). As Robert Coles has noted: ‘our schools and colleges these days don’t take major responsibility for the moral values of their students, but, rather, assume that their students acquire those values at home’ (Coles 2010: 353). Yet, when school *is* home, as it is for these boys at St. Benedict’s, then the scope of Hundert’s pedagogy widens from the precincts of the classroom (and its demand for the promotion of intellectual virtue) into the moral and emotional domains of the students,





in Martin Luther King's resonant phrase, 'the content of their character'.

In class, as Hundert tells his students about the fate of Shutruk Nahunte (a conqueror who left no contribution and so is 'without significance', forgotten to history), or the qualities of Brutus ('the most moral man in Rome'), Hundert presumes that becoming intimately familiar with the lives of men – in effect, caught up in their behaviors, decision making, and character – will naturally, logically reinforce one's own edification. Notice, then, that Hundert presumes – it might even be a point of his vanity – that such 'intellectual' training in the lives of 'great men' will, in fact, rub off on the students' *moral* education during class; he teaches as if the lives of these illustrious men are self-evidently efficacious for learning how one ought to behave in and out of school. Hundert sees a through-line: knowing is believing is acting is character is fate.

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle: these are 'men of profound character', he tells the boys; when they don a toga, like their ancient Greek forbears, they are partaking in a symbol marking the 'transition from the child to the man'. Invoking Socrates, Hundert makes a distinction: 'It is not living that matters, but living *rightly*'. Sedgewick Bell demurs, however, and repeatedly embarrasses Hundert with sarcasm, stunts, and general silliness; Bell has little patience for any lessons from history, and still less for Hundert's confidence in a kind of cross-temporal osmosis of good character. Bell thinks Brutus was stupid for not killing Marc Antony (so he, Marc Antony, could 'win'); when so brazen a challenge is made to Hundert's reading of history and character, in short, his pedagogical authority, his response is not an encouragement of Bell's line of thinking (to pursue it, to test it, and perhaps to defeat it), but rather a resistance to it as if to a threat. Dismissive of Bell's utilitarian calculus, his intuitive grasp of the political exigencies of 'dirty hands', (Walzer 2007) and confident in his own authority as a teacher, and a student of history,

as a knower of truths, Hundert entrenches.

In a bid to bring Bell around, Hundert undertakes a solo field trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with Sedgewick's father, Senator Hiram Bell – a figure meant to combine the stereotypes of the powerful authoritarian and the distant father along with the anachronistic patriarchal swagger familiar to a certain picture of Southern heritage (a loaded gun, a lit cigar), and not to be missed, an instance of a non-academic's cynical anti-intellectualism. Hiram hails from West Virginia, a geographically and socially hybrid culture, and thus presumably is meant to represent a wide swath of just this sort of father, politician, and nonacademic. Though Hundert has come to report on *Sedgewick's* 'difficulty paying attention', the Senator's perpetual distractedness might have given Hundert a clue to the origin of the malady. Still, Hundert proceeds with the presumption that he will find an ally in the Senator, but instead, and again, he hears an echo of Sedgewick's skepticism and contempt: 'What's the *good* of what you're teaching these boys?' Hundert risks stating the obvious, lacing it with what may be a false deference to authority – 'I don't have to tell you, sir' – but then does just that by recounting how ancient Greek democracy gave credence to American's bid for the same; how Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, among others, exemplified civic virtue, character, and conviction. Hundert concludes, respectfully, but still defiantly: 'Sir, it's my job to mold your son's character'. The Senator bristles at the suggestion – laughs mockingly at his guest, looks down on him from on high, then stirs to indignation, scolding and correcting his son's teacher: 'That is a horse that can talk . . . Mold him? Jesus, God in heaven, you're not going to *mold* my boy. Your job is to *teach* my son. You teach him his times tables, teach him why the world is round, teach him who killed who and when and where – *that* is your job. You, sir, will not *mold* my son. I will mold him'.

Hundert and Senator Bell clearly have different conceptions of what teachers (can and should)





do for their students, and what fathers (might) do for their children (in this case, sons). In the wake of the Senator's query ('What's the good of what you're teaching') and his correction ('You, sir, will not *mold* my son'), we are left to wonder about the duties and mandates of the teacher: does Hundert overstep his role as a teacher? Or is the Senator insensible to what teachers (such as Hundert) are for – especially teachers of boys for whom their fathers are largely absent (or if present, then who remain absent-minded, or provide a questionable moral model)? These questions come in for a reply as we consider the shared qualities of mentorship exhibited by Hundert (as a teacher) and Gustave (as a concierge); both of these childless men are also depicted, implicitly and occasionally explicitly, as fathering, or otherwise at least offering fraternal guidance to their charges. As in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, so now in *The Emperor's Club*, we are encouraged not only to think about the protagonists (respectively, the concierge, the teacher) and their practices, but also the institutions in which those practices play out (viz., the hotel, the school). It is worth emphasizing the differences between the hotel and the club (academic and otherwise), for the hotel is a space in which *all* are admitted who can afford the accommodation, whereas a club is predicated on some criterion of exclusivity (though, so often, that criterion is also money-based or class-based, or otherwise marked by traits that divide insiders from outsiders). For guests of an illustrious hotel, there is an implied egalitarianism (often simply called hospitality), whereas for the preparatory school, for instance, the presumption is entry based on merit, retention based on performance (or again, less idealistically or naïvely, based on monetary contributions in the form of tuition and gifts). But then we know that Zero is a penniless, uneducated orphan and refugee – a victim of war's contingencies – whereas Sedgewick is the privileged son of a U.S. Senator. So, if there are obvious differences between concierge and teacher, between hotel

and club, then so also are they apparent between the young protagonists – Zero and Sedgewick – who stand in need of an education.

When seen in tandem, Zero and Sedgewick's scenes of education, bring into subtle form the manner in which both films – *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *The Emperor's Club* – are principally preoccupied with the teaching of moral virtue, what is called 'character' in the latter film, and is understood as a certain mode of relating to humanity in the former (e.g., 'faint glimmers of civilization'). While, for example, Hundert is full of facts, ever ready to call up an historical figure for consideration, his primary ambition is the use of such facts for the constitution of character. As he helps Sedgewick check out a library book, he assures the librarian: 'I can vouch for this boy's character'. And later, when Hundert is trying to understand Bell's motivation for cheating, he speaks of 'being blind to deficiencies in his character'. Likewise for Gustave, personal conduct is the hallmark of judging service; this seems especially the case for those professions, such as the running of a hotel, where service *is* the practice. Thus, for Gustave, being rude or telling other people's secrets is a mortal infraction on the character of the servicemen. We find a close variant on Gustave's lessons, sermons, and confessions when reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, in which the head butler, Mr. Stevens, discusses what he calls the 'dignity' of England's finest butlers (Ishiguro 1988: 33-34). Similar sentiments about the propriety of service staff are also evident in Julian Fellowes' *Downton Abbey*, most often deriving from pronouncements made by the abbey's head butler, Mr. Carson.

Twenty-five years after Sedgewick graduated from St. Benedict's, Hundert is invited to reconvene the Mr. Julius Caesar competition, which was in the 1970s, the scene of Sedgewick's moral breach (he cheated). We, along with Hundert, are encouraged to think the





mature Sedgewick has created the conditions for his redemption – perhaps a function of a lifelong guilt in need of expiation. Instead, we, along with Hundert, are shocked to see Sedgewick – now a grown man, with two sons of his own – cheat yet again. While the audience at the competition cannot hear the irony, we recognize it when (after cheating), Sedgewick toasts his former teacher by saying ‘Your virtue is a beacon of light’. Needless to say, it’s time for Hundert to repair to the bathroom and splash his face with cold water. Bell enters, Hundert confronts him on his inveterate ethical infraction, and offers ‘one last lecture’, one final lesson in the wake of admitting ‘I failed you as a teacher’: ‘All of us, at some point, are forced to look at ourselves in the mirror and see who we really are. And when that day comes for you Sedgewick, you will be confronted with a life lived without virtue, without principle, and for that I pity you. End of lesson’. Once again, and at last, we might think Bell will be chastened, but instead Bell is indignant: ‘What can I say, Mr. Hundert? Who gives a shit? Honestly, who out there gives a shit about your principles and your virtues. I mean, look at you: What do you have to show for yourself? I live in the real world, where people do what they do to get what they want. And if it’s lying and it’s cheating, then so be it’. Hundert is, not surprisingly, gutted by Bell’s unflinching castigation, and, to be sure, his lack of moral perspicacity – especially now, as a grown man with children, sons of his own. Hundert’s disequilibrium, however, will be joined soon enough by Sedgewick himself. For it is the appearance of Bell’s son, Robert, out of a clandestine perch in the bathroom stall that confirms the lasting damage of Bell’s attitude: passing from Hiram to Sedgewick, and now from Sedgewick to his son, Robert, a legacy of compromised moral character has been drawn. Instead of the lineage of character and service we found from Gustave to Zero to Otto (and beyond them, and before them, and outwardly to The Society of the Crossed Keys), we encounter with Hiram and Sedgewick a bona fide tradition of callous disregard for the

cultivation of moral character. As if ethical corruption were a virus or a biological constituent, like a strand of defining DNA, we see the young Robert’s face and wonder about the effect this bathroom conversation will have on his life, and the legacy beyond it – to his children.

The Emperor’s Club concludes with Hundert reminding himself that one failure – that the loss of one student to moral turpitude – doesn’t, or shouldn’t, define a life, *his* life (or his sense of success within it, perhaps especially, as a teacher). Clearly Hundert doesn’t have wealth and power and broad or popular influence to show for his life’s efforts, but he may find a meaningful legacy in those students who used his facts, his lessons, to cultivate a more praiseworthy character than Bell. The subplot with Martin Blythe (Paul Dano/ Steven Culp) is meant to show a counter-instance to Sedgewick Bell, and to assure us that Hundert can *himself* be the beneficiary of the high moral character that he, in some way, contributed to (as when Blythe forgives Hundert’s early treachery, and sends his son, Martin Jr., into Hundert’s class – doubtless a bold indication of forgiveness, mercy, and trust in his former teacher). Still, we are left to wonder if Blythe did, in fact, learn how to behave this generously from Hundert.

Echoing the opening Heraclitean apothegm, Hundert claims that ‘however much we stumble, it is a teacher’s burden to always hope that with learning a boy’s character might be changed, and so the destiny of a man’. Hundert here sounds in sympathy with Simone Weil, who (in a gloss provided by Mario von der Ruhr), encouraged us to believe that ‘the education of the young is always conducted under the banner of hope’ (2006: 37) – but it is not a vague and amorphous hope. Rather, as we find further realignment to the Heraclitean notion – hearing that Ralph Waldo Emerson told the group of young men gathered at the edge of his podium in 1837, ‘Character is higher than intellect’ – so we may conclude that Hundert





privileges moral virtue over intellectual virtue (Emerson 1983 [1837]: 62). If the (intellectually achieved) facts are not in the service of (moral) character, they aren't worthy of our dedication.

Rancière's Pedagogical Lesson: Education as the Poetic Labor of Translation

Hundert is very much in the cast of an Old Pedagogue – a classic explicator – asking his students to fill in the blanks posed by his leading questions. While not as transgressive and egalitarian as Gustave, Hundert nevertheless shares with him an orientation to the character of the boys under his command (a not insignificant word that links an education by the Old Master with martial values). That is to say, Gustave and Hundert reveal how their mandate may be different, or broader, than Jacotot's. Remember that for Jacotot, his ambition was to teach French to Belgian students: this was an education in *translation*. But Gustave and Hundert are concerned – if we may call on, again, the Aristotelian sense of these words – with the quality of young souls: this is an education in moral virtue. An education in character will require a different kind of translation: for the concierge, it means interpreting the conduct of service professionals in relation to their guests, and the care of the institution in which these relationships flourish; for the teacher of history and moral philosophy, it means interpreting the conduct of representative people in relation to the virtues their actions embody, and in time codify for the rest of us.

When Rancière returns to the question or status of the ignorant schoolmaster in *The Emancipated Spectator*, two decades after his first book on the subject appeared, he retains an interest in this work of 'the poetic labour of translation' (Rancière 2009 [2008]: 10). And in doing so, he helps us sort the moments of similarity – and difference – in our study of Gustave and Hundert by providing alternative tropes for the education of the uneducated:

The distance the ignoramus has to cover is not the gulf between her ignorance and the schoolmaster's knowledge. It is simply the path from what she already knows to what she does not yet know, but which she can learn just as she has learnt the rest (Rancière 2009 [2008]: 10-11).

As we conclude here, we can assess Gustave's candidacy as a New Pedagogue and Hundert's (perhaps reluctant, even pathetic loyalty to his) status as an Old Pedagogue by determining the degree to which each has 'uncoupled his mastery from his knowledge' (Rancière 2009 [2008]: 11). While Hundert believes Sedgewick must be taught, and Senator Bell believes his son must be molded, both modes of address presume that Sedgewick's 'ignorance is not a lesser form of knowledge, but the opposite of knowledge' (Rancière 2009 [2008]: 9). By way of contrast, as an ignorant schoolmaster, Gustave comes to learn for himself, in fits and starts, and eventually with some confidence that, as Rancière puts it: 'there is no ignoramus who does not already know a mass of things, who has not learnt them by herself, by listening and looking around her, by observation and repetition, by being mistaken and correcting her errors' (Rancière 2009 [2008]: 8-9). Hundert, perhaps to his chagrin, and more certainly to ours, never learned this lesson. Hundert's character as a *knowledgeable* schoolmaster is, in this regard, his fate. He remains the Old Pedagogue, and therefore remains ignorant of how to teach his students the conditions for their own intellectual – and moral – emancipation.





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