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A Critical Hermeneutics of the Use of Custom in Education: Hexis into Praxis

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ABSTRACT

Aims: To understand the relationship between what students understand to be their knowledge and what the educational system takes to be its knowledge. The latter appears to replace the former in some manner and it is this process which the article seeks to expose and comprehend. How does local custom come to be used as a vehicle for a wider and more anonymous set of pragmatic models?

Study Design: Philosophical analysis

Methodology: A series of questions that interrogate both the hermeneutic commentaries on pedagogy and critique the rationalized character of the education system are combined with an interpretive commentary.

Results: The techniques of instrumental praxis are taught and learned in educational systems by mimicking the forms of custom, the 'hexis' of primary socialization. A philosophical interrogation of this relationship yields a new sensibility: that the outcome of a practical wisdom, or phronesis, is short-circuited by the idea that praxis can be both uncritical and only content based. This extension of the norms and forms of what is customary into the formal education system allow the latter's contents to be digested as merely more advanced tools and skills for living in the everyday, rather than as an authentic praxis, the 'applied theory' which practices both critique and dialectic. The necessary relationship between experience and knowledge is thus lost, and the outcomes of educational systems tend to be a simple amassing of information or a technical ability that dangerously narrows the human project and forgets its condition.

Keywords: Hermeneutics; hexis; praxis; custom; discourse; education; pedagogy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and ignorance are friends. The interpretation of what we have known realizes the promise of learning that knowledge carries within it. We are all interpreters of everyday life. No world is forever closed to us and none appears to us fully embodied. Hermeneutics is the art and theory of interpretation and thus its language is that of the landscape of learning. That Arcadian egos must travel such terrain in search of their destinies and that death too inhabits every Arcadia, only reinforces the dual limits that mortality has conferred upon us from the beginning. One the one hand, we are made unmade and must finish ourselves. On the other hand, we can never accomplish this final form, whatever we may imagine lies ahead for us. Teaching and learning are simultaneously acts of interpretation and willing action which affirms not only our present existence but also our future, however unknown. No one is truly mastery of these processes, but all must partake in them as if they are at least competent enough to begin again. The tyche of mastery is the wisdom that sees living on as a work in progress and the knowledge that such work cannot come to an end and yet also must nevertheless end. The practical wisdom that is generated from the combination of the *techne* of skills and knowledge and the experience of the unexpected and different enables the tyche of mastery to attain *phronesis*, its true character. Custom provides the original template of human diversity and society, while the practice of theory extends, overturns and modifies what has been the case., what is customarily so. Primary socialization provides the action of *hexis*, or what is taken for granted as the case, tradition, and norms (cf. Kristjánsson 2007). *Praxis* challenges the status quo by opening the previously singular and insular world into its manifold and strange recesses. The world as it is confronts us and its alien quality makes further customary action impossible. Yet it is only a combination of the two of these, what has been the case and what is strange, that can create the hermeneutic environment of *phronesis*, the practical wisdom of living on. Customs are reinterpreted, theory adjusted to suit reality, the social reality of tradition is reshaped and the episteme of the serious business of constructing knowledge takes on new its historical task. The wisdom of experiential practice and reflective self-consciousness is *phronetic* in its character. It neither brooks the somnolence of our present state nor does it presume upon the authority of the sciences. It accepts neither value nor fact alone. Rather, it presents to us the idea of validity, a temporary ethical stature that confers authority only on the case to case. While custom presents a ready-made reality for our consumption, oblation and theory presents to us the revolution of consciousness that overturns that world, practical wisdom shines upon the light of worldliness, the way in which the world worlds itself and it is this kind of experience that marks the most realistic of human perceptions, for we know that what we think is subject to change and what we do is no final will.

All of this points directly to an ontological characterization of self-understanding. This 'self' is, however, not merely something that is ranged over against either other selves or the world, but it inhabits and coexists with these others and with their worlds, as well as World itself. World is at once the home of beings as it is the envelope of Being. Within this envelopment, we hardly notice that we too are part of the fabric of history and world. The world as it is also contains the world as it must be, but this 'must', the shalt of the wording of world, is also no final will and its historical foundation is revealed to us when we alter our surroundings, even in the slightest degree. Whether we learn to use a new tool, or a broken tool anew, or for an unexpected purpose, means that we must replace our prior expectations of both our skill set and the tools around us - both part of the 'stock of knowledge at hand' that is a further envelopment into which we are sometimes too sealed and thus what comes to be the new is always a herald of history itself. History is such that it changes over time. It does not matter that sometimes, or perhaps betimes, the pace is almost unnoticeable. The pace of history is

akin in this way to the presence of the world: "World is something sensed 'alongside' the entities that appear in the world, yet understanding must be through world. It is fundamental to all understanding; world and understanding are inseparable parts of the ontological constitution of *Dasein's* existing." (Palmer, 1969:133). Both time and being in their capital states are like social facts, yet they are more universal than the cultural a priori that populate the list of primary socialization form any specific or singular society. They do not lay down the normative content by which each culture is content to live. Rather, they are the ether that fills the vessel of our common humanity and like this invisible and at times even mythical atmosphere, such characters of the human condition can become soporifics. If we are not to wander the earth as somnambulistic masses, we must always turn our attentiveness, our concernfulness of being, towards both history and world, for what they are we are as well.

2. PRAXIS USES THE TEMPLATE OF HEXIS

While what is customary contains the contents of necessary prejudice, and while it cannot be avoided that any social being have his or her respective vault of condensed knowledge about the local social world, nevertheless hexis can also be used as a resource in teaching and learning. The dismay generated by a glancing critique of pedagogical discourse has its roots in the disdain we might project against our common bigotries; those things that 'everyone knows are true' but in fact have little validity beyond the local group: "What is supposed to be known in common by everyone who shares our system of relevances is the way of life considered to be the natural, the good, the right one by the members of the "in-group" (Schutz 1967:13 [1953]). It is somewhat disconcerting that even in our contemporary period cultural groups often behave as if they were nothing more than scattered villages along a lengthy river system, where the jungle hides all signs of neighbors who are also strangers and encounters amongst tribes are often violent and laced with fear and ignorance of the most base kind. This is merely an effect, however, of hexis ideologized into a nation-state. Competition for resources and the power and control of populations that comes with them is one of the major motives for geographical entities and thus the idea of borders and boundary maintenance on the grandest of scales. Education systems within each of these entities aid and abet such purposes. Indeed, if developed countries maintain global control, they might even suggest to that self-same that they do so because they have the right way of thinking, the best way of doing things, the most mature societies known to humankind. If 'they' wish to be like 'us', as so many others seems to do in their official roles as emerging states themselves, then it *must* be the case that we are the most worthy of emulation on all fronts.

Yet we know that, just like our situation at home, governments seldom represent the widest of interests with regard to the citizenry. This is all the more the case in emerging economies within the 'developing' world. "Developing' into what?", we may well ask. At the same time, we are also aware that the intense forces of globalization are in fact creating a kind of world-space - once again, if metonymized into an ontology (a common humanity based on the ideology of want, say) then a fraudulent totalization and hence 'evil' - where shared values and goals are supposed to inhabit every member of the species. This certainly runs counter to our entire history, but it does hold out the stereological promise that if we all turn into the same thing, then conflict and competition will end. Time will tell, no doubt, but the main contenders at present joust with one another not on existential lines, but based only on the most brutish sensibility that 'we are better than them' - indeed thus more worthy of life - simply because we happened to have been born in one geography and not another (cf. Clegg 2010:351). Can the complacency of an accident become the most blithe and pathetic

excuse for geopolitics? It seems that it can, but the reason for this is not that birth itself has become an ideological event, but that hexis is so easily convertible into a politics. One, because what is customary is in fact held in common by a vast majority of persons in this or that space and two, any politics which attempts to preserve its fashionable hold on power must cater to what most people think they know about the world. Yes, opinions can be created and 'spun', sometimes out of control, but it is a savvier politics that knows how to massage what is already there, than one that attempts to create anew in the face of cultural inertia: "Sharing a community of space implies that a certain sector of the outer world is equally within the reach of each partner, and contains objects of common interest and relevance." (ibid:16). This sharing is not at all limited to one's subjectivity when relating to the object realm (cf. Albright 2011:2). We *embody* hexis in the very way we conduct ourselves in the world of others who are not alien to us and in the interface of a world of constructed and natural things that we have grown accustomed to (cf. Antikainen 2005 for this version of Aristotle's notion of hexis): "For each partner the other's body, his gestures, his gait and facial expressions, are immediately observable, not merely as things or events of the outer world but in their physiognomical significance, that is, as symptoms of the other's thoughts." (ibid:16). It is indeed an 'ontography', because we can map it and write on it or about it. Much of the human sciences are the official chart of human ontology in its cultural manifestation.

But this map is one of praxis, not hexis. It is not hexis made into the state narrative of what constitutes the good polis, it is not polis policed. Rather it is metastasizing of custom into theories thereof. "Why do people do the things they do?" is the common question of all human science. The response of traditional authority is good enough within the confines of each in-group, but it fails to utter any higher validity. We do not, in fact even know why things work the way in which they do, let alone anything about deeper human motives or aspirations. Survival and reproduction aside, human beings are evolutionarily and culturally endowed with the ability to imagine the future and cast themselves out into the world as scattered but cogent agents of alien change on a virginal landscape of the non-human. Hexis stands in the way of praxis, but it is also its object. The goal is to understand ourselves better and more fully than before. Hexis is itself a system of self-understanding which has worked 'on its own', as it were, up until quite recently. Conflict certainly was extant for no doubt much of human existence, but never on such a scale that threatened the species or even its diversity of cultures. The reproduction of this or that culture seems to us to be a modest goal today. yet we are not in so very different a position, given that we are fashioning, for better or worse, a global culture, and given that most of us wish it to continue in some form that improves the general human quality of life and intellect. The reproduction of what can be humanity is today the first question, and necessarily following from this, its maturation, simply because we cannot survive as we are now.

2.1 Critiques of Hexis as a Pedagogic Outcome

To learn to do this we must inevitably take our cue from how we used to learn, or how we have always learned. That is, how did hexis survive and reproduce it, and what can we gain from the knowledge of what hexis is and does that can help turn our praxis into a viable hexis that crosses cultural and national borders? "Learning here means acquisition of already is incorporated in books and in the heads of elders. It is taught as a finished product with little regard either way in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future." (Dewey 1938:19). The cosmogonical cycles and narratives that populate the imagination of traditional mythologies and modern science alike are testament that we do pay some notice to 'how it all got started', but generally Dewey is correct (cf. Pamental 2010

for a contemporary reading of the 'situationistic' character of the 'need to know'). In teaching the world as it has been, or custom and behavior which has been the case and is expected to continue, we treat it as a black box, not to be opened pending the risk of Pandora hovering above our youthful heads: "It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as an educational tool in a society where change is the rule, not the exception." (ibid). Perhaps it is precisely because of the accelerated pace of change in the past few centuries that there has grown a more pressing need to keep things the way they were, as every 'is' is so quickly a 'was': "Alongside material production and reproduction, the transmission of forms of social life was traditionally the most pressing of all cultural practices. From the everyday phenomena of manners and childrearing to the more exalted domains of religion, politics, and philosophy, social life was inherently pedagogical." (Horowitz 2001:13-4). This cycle never ended, for as soon as one stopped being the student one already was the teacher; the child into parent, the non-responsible into the obligatory, the guarded into the guardian. One moved from the inheritor into the one who bequeathed in a smooth and often concise fashion, given traditional rites of passage associated with puberty. This telescoping of the time of life was necessary in societies where population loads were small and life expectancies were often below thirty years of age. There was, ironically, no time for the change of human history to occur. One simply lived to pass on what one suddenly had become, without much notice of anything else: "The universality of pedagogy tells us much about the dialectics of fate and faith, since just as each new generation was the vessel of the older one's survival in its passing, the new vessel was inherently untrustworthy and needed to be bent to its responsibilities." (ibid:14). It was less a matter of faith proper, perhaps, than with the skill in showing the manner of how one had to live on in this or that circumstance.

No more reason need be given for the preeminence of the perspective of the other that has also become part of our collective fate. Certainly cultural conflict is also a path to the abyss, but it is also, and more importantly, a manner in which we are shown that we do not indeed have all the answers, as traditional societies once did for their own local situations. For such perspective we also need not travel very far, even though the further afield we do venture, the more strange our beliefs might well feel to us: "Yet the world of my daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one, shared with my fellow-men, experienced and interpreted by Others; in brief, it is a world common to all of us." (Schutz 1967:312 [1955]). As common as it may be, the mere fact that otherness exists and its very conception is also held in common makes the social world not merely mutable, but even fragile. We know we have already changed throughout our own biographical experience, why should others not have done so as well. We indeed have experienced such change in others, even such may be the well-calculated phases of social life that should come and go in rather specific order and fashion. Nevertheless, one does go ahead with one's life with an amalgam of faith and fate which may be primordial to our species consciousness. We believe in the morrow, and therein lay the marrow of all faith.

The intersubjective character of hexis means that for the most part, teachers of all stripes can assume that their tribal lore will not merely amount to something in the world of today, but that their charges will take it on as if it were their own in the same manner as did the previous generations, the teachers of the teachers etc. That language is still the primal medium of human communication, separating us from all other forms of known consciousness, only throws into high relief what we can observe amongst our fellows; that each social encounter is a pedagogical experience, even if by far the most of them confirm our suspicions that the social world is as real as nature and has incomparably more quotidian force for us than what even the cosmos can proffer. These experiences are not

negative in the hermeneutic sense of 'negation of previous prejudice'. Rather in their confirmation - pending our interpretation of them of course - they both solidify the prior presence of what we have assume to be the case, the lessons of generalized hexis, but as well they further the course of pedagogy all of us began as young children (cf. Ecarius 2012:154). The trite casuistry 'learning never ends' is most trivially true in the day to day, where we imagine that we have learned nothing at all. Yet we could not keep up the social performances expected of us without all kinds of help from the other players treading the well-worn boards of the social stage. This is specifically felt through the use of linguistic communication, where the universal texts of humanity are acted out. Language puts us socially 'in our place', as it were. We are heavily reliant upon "...the belief that each person's language use strategies are subjectively registered through a process which might be called *social insertion*. Self-awareness appears in each of us at the moment of language acquisition because both self-awareness and language require and 'mean' in a sense, our implication of other people's lives and their implication in ours." (Bleich 1988:210). Not that we write our own scripts from scratch. The tired adage that here is 'nothing new under the sun' is particularly appropriate for hexis oriented language and interaction, juts as it is potentially overdone for philosophical discourse. We are also reliant upon others to co-write the libretto of everyday life, and we in turn are usually willing to become the co-author of others' communication tactics. This only becomes excessive when we transgress certain interpersonal boundaries in the attempt to exert more control over the actual lives of others, but it should be remembered that we are always treading on these margins in any case, given the intersubjective quality of all human interaction. We do not fully author our own existence - very much less so than the ideology of individualism proclaims, given the inertia of history and the oft unfronted tradition - and yet we get to 'make up' for this in a way by helping others author theirs: "Just as all language has already been used, one's own language is also 'common property'. In most instances, of every day conversation we do not note or think about its uniqueness or allude to the fact that it is 'ours' and not someone else's." (ibid:217).

2.2 Confronting Tradition and Overcoming Custom

Effective historical consciousness needs the perspective of the other, and indeed, as we have already seen, the otherness of what has not been the case, in things, world or persons, provides the radicality of the first step away from what we have known before. Furthermore, this otherness must also be allowed to become abstracted from the immediate dialogical or hermeneutic context. We need not only the sense that there is a self and other, but also that there is, akin to Mead's 'generalized other', another kind of being that stands around us, writ larger than social interaction alone, and yet is still more easily accessible than the quite abstract notion of 'the tradition'. This is the idea of the third eye of semi-autonomous objectivity that we search for in the third person: "This will pose a problem, for we must not allow a theory of reflexivity to rob us of the definite advantage of being able to consider the person as a third person, and not only as an I and a you. The difficulty will be instead, understanding how a third person is designated in discourse as someone who designates himself as a first person." (Ricoeur 1992:35). This is not so much of a challenge as it first may appear, if we simply consider the fact that we too have been 'typecast' in some way in order for others to use us as an abstract quantity or presence. Even the fact that we often, and correctly, take offense at such, a typification can lend us leverage to understanding the quasi-existential shifting of discursive or historical roles undergone by living selves. The trick with any human situation is of course not to make an assumption about what the living will or can do, or what they might actually think of things, before one goes much more deeply into the matter of context and person. We are all each other's understudies and as such we

actually make our own scripted roles much more flexible, as well as being seen as cooperative people acting in the common cause of human communication: "...pre-existing language habits enable one to consciously perceive someone else's use of language in ways *appropriate to the new situation*. It is possible for any student, or other observer, because they necessarily have such language-use strategies, to make new, meaningful, and helpful comments on anyone else's language." (Bleich 1988:262).

Indeed, this constant editing, extending, or extrapolating is also part of the process of making the 'you' into both an 'I' and a 'we'. We might attempt to bring the language of the other closer to our own, though always with the risk of translation losses, but we might also equally well abstract the other until he or she appears only as part of the generalized face of the social consciousness, or yet further, as part of history. There is an immediate danger to this kind of typification of course, if we allow the figures and fields of discourse to also keep their human status, for: "The activities of great men inevitably hold for us a certain mysterious prestige, a certain secret element whose key we are forever trying to discover among the details of their lives. We make use of incident and anecdote both as documentary and as fictional material, and out of them we build up heroic portraits and truthful fables alike." (Focillon 1934:131). Not only can we no longer discern facts from fictions, we incautiously blend history and biography. The up-side to this impatient amalgam is that we are reminded that facts and fictions do not differ as much as we might think, especially when they are ensconced only in a history beyond mortal memory. The down-side rests its peace when we find ourselves repeating a history that was never our own in the first place.

The person with intellectual or artistic talent becomes the scion of a new commodity as a vehicle for marketable talent. The leaders of the 'free world', public or private, almost always emanate from the same source: "Professional men of any specialty, university graduates or not, are men who have been 'determined from above' by a culture of domination which has constituted them as dual beings. (If they had come from the lower classes this miseducation would be the same, if not worse)." (Freire 1970:156). The duplicity of an education that at once tells us that we are free to 'become who we are' while at the same time valuing only a very narrow range of human interest and talent takes its toll at both psychological and social levels. Education research can participate in this state of affairs if the dominance of the science or the control of the context to be studied sets the stage of the sorting of various kinds of successes and failures that are pre-defined by either a class system or a system of symbolic violence that derogate local experience and knowledge (Ball 2010:157, Dillabough 2005:128). Such researchers do not "...come to their subjects with the purpose of *contributing* to their lives and situations. In their roles as observers, and perhaps as manipulative observers, they superimpose an intimidating authority situation on the social scene of the people being studied." (Bleich 1988:81). This sudden authority interrupts the happenstance of culture and interaction in a more serious way than the 'observer effect' suggests. Certainly, persons change their behavior when confronted with more or less strange others. The dual consciousness of the trained technician or martinet is duplicated in educational research that strives for a separation between culture and science, living-on and the history of discourse. There is equal duplicity here, perhaps, as those under study no longer feel the need to be them, as it were, as they have now been cast as understudies for the role of research subject alone. Their new language is that of the education system and its public minions, their actions graded and measured, akin to our students, by rubric not of their own making, and their once resourceful use of hexis is suddenly unmade in the same way as is the bed of an interrupted pair of lovers.

What experiential use of language there may have been is culled in a specific manner: "Language thereby falls into the service of expediting communication along routes where objectification - the uniform accessibility of everything to everyone - branches out and disregards all limits. In this way language comes under the dictatorship of the public realm which decides in advance what is intelligible and what is unintelligible." (Heidegger 1977:197). Language in the service of Thinking, of Being, rather retains its elemental status of as something uniquely human. This status is not merely unique, and confers its uniqueness upon us as a gift, but it also emanates in our beings as the unquiet of the World envelope, the always murmuring moment of a consciousness that is only historical and can only be so. Thinking aloud this moment brings us to within hailing distance of our own mortality. We might suggest that children do not need to know such things, but indeed, they already feel the presence of an absence of this kind because they are specifically less insulated by the completed socialization of the adult, the caves of society that shelter our mortality against the ongoing weather of nature and cosmos. The great anti-existential purpose of modern education appears to be the extinguishing of a thinking that takes us back into the heart of Being: "When thinking comes to an end by slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring a validity for itself as *techne*, as an instrument of education and therefore a classroom matter and later a cultural concern." (ibid).

That human consciousness which is in its essence a thinking and an historical consciousness cannot truly be annulled only by this or that specific skill of training only fuels the desperation of any politics that uses large scale systems of such training and skill bestowing as a form of status elevation. 'You can be a better person only through our education', it says to each and every one of us. The purpose of education is to make oneself a better human being. Philosophy would not in principle dispute this, but would wish to question the definitions of the key terms in use, 'education', 'better' and 'person', for example. If historical consciousness in the nineteenth century meant "...the noble and slowly perfected art of holding ourselves at a critical distance in dealing with witnesses to past life." (Gadamer 1976:5), then today it must also mean the ability to refuse to be tempted by an imagination that says that we can do the same for the voices of the present. We are, in our very Being-Thinking, the creature whose consciousness both develops and breathes in the present while at the same time knowing that the present is not all it appears to be. The present, in other words, has a past. The historicity of present life reminds us that we both live on in the moment but have also lived on previously. Prejudice is the remanance of this relationship. Experience is its residue.

Although personal nostalgia might impinge upon our ability to live as we age, the fact that there is still much living to do - even at the end of our lives relative to what may be coming after the life we know has come to an end - means that we harness experience and live on within it. We do not relive our lives so much as we rewrite our histories whilst living on. We are perhaps more conscious of the fact that as we age we seem to speak more of the past than the present, but the fact that we are still speaking and breathing in the present is never entirely lost on us. The living breathing presences of beings in the world are a constant companion to authentic thoughts of all kinds. Thinking remains 'in its element', as Heidegger puts it, simply because of the persistence of living on while one is still amongst the living. We need only take this self-same perspective that must be applied to our own biographical narratives and understand human history proper by way of it. Half-thought historical consciousness - the distanciation of the drive of the living present - can only produce the discursive version of nostalgia, antiquarianism: "Antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present. Its piety withers away, the habit of scholarliness continues without it and rotates in egoistic self-

satisfaction around its own axis." (Nietzsche 1983:75 [1874]). All techne that redeems itself through smugness has this quality. It does not need the living present for it already knows 'what to do'. These skills and techniques, information and rules exist most fully in their attempt to quell the loquacity of the witnesses, not to history, but to our own lives as they are lived in the here and now.

All critique then has the added task of distinguishing between the technical narratives of instrumental rationality that masquerade as authentic praxis and the severe traditionalism of desperate hexis. The combination of praxis as technique and tradition only harnessed to preservation of what 'has been the case' without regard to the world as it is, is a powerful, world-historical force in our own age (cf. Regelski 2004:33ff for an example in the performing arts).¹ It represents neither thinking, living nor yet being, however, "For it knows only how to *preserve* life, not how to engender it; it always undervalues that which is becoming because it has no instinct for divining it..." (ibid, italics the text's). This is why the knowledge of history is not enough not to repeat it, as the full meaning of Santayana's dictum suggests. For this kind of 'knowing' remains within the ordered collection of nostalgia, as we might practice philately only to understand the history of colonialism or the nation-state's official auto-narrative and without placing its same lessons into our own lives as citizens and beneficiaries of neo-colonialism and geographic territory. The knowing of hexis is mimicked by the praxis of technique as it seeks to replace only the *content* of what have been knowledge, and not its form. Nostalgia for hexis in the face of uncritical praxis allows the latter to 'fill in', to become a surrogate for previous prejudice but also as a stop-gap against thinking. Its mode is the same as that of hexis, a reciting of what has been, and therefore what still must, through 'recitation', be the case.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning in any authenticating sense must go far beyond the accreditation of techne and the expunging of hexis. It must not confer anything on us. Its ordainment is purely secondary to its self-understanding and indeed, even at the most mute level, learning and teaching does have this character: "Indeed, if learning is not simply the passive acceptance of information, but involves interpretation and hermeneutical reflection, then authoritative structures are constantly challenged within educational experience. The very authority of structure (preconception, tradition) stands or falls through this challenge." (Gallagher 1992:97). Yet at the same time the for-having of prior prejudice might contain that which opens itself up into the world and risks the being of its transient vessel: "Productive preconceptions, ones that facilitate understanding; will survive the challenge of interpretation." (ibid). In the battle for the youthful mind, hexis attempts to stand up against praxis, giving its hallmark call to arms as both experience and tradition. Yet hexis is neither properly discourse nor the tradition. It itself has already been infiltrated by the praxis of everyday life, the action that calls itself to alertness whenever the unexpected of any kind appears before us. Far less than the suddenness of irruptive events or phantasms, the improbable and the idea of risk inform our quotidian rounds. Even if something untoward does occur, the 'charismatic' character of the unexpected is quickly routinized. This is also a dual situation, akin to the shared space of fore-conceptions that impinge upon or open themselves to the new and to learning in general, because we also know that even the new can only be recognized at first, and in part, due to its only partial strangeness. We cannot really maintain that what has been the case entirely exists of its own devices, without some concerned presence of what we are today and without some memorialization of the recollective aspect of our present consciousness: "It would be wrong to think of contexts as existing prior to utterances or as

being causally linked to them. Rather, utterances, their interpretations or understandings, and the contexts are intrinsically linked; nothing is entirely prior to the rest.

Thus, understanding and contexts are in many ways developed in parallel, as aspects of the same communicative process." (Linell 1995:178). No learning would in fact be possible without the fact of necessary prejudice built out of the fore having of experience and the larger priority of World and its existential envelope. Hexis represents only the standard equipment of living on in the social world, and not the more sophisticated equipage of being in the world. The ambit of its facticity is neither laid bare before our eyes: "We do not come face to face with brute fact; in our hermeneutical projections, we encounter a meaningful world which is not independent of the language we use to express it. To deliberate, to argue, to judge, to appraise, and so on - these are all ways that we enter into dialogue with the world." (Gallagher 1992:116). We are already dimly aware that social reality becomes ever more a fragile construction when hexis runs headlong into praxis. All successful social institutions 'get them when they're young' and schooling as well as post-secondary education is no exception. Those that fill the numerous seats of large lecture halls in undergraduate programs are undergoing all of the lingering doubts of late adolescence. Has custom really all there has ever been to world? Are there not other worlds than the one I have known? As we have seen, the cynical aspect of praxis of course plays a strong role here, in that the inculcation of hexis allows praxis to simply extend the form of custom into applied theory, without ever engaging in real critique, questions that would dismantle the forms of life, rather than merely replacing one content with another that has more social prestige.

Not that hexis is invulnerable because its position has the inertia of spoken and inter subjective tradition. Precisely because it is not discourse, not even policy, its customariness may be eroded or even shattered in an instant of either selfishness on the part of any community member, or with the incision of the critical blade of an unredeemed question. As we noted above, adolescence provides plenty of both kinds of events, but it is when this raw rebellion of the weary waiting for one's own authoritative space draws nearer the surface of language and interaction that hexis is most endangered, for it is then that we seek other kinds of historical phenomena to enlist in the nascent cause of revolution. So the task for hexis becomes adorned with the most elaborate of hoaxes, that of keeping up a pretense with and about others when all who participate in it already know that that is exactly what each one of us is up to.

3.1 The Translation of Mere Custom into Formal Praxis

Yet there is a more serious matter still enclosed within the quelling of doubts that all of us, as mature adults, have about the fragility of social life. The same historicity that affects society affects the self. And just because the one provides the other with a set of scripted roles with which to stage manage our way through life's phases does not mean it can control every outcome in the face of difference and 'the new'. Hexis indeed bumps up against a different kind of task, one which it is not by itself equipped to negotiate: "In our experience of life generally, we face this task at its most extreme whenever we have to let something be said to us. We might well say that learning how to do this properly is a never-ending task laid upon each of us in our own lives." (Gadamer 1977:141). The reason that listening to 'what has not been the case' is such an arduous event is simply that the new asserts itself against the old in a new way, that is, one with which we have little or no experience. What we have been as persons is offered change, which may appear to be threatening. In fact, the policies and manuals of uncritical praxis are based upon such documents as there are in the worlds

of custom. On the other hand, hexis is hypostasized through mythic narratives of all kinds, and these *do* require of us some kind of adept, even if such an interpretive skill is limited by the structures of the myths themselves - 'deep' or otherwise - and even if we might sneer at the quaint or yet archaic character of certain kinds of myths when we think of the historical and cultural distance between the time of their origins and our own age. Yet here as elsewhere - myth, manual, memorial, or manifesto - we must enlist the hermeneutic frame of circularity in the midst of managing our awareness: "To that extent, it is clear that understanding represents a particular task whenever we are confronted by texts or anything that has been committed to writing - the task is to let the text speak to us once again." (ibid).

Perhaps fittingly, hexis is most at odds with everyday experience when it is thrown into the high relief of its own cosmogony. For when we realize that things have a beginning, we also must understand that what has been the case has not always been the case. There is a 'before' to every present which is unlike itself. Once again, we begin ourselves to recognize that we too have a past during adolescence, when the pace of biographical change accelerates, and when we are faced with more and more complex responsibilities as well as options in our lives. The factual state of being in the world is not radically altered by panoply of choice, but we do find it more of a challenge to keep up the appearances that social life by itself offers us everything we need in the face of our own mortality, which comes just onto the horizon during the earliest of adulthoods. If we opt to misrecognize this ultimate arbiter that calls us to begin the work of life then this deliberate misunderstanding is hung on the peg of personalization, of imagining that what existence calls us to do in fact is a task set before us only by some other to self that is identifiable as another human being. But this is not the case. rather, it is the character of human existence that envelopes us as the most effective part of World, as it is the world's own history which is suddenly at stake through the actions of each of us as singular expressions of Being: "For it is indeed into existence that Dasein is thrown. The avowal of passivity, of the non-mastery of affection, tied to being-called, is directed toward a meditation on nothingness, that is, on the radical non-choice affecting being-in-the-world, considered in its facticity." (Ricoeur 1992:349). If the discovery of origins represents the risk of history - by definition, mutable, and only muted by the ritual of custom - then the incipient vision of an existential horizon represents the end of autobiography. It is just here that hexis appears to us at its most blithe and aloof, for it can carry on without our presence and after our passing. It is just then that we must begin the serious search for something else.

3.2 Praxis Represented as Techne

In order to press local knowledge into the service of institutional discourse, praxis is represented as simply a new tool or skill to be added to the stock of knowledge at hand regarding everyday life. To be sure, praxis also understands itself to be a more realistic and relevant set of such skills than those the natural attitude has to offer, and therefore it has a more serious social status. The prestige of what it can offer those who accredit themselves in its name out ranks the mere possession of various elements of tradition or custom. Hence much of the input to post-secondary educational systems is already keyed in the direction of desiring a kind of knowledge that is a lesson in an advanced 'how to': "Many college students, especially those hoping to be doctors or lawyers, for example, are already apprentice members of the academy and advocates of its interests. They help create a false sense of harmony in the university not because they work as partners of the academy, but *for it*." (Bleich 1988:157). The university is here preaching to the converted. Particularly it is the competitive format of educational settings that dovetails well not only with the larger capital, but with the specific entrance and exit requirements of highly paid professions (cf.

Jessop 2008:15ff). Given that one is always evaluated, the technical know-how and information that must be recollected in order to pass through such a system becomes too detailed and vast, that there is simply no time or energy left over for reflection. That medicine, engineering, law and genetics all have histories is lost in the contemporary setting. The professor and teacher, caught in these contexts, might be held up as sacrificial martyrs to the continuation and enlargement of any technical discourse, especially if the graduates of such programs not only come from more privileged social backgrounds than their mentors, but also will move on to hold more prestigious posts, and thus exercise more power in that same society which gave them their original edge.

The professor, long thought of as a kind of dangerous but respected figure, like the sorcerer of ages past, has lost both these characteristics in contemporary life. Instead, the teacher is held out for a certain kind of disdain, but given that a professor's job is less stressful than other professions, the former cannot make a serious plaintiff. It is enough, then for praxis to use the professoriate as its instruments, paying them well for amount of hours worked, and insulating them from much of the usual labor strife that occurs in other less privileged contexts. But respect as a particular social role is hard to come by, even more so for teachers: "You might ask why archaic taboo and ambivalence were transferred onto the teacher while other intellectual professions were spared. I would like to offer only a *common-sense* remark. Lawyers and doctors, equally intellectual vocations, are not subject to this taboo. However, today they are *independent* professions. They are subject to the mechanism of competition..." (Adorno 1998:180). Those status groups who are not insulated by external suasion and must compete in the open market not only for clientele but for prestige and salary are generally thought of as more viable human beings. They are forced to face the world as it is, we imagine, and those whose intellectual life does not seem to touch the everyday concerns of the great masses of fellow humans are regarded with a suspicious sneer.

But there is yet another reason why praxis sabotages the authority of its temporary vehicles. The teacher is responsible for a new kind of evaluation, one that is not based on what the student already knows, and does not conform to how previous guises of authority have judged the young person. Here, Adorno speaks of how the teacher is regarded as a kind of calculator of specific misanthropy, leveling his students with either the 'authoritarian personality' - theatrical or real, it matters not - or the distanced weapon of evaluation itself. The casual pretense of objectivity, still carried on in the arts and honed to a fine art in the sciences, with regard to grading and measurement of student aptitudes is the major manner of enforcing the misanthropic slouch: "The teacher is so to say not *fair*, not a good sport. Such *unfairness* - and every teacher, even the university teacher, sense this - somewhat taints the advantage of the teacher's knowledge over that of his pupils, an advantage the teacher asserts without having the right; because indeed this advantage is indivisible from his function..." (Adorno 1998:182). The teacher retains his misanthropy due to the combination of not being a representative of hexis and in fact being its enemy, while at the same time having to mimic the style of authority by which hexis established itself as the young person's entire world. Teachers are thus resented on two fronts simultaneously: *they attack the content of the student's fore having while appearing to be but a continuation of that content's sources*. Adorno suggests that there is for the teacher really no way out of this odd corner, for "...he continually bestows upon that advantage an authority he can disregard only with great difficulty. *Unfairness* lies as it were in the ontology of the teacher." (ibid, italics the text's). Transmissive, coercive and hierarchical forms of authority give the young person a sense that the world is not only controllable but also to be kept in control. Social norms demand this of every cultural neophyte. It is the mode of being in the world, to take up

Adorno again, that is controlled by the social world and exerts in turn its control over it. That we are co-conspirators in the grand plot of society is nothing new. Those institutions garner prestige and power through our voluntaristic imprisonment within them is also old hat. What the pedagogical usefulness of hexis suggests, is rather that we desire to have the world of our childhoods and the world of coming adulthood as the same world, that hexis and praxis be more than friends, but be cut from the same cloth, and harbor the same loyalties both to world and fate. That this is not in fact the case is what creates the enormous need for the pretense of control and detente. This would be no more than a rationalized farce if it did not have such wide ranging existential implications for each of us: "Our modern understanding falls prey to the illusion that our control is complete, that we are independent and self-empowered subjects who order the objective world. This illusory understanding is what closes off the possibilities of human self-understanding." (Gallagher 1992:177). Within primary socialization, what appears to 'make sense' to us takes on the form of a rubric for all rational operations. Hexis is harnessed not only as the template for technical praxis, but as the vessel to be filled with fashionable non-culture and market.

Yet it is the element of loss of control, both over us and over the world around us that is perhaps the most disconcerting thing about the new. Educational systems of all kinds, because they must introduce their charges to new content, do so in orders of environments which are not they knew. This in turn undermines the authenticity of the content itself, because its newness begins to seem like a matter of course. It really does appear that praxis is just an extension of hexis, with the suasion that what is customary is not theoretical at all, and also thus is not 'applied' in a any real sense, because it is simply 'the way things are', as if all of us live in a kind of naturalized social caste system. This is no more evident than in the structure of most classrooms at any systemic level: "Enforced quiet and acquiescence prevent pupils from disclosing their real natures. They enforce artificial uniformity. They put seeming before being. They place a premium upon the outward appearance of attention, decorum and obedience." (Dewey 1938:62). The 'true nature' of praxis is of course belied by its representation as a mere addition to custom. It might even be thought of as the folk culture of the classroom. One plays the role of student before that of son or daughter, for instance, just as the teachers are no longer parents themselves. The fact that praxis has a recent pedigree which is well known even unto its origins is forgotten. The fact that praxis has its source in theoretical constructs and models that must be learned as technique as well as philosophy is lost. Perhaps more so than hexis is turned into praxis, it remains the very opposite. Yet this is saying too much, for praxis takes on the guise of hexis in order to insinuate itself into the consciousness of an already partially socialized youth. The 'partial knowledge' of all social locations is also partial in a second sense in that it has loyalties to that location and to no other. It is 'partial' to itself, in other words and to those who share it. Praxis imagines itself to be impartial, just as science and history run across cultures and their feats of mechanical and concrete manifestation 'work' as well there as they do here, near us and yet as well far from their forebears. Kindred with this divide, students of all kinds keep beneath the surface of control and order the partiality they render to themselves and to their prior experiences. They remain loyal, to a point, to the world as it has been: "And everyone who acquainted with schools in which this system prevailed well knows that thoughts, imaginations, desires and sly activities ran their own unchecked course behind this facade. They were disclosed to the teacher only when some untoward act led to their detection." (ibid). This is precisely the same manner in which the new obtrudes upon the silent consciousness of hexis. Its diction speaks the untoward and unexpected, its voice breaks in on a chorus of murmurers and its message is that of the Delphic oracle, a puzzling kerygma that must be interpreted and given meaning in the face of what has been meant by all things before it.

We are here being asked to give our experiences a new interpretation, to name them anew and thus come to understand them differently, whether the source is mystical or practical : "Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it." (Freire 1970:76). Here, the nomos of human language is not merely an iterative grunt in the face of all that stands in front of culture, but a transformation: "Once named, the world in its turn reappears to those who must name as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.' (ibid, italics the text's). Indeed, the designative function of language is felt most keenly in the social sphere and, like nature 'itself', our understanding of the world deemed to be outside of culture and society uses a language that reflects the distance that we set up between these ontological landscapes. Nature and culture are much more fluid categories in these kinds of ontologies. The contemporary version of the transformer being is perhaps the psychoanalytic double of us in the other. We project ourselves on the other, as Nietzsche reminds us, and thence imagine them to be as we think them, but more than this, our society works precisely because we can hold typical expectations of other persons who, in their stolid and predictable performance of these expectations, only renders are sly projection more credibility - if only to ourselves. This 'application of theory' then also lends itself to the newness of institutional praxis and technique, because, just as we are already used to the sense that custom merely names what is the case and thus skill and techne appear to be extensions of this naming process, we are also already aware that new situations might call for new naming procedures and terminologies. We can accept this far more easily than the idea that praxis itself seeks to overthrow hexis and replace it with itself under the guise of hexis anew. This is why professional schools' enrollments are burgeoning across the globe. It is here that praxis is most crafty in assuming its dramatic role as the natural extension of hexis. Its acolytes are implicitly geared to understand praxis as a mere instrument for a part of the customary world they had not yet experienced, and whatever the content of the course or program, even in the arts. The formal evaluation of performance in the classroom mimics the informal but powerful affirmation of earlier kinds of social authority, parents or the like, those children must needed to have performed for. The two sources of the uncritical affirmation of what has been the case dovetail especially well in families where high grades are expected and rewarded early on. There is a relatively seamless transition between schools and universities in these cases, and the prevalence of families who pay their children's tuition but might well withdraw such support if the child does not maintain a certain average are a case in point.

So one cannot simply exhort praxis to show itself in its fullest form and destroy the entirety of hexis overnight. What we can begin with, however, is the abandonment of all uncritical or non-critical forms of acquiescence to any social system or institution, including the fixture of the social scene, the other to self as partial self. This typified interaction is, by definition, a myth, for we cannot be merely part of ourselves. We rather, in fact suppress part of ourselves to perform the parts necessary to get by in the day to day. We are all our own oppressors, pretending to destroy the unwanted parts of who we are in a serial and diverse basis. Yet "Since the oppressors cannot totally achieve this destruction, they must *mythicize* the world." (Freire 1970:135). This is particularly apparent in any public social interaction, but this is only the small print of a much larger tendency that it appears each cultural period or society has exerted over both the world and its own members. This mythic quality then rewrites its own history to the politics of the day. Beyond this, we must also consider that the fashion for being a 'team player' finds itself hitched up to a morality reminds one of the most insidious groupthink: "And quite also apart from those wholly thoughtless people who when

they write history do so in the naive belief that all the popular views of precisely their own age are the right and just views and that to write in accord with the views of their age is the same thing as being just; a belief in which every religion dwells..." (Nietzsche 1983:90 [1874]). It is the aspiration to a morality that links mythology and politics (cf. Kristjánsson 2006:270ff). The retelling of mythic narrative has always had a pedagogical function. Custom is proven universal as such hypostasized hexis. That what has been the case should not have a history is the manifestation of the present become myth.

Such ambivalence that we may have regarding our place in both society and history strikes us as unreasonable given the effort that must be made by each of us simply to find a niche and survive from day to day. That whatever control we exercise over the here and now is immediately called into question by the need for ongoing interpretation and the imprecision of our fellow human beings - the daily commute, for instance, is a perfect example of the attempt to control situations which may suddenly turn to the unexpected and even dangerous and this in turn suggests to us the desperation of all attempts at control. Nevertheless, the complete lack of predictability that a chaotic state of affairs would produce is nowhere to be found. Even in combat there are odds. That the mundane sphere holds little sudden risk is as well known as the fact that the most vanilla of lives will deteriorate into mortal danger given enough time. Quality of life, therefore, retains its reasonable stance. The tools of praxis which model themselves into the forms of hexis may thus be seen not only as the attempt to control human life in its most general sense, but also attempts to control the history of human institutions and ideas. If the 'correct' ideas that inhabit hexis are 'once and for all', then surely too are the lenses we use to analyze both nature and ourselves. History is seen more clearly by the present, and nature in more detail.

At the same time, the language of hexis is too murky for any aspiring praxis of utility. The forms of custom may be replenished with advanced skills and technique, but the voices of hexis must be replaced: "Uses of language that give attitudes, opinions, feelings, generalizations, guesses, and doubts - commonplace, socially interactive behavior - are understood to interfere with the basic need for 'clear information'." (Bleich 1988:13). If this replacement can be accomplished, then anything 'new' takes the form of mere further information, which can be learned on a 'need to know' basis, and simply added to the stock of technique at hand already extant in each student's mind or program portfolio. The seamless sense of knowledge, modern or ancient, is preserved only as an archive preserves the complete set of parts needed to understand each in turn. Just as we do not question the purpose of having this kind of society versus some other kind, or why this kind arose, we also do not question the purpose or creation of information and technique, we only nod sagely at its 'necessity' for the 'working of things', and not even with the caveat of 'the working of things as they are today.', unless it be in the direction of imagining more and more fail-safe technological or policy 'solutions' to current disorders or inconveniences. That knowledge includes self-knowledge means that it itself cannot participate in the round dance of ideology: "This concept of knowledge as dialectic reasserts the hermeneutical circle which had been denied by the paradox. We can learn about the unknown only by recognizing it as something that fits into or challenges what is already known." (Gallagher 1992:195). The 'hermeneutical dimension' of human knowledge is bracketed by any regime of truth that seeks only clarity at the expense not so much of detail, though this too can suffer, but of breadth. The peripheral vision of the human lens is much less clear in its exposition of our condition than is the stereoscopic focus of centered sight. This in principle is not a problem, but it does suggest that it very much matters where we focus our gaze.

4. CONCLUSION

We have seen that it is the idea of the 'fact' as being found only in an informational and technical context, the grounded Gradgrind of instrumental praxis that contributes more than any other modern idea to the sensibility that if we only knew all the facts of this or that situation, we could resolve it without further difficulty. Development programs, certain forms of counseling, medical and clinical work, engineering and economics all generally share this hubris. And just as we extinguished the shades of a retreating history and mutable memory regarding custom, we provide ourselves with the template to do the same for ideas and facts. But factuality is not the same as facticity. The former is kindred to a controlled social experiment, the latter and the ambiguity of the everyday: "We must remember, first of all, that the concept of the fact, which corresponds to the concept of pure perception and pure assertion, was exposed by Heidegger as an ontological prejudice affecting the concept of value as well. Thus Heidegger showed the distinction between the judgment of fact and the judgement of value to be problematic, as if there could be no determination of facts at all." (Gadamer 1976:121). It is well known that the 'validity' statement contains both fact and value. The empiricity or referentiality of what is 'valid' is given a spin by the values or politics of the day. Facts are spun into the service of values, and thus can never communicate their content to us with the complete clarity of idealized truths. This condition is itself perhaps the primordial fact, the first principle, that we cannot have knowledge without both valuing it and evaluating it in some way.

This is the lesson of the tree of knowledge, where human perception immediately sees the 'use and abuse' of what is, the world and other persons. We are only able to do so because what makes us finite is the same thing that makes us self-conscious. No longer do we live as purely part of the existential envelope of World, as the mythical Eden of graceful ignorance imagined our collective origins, but rather as part of the worlding of the world, ever changing and ever partial in its self-understanding. Erasing the history of humanity by only contrasting its supposed origins in a primal nature with its supposed totalizing knowledge of contemporary nature represents the inhumanity of humankind. Heidegger himself suggests that this "... is the subjectivity of man in totality. It completes subjectivity's unconditioned self-assertion, which refuses to yield. Nor can it be even adequately experienced by a thinking that mediates in a one-sided fashion. Expelled from the truth of being, man everywhere circles round himself as the *animal rationale*." (Heidegger 1977:221 [1947]). Instrumental rationality is not even bereaved at its parting from the whole of reason. It mourns only its serial failure to adjudicate with the fullest of factuality the events of humanity. Its memory is one of the embittered but perseverant person of resentment who is determined that things will go his way the next time. Because the stumbling blocks of human aspiration are always the shards of discarded projects that had been at play before the current desire took hold, history itself must be erased. The 'end of history' heralds the beginning of true enlightenment and rationality. The end of being means that being in the world can be controlled and predicted. Hence technical praxis is accepted by hexis as a 'natural' and just extension of a path which has been cleared of the detritus of previous human failures: "Education to objectivity and science, moreover, is a goal that can be accepted by society, and this implies that education to purpose-free research into truth is really not as odd as all that. It has nothing to do with the idolization of knowledge and ability. It is an indispensable element of the process of human 'socialization' in which the practitioner, and even the 'administrator', participates just as much as the researcher." (Gadamer 1998:69 [1977]). Making hexis into praxis means that the values of uncritical sociality will be used to guide the efforts of uncritical skill and technique. The furthering of current aims is thus all we need to know

about, and the belief that we are doing the best possible job given the circumstances is all we need to know.

5. NOTES

¹That we live in the same kind of society that committed genocide is an uncomfortable fact of just such a living present that technique and instrumental rationality would live to deny. In telling ourselves we could not commit such acts we make all of us into 'holocaust deniers'. Adorno reminds us that such an event and others like it are not 'outside' of the flow of history nor are they merely perverse tangents of our social structures: "Millions of innocent people - to quote or haggle over the numbers is already inhumane - were systematically murdered. That cannot be dismissed by any living person as a superficial phenomenon, as an aberration of the course of history to be disregarded when compared to the great dynamic of progress, of enlightenment, of the supposed growth of humanitarianism. The fact that it happened is itself the expression of an extremely powerful societal tendency." (Adorno, 1998:192, [1969]).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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