



## Reflections on the *Bildung* Tradition and Foucault: A Public Choice of Self

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**Abstract:** What is *Bildung*? What is the *Bildung* tradition in education? To explore this further an epistemology of self – a *public choice of self* - is centred on Foucault’s three “axes of education.” It is argued that a public choice of self may be embedded within the *Bildung* tradition. It includes the ability to engage in critique of one’s society, challenging it to realise its own highest ideals. Defining performance criteria as “schooling” we also explore how schooling is different from education. Teachers struggle to reach performance targets. It is argued that education and “being educated” are processes built on knowledge and on ones’ experiences in life. Throughout the paper the definitive article “the” in “the self” is dropped in order to emphasise the point that self’s experience and behaviour in the present may be independent of whether or not self was schooled in the past. This facilitates an *episteme* of education that embraces not only art and poetry, scientific research but also the appreciation of beautiful things like the Inishowen peninsula in Donegal, Munich, or jazz ensembles.

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### 1. Introduction

As an outsider trying to understand *Bildung*, a concept for which no English language equivalent exists (Siljander, 2012), the author works

from the premise that it is a passionate search for continual growth of the individual, tempered by reason that is developed through intense study of one's intellectual tradition. There is a nice illustration of this point given by Foucault when he asserts that our own times and lives are not the beginning or the end of some "historical" process, but "a period like, while at the same time unlike, any other" (Foucault, 1975: 47f). The paper integrates Foucault's diagnosis of the present with an understanding of the *Bildung* tradition by addressing how self's values and motives are conditioned by society and by one's experience of society through time. An integral part of self's experience from Kindergarten to university, for example, is the educational school system as measured by performance criteria.

The definitive article "*the self*" is dropped throughout the paper. It has been dropped because "self" never exists in exactly the same condition for more than a moment in time. This is analogous to the ship of Theseus. In self's life nothing is permanent: everything is change. To think of me, myself, I without this time dimension is like thinking of me, myself, I without self (Midgley, 2014). The "self" represents you as a bundle of experiences, memories, thoughts and emotions. We refer to this as a *public choice of self*. Self enters the schooling system at a young age. Self then exits the schooling system. Our discussion is not about the economics of self as a self-centred economic person guided by a maximisation principle "of getting the most from the least" in the schooling system. Rather it reflects on how "the seamless web of yesteryear" leads "slowly and inexorably into the present" (Ball, 2013: 87f).

## 2. Me, Myself and I

Any investigation of the behaviour of self as an economic agent originally stems from the self-centred maximisation principle. It falls within Lawson's declaration of political economy, delivered at his Dublin lectures in 1843 (Boettke and Sautet, 2009: Chapter 4). He declared political economy as a science that has man as its subject matter and "views him in connexion with his fellow man, having reference solely to those relations which are the consequences of a particular act, to which his nature leads him, namely, the act of making exchange." A public choice of self with its emphasis on one's experiences, memories, thoughts and emotions does not rely on utility maximisation. If we adapt the original Becker-Kirzner's discussion on irrational behaviour (Becker, 2009) to assume that every opportunity has an equal chance of being selected, faced with a binary choice at a point in time, self will consider the trade-off between a short-term gain and a long-term benefit. Therefore, self will appear to be

impulsive, erratic and habitual. Between the two extremes of education and schooling lies a wide spectrum of observed behaviour. Is it irrational behaviour in the sense that no preference system, no utility function is consulted? Yes. The neoclassical economists of past centuries struggled for a formalised answer based on a utility metric. What we are proposing is a degree of vagueness about self's education and schooling without being too precise about what is of its nature, vague. Self relies on subjective judgement if no objective one can be made and the existential question about what matters at a point in time is ultimately a question for self and self's experiences and emotions in life.

There is a dual ambivalence here, as described by Burchell (1996): one aspect in relation to scholarship and one in relation to the constant challenge of "not knowing what and how to think." So, is it irrational behaviour? No; self's behaviour is partly determined by education and partly schooled by experiences in the present. In other words, in a public choice of self, as shown in examples to follow, revisions are made as a consequence of self's conscious and emotions and, a pattern of revisions in self's observed behaviour could be indicative of patterns of rational action at a moment in time. Education should provide a kind of understanding that allows the irrational self to respect the reason implicit in the rational mind.

### 3. Ship of Theseus

Consider Hobbes' famous example of the ship of Theseus. This ship is taken into dry dock for repairs. The masts are broken, so these are replaced. The hull is rotting, so that too is rebuilt with new timber. The deck is replaced and so on until no parts of the ship are the same as when it came into dry dock. So, is it the same ship? And what if someone took all the old pieces of timber and rigging and put them together again. Would that have a stronger claim to being the original ship of Theseus?

The answer is that it depends – there is not really a single fact of the matter (Baggini, 2011). If you are Theseus, however, your ship is the totally renovated one. In the public choice of self you cannot answer the question "but which one is really the same ship?" It is an empty question on *sameness* – although it may be the right question to ask it has no rational utility maximising answer. An analogy used by the late American philosopher David Lewis is with a road that splits. We do not think it a big metaphysical issue whether we say that just one branch is the old Turnpike Way, or whether both are, or whether neither is (Blackburn, 1999:145). Self, expressed as an innate set of personal characteristics and traits, based

on one's experience and knowledge of everyday life, is at the heart of *Bildung*, "a knowable corona"<sup>1</sup> of what is meant "to be educated."

#### 4. Foucault's "Questions Posed in the Present"

The discussion on education is inspired by the philosophical work of Foucault. His "axes of education" are germane to an epistemology on a public choice of self. As academics we learn from our students, we choose to teach and instruct. It has been argued that the focus of much of Foucault's work was to explain what it means to teach and learn and to educate (Ball, 2013). The first axis in our understanding of education is education as an experience. The second axis is education as a means to influence one's belief system and the third axis is education as an embedded power.

In his "middle period" of writing and lecturing, Foucault paid attention to the "management of populations" and on what he called "bio-power" – how power flows through, for example, the educational system, its organisation, the interplay of knowledge and power. Elsewhere (McNutt, 2010) we explored a theme not dissimilar to Foucault's "threats to the population" in the form of a putative criminal who learns from his experiences and gains an understanding of the law and of legal procedure. A set of interrelationships never imagined in the past, cross between the power of a judge and the knowledge of the putative criminal in a moment in time. A well-educated learned judge, rated and ranked and promoted from amongst his peers and, the schooled criminal, cognisant of the procedures and practices of the criminal justice system, dabble in the mysterious art of precedents, rules and regulations every day in the court systems across the world.

#### 5. Crossman's University of the Air<sup>2</sup>

The putative criminal, based on his experiences of the law and legal procedures knows the law by experiencing the law in a manner analogous to Lonergan's theory of knowledge (Dunne, 2005). Relying less on the language of rights and more on the language of experience and dialogue, self discovers what happens when one reaches knowledge, evaluates options, and makes decisions. An illiterate immigrant adapts and speaks a

<sup>1</sup> From the Irish poet Seamus Heaney 1996: *The Harvest Bow*.

<sup>2</sup> Extracted from speech by late Richard Crossman, English politician in 1960s quoted in *Prospect* April 2014 p.88.

new foreign language in order to survive. The newly appointed professor of Economics may learn to speak Mandarin. Each has a personal objective – it will give each one of us “a life of our own, independent of the machine.” And so it could be argued that *Bildung* embraces a society in which there is scope for all kinds of complementary individuals and activities: exposure to different kinds of people and experimentation with different types of lives, a life of experiences that are crucial to the sort of moral development Hegel had in mind writing his *Philosophy of Right* in 1821. Social unity requires well-formed institutions; educational institutions also require a diversity of individuals with the freedom to develop a wide variety of talents and abilities.

Therefore education of the self is achieved through a wide variety of experiences and challenges to the individual’s accepted beliefs. In Foucault’s writings, these challenges enable one “to fully confront the world in an ethical and rational manner.” What binds Foucault’s axes together in an *episteme* of education, we believe, are self’s behaviour and emotions. They are also an integral part of the *Bildung* tradition. Whether self was educated, if self was schooled in the past, should be considered in terms of self’s experience and behaviour in the present. The concept of duty adapted from the writings of Dworkin (1978) provides a space between education and school; ultimately self-as-a-teacher has no duty to school or to educate, but rather has a permission or a discretion to decide either way. That space might easily be exploited by providers of education to introduce performance targets or to instruct a dogma or “to lead out of ignorance,” that is, to educate. The space for many is empty of the “oxygen of knowledge” – what we refer to as *anoxia* in education – occupied by the proposition that self-as-a-teacher has the discretion to educate or not. If the self-as-a-teacher is struggling to reach performance targets he may have a duty not to educate but to school, to focus on the mathematics and not the poetry.

The semantics and choice of words merely translate action into statements of official duty. The teacher is an official, his salary may be performance related and security of tenure may be linked to the school’s performance in a peer-review league of schools. But more ambitious semantics such as “the law provides that John is educated” may be read on the understanding that government have decreed some rule according to which self-as-a-teacher enters into a contract with self-as-a-student.

## 6. What if? If, then?

If you could imagine a potential burglar coming to your home and stating that on knowledge of your impending holiday trip and on the fact that your house will remain unoccupied that he plans to burgle and commit a crime

of worth \$w. Would you trade with him to prevent the burglary happening at all? No self is forced into such a position, but what if? A first and fundamental step might be recognition of the fact that in your neighbourhood crime prevention is sub-optimal; crime continues to escalate and once criminality gains sufficient support among the general public or is observed increasingly by the general public, the reputation of the law will be threatened and more self-interested people will be induced to act unilaterally.

One's moral reasoning here is independent of schooling, and an education, based on performance and scores, arguably, will never be able to give self a boots-on-the-ground guidance on the final decision. A public choice of self is eager to establish grounds for an *objective education* that does not succumb to performance criteria alone. In other words, it is neither self's schooling nor education *per se* that matters, but rather the schooling and education expressed, for example, when faced with a potential burglar. It is, in the words of philosopher Owen Flanagan (2002: 293f) "doing everything we can reasonably expect from the fully Naturalist picture of persons that contemporary science advances".

## 7. Trust and Belief

In the burgeoning literature on virtue ethics one recurring theme is that markets, such as commoditized crime, rely on extrinsic and "thereby non virtuous motivations." Bruni and Sugden (2013: 141f) recently argued that this idea can also be traced back to Aristotle [sic] "the life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else." So in a market setting rational individuals are not independent – they act under compulsion. There are institutional responses to crime. Police informants, for example, are registered sources of information for police detectives on crimes about to be committed. Self-as-whistle-blowers likewise provide valuable information to law enforcement officials. They are symptomatic of the institutional failures in "the law" environment and of the problems caused by imperfections in the market for criminal intelligence. A crime may be prevented if the armed robbery gang were interviewed by the police at time period  $t$  and traded the worth of the crime to be committed at time period  $t + T$ .

So is education a good or a service, is it an end in itself? Is education up for sale? Our contention is that education ought not to be for sale however, schooling is for sale. Higher ranked schools can charge a higher entrance fee and impose entry barriers to ensure the school provides a club education, excludable but non-rival. State schools, by whatever name, are public goods, non-excludable and non-rival. Once financial incentives are

introduced, expressed in terms of better working conditions, higher salaries, improved facilities, this prompts the thought that the self-as-a-teacher may be a self-interested school-teacher, supplying an educational service at the highest price rather than an altruistic educator at *any* price. The concept here of intrinsic motivation has undertones of Aristotelian ranking of intrinsic value over instrumental value. Yes, it depends on the teacher, on you, the academic. However, it has long been established in the psychological literature that external rewards can crowd-out intrinsic motivation (Sandel, 2013).

There has been a revival in the last two decades of Aristotle's contention that it is the proper role of the State to encourage *eudaimonia* or flourishing, in the citizenry. What does it mean to flourish? Harris (2010) tried to articulate the idea of well-being and human flourishing. But, if flourishing is the aim, can *Bildung* enable self to act toward that aim? Nussbaum (2013) looks to John Stuart Mill's inaugural address to the University of St Andrews, in 1867, in which Mill highlights the importance of "aesthetic education" in schools and universities as the foundation for a sympathetic, liberal "religion of humanity." Nussbaum recognizes that if politicians really want to reach into "the souls of their citizens and stir their emotions," they need the arts and humanities. She argues that politicians can at least create conditions in which artistic talent is more likely to arise, and help to educate a populace to a level where it is capable of responding to great art. They can do this "by encouraging the teaching of arts and humanities" in schools and adult education, and by supporting artistic institutions and allowing them to take risks.

The desire to know and to take risks in the *Bildung* tradition accommodates each of us as self; and self's quest for objective knowledge is manifested in different ways at different stage of self's experience. We educate and we are educated. When the mysterious art of precedents, rules and regulations are applied to education the self-as-a-teacher comes under pressure to discover the truth or to discover what Lonergan called "the eros of the mind" – analogous to the free unrestricted *Bildung* desire to know and of what occurs when making value judgements. Concepts are discussed, experiments are conducted and students interact with teachers and academics. There are many concepts from the mathematical equation  $2+2 = 4$ , to the reading of poetry, appreciation of art, to the concept of the Universe to truth itself. Many of these concepts are incoherent and the teacher's account may "hang together" for one student but another will try to argue against. So the process of education and "being educated" is a process built on trust. Trust between teacher and student. To the atheist, God does not exist, to the philistine art has no value and mathematicians can disprove that  $2+2 = 4$ . Which concept is more stable in the delivery of education? That art has value or that God does not exist or that a putative

criminal as a caring defendant could exist? Lonergan's philosophy is based on a gamble that the odds of genuine moral development are best "when individuals are ready to admit oversights in one's self-knowledge" (Dunne, 2005). Trust may help to stabilise a point of view as true or not.

### **8. The Metaphor of Bentham's *Panopticon***

However, there is the possibility that self may not know enough about the concept of truth to judge and thus postpone judgement until further educated. By way of analogy it is only on admittance as a patient that self-as-the-tax-payer experiences the public health service provision and its efficiency. It is as if education and experience are "placing logic within the movement" - from not knowing to understanding the concept. However, beyond understanding there is judgement and experience and the positive value of coherence is reduced. The educated self understands the concept "tell-the-truth" but in life the belief system changes across time and experience. Coherence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of truth. The teacher has the power to influence the belief system of the student by teaching the value of art and poetry, and "to make a difference to the result" - in this case, by raising the student's appreciation of art and poetry.

In other words, intellectual flexibility and Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, both cornerstones of the *Bildung* tradition of good judgement and moral reasoning, may have been replaced by mentality rigidity, ranks and ratings in the schooling system. It has been argued elsewhere (e.g., Boucher 2013: 44) that teachers are often left with no leeway to bring in their passions and emotions, and students measure their own ability solely in terms of test scores and grade averages, and that "educationalists would prefer curricula which mandate only what no student should leave school without knowing and let school governors and the teaching profession decide the rest." In a public choice of self, the individual exercises judgement.

Consider the judgement by the prisoners in Bentham's *Panopticon* writings. They are enclosed in a circular tower under the watchful eye of a guard who observes the prisoners from his vantage point in the tower. A prisoner believes that he has discovered an escape route. There are a number of "givens" - there is a plank of wood, but is it strong enough to support the prisoner's weight? Are the loose bricks at the bottom of the wall removable to allow the prisoners to scale to the top of the wall? These and so many other conditions have to be made before a prisoner can announce a secure judgement "there is an escape route." But there is a hypothesis: if the conditions hold, there may be an escape plan. Or if the conditions hold, any prisoner may predict that one could escape. Knowledge in this case is the affirmation of the self's coherent



interpretation of the data conditions. But what is there to say about the guard? The fact that conditions that are independent of the self, have to be met before judgement can be made indicates that there is an objective detachable quality about what is affirmed in judgement. In the words of Dworkin (1978:54f) it is as if “facts exit independently” of the self or the self’s knowledge of them.

### 9. Isomorphic with Education

In other words, the truth – that the prisoner cannot escape or the prisoner has escaped – is reality. Truth affirms the facts: if the prisoner did escape, then the plank was strong enough and the bricks were removable. Truth is isomorphic with knowledge, knowledge is isomorphic with education. Beyond education there is the question of what is to be done on the basis of this knowledge. Should self, inform on the prisoners? As self begins to evaluate the options, self is no longer making a judgement but is determining what self stands for “self is now self-conscious and self, ponders what self ought to do.” It was, as argued by Fitzpatrick (1982), the impossibility of deriving a value judgement from a matter of fact, an *ought* from an *is*, that led Hume in his 1739 *Treatise on Human Nature* to conclude that moral judgements are merely the result of feelings and emotions.

If self can observe other responsible persons, self will be responsible too in the Kantian categorical imperative to fulfil duty – knowing what to do is intricately linked to observing others. Moral judgement declares that Immanuel ought to tell David the truth; but self’s moral rule is that Immanuel should not lie and, “should not lie” becomes a universal law. Morality is not the same as self-interest – morality is obeyed because it is the right thing to do. For self it is a matter of rational deduction. One is reminded of the opening lines in Chapter 1 of Charles Dickens’ classic *Hard Times*:

*“Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. Stick to Facts, sir!”*

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room. In the opening passage<sup>3</sup> of *Hard Times*, we meet the teacher, Thomas Gradgrind and, hear his own description of his philosophy, as applied to child-rearing

<sup>3</sup> Discussion of *Hard Times* sourced from the URL documentation – dickens.stanford.edu

and education. Gradgrind's grinding emphasis on "nothing but Facts" signals his adherence to Utilitarianism, which is a major target for Dickens in *Hard Times*. In the school he sponsors, Gradgrind prohibits all speculation, fancy, and play. In the period before the 1854 publication of *Hard Times* Victorian society struggled with the question of how to provide comprehensive elementary education to all children. Private schools, such as Gradgrind's, were common and had a strong influence on later nineteenth-century education in the UK.

### **10. Education: "The reason why of things" vs Humean Emotions**

Experience and emotions open the way for subjectivism and prescriptivism.<sup>4</sup> The level of self's evaluative judgement is linked to self's education. Self's evaluation builds on factual knowledge; schooling provides the facts. If not, then self makes an evaluation without regard to facts and without regard to concepts and, it is worthless. Albeit, what grounds the evaluation is the education as it provides the basis for a new question to be asked, a new value judgement to be considered. In a Humean world mechanical beliefs and habits perform a compensatory role in Hume's theory of knowledge. The self operates on the principle of cause and effect – "we understand similars similarly." Moral actions derive from feeling of pleasure and pain.

The mechanical beliefs and habits, however, are formed within the schooling process. It is a machine driven process, grades and performance criteria, and the Enlightenment's view of man as "mechanistic" has prevailed with the emphasis on the hard sciences and the European STEM initiative where advancement in knowledge is by way of empirical verification and scientific analysis. Knowledge of carpentry and history is less prized than knowledge of chemistry or coding. As "the market and cash" mantra penetrates into the schooling system, economic forces and traditional standards clash and "a new economic and social individual" is created (MacFarlane, 1978).

During a recession or economic downturn the arts, education and social services come under new budget constraint. Universities have to direct courses to what industry prefers and government politics is defined along a voter-issue space. Education as an economic good has to be measured otherwise philistines might conclude that education like museums never pay a return on investment. In the interests of an economic return,

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<sup>4</sup> The arguments here have been influenced by the writings of both Fitzgerald (1982) and Ball (2013) and personal notes of the author from Dominican sermons at Oxford's Blackfriars Church in 1980-1982.

education has progressed to schooling with a concomitant metric of measuring, predicting and defining teaching techniques. So management at school A may ask: how should we proceed? Do we sell languages, do we sell science subjects, or do we sell poetry? The teachers have a sunk cost in their particular specialism; they often see their job as no more than a schooling routine, passing on examination techniques to another generation. They may also realise that “the educated mind” cannot be measured. Education is a matter of developing the mind; it is, as argued by Peters (1966), so many years ago, about the “reason why of things.” It has no metric. It is *Bildung*.

### 11. Trabajo Bien Hecho!

Adapting an example from Barrow (1982), imagine a Spanish self, reasonably bi-lingual, now at school in England. If a teacher says to the class the following: “I want brown-haired children in the front row” no problem of definition or understanding will occur. So let us now assume that all the students in class, including the bi-lingual Spanish girl, understand the *verbal definition* of “intelligence” so the teacher does not have to translate or explain when he says “I want all the intelligent children to sit in the second row.” However, some of the class may have difficulty in understanding the *concept* of intelligence, understanding what exactly is involved. The children know what the teacher is talking about but they may not know a great deal about what intelligence actually is. The failure to understand the difference between the word “intelligence” and the concept predefines the difference between schooling and education.

There are IQ tests that measure intelligence: grade A is better than a D grade. But is a Spanish bi-lingual child attending an English speaking school, scoring D in a science examination, *less intelligent* than an English only speaking child who scores A in the same science examination? The professor who monitors and applauds the A in a science examination may not discount the opportunity cost of not speaking another language into the metric. Consequently, the English only speaking student who scores an A grade in science is preferred. The difference between those who champion the provision of technological skills and those who champion the development of the mind are substantive. That debate is not a topic for this paper.

### 12. Education: Promise or Contract?

Foucault did argue that schooling perpetuates an existing difference in wealth, power and privilege and opportunity - so we ask: what value is education? Education is the flourishing *versus* the pain of schooling. A

Proustian logic would point to the pain of schooling, memorising and factual learning, recitation and regurgitation of facts. In Proust's view we do not really learn anything properly until there is a problem, until we are in pain, until something fails to go as we had hoped (de Botton, 1997: 72f). You fail the medical school entrance examination and opt for a science degree instead. Your qualification in time allows you entry into medical school. In that time interval, it is education that carries self through life and affects the chances and influences the behaviour of self. One's expectations and disappointments, behavioural patterns and intelligence and observed irrationality evolve out of one's education as well as one's self-consciousness.

Rationality is a disciplined understanding: We obey the law, drive on the left-side or right-side of the road, tell the truth and do not blow our noses on other peoples' curtains. The rational self wants to know why, to seek explanation and justification, and to be able to account for his or her actions. Schooling fulfils many functions, conforms with Foucault's performativity of education, but for schooling to provide education, it must provide that kind of understanding that allows the irrational self to respect the reason implicit in the rational mind.

	<b>I think</b>	<b>I know</b>
<b>You think</b>	Emotions: promise	rationality
<b>You know</b>	rationality	Performativity: contract

**Table 1:** Anoxia: I-think-You-think.

In Table 1 what is proposed is whether or not knowledge is an exchange of promises between self-as-a-teacher and self-as-a-student and the teacher has a *prima facie* duty to enforce these promises by educating or leading out of ignorance. If knowledge is a concept then the self-as-a-student has a claim on it; if not, then the self-as-a-teacher has a duty to decide the same claim in an opposite way, education *v* schooling. Both versions suggest that there is no logical space between the proposition that knowledge is education and knowledge is schooling. However, if we adapt Foucault reasoning then there may a third independent possibility that occupies the space between education and schooling then it is a space occupied a public choice of self. That blurry space between education and schooling calls to mind the question set by Hofstadter (2007, 32f): "Yes, reader, I ask you: Who shoves whom around in the tangled mega-ganglion that is your brain?"

### 13. Vagueness vs Fulfilling Duty

In Table 1 an exchange of promises progresses to a contractual obligation between self-as-teacher and self-as-student. We can define the following *Hypothesis A*: “the self-as-a-teacher has to fulfil his duty to educate or failing to do so, he is in breach of contract.” But with whom is the contractual obligation, the employer school or the parents or the self-as-a-student? If someone were to apply *Hypothesis A* he may find that he is puzzled whether A is a legally binding contract or not. Consider the following example McNutt (2010:4f): “At a school in Florida, a five year old girl decided to throw everyone’s books and pencils on the floor. Sent to the head teacher’s office, she continued to wreak havoc. Her teachers dared not restrain her physically. Instead they summoned the police, who led her away in handcuffs, howling. The teachers acted as they did for fear of being sued. The law had set a precedent. A teacher at a different school was sued for \$20m for putting a hand on a rowdy child’s back to guide him out of the classroom. The school ended up settling for \$90,000.”

What this indicates is a sense of forbearance amongst teachers frightened of violating pupils’ rights that they allow disorder and havoc to persist. Once the pupils observe the havoc, the havoc continues. A reasonable self-as-a-teacher would be expected to instil discipline in a rowdy classroom either by removing the rowdy pupil in the knowledge that she is acting within the law or punishing the rowdy pupil in the knowledge that other pupils are not only observing the punishment but that they also consent.

Knowledge in this most fundamental sense is ideological, since it forms views of reality and solves problems from a social class point of view. A fact-finder may find it easier to rationalise the case of a poor man stealing from a rich man than the case of a responsible teacher punishing a rowdy child. If the socially desirable outcome is to be obtained – for example, a peaceful well organised and disciplined classroom – then a reasonable self ought not to have to only rely on the law but to act in a responsible manner by fulfilling her duty. Albeit, self-as-a-teacher may argue that if A is vague then there is no right answer, that is, Hypothesis A can be true, A can be false, and A can be neither true nor false. However if Hypothesis A is true as in our example it is because the law has made it true by the actions of someone. In other words, any concept we use to describe self, such that if it is true that self has the property in question it is false: self is a strange loop. Does education, educate? The ship of Theseus is so impeccably re-constructed from hull to sail that what Theseus thinks he sees is not

genuine; it is a fake! Can a blurry, intangible “self” dictate to concrete physical objects such as “everyone’s books” what to do? Hofstadter<sup>5</sup> argues (e.g., Hofstadter 2007: 102) that this conviction arises in us only thanks to our having “suspended our disbelief and mentally slipped into Escher’s seductive world.”

#### 14. Foucault’s Performativity

Finally, we address Foucault’s performativity, whereby education outcome is measured by performance criteria, lists, forms, “do’s and don’ts” and peer review rankings. Education becomes a calculable rather than a memorable experience. Education as a delivery mechanism is a focal point of knowledge, power and ethics. For example, parental choice at both pre-University and University level can be influenced by set of factors such as religious ethos and social ties but the net effect is the commoditizing of the educational experience: education evolves to become an economic good.

Knowledge evolves from Foucault’s first axis of education as an experience good. In 2014 Obama’s US Department of Education was proposing to rate 7000 higher education institutions to help families make informed decisions but also to set standards that will determine how much of federal aid schools will receive in the future. The Education Secretary commented in an interview that “the ratings will take into account whether a college welcomes needy students, helps students graduate on time, and prepares them for good-paying jobs.”

He further explained that the objective is to “rate” colleges by grouping them according to performance criteria, not “rank” them on a best-to-worst criterion. Tennessee’s formula for awarding funds to schools has been identified as a template. We include the template as an exemplar of Foucault’s second axis of education on the transformation of social values: although the University of Tennessee may be ranked higher than the Technological University, low-income student cohorts select the Technological University. The rating criterion of “student progress” has a higher weighting in the Technological University.

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<sup>5</sup> In Chapter 8, p. 102f Hofstadter (2007) discusses Escher’s lithograph *Drawings Hands* – it depicts a right hand drawing a picture of a left hand and yet the left hand turns out to be drawing the right hand.

University of Tennessee, Knoxville	%	Tennessee Technological University	%	Chattanooga State Community College	%
	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>
Graduate degrees	20	Bachelor degree	25	<b>Student progress</b>	20
Research funding	15	<b>Student progress</b>	15	Job placements	20
<b>Student progress</b>	10	Research funding	10	Workforce training	10

**Table 2:** Rank vs Rate: Tennessee Template

Table 2, adapted from the original table in *Business Week* (2013), represents the main criteria in allocating funding and the attached weightings indicate the data-driven trends that are embedded in the funding allocation: for example, the University is rewarded more for research and advanced degrees than promoting access to University; at the Technological University with a low-income student cohort, more funds are awarded for helping them stay in University and earn a degree; and the Community College is incentivised to prepare students for work and job placements. Education is "praise-worthy" to the extent that it enables students to pass exams, to graduate and to progress in life, to secure a job and increase the chances of "a given person escaping their class origins". Education remains a means to an end, a calculable end, a measure of a student's progress. It is schooling.

At a moment in time the metrics cannot be considered in isolation of the situation that an individual finds themselves. The behaviour of the prisoner in the *Panopticon* should not be viewed as having sprung from a rational assessment of self-interest alone. Rational assessment is one of a number of things competing for the attention of feelings that govern the behaviour. Emotional intelligence, self's feelings, education and the situation *per se* all commit self to act in a certain way. The person who informs on the escape plan must endure the opprobrium of his peers. The circumstances of an action or the experience of self in addition to self's motivation, consciousness and self-discipline also contribute. Or do they?

The seemingly irrational behaviour to inform is sometimes explained by commitment to behave in ways that will prove deeply contrary to our interests. For example, no one would willingly hire *Leo the Liar* for a managerial position that involved failsafe opportunities to embezzle cash from the company. However, as argued by Frank (1988) a person who is believed to have a strong conscious is a much more attractive candidate.

### 15. A Foucauldian Prognosis

The strict calculus of self-interest would still dictate that Leo steals the money but a sufficiently strong Zen-like emotional commitment to honesty could overcome this calculus. The latter point calls attention to the fact that such emotional predispositions may depend on self's education, that is, where self was educated, the circumstances of the education, the ranking and rating criteria – the importance of context and self's feelings of right and wrong are combined forces governing self's behaviour. Leo the Liar may be honest and reliable – his failure to pursue self-interest as a liar at a moment in time confers an advantage. If others know that Leo's feelings can cause him to behave honestly even when he knows he could get away with lying then they will seek him out as a partner in ventures that require trust. Like Schelling's (1960: 199f) example of kidnapper and victim, a blackmail act serves as a commitment device that provides the victim with an incentive to keep his promise not to go to the police on being set free by the kidnapper. In conclusion, schooling students to score an A grade in their exams is not necessarily the same as gearing oneself up to reason with the intricacies of every-day problems.

Education is “a political investment of the body,” according to Foucault. With a reliance on performance criteria the schooling experience perpetuates *anoxia* in education. Self-as-a-teacher has the discretion to educate or not. If the self-as-a-teacher is struggling to reach performance targets he may focus on the mathematics and not the poetry. Productivity is everything, as schools and Universities race to compete on grade averages, rankings and research output. Universities lose their independence from the State as funding is linked to peer review performance criteria wherein the third axis of performativity becomes a key policy of government using comparisons and statistics as substitutes for policy direction. Social ties become a tradable commodity within the educational system and a new moral code embeds itself in society. Those who underperform or do not abide by the new code, the mainstream, are subject to what Ozga (1998) called the tyranny of “little fears” (Ball, 2013: 140f). Political correctness, entangled with social class, race and religion, has entered the educational system as an over-arching umbrella of diversity. Under this umbrella, Foucault's axes of education are often inter-twinned with calculable incentives to attract the best teachers to better performing schools in better neighbourhoods.

Teachers and academics, regulated by the performance criteria, are creating a new *episteme* of public service (Walzer, 1984) which involves the subordination of moral and intellectual obligations to economic ones – more precisely, the present theory, how we as individuals develop into the



sort of organic unity that will constantly work towards the full development of our talents and abilities, contrasts with the *Bildung* tradition. In a public choice of self it is the emphasis on education that liberates one from “any sort of belief in realities that transcend the possibilities of human experience.”

Education requires a passionate search for continual growth, tempered by reason that is developed through intense study of one’s intellectual tradition. Fulfilment and flourishing comes through practical activity that promotes the development of one’s talents and abilities as well as development of one’s society. Rather than acceptance of the socio-political *status quo*, *Bildung* includes the ability to engage in critique of one’s society, challenging it to actualize its own highest ideals. Within that tradition, arguably, is embedded a *public choice of self* that never exists in exactly the same condition for more than a moment in time.

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