

Pedagogy of the Negative: Pedagogical Heresy for “The End Times”

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Abstract: At its foundation, the field of educational studies remains thoroughly committed to the idea of hope as a privileged pedagogical disposition. Despite the convergence of crises now gathering force and speed across the globe, there remains a pressure to position education as that holy space where hope is born, affirmative mantras proliferate, and a posture of unquestioned optimism prevails. Through such affirmationist tendencies, it appears today that the industry of education, or what we term in this paper the Educacene, has failed to think alongside rapidly changing planetary realities, reifying instead the modern educative proclivity to combat the world by overcoding its pulsions via a will-to-nothingness, or rather, a mode of desire that perpetually “wills the same.” Where hope springs eternal, this commonsense positivity not only fails to adequately address the material conditions of our contemporary existence, but also actively constructs negativity as an anathema to pedagogical thought. Yet, this abhorrence of negativity overlooks both the persistence of the negative, and further, the potential import of negativity as a mode of thought that might engage in forceful ways with the prevailing cultures of hope and optimism that have come to undergird contemporary pedagogical life. Drawing on developments in (cosmic) pessimism, speculative heresy, and non-philosophy, this essay will attempt to re-join the significance of the negative for pedagogical thought in order to say “no” to the images of affirmative standardization that maintain and perpetuate the futureless repetition of educational thought today. In short, this non-philosophical engagement aims to relaunch pedagogical thought so as to harness its potential for un-becoming, which necessitates in its first instance the mutation of ideas from their standardized regulation, and secondarily, the heretical elaboration of an “outside” thought from which such standardization is inoculable. By attempting to articulate an approach to pedagogy via negation, pessimism, and the forms of resistance to which these (non)philosophical vectors might give rise, this project will develop an alternative set of conditions for enacting and thinking about pedagogy for “the end times.”

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1. Twilight of the “Educacene”

1.1. “It is, I promise, worse than you think”

In November of 2017, over 15,000 scientists and scientific researchers issued a collective “warning to humanity.”¹ Outlining the precarious ecological circumstances of life on planet Earth, the warning implores immediate collective action on a host of environmental concerns arguing that, “by failing to adequately limit population growth, reassess the role of an economy rooted in growth, reduce greenhouse gases, incentivize renewable energy, protect habitat, restore ecosystems, curb pollution, halt defaunation, and constrain invasive alien species, humanity is not taking the urgent steps needed to safeguard our imperiled biosphere.”² It might be said that the catastrophic state of planetary life articulated in the 2017 report is scarcely news, having been precipitated by a similar appeal by the Union of Concerned Scientists and more than 1700 independent scientists in 1992. Indeed, the detrimental impacts of anthropogenic climate change are not a recent “discovery,” having been understood as early as 1979, when the world’s major powers came “within several signatures of endorsing a binding, global framework to reduce carbon emissions - far closer than we’ve come since.”³ The 2017 report is also not the last. Since first drafting these words, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a “Special Report” (in November 2018) outlining the life-or-death difference between a 1.5 and 2.0 degree warmer world, calling for global “system transitions” in order to avoid climate catastrophe. In November 2019, yet another alarming statement was released, this time

backed up by 11,000 scientists and published in the journal *BioScience* on the 40th anniversary of the first world climate conference. In this more recent headline-proliferating statement we are told that people face “untold suffering due to the climate crisis,” which “is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity.”⁴

While international organizations continue to issue various warnings and wake-up calls, researchers across scientific disciplines are also chiming in with various reports of the coming (or in some cases, current) catastrophes. Data gathered in nature reserves across Germany, for instance, demonstrates how the total flying insect biomass has plunged by three-quarters over the past 25 years, putting us “on course for ecological Armageddon.”⁵ Meanwhile, in a 2018 *Nature* article, Australian scientists show how in the aftermath of record-breaking heatwaves in 2016, more than half of the corals in the northern third of the Great Barrier Reef have been wiped out within a span of just two years.⁶ Unprecedented heat waves have also impacted northern climates to the point that 2018 saw the North Pole thawing mid-winter as temperatures smashed previous records,⁷ while peat fires burned in Greenland, posing risks to the island’s ice sheet due to falling carbon soot, which has been linked to hastened glacial melting via accelerating feedback loops.⁸

⁴ William J. Ripple, et al., “World Scientists’ Warning of a Climate Emergency.”

⁵ Caspar A. Hallmann, et al., “More Than 75 Percent Decline Over 27 Years in Total Flying Insect Biomass in Protected Areas,” *PLoS one* 12, no. 10 (October, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>.

⁶ Terry P. Hughes, et al., “Global Warming Transforms Coral Reef Assemblages,” *Nature* 556 (April 2018): 492–496, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-018-0041-2>.

⁷ Kirsten Fenn, “North Pole Thaws Mid-winter as Temperatures Smash Records in the Arctic,” *CBC News* (Feb 28, 2018), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/north-pole-thaw-1.4554864>

⁸ Megan Gannon, “Greenland’s Biggest Fire is a ‘Warning’ For its Future,” *Scientific American* (April 14, 2018), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/greenlands-biggest->

¹ William J. Ripple, et al., “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice,” *BioScience* 67, 12 (Dec 2017): 1026–1028.

² Ibid.

³ Nathaniel Rich, “Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change,” *New York Times* (August 1, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html>

This is just the weather. As the world simultaneously burns and floods, political responses oscillate between conservative nostalgia - *Make The Planet Great Again!* - and “cruel optimism,”⁹ between outright denialism (resulting, for instance, in the hollowing out of environmental protections agencies) and hopeful appeals to all-too-human techno-scientific ingenuity. As Andreas Malm puts it, “[o]ne after the other, the matches are lit and held to the fuses, seemingly at the very same pace as we learn of the disastrous consequences: on one page of a newspaper, the science is relayed to the public; on the next page, it is all business-as-usual.”¹⁰ All of this is to say, as Wallace-Wells asserts in the highly circulated *New York Magazine* article (turned book¹¹) “The Uninhabitable Earth,” “it is, I promise, worse than you think.”¹²

1.2. False Alarms and Abiding Commitments

While these sobering reports attempt to communicate both a sense of urgency and a general posture of reticence that seemingly undergirds climate change discourse today, they have also been critiqued for being “alarmist,” or worse, flat-out wrong. Following the publication of Wallace-Wells’ *New York Magazine* article, for example, critics argued that he “exaggerate[d]

fire-is-a-warning-for-its-future/

⁹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Andreas Malm, “Socialism or Barbecue, War Communism or Geoengineering. Some Thoughts on Choices in a Time of Emergency,” in *The Politics of Ecosocialism: Transforming Welfare*, ed. Kajsa Borgnäs, Teppo Eskelinen, Johanna Perkiö and Rikard Warlenius (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2015), 180-194.

¹¹ In 2019, Wallace-Wells released the book *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*, which was inspired by the *New York Magazine* article and speculates on the outcomes of today’s dire climatological predictions of global warming in order to paint a picture of what life might be like on Earth in the near future given current climate models and forecasts.

¹² David Wallace-Wells, “The Uninhabitable Earth,” *New York Magazine* (July 10, 2017), <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>

the evidence,” asserting that “climate scientists nearly universally say that there is still time to avert the worst consequences of global warming” and that “studies have shown ... doom and gloom only leads to fear and paralysis.”¹³ On Twitter, commenters responded with sentiments such as “[c]limate change is a real/present issue but I think we can reach a broader audience by talking about impacts/solutions rather than hyperboles,”¹⁴ while in a widely-shared Facebook post, climate scientist Michael Mann wrote: “I am not a fan of this sort of doomist framing. It is important to be up front about the risks of unmitigated climate change ... but there is also a danger in overstating the science in a way that presents the problem as unsolvable, and feeds a sense of doom, inevitability and hopelessness.”¹⁵ Still others commented on the misguided focus of the article in terms of the “real climate dangers” we face today. In the *Jacobin* article titled “New York Mag’s Climate Disaster Porn Gets It Painfully Wrong,” for instance, Cohen agrees that things may be “worse than we think,” but argues that Wallace-Wells’ article “selectively fetishizes natural science” instead of drawing attention to the political power of “a vicious right-wing minority [that] will impose an order that privileges the affluent few over everyone else.”¹⁶

While these critiques and caveats are important for understanding how alarmist discourse may work to distract and obscure from more urgent questions around geo-social futurity and the fact that “environmental catastrophe is already here - it’s just not evenly distributed,”¹⁷ the backlash

¹³ Andrew Freedman, “No, New York Mag: Climate change won’t make the Earth uninhabitable by 2100,” *Mashable* (Jul 10, 2017), <https://mashable.com/2017/07/10/new-york-mag-climate-story-inaccurate-doomsday-scenario/>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Michael Mann (July 10, 2017), <https://www.facebook.com/MichaelMannScientist/posts/1470539096335621>.

¹⁶ Daniel Aldana Cohen, “New York Mag’s Climate Disaster Porn Gets It Painfully Wrong,” *Jacobin* (July 10, 2017), <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/07/climate-change-new-york-magazine-response>.

¹⁷ Rory Rowen, “Extinction as Usual?: Geo-Social

against this so-called “doomist framing” also points to the ways in which today’s ecological situation is not only increasingly uninhabitable, but also increasingly *unthinkable*. That is, while writers such as Wallace-Wells are charged with the cardinal sin of alarmism, such accusations also point to a limit-case for thought today, particularly in light of the planetary transformations now taking place in the so-called Anthropocene era. For instance, the warnings issued in the IPCC’s 2018 “Special report” have already been denounced for being overly optimistic.¹⁸ Further, the unfathomable impacts of accelerating climatological feedback loops have produced yet more headlines asserting that it is, indeed, “worse than we thought,” and as such, it appears that what was once deemed alarmist - inflated, exaggerated, overstated - is perhaps nothing of the sort. Given the proliferation of ongoing “alarm bells” and “wake-up calls,” which, as we have already begun to unfold, are nevertheless dismissed or downplayed for being either overly optimistic or unduly pessimistic, what is perhaps most perplexing about today’s increasingly unthinkable situation is how ecocatastrophic abolition is disregarded and discounted via particular fidelities that undergird what is possible to think in the first place.

In short, it appears today that despite the convergence of ecological, and by extension, civilizational crises that are now gathering force and speed across the globe, abiding commitments to

Futures and Left Optimism,” *e-flux journal* #65
 SUPERCOMMUNITY (May–August 2015), <http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/texts/extinction-as-usual-geo-social-futures-and-left-optimism/>

¹⁸ A number of scientists, for instance, have asserted that the IPCC’s recent reports on “pathway modelling” fail to account for all of the warming that has already taken place, and further, that they do not adequately address the economic costs of severe storms and displacement of people through, for instance, drought and deadly heat waves. With this in mind, Wallace-Wells has asserted that the “new report’s worst-case scenario is, actually, a best case” or even “beyond-best-case scenario” due to the fact that, save some magical technological innovation, even the 2 degree target to limit global warming is now unattainable.

ultimately “positive” “human” futurities, which, as many have noted,¹⁹ are always-already unequally distributed, have come to monopolize, and thus *disappear* the Real of today’s very particular “end times” scenario. This monopolizing process is perhaps best exemplified by what we term here the “industry of education,” or what might be speculatively dubbed *The Educacene*.

1.3. *An-archaeology of the “Educacene”*

If a then extinct human species might be read from the vantage of some future alien archaeologist, as a sort of *an-archaeology*, the industry of education, or the *Educacene*, might appear perplexing. Here, we borrow from Bensusan’s (2016) “speculative anarchoeology”²⁰ to denote the excavation of *what could have been*, or the un-grounding of different pasts that invite us to consider the ways in which alternative versions of the past have disappeared in favor of dominant moods, idealisms, and doxa. For Bensusan, speculative anarchoeology can be parsed out in three different ways: *anarchoeology*, or the study of that which is unruly, ungoverned, and undetermined; *an-archoeology*, or the excavation of that which does not have foundational grounding (Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* offers an example here); and *an-archeology*, or the study of the past in all of its alien and potentially

¹⁹ As Martinez-Alier points out, environmental risks are not randomly spread, but instead disproportionately fall on the poor and other oppressed and exploited bodies. Similarly, and as critics of Anthropocene discourse have highlighted, the very naming of a geological era after the *anthropos* assumes that *all* humans are equally responsible for anthropogenic climate change instead of recognizing, as Zoe Todd writes, “the distinctions between the people, nations, and collectives who drive the fossil-fuel economy and those who do not.” See Joan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2002). See Zoe Todd, “Indigenizing the Anthropocene,” in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 244.

²⁰ Hilan Bensusan, *Being Up for Grabs: Speculative Anarchoeology* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016).

counterfactual versions.²¹ In our own an-archaeological digging, we borrow from this third parsing, in order to excavate the originary decisions and theoreticist idealisms that have come to monopolize educational realities, in turn defining and delimiting educational research, practice and thus the Educacene itself.

Riffing off the proliferation of names that have been proffered in response to the Anthropocene designation, the Educacene signals the era wherein education has been subsumed under a standardized “business ontology,”²² which is nevertheless naturalized as “the way things are,” thus limiting potentials for future pedagogical life to unfold otherwise. In this way, the Educacene not only refers to the now ubiquitous neoliberal imperatives that have come to undergird educational practices, spanning across K-12 classrooms, university learning spaces and teacher “training” programs alike, but also references how the very conceptualization of what we call “education” has itself become equated with the production of “goods and services” that have become commensurate with what counts as “good” or “necessary” pedagogy today. Put briefly, the term Educacene provides an index for understanding the contemporary industry of “education,” where education not only refers to practices of schooling, but also to the development of philosophies and theories, which in turn contribute to a body of knowledge that defines and delimits the field.

We wager that while the geological strata of the Anthropocene will register the tumultuous planetary transformations endemic to the era, an an-archaeology of the Educacene will simultaneously record a trenchant *reactivity* in educational thought and practice that manifests in terms of a general *non-confrontation* with the challenges of anthropogenic climate change. In-

deed, we today witness in educational thought the conservation of a stable image of the world characterized by standardization, mastery, and ultimately, a positive future for “us.” Where the Real of anthropogenic planetary change might otherwise be read as a pressing impetus to challenge such doxa as affirmationism and human exceptionalism (in which the overt text of the Anthropocene consists), the Educacene appears to forgo this encounter, instead doubling-down on a profusion of extinct concepts and moods from which the planet will already have been seen to recede. In this way, the Educacene incongruously allies with what Nietzsche dubs the *will-to-nothingness* or rather, a mode of pedagogical desire that perpetually “wills the same.”

Digging in to the an-archaeological site of the Educacene, then, we conjecture that a future an-archaeology would find education’s non-confrontation with the challenges of encroaching ecocatastrophe less the product of denial or a will for ignorance than the byproduct of an inherent alliance with a set of axiomatic idealisms that are fundamentally *nihilistic*. Put another way, where educational thought is endlessly structured by standardization and the eternal return of the same, it might be argued that the industry of education is, in fact, a *nihilist* project. In lieu of transforming such foundational predilections, the impulses of standardization inherent to educational philosophy and practice have accelerated their circulation in the educational imaginary, in turn formatting a relation to the Real that is coextensive with the oppression and exploitation of material life. Herein, the conceptual alliance of standardization with the image of a stable world rejoins the will-to-nothingness in that the image of life produced has been rendered obsolete by an unstable, precarious, and inhuman futurity. More pointedly, education’s philosophical standardization has thus far failed to think alongside rapidly changing planetary realities, reifying instead the modern educative proclivity to combat the world by over-coding

²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

²² Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 17.

its pulsions within the circuits of *ressentiment*. Examined in a non-philosophical manner, this will-to-nothingness might be understood as one of the key philosophical decisions that has come to define current educational realities, albeit one disappeared through non-recognition.

1.4 Towards Non-Philosophical Intervention

As Laruelle writes, “[p]hilosophical practice has become the archaeology of its own ruin, an archeology of utopias without a future.”²³ Regarding the Educacene, the same might be said of educational philosophy, which endlessly “encloses itself, consummate[ing] itself as a form of technique, leaving behind an empty space for a new experience of thought.”²⁴ Put another way, and drawing on Laruelle, every philosophy is necessarily “bound to a specularly that it mistakes for the real, bound to a primacy and priority of theory as reflection of that real” and in turn economized so as to disappear those fundamental axioms from recognition.²⁵ In the Educacene, educational philosophy is likewise bound to a set of concepts that are mistaken for the Real, or “the way things are,” but nevertheless explained, economized and practiced as if they are the Real. In this way, the Educacene’s non-recognition with the Real of anthropogenic climate change not only points to its own insufficient philosophical decisions, but also what Laruelle might express as a transformed relation to the Real where “the real [doesn’t] seem to matter as much as the image.”²⁶ That is, the Educacene’s non-confrontation with the inhuman futurity characteristic of post-Anthropocene

times is made possible by a hallucinatory specularly that mistakes the fantasies of human affirmation, superiority, ingenuity, and *permanence* for the Real, in turn naturalizing these “theoreticist idealisms”²⁷ as axiomatic and fundamental.

Further, and as Laruelle asserts, where “Man” is “an answer without a question”²⁸ (educational) philosophy remains caught by a narcissism that assumes it can intervene in reality, in turn disavowing the notion that what philosophy calls “reality” is but a *concept* of the world. As Laruelle writes:

“[t]hrough this concept, philosophy projects a reality in itself, which is to say, one that has been constructed in the realm of operational transcendence, within which it claims to intervene, and in terms of which it gauges all possible intervention. But the real content of philosophy, once the illusion of the in-itself has been bracketed, is this very correlation between itself and the world.”²⁹

Following Laruelle, we therefore ask: how to think education, how to think pedagogy, separate from or alternatively to what educational philosophy currently allows us to think?

As a starting response, in order to liberate educational thought from those philosophical delusions that have come to undergird its fundamental aims and commitments requires emancipation from educational philosophy itself. Following, we might ask how to suspend the authority of the industry of education, or the Educacene, through non-philosophical thinking in order to articulate a very different register and thus possibility for educational thought. The point here, and as Laruelle reminds us, is not to

²³ François Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2012).

²⁴ François Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 8, no. 2 (Jun 2010), 173.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁶ Drew S. Burke, “Translator’s Introduction,” in François Laruelle’s *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, trans. Drew S. Burk and Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2012), xii.

²⁷ Laruelle, “What Can Non-philosophy Do?,” 173.

²⁸ Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, 12.

²⁹ Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” 183.

“get out” of or escape philosophy, but instead to realize that we were perhaps never “in it” in the first place. This is Laruelle’s non-philosophical proposal. As Laruelle writes, the attempt here is not to create a new philosophical paradigm, nor is it a “philosophical taking of sides and thus inside philosophy,”³⁰ but instead, to endeavor towards the “transformation of philosophy.”³¹ As Ó Maoilearca writes on Laruelle’s “criminally performative” thought, “while standard philosophical approaches take their conception of what proper philosophy is and then apply it to all sundry objects – what Laruelle calls the ‘*Principle of Sufficient Philosophy*’ – non-philosophy is a ‘style of thought’ that mutates with its object.”³²

From the vantage of non-philosophical mutation, then, what the Anthropocene reveals is not only the unprecedented impacts of (some) human activities on the geological record, but, and perhaps more importantly, how “all our positions, those little compressed bundles of opinion and analysis, practice and experience, crumble - *as positions*.”³³ In educational domains, for instance, the very proposition that the planet can, and should, be conserved and defended has become suspect, or as educational theorist Nathan Snaza puts it, perhaps “the Earth is not “ours” to save.”³⁴ As Snaza writes, “we have to let go of our desire to plan, to act in ways that conform to a priori rules or maxims, to act only in the (false) certainty that our actions are just because they are oriented toward some good

which we cherish.”³⁵ Such an educational orientation requires both a radical refusal of human planetary dominion and an investigation of how an all-too-human “we” and “ours” has failed to acknowledge the differential experience of human beings. Put another way, and as American environmentalist Bill McKibben elides,³⁶ in an era of mega-fires, drought, and acidifying oceans, it has become necessary to rethink planetary life in a manner that no longer evokes a sense of positive futurity, familiarity or nostalgia for “us.”

Given this background, we wager that educational thought today requires a form of *heretical thinking* that is capable of effecting a real transformation, not through “better” reflections of or de/constructions of “reality,” but through “a philosophical poetics,” or non-philosophical experimentation, that strives to “take on the blind-spots of actuality as seismographs of man’s relationship with the world.”³⁷ Non-philosophy provides a mode of resituating educational thought as the struggle against its own limits and parameters as they have come to think on our behalf, and thus, non-philosophical educational thinking employs philosophy as a way of effecting “a real transformation of the subject [so as] to break the spell of its bewitchment by the world and enable it to constitute itself through a certain struggle with the latter.”³⁸ Once again, the goal here is not to further monopolize the Real, for instance by developing a more nuanced or “critical” representation of the world, but to articulate a different order for thought and subjectivity, both of which must be conceived as being “in-struggle.”

In short, what is necessary in this twilight moment of the Educacene is not further wake-up calls and alarm bells, but the introduction of an

³⁰ François Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou: On the Introduction of Maoism into Philosophy*, trans Robin Mackay. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 45.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

³² John Ó Maoilearca, “Laruelle’s ‘Criminally Performative’ Thought: On Doing and Saying in Non-Philosophy,” *Performance Philosophy*, 1, no. 1 (2015): 161-167.

³³ Alejandro de Acosta, “Green Nihilism or Cosmic Pessimism,” *The Anvil* (November 20, 2013: para. 5), <http://theanvilreview.org/print/green-nihilism-or-cosmic-pessimism/>

³⁴ Nathan Snaza, “The Earth Is Not ‘Ours’ to Save,” in *Interrogating the Anthropocene: Ecology, Aesthetics, Pedagogy, and the Future in Question*, ed. Jan Jagodzinski (London/ New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 339 - 359.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 352.

³⁶ Bill McKibben, *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2011).

³⁷ Burke, “Translator’s Introduction,” xiv.

³⁸ Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” 179.

alien conceptual apparatus into the educational frame, one that is capable of derailing those axioms and idealisms that have come to over-determine the ordinary language of “education” today. In what follows, we endeavor towards this mode of heretical thinking, particularly in relation to the highly standardized and overtly affirmative field of educational philosophy as it has come to circulate within the industry of education. Through the development of a philo-fictional educational framework, what we call here a *pedagogy of the negative*, we experiment with possibilities for a non-philosophical intervention within educational thinking itself so as to ask questions and pose problems previously unthinkable.

2. Hope After “Us”

2.1. *Happy Inoculations and the Doxa of Affirmationism*

In order to optimize the nihilistic impulses through which the Educacene seemingly operates, educational thought must propagate an overarching and largely unremarked “affirmationist doxa,”³⁹ which simultaneously systematizes positivity while painting traditions of critique and negation as passive, reactionary, and/or unproductive. This celebration of affirmation is evidenced by, for instance, how the thought of Deleuze, or more specifically, *Deleuzianism*, has become increasingly popular in educational circles. While the work of Deleuze (with Guattari) remains relevant, particularly in terms of providing (anti)methodological or even non-philosophical approaches to *doing* educational philosophy, the “rhizomania”⁴⁰ that now pervades much contemporary educational theorizing concomitantly marks a co-optation of Deleuzian

concepts that divest them of their most radical political and ethical import. For example, where “rhizomatics” are now mobilized in educational spaces as a mode of recognizing a multiplication of “diverse” identities, rhizomatic thinking becomes but a “hand-maiden of neoliberal capitalism.”⁴¹ Here, imperatives for the creation of pluralist subjectivities, such as those promoted in contemporary arts-based educational research (i.e. the artist-teacher-researcher), are not as much radical as they are perfectly optimized for a socio-economic vehicle that requires such post-structural, self-styling “schizo-identities.” At risk here is not simply the reduction of “rhizomatics” into yet another set of educational clichés, but also the domestication of Deleuze (and Guattari’s) concepts within pre-established fantasies of all-too-human creativity, liberation and redemption.

Instead of offering divergent “lines of flight” and alternative becomings, the facile translation and idealistic tropes of *Deleuzian* thought within educational theory and practice work to reinscribe the prerogatives of pre-established circuits of power under the guise of “difference,” where difference is always-already positioned (in a manner antithetical to Deleuze’s thought) as that which essentializes and reattaches otherwise multifaceted flows to unitary identities and consolidated traditions. The ubiquitous talk of rhizomatic connectivity, positive affirmation, action and expression, gaps and slippages, chaos and contingency tend towards registering only the “happy becoming” of the world, a now compulsory mode of thinking that has traded the otherwise “dark” impulses of Deleuze’s thought for the lightness of “California Buddhism.”⁴² In a contemporary moment of epidemic depression that might partly constitute a response to the strife of existence today, this compulsive co-optation is but one example of how the in-

³⁹ Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ Jason Wallin, “Rhizomania: Five Provocations on a Concept,” *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education* 7, no. 2 (2010): 83-89.

⁴¹ Wallin, “Rhizomania,” 84.

⁴² Andrew Culp, *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 7.

dustry of education dispatches the anachronisms of satisfaction and contentment as a strategy of enfrauding the polis and inoculating against a disposition of saying “no” to the *given* world.⁴³ The alliance of education with happy inoculations and a doxa of affirmationism perpetrates a doubling of resentment, divesting the antagonisms of hatred, refusal, and (eco)catastrophe from educational consideration while simultaneously occulting institutional indifference to misery. Where some educational scholars claim that “it is still possible to be optimistic about education today” by developing “a new version of optimism,” or an “optimism that optimizes,”⁴⁴ such affirmations merely work towards an acceptance of the *given* world, or a saying “yes” to the world *as it is*. This acceptance of the way things are not only invests the Real with specular delusions of affirmation, but also reveals a radical detachment from prevailing dispositions of depression, misery and the challenge to jettison the odious values of contentment and satisfaction historically linked to the exploitation and dominion of material life for “us.”

2.2. *Hope at the End of the World*

Alongside the dominance of happy affects that work to withdraw from the potential of “wish[ing] a happy death on calcified political forms, no-good solutions, and bad ways of thinking,”⁴⁵ the lightness of *hope* transpires as a privileged axiom within educational philosophy and, by extension, practice. For instance, in our own province of Alberta, Canada, the ministry of education positions schools and schooling as spaces wherein educational subjects can and should be able to “adapt to the many changes in society and the economy with an attitude of *optimism* and *hope* for the future.”⁴⁶ Despite the con-

⁴³ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 17.

⁴⁴ Emile Bojesen, “A New Version of Optimism for Education,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 37, no. 1 (Feb 2018): 8.

⁴⁵ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 13.

⁴⁶ Italics added. Alberta Education, “Ministerial Order on Student Learning (Order #001/2013)” (2013), <https://>

vergence of crises already taking shape across ecological, social, and mental domains, there remains a pressure to position education as that holy space where hope is born, happy affects circulate, affirmative mantras proliferate, and a posture of unquestioned optimism prevails. While hope has been critiqued for its presupposition that the future will actualize the image of the present, it appears today that hope has nevertheless been rallied in fidelity to a human futurity that betrays an increasingly alien future.

Transposed to the Educacene, the imperative to hope might therefore be questioned both in terms of its ability to confront current anthropocenic realities, as well as its decisional structure, which relies on a commitment to education’s emancipatory potential and thus the reinscription of the very regime of inequality it seeks to overcome. Education is, after all, predicated on a particular sense of hope, especially in its critical instantiations.⁴⁷ Traditional approaches to critical pedagogy, for instance, enact a kind hermeneutical pedagogy, wherein the educator assumes the other (i.e. the student) lacks the means to understand their own oppression, in turn reaffirming the educator’s own superior position: “the pedagogue assumes the role of one who is required to lift the veil; what they lift the veil from, however, is a status quo on which they stand in external judgment.”⁴⁸ In the domain of critical pedagogy, then, hope and optimism have come to characterize the idealist theoreticisms that underscore educational futurity by actively constructing negativity and nihilism as an anathema to pedagogical thought.

2.3. *Human Preservation*

The reinscription of an endlessly hopeful subject at the heart of the educational project today emerges along multiple trajectories, not the

education.alberta.ca/policies-and-standards/student-learning/everyone/ministerial-order-on-student-learning/.

⁴⁷ Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, Piotr Zemojski, *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* (Punctum Books, 2017).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

least of which are those modes of educational philosophy that remit the question of how we might learn to die⁴⁹ by insisting ultimately on the narrative frames, scales, and registers of *human permanence*. That is, it is simply taken for granted that educational thought will forever be founded on the conservation and triumph of human beings and thus the field continues its dedication to the industry of human preservation. Such preservation exceeds the aim of becoming more fully human, an aim that is intimate to critical pedagogy (such as in Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed⁵⁰), extending into the presupposition that by re-routing destructive humanity, and its improper capacities, a *new* humanity will emerge.⁵¹ Critical education, for instance, often presumes a future polis after-man that is nevertheless underscored by an expression of education's having become an industry of human preservation. In this case, expression and narrative become honed upon the limits of human agents, while the scale of history is narrowed upon the purview of anthropic life. Following Laruelle's argument on philosophical insufficiency, such scaling might be seen as a moral commitment regarding our conceptualization of ecological events and the conceptualization of a "standard" future.⁵²

In education, such commitments might be seen as a form of general reactivity subverting the otherwise inhuman frames, scales, and complexities of the Anthropocene upon their all-too-human significance. Such "anthropic subversion"⁵³ inheres in the field of educational philosophy, where the dominance of human creativity con-

joins with the popular fetishization of positivity, unity and mindfulness by which we perpetually find ourselves *after* ourselves.⁵⁴ For example, in response to the advent of the Anthropocene, contemporary educational theory and research is currently experiencing a movement towards the integration of topics like "sustainability" into policy and curriculum, an intervention that not only works to reaffirm a progressive human futurity, but also assumes that education will forever be tied to the project of human perpetuation, and ultimately permanence. In this way, the Anthropocene has not led to an upheaval of or interruption in educational thought, but has, instead, become the impetus for "envisioning a sustainable human presence on Earth in which humans would no longer be 'invaders' but rather participants in shaping the natural environment."⁵⁵ As part of the broader "Good Anthropocene" narrative, education here is re-positioned as a technology that can and should be re-directed towards more sustainable practices. As Leinfelder writes, given the Anthropocene moment, "[s]ociety will have to legitimize science and technology, focusing in particular on education as one of the most powerful tools for transformation, in order to make the Anthropocene long-lasting, equitable, and worth living."⁵⁶

With this in mind, we wager that the Educacene's hopeful disposition is not only defined by happy inoculations of affirmationism, but also married to the educational industry of human preservation through which it is simply assumed, or made a fact of the Real, that a new humanity can and will emerge *in spite of* the destructive anthropogenic impacts altering the planet today. This decision towards preservation that now structures much of educational phi-

⁴⁹ Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2015)

⁵⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

⁵¹ Clare Colebrook, "What is the Anthro-political?" in *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, ed. Tom Cohen, Clare Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), 83.

⁵² Colebrook, "What is the Anthro-political?"

⁵³ Eugene Thacker, *In The Dust Of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy*, vol. 1. (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011).

⁵⁴ Colebrook, "What is the Anthro-political?"

⁵⁵ Reinhold Leinfelder, "Assuming Responsibility for the Anthropocene: Challenges and Opportunities in Education" in *Anthropocene: Exploring the Future of the Age of Humans*, vol. 3, ed. Helmuth Trischler (Rachel Carson Center Perspectives, 2013), 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

losophy is not only implicit to approaches such as critical pedagogy, but is dispersed across an array of educational thought allied to “sustainable” practices and the political more generally. Indeed, across the field of contemporary educational thought, the claim that we will emerge from beneath the yoke of destructive humanity and the time of pernicious petro-capitalism has gained significant, if not ubiquitous traction. However, the presupposition that a standardized ‘we’ will emerge post-capital or post-man or post-Anthropocene recommits to the pathological self-interest of human exceptionalism. The condemnation of man and capital now seemingly automatic in educational scholarship still reiterates the tenets of humanism by reasserting the agency of anthropos, or otherwise, by articulating as the telos of critical inquiry the emergence of anthropos ‘proper’ (standard man *after* man).

Such presumptions now constitute a new orthodoxy in educational philosophy and research expressed through the assumption that by triumphing over capital, ecological degradation, the misuses of democracy, the destructive forces of humanity, and nihilism itself, a humanity-to-come will actualize. In resentment of civilizational collapse and ecocatastrophe, the redemption of humanity perpetuated in such educational thought reiterates an image of the future for “us,” or worse, a future in which the Real is monopolized by the anthropocentric conceits of academic educational thought, which presumes to articulate both the conditions of salvation and its subject. Against the momentum of this orthodoxy, the twilight world of the Anthropocene issues a more-than-critical educational challenge.

3. Towards a Pedagogy of the Negative

3.1. *Death of the Given World*

The antagonisms raised by ecocatastrophic and civilizational end conspire to not merely extend the circuits of anthropic production and salva-

tion, but break them by actualizing a non-communicative distance between the world for “us” and an unfathomable world “without-us.”⁵⁷ In this way, the distance between the Educacene’s allegiance to the preservation of the human and the misanthropic realisms of planetary transformation not only rejoin to the “Death of Man,” as pronounced in post-human thought, but as Culp extends, to the Death of the *Given World*.⁵⁸ The staid thinking of Roy Scranton posits a corollary approach, which interrupts the continuation of the *given* world by suggesting the need for a pedagogical encounter with the question of how we might learn to die.⁵⁹ For Scranton, this encounter is not about ringing the alarm, nor is it about throwing our hands up and welcoming “the end times,” but instead, coming to terms with the fact that there is no single event, invention, or, in the case of this paper, educational philosophy, that will save us from the future.

The short-circuiting heresy produced by calls for the death of the given world and questions such as how we might learn to die are, however, demonstrably unpopular in educational thinking. As Burke reminds us, referencing Laruelle, “[heresy] is harder than it sounds.”⁶⁰ Laruelle is clear about this point, asserting that, indeed, “philosophy will not relinquish its privileges without being forced to, and the abandonment of its authority will be an expensive price to pay.”⁶¹ In the case of this exploration, for instance, the Educacene relies on human continuation, preservation, and exceptionalism as a positive condition of its very existence, and thus the fashions of vitalism and affirmation by which educational philosophy has been theoretically reanimated (i.e. through a certain instrumentalization of Deleuzian pedagogy, for instance), protects pedagogical life from the conditions of extinction that otherwise grip planetary existence.

⁵⁷ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*; Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁹ Scranton, *Learning to Die*.

⁶⁰ Burke, “Translator’s Introduction,” xviii.

⁶¹ Laruelle, *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*, 6.

It is here where a pedagogy of the negative enters the fray. As a philo-fictional experiment in non-philosophy, or non-standard philosophy, a pedagogy of the negative does not aim towards creating a new theory, or meta-theory, of and for education, but instead endeavor towards alternative educational practices so as to re-vision and re-launch what counts as educational thought in the first place. While this experimental practice draws on various modes of negation and pessimism, a pedagogy of the negative is not a negation of educational philosophy *per se*, but instead its expansion into anomalous realms of thought. Following Laruelle, we endeavor to “use philosophy as a material (as one would use space or color, as a materiality) for an art that would be of a piece with conceptual thought without making a new aesthetic or a new philosophy.”⁶² The philosophical material employed here is drawn from a range of contemporary thought committed to negation and the “non,” albeit in divergent and sometimes even contradictory ways. In this way, and following Laruelle’s non-philosophical impulses, a pedagogy of the negative is not defined by a logical identity, nor is it “theoretical nor practical nor aesthetic, etc., in the sense whereby philosophy defines separated regions of experience,”⁶³ but is instead understood as the practice of mutating and bifurcating ideas from their standardized regulation via the heretical elaboration of an outside thought from which such standardization is inoculable. In this way, a pedagogy of the negative is not opposed to practice or pragmatism, which are themselves always already theoretical, but instead, this practice is able to “determine in the last-instance the philosophical forms of theory

and their combination with empirical practice.”⁶⁴ In what follows, we elaborate on this alien practice by unfolding three potential mutations composed from various philosophical materials including Noys’ “praxis of negation,” Culp’s “dark Deleuze,” and, finally, Laruelle’s “science of the non.”

3.2. *The Praxis of Negation*

To begin, a pedagogy of the negative is one that takes seriously the persistence of the negative through what Noys calls a “praxis of negation,”⁶⁵ or, a practice that repositions negation as “the destruction of existent positivities through the performance of immanent ruptures.”⁶⁶ As Noys asserts, at the core of “unconditional” or “high” affirmationism lies a number of common features, including the insistence that philosophy begins from affirmation, which necessitates the downgrading of negativity and critique as “life denying.”⁶⁷ Against this “affirmationist doxa,” Noys works to excavate negativity as the necessary condition for re-articulating a thinking of agency, one that might be able to traverse and contest the structural and geopolitical pressures of the present. For Noys, this excavation involves examining theorists that have been highly influential in their articulation of affirmative thought, including Deleuze, in order to assess and refract their construction of affirmationist theory “through the prism of the traces of irreducible negativity that [nevertheless] mark their work.”⁶⁸ That is, Noys examines the affirmationist idealisms expressed through Deleuze (among others) in order to excavate the angles of resistance that do not subsume negation under a teleological dialectic in opposition to positivity and affirmation, but instead provide points of fissure where negativity might link to mutation points that cannot be automatically reconfig-

⁶² François Laruelle and John Ó Maoilearca, “Artistic Experiments with Philosophy: François Laruelle in conversation with John Ó Maoilearca,” in *Realism Materialism Art*, ed. Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey and Suhail Malik (Berlin: Sternberg/CCS Bard, 2014), 177.

⁶³ François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) 285.

⁶⁴ Laruelle, “What Can Non-Philosophy Do?,” 179.

⁶⁵ Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

ured as positive lines of flight. Through such mutation points, Noys reconstructs Deleuze's "disavowed"⁶⁹ negativity in order to develop "a more *strategic* thinking of subjectivation ... one that would take into account negativity" by recuperating the possibility of "void-points" as sites of potential (un)becoming.⁷⁰ It is though Noys' intentionally suspicious and somewhat heretical excavation that a praxis of negation might offer a crucial non-philosophical mutation of and resistance to the exhausted intellectual options of the present.

Transposed to the site of the Educacene, Noys' praxis of negation raises important provocations about the role of negation, and by extension the role of critique, within educational philosophy, which as we have unfolded above, tends to fetishize the positive-in-itself, in turn painting critique and negation as reactionary and/or unproductive. Of course, and as many thinkers have pointed out, there is good reason to be weary of negativity and critique, both within the field of education and beyond. As Isabelle Stengers notes, for instance, critique too often functions as a mode of "heroic combat" that is incapable of generating new questions and new possibilities due to the way in which it seeks to ratify "*something that has already happened*."⁷¹ Or, as Noys asserts, critique is too often denigrated, particularly within the humanities and social sciences, for a lack of production and/or a failure to contribute "positively" or "affirmatively" to society. Indeed, even while writing these very words we are weary of how our own nay-saying may be taken as just another form of alarmism, inaction, resentment, or even a childish reactionary penchant for destruction. Further, and as Harney and Moten assert, where critique itself has been subsumed under the guise of "good" and/or professional academic practice, where "a

professional education has become a *critical* education," it is important to be both "weary of critique [and] at the same time dedicated to the collectivity of its future, the collectivity that may come to be its future."⁷² This is not unlike the claims made by both Deleuze and Guattari, who also name "those who criticize without creating" as "the plague of philosophy."⁷³ Even in Laruelle's critique of "philosophies of difference," he does not simply criticize and dismiss this philosophical work, but aims to re-invent the concept of difference itself in terms of those philosophical decisions and consequent mixtures that have come to define concepts of difference in the first place.

In addition to happiness and satisfaction, then, proactivity, thinking positive, and creative and/or emergent solutions have also become 'order' words that help to oil the wheels of neoliberal capitalism, while producing an unquestioned culture of affirmation that necessarily occludes what Noys calls the persistence of the negative. While Noys acknowledges such limits of critique, including Deleuze's warning that "[n]o book *against* anything ever had any importance,"⁷⁴ he nevertheless asserts that the precise point of his immanent critique is that "affirmationism in no way exhausts these thinkers' work, individually or collectively."⁷⁵ Indeed, critique and negation cannot, and should not, be things that are argued for in any simple sense as this will only work to either subsume them under a teleological or idealist dialectic against affirmation, or worse, produce a self-fulfilling prophecy where the negative further perpetuates a will-to-nothingness. In short, if a pedagogy of the negative requires

⁷² Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 32.

⁷³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press: 1994), 28.

⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974*, trans. Mike Taormina (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 192.

⁷⁵ Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*, 16.

⁶⁹ Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*, 53.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷¹ Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 111.

the death of the given world, it also requires the ability to recognize, critique, and ultimately say “no” to the commitments that structure what is perceived as given in the first place.

3.3. *An Un-becoming Proposal: Towards a Dark(er) Deleuze*

A praxis of negation might be further elaborated via Andrew Culp’s *Dark Deleuze*, which looks to Deleuze’s oeuvre to “rehabilitate the destructive force of negativity”⁷⁶ and “say “no” to those who tell us to take the world as it is.”⁷⁷ By extending and mutating Deleuze’s nondialectical negation, Culp advocates the “complete cutterage” from our idols, a strategy paralleled in Claire Colebrook’s⁷⁸ suggestion that the conceptual and intellectual idols of the Anthropocene have entered their twilight. For Culp, the death of idols, including those that have become cliché within the trajectory of Deleuzian theory, constitutes a necessary response to the failure of optimism to engage the challenges of the contemporary era, an assertion that extends to our own advocacy to jettison the obsolete conceptual idols of hope, compulsory happiness, and the “human” venerated by the industry of education. Yet, the murder of idols extends beyond the rejection of those concepts destined for ruin insofar as it implicates also those educational thinkers that would monopolize the Real by operationalizing philosophical categories that neutralizes outside thinking.

Put another way, the dogmatic autoproduction of reality enacted by an academic aristocracy demands unlearning, or better, a mode of unrelenting heresy capable of producing non-standard images of the Real. With this in mind, Culp’s *Dark Deleuze* provides a sketch for how we might learn to overturn doxa of affir-

mationism in favor of negation, or what Culp might call modes of cultivating hatred for the *given* world.⁷⁹ As Culp develops, it is today insufficient to rely on affirmation, lines of flight, or becoming as modes of happy liberation in that such concepts are fundamentally ambivalent. Affects can be ruled by tyrants, molecular revolutions can be made fascist, and nomadic war machines conscripted to State apparatuses.⁸⁰ Extending the importance of destruction in Deleuze, Culp therefore articulates the role of hatred as a necessary countermeasure to cliché, if not the values of compulsory happiness and usefulness in which education is imagined more generally. Not unlike Noys’ praxis of negation, then, the function of negation here becomes an integral mode of resistance for overturning the will-to-nothingness undergirding the Educacene and its projection of a happy future that endlessly wills the same.

Taking off from the “happy Deleuze,” which has also come to undergird much Deleuzian pedagogy, Culp advocates for the destruction of iconoclasm and the cultivation of hatred, which, applied to pedagogical dispositions might be thought of as modes of *un-becoming*.⁸¹ Culp’s notion of un-becoming might be seen as an oblique parallel to Scranton’s proposal of “learning to die in the Anthropocene” in that each posits the necessity of short-circuiting assemblages that would autoproduce the very contingencies of becoming. More directly, the idea of un-becoming responds to the challenge of rethinking what it means to be human when such autoproducer terms are beset by a host of problems at the level of the species and “its” milieu.⁸² For Culp, a measure of un-becoming includes dissipating the connective tissues between the subject and its orthodox referents in “identity,” a caveat that might be understood in terms of standardized

⁷⁶ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁸ Claire Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction, Vol. 1* (Open Humanities Press, 2014).

⁷⁹ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸² Colebrook, “What is the Anthro-political?”

identifications with the human at a species level. In discord with the identitarian idea that “I’m this or I’m that” of which Deleuze and Guattari were consistently critical, Culp advocates the mobilization of corrosive affects capable of dissolving the automatic correspondence of the subject to a name that would designate “the sum of [its] capacities.”⁸³ The corrosive affects advocated by Culp are transpired through the outside thought of ecological and civilizational upheaval in the Anthropocene, where the connective tissue of the human to “its” referential world is dissolved.

As Scranton develops, the “truth of our end” forecast by the precursors of climatological and civilizational collapse wrest the subject from its habitual autoproduction in permanence, hope, stability, pleasure, attachment, and the future.⁸⁴ The affective solvent of inhuman scales, narratives, and registers at the twilight of “man” therefore hold the capacity to commence a mode of un-becoming that palpate conditions for the recommencement of educational thought, not the least of which is the thought of (un)becoming that has nothing to do with entrenching the subject within the cul-de-sac of identitarian thought or the aspiration to become more human.⁸⁵ Rather, the affective solvent of cosmological and metaphysical dilation brought about by planetary transformation finds new conditions for resistance to the present fashions of both affirmationism and all-too-human thinking. Put another way, un-becoming circumvents the habitual entreaty to continually find ourselves *after* ourselves in what has become a new imperative in the era of the Educacene.

3.4. Non-Philosophy and Pedagogical Heresy

Drawn from a darkened Deleuze and underscored by a praxis of negation, the idea of

un-becoming also leads us back to Laruelle, who advocates that the very structure of philosophical thinking can only be grasped “non-philosophically.”⁸⁶ While the idea of un-becoming is punctuated by a world receding from the ambit of human will and desire, Laruelle’s call for non-philosophical intervention, or a “science of the non,” entails the *pedagogical task* of de-philosophizing educational philosophical discourse and, by extension, those idealisms (i.e. affirmationism, the human) on which it relies.

For instance, and as Laruelle articulates, “as a philosophical concept, man is a humanoid traced from the dyad of the anthropoid, which has hardly gone beyond Greek anthropological thought, and of the Judeo-Christian ‘creature.’”⁸⁷ Along similar lines by which Cohen, Colebrook and Miller⁸⁸ demonstrate how the idea of the Anthropocene rehabilitates the myth of a universal humanism, the idea of the human is, for Laruelle, “standardized” through its philosophical classification and by intellectual elites that monopolize, or lay claim to the Real.⁸⁹ Where the idea of the Anthropocene suggests a universal human - *anthropos* - and educational thought works to reproduce a standardized humanism, each commit to the anthropomorphization of the Real. In contradistinction, Laruelle’s advocacy for a non-philosophy of the human posits that despite claims to the Real, both the Real and the human are themselves not given for “us” and that the anthropomorphism of “man” given by philosophy must be rebuked through a process of “indefinition,” which remits the idea of metaphysical becoming for continual indefinition.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy*. (London/New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁸⁷ François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013), 78.

⁸⁸ *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, eds. Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller (Open Humanities Press, 2016).

⁸⁹ Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*.

⁹⁰ John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

⁸³ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 27.

⁸⁴ Scranton, *Learning to Die*, 92.

⁸⁵ Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 28.

For Laruelle, there is no positive correlation of the human to the idea of the human ($a = a$), but only a non-standard, “non-anthropocentric” humanism ($a = z, q, r, \text{etc.}$) that is itself resistant to givenness. While “philosophy wants the inhuman, the pre-human, the all-too-human and over-human” it fails to recognize the “ordinary nothing-but-human”⁹¹ and thus “where there is the human, thought must be made axiom and renounce its sufficiency.”⁹²

Read stereoscopically with Culp’s notion of un-becoming, and underscored by Noys’ praxis of negation, Laruelle’s “science of the non” might be understood as a mode of saying “no” to the image of standardized humanism inhering both the project of education and its institutional aims, while concomitantly perpetrating a heresy against the enlightened norms and authority of the academic literati. Put another way, against the uninhabitable world of non-contingency and categorical obstruction produced by philosophical thinking, Laruelle’s non-philosophy posits in the place of being the mutation of “man” from under its conceptual entrustments. Transposed to the Educacene, the function of pedagogy might be revised via Laruelle’s project so as to harness its potential for un-becoming and, ultimately, alternative trajectories for educational thought. Given today’s situation, defined as it is by the endless recuperation of any new thought under market logics, where “thought has to sell itself to be called ‘a thought’ in the first place,” a pedagogy of the negative might be actualized through non-philosophical practices that are anomalous to habitual standardizations, instead working to a rhythm and logic of their own creation.⁹³ In this way, a pedagogy of the negative provides a mode of challenging the idea that education is but the preparation for a series of market-driven futureless repetitions, in

turn opening up an actual space of inquiry for rethinking the very role, purposes and methods of education.

Returning to the an-archeological site of the Educacene, we speculate that viewed from the vantage of the future, the industry of education will be simultaneously defined by unprecedented planetary transformations and the “happy becoming” of such changes through which a stable world for us is endlessly reproduced and maintained. While the Educacene might be traced in terms of its non-confrontation with ecocatastrophic abolition, a pedagogy of the negative aims to grapple with the persistence of the negative characteristic of today’s “end times” situation, for instance, by confronting the non-existence of the human and the specular qualities of educational futurity. In this way, a pedagogy of the negative actively works against the doxa of affirmationism that has come to pervade the educational imaginary, which nevertheless redoubles the Educacene’s nihilist impulses. A pedagogy of the negative does not see negativity as an anathema to pedagogical thought, as something to be problematized and overcome, but instead recognizes such moods and attitudes as the milieu from which a necessary interruption might arise. By short-circuiting the articulation of only tolerable thoughts, thoughts that endlessly select for the positive and happy-becoming of a world for us, a pedagogy of the negative endeavor towards the death of the given world by exercising a praxis of negation, which recuperates negativity and critique as necessary ruptures within dominant educational postures in order to bring about practices of un-becoming, non-philosophical thinking, and ultimately, pedagogical heresy against the given world.

Press, 2015).

⁹¹ Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, 78.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹³ David Cole, “Educational Non-Philosophy,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, no. 9 (2015): 1009 - 1022.