

Philosophy as a Way of Life for Educators in Higher Education

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Received February 2025

Accepted for publication March 2025

Published November 2025

Abstract

The audit culture in Modern Western education has increasingly brought about pervasive practices of accountability and standardization associated with the political regimes that have power in these systems. I argue that these practices occupy our attention, shape our subjectivity, and dictate *who* we are as educators; it leads to inward impoverishment. Consequently, I further contend, prevents us from growing towards holism, embodiment, and animism, falling prey to the ills of a neoliberal approach to education that dominates the current educational scenes. Given this, I urge educators to re/turn to the self and to regenerate self as the site of *being*.

Taking my lead from Pierre Hadot's, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, I revitalize the importance of self-cultivation for educators and the need to embody a philosophical way of life. Our moral responsibility as educators to pay our attention inwardly at the condition of our inner life has been largely ignored, but the necessity of self-cultivation and inner work lies at the heart of authentic teaching. I investigate how the nature of teaching is to be a mode of existing-in-the-world, rather than sole competency with theory, pedagogy, and practice. Drawing on my experiences in higher education, I consider *how* this is generated through contemplative inquiry and practice; not as a solipsistic endeavor, but one situated within a collective attempt towards humanity's harmony and interdependent existence.

Keywords: *philosophy as a way of life, Pierre Hadot, contemplative education, higher education*

Audit Culture in Higher Education: A Current Sketch

The audit culture in Modern Western education has increasingly brought about pervasive practices of accountability and standardization associated with the political regimes that hold power in these systems (Raffoul et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2016; Zumeta, 2011). These can be seen specifically in higher education (HE) in Australia,

Canada, United States, and the United Kingdom, where the massification, internationalization, and globalization of post-secondary learning revolves around “public trust in colleges/universities and elites, and shifting boundaries around the public interest in higher education” (Hazelkorn, 2018, p. 431). Zumeta (2011) uses the term “public accountability” to refer to:

Responsibility for one's actions to someone or to multiple parties as a result of legal, political (in the best, constitutive sense), financial, personal, or simply morally based ties [and is] subject to reinterpretation over time as a society and polity's needs, values, and expectations change.

(pp. 133-134)

The concept of audit culture in HE seeks to provide this public accountability through evidence-based practices, “ensuring they are graduating knowledgeable citizens; using resources responsibly and efficiently; and achieving predetermined goals” (Raffoul et al., 2023, p. 258). Wrapped up with the logic of capitalist expansion, the processes and practices associated with this—imposing metrics, allocating funding based on performance, increased data collection for improving teaching and learning—sit within a complex web of forces of compliance and resistance (Raffoul et al., 2023). I argue that these practices occupy our attention, shape our subjectivity, and dictate *who* we are as educators. Raffoul et al.'s (2023) qualitative study on how the audit culture in Canadian HE has affected educational developers reveals some of their practices and insights around data collection.

If you don't show numbers, it doesn't mean anything. Your work doesn't mean anything unless it is supported by facts and numbers... figuring out metrics to evaluate our work and how our work supports institutional priorities is very, very difficult and frequently I feel like we fall back on things that are easy to give numbers about (e.g., attendance, numbers of consultations). ... There are

stakeholders who don't like the data that we are interested in ... and they will just kind of pile on more, more, more requests, and then it becomes really difficult to be able to keep up with that.
(pp. 263-264)

If educators are spending their time evaluating impact and assessing them with a results-oriented approach, what we signal to students is that the separation between “the knowing subject, and the objectified world ‘out there’ that is to be known” (Bai, 2015, p. 138). To be “knowledgeable” is then measured by how much the subject can *know* through an examination, assignment or quiz. Reflected in a static grade, this becomes a narrow reflection of a student. If “we teach who we are” (Palmer, 2017, p. 2), then educators who engage in these practices of accountability and standardization for the sake of public accountability are teaching ways of being which are fragmented, lacking in care, and apathetic. They fall prey to the ills of a neoliberal approach to education. This impacts students' learning *and* the relational aspects of that learning. Hadot (2001/2011) states that there is a “reciprocal causality” (p. 104) between one's inner life and the choices we make. Do we intentionally reflect on how these practices shape our inner dimension and consequently, the influence it has on our choices when teaching? And inversely, do we reflect on how our teaching choices re/trans/de/form our inner life?

The importance of looking inwards and paying attention to shaping who we are needs to be of central and urgent matter. For, the curricular and pedagogical implications of an education that prevents us from growing towards holism, embodiment, and animism (Bai, 2015; Lin et al., 2021) will continue to feed into the dualistic and disembodied nature of capitalism. One example by Lin et al. (2021) notes the growing rates of

suicides in Taiwanese youth aged 15-24 due to admissions systems in modern education being excessively concerned with performance. As a result, students from predominantly middle-class families in Taiwan lack the search for a meaning in their life.

When the productivity-oriented system take[s] over young people's decision-making processes to prevent them from failing, we risk affronting and interrupting the ontologically significant questions they are learning to ask and explore: What does my life mean? What kind of human being do I want to become?

(Lin et al., 2021, p. 642)

These are the sorts of questions that our students should be engaging with if modern education is to meet its aims of achieving democracy, autonomy and agency. Bai (2006) argues for the “a conception of philosophy as a *practice* devoted to the cultivation of fundamental human agency” (p. 8), which can be achieved through contemplative practices (which I will attend to later). If we operate from an orientation of disembodiment, or “de-animation” (Bai, 2015), there is a loss of understanding of animism, interconnectedness, and interdependent relationships. Thus, *who* educators are, or are becoming, when stepped in the audit culture of HE, is shaped by the pervasive practices of public accountability. The resources and opportunities for current educators to attend to this are yet to be integrated with institutional processes and policies. However, philosophy of education is a fitting place for these explorations of ontology, beingness, and self-cultivation; and herein lie opportunities to implement theory into practice in teacher preparation programs, postgraduate studies, and continual professional development for educators in HE. In the post-COVID-19 era, I ask: What do the changing

needs of our society mean for *whom* educators need to be in HE? And in a similar vein, when educators’ shape themselves in a certain philosophical way, what does this say about the changing needs of our society and how we meet these for our students?

Philosophy as a Way of Life: A Theoretical Framework

In this paper, I take my lead from Pierre Hadot’s concept of “philosophy as a way of life” as a springboard to explore the importance of educators re/turning to the self. Given the criticisms of HE vis-à-vis accountability, I revitalize the importance of self-cultivation for educators. That is, Hadot’s (1981/1995) case for embodying a “philosophical way of life ... a unitary act, which consists in living logic, physics, and ethics” (p. 267). I interpret this more simply as living in alignment with our beliefs, actions and speech. Hadot (2001/2011) states that the philosophical way of life is quite simply the philosopher’s behaviour in everyday life” (p. 98). As a historian, he uses the Roman Stoics, Platonists, and Epicureans as examples of people who displayed austerity, moral rigor, and peace of mind—achieved through a variety of exercises. He terms this as spiritual exercises (*exercices spirituels*), maintaining that they are necessary for the healing of the soul. Hadot’s choice for naming it “spiritual exercises” has been widely challenged by scholars with mixed responses; these contentions fall outside the scope of this paper. However, his line of thought for the use of this term helps us better understand the essence of it. He first came across Jean-Wahl’s *Poetry as a Spiritual Exercise*, a title which was unforgettable to Hadot. He then read about Beethoven’s assignment of musical compositions to students as a spiritual exercise to attain aesthetic wisdom. Later, he engaged with Paul Rabbow’s work around Spanish theologian, Saint Ignatius, and his understanding of spiritual exercises through

ancient philosophical thought. All these practices he encountered allowed one to bring consciousness to the unconscious, to manipulate the experience of time, and to re/situate oneself within cosmic consciousness: “the immense event of the universe . . . the unfathomable mystery of existence” (Hadot, 2001/2011, pp. 96-97). It allowed a person to see with fresh eyes and consequently, act in different ways. That is, to color the world in vibrant ways because of how these exercises are attended to the interior landscape with awareness and care. It is important to note that “the aid of spiritual exercises does not guarantee that we will live well, [but] they plausibly make that outcome more likely” (Grimm & Cohoe, 2021, p. 244). Examples of spiritual exercises Hadot examined include meditation (*praemeditatio malorum*) and engaging in dialogue; which often had attention (*prosoche*), listening (*akroasis*), and self-mastery (*enkrateia*) as core components.¹ These were enmeshed in a web of interconnected relations of others, the more-than-human and the cosmos, as evidenced by Chase’s (2024) extended attention to Buddhist meditation as a spiritual exercise. Chase (2024) uses a contemporary neurological lens to demonstrate the achievement of cosmic consciousness, the true Self, as opposed to using spiritual exercises for a solipsistic endeavor. These transformative practices become the intimate link between philosophical discourse and a form of life: a holistic understanding of thought, psyche, and ethical practice (Mullen & Alexander, forthcoming). We can learn from the ancient schools of thought from which these spiritual exercises originated, as “antiquity contains ideas in a state of concentration, in the state of elixir”

¹ Pierre Hadot dedicated his last monograph to expanding and deepening the notion of spiritual exercises inspired by the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. See Hadot, P. (2023). *Don't forget to live: Goethe and the tradition of spiritual exercises*. (M. Chase, Trans). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 2008)

(Michelet, 1959, as cited in Hadot, 2001/2011, p. 103). Thus, Hadot’s work has the potential to assist us in living a certain form of life, one that attends holistically to the human experience.

Philosophy as a way of life has also been explored in recent times vis à vis other ideas, such as Foucault’s “care of the self” (Faustino & Telo, 2024; Flynn, 2005) and Eastern wisdom traditions (Ding & Yu, 2022; Kapstein, 2013; Maria, 2020; Rizvi, 2013). Even with the revival of Hadot’s idea on the art of living, he has not been absolved from critique. Criticism by academic scholars point to Hadot’s historical analysis being rooted in a particular time of crisis in antiquity and then applied to a whole historical period, subsequently generating a misleading interpretation of ancient philosophy (Cooper, 2012; Horn, 2024). Most notably, Cooper’s (2012) intellectualist argument states that:

No quasi-religious devotional practices, such as Hadot describes, had, or even could have had, anything essential to do with living a life of philosophy, given what philosophy itself, both in antiquity and, in fact, in its whole history, is: an exercise of reason. . . Hadot was badly mistaken to take features of philosophy as a way of life at that culminating point of the tradition and read them back onto the tradition itself from the beginning. The result is a badly distorted account of what ancient philosophy was. (pp. 20-21)

Contra arguments to Cooper have been made since (Grimm & Cohoe, 2021), recognizing how philosophers such as Plato, were well “aware of the limitations of reason [and that] the soul, houses not just reason, but also spirit (*thumos*) and appetite (*epithumia*)” (p. 239). Further contention

claims that “Cooper often appears to deal with them by selective framing and omission” (Grimm & Cohoe, 2021, p. 240). Whilst a deeper examination of the limitations and critiques of philosophy as a way of life lies beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to return to a valuable point that Hadot described about the spiritual exercise of learning *how* to read, which Cooper’s (2012) intellectualizing may have missed the essence of.

To pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us. This, too, is a spiritual exercise, and one of the most difficult.

(Hadot, 1981/1995, p. 109)

The Case for Philosophy as a Way of Life for Educators

Pierre Hadot’s thinking attends to the “convergence and divergence of contemplative and academic traditions in the past” (Gunnlaugson et al., 2014, p. 1). The quote above captures a nuance that is often ignored in modern education but remains a foundational element of contemplative inquiry and learning—the practice of letting go. To surrender our desires for a concrete and definitive understanding of life, to pay close attention to our inner life, and to let wisdom present in ways for which we may not intellectualize. These hold transformative power in the formation of self, ultimately shaping how we inhabit the learning ecologies that we occupy. What I am particularly interested in is philosophy as a way of life for educators. By attending to the current gap between philosophy as a way of life and practitioner integration, I am contributing to the conversations around holistic and contemplative education, two growing areas

educational theory and practice. Using his ideas as a point of departure, I narrow my focus on the educator and the relationship between self-cultivation and pedagogical practice in the context of HE. With philosophy—and education more broadly—continuing to operate in disembodied ways, can we let go of, and make space for, timely *and* timeless wisdom to regenerate the self as the site of *being*?

The inescapable tension in HE between what upholds meaningful learning and what drives a large-scale system to function efficiently has resulted in inward impoverishment (Bai, 2015; Lin et al., 2020). The price we pay for “a system of education so fearful of soulful things that it fails to address the real issues of our lives ... [is] people who are spiritually empty at best and spiritually toxic at worst” (Palmer, 2003, p. 379). Educators have a significant responsibility in creating pedagogical conditions for strengthening relational dynamics amongst/with/in students. Our moral duty as educators to pay attention inwardly to the condition of our inner life is a key aspect of cultivating this relationality. This is because we project our beliefs, conditioning and dispositions—all the parts of *who* we are—onto the curriculum, pedagogy and students (Palmer, 2017). Bai et al. (2020) give an example of how this is translated in educational practice:

Suppose a teacher who is anxious is teaching students some subject matter. Most likely she will unwittingly transmit anxious vibes to students. Anxiety then becomes something of a “hidden pedagogy”; for, students are unconsciously “learning” anxiety in the sense that they themselves become anxious or, if they were already anxious, they would become more anxious. In not recognizing the connection of being-to-being influence

between the teacher's anxiety and students' anxiety, we may pay no attention to the latter; or if we do, we may focus only on the students' anxiety and try to get rid of their anxiety. (p. 38)

These hidden pedagogies mostly happen subconsciously, and so, "becoming reflective persons is an important educational aim" (Cohen & Falkenberg, 2023, p. 5). The complexity of our humanness sits within the web of interconnectedness. Relationships and the intersubjective spaces become the threads which hold the tension between us all. That is, educators have a responsibility to attend to the relational dimension of their practice through the art of self-cultivation and perception.

The intimate relationship between philosophical or educational discourse and a way of living suggests that the nature of teaching is "a mode of existing-in-the-world" (Hadot, 1981/1995, p. 265), rather than sole competency with theory, pedagogy, and practice. The necessity of self-cultivation and inner work lies at the heart of authentic teaching (Cohen et al., 2012; Cohen, 2020; Palmer, 2017). Self-study—which can be messy, non-linear and dynamic—becomes a significant part of shaping our *beingness* as educators situated within complex systems. I contend that this is a lifelong process, one of continual return to the inner self, which is in constant conversation with our ethical practice in education. Repeatedly visiting this fault-line between the inner and outer creates liminal spaces pregnant with opportunities for reflection, helping us develop holistically and live in alignment. An example aforementioned is the practice of learning how to let go and liberate us from anxieties through the spiritual exercise of "reading." Therefore, these practices assist us in moving towards holism—embodying an understanding of interconnectedness and

interdependent relationships in educational spaces.

Humanity as a Pedagogical Experience

So, what does this look like in educational practice and application? In the remainder of this piece, I draw on a lived experience that reveals Hadot's notion of philosophy as a way of life and my educational application of his conceptualizing. I have had the pleasure of working as a teaching assistant at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in British Columbia, Canada for undergraduate elective courses around social issues in education with tutorial sizes averaging around 20 students. As these are electives, there is an even split of students who are intending to take on the Professional Development Program (PDP) offered by SFU's Faculty of Education and those from other degrees (Kinesiology, Economics, Computer Science, Engineering, and so on). I have found that the diverse range of experiences and interests from the students enhance our sociological, philosophical, and educational explorations. The tutorials are "a landscape embodying the curriculum-as-plan and curricula-as-lived, indeed, an open landscape of *multiplicity* [emphasis added]" (Aoki, 1993, p. 261). My pedagogical role involves holding space for weekly readings and assessments set by the professor (the curriculum-as-plan), and how these dynamically interact with each unique group of learners (curricula-as-lived). Having a limited number of hours with them each week (a two-hour lecture and 50-minute tutorial)—unlike elementary and secondary schooling—there is an alertness, open-mindedness, and urgency with which I show up to learning spaces each week. This requires me to be present and attentive: qualities which I further develop in sustained contemplative practices outside of these sites (for example, Hatha yoga, philosophical writing, walking meditation, and photography). What excites me about teaching education electives is the students'

willingness to engage, openness to grapple with new ways of thinking, and the deepening commitment they develop over time to teaching and learning across various disciplines throughout the course.

By focusing on the nuances of my pedagogical practice, what I intend to demonstrate is an attention to relational dimensions of self, other, the more-than-human and the cosmos through the spiritual exercise of reading. I hope that this re-claiming of relationality within education can be seen as a generative philosophical conversation to be had apropos the multidimensionality of being. It is, additionally, a profound reminder that all educators are humans. Their humanity, in all its colours and textures, is an integral part of what they bring to learning ecologies—it is *the* pedagogical experience. Bingham (2006) argues that the work of teachers is to create “educational scenarios that enable students to have an aesthetic experience” (p. 547). Like Beethoven’s musical accompaniments intended as a spiritual exercise for his students, I, the educator, engage in written texts that allows me to attain, or maintain, “a mode of life, a form of life, and a choice of life” (Hadot, 2001/2011, p. 93). Thus, the value of these practices can help educators in HE appreciate the beauty that exists in humanity, so that we can project this onto the pedagogy and curriculum for the benefit of the collective. Intended to form, rather than inform, the focus is on ontological shifts that we undergo—holistic, aligned, and deeply integrated. That perhaps is the challenge. But what stands in the way also becomes the way—an idea often attributed to the Stoics.

During the 2024 Summer term, I was involved with a course titled, “Studies in the History of Education in the Western World”; this revolved around using genealogy as a way to explore educational history. Centered around ‘a history of the present’, undergraduate students were

investigating the transformations of different phenomena that influence education (for example, grammar, grading, race, and sexuality). The tutorials that I taught drew on contemplative and holistic ways of learning which continues to have a growing field of scholarship around it (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Gunnlaugson et al., 2014; Miller, 2015; Simmer-Brown, 2019; Zajonc, 2013). These are characterized by “the adaptation of Asian and western contemplative practices to non-sectarian university classrooms” (Simmer-Brown, 2019, p. 7), aimed at increasing awareness, compassion and disciplined reflexivity. Examples of my pedagogical practices include being outside in nature, self-reflection and inquiry, deep listening and somatic movement practices.

We begin each tutorial with a meditative practice (such as mindful breathing, walking meditation, or observing silence) and a check-in (Cohen, 2020). These two activities are followed by a sharing from a current book that I would be reading and engaging with in the Hadotian sense. This time, it was Vietnamese Buddhist, Thích Nhất Hạnh’s *No death, no fear: Comforting wisdom for life*. Rather than finding a text that would fit a prepared lesson plan, I let my connection with the book develop organically. At times, the word ‘exercise’ used by Hadot can mistakenly accentuate the *doing*, rather than the experience of *being with* a text. As I shift into a mode of trying to receive with fresh eyes, it can seem like nothing is happening right away, or for a while. When no explicit connections appear, I sometimes resort to forcing ideas to work, only to feel intuitively as a teacher that students would sense the disingenuous nature of my poor soldering. At some point, “the experience of a philosopher coincides with the experience of the poet and the painter” (Hadot, 2001/2011, p. 96). A passage emerges, as if I see the world for the first time again. It resonates with the themes we have been discussing, as well as capturing my dynamic

journey as a doctoral student moving from Australia to pursue my studies. The experience of perception allows me to situate my “personal existence in a cosmic and universal perspective” (Hadot, 2001/2011, p. 96), laying the foundation for meaningful pedagogy. I meditate with Thích Nhất Hạnh’s words: calmly and carefully.

Am I Yesterday's Me?

I have a photograph of myself when I was a boy of sixteen. Is it a photograph of me? I am not really sure. Who is this boy in the photograph? Is it the same person as me or is it another person? Look deeply before you reply.

There are many people who say that the boy in the photograph and I are the same. If that boy is the same as I am, why does he look so different? Is that boy still alive or has he died? He is not the same as I am and he is also not different. Some people look at that photograph and think the young boy there is no longer around.

A person is made of body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness, and all of these have changed in me since that photograph was taken. The body of the boy in the photograph is not the same as my body, now that I am in my seventies. The feelings are different, and the perceptions are very different. It is just as if I am a completely different person from that boy, but if the boy in the photograph did not exist, then I would not exist either.

I am a continuation like the rain is the continuation of the cloud. When you look deeply into the photograph, you can see me already as an old man. You do not have to wait fifty-five years. When the lemon tree is in flower, you may not see any fruit, but if you look deeply you can see that the fruit is already there. You just need one more condition to bring forth the lemons: time. Lemons are already there in the lemon tree. Look at the tree and you only see branches, leaves and flowers. But if the lemon tree has time it will express itself in lemons.
(Hạnh, 2002, pp. 27-28)

Sitting in a circle in the Academic Quadrangle of SFU’s campus, the brutalist architecture is backdropped by the rugged mountain peaks of the Pacific Ranges of British Columbia. After reading the passage aloud to my students, I pause. My presence—still, grounded, and attentive—and I invite them to do the same. Moved by the simple truth of interconnected being, captured through Thích Nhất Hạnh’s lived experience, this passage aptly reflects Hadot’s philosophy as a way of life. We further explore the ideas by looking to the environment around us, identifying interconnectedness by looking deeply at nature. With a think, pair, share activity, the focus shifts to reflecting on our inner lives: What has remained the same about me over time? What has changed? How might these contribute to who I am *becoming* throughout this course? The notion of continual transformation, in self, others, education or society more broadly, remains a theme that we keep re/turning to throughout the term.

Educational assessment for this course focused on both process and product. Firstly, the major assessment project assigned to students was a

creative group project that they would work towards throughout the term. In groups of three to five, they were asked to create a TED talk style video exploring the genealogy of an educational practice or phenomena of their choice. A key trait of genealogy that we investigated was the notion of transformation and how educational practices, such as grading, are subject to continual transformation from external forces. Hanh's story above was a fitting one to demonstrate this idea of flux, as well as providing an opportunity to discuss how internal changes also shape ourselves. This leads to a second assessment task designed for the course: weekly reading and reflection logs. In 500 words, students are expected to integrate their key takeaways from the lecture and assigned readings each week with their personal experiences, as well as how this may inform them as a future educator. These support them in meaningfully engaging with the course content. In tutorials, I intentionally strive to provide opportunities for reflection as a scaffold for their written logs, but also as a life-giving practice to attend to who they are, and are becoming, more broadly. The final assessment component is attendance and participation, which places values on the participation of all aspects of the learner, aiming to positively recognize the holistic nature of education.

Applying contemplative pedagogy echoes my own ongoing explorations of self-cultivation, study, and transformation as a scholar-practitioner. *Who* I am in this HE space becomes a statement of resistance to neoliberal practices of accountability. My moral responsibility to students calls for a reorientation of society's current needs, shifting what "public accountability" is. As an alternative epistemology, we, both educator and students, co-create spaces which move towards "a comprehensive and deep understanding of self and world" (Zajonc, 2013, p. 91). This way of being and seeing is grounded in relational orientations and is a constant process

that oscillates between educational theory, practice, and praxis. Responses from students include consistent attendance from a majority of each cohort, a willingness to participate in learning activities, maintenance of a healthy work-life balance to manage course workload, an openness to share their vulnerabilities and personal challenges in ways that are comfortable, the development of relationships through peer and group dialogue, and continued enrollment in other education electives or the PDP program in subsequent terms. All these aspects are part of a continual, gradual transformation of the learner throughout the course.

The Luxury of Philosophy for Educators

I am cognizant that not every educator in HE may have the affordances to effectively integrate contemplative pedagogies underpinned by Hadot's ideas given individual structural, political and temporal constraints.² As aforementioned, this paper sows the seeds for generative philosophical conversations to be had vis-à-vis formation of self in relation to others and pedagogical practice.

Hadot's (2002/2005) article "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers" uses Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* as an example of an individual who actively chooses to live a certain philosophical mode of life. Thoreau's life included "manual labor and poverty, but [it] also opened up to him an immensely enlarged perception of the world" (Hadot, 2002/2005, p. 233). I am not advocating

² A growing body of research around contemplative approaches to education have sought to develop curricular and pedagogical applications across various disciplines and contexts. These may offer pertinent examples to readers. Notable works include Barbezat and Bush's (2013) *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning*; Gunnlaugson et al.'s (2017) *The Intersubjective Turn: Practical Approaches to Contemplative Learning and Inquiry Across Disciplines*; and Jeffrey et al.'s (2023) *Presence in the Online World: A Contemplative Perspective and Practice Guide for Educators*.

for educators to begin fleeing into the depths of a forest, but what we can take away from Hadot's exploration of Thoreau is his devotion to a philosophical discourse, lived through practices. By designing curriculum and instruction that builds opportunities for students to spend time in nature, be alone with their thoughts, or engage in embodied somatic movements, we put Hadot's theory of living philosophically into practice. There are currently a wealth of schools and programs which may already be offering activities of a contemplative nature: forest schools, outdoor education, environmental literacy, arts-based programs, and the like. But there may be a different value in framing these using the Hadotian and contemplative lens. This would be, as Thoreau describes it: "a little star-dust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched" (Thoreau, 1971, as cited in Hadot, 2002/2005, p. 234). One might call these the immeasurables, lying "outside the realm of quantifiable, measurable, predictable, and controllable knowledge that the still dominant modern Western empiricist epistemic paradigm valorizes" (Walsh & Bai, 2017, p. 2). They help create aesthetic experiences in education, offering access to what Hadot called 'cosmic consciousness', the notion "that we are a part of the cosmos, and the consequent dilation of our self throughout the infinity of universal nature" (Hadot, 1981/1995, p. 266). Being aware of one's place in relation to others, the more-than-human, and the cosmos can allow learners to see with fresh eyes and take on an expanded awareness. Educators have the agency to curate learning ecologies and pedagogical encounters which increase the chances for this relationality to be experienced.

To fashion ourselves as educators who can offer the learning that is being advocated for here, we must ask ourselves:

- What philosophical mode of life am I choosing to engage with?

- In what ways is this projected onto my pedagogical practice?
- How does this affect student learning and relationships?
- In my daily work as an educator, am I giving intention, and attention to living in alignment with my beliefs, actions and speech?
- How do I respond when audit culture or accountability practices misalign with this?
- Can I respond in a way that is more compassionate, empathetic, and sustainable?

These questions spark inquiries that are situated within the growing field of contemplative and holistic education. Hadot (2001/2011) points to this way of living philosophically as:

Anything but a luxury. The drama of the human condition is that it is impossible not to philosophize, and at the same time it is impossible to philosophize But worries, necessities, and the banalities of daily life prevent us from acceding to this conscious life of all its possibilities It can only be a fragile conquest, always threatened. (pp. 189-190)

The pressures of capitalist society and neoliberal education constantly threaten my decision to devote myself to a philosophical mode of living—as a human being and an educator, both of which cannot be separated. Both philosophy and philosophy of education "appear to be luxurious areas of study perhaps out of touch with the real world and its demands" (Jackson, 2024, p. 246). However, these tensions within the field of philosophy of education, and those throughout education more broadly, create fault-lines which I carefully visit and learn to navigate, it becomes "a

rich and distinctive source of reflexivity, responsiveness, self-scrutiny, and criticality” (Jackson, 2024, p. 252). Hence, the courage for me to maintain attention to a philosophical way of life—both in and out of educational ecologies—is dynamic, constantly responding to change, and ultimately, a holistic endeavor. These attitudes hold pedagogical purpose: forming, rather than informing myself, students and society more broadly. The spaces I create as an educator to recognize the humanity of self and others, thus, is a pedagogical experience. My hope is that my work on inner transformation and the external embodiment of this as an educator creates rippling effects for social change. The future educators and professionals that are in my learning ecologies are offered ways of thinking and being that may influence *who* they are in their various settings. The inner work that both students and I do is not a solipsistic endeavor for solely personal recognition or gain, but one situated within a collective attempt towards humanity’s harmony and interconnected existence.

Concluding Reflections

The audit culture in HE remains pervasive across institutions globally. Practices concerned with public accountability run the risk of creating an education that is fragmented, *careless*, and disembodied. I have offered a case for Hadot’s concept of “philosophy as a way of life” for educators, along with investigating how this translated to educational practice through my lived experience as a teaching assistant for undergraduate courses at SFU. Furthermore, I have put forward the claim that teaching is to be “a mode of existing-in-the-world” (Hadot, 1981/1995, p. 265), and that giving attention, and working on, our inner life holds pedagogical value for cultivating relationality with our students. While I am not agreeable to any homogenous manifestations of philosophy as a way of life by educators, I am earnest about intentionally

bringing awareness to how we form *who* we are in learning ecologies and the influence this has on students. This paper is intended to pave the way for generative conversations, which may agitate our current ways of living—rupturing safety and banality to daily life. To visit the faultlines between our inner lives and outer expressions of this in our pedagogical practice offers a space that is pregnant with possibilities in regenerating humanity in holistic and embodied ways, ultimately a collective attempt towards harmony and interdependent existence.

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