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# Brilliant Yet Shadowed: Shining a Light on Lesser- Known Thinkers of Education

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Brilliant Yet Shadowed: Shining a light on lesser-known thinkers of education

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Shadows are created by objects disrupting a source of light and often metaphorically refer to something hidden. For something to be seen, it is necessary to bring it into the light. The metaphor of “light” is timeless and an elegant one to employ. Not only is the idea of “enlightenment” somewhat synonymous with education as the student moves from a negative to a positive state (not-being to being), but the Greek origin of the word theory is θεωρίᾱ which can be translated as “sight” as well as “theory”.

In this special issue, we aim to redirect focus to some voices which are lesser known, lesser heard about and are therefore absent from thematic discussions in which they have contributed significantly. While thinking about education as field of inquiry, we are bolstered by a canon of seminal thinkers and texts with which every self-respecting young researcher ought to be acquainted. For something to become canonical, of course, means that it must hold certain criteria to be included; thus, what is canonical is generally replete with permeations of the same dominant ideas. This prompted the question: if education can, and should, be characterised as a human endeavour, why is it only a select group of humans whose thoughts seem to garner the most importance? Whose voices are missing? What would change if other thoughts were brought into focus? Of course, postmodernists asked the same such questions of history, science, and philosophy in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and so the proposition inherent in the title of this special issue is not radically new. On the other hand, neither is it intended to act as an assault on those theorists and philosophers who have been significantly studied and who provided material to prop up the dominant discourses in education for centuries (perhaps even millennia). Rather, we intend to offer a wider lens through which to examine, and critique, the commonly conceived notions of education that we take for granted both in research and practice.

Moreover, in view of a perceived mismatch between contemporary research in education theory and education practice, it is hoped that by shining a spotlight on the hitherto lesser-known theorists, it may encourage a renewed optimism in the pragmatic dimension of theoretical research. Many of the articles feature figures who strode across the frontier to set up their own schools or were significantly involved in the setting up of other influential institutions. Many of these schools and institutions are still operating with the philosophies of their founders (or interpretations thereof) resonating in every student-teacher interaction; every scratch of a pencil; every corridor, hall, and classroom that these ideas built. In short, there is no practice without, first, a theory. As you peruse through this special issue, you may find similarities and points of convergence but also find interpretations of terminology that speaks from its origins and cultural history rather than a universality.

We have grouped these papers together so that they represent the prominent themes presented by the authors: method, politics, feminism, and social activists. We begin by looking at those theorists whose legacy suggests different ways of thinking about, and practising, education. We learn about an alternative method of viewing experience and expertise from the Japanese psychologist Giyoo Hatano; the importance of slow thinking from Cleanthes of Assos; and Henriette Herz – the salonnière whose forging of a space for discussion proved influential to the German thinkers of the Romantic period, many of whom, in turn, influence modern educational theorists.

We then move on to those whose educational thought was intertwined with their political and nationalist leanings. A broad perspective on this is offered as we move from China and the influence of Chang Po-Ling, through to Italy's Gerardo Marrotta, via the thoughts of the Turkish theorist Ziya Gokalp and Venezuela's Simon Rodriguez. The diversity of thoughts across each of these geographical, and temporal, contexts is evident, and cements the idea that education, even outwith formal systems, is inherently political.

As such, we address a particular political framework in our next section: feminism. The thinkers in this section had the explicit intention of educating women but as will be noted, had various peripheral intentions, means, and methods of doing so, although there is something of a religious thread running through each. Nana Asmu'u, a member of the Yan Teru Muslim sect, showed her alliance to progressive education when she decided to have exclusively female members of her community as teachers to ensure students felt seen and represented. Begum Rokeya, in Bangladesh, sought to bring women into the light as a reaction to the oppression she observed as a Muslim woman. Motoko Hani, in Japan, also intended her education as a means of female empowerment, but with a specific view towards self-governance. Hani's strong Christian views are evident throughout her writings.

The final section concerns educators interested in educational and social reform, thus the application of their thought becomes the focus of these papers. Beginning with Korczack, who held particular views on the rights of children that were ahead of their time, through to the Indian thinkers Narayana Guru who held a philosophical vision of universal equality; and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur who cemented the contribution of Hindu Astral Sciences to the full corpus of scientific discourse, recognising the reasonable juxtaposition of Eastern and Western thought. Tao Xingzhi similarly intended to bridge the gap between the educational thoughts of the East and West, and this final article talks about the introduction of the notion of "Xing" that allowed him to do so in his theory and practice.

Each of the brilliant theorists in this special issue are stepping out of the shadows and taking their deserved place in the spotlight. We invite you to embrace this journey across different times, cultures, roots and reasons.

A Vision of Expertise and Education: The Ideas of Giyoo Hatano  
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Giyoo Hatano was a Japanese cognitive and developmental psychologist. He and his coworkers, in particular Kayoko Inagaki, developed theories of expertise and concept learning with broad implications for education.

Hatano and colleagues made genuine and important contributions on these educationally important issues and presented a nuanced and at times unifying theory of learning. Their focus was broad ranging, encompassing children's early learning and thinking, the 'cognitive tools' used in reading and mathematics, and the concept of expertise as it applies to both schooling and to cultural practices as diverse as raising goldfish, making kimonos, and using an abacus.

Their approach "always focused on central issues and on combining theory with data" (Goodnow et al., 2007, p. 16). Yet, their work is often overshadowed compared to other thinkers whose work pertains to education and to theories of learning. This chapter aims to explore the implications of their work and to share it with a broader audience.

### ***An innovative take on expertise***

My first engagement with Hatano's work was with an article on expertise that he co-authored with Inagaki, and which outlines two paths for expertise and discusses the implications for children's thinking. Hatano and Inagaki (1986) argued that through extensive practice of everyday tasks and procedures, young children can develop a conceptual understanding and "can be flexible and adaptive, e. g., 'invent' other procedural knowledge" (p. 30).

As such, the paper conflicts with mainstream Piagetian theory. Jean Piaget's constructivist model set out a universal series of developmental stages, each featuring qualitative changes and constraints in a child's thinking. It proposes that young children cannot think scientifically. Hatano and Inagaki suggested that this view and its associated research underestimated children by testing them on trivial tasks that don't represent deep learning in everyday contexts.

The Hatano and Inagaki (1986) paper goes on to outline two distinct routes for expertise: *routine* and *adaptive*. The former describes how those with experience can become fast and efficient in a very restricted domain, unable to go beyond the repetition of familiar tasks. Routine experts are efficient but struggle with unfamiliar tasks. Abacus skill are one example; Hatano (1982) had previously found that the skill was highly compartmentalised, failing to transfer to general mathematics competence. An adaptive expert, in contrast, can innovate (Hatano & Oura, 2003). They recognise a successful strategy and think creatively about its benefits before they try it (Hatano & Inagaki, 1996).

As well as being a compelling way to characterise two types of expertise, this view also presents a challenge for pedagogy; as adaptive expertise is usually more desirable, education must think about how to foster it (Bransford et al., 2000).

### ***Development and culture***

Another contribution made by Hatano in collaboration with Kayoko Inagaki suggested that children typically develop a naive theory of biological processes (Hatano & Inagaki, 1994). Specifically, Hatano and Inagaki demonstrated commonalities in how children think about both animals and plants and showed that even very young children perceive that animals grow not through volition but because of the consumption of nutrients.

The idea that pre-school children have naive theories of any sort is another departure from the mainstream Piagetian theory of cognitive development; the latter assumes that children are incapable of theorising at this age. And while Hatano and Inagaki were not the first researchers to raise the idea that some types of learning were ‘privileged’ in the sense of being easier to learn (see Carey, 1987), the question of whether such a status applied to the learning of biology specifically was unresolved at the time.

Combining this insight with examples of everyday expertise that they had studied, the researchers went on to argue children gradually restructure their knowledge, with naive theories replaced by more accurate, scientific understanding (Hatano, 1996) – another concept with educational implications.

### ***Cultural insights***

The research of Hatano and colleagues drew heavily on local examples of expert learning, both routine and adaptive, including farmers and sushi makers in Japan. This focus illustrated their desire to understand expertise in its cultural context, helping to integrate insights into the nature of expertise with socio-cultural processes. In studying everyday cultural contexts, they eschewed the relatively artificial methodologies common to developmental psychology and its emphasis on schooling, paving the way to a broader understanding of skills development and expertise in education (Goodnow et al., 2007).

For example, Oura and Hatano (2001) explored how the nature of the perceived social audience changes as expertise increases; a beginner may perform an action for their tutor’s approval, but an expert has a broader audience in mind. In collaborative activity, such as when a group of people (researchers, musicians, etc.) produce something new, Hatano (2005) championed a two-level analysis whereby an expert helps to develop a shared product but also draws on this to refine and revise their own personal knowledge and expertise. This and other work by Hatano and colleagues influenced how researchers theorise about creativity (e.g., see Gube & Lajoie, 2020).

Another question the researchers explored concerns why Japan uses more than one writing system, when the kana system (based on syllables) is in principle sufficient to write any Japanese text. The answer, it appears, is that although the kana system is easier for beginners, the kanji system can be faster for those with expertise (Hatano et al., 1981), functioning as an effective cognitive tool (Cole, 2007).

In studying questions rooted in local culture, such findings, perhaps ironically, provided general insights into how people think and learn. There may indeed be an argument that the ideas published by Hatano constitute a unique learning theory in its own right, rather than a refinement of Piagetian constructivism. They sought to delve into the nuances of what is naturally given, what is cultural, and how the two connect (Goodnow et al., 2007). The work maintained an emphasis on the trajectory and constraints of cognitive development that was unusual in research into expertise, while making more room for socio-cultural influences than was typical of developmental psychology at the time.

### ***Schooling***

With the emphasis on everyday expertise that characterised their work, it might be assumed that Hatano and colleagues were uninterested in the school classroom. However, these researchers clearly saw the advantage of applying insights from everyday expertise to schooling. In doing so, rather than assuming the latter as the proper arena for educational research, they developed unusual questions and challenges for pedagogy and the curriculum.

In general terms, Hatano and Oura (2003) argue that most of the fundamentals of expertise can readily be applied to schooling, but lament school structure: “ ... students are seldom expected to become experts in any particular domain. Rather, they are expected to learn uniformly in a number of prescribed subject-matter domains” (Hatano & Oura, 2003, p. 27). These domains, the researchers add, typically lack social significance to the learners. Hatano and Oura further highlight the motivational variability among school students compared to hobbyists and advise careful consideration of individual variability among school students.

Nevertheless, Hatano and Oura (2003) argued that the features of gaining expertise in schooling are much the same as in other contexts: an expert must develop well-structured knowledge, engage in many years of (deliberate) practice, and will typically be supported by people and artefacts of various kinds. They therefore see the potential of schooling to form each student into a “baby adaptive expert” (p. 28), setting them on the road to expertise, albeit with some distance to go. They also praise pedagogical practices such as the jigsaw technique (e.g., Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979) and enquiry-based projects, as these prompt learners to delve deeply into specific topics.

In applying their work to schooling, Hatano and Oura (2003) address another important issue for education – the difficulty of transferring learning beyond the practice situation (see Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Specifically, they note that the failures of transfer that often characterise schooling are not a major feature of adaptive expertise in everyday contexts, even among children. As an example, that also illustrates children’s facility for biological concept learning, it appears that children with goldfish as pets can generalise key insights to the raising of frogs (Hatano & Inagaki, 1992).

For those who seek to reform formal education, transfer is often seen as a serious challenge (e.g., Griswold, 2023; Perkins & Salomon, 1992), and this work presents an intriguing possible solution via targeting adaptive (rather than routine) expertise and increasing the cultural richness of topics and activities. Hatano and Oura (2003) add that adaptive expertise is more likely to be fostered “when people repeatedly participate in a practice that requires meeting varied and changing demands”; this notion of practice concords with the desirable difficulties framework (Bjork & Bjork, 2011; 2023), which likewise emphasises varied practice in the service of learning and transfer.

Teaching and lecturing, too, can be analysed in terms of routine and adaptive expertise. In their chapter on how teachers learn and develop, Hammerness et al. (2006) conceptualised this as (ideally) a process of gaining adaptive expertise, noting that it is highly desirable for an educator to show flexibility, rather than merely routine efficiency, in deploying their conceptual knowledge and pedagogical skills.

### *To conclude*

Overall, the work of Hatano and colleagues presents a nuanced take on important issues, combining cognitive and socio-cultural insights in an era when many researchers and educationalists focus on one or the other. Their work on expertise champions the value of knowledge but also emphasises the need to think flexibly and to transfer what has been learned. Insights from their work on development give space to both innate influences and the role of nurture. In the words of psychologist Michael Cole, Hatano and colleagues “offered us fresh perspectives that nudged us, or forced us, to reconsider long-standing assumptions about human development” (Cole, 2007, p. 73).

Personally, I find myself increasingly turning to this research when working on issues related to conceptual development and cognition and when teaching students about theories of learning. Adaptive expertise was also a foundational concept advanced in my co-authored book on creativity (Badger & Firth, 2025). As a cognitive scientist views it, creativity involves being

flexible and coming up with novel strategies and products in a field where you well-established domain knowledge – that is, it involves applying adaptive expertise. In my view, the research and ideas of Hatano and colleagues have significant implications for theories of learning and should not be left in the shadows.

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Cleanthes of Assos - On Pace with Mind  
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Perhaps the most mortifying statement that Diogenes Laertius, the historian of ancient philosophers, makes towards the early Stoic, Cleanthes of Assos, is that the industrious hulk of a man was “extraordinarily slow” (Diogenes Laertius 1991, p. 275). Labeling one’s intellectual dearth as such presents that thinker as possibly having an inherent dysfunction, attenuating the man’s rational development. This claim, devoid of precise details, might alienate such an individual, for the term *extraordinarily* adds much more negativity to Cleanthes’ slowness, such that the philosopher may have struggled to make sense of things. Apparently, studying the ancient conception of physics proved to be an area of weakness for him, but his interest in philosophy, especially the budding viewpoints of the Stoic school, did not deter him from taking on any hardships. Is this philosopher doomed to fail, or is he conditioning himself to improve?

Cleanthes is not one of the most celebrated stoics, but he is definitely deserving of a more thorough look. If his slowness is a natural impediment, especially since he spent 19 years of his life as Zeno of Citium’s protégé, a feat that might make modern-day philosophy departments regard such a person as a disappointment, then he must use his abilities as best as he can. In terms of learning, especially understanding the stoic doctrine, slowness becomes synonymous with a person’s attempt at comprehension. There is a prolonged mental engagement with a topic for study. Familiarity, as would be expected, sets in because of one’s perennial exposure to what is unknown or problematic, stimulating further intrigue. Simple exposure to something is not enough, for a determined mental revisiting, or reevaluating, strives to establish permanence in one’s mind. This exercising of thought is consistent with a process that is never fully complete; more time should be required for a person’s understanding to retain what has been deduced and to advance beyond that. Slowness, in a rational capacity, has the most accommodating feature to enable one’s cognition to linger patiently before branching out eventually. So then, there is plenty to learn from the old slowpoke.

Receiving frequent slams from classmates and people in public might upset any person, but Cleanthes would shoulder such abuse by recontextualising what others have said. As Diogenes Laertius reports on one occasion, someone “reproached him with cowardice” and Cleanthes’ response clarified that “That is why I so seldom go wrong” (Ibid., p. 277). Important to this admission is that the thinker is fallible, but not often. There is not only a confidence in expressing his high degree of not failing, but the manner in which he challenges the reproach reveals that his critic has not taken into account what preoccupies Cleanthes’ thoughts on some issue. Since cowardice implies that a person has retreated from some predicament likely due to one’s fear of something bemusedly problematic, Cleanthes is showing himself to be careful around certain confrontations. He remains engaged, taking the matter on in a non-aggressive, vigilant manner and from a secure vantage point. So, Cleanthes sets the stage to avoid being defeated, or mistaken, and steps back, an initial movement away from any threat--or a delay in reacting immediately, to assess how to handle the situation before becoming assuredly direct in his involvement. This philosopher is capable of relying on his critical endowments as he sees fit.

Putting what Cleanthes is doing into a temporal context could be best expressed as a reasoned time out. Plenty can go on in this suspension of time, especially in terms of thinking something out, for in a piece critical of fast paced thinking, Joseph Sen presents hesitation as a calculated, disciplined maneuver. For a person to pause before arriving at some conclusion reveals that “an effort to refrain from a course of action” involves the exercising of an inner strength, a maintaining of rational composure (Sen 2000, p. 610). Such forbearance protects,

from Cleanthes' vantage point, a person from going wrong, for more time is required to study the situation. There seems to be concern over whether one's thoughts are fully developed, or, better still, whether one's reasoning has enough insight to function with certainty.

In keeping with the stoic tradition, there are known strategies that help shape one's acuity. One in particular is for a person to adopt *aneikaiotēs*, a meritorious method of philosophical inquiry (Long 1978, p. 108). Attributed to Zeno, the founder of stoicism, this technique involves a person to champion a "Freedom from precipitancy...a knowledge when to give or withhold the mind's assent to...what at the moment seems probable, so as to not be taken in by it" (Diogenes Laertius 1991, p. 157). Since stoics possessed that "attitude toward discovering truth" (Long 1978, p. 114), a student should know better than to cave in with what one's mind assents to, an accepting of a first impression of some event in the world, a perspective told by another person without much substantiation, or whatever suddenly fascinates and stimulates one's desires. For Cleanthes, there must be something appealing about *aneikaiotēs*, an "unhastiness" to determine what counts as true when some thought-provoking matter arises at a given moment and uncertainty takes hold. Being "extraordinarily slow" may be the necessary condition for a person to sit back and let it all soak in.

Circumspection should not be deemed a laziness where one undergoes a cognitive shutdown when what there is to know is overwhelming. Cleanthes deems such a scenario favorable, for he relished the opportunity to put forth a lot of effort into a task at hand. One's recognizing "that toil [is] a good thing" would have to include all epistemological strife as well (Diogenes Laertius, p. 277; modification mine). Consider once again Sen's point about one's refraining from pursuing a particular action, for a person may resist the temptation of having to assent to what seems truthful, but cannot establish, in one's mind, it as being genuinely true. This doubt, a sample of "toil" or inner turmoil, indicates that someone's cognitive faculties are actively involved in seeking clarification.

Adding toil to one's slowness seems as though it would stunt intellectual growth. Should personal growth come to fruition, then, one's critical engagement of challenges, regardless of their being from internal or external sources, constitutes a personal preparedness. If one's dealing with a matter is toilsome, the taking of one's time to attend to the hardships means that one's mind is engrossed with what is at hand—or even later on, when one recalls what's been preserved in memory—and becomes aware of how to apply oneself to such a circumstance. Cleanthes, addressing his means to survive while being so impoverished and attempting to spend as much of his free time on education—an open field where an impoverished mind seeks to enrich itself, affirms that his "love of philosophy" was so powerful that he was willing to "undertake any other labour" (Ibid., p. 275). Working as such brings about a peace of mind, for there is a time to devote oneself to thought. One must dig deep to realize that Cleanthes' watering of gardens or digging trenches, examples of toilsome, physical activities, were indeed time-consuming, but necessary for exercising his mind when it came to philosophical study. Even while engaged in these laborious, muscle-building enterprises, Cleanthes' mind continues working, for his approach neither distracts him from nor weakens his commitment to what matters most.<sup>1</sup> To think that toil is a waste of time is one's failure to

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<sup>1</sup> As part of their training regiment, some cynic philosophers deemed it necessary to exercise both mind and body in tandem. Worth noting is that, for Diogenes of Sinope, such a routine consisted of "constant" bodily training in order that an individual may "arrive at virtue." Not only did good physical health contribute to the development of an individual's "extraordinary manual skill through practice," it further, through "incessant toil," contributed "to the training of the mind," ensuring that such "labours would not have been unprofitable or ineffective" (Diogenes Laertius 1991, pp. 71, 73). That reference to profitability may be an allusion to the fact that since cynics lived with the bare essentials, their reliance on themselves meant that both the body and mind had to be in peak condition, determining an individual's true worth. Cleanthes was most likely aware of this practice, because Diogenes of Sinope taught Crates of Thebes, who in succession was Zeno of Citium's first teacher of philosophy

conceive of how a person adequately occupies time, based on Cleanthes' experience, so as to exert one's thinking and, gradually, refine one's understanding.

Promoting a slow approach might not win over those who are perspicacious. Those minds that function at a much quicker pace would, conceptually, be best suited to meet short deadlines and, possibly, accomplish as much work as time allows. Rushing headlong in thought, however, is what Cleanthes regards as that which would make him go wrong if his pace hastened. Fusing productivity and expediency, within the context of a person's performance, runs the risk of sacrificing accuracy and undervaluing, should it apply, truthfulness. Taking one's time is epistemologically advantageous to someone learning as opposed to one's competing against time, for the former operates within a workable time frame where "there are no fixed boundaries" (Sen 2000, p. 607), while the latter has determined that time is one's nemesis and must be beaten. Beating the clock, as it were, implies that a person must have enough confidence in one's ability to process all there is for whatever problem one faces and satisfy that restrictive limit of time that one places on oneself. Such problem solving would invest more in the time it takes to solve the problem than focusing directly on the problem. Perhaps that type of reasoning would ironically make Cleanthes in a Biercean<sup>2</sup> sense leery of someone thinking on one's feet.

Ignoring Cleanthes' contribution to a personalized approach to learning is a dismissing of "the development of [the] dialectic as a systematic science" that is, to expand on A. A. Long's analysis, "indispensable to all philosophical inquiry" (Long 1978, pp. 106, 107; modification mine). It is unfortunate, though, that no one can probe into how the stoic formulated, according to Diogenes Laertius' list, several treatises on education, knowledge, dialectic, insoluble problems, and other similar topics (Diogenes Laertius 1991, p. 283), since they have likely been lost because of careless preservation methods. What is left, as primary sources, might come across as scant, but his influence, Long credits, has struck a chord in others.

Later stoics, Seneca and Epictetus—names of more appreciable stoic philosophers, fashioned therapeutic and inquisitive aspects of going slow to the way in which a person should think (Sen 2000, pp. 609, 610). What is beneficial in having these fellow thinkers promote this personalized taking of time to deal with matters is that Cleanthes' slowness may have been recognized as something more than a burdening impediment. Adopting the style of a previous stoic instructor, it seems, gives cogency to that learning process. In those hundreds of years from the start of stoic philosophy to those following it in the Imperial Age, there remains an impressive feature of how one's mind operates, striving to establish soundness in one's reasoning once all avenues have been, if possible, explored without ever surrendering to falsehoods or mere speculation. Such a mental task seems mighty elaborate, but for a person to grasp a coherent understanding without question, thinking slow tends not to miss out any of the intricacies, whether apparent or obscured, of some issue. Most impressive about this developing of one's ability to reason and learn is that going slow works for everyone.

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(Rist 1969, p. 78). Though similarities between what Cleanthes and the cynics practiced exist, Cleanthes' impoverished state had more to do with his becoming self-reliant as opposed to picking up that lesson from the cynics.

<sup>2</sup> Ambrose Bierce ridicules certain types of individuals in his definition of a coward. He writes: "One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs" (Bierce 1993, p. 19). Though Bierce's coward is definitely quick to react when menacingly provoked, it is only fair to question whether such thinking exclusively concentrates on urgency or comprehension of that situation. Urgency as such excludes any temporal considerations where there is literally no time for someone to think—reflect on what happened and anticipate what to do next aside from running away. An individual's thinking is restrictive because of some danger, but that peril does not prove to be immediately fatal, allowing one time, however long, to appropriately figure out what has happened and how to go on from there. Lastly, since Bierce relies on a metaphor to have one's legs do one's thinking, one might find this illustration as an example of where appropriate thinking is not used. So when Cleanthes acknowledges that he goes wrong, though seldomly, something about his thinking did not function in the best possible way.

Acknowledging that later stoics, specifically Epictetus, stressed how each person took on epistemological challenges, to phrase it in a facile manner, to make sense of reality, Gretchen Reydam-Schils notes a commonality for those applying this stoic craft. “All humans,” she claims, “not just a few exceptionally gifted ones, can and should give assent cautiously” (Reydam-Schils 2005, p. 27; see also Long 1978, p. 116). Again, one’s taking such cautionary measures to one’s thoughts means that the process does not and should not advance at lightning speed; otherwise, a person exposes that compulsive side of one’s reasoning to reach an end immediately as opposed to correctly. The wisdom behind thinking slowly can be attributed to the dedication that Cleanthes had shown to conditioning his faculties with intellectual and non-intellectual hardships, regardless of however long those struggles took, and keeping pace with his own mind’s natural ability, not with time.

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Henriette Herz: Influential Salonnière  
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Henriette Julie Herz (1764-1847) was a Jewish woman at the centre of Romanticism<sup>3</sup> – the period in which pedagogy established itself as an autonomous discipline<sup>4</sup> – whose Berlin salon was the site of social gatherings that would go on to shape the course of educational thinking. Herz's talents were numerous: she was intelligent and studious, particularly as a linguist (she learned over 10 languages); she was full of social charm and wit that she used to keep company with many of the leading thinkers of the time; and she had a goddess-like demeanour with captivating looks that continually aroused suspicions amongst Berlin's gossip-hungry society (Bilski & Braun, 2005). Collectively, these talents made Herz the perfect *salonnière*, and Herz's salon was attended by many leading thinkers associated with Romanticism, such as Friedrich, August and Dorothea Schlegel, Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt and Friedrich Schleiermacher. But whilst significant attention has been drawn to the male protagonists in the history of ideas, Herz's role – and indeed other *salonnières* such as Rahel Varnhagen and Madame de Tecin – is less well-known<sup>5</sup>. This short piece instead places Henriette Herz at the centre of the story as one of the leading conductors of Romanticism, a symphony of fragmented harmonisation and dissonance brought about by collaborative thinking, convivial discussion and dynamic productivity across all artistic forms that has had a large legacy on how we humans understand ourselves and our relations, particularly regarding educational theory.

To understand Herz's leading role in Romantic educational thinking and the Berlin salon as an educational thought for contemporary times, it is necessary to understand the *salon* as the societal institution it was in Herz's times. Salons, also known as “at-homes”, were weekly social gatherings held at a private residence on a fixed day at the same time, accompanied by midday dinner or evening supper. Whilst previously the term referred to spaces in aristocratic residences predominantly in Paris – at which French upper classes and aristocracy would meet in groups to discuss important affairs – a salon later referred to a specific form of social activities within a home that were not mere leisure but social spaces that valued ideas and fostered discussion, useful to those attending and also intended to be useful to society beyond<sup>6</sup>. Salons, in contrast to other social spaces that often had the simple goal of passing time not working, were one of the first institutions of modern culture that provided the base for Enlightenment and subsequent Romantic thinking. Of course, meaningful and academic discussions also occurred outwith salons but, as Jürgen Habermas notes, salons turned “conversation into criticism and *bons mots* into arguments” (in Goodman, 1989, p. 339). It was in salons that conversation and wit developed beyond light-hearted discussion into well-formed critiques and new ideas. And there can be no doubt of the central status of Herz's salon, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1798) commented: “no person of importance comes to Berlin without visiting [Herz's salon]” (in Bilski and Braun, 2005, p.26).

Herz's role as *salonnière* of the most well-known Berlin salon began in partnership with her husband, Marcus Herz, a well-regarded physician and philosopher, and disciple of Immanuel Kant who had studied in Königsberg. At first, Henriette and Marcus hosted friends

<sup>3</sup> Romanticism is broadly understood here as a defining ‘mood’ that began in Prussia as a response to the disillusionment with Enlightenment thinking brought about by the French Revolution 1789. Whilst this article focuses on Prussia (now Germany), Romanticism also had its Scottish counterpart by way of Robert Burns and Walter Scott.

<sup>4</sup> See Kenklies (2012) for the role of Johann Herbart and Friedrich Schleiermacher in the formation of pedagogy as a discipline in the early nineteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> A contributing factor is that Herz burned most of her written works and letters in older age.

<sup>6</sup> The term *salon* applied to gatherings such as those hosted by Herz is in fact an anachronism: only in 19<sup>th</sup> century did the term come to be used to designate social activities inside the home, as opposed to an interior space in private aristocratic residence as it was used in earlier times.

and acquaintances informally at their residence who were interested in discussing literature, philosophy and the arts. Over time, these meetings grew to become more structured, regular and with wider participation. The gatherings also split, with Henriette's meetings oriented towards literature, art, and social topics, attracting writers, poets, and artists, whilst Marcus' group discussed philosophical and scientific topics. Henriette's group developed to become a significant cultural hub, known for its lively and inclusive atmosphere. This atmosphere suggests what Bollnow (1989) later termed *pedagogical atmosphere*, and it helps elucidate the relevance of Herz to educational thinking. Herz's qualities such as love, trust, serenity, humour and goodness were key to the success of the salon by facilitating a productive pedagogical atmosphere.

As *salonnière*, Herz ensured that invitations were sent to the right people and the room laid out with flexible seating arrangements, open circles and small clusters, with the only fixed position that of Herz herself on a daybed. During the gatherings, Herz was master of ceremonies and leader of the discussion and debate, which was the core activity of the salon. In addition, it was common for either Herz or one of the guests to provide a musical or theatrical performance or a literary reading either of their own works or of others, for example, of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*- a highly influential text on Romanticism<sup>7</sup>. This structure was common across most salons, but Herz's gatherings were set apart by their openness and inclusivity, serving as welcoming cultural hubs where both Jewish and Christian intellectuals could come together, and conversation could roam freely, all the time facilitated and expedited by Herz's gracious hospitality. In educational terms: the pedagogical atmosphere that Herz created at her salon led to some of the most lively, creative and inclusive gatherings of the times, and it illustrates Herz and her salon as relevant inspirations for contemporary educational thinking. Herz's salon experienced its heyday in the 1790s, and continued until Marcus's death in 1803, at which point Henriette largely withdrew from social life.

However, a relationship that started during the salon days but continued beyond<sup>8</sup> was Henriette's close connection with Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher, a renowned theologian and 'founding father' of pedagogy as a discipline, made daily visits to Herz from 1794. They had a close relationship that inevitably attracted the attention and gossip of others who believed that their partnership must have been romantic, but it was in fact nothing more than platonic, characterised by mutual respect, admiration and intellectual stimulation. Herz valued Schleiermacher's contributions to discussions at the salon, and respected him as a theologian, possibly influencing her conversion to Protestantism in 1817; Schleiermacher received Italian lessons from Herz, and he appreciated her continued support with his writing, as well as inclusion in her salon. Together, they enjoyed reading Shakespeare and attending cultural events such as theatre performances and art exhibitions, and they worked together to produce a comprehensive translation of the works of Plato into German. Herz and Schleiermacher's relationship can moreover be seen of particular interest to educationists because of Schleiermacher's foundational role in educational theory, and it was through his meetings with Herz and her salon that his thinking and theorising took shape (Rasch, 2006).

Henriette Herz has long since passed, but we might do well to recall her life, role as *salonniere*, and the role of salons in Romantic educational thinking more broadly. In the present digital era in which shared physical spaces run the risk of being rendered obsolete, consequently atrophying opportunities for sociability, joint attention and serendipitous findings, maybe the Berlin salon can serve as a valuable antidote and educational institution for contemporary times. And perhaps Henriette Herz can be understood as one of the most

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<sup>7</sup> Prominent Romantic theorist Friedrich Schlegel defined Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* as one of the three fundamental preconditions of Romanticism. The other two were the French Revolution and Fichte's 'Ich philosophy'.

<sup>8</sup> They continued meeting until 1806, when French occupation of Berlin made social meetings difficult. Schleiermacher's career also took him to different locations, making meetings with Herz logistically impracticable.

brilliant of educators of the Romantic period who, through her salons, created the space and pedagogical atmosphere needed for thinkers, herself included, to come together and share in the collective endeavour of academic thinking and discussion, in the process laying the foundations for educational theory that remains with us today.

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The modern Chinese educationalist: Chang Po-ling 张伯苓 (1876-1951)

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*Dedication to public interests, acquisition of all-round capability, and aspiration for progress with each passing day*

*The Motto of Nankai 允公允能 日新月异*

There are few descriptions about Chang Po-ling 张伯苓 (1876-1951) in Anglo-phone educational discourse despite the fact that Chang Po-ling has made great contributions to the construction of modern education in China, including the institution of Nankai High School and University in Tianjin, and Chongqing Nankai middle school of which I am a former student. It may, in a short-sighted sense, be observed that he has made less inquiries into the theory and philosophy of education as evidence of his educational thought is relatively fragmented. Nevertheless, there are some sources from which extrapolations of his thoughts can be made. This short paper is, therefore, intended as a basic introduction to Chang Po-ling using material from *The Study of Chang Po-ling's Educational Thought* (1994) 张伯苓教育思想研究, *The Selected Educational Statements of Chang Po-ling* (1984) 张伯苓教育言论选集, and *To Achieve Success One Must Be a bit of a Fool* (2005) 欲成事者须带三分傻气.

Chang Po-ling, born in 1876 in Tianjin, was educated at the Naval Academy in Beiyang (Lorenzen, 1990). China was weak on the global stage in the early twentieth century and Chang Po-ling firmly convinced himself that only through education could the Chinese regain their confidence. With this nationalist intention, he established the aforementioned schools and a university (Esherick & Wa, 1995), and, further, promoted women's education (Beja, 1987). Besides his educational concerns, he was also an advocate of public affairs and public life. The most prominent of his activities was his role in introducing the Olympic movement in China, offering the country a renewed place on the world stage while espousing his idea that good teachers were borne from good sportsmen.

In the proceeding sections, I will consider Chang Po-ling first as an educationalist with reference to his theoretical leanings, before looking at how he applied his thought to his intention to change the fabric of formal education in China.

### ***Chang Po-ling the educationalist***

As Chang Po-ling made significant distinctions between the notion of the educationalist and the notion of the educator, it is important to begin by interpreting what he refers to with these terms. For Chang Po-ling, the educationalist is an absolute, incorrigible, optimist, or idealist who expresses a persistence to educate even when it seems hopeless. This persistence may in turn show itself as quiet calmness, easily being mistaken for submissiveness and lack of initiative. However, such calmness is also regarded as an outward expression of a person who is strong inside in Chinese tradition. This comes from some words in Chinese culture, such as 呆若木鸡, a chicken made of wood, which does not move under any circumstances. Although, as language has changed and this metaphor has developed less favourable connotations, it was originally meant to represent the steady demeanour of the cultivated person. The Educationalist, thus, embodies the calm persistence and the optimism that he can create this in others.

*When things being investigated, knowledge became complete. When knowledge is being complete, the will becomes sincere. When the will is sincere, the mind is correct. When the mind is correct, the self is cultivated. When the self is cultivated, the clan is harmonized. When the clan is harmonized, the country is well governed. When the country is rightly governed, there will be peace throughout the world*

*Great Learning 格物而后知之，知之而后意诚，意诚而后心正，心正而后自修，自修而后家齐，家齐而后国治，国治而后平天下*

Take Great Learning as an example<sup>9</sup>. For Chang Po-ling, the educationalist needs to take responsibility for the well-being of the World/Tian Xia天下<sup>10</sup>. Simultaneously, he implies that school provides a place for simulation of the larger society. To take a literary example, it is like Shakespeare's theatre-as-world in which the school acts as a theatre; teachers and students are like actors. Teachers as actors come to exhaust their ways of self-reliance, as well as guiding students themselves to become self-reliant. A good teacher, therefore, must have a thousand ways to play this role in the face of an unknown future in order to act as an example to their students. Later, it is through the influence of the teacher over a period of time that the student may be capable of reaching out to the unknown future playing out on the world stage beyond the school. At this time, they will be facing the various types of people (villain, mediocre, hero, etc.). Meanwhile, the educationalist should be one who has the capability to return to his or her inner integrity合于己者, and the students should aspire to do the same.

With this in mind, it could be argued that the basic object of education in this case is the human being. Chang Po-ling proposes that, as an educationalist, the question of how to realize the full potential of the different abilities of different people should remain constant in education. The educationalist is like a master miner, and each one's potential is like a treasure. There is no need for the educationalist to have any magic power since the approach to education used by educationalist a la Chang Po-ling is to let nature take its course 顺其自然. Of course, the term nature is a complex concept, but in this context, we can suggest that it refers to the laws and limits of human activity. In particular, it is necessary to know the mind, the capacity and the weaknesses of the educated person, leading them to continue with the good, or desirable, aspects, and asking them to correct the bad, or undesirable, aspects.

In contrast to the educationalist, the educators<sup>11</sup> take forced guidance and mechanical indoctrination as the absolute method of teaching and this does not cultivate the strength for which Chang Po-ling advocates. We need to have the capacity to discern on our own without just following. This exemplifies Chang Po-ling's emphasis on moral self-restraint and is perhaps something that more modern educators, ensconced in a self-serving neo-liberal society, may wish to reflect upon.

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<sup>9</sup> This classic statement describes the ideal path from self-cultivation to social governance. It is important for understanding both Confucianism and modern China.

<sup>10</sup> Let is put aside the question about Tian Xia/World for now. It is the same meaning here.

<sup>11</sup> Educationalist is different from educator in this context: it refers to those who have mastered the natural laws of human activity as described above, and who do not restrict themselves to mechanical and technical teaching.

### *Chang Po-ling the pragmatic educator*

As a young student of Chongqing Nankai, the most impressive thing I remember was a statement by Chang Po-ling<sup>12</sup>. It can be briefly described as ‘Yue Nan Yue Kai越难越开’ (where the word Nan here can mean both the location of the school – south – and difficulty) expressing the attitude that the more difficult life is, the more it opens the way. It is a spirit of universal value, for any age, culture, and location. Such an attitude towards life is Chang Po-Ling’s approach to education.

It is clear from this elegant and thoughtful naming of his institution as Nankai – difficult and south - that Chang Po-ling expressed some kind of educational philosophy; however, it seems that Chang Po-ling's explicit exploration of educational matters focused on practice as opposed to theory and so, the little he published reinforces this imperative. During that time period, in China, education practice did take primacy, with educational thought nothing more than a segue into practice. This reflects Wang Yangming’s idea that knowledge serves primarily as the motivation for action<sup>13</sup>. In other words, Chang Po-ling believed in the pragmatic application of knowledge and that one should be cultivated to absorb and apply knowledge simultaneously.

With this guiding principle in mind, Chang Po-ling set about identifying the problems of Chinese society at the time, with special regard to the position of China on the world stage, and how education should be reformed and put into action to overcome such societal weaknesses. These problems included Chinese physical weakness, conservatism and superstition, lack of scientific knowledge, lack of material goods for living, lack of a sense of solidarity, and lack of concern for the good of the nation as a whole. Thus, he provided some basic suggestions on what education should strive to do:

1. *Focusing on physical education*
2. *Strengthening the development of exact science*
3. *Promoting cultural and social activities*
4. *Provide moral education (Lorenzen, 1990).*

With these principles, Chang Po-Ling hoped to overturn China’s reputation as the sick man of Europe, if not of the world. Despite this, he was not viewed favourably in China at the time of his death due to his links with Taiwan and so, he has only achieved more recognition since the 1980s.

To conclude, Chang Po-Ling exercised some educational influence over China in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by founding several institutions at various levels. His university certainly grew to be one of the most prestigious in China. As a public figure, he was also caught up in the turbulent politics of his time, such that he was largely uncredited for his contributions at the time of his death. Nevertheless, his ideas have continued to rise into prominence over the last 40 years and so now is the apt time to cast a light on his influence in Chinese education.

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<sup>12</sup> The TV series about him. Chang Po-ling (2005). I believe it is a wonderful memory for every Nankaier. The focus of the TV episode is not only on the Chang Po-ling episode itself, but also on the fond memories of the author and his classmates watching the TV episode in a group at sunset.

<sup>13</sup> Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) is a prominent Chinese philosopher. He is one of the key figures of Chinese culture.

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Philosophy and historical Consciousness in Gerardo Marotta's Thinking on Education  
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Gerardo Marotta was a prominent figure of the Neapolitan cultural scene and the president of the Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies in Naples, Italy, from 1975 to 2017, year of his death (IISF, 2025a). Originally a lawyer, Marotta had later become known for his commitment to the enhancement of philosophical knowledge, a task that brought him to build cultural relationships with some of the most important higher education institutions and academics across Europe and beyond (Piga et al., 1999). The 40-years long work of Gerardo Marotta for the education of young people is immense, as shown by the tens of volumes reporting the teaching and research activities of the Institute over 4 decades (IISF, 2010). The scope of this paper will be limited to reflect on the pedagogical principles that drove Marotta to commit his own life and financial resources to this great educational project.

At the heart of Marotta's pedagogical thinking there was a broad conception of philosophy, seen in a strong connection to history. Marotta argued that the education of a new generation of leaders should have been grounded in philosophical as well as **historical consciousness** (Marotta, 1981; Carratelli, 2010; IISF, 2025b). He thought that the great philosophical theories shaping human thinking and action could only be properly taught and understood together with the historical process that they grew out of, which must include the teaching of crucial advancements in all arts and sciences that contributed to shape the human mind over time<sup>14</sup>. The idea of philosophy that his Institute promoted was, therefore, much broader than that taught in the university, as it included specialist seminars on a variety of disciplines and thinkers, not only philosophers. For example, the teaching of Ancient Greek philosophy went along research projects and seminars on the history and arts of the Ancient world; the teaching of European modern philosophy was enriched with the same level of attention to the European history, economics and political thought; the teaching of philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was strengthened with research seminars and lectures in contemporary history, sociology, anthropology, history of art, science and medicine that included presentations of innovative research from a variety of Italian and international scholars. This wide programme reflected Marotta's great aspirations for the education of young people and also an attempt to create a place where scholars of different disciplines could return to have a cultural dialogue outside of their fields of expertise<sup>15</sup>.

His approach to a philosophical education that incorporated historical knowledge, and understanding was inspired mainly by two different notions of history that were prominent in the Italian culture between the 50es and the 70es, i. e. the liberal view of Benedetto Croce and the socialist view of Antonio Gramsci. Croce's historicism was based on the assumption that history shows the people's moral struggle to achieve freedom of thought and action, and the rise and fall of such collective efforts towards freedom (Croce, 1921; 1941; 1972). In the Gramscian pedagogy, the study of historical processes is essential to cultivate a political class consciousness and create the working class's own leaders; these are intellectuals able to guide others through the historical struggle between the bourgeois ruling class and the working people (Urbani, 1967; Gramsci, 1992). Whilst these ideas were popular in the intellectual

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<sup>14</sup> Inspired by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers' essay, *La nouvelle alliance* (Prigogine & Stengers, 1983), Marotta was also particularly interested in the idea of a dialogue between the Humanities and natural sciences. He invited Prigogine to give a lecture at the Institute to further discuss this possibility (Prigogine, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> The general secretary of the Institute, Antonio Gargano, illustrated Marotta's notion of philosophy as the endeavour of keeping an open horizon towards knowledge, in opposition to those who conceived it as one of many specialist subjects (Gargano, 2005).

circles of the Post-War period in which Marotta was educated, he found himself to organise the Neapolitan cultural life in a totally different environment, that resulted from the massification of university access in the 80es and the increasing subject specialisation which followed. He thought that his Institute should have had a different role from the university, which had become a place for professionalisation and training, with restrictions on curricula and programmes of study, mainly covering pre-fixed, specialised content tailored to mass delivery and evaluation (Marotta & Sichirollo, 1999). The programme and method of teaching in the Institute had to be different. Marotta used to prepare the Institute's programme together with his colleagues, Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, an expert of the ancient world and director of study at the Institute, and Antonio Gargano, a historian of philosophical ideas as well as the Institute's general secretary. They consulted with an international scientific committee and a local executive committee to find suitable speakers on an incredibly broad range of scientific and philosophical themes<sup>16</sup>. The programme also remained always opened to new additions, and many scholars and researchers would ask to present their research findings at the Institute. The sessions were open to the public and there was usually a varied audience made of university students, high school teachers and pupils, retired teachers, academics, researchers, authors, or even just citizens curious about the topic. This created a stimulating environment for young researchers and experts, students and teachers who could talk to each other after the seminar without strict time restrictions or the fear of being under evaluation.

Marotta's pedagogical utopia involved the creation, next to the Institute, of an advanced school for young and gifted academics, with the aim of providing them with suitable accommodation, maintenance bursaries and a special library collection<sup>17</sup>; this had to be an environment, he wrote,

*In which they can live together with their peers and their mentors in a climate of industrious study and active philosophical thinking, where that **Humboldtian Leben in Ideen** is possible, that life of ideas that was so necessary yesterday in Naples and more than ever today ... in new forms, but with an attention to tradition (Marotta, 1981, p. 3).*

Marotta persistently stressed out in his speeches that moral coherence and responsibility towards society are essential qualities of those who aspired to be leading intellectuals. He drew on a tradition of Neapolitan thinkers who had promoted cultural, social and political reforms, and coined the distinctive expression of 'civic humanism' or **Neapolitan humanism** to define a philosophical approach that includes such characteristics (Carratelli, 2011; Losurdo, 2006; Montano, 2009). In his view, an academic's integrity was not limited to the respect of specialist subject's methodological standards and scientific values, but involved moral obligations towards the public good, much beyond the requirements of graduation titles. Marotta was indeed a fierce critic of the "social block", a notion to encompass a rooted criminal culture threatening to draw experts and specialists into corrupted practices within and outside academia (IISF, 2025e).

He also believed that a philosophical horizon was more necessary nowadays than ever before as a countervailing power to the growing military tensions that threatened the progress of cultural and scientific international cooperation. Such were the arguments of the appeal for philosophy that Marotta promoted and sponsored together with a group of European

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<sup>16</sup> For a list of the Institute's first scientific committee see IISF, 2025d.

<sup>17</sup> Marotta had created a library of 300 thousand volumes, including rare and antique books, that he meant to donate to students. 1980 he funded a first series of special lectures out of his own financial resources, in the hope that the government would, later, offer additional public funding and a permanent site to host the school and the library, but this never happened. The lectures were published by Bibliopolis (IISFe, 2025), the books lie in a depot (Day, 2012).

intellectuals in 1999. They argued that it was a mistake to focus education on nurturing professional and practical talents whilst allowing philosophical thinking and intellectual history to be pushed aside. ‘It follows from this’, they pointed out, ‘that fewer and fewer people comprehend – or are at all capable of comprehending – historical connections’ (IISF, 1999). Marotta and his European colleagues believed that the lack of understanding of the historical connections between different philosophical ideas would have been disastrous for the new generations and their leaders, as such knowledge was the indispensable premise for conceiving of a genuine encounter between peoples and cultures. The decay of philosophical and historical consciousness, in other words, could have only directed humanity on the path to war.

In conclusion, I would summarise the importance of Gerardo Marotta’s pedagogical thinking in two major points. One concerns the need to look beyond the disciplinary specialisms and work towards a level of cultural dialogue that allows academics and scholars, together with their students, to have a conversation on the future direction of human knowledge in general. The second point concerns the need to remind ourselves that being in higher education requires, both from academics and students of any discipline, an effort bigger than that of gaining skills. The effort must be that of striving to understand the part one plays in the history of culture, not just as an isolated individual, but as a member of a broader society that has its own ethical struggles and goals.

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Ziya Gökalp: On the Concepts of Nation and Education  
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Born in 1876, Ziya Gökalp is among the first scholars studied and offered courses in modern sociology and philosophy in the history of Türkiye. Primarily focusing on political discussions during his lifetime, in which various societies were struggling for establishing nation-states, he also philosophized on the question of being an individual, a society, and a nation through education. Considering the contemporary socio-political issues and developments in this everchanging world, knowing more about his arguments may provide thought-provoking ideas and start new critical discussions among those focusing on socio-political problems in relation to educational issues.

A major problem that Gökalp fundamentally deals with is theorizing about the concepts of nation and education. Gökalp (1968, p. 15) argued that:

*a nation is not a racial or ethnic or geographic or political or volitional group but one composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality and aesthetics, that is to say, who have received the same education.*

In this sense, he first clarifies what nationhood is not by focusing on the concept of Turkishness. From the perspective of Gökalp, nationhood is not to be based on ethnicity since, even in ancient times, no societies can argue for ethnic purity. Similarly, there can be no plausible reason to support any relations between race and nationality that may identify social characteristics. Considering the idea that a nation can be defined by geographical boundaries in which a group of people live and share a set of common traits, Gökalp argues that the idea is simply wrong since there are examples of various groups of peoples sharing the same language and cultural traits but living in different locations around the globe. Thus, so far, he tries to clarify that nationhood is not about race, ethnicity, or geographic region.

Further, since being a member of a multicultural society operated essentially by the principle of toleration for a long time (Varady, 2001, p. 137; Walzer, 1997), he stresses that the idea of nationhood cannot be reduced to a particular constituent of a pluralistic societies simply because each group of peoples identify itself with a distinct set of cultural traits. From a similar standpoint, he also argues that nationhood is not to be identified based on religion because various groups and societies may hold the same religious doctrine but still may differ in language and other cultural traits. For this reason, religion cannot be the essential characteristic in identifying the concept of nationhood, according to Gökalp.

Now, as he emphasizes in the above quote, none of the concepts solely provide a reliable basis for a strong idea of nationhood for the reasons mentioned. However, one concept including several aspects of the others appears to be the one, namely education. For him, a society composed of individuals educated to a set of common cultural traits can be called a nation. But it cannot be done by focusing only on a particular characteristic of qualities that may help identifying a group of people only to a limited extent. To identify a society with the concept of nationhood, in other words, the first thing is to create a right kind of education system so that each member receives the same values and is provided with the same instruction that inculcates in them common cultural traits such as linguistic, moral, and aesthetic.

Clearly, for him, a nation is a society united by individuals raised through the same education. But in the end of this process of raising educated individuals, the young are supposed to develop a sentimental allegiance to the nation they belong. Gökalp argues that spiritualistic aspect of human beings precedes over its materialistic aspect. For this reason, he further argues, an education that inculcates the young with national ideals and develops in them cultural

belonging is to apply to their spiritual development. He sees this essentially important since spiritual virtues comes from the societal ideals in which one is educated. Gökalp (1968, p. 16) exemplifies his idea with an anecdote supposedly from Alexander the Great: 'My real father is not Phillip but Aristotle, because the first is the source of my materiality but the second of my spirituality'.

Gökalp, in short, first focuses on the problem of how to define the concept of nation and then tries to establish a solid relation between the idea of nation and education, which in the end provides him with a robust perspective on national education. For this reason, he not only discusses on biological, cultural, and political aspects of the concept of nation, but also put an emphasis on the idea that an approach to education is to be built on psychological, sociological, and philosophical foundations.

One important aspect of his thoughts lies in his influence over the political ideology and educational perspective of the founders of the Republic of Türkiye. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the World War I, a new Turkish state was founded as a democratic republic with an aim at developing a full-fledged western-like democratic society. In fact, starting especially with the *Tanzimat* era in which Turkish society under the rule of Ottomans went through a series of reforms to modernize and reorganize the socio-political order, not only the order but also the ideologies aiming to keep the territory and culture of the wider society intact showed frequent changes in accordance with the global developments and issues. While modernizing its institutions including the education system, its intellectuals also framed several ideologies that supposedly could provide politics with ways to save the remaining lands of the empire, which became more important in time once its parts such as Armenian, Serb and Greek societies started demanding full independence. One of the most influential ideologies – among the others such as Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, and Pan-Turkism – was Turkism, which provided the founders of the Republic with a perspective on nation-state.

With his ideas and discussions, Gökalp became influential on the perspective of the founders of the newly established Republic especially on the ideas of nation and national education. As mentioned, the new state was founded as a democratic republic with an aim at developing a full-fledged western-like democratic society. Establishing a nation-state was a priority, yet creating a democratic culture was equally, if not more, crucial for the founders. However, this completely new way of life was unknown to the people ruled under an absolute political power for centuries. Primarily for this reason, the establishment of the Republic was conceived as both a political and an educational project among the founders. Thus, the political/educational project aiming at developing a nation-state with its citizens acculturated to democratic ideals required planning and carrying out a successful educational project while it is essentially a political one.

Gökalp played a major role especially in realizing one side of this two-sided project. However, when it comes to the discussions on education and democracy, one widely known and globally influential philosopher steps forward in the history of Türkiye as well. John Dewey was officially invited to Türkiye within the first year of the Republic. He visited the country and provided the officials with his report and recommendations on the education system.

In fact, Dewey's educational ideas were known to Turkish scholars and even to the founders of the Republic. Some of his works were already translated into Turkish before his visit to Türkiye. But with the official importance given to his ideas, Dewey's ideas became further known to a wider society of educators and policy makers. As Wilson (1928, p. 47) stated in the early years of the Republic, everyone among Turkish educators knew something about Dewey and many of them were able to discuss intelligently Dewey's educational philosophy.

In sum, the two thinkers played essentially influential role in adopting a new approach to society and education during the early period of the Republic of Türkiye. Among the two thinkers, doubtlessly Dewey has been a widely studied and well-known philosopher

internationally, while Gökulp has been highly influential locally. Yet Gökulp's ideas on the concepts of nation and education offers a unique perspective, especially considering that the early periods of the twentieth century were still a time of change for various societies that had not been introduced to democracy previously but also was trying to form a democratic nation-state. As a final remark, considering the contemporary circumstances of democratic culture suffering from various issues such as injustices, inequalities, polarization, and populism, critically revisiting those ideas and discussions may benefit thinkers concerned with socio-political problems in relation to education.

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## Simón Rodríguez's Educational Philosophy: Hospitality, Irreverence, Communism, and Questioning.

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Simón Rodríguez, one of the most pivotal figures in Latin American intellectual history, presented an educational vision that radically critiques the colonial educational systems of his time and offers profound alternatives that continue to challenge modern-day pedagogical frameworks (Castrillón, 2024). Born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1769, Rodríguez's critique of the colonial educational systems extended to its hierarchical structure and its exclusion of entire segments of society from intellectual and moral development. He proposed a more inclusive, critical, and creative educational model, one that empowered individuals from all backgrounds and social classes (Torres, 2019). This radical approach culminated in the establishment of a popular philosophical school in Chuquisaca, Bolivia, during the early 19th century. The school embraced four essential themes - hospitality, irreverence, communism, and questioning - that continue to resonate in contemporary educational debates (Durán, Kohan, 2018).

In today's increasingly standardized and performance-driven educational systems, Rodríguez's philosophy offers a refreshing and deeply humanistic alternative (Prieto, 1987). His ideas transcend conventional pedagogical models by placing a strong emphasis on inclusivity, independent thought, and the radical transformation of society through education. Rodríguez's approach emphasizes that true education goes beyond rote memorization and passive learning; it involves active engagement, the cultivation of critical thought, and the promotion of social justice. This essay explores Rodríguez's four themes of educational philosophy, critically examining how each theme challenges both his contemporaneous educational landscape and the modern educational system we face today.

### ***Hospitality: democratizing Knowledge***

The first theme of Rodríguez's educational philosophy is hospitality, which is emblematic of his belief in an inclusive education system that transcends social, racial, and gender divisions. The concept of hospitality is not just about offering a welcoming environment; it signifies a deep commitment to providing intellectual space for marginalized communities, thereby democratizing knowledge and making it accessible to all individuals. In Rodríguez's view, education should serve as a tool for liberation, and it should not be confined to an elite few, as was the case with colonial educational structures (Torres, 2019; Sanchez, 2019).

Rodríguez's notion of hospitality was a radical departure from the elitist educational system of colonial Latin America, where education was restricted to the privileged classes (Durán, Kohan, 2018). By advocating for a system that welcomed all people, regardless of their social, economic, or racial status, Rodríguez sought to break down these traditional barriers. His model of hospitality was grounded in the belief that true education could not be achieved unless knowledge was shared equitably among all members of society.

In contemporary educational systems, the issue of inclusivity remains a persistent challenge. The growing privatization and commercialization of education have created significant divides, limiting access to quality learning for underprivileged communities. Rodríguez's emphasis on hospitality directly critiques this trend, calling for a return to an education system that prioritizes the collective good over individual profit. Today, his call for a more inclusive education system is especially urgent, as millions of people worldwide still lack access to quality education due to socio-economic and racial barriers. Rodríguez's vision of hospitality invites us to reconsider our educational priorities and work toward a more

equitable system in which everyone, regardless of background, has access to knowledge and the opportunities that education provides.

### ***Irreverence: a challenge to authority and tradition***

The second theme, irreverence, is central to Rodríguez's approach to education. Irreverence is not about disrespecting knowledge or intellectual authority, but about questioning established norms, challenging accepted truths, and subverting the hierarchical structures that have historically shaped education (Sanchez, 2019). In Rodríguez's time, education was highly authoritative, with a rigid system that emphasized obedience, memorization, and deference to traditional intellectual and social hierarchies. Rodríguez believed that true learning could only occur if students were encouraged to engage critically with ideas, to reject unquestioned authority, and to confront oppressive social structures (Durán, Kohan, 2018).

Irreverence, for Rodríguez, was a transformative tool. It was not simply rebellion for the sake of rebellion, but a necessary step towards intellectual independence and societal liberation. Rodríguez's students were urged to challenge the colonial structures that held them down - whether they were based on race, class, or intellectual conformity. His educational vision promoted an environment where questioning and critical thinking were at the forefront, a sharp contrast to the passive absorption of knowledge characteristic of the colonial education model (Torres, 2019).

In modern educational contexts, this call for irreverence remains equally significant. Many educational systems still adhere to rigid curricula that prioritize conformity and standardization over creativity and independent thought. Rodríguez's irreverence reminds us that education should not be about simply transmitting knowledge; it should be about creating thinkers who are capable of challenging established norms, whether those norms are found in textbooks, societal structures, or political institutions. By emphasizing irreverence, Rodríguez advocates for an education that promotes intellectual autonomy - an autonomy that enables students to engage with the world critically and constructively.

### ***Communism: knowledge as a shared resource***

The third theme of Rodríguez's educational philosophy is communism, but it is important to clarify that his conception of communism differs from its Marxist interpretations. Rodríguez's communism focused not on material wealth but on the sharing of intellectual resources. He believed that knowledge should not be a commodity reserved for the elite but should be freely available to everyone (Pietro, 1987). In Rodríguez's vision, education was a collective process, where intellectual resources - such as knowledge and ideas - were shared equally among all members of society, regardless of their social or economic standing.

Rodríguez's idea of communism was fundamentally tied to social justice. He saw education as a means of levelling the playing field, where knowledge could be used to empower the oppressed and marginalized. His model of education directly challenged the colonial system, which sought to restrict access to knowledge in order to maintain control over the lower classes. Instead of hoarding knowledge for the elite, Rodríguez advocated for an educational system that would allow everyone to participate in the intellectual and cultural life of society (Durán, Kohan, 2018).

In the 21st century, we see a growing trend of privatization and commercialization in education, where knowledge is increasingly treated as a commodity that can be bought and sold. Rodríguez's emphasis on the communal nature of knowledge offers a powerful critique of this trend. His vision for an equitable educational system calls for the dismantling of intellectual hierarchies and the creation of a space where knowledge is shared freely for the

collective good. In today's world, his ideas serve as a reminder that education should be about more than just individual success - it should be about the betterment of society as a whole (Torres, 2019; Sanchez, 2019).

### ***Questioning: the heart of education***

The final and perhaps most critical theme of Rodríguez's educational philosophy is questioning. For Rodríguez, education was not about absorbing fixed truths; it was about cultivating a mindset of curiosity, skepticism, and inquiry. He believed that the process of questioning was the foundation of true learning and intellectual growth. Rather than passively accepting knowledge, Rodríguez's approach encouraged students to interrogate ideas, challenge assumptions, and engage critically with the world around them (Sanchez, 2019). The act of questioning was both an educational tool and a revolutionary act - one that could subvert established power structures and free the individual from intellectual and social oppression.

Rodríguez's commitment to questioning was a direct response to the colonial education system, which sought to stifle critical thought in favor of obedience and conformity. In this sense, questioning became a radical act of resistance - an intellectual rebellion against the oppressive educational and political systems of the time. By encouraging his students to question everything, Rodríguez empowered them to think for themselves and to shape their own intellectual and social futures (Bolívar, 1826; Rodríguez, 1999, 2004).

In today's educational climate, the value of questioning is increasingly under threat. Standardized testing, rigid curricula, and a focus on measurable outcomes often discourage critical thinking and inquiry. Rodríguez's emphasis on questioning offers a counterpoint to this trend, reminding us that education should be about more than just memorizing facts and passing exams. It should be about fostering independent, creative, and critical thinkers who can engage with the world in meaningful ways.

Simón Rodríguez's four themes of hospitality, irreverence, communism, and questioning provide a comprehensive and transformative framework for education. His vision for education was radical in its inclusivity, its emphasis on independent thought, and its commitment to social justice. Rodríguez's philosophy challenges contemporary education systems, which are often marked by inequality, conformity, and a lack of critical engagement (Rodríguez, 1999, 2004).

In the 21st century, Rodríguez's ideas offer a blueprint for reforming education and creating learning environments that foster creativity, inquiry, and social responsibility. By embracing his four themes, we can begin to rethink the purpose of education and its potential to shape a more just and equitable society. Rodríguez's vision reminds us that education is not merely about the transmission of knowledge; it is about the cultivation of independent thinkers who can question, critique, and transform the world around them. By returning to these principles, we can work toward a more inclusive, creative, and intellectually liberated educational system - one that prepares students not just for the workforce, but for active, meaningful participation in society.

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Reviving the Legacy: Nana Asma'u's Impact on Women's Education in the Sokoto Caliphate  
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Nana Asma'u was a renowned poet, scholar, and educator who made significant contributions to female education in Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. At a time where formal education was restricted to men, she can be credited for advancing the social and intellectual empowerment of women and girls. Through the Yan Taru movement—a grassroots network of female educators that Asma'u spearheaded—she developed an innovative system that combined Islamic scholarship with local traditions, making learning both accessible and culturally relevant. Her influence extended far beyond her time, shaping approaches to education and women's literacy in West Africa. This essay examines the historical context that shaped Asma'u's work, her contributions to education, and the lasting impact of her teachings.

***Historical Context: Educational Challenges and the Yan Taru Movement***

Though Islam would first arrive in West Africa sometime during the 8th century, it would not be until the 19th century that the Muslim community would become centralized under a single confederation (Falola, 2009). The Sokoto Caliphate arose from the conquest of the Hausa people by Usman Dan Fodio in the early 19th century (Maishanu and Maishanu, 1999). Dan Fodio was noted for his ability to draw in people from various walks of life, primarily through his charisma and personal example (Boyd, 2013). At its height, the Sokoto Caliphate would reign over more than 1 million square miles, and rule over a population of roughly ten million. By rallying together both Fulani and Hausa followers, Dan Fodio would eventually manage to establish the largest pre-colonial empire in Africa (Maishanu and Maishanu, 1999). Education reforms, literary revivals, and law transformations resulted in the formation of the first Islamic caliphate in Western Africa. It was under these conditions that Nana Asma'u came into the world.

After the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1808, a new issue became apparent regarding the large number of non-Muslims that had been absorbed into society during the creation of the Caliphate (Boyd & Last, 1985). Many of these people were still entrenched in traditional practices that did not align with Islam (e.g. witchcraft, fortune-telling, soothsaying) (Boyd & Last, 1985). This threatened the newly formed Caliphate's goal to have Islam as the dominant religion in the region for the foreseeable future. To achieve this, there needed to be a widespread attempt at absorbing these new citizens into Islamic society (Boyd & Last, 1985). The solution was the creation of the Yan Teru movement. Like her father, Asma'u was a devout follower of the Qadriyya order of Sufism (Azuonye, 2006). A mystic sect of Islam that promotes inclusivity and philanthropy (Renard, 2004).

As a Qadriyya Sufi, there were two particularly important tenements through which she viewed the world. The first was that both men and women were capable of pursuing spiritual growth; the second was that education was about both acquiring intellectual knowledge and nurturing one's spiritual and moral development (Boyd and Mack, 2013). To Asma'u, education was a tool for self-improvement and community service. Her belief in the importance of service was deeply rooted in the sect's teachings, which promoted social responsibility as an aspect of one's faith (Boyd and Mack, 2013).

The Yan Teru movement in the Hausa language translates into "those who have come together". It would serve the dual issues of establishing a strong Islamic foothold in rural areas, as well as formalizing Dan Fodio's reformations declaring that all women should be granted the rights Islam guarantees them. The approach was intentionally methodical and direct. By

utilizing the local cultures' veneration for oral instruction as well as poetry, the Yan Teru movement seamlessly blended into daily life (Boyd & Last, 1985). Older women would specifically be chosen as teachers due to the fact they did not have the same cultural restraints around mobility outside the home as younger women did. This would allow for them to move more freely across different places and groups of people. Asma'u also noticed that older women in the local culture would also wear large hats. In response, she presented her teachers with a similar hat wrapped in red (Boyd and Mack, 2000). By doing so, she drew on an existing symbol to strengthen the authority of the women she sent out to teach. Asma'u would then hold these women through a series of tests to determine their eligibility to teach. Once they had passed, they were bestowed the title of *Jaji*. It was their job to spread the curriculum that Asma'u had created (Boyd & Last, 1985).

### ***The Yan Taru Approach and Its Enduring Legacy***

A core principle of Asma'u's educational philosophy was accessibility. Asma'u also understood that education needs to adapt itself to the student. Yan Teru's curriculum was designed to accommodate the culture by emphasizing the importance of oral instruction and community involvement (Boyd & Last, 1985). Instructive poems were composed that would be memorized by her *Jajis*, who would then go on to instruct local villages. These poems covered topics such as healing, personal hygiene, and other rudimentary life skills. Asma'u also simplified concepts such as Islamic jurisprudence. Additionally, the curriculum was devised with its population in mind. The curriculum allowed for rural women who primarily occupied the home to contribute to their domestic duties while still participating.

Asma'u showed an admirable interest in deeply understanding the lives and environments of her students. By choosing to meet them where they were, Asma'u's system allowed for students to comfortably excel at their own pace without having to sacrifice aspects of their culture or daily lives. Presently, as educators there has been much focus on understanding the lives of students beyond the classroom (Mahmoudi et al, 2012). Educators are encouraged to address the emotional and social as well as the academic needs of students. The story of Nana Asma'u provides a framework for educators to draw upon when looking to develop the whole students, not just their intellectual abilities.

The very same principles of inclusivity, accessibility, and community-based learning would be what inspired African American Muslims to create their own branch of the Yan Teru movement nearly a century later. Beginning in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania during the late 20th century, The American branch of the Yan Teru movement continues to encourage women to model themselves after Asma'u and balance their faith with education and leadership roles. Through this connection with her teachings, Muslim women find strength in their identity and continue to advocate for their communities.

Asma'u's program was ahead of her time. She believed that students must see themselves and their environment reflected in the curriculum if it was going to be beneficial. By choosing to have the teachers of her program be women from these communities, while introducing concepts that were becoming increasingly necessary to achieve social mobility and acceptance in the Sokoto Caliphate, Asma'u essentially created her own framework of both culturally responsive and integrative education. It is known that when schools support and respect their students' cultures, they perform significantly better academically (Maina, 1997). This is partially why there has been a push in recent decades in incorporating various indigenous practices into curriculums around the world (Maina, 1997). Asma'u's method not only preceded these practices but also showed that emphasizing the importance of culture and identity in education ultimately benefits students.

## Conclusion

Nana Asma'u's legacy as an educator and advocate for women's education remains a powerful testament to the transformative potential of inclusive learning. Through the Yan Taru movement, she not only expanded access to education but also reinforced the idea that learning should be inclusive, adaptable, and deeply rooted in cultural and social realities. Her work demonstrated that education is not a privilege for the few but a fundamental right for all. By recognizing the importance of community-based learning, she ensured that even the most marginalized groups had access to intellectual and spiritual growth. Her influence extended far beyond the Sokoto Caliphate, inspiring movements that continue to empower women and reshape education in communities across the world. Asma'u's contributions are not just a historical achievement, they are a lasting blueprint for inclusive and equitable education worldwide.

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## Rokeya's Ladyland: Rewriting the Rules of Women's Education

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Begum Rokeya, one of the most influential yet often overlooked educators of colonial Bengal, was a visionary who fought relentlessly for Muslim women's education. At a time when women were confined within the four walls of their homes under the strict practice of *pardah*<sup>1</sup>, she recognized that education was the only way to break the cycle of oppression. She founded a school for women in 1911 through which she opened the doors of learning to Muslim girls who had been systematically excluded from formal education. However, her vision extended beyond just access to schooling; it encompassed a complete reimagining of gender roles in society. With a prolific body of work encompassing essays, short stories and novels to support her activism, Rokeya's work was about both real-life change and new ideas. She questioned deep-rooted social rules both through her actions and her writing. Although she has gained some prominence in Bangladesh, global awareness of her contribution is still minimal.

### *Activism and the Struggle Against Social Barriers*

In colonial Bengal, women were not allowed to get education because of strict gender segregation and traditional religious beliefs. White (1977) explains that *pardah*<sup>18</sup> kept women inside their homes, making it difficult for them to learn or take part in public life. The predominant belief was -girls did not need education since they would marry young and take care of their families (Amin, 1996). Although Begum Rokeya was born in a wealthy Muslim family, was also not allowed to be schooled, unlike her brothers who were afforded premium education. Still, with the secret help of her brother, she learned Bengali and English. Even more, her husband, who had progressive views, supported her learning and encouraged her to think about gender equality (Khatun, 2023). Thus, although she was lucky to have received encouragement and support, she wanted to challenge social restrictions for other girls who weren't as privileged.

In 1911, she established the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School, a revolutionary institution for Muslim girls' education. Amidst reluctance for enrollments amongst families, Bagchi (2009) notes, Rokeya personally visited families door-to door to persuade them to send their daughters to school. For her, the school was more than just an educational institution; it was a bold statement that Muslim women had the right to learn. Begum Rokeya's activism extended far beyond merely providing education to women. She founded the Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam (Muslim Women's Association) in 1916, which advocated for female employment and empowerment, demonstrating that education was not just about literacy but about transforming social structures. She wrote extensively on the subject, addressing social constraints and advocating for systemic change. In her essays and speeches, she highlighted the hypocrisy of a society that allowed men to be educated while depriving women of the same opportunity.

Rokeya believed that true empowerment could not be achieved through token gestures but required a complete shift in how society viewed women's roles. Her vision for change extended into her literary work, where she imagined a society in which women,

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<sup>18</sup> *Purdah* (curtain) refers to the practice of restricting women's interactions with men outside their immediate family through practices like confining women to separate spaces in the home, wearing veils in public, and using segregated public spaces. While the practice has existed in various cultures, it is most commonly seen among Muslim Communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, as well as in certain Brahmin castes in India.

educated and empowered, could lead and innovate. In *Motichur*<sup>19</sup>(1904 & 1922)<sup>i</sup>, a collection of her essays, Rokeya emphasized that women should not only receive education but also be allowed to fully utilize it or in *Padmarag* (1924) where she explores women's self-reliance. She criticized men who feared educated women, arguing that ignorance was the root of their continued subjugation (Quayum, 2013). She further posed the question: if women are ignorant and weak, who is to blame? Without education, they remain ignorant, but through learning, they can rise above it. For Rokeya, weakness was not an inherent trait; it was the result of neglect. She insisted that strength comes through effort, and even a dull mind can be sharpened with practice. Rokeya's activism and writings underscored that education was not just a right, but a transformative tool for women's empowerment.

### ***Literary Vision and the Impact of Ladyland***

*Now that they are accustomed to the purdah system and have ceased to grumble at their seclusion, we call the system 'Mardana' instead of 'Zenana' (Rokeya, 1905/1988, p.14)*

*Sultanas Dream* (1905), a satirical short story by Rokeya envisions a world where women, through their intellect and education, overthrow patriarchal structures and establish a society based on scientific progress and rationality. Based in an imaginary place called Ladyland, where men are confined to their homes, mirroring the *purdah* system that restricted women in Bengal, while women governed, innovated, and maintained peace (Rokeya, 1905/1988).

Thus, in *Sultana's Dream*, education is not just a means of literacy; it is the key to liberation. The women of Ladyland do not simply gain access to schooling; they master science, develop solar power, and eliminate crime and war. This radical inversion of gender roles forces readers to question the arbitrary nature of power structures and this vision stands in stark contrast to the real-world constraints of the times that Rokeya was living in and fought against. As Bhattacharya (2001) points out, in early twentieth century, only about one percent of women in British India had access to formal education. By juxtaposing the reality of Bengal with the possibilities of Ladyland, Rokeya makes a powerful statement: if women were educated, they could not only improve their own lives but also transform society as a whole.

*We do not covet other people's land, we do not fight for a piece of diamond though it may be a thousand-fold: brighter than the Koh-i-Noor, nor do we begrudge a ruler his Peacock Throne. We dive deep into the ocean of knowledge and try to find out the precious gems, which nature has kept in store for us. We enjoy nature's gifts as much as we can (Rokeya, 1905/1988, p.17)*

In *Sultana's Dream*, Begum Rokeya presents a society where women lead through intellect and innovation, resulting in peace and prosperity. Her Ladyland was free of war, strife, poverty or illness. Even the roads were not muddy, as women stored rainwater before it touched the ground, ensuring they could make full use of resources, whenever and wherever needed. The details of activities of women in Ladyland seem to be aimed at improving society for everyone (Rokeya, 1905/1988). The emphasis in Ladyland is on the

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<sup>19</sup> A collection of essays written by Begum Rokeya about gender inequality, women's access to education, and critiques of colonial and patriarchal structures. The term *Motichur* itself means crushed pearls, referring to the idea of a small, intricate collection of thoughts and ideas.

power of intellectual strength over physical force, as women believe that knowledge, rather than brute strength, is the true source of progress. Ladyland envisioned the idea that education was not just a tool for individual upliftment but a means for societal transformation. It further suggested that reversal of gender roles was beneficial and critiqued conventional power structures.

### ***Have We Moved Beyond Rokeya's World?***

Begum Rokeya's vision of a society driven by education seemed so compelling but why does it still seem out of reach over a century later? According to UNICEF (n.d.), 119 million girls remain out of school, and even those who do receive an education often face significant barriers when trying to enter leadership roles. The issues she critiques remain relevant today, where access to education for women, continues to face opposition in various parts of the world, often under the guise of cultural or religious traditions. Her thoughts and actions, encourage us to examine the ways in which education still remains a contested space for women. Mitra & Mallick (2023) believe Rokeya's legacy extended beyond simply advocating for literacy; she envisioned a world where women were not just educated but leaders, thinkers, and changemakers in a society and actively shaping the future.

Begum Rokeya was not just an educator; she was the architect of a radical feminist vision. Her legacy challenges us to reimagine a world where education is not just an opportunity, but a revolutionary force. If Rokeya were alive today, she would likely remind us that true progress is not just about opening schools for girls, it is about ensuring that education leads to genuine freedom, critical thinking, and systemic change. The questions remain: How far have we come in making Ladyland a reality? Is it even possible, or should we even pursue it?

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Motoko Hani and the *Jiyu Gakuen*

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It can be argued that every educational thinker spotlighted in the pages of this bulletin may be justifiably bestowed with the title of ‘pioneer’. However, Motoko Hani is one who really did earn this accolade as Japan’s first ever female journalist but, more importantly for this special issue, she pioneered a philosophy of education for women in the 1920s culminating in an institution that is still a going concern over 100 years later – the *Jiyu Gakuen*.

In her earliest years, Motoko Hani was a gifted student, recognised as a top achiever by the Japanese ministry of education in 1884. She was strongly influenced by her school experiences, particularly that of Meiji Girls’ school in which her talent for journalism was recognised. Later, along with her husband, she established the still popular publication *Fujin no Tomo* (Woman’s Friend) which was intended to develop the enlightenment of women by encompassing a broad range of topics including philosophy and culture, alongside what one may consider more quotidian advice on daily living (Iwama, 2008). Her Christian beliefs and upbringing are also central to her philosophy and work. “Thinking, Living, Praying” is a mantra that she would later come to adopt as a motto for her later educational endeavours.

Thus, her career as a journalist, and her Christian background, was instrumental in the foundation of the *Jiyu Gakuen* (interchangeably translated as Freedom School, or School of the Free Spirit), the name of which is inspired by the Gospel of John that proclaims, “the truth will make you free” (Jiyu Gakuen, 2013). Iwama (2008) notes that Hani would later come to remark that there is little difference between the *Jiyu Gakuen* and *Fujin no Tomo*, given that it is the place where young *Fujin* are nurtured. It was with this in mind that the *Jiyu Gakuen* was built to cultivate self-governing young women (Kira, 2017) – women who could take control of a household but would also be motivated use their free time to grow intellectually by reading, writing letters, visiting friends or taking excursions (Ito, 2002). The school acts, I will argue, as an elegant manifestation of Hani’s philosophy of liberty and self-governance and this is none more apparent than when observing the notions of liberty, unity and authority as central to her ideas via her alternative uses of time and space as pedagogical tools.

### ***Liberty, Unity and Authority***

It is not unusual to find these three lofty notions sitting central in philosophical works concerning education. Of course, whenever they are referred to, it is imperative that they are considered in the context in which they were written. Hani, too, considered these as central to her own philosophy, and so I will attempt to delineate what she intended with these ideas using a trusted translation of her own words.

Hani (1937) stood firmly against *Tsumekomi Kyoiku* – loosely translated as the ‘cramming method in education’ - which put primacy on rote memorisation as a means of ensuring that students follow without question. She notes that this is not at all effective but, in her observation, it was the most prevalent method of education across the world in her time because schools were so large that any other kind of education would be impossible. Not only this, but it offered a desirable quick fix for parents and educators who were seduced by the illusion of complete unity and, thus complete control: everyone learning (more accurately memorising) the same thing in preparation for examinations that will lead them to jobs.

Despite the illusion of unity, the cramming method could not, in Hani’s view, encourage the character development or student thinking that would be necessary for real liberty. As she notes (Hani, 1937, p. 3), a remedy to the cramming method is:

*education in which not only the teachers and the pupils but the parents and the whole of society work together towards the common end, each acting freely from the standpoint of each.*

This unity of objective – the common end – with a recognition of individual viewpoints within is an explicit recognition that liberty/freedom thrives in a recognisable framework, especially given her assertion that liberty without unity is the “root of all the evils” of what was commonly known as progressive and liberal education (Hani, 1937, p. 4). She notes that unity “should be the agreement of things discovered and selected by the really free efforts of each individual.” (p. 3). It seems that she is suggesting here that liberty and unity are interdependent, with the presence of one reliant upon the presence of the other. Unity comprises a shared objective alongside the free contact of individuals with different objectives; but liberty arises from such unity. To illustrate this, Hani (1937) describes a sewing class in the *Jiyu Gakuen* in which the girls share the objective to sew, but each individual has a certain objective based on their individual abilities (for example, to improve neatness, or to improve speed).

Further arising from unity and liberty comes the idea of authority. Authority is the recognition of goodness and righteousness in one person by another, such that there is a willingness to follow the good and right person with pleasure (Hani, 1937). Unity finds itself in the drive toward goodness, while liberty can be seen in the willingness to follow. For Hani, provided that unity is not made by one “superior minority, nor... enforced by high-handed power” (1937, p. 8) then it will possess innate authority. The school itself possess authority because the life of the school is something that unifies the students, but they are disposed to contribute to this in myriad individual ways. Hani – a devoted Christian – also speaks of religion as authoritative provided that the unity of practising the faith comes from a willingness of the followers to do so.

The final section of this piece will briefly consider how Hani’s central notions of unity, liberty and authority play out in her unique pedagogical ideas around time and space.

### ***Time & Space***

Hani was very much an arbiter of the importance of time discipline and would meticulously set out, in *Fujin no Tomo*, the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly tasks to be completed by women in the household. To the modern, Western, ear this may sound contrary to notions of ‘freedom’, or ‘liberty’, as they may now be popularly conceived<sup>20</sup>. However, time discipline, in the way that is particularly set out in *Fujin no Tomo* and later adopted in the *Jiyu Gakuen* was not intended to be prescriptive or limiting. It offered a framework with the unified objective of running a household, but with differentiation in the way in which this may be done, depending on the certain conditions of the household itself, and the woman at its core; thus, Hani’s unity and liberty could be found in this method. The free pockets of time that women would find in following Hani’s method allowed them the opportunity to follow their own interests outside of the household: perhaps they would choose to read, or visit friends, or take excursions.

Indeed, the unity, and liberty, Hani called for in the use of time was also evident in her use of space. It was a coup for the Hanis that they could commission noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright, along with his assistant Arata Endo, to design the original school building for *Jiyu Gakuen*, known as *Myonichikan*. Frank Lloyd Wright had already been instrumental in the design of some school buildings in the US, but found an affinity with Japanese culture as, in

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<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Hani’s idea of time was influenced by the adoption in Japan, during the Taisho period in which she lived, of western philosophical ideas of time – that is, linear time, conducive to the workings of industry as opposed to event time which was the traditional method of observing time in Japan (Rapplepe and Komatsu, 2016). Thus, time discipline, for Hani was a modern conceptualisation.

his view, it sought to unify human action and artefacts such that the whole civilization would become a work of art (Cronon, 1994). In this way, he placed as much importance on unity as Motoko Hani did, although perhaps their notions of this may have differed slightly.

Tanigawa and Miyamoto (2009) note that the design of the buildings at *Myonichikan* tends towards representations of unification between inside and outside, nature and earth. Going against the grain of Japanese school buildings of the time, there were no separate entrances for students and teachers, nor raised platforms for teachers implying hierarchy – this certainly exemplifies Hani’s central notions of unity and authority at work. Tanigawa and Miyamoto mention that Lloyd Wright used a versatile tatami mat design (with some exceptions such as the dining area) in recognition that rooms could have many purposes (or no purpose) which is suggestive of Hani’s idea of liberty. The room is part of the life of the school (unity) but what happens there need not be prescribed by teachers (liberty and authority).

To conclude, in this short piece I have set out Motoko Hani’s central notions of liberty, unity and authority in her educational philosophy and considered how her organisation of space and time exemplify these. Motoko Hani, despite being one of Japan’s most influential educators, continues to be overlooked, but there is certainly value and scope to consider her ideas further, not least because of the continuing influence of *Jiyu Gakuen* on an international scale, but because her interpretation of notions such as unity, liberty and authority may challenge some of the passionately held interpretations modern, Western educators hold of notions by the same name. For this, she deserves a greater audience.

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Janusz Korczak: *To Live* a Philosophy of Education  
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Janusz Korczak is perhaps best known as the author of popular Polish children's literature, including his most widely translated story, *King Matt the First*, a tale of a child king who must accede to the throne after the unexpected death of his father. Matt, with his unique childlike sensibilities, becomes a visionary reformer who struggles against injustice in the adult world. Including a childhood photo of himself in the front matter of the novel, *King Matt*, along with many of Korczak's other fictional writing, is a reflection on his own decades-long struggle for the recognition of the rights of children. Despite a passion for writing and some early success in publishing, Korczak's abiding interest in children's welfare and pedagogy led him to the study of medicine, once writing, 'literature is just words, while medicine is deeds' (cited in Lifton, 1988, p. 30). His life would prove to be a perpetual struggle between scientist and artist as he earned a living as a paediatrician and orphanage director under his birth name, Henryk Goldszmit, but became famous throughout Poland as the writer and pedagogue Janusz Korczak – a conspicuously non-Jewish name. Though he published prolifically in educational philosophy and psychology, his corpus has been largely ignored by educational theorists outside of Poland, barring a handful of contemporary scholars. Living in Warsaw in 1939, Korczak's story and philosophy intertwine with the darkest moments in human history, providing a stark backdrop for a *lived* philosophy grounded in a radical conception of educational relationships based in trust, forgiveness, and respect for the child.

Korczak, like other turn-of-the-century progressives, was influenced by the work of Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whom he considered one of the greatest scientists of the nineteenth century (Lifton, 1988, p. 36); however, the extension and development of Pestalozzi's work into modern progressivism is most often studied through more mainstream theorists like John Dewey and Maria Montessori. Like Korczak, Montessori trained as a physician, but while she found herself concerned with pedagogical technique and the development of specific learning materials that engaged students' senses, Korczak was principally interested in children's social interaction and moral development. His ideas may be more directly related to those of John Dewey with Korczak's successful establishment of a children's court and newspaper resonant with Dewey's pragmatist commitment to learning through experience. Still, Korczak's unique focus on the relationship between teacher and pupil is his major contribution to progressive education, calling us to move past concerns for the most effective or enduring approach to learning educational content and focus on educational relationships rooted in *pedagogical love*.

Korczak was significantly influenced by social democratic intellectuals living in Warsaw at the turn of the century while Poland was still under the control of the Russian Empire. It was in his interactions with these intellectuals that he began developing a resolute commitment to fight for the rights of children. In his fictional story, *When I Am Little Again*, Korczak tells the tale of a middle-aged schoolteacher who makes a wish to become a child again. As his wish is granted and he is transported back to his childhood bedroom, though still with all his adult memories and knowledge, he soon rediscovers the joys of being a child. As the story continues, he begins to realize that interactions between adults and children are rife with miscommunication. Within this work, Korczak embeds one of his key messages: adults do not take seriously the suffering of children. His mistrust of adults is a theme that runs throughout his work as he argues that adults continuously fail the children under their care. The pedagogical implications follow that adults should meet children first and foremost with the respect that they are due. In *A Child's Right to Respect*, he writes,

*It is as though there are two kinds of life: one serious and respected, another forbearingly tolerated and less valued. We say that they are future people, future workers, future citizens. That they will be, that their life will truly begin later, that it is not serious until the future...but this is wrong, for children have been and will be.*  
(Korczak, 2017, p. 27)

Reminiscent of Rousseau and other progressives' call to respect childhood as its own unique and important era of life, Korczak goes further to say that children possess a sense of justice underdeveloped in adults – we should listen to children and treat them as our moral equals.

The practice of trust is at the foundation of a relationship based in Korczak's conception of *pedagogical love*, but in contemporary educational practice, trust is often unidirectional and self-serving. Educators use trust as a mechanism for more effective teaching by eliciting the trust of their students to curb undesirable behaviour and manipulate students to obey their will. Certainly, Korczak wanted to earn the trust of his students, but more importantly he implored educators, and adults broadly, to trust children. This position on trust is most visible in his arguments for a radical forgiveness, a concept that Boaz Tsabar (2021) says 'constitutes a proud expression of optimism in the faith and capacity of human beings to better themselves...a prime manifestation of trust' (p. 626). In *How to Love a Child*, Korczak (2018) writes on the role of forgiveness saying,

*Let the child sin. Let us not strive to forestall every action, to immediately show the way whenever there's hesitation, to run to help whenever things go awry* (p. 140).

By giving students grace to make mistakes followed by radical forgiveness, they develop their moral sensibilities, learning through experience. In critique to typical adult responses to child error, he continues:

*You're outraged not because you perceive danger for the child, but because she jeopardizes the opinion of your institution, your approach to childrearing, your person: you're concerned for no one but yourself* (p. 140).

Korczak challenges us to teach not from the ego, but with compassion for our students – a pedagogical love that forgives rather than punishes, listens rather than manipulates. Although the full vision of early twentieth century progressives was never fully realized in schools, the influence of these thinkers is surely present in classrooms across national contexts. However, because Korczak's writing is not often at the fore of progressive canon, we are left with a diluted progressivism that is more often appropriated to justify contemporary approaches to student-centric learning rather than staying true to the spirit of progressive reforms. In the modern context of increasing global educational competition, realized through a hyper-focus on academic achievement measurable with standardized testing in favoured courses of study, students become objects of learning for manipulation by teachers and society. Korczak's body of work provides unique insight into fully humanistic approaches to teaching and presents teaching as a moral act requiring the recognition of students as subjects due the respect owed to all human beings. Because of his revolutionary commitment to protecting the rights of children but especially given the circumstances of caring for orphaned Jewish children in Nazi-occupied Poland, Korczak's life story provides opportunity for existential reflection on the nature of our relationships with students and the depth of our own *pedagogical love*.

For educators, theorists, and committed child-advocates alike, Korczak's story compels reflection on what it might mean to truly *live* a philosophy of education. I often wonder the extent to which historical and contemporary educational theorists act in accordance with their

stated principles and what this means, if anything, about their educational ideas. Like many educators, I strive in my own practice to teach by my philosophy, but there are few exemplars of how to do this when the stakes are higher than most can even imagine. Korczak, who wrote about his own struggles with fulfilling his vision of the caring pedagogue, provides a noble example of what it means to carry out your moral duty as an educator. In his case this meant fighting for his students to be respected and treated with dignity, and when at the final hours there was nothing left to do, to remain steadfastly by their side. In one of his final entries in *Ghetto Diary* (2003), Korczak writes,

*I should like to die consciously, in possession of my faculties. I don't know what I should say to the children by way of farewell. I should want to make clear to them only this – that the road is theirs to choose, freely. Ten o'clock. Shots: two, several, two, one, several. Perhaps it is my own badly blacked out window. But I do not stop writing. On the contrary: it sharpens (a single shot) the thought (p. 101).*

Despite being offered multiple opportunities to escape the Warsaw ghetto, Korczak refused to abandon the children under his care, ultimately facing their same fate at the Treblinka extermination camp. What he left behind was not only written educational theory, but a profoundly *lived* philosophy of education. His legacy serves as an inspiration for those committed to humanistic relationship-focused teaching and a haunting reminder of the importance of those relationships in our darkest times.

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## Education, Mind and Society: An Introduction to Narayana Guru's Philosophy of Non-dualism

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In this article, I introduce an Indian philosopher, Narayana Guru (1851 - 1928), a philosopher-poet belonging to the prominent Indian non-dualist tradition – *Advaita Vedanta*. Here, 'Guru' refers to wisdom-teachers or philosophers. He is well-renowned in the south Indian state of Kerala for his social activism, particularly his efforts to tackle social inequalities, promote education and foster religious harmony. Narayana Guru was deeply concerned with social inequalities, particularly casteism, which he considered a social evil to be eradicated through wisdom and enlightenment. His philosophical vision of universal equality and solidarity among all human beings underpinned his social activism. He challenged caste discrimination, religious hostility, and inequality by consecrating temples that were open to all. Social movements popularised his words using them as slogans:

*Of one kind, one faith, one God is man;  
Of one womb, of one form  
Different herein is none.*

(Prasad, 2009, p. 331)

Narayana Guru believed education was the key to overcoming social problems and famously declared that people needed more schools than temples. He founded two schools<sup>21</sup> and promoted farming, trade, and industry, including a weaving school to tackle poverty and social injustice. While his practical wisdom secured a legacy as a social reformer, his philosophical contributions remain underexplored.

### ***Education and Philosophy: From Whose Perspective?***

Before introducing Narayana Guru's philosophy, I recount how I discovered neglected philosophical links and marginalised thinkers outside the Western academic canon. Recent Vygotsky scholars have highlighted long-neglected philosophical dimensions in his work (Bakhurst, 2011; Dafermos, 2018; Derry, 2013). Vygotsky scholar Jan Derry (2013) and others have emphasised Vygotsky's connection with the German idealist tradition inspired by philosophers like Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel (Surendran, 2023; Webb, 2023). This philosophical perspective aligns with the neo-Hegelian work of McDowell (1994) and Brandom's inferentialism (2001) in contemporary analytic philosophy. Through Vygotsky's and Brandom's work, knowledge, mind and consciousness related to German idealism and non-dualist epistemology, I recognised deep connections with *Advaita Vedanta* (Indian Non-dualism) and Narayana Guru's philosophy (Prasad, 2009). While reinterpretations of Vygotsky have been readily integrated into educational theory and philosophy, the influence of Vygotsky's German idealist roots beyond the Anglo-American context remains overlooked (Surendran, 2023; 2025). Few scholars have acknowledged the influence of Indian and Eastern philosophies on German thinkers (Herling<sup>22</sup>, 2014; Schönfeld and Thompson, 2003). Some

<sup>21</sup> One was a Sanskrit school dedicated to the language of philosophy. The other was an English school. A century ago, he advocated for people to learn English for the modern age.

<sup>22</sup> Herling's book is entitled *German Gita*, which recounts the profound and widespread influence of the Bhagavad Gita, a prominent Indian philosophical text.

challenge the status quo of academic philosophy, or as I refer to it: *academic hegemony*, advocating for diversity and a more inclusive world philosophy (Garfield and Norden, 2016; Surendran, *due 2025, forthcoming*).

### ***Narayana Guru and Indian Wisdom***

Narayana Guru's philosophical teachings are primarily in poetry, comprising 61 curated works, classified into hymns, philosophical works, ethical works, translations, and prose (Prasad, 2009). His works are better understood within India's oral tradition, where philosophical or spiritual/wisdom education involves chanting or reciting rather than being approached purely as academic texts. Two quintessential philosophical works are *Atmopadesha Satakam* and *Darshanamala*, which explore the ultimate Reality and non-dual wisdom—knowledge of mind and world understood as expressions of an all-encompassing absolute consciousness. Given developments in Neo-Hegelian non-dualist epistemology (Brandom, 2001), Advaita Vedanta offers significant insights into the history of Western philosophy and understanding of education (Guru, 1977).

I first discuss *Atmopadesha Satakam (One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction)*, one of Narayana Guru's most significant philosophical texts in the Malayalam language. In 100 verses, it undertakes a non-dualist philosophical inquiry into knowledge, mind and the world, adopting an approach suited to the scientific age. In Verse 10, Narayana Guru initiates a thought experiment: in a dark room, two individuals sense each other's presence. One asks, "Who are you?" The reply, "It is I," which, in turn, invokes the same question and response. This intersubjective dialogue sets the stage for the treatise, placing self-inquiry at the core. In verse 27, he returns to discuss the import of this experiment.

#### *Atmopadesha Satakam, Verse 27*

*Sitting in the dark, that which knows is the self;  
what is known then assumes name and form,  
with the psychic dynamism, senses, agency of action and also action;  
see how it all comes as Mahendra magic!*

(Yati, 2013, p. 190)

The 'I' common to both individuals known in the dark is knowledge. It is knowledge of the self, a consciousness aware of knowing itself. This I-consciousness, in both individuals, is Self-consciousness or Self-knowledge<sup>23</sup>. This philosophical inquiry leads from the knowledge of the self, the I-consciousness, as knowing the world through assuming names and forms. This Self-consciousness, which functions as a knowing mind with agency, acts in the world of actions. How this manifestation and duality is even made possible is compared to this spectacular act of a great magician. Self-consciousness functions as the mind and appears as the world, like magic, or a mirage or dream, referred to as *maya* in *Vedanta*. Unlike a mind-independent world, the natural world is understood as permeated by Self-consciousness, underpinned by knowing-consciousness. Knowledge and Self-Consciousness are fundamental to existence and non-existence. In subsequent verses, he systematically reaches the final conclusion: all reality is rooted in non-dual knowledge of the Self, realised as an absolute, all-

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<sup>23</sup> The capitalisation is significant here, as differentiates the individual 'self' from the 'Self' that is the all-compassing Reality.

encompassing consciousness, continually manifesting as mind and world while remaining an infinite potential.

*Darshanamala*—Garland of Visions of the Absolute (*Brahman*) is one of his most profound philosophical works. Adopting an innovative method, the Absolute is viewed from ten philosophical perspectives. I selected *Astaya Darshana* (Vision of Non-existence).

Chapter III, Verse 1

*All this (world) is of mind-stuff:  
The mind, however, is not anywhere;  
Therefore like the blue and so on in the sky  
The world is seen in the Self.  
(Guru, 1977, p. 409)*

Perception of colour illustrates an empirical world inextricably tied to the mind and phenomenal experience. This illusory world, like the blue sky, has no independent existence. It appears only through the mind's imaginative capacities within the Self (Consciousness). This chapter adopts the perspective of a form of idealism. It highlights a philosophical thread from Hegel's project to Wilfred Sellars and Brandom and across time and traditions, engaging philosophers and educators in Eastern and Western thought. This verse forms an analytic part of the chapter's synthetic whole, woven together systematically to form an integrated 'philosophical vision of Consciousness' (*Brahmavidya*).

A key term in Narayana Guru's philosophy is *Arivu* (knowledge-consciousness), which embodies both knowledge and consciousness of the self, the world, and values. Knowledge is an awareness of the interconnected nature of self, mind and world, Self-realisation or Absolute Wisdom (*Brahmavidya*). His philosophical teachings remain preserved through the *Gurukula* system, an indigenous form of education rooted in the oral tradition. Narayana Gurukula, a literal school of philosophy, is dedicated to contemporary research studies and publications expanding and extending on his nondualist philosophy, marking a modern turn in Indian nondualism with global significance. Within the *Gurukula* tradition, wisdom-learning transcends ordinary (academic) knowledge of the sense-mind of the head but is directed to the Self – the core Reality in Vedanta.

*Atmopadesha Satakam*, Verse 1

*Attaining the core Reality that  
Transcends all ordinary knowledge,  
That irradiates both as the apparent form of the knower  
And all objects external at the same time,  
Requires the turning inwards of all five senses,  
Accompanied by repeated prostrations, reading,  
Chanting and mastering scriptures (like the present one).*

(Prasad, 2009, p. 235)

Narayana Guru's non-dualist philosophy emphasises knowledge as embodied in living wisdom as an expression of one's way of being rather than intellectual abstraction alone. In this view, philosophy and education is *darsana*—a unitive vision that incorporates all parts within an all-inclusive whole – an Absolute Consciousness that embraces every possible perspective. While renowned as a religious/spiritual leader or social reformer, Narayana Guru's wisdom-vision for tackling social inequalities in society and education is as crucial today as it

was over a century ago. For him, social progress and education were not two distinct activities; they were two sides of the same solution: Knowledge (*Arivu*).

### ***Embracing World Philosophy: From Division to Diversity***

Introducing Narayana Guru's philosophy into (Western) academic discourse spotlights long-neglected links between Eastern and Western traditions. While his contribution remains underexplored in Indian philosophy, recent developments in non-dualist epistemology within contemporary (Western) philosophical and educational theory signal opportunities to engage Narayana Guru's reorientation of *Advaita Vedanta* (non-dualism) for the scientific age. I bring this article to a close on two key points:

1. Academic philosophy and education require re-viewing in light of global philosophies' history and viewing humanity as a one-world collective. This moves philosophy into a more diverse, inclusive space that can be viewed from different perspectives in the educational process.
2. The East-West division requires re-assessment in light of our shared humanity. Education, understood as embodying the interconnectedness of the human spirit, can view knowledge inclusively as part of one-world, as an integrated whole. Such holistic, humanistic and non-dualist perspectives can begin to redress the social and epistemic injustices embedded in exclusionary forms of academic education and the divisive nature of the world.

Wisdom-enlightenment (*Arivu*/knowledge) interconnects the human spirit in unitive consciousness with people and the world in all its diversity, offering education of Self-knowledge in society as part of a holistic vision or World philosophy.

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The Intersection between Science, Religion, and Education in Colonial Bengal, exemplified by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur.

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My article examines the life and works of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur (1874–1937), the founder of the Gaudiya Math and Mission (1920), who merits particular focus in light of the history of national education in modern Bengal, where Hindu astronomy and astrology played a significant role. The colonial period gave rise to the Bengali gentry, known as the *Bhadraloks*<sup>24</sup>, who displayed a strong desire to learn from the Western knowledge system while also exploring the rich heritage of their Hindu culture. Socio-religious reformers such as Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Dayanand Sarasvati advocated for the revival of Hindu religion and philosophy, emphasizing an epistemological understanding grounded in national science. As a result, the idea of cultural nationalism evolved into scientific nationalism, with the Bengali middle-class intelligentsia stressing the importance of science education in the vernacular language (Lourdusamy, 2004). Prominent science advocates such as P.C. Ray, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Mahendralal Sarkar, and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore actively promoted the vernacularisation of science in the nation. (Sinha, 2012). This paper is based on my readings of the journals and almanacs as well as a personal interest in his works despite lack of scholarly outputs of his work.

***A Brief Biographical Sketch of Bimala Prasad Datta (Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur)***

Bimala Prasad Datta was born on February 6, 1874, in colonial Bengal, then a part of British India. His father, Kedar Nath Datta, was a government official who later became a monk in order to uphold and spread Gaudiya Vaishnavism, a modern interpretation of Lord Caitanya's teachings. From a young age, Bimala Prasad proved to be a devoted Vaishnava with exceptional academic skill, particularly in Astronomy. Following his father's death, he turned to spiritualism and embraced monastic life. Known thenceforth as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, he founded the Gaudiya Math to promote Gaudiya Vaishnavism. He passed away on January 1, 1937, leaving behind a notable legacy as a socio-religious reformer in modern India (Sardella, 2018).

He made significant contributions to the dissemination of scientific knowledge. His efforts at decolonising science by reviving the ancient *Gurukula* system through his *Chatuspathi*<sup>25</sup> his practice of scientific nationalism in the vernacular, were accessible to non-elite audiences. His astronomical journals, *Jyotirbid* and *Brihaspati* provided first-hand exposure to Hindu astronomy and astrology, fields that were once regarded as sacred sciences reserved for the Brahmins.<sup>26</sup> Bimala Prasad also established the '*Calcutta Saraswat Chatuspathi*' to facilitate the learning of Hindu astronomy and astrology, and published *Bhaktibhavan* or *Nabadwip Panjika* to promote astronomy and astrology in the vernacular as forms of Indian or national science, where astronomical data helped to validate the chronology and periodisation of Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

His publication, *Bhaktibhavan Panjika*, written in simple Bangla, is still printed, by Sri Caitanya Math, Mayapur, West Bengal (Sardella, 2012). The almanac designates days for religious rituals or ব্রত and fasts or উপবাস based on decisions by eminent Vaishnava Gurus

<sup>24</sup> [https://ebrary.net/275496/sociology/bhadraloks\\_indian\\_intelligentsia](https://ebrary.net/275496/sociology/bhadraloks_indian_intelligentsia)

<sup>25</sup> Traditional learning centres for the Hindus focussing on study of Sanskrit, philosophy and study of the four Vedas.

<sup>26</sup> The highest caste in the Hindu social hierarchy.

(শুদ্ধবৈষ্ণব সিদ্ধান্তানুসারে). It also records dates for তিথিপূজা, or religious festivals, including the birth and death anniversaries of revered Vaishnava Gurus, and it offers information about the history of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and significant pilgrimage destinations. Siddhanta Sarasvati additionally published *Sri Caitanya-Panjika*, sometimes called *Sri Mayapur-Panjika*, further endorsing the print culture for almanacs. Perhaps these initiatives enabled the Gaudiya Vaishnava Community to demonstrate its worth not only in light of spiritual doctrines but also from the perspectives of scientific humanism and helped the devotees live a structured life based on fasting and vegetarianism, thus promoting traditional health sciences through religion (Dey, 2020).

### ***Siddhanta Sarasvati's ideas on the circulation of Knowledge***

Bimala Prasad Datta, believed that *Bhadraloks* should engage with India's rich cultural heritage, including Hindu Astral Sciences, not only to cultivate national pride but to contribute to a stronger sense of national consciousness. While essentially secular in its format, the science education he championed demonstrated deep respect for both traditional Hindu knowledge systems and Western scientific advancements. He maintained that progress in any community rested on its members' willingness to study, practice, and investigate scientific fields.

His educational innovation lies in making specialised knowledge accessible through multiple strategies. He translated complex Sanskrit astronomy texts into the vernacular and incorporated Western mathematical calculations, adding his own annotations to bridge tradition and modern approaches. Beyond the theoretical, his almanacs served as astronomical calculations and practical religious guides for devotees. A passionate astronomer himself, he also recognized astrology's scientific merit, emphasizing its symbiotic relationship with astronomy. He saw a professional dimension in this combined knowledge system, for his institution trained students to become professional astrologers. One of the earliest centers for "national science" in colonial Bengal, his establishment for teaching Hindu astronomy and astrology fostered a liberal educational outlook.

Siddhanta Sarasvati's educational approach bears comparison to medieval Europe's Schoolmen, particularly in his emphasis on textual transmission and commentary. T. Stewart and E. Dimock (1999, 66–68), as cited by Ferdinando Sardella (2018), highlight Bhaktisiddhanta's efforts to reprint the canonical biography of Caitanya, the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, on a large scale, paralleling how Schoolmen circulated the works of Aristotle amongst their disciples (Thompson & Johnson, 1922). His methodological innovations reflect possible Baconian influences, with an emphasis on empiricism, observation, and natural-world inquiry. (Sessions, 1987) Indeed Bacon's maxim, "Knowledge is power," seems evident in Siddhanta Sarasvati's project of promoting India's national aspirations by highlighting the scientific contributions of Hindu civilization (Sessions, 1987).

In his own words, in the first volume of *Brihaspati* or *The Scientific Indian* (1896):

*In Bengal, there are relatively few serious readers, or 'pathoks.' While people express interest in reading books, they often encounter challenges in accessing the content, particularly when it comes to scientific topics..... We believe that our educated society should engage in discussions about Hindu astronomy or Jyotisha Sastra, one of the essential components of the Vedas. ...Those who think that Bharatiya Prachin Sastra is irrational and merely replicates Western science should explore these ancient scriptures to challenge their misconceptions.*

To support this vision, he established a print culture in science by publishing vernacular astronomical journals, which were on par with other significant scientific journals of the

nineteenth century, such as *Digdarshan* (1817), *Pashavali* (1822), *Bigyan Sevedhi* (1832), *Bigyan Swar Sangraha* (1833), and *The Dawn* (1897) (Das Gupta, 2023). These journals covered a wide range of topics, while Siddhanta Saraswati's publications specifically promoted astronomy. His efforts represent a call for societal reform based on scientific awareness. Therefore, the idea that, "...economic upliftment and social reform may have been foreign concepts to Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati..." (Sardella, 2018) can be contested. His educational philosophy was especially evident in the first half of his life, before he became a *Sanyasi* (monk).

There are many works discussing Siddhanta Saraswati's religious philosophy, but few scholars have highlighted his role as an educationist. J. Brzezinski (1996-1997), cited by Ferdinando Sardella (2018), noted that Siddhanta Saraswati emphasized the *Guru-Shishya Parampara* (the relationship between the mentor and his students) as a means of spreading modern Vaishnavism, as opposed to focusing solely on initiation. Sardella (2012) may be one of the first religious historians to understand how young Bimala Prasad, an '*elite Sudra*' (*Sudra* being the lowest *Varna*/class in the Hindu hierarchical system), challenged the monopoly of higher castes in the Hindu knowledge system. Perhaps this experience of marginalization influenced his spiritual beliefs, leading him to prioritize inclusion through *Bhakti*, or devotion. In my opinion, if we view him as an educationist rather than merely a religious reformer, we can see that he indeed contemplated social reforms and economic upliftment, much like other contemporary advocates of science in modern Bengal.

### ***Conclusion: Siddhanta Saraswati's contributions in the fields of Religious Philosophy and National Education***

Siddhanta Saraswati's pursuit of scientific knowledge reveals a positivist outlook on transcendentalism, or consciousness, surfaces in his reflections on the atman, or soul, which he perceives as part of universal creation. In his astronomical journals, he highlighted how traditional Sanskrit texts on Hindu astronomy elucidate cosmic structure, planetary positions, and the ceaseless motion of stars, which he deemed unimpeachable. As he formulated his religious doctrines, he harnessed this scientific humanism to underscore the supreme soul, or the ultimate source of consciousness. His quest for empirical knowledge guided him toward a deeper grasp of traditional Hindu philosophy's spiritual essence, following the path of Lord Caitanya, the founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

He transformed this spiritual sensibility into a broader national consciousness, attempting to craft a national identity anchored in traditional convictions. Indian knowledge systems became vital to his initiatives, which not only shaped communal identity but also underscored the demand for an education system grounded in indigenous traditions. By promoting this culture of religious nationalism, he drew attention to Hindu science in the vernacular as a vehicle for national education. It could be said that no other modern Bengali socio-religious reformer displayed such creative innovation. This year marks the 150th birth anniversary of Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and this paper pays homage to his largely overlooked contributions to education.

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“*Xing*” (行 Action): Tao Xingzhi’s Educational Philosophy - Integrating Knowledge, Action, and Social Reform for Educational Excellence

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In the landscape of 20th-century Chinese educational reform, Tao Xingzhi emerged as a transformative figure whose educational philosophy focused to address contemporary pedagogical and social challenges. By synthesizing Chinese traditions, particularly WANG Yangming’s (Lederman, 2022) concept of “unity of knowledge and action” (知行合一), with John Dewey’s (1916 & 2024) pragmatism, Tao (2012 & 1985b) created a unique educational framework of “*Xing*” (行, action) that bridged Eastern and Western traditions. His philosophy emphasized the practical application of knowledge to real-life situations and the role of education in driving social reform. This integration of ideas culminated in three foundational principles: “life as education” (生活即教育), which redefined education as inseparable from daily life; “society as school” (社会即学校), which expanded the boundaries of learning beyond the classroom; and “unity of teaching, learning, and doing” (教学做合一), which emphasized the interconnectedness of theory, practice, and action (Mao, 1984; Qian, 2018). These principles not only reflected Tao’s innovative vision but also laid the groundwork for his practical contributions to educational reform in China.

This paper examines Tao’s distinctive educational philosophy and its practical applications. It begins by exploring Tao’s core principles, followed by an analysis of his innovative educational practices, such as the Xiaozhuang Normal College, the Yucai School, and the “Little Teachers” system. Finally, the paper discusses the contemporary relevance of Tao’s ideas and their implications for modern education reform in China and beyond.

### ***Tao’s Core Educational Principles***

At the heart of Tao’s educational philosophy lay three synergistic principles that fundamentally challenged traditional educational paradigms. Tao’s concept of “life as education” emphasized that authentic learning occurs through direct engagement with real-life experiences rather than abstract theoretical instruction alone (Jin & Li, 2001). He believed that life itself was the most profound educational experience, critiquing contemporary educational systems for their disconnection from real-life contexts. Tao (2005) argued that education should be derived from and deeply integrated with students’ lived experiences and community needs, making education more relevant and meaningful.

Building upon this foundation of life-centered education, Tao further expanded the scope of education with his principle of “society as school,” which transcended the traditional boundaries of education beyond classroom walls, conceptualizing the entire society as a potential learning environment. He maintained that limiting education to formal school settings was insufficient for achieving comprehensive social transformation and growth. Instead, he believed that educational resources extend far beyond institutional settings, encouraging students to learn through diverse social interactions and real-world challenges (Tao, 2019). This approach democratized education by making it accessible to broader segments of society, including marginalized and under-privileged populations (Qian, 2018).

Perhaps the most revolutionary was Tao's signature emphasis on the "unity of teaching, learning, and doing" (Tao, 1934) in his era. For him, education was not a static institution but a living organism, which requires the seamless integration of instruction, learning, and practical application, with *xing* serving as the primary catalyst for knowledge acquisition and social change (Tao, 1985b). He stressed that doing is a process that begins with action, accompanied by thought, and ultimately leads to the creation of new value. This new value, in turn, guides further actions and thoughts, creating a positive cycle of interaction. Tao emphasized, teaching, learning, and doing are one thing, not three. We must teach through doing and learn through doing. He further stated, when teachers use doing to teach, it is true teaching; when students use doing to learn, it is true learning (Tao, 1934).

### ***Practical Implementations***

Tao's educational philosophy did not remain in theory only but was carried out in actual and meaningful practices that addressed pressing social and educational challenges. One of the most notable examples was the establishment of Xiaozhuang Normal College (晓庄师范学院) in 1927, which represented a concrete manifestation of Tao's educational philosophy "*Xing*" (action) (Qian, 2018). The college adopted "life education" as its guiding principle, closely integrating education with rural life. Students at Xiaozhuang not only studied theoretical knowledge but also participated in various practical activities, such as farming, building houses, and establishing rural schools (Tong, 1992). This approach trained a generation of rural teachers and equipped them with strong practical skills and a deep sense of social responsibility, significantly contributing to the development of rural education in China (Zhang, 2011).

Following this example, Tao continued to apply his philosophy to address urgent social issues. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, he founded Yucai School (育才学校) in 1939 to provide education for war-displaced children. This initiative demonstrated Tao's commitment to using education as a tool to meet immediate societal needs while fostering individual growth. Yucai School not only offered general education but also cultivated students' special talents through specialized programs in arts, music, and literature. Tao believed that talent should be discovered and developed from the people, and after completing their education, individuals should return to the people, using what they have learned to contribute to society and improve the welfare of the common people (Tao, 2005). This pioneering effort exemplified how educational institutions could respond to social crises while striving for high standards of learning as well as social influence (Tao, 2012).

Another innovative practice that embodied Tao's philosophy was the "Little Teachers" system, which addressed the scarcity of educational resource in rural China. Imagine a young boy, barely 12, teaching his illiterate grandmother how to read by the dim light of an oil lamp. This was the reality of Tao's "Little Teachers" system. This model empowered students who had acquired knowledge to immediately share it with others, including adults, thus transforming learners into teachers. Tao encouraged these "little teachers" to seek out their students, who could include illiterate grandmothers, mothers, sisters, brothers, neighbours, and even those tending cattle, chopping wood, collecting coal, or scavenging into their "students" (Jin & Li, 2001; Tao, 2019). This system not only addressed the shortage of teachers but also reinforced the children own learning, developed their leadership skills and instilled a sense of social responsibility. By teaching in flexible and informal settings, such as homes and streets,

the “little teachers” helped make education accessible to a broader population, fostering a culture of shared learning and mutual growth.

### ***Contemporary Relevance and Implications for Modern Education***

Tao’s philosophy built a bridge between the ivory tower of academia and the modest streets of rural China, where real-life challenges awaited. His emphasis on integrating education with life, responding to social needs, and empowering individuals to take responsibility for their own learning continues to resonate with contemporary educational trends globally. Tao’s principle of “life as education” offers valuable insights for shaping project-based learning and community-based education programs, emphasizing the importance of grounding education in real-world experiences and community engagement. Likewise, the principle of “society as school” highlights the potential for fostering lifelong learning and utilizing digital spaces as dynamic and inclusive learning environments. Similarly, the “Little Teachers” system serves as a powerful model for inspiring peer-to-peer learning initiatives, particularly in underprivileged areas or through digital education platforms, where knowledge-sharing and collaborative learning can empower individuals and expand access to education.

Beyond his pedagogical innovations, Tao’s serious commitment to educational accessibility and social transformation resonated with current discussions about educational equity and social justice. This humanitarian dimension of his philosophy was best captured by CHEN Heqin (陈鹤琴) (2010), a renowned contemporary of Tao and prominent educator in children’s education. Chen observed and pointed out that Tao’s greatest characteristic was his deep love for children, for the people, and all those who are vulnerable. This compassionate approach to leveraging education as a vehicle for social reform offers valuable insights for addressing contemporary educational disparities and promoting inclusive education (Mao, 1984).

Drawing from this foundation of social responsibility and practical pedagogy, educators can find particular inspiration in Tao’s integrated approach to curriculum design. His framework emphasized the need to address five crucial relationships in education: the relationship between life and education, between teaching, learning, and doing (or applying), between manual and mental labour, between action and knowledge, and between society and education (Qian, 2018; Tao, 2012). By addressing these five key relationships, educators can create learning environments that prepare students to navigate the complexities of the modern world while fostering a sense of purpose and connection to their communities.

### ***Conclusion***

As we move forward, Tao’s ideas remain relevant and inspiring, offering valuable lessons for educators and policymakers worldwide. His philosophy reminds us that education is not just about academic learning, but about preparing students to become active citizens who can contribute to the betterment of their communities and society as a whole (Tao, 2020). As Tao (2005, p. 612) said,

*If we are willing to work hard and persist in our efforts, we can certainly achieve our goals and create a brighter future for ourselves and for society.*

As we face a rapidly changing world, where education must adapt to unprecedented challenges, we must ask ourselves: How can we, like TAO Xingzhi, reimagine education as a force for both personal and societal transformation.

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## Epilogue

### The Theory Within: You as the Educational Thinker

Unless philosophical beliefs are to influence educational practice in a distorting manner, they must influence it indirectly through the medium of educational theory (Hirst, 1963, p.52)

This special issue discussed thinkers from diverse parts of the globe and their contributions to education. We read about people through time and geography, each offering insights about education and change. Yet perhaps their greatest collective lesson lies not only in their specific teachings but in how they exemplify a fundamental idea that the most profound educational thinker perhaps lies within us.

Reflecting on these luminaries, we realise that their theories didn't only emerge from academic discourse. Instead, they originated in personal experiences, internal dialogue, and deep self-reflection. Tao Xingzhi blended Western concepts with Chinese societal needs, whereas Rokaya Begum's vision stemmed from her personal struggles and observations. This realisation challenges us to reconsider the nature of educational thought. Do we often overlook our insights, unique experiences, and cultural contexts, and how could tapping into that contribute meaningfully to educational theory and research?

The diverse voices across time and cultures stemmed from dialogue and self-awareness. The ideas were not mimicked or transplanted but brought to fruition within the constraints and opportunities of the thinkers' vision and personal experiences. In this age of increasing standardisation and metrics, perhaps the most radical educational act is turning inward and recognising one's personal educational theory and the beliefs that animate it. Also, often educational thought is at the intersection of social reform, gender and cultural identity and maybe spiritual development

Finally, these thinkers served not so much as models to imitate but as mirrors reflecting each individual's potential as educational thinkers with the understanding that there is no single path, or universal formula, but a journey of self-discovery. Of course, this inward turn does not mean rejecting external knowledge, but an invitation to use others as a catalyst for reflection and a recognition that all great thinkers emerged from personal insights and experiences.

This shift from passive consumers of educational theory to active creators is personally empowering and essential for the evolution of educational thought. Our collective world could benefit from diverse perspectives and innovative approaches.

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