

Foreword¹

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Teaching as a calling,” Peter Grimmett remembers, “represents a vocation in the ‘now’”(all Grimmett quotes are from this volume). No expression of “temporal narcissism,”² teaching attentive to the “now” (as elusive as it is:³) means experiencing the present moment as lived, embodied in the actually existing person, shared with others, this fact of relationality, of collectivity, calling each of us to “become historical,”⁴ as the “historical present” is in fact lived,⁵ including “the damage that we live with in the present.”⁶ What “damage” must be undone now?

It appears we are teaching in an era of “proflificity,” a post-human period when - Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J. D’Ambrosio suggest - we have become our online profiles, no longer embodied, in-person, instead images on the screens of our (de)VICES. Our identities remain gendered or raced but performed primarily for the sake of one’s profile, a constant curation constructed for self-promotion. Throughout history, Moeller and D’Ambrosio suggest, there have been three forms of identity: (1) sincerity, (2) authenticity, and (3) proflificity. The first – they associate sincerity with pre-modernity – implies coinciding with one’s role, performing it perfectly. The second they associate with modernity, when one’s social role became (at least aspirationally) a reflection of one’s inner self. The third they associate with postmodernity, specifically the present moment, the near omnipresence of social media, when one’s public presentation, one’s profile, follows from and is directed toward “specific audiences,” relying on “feedback processes” that put “distance between self and persona.”⁷ While Moeller and D’Ambrosio allow that the three co-exist (sometimes segregated among different groups in different places), “no identity technology erases the others altogether.”⁸ They also assert that, in the online world much of humanity now inhabits, “being successful, or simply being, relies heavily on proflificity.”⁹ “What counts is what is seen,” the two professors of philosophy emphasize, “and importantly, what is seen as being seen,”¹⁰ adding: “what

anyone ‘authentically’ thinks is beyond the horizon, [and] beyond there lies nothing, or at least nothing we can call our own.”¹¹ Proflicity is now the “reigning identity paradigm,”¹² illustrated, Moeller and D’Ambrosio suggest, by the 2016 election of Donald J. Trump as U.S. President. Trump personifies the “political triumph of proflicity.”¹³ To illustrate, they report that at first Trump dismissed the phrase “drain the swamp,” seeing it as stupid. But when he saw the poll numbers - that the phrase mobilized his supporters - he embraced it, repeating it endlessly, a move demonstrating his “proflic savvy.”¹⁴ That it demonstrated his moral corruption Moeller and D’Ambrosio ignore.

What move can educators make in such an era, when moral corruption is recast as “savvy”? One answer is the reactivation of the past to reconstruct the present. To that end – if more specifically - Teresa Strong-Wilson discusses three forms of nostalgia, (1) restorative, (2) reflective, and (3) critical. Restorative nostalgia is in service of restoring past glories, often ignoring the facts to present a false picture of what happened for the sake of re-vitalizing the present. In the United States, Republican opposition to the 1619 Project and to critical race theory provides the perfect example of such efforts to falsify the past. Reflective nostalgia does not distort, as one remembers how awful the past was, but one also remembers those elements one appreciates even misses; it incorporates an “ironic awareness of loss,” an “attachment to the past,” but also “an attitude of distantiation.”¹⁵ Third, often associated with the recovery of “subaltern memory,” critical nostalgia can “appear more like restorative than reflective nostalgia in that there is a definite investment in return to a certain past or set of traditions that have been lost or, more accurately, stolen.”¹⁶ In critical nostalgia, Strong-Wilson explains, “memory is mobilized ... “put to work.”¹⁷ suggesting that: “Critical nostalgia, through memory-work, highlights this feeling of unmooredness, even as it invokes, as well as seeks, strings of attachment.”¹⁸

Unmoored Peter Grimmett may have been, as events - like that rogue wave that almost ended his life and with which he starts the book - can be like blows on the head, causing loss of memory. Grimmett remembers. He remembers that human beings are more than their online identities, that among the gifts we possess – or did once possess – is a soul, a sacred self apart from the corruption of self-promotion, power, and greed, ancient sins still very much in circulation in secular society, now recast as “savvy.” Grimmett sees soul as “that inner place, the secret place, at the center of every person’s being.”¹⁹ No hollow creature stuffed with straw (to paraphrase T.S. Eliot), no (to quote Grimmett) “forfeiture of a person’s meaning and destiny through an escapist disengagement from the public everyday world, an escapism that leads inevitably to an anonymous, virtual world of the ‘They’ and ‘Them,’” what Moeller and D’Ambrosio term the “general peer”²⁰: soul, like the music it specifies, means emotional or intellectual intensity, especially as expressed in a work of art or an artistic or (as Grimmett will show) pedagogical performance. This is a book with soul.

Peter Grimmett remembers what education is, what teacher education is, what teachers are. His nostalgia is critical, mobilizing memory to move through injury, lament and loss to express indignation. He has reactivated the past to reconstruct the present, reminding readers that “teacher educators have become functionaries and teacher education has lost its soul.” “No longer is professional judgment to be the hallmark of an effective teacher,” Grimmett laments, “and no longer is the education of teachers expected to provide intellectual leadership.” The idea that “teachers and teacher educators are working to safeguard the public trust both of knowledge and of students seems antediluvian,” as they are “not so much expected to impart breakthrough knowledge using creative pedagogy as they are to ensure that public policy is followed in the form of increasing student success on standardized tests.” No longer is accountability what teachers owe to “their profession and to their students in regard of their subject matter and instructional mastery; rather,

they are subject to performativity measures put in place by policy makers that quantify their productivity and assess their professional worth.”

From remembrance of what is lost Peter Grimmett moves to what must be found, a “re-enchantment of teacher education” marked by “wisdom, profound insight, and *savoir-faire* require an honest appreciation of mystery.” He suggests a “different way in which we need to be accountable,” being “accountable for what is *significant* in what we as teachers do.” Re-chanted, teacher educators and the students with whom they work “would begin to appreciate wonder, mystery, and story, together with a respect for other cultures and life’s simplicities, rather than being neurotically driven to hyperactivity by an imagistic world’s heavy emphasis on performativity and self-aggrandizement.” Like Moeller and D’Ambrosio, Grimmett knows we live in an era of “prolificity” (without using that term), one wherein we lose our souls. But he remembers that education means looking past the shadows of our “shrouded shelter,” to experience those “edifying epiphanies [that are] central to everyday living wherein teachers become pedagogically wide-awake, experiencing increased presence in the moment with students, together with a heightened sense of ethicality, intellectual poise, and inner serenity.” You’ll read autobiographical reports registering Grimmett’s authenticity, his sincerity, his aversion to prolificity, all the while acknowledging that “our conception of experience has changed; we no longer believe in living it, rather we make it visible to others on screens.” A sign of soullessness, narcissism encourages exhibitionism. “What counts,” Moeller and D’Ambrosio emphasize, “is what is seen, and importantly, what is seen as being seen.”²¹ Grimmett knows what counts - and “being seen” is not it.

It was “neoliberal policymakers” who stripped soul from teacher education, a loss of “meaning” and “meaningfulness,” now presumably focused on “process” but also ignoring “the inner work of the teachers’ pedagogical soul,” which is to say “the very soul of teacher education itself.” Grimmett decries teacher education reduced to a “set of procedural tricks for the classroom,”

structured by “efficiency, predictability and calculability.” He knows that teaching cannot be reduced to “telling, talking, cajoling, or coercing.” Nor is it a simple-minded matter of “teachers merely teaching and students merely learning.” Soulful teachers seek “to know their students, to listen and reach out to them with care and understanding,” understanding that “provides the basis for teacher-student engagement,” enabling “teachers to create opportunities and capacities for students to reach beyond what they currently know toward what is yet to be known.” What can follow is an “insatiable desire for learning, a zestful curiosity about events, encounters, and experiences,” a “soulful response” to “neo-liberalist audit culture.”

Grimmett invokes idealism, that philosophical tradition that affirms the “central role of the ideal or the spiritual in the interpretation of experience.” Central to the history of philosophy in Anglophone Canada²² and recently reaffirmed by Gabriel and Zizek,²³ idealism allows us to affirm that (in Grimmett’s words) “certain ideals (e.g., truth, beauty, virtue, justice, goodness) are eternal, real, and universal (i.e., they apply to all people),” implying “that human beings have a soul, and that life has definite purpose and meaning.” Educators who espouse such ideals “strive to elevate people morally, as well as intellectually.” Epistemologically, idealists appreciate “that ‘reality’ is in some way indistinguishable from human understanding and/or perception; that it is in some sense conceptually constituted or otherwise closely connected to ideas.” The “having of wonderful ideas”²⁴ produces not only epiphanies but deepens understanding and expands perception.

No “cyber-tribalism” for Peter Grimmett, limiting “human cognition” to “ever-narrowing interpretive frames in an ever-expanding universe of information.” He knows that social media permit us to “follow our own prejudices,” leading us into traps of our own making, halls of mirrors wherein we see only ourselves, hear only echoes of what we’ve said already. “Such mental operations increase in people the allure of uncritically following scripts of others’ making,” an intellectual and political dependency – even infantilism - expressed in right-wing populism, authoritarianism, illiberal

democracy. Against prolificity Grimmert affirms one's "true self," a "source of identity" in tension with that "mask that is created and demanded by everyday social interaction," making us over "through the eyes of others." Grimmert remembers: "The self or subjectivity is our true center, our awareness of ourselves without outside interference, which is developed by bringing the conscious and unconscious parts of our mind into a state of harmony." Synthesis²⁵ is another term for such moments of subjective coherence.

Grimmett remembers that "myths do not conflict or collide with rational thinking; rather, they co-exist as an abiding and steadfast narrative on how we relate to the world and to one another, becoming part of the discourse around the social imaginary of what it means to be a community, a society, and a nation." Like identity itself, "myth functions as a language at the intersection of individual sentiments and intelligible communal expression." Myths come in all shapes and sizes; Grimmert starts by naming the negative ones, those that "work considerable harm to teachers and teaching if they are not exposed and then extirpated." Then he attends to myths that heal, that affirm soulfulness, among them the idea "that teachers must learn to get in touch with their inner being," no "ego move" he knows; "rather, it is to discover your subjectivity as a person, to be fearless before challenge and critique, to be free to act and take calculated risks, to be neither beneath others nor superior to anyone, to be full of magic, mystery, and enchantment." Another affirming myth separates "teaching from learning," acknowledging that the latter occurs through students' study. A form of self-formation, study is for teachers too; it is the means by which "teachers can find the source of pedagogical inventiveness within." Like Aoki,²⁶ Grimmert affirms "humility" while sidestepping "self-pity," inner moves acknowledging that "teachers need to care for their own self and engender a healthy self-formation ... the ground upon which we can care for students and their learning." Grimmert remembers that "we must continuously act on ourselves to fashion ourselves as ethical subjects ... to restore our pedagogical souls," engaged in "practice is

conceived as praxis,” examining the “constraints and ideological distortions that act as impediments to their own development as teachers and to a learning process that attempts to connect with the needs and interests of students.” Reenchanted, teacher education becomes “teacher educators working with pre-service teachers to facilitate the development of their pedagogical capacity and professional freedom and responsibility” by “critically re-framing perplexing difficulties and dilemmas in teaching in a manner that engages thought and compels conversation.”

What Grimmert remembers – what he knows – is that, however metaphoric its reality, it is the soul that confers upon “life purpose and meaning ... the river through which truth flows.” Not to be confused with one’s everyday ego, certainly not with one’s profile, one discerns a “soulful response” when we distance ourselves from the everyday, “slow ourselves down to listen to the murmurings of our heart.” Those murmurings call us to 1) the “care of the self and self-formation, 2) “communal inter-relationship,” and to 3) “magnanimity.” These three are interrelated, as each encourages the other. Referencing our close colleague William E. Doll, Jr.²⁷ Peter also remembers that “a soulful response also involves playfulness with ideas,” concluding: “For *love, kindness, and beauty* epitomize the presence of the soul in teaching.”

“The inwardness of life is only realized in its outward manifestations,” Gabriel and Zizek suggest, adding: “Life is not a mysterious spiritual quality but the activity of expression, of objectification.”²⁸ It is as if one’s spiritual state spills out of oneself, expressed in one’s ethical conduct and pedagogical practice. “The ultimate soulful response to the external neo-liberalist pressure placed on teachers and teacher educators,” Grimmert knows, “is one of releasing its grip on your mind, your life, your understanding of curriculum, and your pedagogical practice.” I am reminded of Ted Aoki’s affirmation of improvisation²⁹ when Grimmert writes that “the key is giving up control of a pre-determined curriculum structure in order to permit ideas and discussions to emerge in a manner that initiates both students and teacher into the joyous focus of study.” Such

receptivity and consequent creativity “involve playfulness with ideas and a personal humility that results in not taking oneself and one’s ideas seriously.”

Grimmett replaces “ego-pride with a reverence for teaching,” teaching that “involves character formation,” cultivating “an enduring passion for learning, appreciating beauty, and caring for others.” Such “pedagogical inventiveness” can “re-direct our anger at external pressures toward an unfettered vocational joy that frees us to take careful but deliberate pedagogical risks.” Then educators “become at peace with complicated human relationships to engage in pedagogical problem solving, using freeing questioning strategies and exploration practices.” Peter Grimmett knows what teaching is.

Moeller and D’Ambrosio appear unconcerned when they report that, in the present moment, humanity “might lose their authenticity, but they find their prolificity.”³⁰ Without a concept, felt presence, and expression of soul, Moeller and D’Ambrosio can see only identity, writing of prolificity: “While the way in which identity is assembled may be novel, it is no less a form of identity.”³¹ “We also must be open to the possibility,” they continue, “that prolificity offers a timely way of seeing ourselves and one another.”³² It’s “timely” all right. Soul aside, they ignore that identities are curated (“in prolificity, identity is formed through profile curation”³³) after they’ve been conferred. Working from within³⁴ we respond to what others have constructed us to be, maintaining critical distance from our “identity” while pressing against then infusing it – through soulful self-expressivity – with who we actually are, not only what others imagine or demand us to be. We lose our souls when lost in the glare of others, as Moeller and D’Ambrosio revalorize: “Today, people rely on second-order observation to make sense of themselves.”³⁵

This cultural catastrophe – as humanity loses its soul, becomes “post-human” – calls us educators to extricate ourselves from this nightmare that is present, to reactivate the past, from where we can then find the future. Before reactivation is remembrance of what has been lost. Such

“memory work” - to recall Teresa Strong-Wilson’s concept – is also the labour of subjective and social reconstruction. “Reconstruction,” Strong-Wilson explains, “implies the actual work to be done – memory-work, and critical nostalgia, the pedagogical working-through of a difficult subject matter; the ethical addressing of a preoccupation or *concern*.”³⁶ That Peter Grimmett has done, a resoundingly significant achievement, and a gift to us all. Turn the page and receive it.

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Endnotes

¹ Foreword to *Restoring Soul, Passion, and Purpose in Teacher Education: Contesting the Instrumentalization of Curriculum and Pedagogy* by Peter Grimmett. Routledge.

² North 2018, 2.

³ North 2018, 168.

⁴ Toews 2008, 303.

⁵ North 2018, 5.

⁶ Love 2007, 29.

⁷ 2021, 250.

⁸ 2021, 21.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2021, 27.

¹¹ 2021, 29.

¹² 2021, 158.

¹³ 2021, 157.

¹⁴ 2021, 185.

¹⁵ Strong-Wilson 2021, 60.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 2021, 70.

¹⁸ 2021, 76.

¹⁹ Grimmett quotations come from this volume.

²⁰ 2021, 48.

²¹ 2021, 27.

²² See Armour and Trott 1981, 91, 94, 178, 184.

²³ 2009, 158.

²⁴ Duckworth 2006.

²⁵ Pinar 1975.

²⁶ 2005 (1986), 165; 2005 (1993), 213.

²⁷ Trueit 2012.

²⁸ 2009, 77.

²⁹ 2005 (1990), 367.

³⁰ 2021, 178.

³¹ 2021, 178.

³² Ibid.

³³ 2021, 261.

³⁴ Pinar 1972.

³⁵ 2021, 262.

³⁶ 2021, 150.