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Table of contents – Indice

EDITORIAL – EDITORIALE

Enricomaria Corbi
What Education for New Political Scenarios? 9
Quale educazione per i nuovi scenari politici? 11

SYMPOSIUM
Anarchism and Education

David Kennedy
In Search of a New Reality Principle:
Introduction to a Special Issue on Anarchism and Education 15

Félix García Moriyón
A Libertarian, An-archist and A-*crata* Approach to Education 27

Maria Miraglia
Prospettive dell'educazione libertaria: alle origini del pensiero anarchico 43

Edoardo Puglielli
Michail Bakunin: l'istruzione integrale 67

Orietta Vacchelli
Descolarizzazione e cultura della sostenibilità: un cambiamento possibile 83

Roy Danovitch, Erica Eva Colmenares
Remaking Education at Anarchist-inspired Alternative School 99

Fulvia Antonelli, Alessandro Tolomelli
L'educazione incidentale, gli adolescenti e Colin Ward:
ripensando le comunità 113

Luca Odini
Uno sguardo diverso.
Il bambino, l'educazione e la comunità nel pensiero di Colin Ward 131

Kevin J. Holohan
L'etica anarchica come fondamento di alternative educative 149

Judith Suissa
Immaginari non statuali in educazione 169

ESSAYS – SAGGI

Vito Balzano
Democrazia e educazione in John Dewey. Nuove prospettive pratiche per un educare alla cittadinanza democratica 183

Vittoria Bosna
L'educazione delle donne: un traguardo difficile da raggiungere. L'inchiesta del 1810: alcune riflessioni 197

Angela Muschitiello
Il Gruppo di Parola come dispositivo educativo problematizzante per la trans-formazione dei legami familiari interrotti dall'alta conflittualità 207

Fabrizio Pizzi
I minori stranieri non accompagnati nei circuiti devianti 223

Fabrizio Manuel Sirignano, Stefania Maddalena
Riscoprire le "Piccole Scuole" di Port-Royal fra tradizione e innovazione pedagogica 245

BOOK REVIEWS – RECENSIONI

Maria Romano
Galli della Loggia, E., *L'aula vuota. Come l'Italia ha distrutto la sua scuola*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2019, pp. 240 265

Abstracts 271

In Search of a New Reality Principle: Introduction to a Special Issue on Anarchism and Education

David Kennedy*

The emergent epistemological structure that this collection of papers suggests mirrors the structural characteristics of the field: forever true to its name, anarchist theory and practice stubbornly resist any *arche*, any arboreal hierarchy of principles or practices, any final codification, any definitive territorialization, any 'state' that rules, orders or organizes its emergent and rhizomatic exfoliation. Even the name of the movement itself—shall we call it anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, individualist-anarchism, mutualist or collectivist anarchism, left or right libertarianism, or 'anarchism without adjectives,' or 'synthesis anarchism,' or anarcho-socialism, libertarian socialism, cooperative socialism, community socialism, agrarian socialism, stateless socialism, scientific or cultural socialism, utopian socialism; or even deep democracy, or direct democracy? The name itself seems to undergo an endless process of deterritorialization, even to the point of slipping into the black hole of right libertarianism and the Ayn Randian nightmare of radical individualism.

Nevertheless, I would like to try to identify some general philosophical themes that I understand as fundamental to the anarchist vision, and which I see as implicit in all the papers offered here. I present them as binaries, albeit with the understanding that experience tends to confound binaries and binaries tend to distort experience, and are, finally, overcome only in the poetic realm. My hope is that these thematics may help us to reflect on and to explore how the anarchist vision—which I understand as inherently prophetic—applies to education, and even more specifically to the form of education that we call school.

The first has to do with the distinction between state and community, and correlatively, the relation between political and social reality. The anarchist community is not a little state (like a city state), nor can it become a state without losing its identity as a community. It is ontologically distinguished in its power structure from the state, which is hierarchical and centralized, in which power exerts its *mancipium* from above, codifies its practices in laws and regulations, and above all reserves the exclusive right to act violently—to the point of death—toward those who refuse its claim to sovereignty, as well as to exclude those it chooses to, thereby rendering them *homo sacer* and as such, profoundly vulnerable. This is a principal of state whether it is found in a vast nation state, an independent city, or a micro-institution like school.

The principle of community, on the other hand, is based on direct, participatory democratic process, and an understanding of power as local and horizontal, as fluid, shifting, and inherently relational, and its ever-potential pathologies best contained through decentralized, rhizomatic and federated rather than arboreal social and political organization. The success of a community—that is, its capacity to thrive in all the senses of the Hebrew word *shalom* (peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare, tranquility) and the Greek word *eudaimonia*—follows from its capacity to create, follow and recreate governing practices that manifest 'power with' rather than 'power over.' Its rules and regulations are emergent and pragmatic—responses to the requirements and opportunities of the present moment in the life of the particular collective, which understands itself implicitly as engaged in an ongoing process of reconstruction—an ontological process inherent in temporality and in embodiment in general. On the pragmatist account, this process entails both adaptation to the emergent exigencies of the lived environment *and* reconstruction of that environment in the act of adapting to it—an ideal of optimal "experience" in the Deweyan (Dewey, 1938) sense, and indicative of a fundamental dimension of dialogue present in lived experience itself, whether of the individual or the collective.

A second, related principle holds that political change alone, to the extent that it is not based on social change, is no change at all; and furthermore, that social change which does not emerge from or lead to (more often than not the causal chains are mutual) a majority of individuals with changed sensibilities is like arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic—whether we call the ensemble of those sensibilities social character, modal personality, collective subjectivity, socialization, 'interpellation,' 'subjection' or something else. Put differently, given the present state of what we call 'human nature' we are stuck with the inherently compromised politics that we must endure. Another politics would require another form of sociability on another level—the level of identity, including deep dimensions of the psyche like sexuality; hence the importance for many early 20th century anarchists of Reichian theory, and more specifically the notion of body "armoring," which is correlated with a tolerance or intolerance for cruelty and violence, whether individual or social (Reich, 1980).

So Herbert Marcuse, in his invocations of a "new sensibility," prophecies what Gianni Vattimo (1992: 63), describing Marcuse's vision, calls "the aesthetic (sensory and sensuous) rehabilitation of existence as a whole." As Murray Bookchin (2005) argued, "human nature" is always a "second nature," product of a "natural history" of subjectivity. For him, the prophetic vision entails the "recovery of the continuum between our 'first nature' and our 'second nature', our natural world and our social world, our biological being and our rationality," which forms the basis of "an ecological society and sensibility" (Ibid.: 369).

This prophetic vision has been around for awhile—in our epoch since the Romantics, whose call for a "renovation of the senses" (Abrams, 1971)

arose on the ruins of the cataclysmic failure of the French Revolution, but which is present in gnostic, countercultural Christianity throughout Western history (see Marshall 1992: Ch. 6; Landauer, 2010), and even, post-Holocaust, enjoys a half-life in Benjamin's (1940) "weak messianism." In Marcuse's formulation, it presupposes "freedom as a biological necessity," and the human organism as "physically incapable of tolerating any repression other than that required for the protection and amelioration of life" (Marcuse, 1969: 28). As such, the "new sensibility" is an intrinsic human telos, and to realize would represent both a *novum* and a dialectical return. It registers a change in instinctual structure, or what John Dewey (2011) would characterize more pragmatically as a change in the dialectical relation between "impulse" and "habit."

The change in question represents a new reality principle that follows on a changed sensorium—a revolution in perception, and as such a new form of reason (Marcuse, 1969: 37). It implies a revolt on a visceral level against structural violence, the cruelty of the everyday, exploitation and oppression, universal commodification and alienation—a revolt that reaches into "second nature," into the "ingrown patterns of behavior and aspirations" that, given "the malleability of 'human nature,' reaches into the depths of man's instinctual structure […] which 'sinks down' into the biological dimensions and modifies organic behavior" (Ibid.: 10-11, *passim*). To the extent that human nature is always a second nature ("[…] the world of the senses," he argues, "is a historical world," [Ibid.: 29]), Marcuse sees the searing injustices and structures of domination and exploitation of late capitalism as a trigger for the "Great Revolt," and the emergence of a shared morality that— "prior to all ideological expression," "this side of all values," based on "a 'disposition' of the organism […] rooted in the erotic drive to counter aggressiveness, to create and preserve 'ever greater unities' of life—represents an instinctual foundation for solidarity among human beings" (Ibid.: 10).

In response to the obvious characterization of Marcuse's formulation of profound change on the level of "instinct" as utopian, we may start with his characterization of utopia as not "that which has 'no place' and cannot have any place in the historical universe, but rather that which is blocked from coming about by the power of the established societies"; as well as his invocation of those "utopian possibilities that are inherent in the technological forces of advanced capitalism and socialism" (Ibid.: 4). But even more to the point, we may call on the testimony of major figures (among many, many others) in anarchist thought and practice such as William Godwin, Peter Kropotkin, Elisee Reclus, Gustav Landauer, Colin Ward, George Woodcock and Pierre Clastres, and to the testimony of our own experience to the effect that the "new sensibility" is in fact not new but, in Landauer's well-known words, "the actualization and reconstitution of something that has always been present, which exists alongside the state, albeit buried and laid waste" (quoted in Marshall, 1992: 34); a sensibility that carries an inherent conviction rooted in human experience

that, as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon put it, "liberty is not the daughter but the mother of order" (Ibid.: 92). The anarchist remnant, most recently evoked in Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's (after Baruch Spinoza) "multitude" (Hardt & Negri, 2004) represents a psychoclass that is already here among us, and, to some degree, always has been. As Woodcock put it,

> The anarchists have always valued the endurance of natural social impulses and the voluntary institutions they create, and it is to liberating the great network of human co-operation that even now spreads through all levels of our lives rather than to creating or even imagining brave new worlds […] [T]hey have always believed that human social instincts, once set free, could be trusted to adapt society in desirable and practical ways without plans (quoted in Ward & Goodway, 2003: 11).

On this account, the anarchist habit-impulse relation is a virtual dimension of all social experience that, when allowed to, is always becoming-actual in the 'metastable equilibrium' that characterizes the process of individuation/collectivization—and which, in that it is virtual, is never completely actualized. As such, Marcuse's "new sensibility" and Bookchin's "second nature" have always been potentialities of human experience that, given material conditions—of which, I would suggest, the leisure ('free time,' Gk *skholé*) made possible by the 'irreducible minimum' and commons law are the essentials—will become actualizable. Of course we encounter a vicious circle here: in our present 'actual,' the irreducible minimum can only be guaranteed by the state apparatus, which, in the present epoch of aggressive corporate, global capitalism, goaded forward by reactionary, right wing libertarian and proto-fascist ideology, effectively "buries and lays waste" the anarchist impulse, turning it into an impotent utopian fantasy, or, as Colin Ward has characterized it, at best "a series of running engagements" with the state. We are not, in short, living in 'the best of all possible worlds.' The reality is that solipsism, delusion, greed, fear and narcissism in individuals, and, correspondingly, authoritarianism, group pathology and plain bigotry in collectivities is as much the rule as its exception—at least among the dominant psychoclasses. The youth of our species is as vulnerable to the social pathologies of the culture of rugged individualism, social indifference and cruelty as were the indigenous peoples to the diseases of the invading colonialists. As Kropotkin's (2009) influential account of human nature suggests, the struggle between what Jewish thought calls the yetzer hara and the *yetzer hatov* (the good and the evil 'inclinations'), competition and cooperation, is a fundamental one, and perhaps even necessary to the dialectic of human development; albeit in Kropotkin's grand narrative, co-operation and mutual aid hold the evolutionary advantage.

We appear to be living in an epochal moment in which Kropotkin's faith in that advantage is being sorely tested, hovering as we are on the verge of the planetary apocalypse that is global warming in combination with global corporate capitalism. Not surprisingly, it is the anarchists who are

first-responders, whether it be Occupy Wall Street, G-7 protests, animal liberation, squat communities, autonomous zones and cooperatives of all kinds—all the various contemporary prefigurative anarchist 'transfer cultures,' which should certainly should not be excluded from a larger discussion of anarchism and education. They are prime examples of educational deterritorialization—of, after Deleuze and Guattari, a "nomadic war machine" engaged in "lines of flight" acting to deconstruct the state's ideological and repressive apparatuses. Indeed, "street" activism and informal education—in the form of reading groups, public lectures, demonstrations, neighborhood cooperatives and small press publications—have been the *modus operandi* of European and American anarchist practice ever since the late 19th century, in which such unsung (and vilified by the mainstream, 'liberal' and 'conservative' alike) heroes as Voltairine de Cleyre, Errico Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Louise Michel and Colin Ward, worked tirelessly in an atmosphere of unrelenting hostility from state, law enforcement and the press (see for example Avrich, 1974).

While I see these 'running engagements' as fundamental to the anarchist educational project, my own perhaps narrower interests tend to be drawn to anarchist *schooling*, understanding 'school' as, in Jan Masschelein's and Maarten Simons' phrase, a "form of gathering and action" in the more or less conventional sense of an organized (which, on the anarchist account, would mean self-organizing) intergenerational encounter within a dedicated space, involving a regularly attending group of students and teachers, and committed to a 'curriculum,' or course of study. Masschelein and Simons (2014) understand the basic model of the 'school' as we know it—albeit they see this model as being "tamed" and "neutralized" in its conventional contemporary form—as an invention of the ancient Athenian polis that accompanied the "invention" of democracy. They also understand it in its original form and impulse as a result of the drive to, first, create an institution that acts to suspend the "so-called natural, unequal order":

> The school […] is the materialization of the belief that *humans have no natural destination*. It is the materialization of the refusal of natural destiny and of the confirmation of *homo educandus*; since there is no (given) destiny, (wo)men can and have to be educated" (Ibid.: 180).

This principle corresponds with the anarchist persuasion that there is no given 'human nature'—that every form of subjectivity is the reflection of a second nature—and identifies the "form of gathering and activities" of that intentional community called school as a crucial site in the emergence of a form of social character or modal subjectivity for which *freedom*—freedom *from* domination and freedom *to* inquire—is fundamental. Masschelein and Simons connect this project with the construction of a "time and space that was in a sense detached and separated from the time and space of both society (*polis*) and the household (*oikos*)," which they characterize as the site of an "emancipatory rupture" (Ibid.: 181). In fact

the etymology of the word *skholé*, 'free time,' also suggests 'holding back, keeping clear'—in this case from the domination of the so-called 'natural' cultural, social, political, economic, and religious order that the state,in all its forms, codifies and enforces.

Skholé connotes a communicative, noetic and discursive system that holds back and keeps clear of the world of production and the inexorable pressures of *kronos*; rather, it is dedicated to 'study,' whose etymological root *studium* denotes 'passion, enthusiasm, zeal'—that is, the deep play of cognitive arousal and emergent, self-organizing inquiry—a concept articulated by Giorgio Agamben and recently explored in depth by Tyson Lewis (2015). As such its form of temporality is characterized by *kairos*—the time of epiphany, manifestation, event—and by *aion*, or the time of pure presence, of release from the small world of everyday consciousness, the push-me-pull-you of retention and protention, into a noetic state in which the interplay of past, present and future approach simultaneity. I would argue that such an institution, especially when constructed as an intentional community dedicated to intergenerational encounter, is an archetypical "counter-signifying" or "nomadic regime" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980), which acts to create lines of flight that deterritorialize the ideological underpinnings of the state—or, as Masschelein and Simons (2014: 183) put it, provide "a time and a space for study, exercise and thought in order to give the young generation the opportunity to renew society". Just as *skholé* accompanies the invention of democracy, it provides a space for the exploration of the radical, anarchistic potentialities of democracy, and for the emergence of a form of subjectivity in a psychoclass that values individual freedom and cooperation and an ethos of mutual aid above the toxic combination of radical individualism, conformism and universal commodification that characterizes a world dominated by corporate capitalism.

The current neoliberal construction of 'school' profoundly belies the vision of *skholé*. In fact mainstream schooling as we know it—and have known it since the rise and consolidation of the monolithic industrial nation-state in early 19th century post-revolutionary, reactionary Europe—presents us with a painfully clear example of an "ideological state apparatus" (Althusser, 2008) dedicated to the universal reproduction of hierarchy, inequality and domination, first for the nation-state and now for corporate capitalism. In fact contemporary public school policy represents, in its rhetoric of 'accountability,' its mythology of 'data driven' practice and its entrenched transmissionist pedagogy, a catalogue of capitalism's most egregious violations of anarchist principles, and even in professedly "democratic" countries acts as a primary incubator of "soft" or "inverted" totalitarianism (Wolin, 2010).

It is also the case, however, that the taming and neutralizing of *skholé* and the co-opting of the school as a radical democratic institution by a hegemonic *dispositif* that 'flips' it from a site dedicated to adult-child dialogue and social reconstruction to one of social reproduction and normalization, has been contested from the beginning. The rise of progressive

schooling also begins in post-revolutionary 19th century Europe, and its emergent articulations are typically associated with libertarian impulses, whether in Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Dewey, or the more radical Francisco Ferrer, Sebastien Faure, Paul Gobin, Louise Michel, and others.

Furthermore, I would suggest that those libertarian impulses were provided the cultural and social space in which to emerge and grow in the context of a psychohistorical shift connected to what some would call the 'invention' of childhood, but which I would prefer to call the recognition of childhood, or the becoming-aware of childhood, or the entering-dialogue with childhood—or, in Deleuzian/Guattarian terms, "becoming-child." It first reaches the level of public discourse in Rousseau's (1762/1979) explosive pre-revolutionary manifesto *Emile*:

> On ne connait point d'enfance: sur les fausses idees qu'on en a, plus on va, plus on s'egare […]. [We know nothing of childhood; and with our mistaken notions the further we advance the further we go astray]. The wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what a child is capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man (Ibid.: 33).

The slow rise over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries of what Lloyd DeMause (1974) called the "empathic" child-rearing psychoclass is in my view closely associated with the evolutionary impulse of which anarchist theory and practice are the vanguard. The new sensibility, we may say, is what the evolutionary biologists call *paedomorphic*—that is, characteristic of an organism that retains juvenile characteristics in the adult form. On this evolutionary principle, new species emerge from the form of the young of the evolving species. The hominids arose from the Bonono or chimpanzee stage because their young remained experimental, playful longer. Paedomorphism, on this account, is the hallmark of the human species. In addition, humans are the *neotenous* (*neos* 'new' + *teinein* 'extend') species: we experience the longest period of immaturity of any creature on earth, during which time there is a continual construction of synaptic structures through the organization of experience-dependent neurons through unique individual experience that fosters new brain growth and refines existing structures, thus rendering each brain a singular, unique structure (Montagu,1989; Bjorklund, 1997; Gould, 1997).

The recognition of the paedomorph by evolutionary biologists in the 20th century is, it seems to me, of a piece with the gradual evolution in child rearing modes that deMause traces over millennia, in its recognition of the radical potential that 'child' and childhood per se represent in species evolution. The psychology of the empathic mode is identified broadly with the "withdrawal of projection" of parental shadow material onto their children, and the recognition of the child, not just as a dynamic locus of natality but as a singularity, and thus as worthy of interlocution and dialogue as any adult. It acts to initiate a deconstruction of the contra-

stive pair 'adult/child,'—a process that we may attribute initially to Freud, in whose theory and practice 'child' remains as an interior interlocutor, an 'I-position' in each adult (that Freud's formulation involved a pessimistic account of "successful" adult development as involving a renunciation of child's "infantile narcissism"—"where Id was, there Ego shall be"—is material for another discussion).

The result of this evolutionary passage from the 'intrusive' (18th century) to the 'socializing' (19th century) to the empathic (20th century) child rearing mode is, in deMause's formulation, the emergence of a new psychoclass, or "second nature," or "sensibility"—characterized, not only by increased psychological paedomorphism, but by a recognition and honoring of neoteny—the long, experience-dependent neurological journey of childhood. It is also, by implication, a recognition of the time and space of childhood as an evolutionary frontier: a site keyed for the emergence of new forms of understanding, new solutions to the problems posed by human finitude, new (or renewed) forms of communication; new forms of interaction between impulse and habit, newly configured brains in fact (for which see Pearce, 2002): a site where Spinoza's famous question—"who knows what a body can do?"—becomes the question put to education both as theory and as practice. And the ancient Greek model of *skholé*, we may say, is an apparatus designed for the exploration of this evolutionary frontier—an archetypal space of intergenerational encounter. As an assemblage comprised of child, adult, place, cultural information and emergent self-organization, *skholé* is a zone of adult-child intensity, an open space of dialogue; a paedomorphic laboratory in which, as Dewey put it, the dialectical relation between impulse and habit is explored under the educational aegis of "growth" and "experience." As such it is an apparatus dedicated to epistemic, psychological, cultural, social, political and material transformation.

The dedicated struggle to maintain and develop the archetype of *skholé* in the face of widespread official and public nescience was implicit in the spread of progressive educational theory and practice in the first half of the 20th century by educators and philosophers such as Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, George Counts and Caroline Pratt, among countless unsung others. But it was avowed anarchist practitioners and activists such as Leo Tolstoy, Ferrer, Elizabeth and Alexis Ferm, Faure, Robin, Michel, Marietta Johnson, Celestin Freinet, Herbert Reid, Colin Ward—and again, many others—who carried the counter-traditional banner. A.S. Neil's Summerhill School, founded in 1921, introduced a model of direct democratic school governance, operationalized in the 'weekly meeting,' which, with the re-emergence of anarchist energies in the 1960's, inspired and continues to inspire a growing network of small independent schools that operate on the Summerhill model, the majority of them founded by parents, and which has developed into a worldwide network of democratic schools—the International Democratic Education Network.

It may be inappropriate, in ours or any historical period, to search for the basic lineaments of *skholé* such that they can be stated as fundamen-

tal principles. The anarchist school is typically a response to a specific historical social situation, and more often than not emerges in the context of a community for which, as children appear in its midst, the school is a natural outgrowth. Anarchist theory eschews centralization, and values the rhizomatic over the arboreal, lines of flight over over-coding. As such, the borderline between school and a host of other educational projects, whether cooperatives of unschoolers, the Nomadic University or some of the educational forms explored in this special issue—most strikingly Colin Ward's form of "incidental education," in which the walls of the schoolhouse disappear and the city itself becomes the campus—may appear to challenge the primacy of the *skholé* archetype. The development of the anarchist project is, to be sure, linked to spontaneous, emergent historical events, moments of deterritorialization, whether the Prague Spring, the Paris Commune or Paris 1968, Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, Iran's Green Revolution, or the current outbreaks, uprisings, and protracted protests currently sweeping the planet from Hong Kong to Chile—all temporarily liberated (or at least contested) spaces that testify to the emancipatory force of the anarchist vision, and act as prefigurations of a possible world to come.

If we understand education in its etymological sense (*educare*, to lead forth) as a fundamental dimension of all anarchist theory and practice, implicit in whatever form the emancipatory impulse takes, it could be argued that the intergenerational intentional community dedicated to dialogue, open inquiry and *studium* called *skholé* is too specific a form to contain all the manifestations of that impulse. The papers gathered in this special issue are not only rich in broad historical analysis of the movement, but also amount to a catalogue of anarchist educational forms across a broad gamut, from their presence as de-territorializing flows behind the enemy lines of conventional schooling, to their crystallization in the self-governing schools associated with Free Schools and burgeoning Democratic Schools movement, to their articulation in various forms of incidental, 'descholarizing' education that seek to take down the walls between the school and the larger environment, in what could be seen as a dialectical return to a pre-industrial form of education. I would suggest, however, that the phenomenon of *skholé*, *per* archetype, represents a virtual form of intergenerational dialogue that is present in potentia wherever children and youth are understood as inhabitants of an evolutionary frontier, which is to say wherever neoteny is understood as a space charged with the possibilities of psychocultural reconstruction—wherever, that is, the 'new sensibility' is recognized as grounded in that 'well of being' we call childhood.

I would also suggest that—beyond the basic fact that the way we see children is determinative of the form of education we practice with them—there are at least three regulative concepts at play in all educational theory and practice. I have identified these as *order*, *authority* and *agency*, and discussed them at some length in a paper published in this journal (Kennedy, 2016). Not only are the beliefs and assumptions informing these concepts

fundamental to how we understand anarchist theory and practice generally—take, for example Proudhon's famous dictum, quoted above—but they also are continually put to the test in any collective, and particularly in intentional communities such as *skholé*, where procedural transparency is fundamental to an "emancipatory rupture" of the "so-called natural, unequal order." As an adult-child collective rooted and grounded in the principle of dialogue, *skholé* is a social assemblage which, in its very structure, functions as a goad toward reconstruction of these three concepts—a goad whose point is sharpened by the fact that children and youth are major protagonists in the process. After all, children have served for centuries as proof-texts for authoritarian narratives justifying heteronomy, hierarchy, domination, subjection, infantilization and disempowerment, all of them informed by beliefs, whether vague or pointed, organized around a dystopian reading of the binary constructs order/chaos, authority/rebellion, and agency/license. It is through the rupture and ongoing reformulation of these binaries that new social forms will emerge, and *skholé* represents one theater of operations in the grand scheme of this struggle.

Given the ontological situation of human finitude and the perennial ubiquity of cultural pathologies that propagate the "so-called natural, unequal order," the tension between authoritarian and libertarian narratives appears to be irresolvable. However, anarchist theory and practice, and anarchist educational configurations in particular, may be seen as prefigurations of a form of life that in fact is already among us albeit just beyond us—a "not yet," a form of becoming what William Blake (1794/1966: 117) called the "human form divine." Meanwhile, and what seems interminably, what he termed (Ibid.: 481) the "dark Satanic mills" grind on, and the "the blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall" (Isaiah 35: 4). As such, the anarchist educator lives in a sort of suspended time, in weak messianic preoccupation, in the deep intuition that "the history of human reason has not yet reached its culmination, much less its end" (Bookchin, 2005: 369), even as we glimpse an (im)possible future in each child's face.

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