**A Self-Compromising Pedagogy: The Faults of Prescriptive Solutions in Attempting to “Reform” Education**

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**I. Introduction to A Self-Compromising Pedagogy**

This essay will confront the question of education reform, and its necessity in the contemporary classroom. There exists a historically developed notion that education reform is a reference to the adjustment of legislature surrounding education; an adjustment that exists to perfect the functioning of academic institutions in the region affected by the given legislature. However, this essay is going to highlight that this approach to education reform is highly problematic. I will establish that legislative prescriptions to education neglect the structure of the learning-apparatus from which subjects obtain knowledge. From this argument, I will extrapolate on the impact of legislative institutions on the functioning of the learning apparatus aside from its prescriptive impositions. Lastly, I will articulate a different form of education reform such that education and reform become bounded, and the subject is liberated through constant reform to the nth power. I will not, however, attempt to compare the two lenses of education, for this ultimately compromises my thesis that prescriptive solutions are bad. Instead, through actively criticizing the dominant system of education and then articulating an alternative, an arborescent dualism is constructed, one in which the former consumes the latter, ultimately resolving the dilemma surrounding education reform.

**II. The Essay: A Post-Modern Pedagogy: The Faults of Prescriptive Solutions in Attempting to “Reform” Education**

Contemporary educational institutions confine learning to a two-sided spectrum. The first, formal education, takes place within a school, and is pervaded by a mentality of managerialism. This mentality is present primarily in the secondary US educational system, where the subject experiences a strictly defined curriculum and a delineated space for learning (the classroom). Because it has an institutional foundation, formal education is socially accepted as the most concrete methodology for the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the learning-apparatus associated with formal education is under constant evaluation. The second side of the spectrum is informal education. This type of education is one that occurs through non-mediated interactions with the external world. The subject freely learns from experiences, learning in solitude, away from institutional requirements and standards. Informal education is said to be the most liberating methodology for the production of knowledge.

These two systems are constructed to coexist with one another, complementing the processes that comprise each. However, the development of formal education in the United States has complicated the coexistence of these systems in many ways. Firstly, formal education in the United States has more recently been isolated as the sole area from which subjects obtain concrete knowledge. This notion is justified through the labor system largely requiring subjects to graduate from high school. Positing formal education as the primary expectation of citizens alienates the subject from their experiences, and constructs a paradigm in which subjects internalize the managerialist mentality embraced by institutions of formal education. Theses effects are products of the socially constructed necessity of formal education. As subjects are taught that institutions are the principal site for obtaining knowledge, their capacity to generate an independent understanding of the world becomes obstructed, as this capacity becomes reformulated by an institutional pedagogy. This pedagogy is presented in the classroom, through the learning-subject’s relationship with their instructor. Between the learning-subject and their instructor exists a violent relationship; a relationship that victimizes the learning-subject in their ignorance, while simultaneously positing the instructor as a superior body, capable of liberating the learning-subject with their valuable collection of knowledge. This forces the learning-subject to confront a false dichotomy- neglecting their instructor and institutions of formal education and becoming savage-like in their ignorance, or fully embracing formal education and developing a concrete understanding of the world and thus being able to make decisions that maximize their value to life. Furthermore, when faced with this dichotomy, the learning-subject embraces the latter, demonizing the institutionalized pedagogy associated with informal education in favor of a highly structured mode of learning. However, rather than remaining within the classroom, this demonization spills over into the daily life of the learning-subject. Out of the fear associated with being savage or other, the learning-subject internalizes the managerial approach to learning, neglecting their own experiences as capable of being valuable sites for the acquirement of concrete knowledge.

Institutional approaches to pedagogy are thus inherently oppressive in the contemporary learning-apparatus. Creativity is modulated and directed through paths, constricting the liberating capacity of learning-subjects to generate independent and unique concepts to challenge dominant ideologies. Liberation is not found in the reformation of formal educational institutions, however. Despite constant legislative reformation, the formal educational learning-apparatus still remains equally, if not more, constricting in its approach to pedagogy as it was when the Boston Latin School, the first public school in the US, was established. This is due to the inherent hierarchization that contemporary institutions embrace as principle. Reform is self-defeating if the object of said reform remains functionally the same at the foundation.

Thus, rather than a top-down legislative approach to liberate subjects from instructional oppression, what is necessary is a rigorous critique, a deconstruction beginning from the bottom and resonating throughout the hierarchical structure of formal educational institutions. This deconstruction isn’t just blatant rejection, however. Rather, the process of criticism is inextricably bound to the process of reconstruction. That is, the act of micro-politically attacking the institutional approach to education is itself a liberating departure. Constant criticism is valuable so long as it originates from the subject, absent mediation or regulation. Modes of criticism aren’t strictly bound by regulation, either. From the smallest articulations in dialogue, to rigorous protestation, any methodology for challenging the formal educational institution should be utilized. The goal is to reverse the alienation, away from the demonization of informal education, and towards that of formal education. Once learning-subjects are confronted with dissenting opinions, they are forced to second guess their deeply held faith in the status quo. However, absent a recognition that this state of second-guessing is the starting point for the construction of new beliefs, these dissenting opinions could have a negligible impact on the functional structure of formal educational institutions. This is why broader discussion of the faults of these institutions is so crucial. Similarly, what is also crucial is a recognition that subjects are to predicate their criticism upon informal educational bodies of knowledge. This means beginning from a single voice of dissent, and contextualizing it to develop a permanent critical lens through which to view the world.