MAKING A DIFFERENCE:
ACADEMIC PATHOLOGIES AND THE ANXIETIES OF KNOWING

Professor Michael A. Peters

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Michael A. Peters

Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research,
Faculty of Education, The University of Waikato

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Professor of Education

Michael A. Peters, Professor of Education, has written dozens of books and hundreds of papers and chapters on education, philosophy and politics but one paper has evaded him for the past decade. In his inaugural lecture, Professor Peters pursues this illusive paper, theorising the concept of "academic pathologies" and examining what he calls the "anxiety of knowing". During the lecture, he draws upon the work of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, widely considered one of the foundational thinkers of existentialism, the American film-maker Woody Allen and Jacques Derrida, among other thinkers, to talk about the culture of the academic self.

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> Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness (Søren Kierkegaard, 1844/1980, p. 152)

> Who has the more difficult task: the teacher who lectures on earnest things a meteor's distance from everyday life-or the learner who should put it to use? (Søren Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 62)

I have been trying to write one particular academic paper now for many years, at least over a decade, and I can't cut the mustard so to speak. This paper has gone by different names that have stabilised around the words "academic pathologies". Sometimes I have tried unsuccessfully to write this paper with different co-authors including my wife and partner Tina Besley, who has a therapy background as a counsellor in one of her past lives: I am one of her "works in progress". Other times I have tried to work on the paper with other colleagues. The paper has never got much beyond an idea or a few scribbled notes. Actually I lie. I counted recently when coming to write this paper seven different beginnings: some of a few lines; others, an abstract, a table of contents and an introduction sketching out the contours of the concept. I will share these failed attempts a little later. I should say this failure to write is a very unusual situation for me because I write easily and freely. It has not always been the case. I should explain that by most standards I do write quite a lot. I have written over 60 books and some 500 papers and chapters. I also

do a lot of editing. At last count I edit over 32 issues of journals per year. And last year I established a new journal called *Knowledge Cultures* with a New York publisher.[1]

This presentation tonight, then, is an exercise in self-therapy, confession and self-examination about my continuing inability to produce this paper. It is also a public exorcism. I am hoping that I can finally rid myself of this ghost paper, an insistent idea that forever returns to my academic consciousness and says: "Write this paper—it is probably the most important piece you will ever write!"; "make this idea!"; "create!" Only by finally writing it will I be able to stop thinking about it. There is a certain anxiety with not being able to produce. For me there is also as well the sheer luxury of being able to endlessly dwell in a state of indecision and contemplation, a state of anxiety *before* knowledge, before choosing how and with what words one will put a stamp on a series of difficult concepts and aspects of experience that swim in the imagination but refuse the various forms I try to assign them: I call this the "anxieties of knowing".

I believe that I coined this phrase linking it to a range of different academic pathologies. "Anxieties of knowing" include anxieties about reading, writing, speaking, thinking and learning. By anxiety I mean the commonly accepted definition that emphasises "uneasiness" or "apprehension" or "uncertainty" and sometimes "fear" of an anticipated state, event or situation that may cause psychological impairment or feelings of insecurity and helplessness. The notion of anxiety here could easily be called by a variety of other kinship terms: "dread", "angst", even "despair" or, less dramatically, "annoyance", 'irritation", "disturbance". It's a universal sentiment or feeling that is often associated in the philosophical literature with "doubt" or "scepticism" and sometimes with forms of "madness" that we might say take the form of pronounced, exaggerated, deep anxiety that can lead to desperation, despair, anguish and depression.

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[1] See http://addletonacademicpublishers.com/knowledge-cultures/journals/kc/about-the-journal.html

This is the "dark epistemology" of not-knowing, the neuroanatomy of the visceral mind, the confusion of unruly, inchoate and formless thought that troubles us and calls for resolution and order, if only temporarily. The word "knowing" is used here with imprecision: some people will say why not "writing" or "thinking"? I am happy to contemplate these substitute notions but I also employ the poet's license to invent the metaphors. "Anxieties of knowing", "academic pathologies": *Anxiety, Dread, Angst, Despair*. This run of concepts reminds me of the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, widely considered one of the foundational thinkers of existentialism, who wrote and published *Fear and Trembling* (1843/1983), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844/1980) and some twenty-one major works in a period of nine years between 1841–1850 often under pseudonym, on topics concerning Christianity, theology and the philosophy of religion, ethics and psychology.

His highly personal and poetic work focusing on "truth as subjectivity" engages with how one lives an ethical life as an individual with freedom, choice, commitment and faith. He wrote *The Concept of Anxiety* in 1844 as a psychological deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin. In this work he examines the experience of anxiety through the example of a man standing on the edge of a cliff who both fears falling into the abyss and also feels the terrifying impulse to throw himself over the cliff.

The experience of anxiety or dread is a fact of our complete freedom to do something that includes the most terrifying possibilities and triggers our feelings of dread. In Kierkegaard's theological discussion "anxiety" precedes "sin". Hence, for Kierkegaard "anxiety is the dizziness of freedom". As he says in one of his journals: "Anxiety is the first reflex of possibility, a look yet a terrible spell" (as cited in Grøn, 2008, p. ix). Arne Grøn (2008), a researcher affiliated with the Center for Subjectivity Research at the University of Copenhagen and an expert theologian on Kierkegaard, explains: "The concept of anxiety leads us directly to freedom, but what freedom means is encircled negatively by examining forms of unfreedom. In anxiety the possibility of freedom presents itself, but in anxiety a human being also becomes unfree" (p. ix). For Kierkegaard, as Grøn reminds us, anxiety opens up the question of what it means to be a human being.

I use the term "anxieties of knowing" to suggest the "burden of freedom" that one faces in choosing words to formulate a sentence, or a research topic, or an interpretation of a work, or indeed an utterance. On any topic seemingly there is a vast literature, a myriad of choices of word and phrases. The past is strewn with many literatures: so many great thinkers, poets, writers have gone before us. The prospect of saying something—anything of significance—is so daunting and many students and faculty in face of adding to knowledge say to themselves: What do I have to say? Do I have *anything* to say? Who am I in the history of ideas to add anything of consequence? Conscious of the past couple of thousand years of literary tradition, these anxious individuals are reduced to silence and to the anguish of thinking they have nothing to contribute.

The phrase "anxieties of knowing" also reminds me of the greatest living Jewish New York philosopher, film director Woody Allen. The gravity of his philosophy is explored in a series of movies, scripts, roles, plays and books that exemplify the American tradition of stand-up and slap-stick comedy coloured with European art cinema and particularly Bergman and Fellini. He starts his *Speech to the Graduates* (1979) with the following remark:

> More than at any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.

> I speak, by the way, not with any sense of futility, but with a panicky conviction of the absolute meaninglessness of existence which could easily be misinterpreted as pessimism.

> It is not. It is merely a healthy concern for the predicament of modern man. (Modern man is here defined as any person born after Nietzsche's edict that "God is dead," but before the hit recording "I Wanna Hold Your Hand.") This "predicament" can be stated one of two ways, though certain linguistic philosophers prefer to reduce it to a mathematical equation where it can be easily solved and even carried around in the wallet. (Allen, 1979, p. A25)

Woody Allen's instincts are not untutored yet in contrast to Kierkegaard he uses comedy rather than tragedy to explore the fundamental existential condition of humanity. Adam Cohen (2007), writing for the *New York Times*, suggests: "More than any other American writer, Mr. Allen put existential

dread on the map." He reviews Allen's two collections of comedic essays, *The Insanity Defense: The Complete Prose* (2007) and *Mere Anarchy* (2008), and goes on to write:

> When Mr. Allen started out doing stand-up comedy in Greenwich Village clubs, young people sat in cafes reading books like Sartre's "Being and Nothingness," and debated man's fate late into the night. Mr. Allen found himself turning to the same questions. "What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists?" he wondered. "In that case, I definitely overpaid for my carpet."

Existence is considered an absurd cosmic joke. As Allen once said about all the characters in his films: "You're born and you don't know the script, you suffer tragedy and catastrophe, and then you are wiped out for no offence that you have committed." Allen explores the desire of many of his characters to ground their lives in traditional ethical values despite their realisation that such values may no longer be certain and the idea that contemporary American society is rapidly descending into barbarism precisely because of societal failure to maintain a sense of individual moral responsibility.

Let me show a brief clip of Woody Allen on existentialism

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RB9afLhro3M

I am often asked why I write so much. I guess as much as experiencing problems with academic writing, "writing too much" can be seen as compulsive behaviour, as an academic pathology in itself. One colleague told me facetiously and semi-seriously some years ago that my new performance

target for next year was to write half of what I wrote last year and the following year to write half again. He is a colleague for whom writing is a form of self-torture causing him deep and continuing distress, sleepless nights, and hours of sitting at a computer mulling over the same sentence. His feelings of distress are exacerbated by the fact that his father, a famous professor of Islamic history, wrote over sixty single-authored books in his lifetime. He can spend a week writing a paper and end up with nothing but a whole raft of feelings of self-disgust and emptiness. It is self-imposed distress, a form of self-hurt and personal self-inflicted behaviour often causing deep psychological suffering. He and many others—both students and colleagues—have a deep anxiety and fear of writing.

Psychologists talk of reading and writing problems in terms of "dyslexia" and "dysgraphia". These are technical terms defined in a neurological discourse with very specific meanings:

Dyslexia has been defined as "a disorder in children who, despite conventional classroom experience, fail to attain the language skills of reading, writing and spelling, commensurate with their intellectual abilities" (World Federation of Neurology, as cited by the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology [INPP], n.d., Dyslexia—Reading & Writing section, para. 1). And more comprehensively:

> A complex neurological condition, which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect various areas of learning and function and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected: numeracy, notational skills (music), motor function and organisational skills. However, it is particularly related to mastering written language, although oral language may be affected to some degree. (British Dyslexia Association, as cited by the INPP, n.d., Dyslexia—Reading & Writing section, para. 3).

Dysgraphia sometimes termed agraphia is a specific deficiency in the ability to write not associated with ability to read, or due to intellectual impairment. (See, for example, the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology website at http://www.inpp.org.uk/)

Yet I am not talking about the fear of writing as a neurological problem but

rather as a philosophical and educational problem that is connected with a range of other problems of self, fundamentally of self-expression, of the culture of the academic self, often exacerbated by "performance anxiety" in a publish or perish environment. But the fear of writing is not simply a fear experienced by scholars and students but also by those for whom writing is everything. Let me elaborate by showing a clip of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida talking about the fear of writing.

JACQUES DERRIDA - FEAR OF WRITING

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoKnzsiR6Ss

The comments posted on this YouTube clip are interesting. Somebody writes (grammar and writing in the original): "Holy shit this is exactly how i felt writing my term paper." Another adds: "Monsieur Derrida, the charlatan." In the same vein, someone comments: "Such agony, living as he does, as the divine instrument of great cosmic philosophical forces: the danger, the sense of mission, the posturing and hairstyling. The vanity is overwhelming."

One person, closer to where I'm standing, writes:

> "It's all about nudity. Writing (good writing) rips your clothes off. It's an expression. Your soul has spoken, and perhaps somebody has listened. Taking your (actual) clothes off, letting the dreams and thoughts overwhelm you—how could you possibly avoid anxiety?"

I have so far focused on the fear of writing, certainly a pathology and one that haunts writers and philosophers and academics, perhaps also journalists, speech-writers and people in their everyday lives whenever they have to write, speak or think before an audience. We hear of "writer's block". This is how one critic portrays the contemporary Singaporean playwright Tan Tarn How's (2012) play *Fear of Writing*:

> *Fear of Writing* portrays a playwright's creative handicap—the writer's block—under intense anxiety and scrutiny. Through this crisis, Tan uncovers the existentialism of self-censorship and freedoms in Singapore. An urgent provocation of the country's boundaries—as bound to art, artist, citizen and humanity. (The Theatre Works, n.d.)

There are many remedies and programmes: "Ten Steps to Overcome Your Fear of Writing". I don't have the time to explore or even discuss these "writing technologies of the self" tonight. All I want to say is that fear of writing is very definitely an educational and a philosophical problem. Philosophically speaking we can consider it an "academic pathology" that is connected to deeper problems of the academic self and to the question of style and to problems of self-stylisation or self-creation. We might say simply "writing the self", to use an expression of the late Michel Foucault. By "self-stylisation" I do not mean "dummy subjects", "split verbs", "verbosity", "Prepositions at the End of a Clause Beginning With *That*", "Dangling Modifiers", or other defective rules of the style manual.[2]

Both terms—"academic pathology" and "writing the self"—I have used consistently in my thinking and in my work over the years borrowing, as I said, the latter term from Foucault. He used it to describe an ancient form of self-writing (*hupomnemata*) used by the Greeks, a kind of journal or notebook to capture the already said, to collect what one has managed to hear or read, and for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self (Foucault, 1997, p. 211). It is an ancient art for "care of the self". The concept of "writing the self", like reading or speaking the self is part of attaining selfhood in the world of literacy and especially in academic

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[2] See James Lindgren (1990)

culture. Texts, especially those in the humanities, are autoethnographies in this sense, and we have genres that consist entirely of the expression of self: diaries, letters, confessions, autobiographies. Some scholars argue that the modern novel arises as a narrative expression of character. Is all writing both autobiographical and therapeutic? I have used the term "writing the self" in relation to the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's confessional style of philosophising that is compelled to tell the truth and thus creates conditions for ethical self-formation (Peters, 2002).[3]

Foucault's colleague at the College de France, Pierre Hadot, signals to us the importance of writing the self as the basis for understanding the development of academic cultures. In his investigations of "spiritual exercises" in Latin antiquity, Hadot (1995) describes in the philosophy of the Stoics the way in which "thought, as it were, takes itself as its own subject-matter" (p. 81) as the basis for an art of living where the individual is transformed into an authentic state of heightened self-consciousness providing both inner peace and freedom.[4]

Sigmund Freud's (1929/2002) *Civilization and its Discontents*, a seminal work written in 1929, explores the fundamental tension between the individual's quest for freedom and civilisation's demand for conformity. It is a work where he contemplates for the first time the notion and consequences of a "sick" culture. Where the early Freud was interested in specific neurotics, in *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud expands his interest to identifying the neurotic aspects of society itself. I acknowledge him in this regard not because I believe in "oceanic feelings", the Oedipal conflict or theories of

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[3] See my wider work on Wittgenstein with colleagues Jim Marshall, Nick Burbules and Paul Smeyers: Peters & Marshall (1999); and Peters, Burbules & Smeyers (2008). I regard this notion of writing the self as an outgrowth of the Continental tradition of the philosophy of the subject. For various formulations around this theme, see Peters (1993, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005), Besley & Peters (2008). On discourse and positioning theory Peters & Appel (1996), and Peters & Howie (1996). More recently see my recent essay on Guattari (Peters, in press) and the edited collection with the Mexican philosopher Alicia de Alba on *Subjects in Process* (Peters & de Alba, 2013).

[4] For my considered position, see my Introduction to my selected works (Peters, 2012). On academic genres and writing, see Peters (2009).

sexual drives but because he provides the insight that we might contemplate the frustrations to individual freedom of self-expression as a primary source of academic pathology. I use the term pathology, then, in its original Greek sense of *pathos* to refer to "feelings" or "sufferings", and "-logy" as the study of these sufferings. Academic pathologies are the study of the causes, development, changes and consequences of changes of subjects who suffer from impediments to their fundamental self-expression, sometimes caused or brought about by the academic culture itself.[5]

I thought I had invented the term "academic pathology" when I first started thinking about this topic many years ago. Now I discover to my horror that an online journal in education took up the term as the theme for a special issue in 2009. In *Educational Insights*[6] the editors of the journal write:

> In 2007 sociology professor, Doug Aoki, (University of Alberta) assembled a call for an issue of *Educational Insights* exploring the paradoxical relationship between pathology and normalcy in the context of teaching, research, labour, theory and writing within the Academy, "in love and hatred, pride and prejudice, genius and folly, sex and lies." (Aoki, 2009)

Aoki continues:

> The academy systematizes pathology through a myriad of vectors. Once again, the diagnosis turns on how we handle the language. *Patho-*, from *pathos*, means suffering or feeling; *-logy*, that definitive academic suffix, is the venerable

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[5] I talk of the archi*text*ure of fear of writing: Fear of writing is often fear of being an author (being a subject); fear of writing is fear of self-expression; fear of writing is deeply concerned with questions of self and identity; fear of writing is also fear of thinking (if one accepts a close connection between writing and thinking); fear of writing is not only individually experienced, but also socially experienced and constructed; fear of writing involves choices about discursive form which may have an unconscious element; fear of writing may be related to fear of reading, speaking, thinking. Chandler (2007) indicates: "In Composition Studies, many researchers assumed that emotions connected to students' life situations and individual psychology, and could not be integrated into pedagogical practice" (p. 53) and she reviews theories of embodied cognition and explorations of writing and healing. Composition Studies is not generally recognised in New Zealand universities except for a few classes in "creative writing".

[6] http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v13n04/toc.html

normalization of *logos*, with all its familiarly appalling connotations. Then a productive reading of *academic pathologies* is the variable institutional logics of suffering and feeling in the university. (Aoki, 2009)

The articles themselves follow with some interesting titles:

Desentence(sizing) the Reference: Lifenotes in Endnotes, Hartley Banack and Daniela Elza, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC

Living in Paradox, Ardra Cole, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Ontario

The Academy of Everyday Life—Psychology, hauntology, and psychoanalysis, Jan de Vos, Ghent University, Belgium

Enlivening the Curriculum of Health-Related Fitness, Rebecca J. Lloyd, University of Ottawa, Ontario; Stephen J. Smith, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC,

I Shouldn't Be Telling You This—A story of teacher burnout and attrition, Nan Nassef, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Geo-literacies in a strange land: Academic vagabonds provoking à pied, Patricia Palulis, University of Ottawa, Ontario

"Lately I've taken to walking…" Embodying the space of the campus, E. Lisa Panayotidis, University of Calgary, Alberta

Spousal Hire, Celeste Snowber, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC

Never Quite Getting There: Confessions of an Academic Wanna-Be, Joanna Szabo, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta

I have not read them all but the discipline of education is so unruly and undisciplined that it still leaves room for experiment and new thought: it leaves room to think outside the ever-increasingly regulated space of academic writing.

I have postponed long enough. This is what I call the *pedagogy of differal*, the educational science of delay. I did say I would return to this paper that refuses to be written. This paper I called "Academic Pathologies". Here is the history of my failed attempts to deal to or realise this concept:

First, a simple attempt that came with trying to frame an abstract:

In this paper I coin and explore the term "academic pathologies" as a form of analysis for understanding disorders of the academic self. The paper first provides a genealogy of the various depth hermeneutical models employed by Freud focusing on the thinkers in the critical theory tradition and it evaluates the attempts of Marcuse (*One Dimensional Man*), Adorno (*The Authoritarian Personality*) and Wilhelm Reich (*The Mass Psychology of Fascism*) to provide a critical psychoanalysis that serves to interpret the structure of the personality in relation to the structure of society, a relation first contemplated by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. I indicate how in the critical tradition such theorists and authors as Christopher Lasch (*The Culture of Narcissism*; *The Minimal Self*) and Michel Foucault (*Madness and Civilization*; *The Birth of the Clinic*; *History of Sexuality*) provide some interesting possibilities for developing an alternative to mainstream educational psychology in understanding academic behavior.

In this attempt I never got beyond the abstract but it did indicate the territory I wanted to traverse. Here is a second more sustained effort:

There is a more or less direct line from the origins of modern philosophy—from Descartes' "subjective turn" and Hegel's *Phenomenology*—to what we might call today "critical political psychology" or to critical forms of "depth psychology" or a "critical hermeneutics of the self" that calls special attention to the issue of power in the institutional creation and self-constitution of identities. Descartes' assumption of the *cogito*, the reflective 'I', as the basis of all claims to knowledge and morality set modern philosophy on the track of subjectivity. Twentieth century French philosophy's rehabilitation of Hegel coalesced with Descartes' subjective turn in Henri Bergson's emphasis on the temporality of the subject. Later Alexandre Kojéve's lectures at the Collège de France during the 1930s served to introduce an influential generation of thinkers to Hegel and began a renaissance in French thought that has had lasting impact.

In the German context critical theory owes its origins also to Hegel's *Phenomenology* and also to the young humanist Marx of the 1844 manuscripts, to Freud, and later to Husserl, Heidegger and phenomenological tradition. Indeed, both strands of critical *philosophy of the subject*, both French and German, were never divorced from questions of power even though this was thought different at different periods. Twentieth century French philosophy, beginning with Bergson and undergoing transformation at the hands of phenomenology-existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism and poststructuralism, focused heavily upon *power*

as ideology, domination and hegemony in the Marxist sense but also attempted to foster understandings of disciplinary power, power exercised through discourse and forms of continuous control especially through the works of Foucault and Deleuze.

Critical theory as it was inaugurated by Grunsburg, and established by Horkheimer and Adorno, working directly from sources in Marx and Freud, and later phenomenology as it was developed by Heidegger, flourished with various combinations of Freudian-Marxism, and Heideggerian-Marxism in the works of Eric Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich.

Both the French and German lines were also strongly influenced by the avant-garde in art and literature. First, Dadism, then Cubism followed by Surrealism under Andre Breton exercised a healthy scepticism of the visual based on perspectivist epistemologies and tried to break through bourgeois morality by means of a depth psychology of images. Breton, working from a marriage of Freud and Marx, tried to break with the "realism" and popular hold that bourgeois morality had on the imagination and on the taken for granted world of "the individual". The lasting influence of this mixture of Freud and Marx in surrealism had a continued influence on the French novel. *Nadja*, Breton's second novel, published in 1928, begins with the question "Who am I?". Through automatic writing and altered states the surrealists tried to reveal the workings of the unconscious self. They revolutionised French literature and influenced a generation of writers and poets: Jean Cocteau, Jacques Prevert, Pierre Reverdy, Antonin Artaud, Henri Michaux and Rene Char.

The Frankfurt School from its beginning was heavily influenced by the German tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and its early secular humanism evidenced in the works of Eric Fromm as well as Adorno and Horkheimer recorded its intellectual indebtedness to the concepts of *Bildung* itself as it influenced German philosophy and life more broadly, fostering a set of kindred concepts for thinking—autonomy, authenticity, duty, responsibility and obligation—even if these were open to questions and themselves the object of suspicion "after Auschwitz".

What became "postcolonial studies" in the 1970s had its origins in two areas: the phenomenology of Hegel, once again, that in the tradition of Memmoni, Lacan and Sartre transformed itself into the *phenomenology of racism*, of the racialised self under the influence of Frantz Fanon who wrote works like *Wretched of the Earth*, *Black Skin*, *White Masks* and developed and inspired a psychopathy of colonisation.

This felt as if I was on the right track. Intuitively I felt my instincts were close to the heart of the matter but I again faltered. The scope was too large even if it pinpointed the phenomenological beginnings. It spanned the whole of nineteenth century German philosophy and twentieth century French and German philosophy to focus on the different accounts of power put forward by the Frankfurt school philosophers and the contemporary French thinkers like Foucault.

Here was a note I made to myself once on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) (retrieved from http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx) and its text revision in 2000, known as the DSM-IV-TR. I was anxious to try to lend some contemporary and reputable guide as a basis for my thesis. The DSM-IV organises each psychiatric diagnosis into five levels (axes) relating to different aspects of disorder or disability:

» Axis I: Clinical disorders, including major mental disorders, and learning disorders

» Axis II: Personality disorders and mental retardation (although developmental disorders, such as autism, were coded on Axis II in the previous edition, these disorders are now included on Axis I)

» Axis III: Acute medical conditions and physical disorders

» Axis IV: Psychosocial and environmental factors contributing to the disorder

» Axis V: Global Assessment of Functioning or Children's Global Assessment Scale for children and teens under the age of 18

I noted to myself and excerpted the following section that focuses on early childhood, identifying especially with "Reading Disorder, Mathematics Disorder, Disorder of "Written Expression, and Learning Disorder Not Otherwise Specified" and wondering how nobody had ever diagnosed my learning disorders:

> The provision of a separate section for disorders that are usually first diagnosed in **Usually First Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood, or Adolescence Learning Disorders**. These disorders are characterized by academic functioning that is substantially below that expected given the person's chronological age, measured

intelligence, and age-appropriate education. The specific disorders included in this section are **Reading Disorder, Mathematics Disorder, Disorder of Written Expression, and Learning Disorder Not Otherwise Specified**.

Motor Skills Disorder. This includes **Developmental Coordination Disorder**, which is characterized by motor coordination that is substantially below that expected given the person's chronological age and measured intelligence.

Communication Disorders. These disorders are characterized by difficulties in speech or language and include **Expressive Language Disorder, Mixed Receptive-Expressive Language Disorder, Phonological Disorder, Stuttering**, and **Communication Disorder Not Otherwise Specified**.

Pervasive Developmental Disorders. These disorders are characterized by severe deficits and pervasive impairment in multiple areas of development. These include impairment in reciprocal social interaction, impairment in communication, and the presence of stereotyped behavior, interests, and activities. The specific disorders included in this section are **Autistic Disorder, Rett's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Asperger's Disorder**, and **Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified**.

Attention-Deficit and Disruptive Behavior Disorders. This section includes **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**, which is characterized by prominent symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity. Subtypes are provided for specifying the predominant symptom presentation: **Predominantly Inattentive Type, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type**, and **Combined Type**. Also included in this section are the Disruptive Behavior Disorders: **Conduct Disorder** is characterized by a pattern of behavior that violates the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules; **Oppositional Defiant Disorder** is characterized by a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior. This section also includes two Not Otherwise Specified categories: **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Not Otherwise Specified and Disruptive Behavior Disorder Not Otherwise Specified** (pp. 37-8). (http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx)

Actually I was/am dyslexic and also suffer from ADHD. My attention span is very short. Anybody who knows me can identify that I suffer from **Oppositional Defiant Disorder**. These I take to be my philosophical dispositions and tools. I never grew out of the developmental disorders.

In another take I started the paper with a couple of quotations from Wittgenstein:

> What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, p. 309)

> I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again "I know that that's a tree", pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy." (Wittgenstein, 1969, section 467)

And then continued:

> Introduction

> Wittgenstein was strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud, Karl Krauss, and William James. He famously develops a therapeutic view of philosophy as one that sees philosophy as a parasitic and infectious discourse feeding on the use of words in ordinary language and failing to get a clear view of the way we talk about the world. Philosophy is not only destructive (or desconstructive) in the sense of dismantling pseudo problems, it has therapeutic effects and philosophy can act as a kind of purgative enabling us to stop doing philosophy thus freeing us from philosophical pathologies. Linguistic therapy can defuse and neutralize miscreant theories and it can also free us from the dominant or ruling metaphors that hold us captive. Wittgenstein alerts us to the way in which very general pictures of how we view the relation between language and reality easily become part of our philosophical illusion and a fit subject for pathology of the intellect. In an obvious sense these broad philosophical assumptions that govern the discourses of the human sciences, of the humanities and social sciences, constitute a clear picture of academic pathologies based on the kind of confusion that takes place when language goes on holiday. In this context, as Wittgenstein demonstrates often, philosophical understanding is a matter of will rather than intellect.

> Wittgenstein once said he regarded himself as a disciple of Freud. Indeed, Jacques Bouveresse in *Wittgenstein Reads Freud*, argues that "Wittgenstein is the 'disciple' of Freud who seems to do nothing but raise objections to his master" (p. 41). And while Wittgenstein attacked the scientific status of psychoanalysis he did also believe that Freud had invented a line of thinking. Wittgenstein's view of Freud was tempered by his own reappraisal of positivism and his view on the purity of language came from the Viennese satirist and critic Krauss, who in the journal *Die Fackel* wrote "Psychoanalysis is that spiritual disease of which

it considers itself to be the cure". Krauss believed reason to be instrumental and values to arise out of creative imagination and Wittgenstein came under his spell in seeking to clarify and purify language, linking language to ethics as a critique of culture. Russell Goodman (2002) has argued that Wittgenstein learned a great deal from William James' T*he Principles of Psychology* which he first read in 1912, and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and shared a set of commitments "to anti-foundationalism, to the description of concrete details of human life, to the priority of practice over intellect, and to the importance of religion in understanding human life" (p. 5).

The term "pathology of philosophy" also has been applied by Donald W. Livingston (1998) in his *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium*, a book that seeks to explore Hume's answers to the questions "what is philosophy?" and "what is the philosophical life?" on the basis of virtues of the true philosopher who understands that philosophy springs from the mystical polytheistic religion that provides us with the first understanding of themselves and the world. Hume seeks the origins of philosophical practices in the dispositions of human nature and sees the culture of Europe as progressively shaped by secular modes of thought (p. xiv).

This was followed by a version of Hegels' influence on critical theory and I ended with the note to myself:

Continue by reference to Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* ending with a tentative typology of disorders of (the academic) self.

Horkheimer's Preface:

The central theme of the work is a relatively new concept—the rise of an "anthropological" species we call the authoritarian type of man. In contrast to the bigot of the older style he seems to combine the ideas and skills which are typical of a highly industrialized society with irrational or anti-rational beliefs. He is at the same time enlightened and superstitious, proud to be an individualist and in constant fear of not being like all the others, jealous of his independence and inclined to submit blindly to power and authority. The character structure which comprises these conflicting trends has already attracted the attention of modern philosophers and political thinkers. This book approaches the problem with the means of sociopsychological research. (p. ix)

This, as you can witness, was a more sustained attempt. I was trying to develop a philosophical concept of "academic pathologies" that owed something to a

line of critical thought with its basis in Hegel and phenomenology and flowered into a critical psychoanalysis. It made a central place for Wittgenstein.

Adorno's "authoritarian personality" referred to a cluster of traits reflecting a desire for order, a kind of rigidity, unquestioning obedience, respect for authority, a desire for highly structured command, scapegoating and a highly conventional outlook. The authoritarian personality theory was devised to explain racism and the F-scale that Adorno et al. (1950) designed is no longer used, partly because group loyalty is seen as a commonplace and ethnocentrism and stereotyping are also seen as common and ineradicable psychological processes.

In another version I entitled the essay "Academic Pathologies: Power, Identity and the Political Psychology of Institutions". Clearly, I was trying to focus on institutional power relations as a crucial factor in the development of academic pathologies. In part I was motivated by my own very personal observations in different university institutions around the world of the simple truism concerning the effects of administrative power on individuals: how suddenly the power and status of an administrative position would transform the personality of an individual and how it led often to the effects of the exercise of administrative reason and academic life, deforming it, regulating it, counting it. I wanted to theorise this condition or at least I wanted to ensure that any theory of academic pathology could take account of this common observation. I tried to understand the larger institutional forces at work in terms of academic reason, sometimes cross-cut and disruption by administrative reason and increasingly by commercial or entrepreneurial reason.

Then I started, perhaps more conventionally, under the same title with a return to early Western origins:

> On Temple of Apollo at the Theatre of Delphi in the valley of Docis in Greece— the site of the Delphi Oracle, perhaps the most famous in classical Greece—three inscriptions were carved into the lintel of the Temple:
>
> γνωθι σεαυτόν (*gnothi seauton* = "know thyself")
>
> μηδέν άγαν (*meden agan* = "nothing in excess")
>
> Εγγύα πάρα δ'ατη (*eggua para d'atē* = "make a pledge and mischief is nigh")

These maxims are attributed to the Seven Sages. The inscriptions reputedly have their origins in prehistoric times and in the worship of the Goddess Gaia. There is some archeological evidence to suggest occupation of the site around the eighth century BC. Apollo spoke through the Oracle, generally virtuous older women known as the Pythia. The Oracle was consulted on all major occasions and made prophecies. Dr E. Partida, the archaeologist at the Hellenistic Ministry Culture's website at the archeological ruin suggests:

> Between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, the Delphic oracle, which was regarded as the most trustworthy, was at its peak. It was delivered by the Pythia, the priestess, and interpreted by the priests of Apollo. Cities, rulers and ordinary individuals alike consulted the oracle, expressing their gratitude with great gifts and spreading its fame around the world. The oracle was thought to have existed since the dawn of time…

> The rise of the Rationalist movement in philosophy in the third century BC, damaged the oracle's authority, yet its rituals continued unchanged into the second century AD, when it was consulted by Hadrian and visited by Pausanias

'Know thyself' is the founding expression of the relation between the subject and truth, as Foucault notes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005), and 'know thyself' has a fundamental relationship to 'care of oneself' (*epimeleia heatou*).

Foucault suggests that the inscription 'know thyself' "did not prescribe self-knowledge, neither as a basis of morality, nor as part of a relationship with the gods" (p. 3). The inscription only gathers the significance concerning self-knowledge much later. At the time it meant something like 'don't ask too many questions' or 'as a mortal don't presume too much of the gods'.

Only when it appears in philosophical discourse (such as the *Apology*) with Socrates does it take on added significance, especially when coupled with 'take care of yourself'. Indeed, Foucault maintains that the latter—'take care of yourself'—is the ground or foundation for the former—'know thyself'. Thus, 'take care of yourself' was, according to Foucault, "a fundamental principle for describing the philosophical attitude in Greek, Hellenistic and Roman culture" (p. 8). Epicurus uses the Greek word 'therapeuein', meaning both medical care (therapy for the soul) as well as service to a master. This attitude became the principle of moral rationality in Greek culture and even permeated Christianity, appearing especially in Christian asceticism.

Within the Western philosophical tradition the self has been posited as an objective, unified and universal entity—both ahistorical and acultural—that transcends particular historical and cultural contexts. The concept has grown out of religious and theological discussions where the enduring part of the essential, 'true' or authentic self focussed upon the soul, spirit or mind—an immaterial aspect—that survived the body. In modern Western societies, beginning with Descartes, Hobbes, Locke and Kant, the sovereign self has been assumed to be a separate, individual, autonomous and rational being existing independently and logically prior to society. Indeed, this tradition of the rational, autonomous subject has taken two influential forms: the Kantian ethical subject and the self-interested individual of liberal political economy established by Adam Smith and David Ricardo—so-called *homo economicus*, based on assumptions of individuality, rationality and self-interest. Both lines of development have been responsible for founding and structuring the central institutions of liberal culture synonymous with modernity. Not only is this concept radically individualist, rationalist and possessive but it is also assumed to be given and unchanging—an essential self that is not historically or culturally constituted.

While socially and politically progressive in its day—when these related conceptions first received their formulation—a number of telling critiques have been mounted against the self as sovereign individual. These critiques have come from all quarters. Radical feminist philosophers, from Simone de Beauvoir on, have argued that the dominant Western concept of self is both patriarchal and masculinist and they have substituted most often a relational notion of self, based on the ethic of care. Marxist and socialist critics have drawn attention to the ideological nature of the subject underlying liberal political economy, insisting that the self is a set social relations defined largely by underlying economic forces. Scholars from psychoanalysis have criticised the assumptions of rationality and individuality, positing relational modes of analysis that recognise more fully the role of emotions and desire. Communitarians have criticised the liberal individual as the atomic political sub-stratum beyond which one cannot go to invoke a communitarian view of the polity. Critics from other cultures have questioned the ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism of Western notions of self and the way it has been advanced as the basis of a universalist global society. Some of these strands of critique share with postmodernist and poststructuralist accounts the radical working assumption that the Western concept of self is an historical and cultural construction—an historical ontology—that is inextricably bound up with questions of power. On this view Western concepts of the self have shifted

over time.

The rest of this attempted and failed essay goes on to explore themes similar to those recounted above and finishes with the following notes for different sections on Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard. I took this passage from a review of Jens Glebe-Moeller's (1997) "Notes on Wittgenstein's Reading of Kierkegaard":

> Wittgenstein told his friend Maurice Drury that Kierkegaard was the most profound author of the nineteenth century and a saint. (Proudfood, 2008, para. 1)

> Both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein regard philosophy as an ethical pursuit in which analysis and conceptual clarification are to be employed not in the service of speculative thought, but to identify self-deception and dispel illusion in order to make it possible to live an authentic life. (Proudfood, 2008, para. 3)

At this point and in reflection of where I have been I realise that there are at least two lines of argument I would like to add to this mélange. First, a new insertion from Judith Butler's (1997) *Excitable Speech* that introduces the gender dimension into the speaking, writing, thinking subject—a not so obvious category before Simone de Beauvoir's (1948/1989) *The Second Sex*. Butler, drawing on this philosophical tradition, demonstrates that gender is a *performative* category rather than a fixed or stable identity and in this work she explores the phenomenon of "hate speech" in the US. "Excitable speech" is a metaphor for the complex interrelations between language, identity and agency. Butler maintains we are all linguistic beings and become ourselves through the continual and forever risky negotiation with the very linguistic system that permits our semiotic identity to emerge. For Butler linguistic being proceeds from the intersubjective nature of language that is both enabling and disabling, with great power to wound, but that also makes possible the speaking and writing time of the subject. If the notion of "anxieties of knowledge" applies at all most certainly it applies with regard to the discursive (self)positioning of women that up until very recently have often been reduced to silence.

Second, and in relation to educational and philosophical themes that run so deep in Aotearoa, what I am going to call the "imperial writing subject". I cannot do justice to the complexity of this topic here but let me say briefly:

Māori children who were fluent speakers of te reo Māori speakers were forced to "write" te reo Māori rather than "speak" it in New Zealand School Certificate Examinations prior to 1988. Successive generations of Māori children fluent in te reo Māori were failed at the subject "Māori" because only written Māori (i.e., the anglicised, alphabetised English literate form) was examined and for many this was equivalent to failing at their own culture. The pathological consequences have been enormously damaging for Māori students.[7]

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

This paper and the presentation based on it has been a history of my failed attempts to manufacture a usable concept of "academic pathology" that does not simply rest on disorders of the individual academic self or problems surrounding the anxiety of knowing or the fear of writing. I have tried to address the collective and institutional dimensions of the anxieties of knowing that address institutional power relations. Throughout the essay and during its writing it became clearer to me that the *positionality* of the subject was important but also, and increasingly one might say, the cultural specificity of the subject became a central aspect in my thinking; for how fear is experienced, how anxiety manifests itself, and how power relations are perceived are all matters that can only be described under the category of difference. For instances, how does the fear of writing manifest itself in traditionally oral cultures? How are women textually represented and how do

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[7] The project Te Reo o te Tai Tokerau was concerned with introducing an oral component into the exam but it had a much wider political agenda. I spent seven years in the field working in the Tai Tokerau on a range of related projects. This experience early in my career was at once personally transformative. I began to understand the significance of the oral, its place in the stream of life at the heart of Māori culture. I also began to understand the marginalised nature of teachers of te reo Māori in the state system of education, the way in which "enforced writing in English" was conceived by early educationalists because te reo Māori was widely regarded as "an imperfect vehicle for thought", and I witnessed in the 1980s the widespread extent of institutional racism in New Zealand schools. See Peters & Marshall (1988; 1989a,b,c; 1990), Peters, Para & Marshall (1989); Besley & Peters (2012); and Engels-Schwarzpaul & Peters (2013).

they represent themselves? What of the writing and speaking subject in the process of becoming an academic self, especially for women, for Māori, for cultural minorities, for immigrants, for those for whom thinking and writing in ideographs is the cultural norm?

To deal adequately with these anxiety disorders—anxieties of knowing— we need to locate them firmly within the wider psychological ecology of the culture of the self and to encourage an ongoing set of reflections on the question of academic self-knowledge. In this way we may come to understand more deeply that knowing has its own pathologies.

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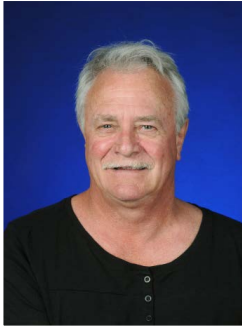
Professor Michael A. Peters

Michael A. Peters is Professor of Education at the University of Waikato, Emeritus Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Adjunct Professor in the School of Art, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and School of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou University. He is the executive editor of *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and editor of *Policy Futures in Education* and *E-Learning and Digital Media*. His interests are in education, philosophy and social policy. He has authored over 60 books including *Education Philosophy and Politics: Selected Works of Michael A. Peters* (2012); *Education, Cognitive Capitalism and Digital Labour* (2011), with Ergin Bulut; and *Neoliberalism and After? Education, Social Policy and the Crisis of Capitalism* (2011).

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