For some time, I have been haunted by a troubling question: to what extent should I assert or repress my personal ideologies in teaching composition? In an age of relativism—when we are increasingly sensitive to the diversity of our students, when deconstruction illuminates at least some shadows in our classrooms with a new critical inquiry, and, yet, when the world demands our active response to social exigencies—what should be the role of personal ideologies in teaching? There is a need for philosophy among teachers of composition, a need to examine critically the assumptions that govern our personal lives and professional practices. We must do so not only to avoid or overcome wrongheaded and unproductive techniques, but also to understand the implications of classroom practices for changing our students' lives and perspectives.

Apparently, few teachers perceive this need for ongoing self-evaluation. What is worse, many actively deny the influence of ideology in teaching, often teaching with the uncritical assumption that "objectivity" can be attained in classrooms. As James Kinneavy and C.H. Knoblauch both observe, we tend to operate as though we could create within institutional confines a social world distinct from the larger society, as though there were no interanimation between them (Kinneavy, "Exile" 109-11; Knoblauch 53). As responsible teachers, we must recognize that classroom discourse is ideologically charged regardless of individual teaching practices, and that those who strive for "objectivity" are acting, though perhaps unwittingly, to powerfully support a particular ideology, the ideology of our societal status quo.

A Personal Case: Ideology in Composition

After the close of a recent semester, I accepted the invitation of several students to meet at a local nightspot. There were ten or twelve of us, all prepared to celebrate the end of a difficult school year and a long-awaited graduation. These were adult students I had come to know well through successive courses in composition, now graduates, so I felt comfortable joining their festivities. Some time into the evening, our conversation turned to politics, and they reflected on some of our class discussions.
their own selection, and I feel comfortable with nonauthoritarian, pluralistic approaches to collaborative writing in which I, too, take a role as learner. Ours had been a classroom structured on lively dialogue, addressing serious issues and creating exigencies for writing and reading. Since students directed discussions to their interests, we often explored controversies of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and so forth. This was one of those intriguing class mixes to which students brought an exceptional diversity of life experience and a wide range of academic expertise. Remarkably, happily, the class had evolved with open and honest discussion despite our differences.

What did my former students reveal on that night of celebration? First, let me tell you that their opinions on issues they had led us to entertain in class—issues they embraced so personally—spanned the political spectrum: gun control, abortion, capital punishment, environmentalism, the violence of our patriarchy, and a host of other difficult problems no less exciting for the frequency with which they arose. That evening, when they began speculating about my opinions on the topics we had addressed, I was surprised to find that each assumed my opinions conformed with her or his own. This was, of course, a logical impossibility. We shared our views and had a good laugh in the face of our misperceptions.

Initially, I welcomed the multiplicity of identities that my students had vested me with as a validation of the teaching I had attempted, as the success of a pedagogy designed to focus on student needs and interests, vanishing the teacher’s authority and encouraging student autonomy. Also, I supposed that this development indicated fruitful nurturing; it may have been that these students had felt supported by my observations in class and responses to their writing and, thus, had assumed my basic agreement with their individual views. Clearly, I had succeeded in bringing some valuable elements of deconstruction to our classroom. We had enlarged and challenged ideas freely, fulfilling Roland Barthes’ prescription of “peaceable speech”—that is, suspending violence and authority, no one had become “the actor of a judgement, a subjection, an intimidation, the advocate of a Cause” (Barthes 214). Like Richard Lanham, we had emphasized the serious “play” that properly characterizes the humanities, celebrating what William Covino calls “the art of wondering.” With a nod to Paulo Freire, our classroom had evolved to an arena of questions, serious questions about the nature of our society and world, about our roles and responsibilities as individuals. In their writing, some of the students had explored conclusions that revealed a breaking-up of the unexamined coherences that so many student writers bring to class, and some students had even come to understand that most of these conclusions needed to remain provisional, surrounded always by an imbrication of uncertainty.

Yet I wondered if I should have felt satisfied that each of these students assumed my agreement with their disparate, often conflicting, and (from my point of view) sometimes immoral views? Is it really desirable to vanish one’s
teaching authority in dialogue that never leads to judgment but only to a
continued cycle of questions? Surely, these students had become more
reflective and critical writers. But should I have been satisfied with this
accomplishment?

Semiology, Ideology, and Reality in Our Classrooms

Michel Foucault provides one important perspective on this question in
Archaeology of Knowledge. To analyze Foucault’s discursive formations is to
focus on the relative value of statements within the economy that they
function in, to focus not on their truth value but on their asset value as objects
of historical-political struggle (118-20). His archive is foremost “the law of
what can be said” (129), though, of course, it deals almost exclusively with the
already-said. For Foucault, that we are influenced by the archive that we
function within is completely unavoidable, and most often unnoticed (130).
So the enunciative modalities governing the site of our discourse are largely
cast; certainly, the ideology of the world external to classrooms forms most
of the enunciative field that our practice operates in. Our students speak the
autochthonous messages of their socialization, and educational institutions
are themselves statements that bring into operation the collateral space of
society. But as individual teachers, we do have some influence in our
classrooms over who is accorded the right to speak—and the roles they may
take as observing, seeing, listening, or questioning subjects. In classrooms
and institutions, we can manipulate the enunciative field that determines the
set of possible discursive formulations.

Three characteristics of Foucault’s General Grammar are available to us
for conscious influence in our classrooms and institutions. Foucault de­
scribes a “domain of validity,” wherein it is determined “according to what
criteria one may discuss the truth or falsehood of a proposition.” Second is
a “domain of normativity” that determines “according to what criteria one
may exclude certain statements as being irrelevant to the discourse, or as
inessential and marginal.” And third, he perceives a “domain of actuality
... comprising acquired solutions, defining present problems, situating con­
cepts and affirmations that have fallen into disuse” (61). While Foucault’s
emphasis, again, is to describe the already-said, to understand its boundaries,
these domains are available to us—particularly in the way we delimit them
through extension or restriction—as means not simply to contain but also to
enlarge the possibilities of enunciation for students. For example, in my
composition classes this past semester, several women students wrote of the
physical and mental abuse that they have been victims of, their objectification
under our patriarchy; they created highly charged statements directed toward
political action, discourse with important consequences for their own and
others’ lives. For these students, writing suddenly became vitally important.
Few colleagues that I interact with at conferences and workshops seem to
receive such writing from their students. For many students, it seems, the
norm is what Jasper Neel has called "anti-writing," writing that refuses to take a voice or establish a position (83-96). This dissimilarity may result from differences in teaching practice, for while we have little power or control over the greater part of the enunciative field that we work in, we do have influence in our classrooms. To some extent, with a responsible use of authority, we can kindle the possibilities of discourse; we can help students change the rules for forming discursive objects.

In teaching, it is vital to explore the role of what Foucault calls the "discursive practice/knowledge" axis of knowledge. Understanding the role of this knowledge may free us from some shackles and perhaps even broaden students’ scope of possibility, for it is here that the conditions necessary for the birth of any enunciation are formulated. But this is not enough. We must also direct our inquiry to another axis; that is, we must engage the question of "truth" values—examine in classrooms what Foucault terms the "consciousness/knowledge" axis of knowledge (15, 183). We must interrogate the statements within our statements—not only the already-said but the unsaid as well.

In 1929, the Russian linguist, V.N. Voloshinov, published a book first translated into English over forty years later as *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Voloshinov’s philosophy of language carries stunning implications for teaching, addressing vital questions of truth not considered by Foucault’s archaeological exploration of discursive practice. For while Voloshinov explores Foucault’s “discursive practice/knowledge” axis, his concern turns to the interanimation of knowledge and consciousness, a very different question.

Few among us—perhaps not even those who claim a substantial degree of “objectivity” for their teaching—would maintain that classrooms equal only themselves, that they signify nothing beyond their spatial and temporal bounds. It would be a strange one among us who spent a lifetime teaching with no other aim than to define the economy of his or her classroom. We can probably agree, then, that classrooms have meaning, that they are not only composed of but are also themselves “signs.” Therefore, in Voloshinov’s semiology, they are manifestly ideological. Regardless of our “objectivity,” classrooms reflect and refract other realities that make their way into our teaching through language. Unlike the ideology of “false consciousness,” the wrong-thinking that Marx and Engels found infecting almost all members of capitalist social structures, Voloshinov’s ideology permeates all sign systems. It is not difficult to imagine why this vision led to Voloshinov’s disappearance in Stalin’s purges: if ideological constructions inhabit all sign systems, then all sign systems must be evaluated critically, including that of the “party line.” As Voloshinov expresses it:

> A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality—it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special
Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation (i.e., whether it is true, false, correct, fair, good, etc.). The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. (10)

The ever-present possibility of distortion, as each sign refracts reality, imposes an imperative of evaluation. This seems like a healthy perspective for teachers of composition. We, too, ought to evaluate critically the ideological bases of our theory and practice, insofar as this project can be carried within the archive that we are a part of.

Since any sign is a phenomenon of the external world—the world external to language and thought and, for our purposes, the world external to our classrooms—“both the sign itself and all the effects it produces (all those actions, reactions, and new signs it elicits in the surrounding social milieu) occur in outer experience” (Voloshinov 11). In meetings of the “Learning through Writing” faculty of my college, where we are pleased to find active and interested faculty participants from across the curriculum, those in mathematics and the sciences occasionally distinguish the pedagogical demands of their disciplines from ours in composition on the basis of “content.” “Well, that may work in your case,” they may say, remarking on a suggested application of epistemic writing, “but your case is different; we have to deal with content.” Presumably, they view composition’s language focus as somehow removed from external realities. Nothing could be further from the truth. Whether we are talking English or enzymes, there exists an interanimation of our classrooms and external reality conducted through the agency of signs. As Voloshinov puts it, “Understanding itself can come about only within some kind of semiotic material. . . . Consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs.” This understanding, this consciousness—imbued with ideologies that echo from perspectives external to us and our classrooms—is like a chain, as Voloshinov suggests:

This chain of ideological creativity and understanding, moving from sign to sign and then to a new sign, is perfectly consistent and continuous: from one link of a semiotic nature (hence, also of a material nature) we proceed uninterruptedly to another link of exactly the same nature. (11)

Nowhere can the chain be broken, nowhere does it “plunge into inner being, nonmaterial in nature and unembodied in signs” (11). So in no case can we construct entirely private realities; in a reality dominated by language, we can fence neither ourselves nor our classrooms from the external world.

If we eliminate the content of reality—the material and social fact that becomes the stuff of individual consciousness through social interaction—we are left with, at most, a mere framework of consciousness or perhaps with nothing at all. Conceiving of consciousness in this manner alters our
understanding of ideology in a fundamental way. Ideology does not now spring from consciousness; rather, consciousness springs from a superstructure of ideological signs: "The individual consciousness is nurtured on signs; it derives its growth from them; it reflects their logic and laws. The logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication, of the semiotic interaction of a social group" (13). Thus, Voloshinov takes issue with Saussure and the linguistic point of view that he calls "abstract objectivism." For Voloshinov, the individual utterance, Saussure's parole, "is by no means an individual fact not susceptible to sociological analysis by virtue of its individuality" (93). Parole is individual utterance, to be sure, but the total of these individual acts and the abstract features common to all such individual acts clearly engender social products. At the same time, Voloshinov castigates proponents of "individual subjectivism"—Vossler most notably—by celebrating the social structure of both the individual utterance and the very experience being expressed. Voloshinov postulates a "verbal stream of utterances." This is the reality of language, and "each drop in that stream [that is, each individual utterance] is social and the entire dynamics of its generation is social" (94). While we can know that language must be grounded in social reality, there is no simple correspondence between that sign system and reality. Voloshinov believed that "existence reflected in sign is not merely reflected but refracted" through "an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community" (23). We need not accept Voloshinov's exclusive identification of this "intersecting" with "class struggle"—indeed, this seems an unnecessarily limiting reduction. But his statement on sign refraction raises an interesting question about the empiricism of language. For Voloshinov, the cause and degree of this refraction may be open to question, but one resulting implication is beyond doubt: all language is connotative. Indeed, for Voloshinov, "multiplicity of meanings is the constitutive feature of words" (101). So word meaning is determined entirely by context, and "there are as many meanings of a word as there are contexts of its usage" (79). Without this multiplicity of meaning, that which would otherwise contend to the status of "word" is not a word at all, but a mere signal with a single meaning inseparable from the concrete situation of its implementation.

This connotative view of language raises the difficult issue of understanding. Denotations still exist in this scheme, through the unity of connotation that flows to each word's concrete situational meanings (80). In the mind of each subject, each word is associated with a complex connotative matrix that generally includes one or more connotative responses conforming to the word's socially constructed denotation. This makes communication through language possible. But even if a word is understood as it is commonly denoted, the subject also associates it with additional connotative meaning. At the moment it is internalized, any cultural sign becomes "part of the unity of the verbally constituted consciousness." In this scheme, Voloshinov char-
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acterizes language along the lines of Derrida's *differance*, where "spreading ripples of verbal responses and resonances form around each and every ideological sign" (15). One result of this is that meaning is dialogic in nature: "Meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers; that is, meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding" (102). In emphasizing this historical process of "becoming" in language meaning, Voloshinov criticized structural linguistics, in which the focus on morphological and phonetic forms "has hopelessly lost any sense of the verbal whole" (110), and in which words are "ontologized and transformed into ideal Being" (105). On the other hand, in Voloshinov's view, words play a vital role in the living social process "where meaning is always permeated with value judgment" (105).

Obviously, to accept this view of language is to launch a critique of much English teaching in language, literature, and composition, to the extent that classrooms (and most textbooks) continue to focus on "elements" almost to the exception of verbal wholes. This is particularly evident considering the social nature and ideological content of verbal wholes. Classroom discussions or lectures and students' compositions cannot be confined in their meaning to the safety of some "objective" classroom environment that is somehow distinct from the "real" world. It is true that we can arbitrarily structure notions of language and teaching along the lines of what Voloshinov calls "abstract objectivism," simply defining as "correct" that which conforms to a normative system of language (52-62). But we are deceiving ourselves if we believe that either we or our teaching is free of ideology in this case. To believe naively that this is so is to throw wholehearted support behind a not particularly desirable ideology—to champion unavoidably not only the best but also the worst of the prevailing ideology that grounds a world of racism, misogyny, cultural bias, violence, and a host of other evils. On another level, to base teaching practices on the assumption of objectivity is to convey to students a perversely mistaken view of language, by focusing attention on "words" rather than their meanings. As Voloshinov notes:

> In actuality, we never say or hear *words*, we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. *Words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology.* That is the way we understand words, and we can respond only to words that engage us behaviorally or ideologically. (70)

This seems an accurate accounting of the many students who arrive in my classes with little interest in composition; far too often, they have been subjected to teaching that focuses on "words" rather than their engaging behavioral or ideological pointers.

In the worlds of business and politics, ethical examination of common practices is often forestalled by concerns for what might be found and the
demands that these results might make for altered practice. We should more willingly engage this sort of evaluation in our discipline, regardless of the possibility that we may be compelled to change. We commonly evaluate technique, of course, and we have personal and administrative checks on effectuality. But as individual scholars and teachers, we should also be evaluating ourselves from Voloshinov's perspective of ideology. We need to remind ourselves continually that all aspects of classroom practice are rooted in ideology, that our teaching ripples to shores of content ranging far beyond the narrow pool of our canons and our students' compositions.

Ideology, Literacy, and Moral Development

If racism, misogyny, and violence displease us, we cannot view as moral the educational practices that uphold the current state of our lives. Since even teaching that ostensibly "takes no stand" effectively supports a particular parochial position—perpetuating things as they are, in a condition that we know to be unjust—there is no fundamental structural difference between being "objective" and responsibly exercising one's authority in a just cause. This is not to say that uncritical personal goals should override the public good. Certainly, the responsible teacher must critique the ethics of his or her positions. Nor is it to say that one should earnestly take up a banner for educational change with the kind of absolute commitment that admits no ground for error. After all, we must continue to recognize the anomalies of our paradigms; we must remember the imperfections of closed minds. Even a participant in Freire's radical education plan in Brazil, Frances O'Gorman, feels a need to ask, "Do we... have the right to raise the consciousness of the educatees with whom we interact?" O'Gorman extends her question to ask if she and her coworkers, as agents of consciousness-raising, were not "manipulating" others. This is a vital question, one especially to be asked by those certain that classrooms are value free, and others who intentionally design their practice to manipulate students with particular ideological ends in mind. So, for example, while there is much of value in Charles Paine's recent call for a pedagogy leading to "commitment in relativism," O'Gorman's question becomes vitally relevant when Paine calls upon us to "influence (perhaps manipulate is the more accurate word) students' values through charisma or power" (563). Even more troubling are ontological pedagogies, like the quasi-theistic extremes of some Marxists or those pedagogies that would convert schooling to "a theistically based curriculum that integrates academics and the content of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament" (Woodward 467). If my interpretation of my students' evening celebration is correct, my teaching is not modeled on domination. In fact, one reason I revel in teaching composition is the wonder of being a cosubject, examining the world along with my students. Teaching composition in this way is a profoundly philosophical endeavor and great fun, too. But an optimally effective teacher must be both cosubject and agent of change. It is
this latter role that we must address more explicitly in teaching composition, and this goal requires that we explore the nature of responsible teaching.

Most adherents of the various literacy themes assume that their theories are not ideologically grounded but ontological; that is, their theories have always existed in truth. But we exercise and support an ideology in our classrooms whether we recognize it or not. For example, those who demand improvements in cultural and functional literacy often view language as a value-neutral vessel, as a tool for learning to do the world's work. Yet implicit in the rhetoric of Ernest Boyer, E.D. Hirsch, and Mortimer J. Adler is the voice of the manager who has in mind workers and citizens who are unlikely to question the socioeconomic machine into which they are fitted. Even in Boyer's more liberal formulation, there is no felt need for social transformation; he seeks to improve people's lives but only in a context where nothing else is allowed to change. Is this a "bad" literacy agenda, an undesirable goal? Not necessarily—or, at least, not entirely. It does offer potential for improving the lives of individuals; its adherents are surely well meaning. But they should be aware of its underlying ideology and its implications for change or stasis in the status quo; they should acknowledge the powerful ways in which their personal vested interests help to shape their seemingly a priori arguments and the limitations on individual and social development that their proposals impose. One thing is clear: statements of literacy, including designs for composition classrooms, offer agendas for controlling people's lives. This should give us pause. As teachers of composition, we make daily choices on these issues, choices that affect people. And we aim to affect them, understanding that to educate is to change. If we are to teach responsibly, we must recognize that we have interest as individuals in the social reality outside of our classrooms, an interest that colors our teaching practices. Surely, it is more responsible to consciously interrogate the ideology that dominates our classrooms than to ignore its presence and its probable effects, assuming naively that classrooms are somehow value free.

In "A Plea for the Revival of Sophistry," Sharon Crowley describes connections between the Sophists and modern composition teachers. She sees a split between scientific inquiry, which "valorizes the generation of knowledge for its own sake," and the rhetorical ideal, which "posits that the acquisition of knowledge has only one rationale: to improve the quality of human life" (320). As Crowley sees it, the proliferation and specialization of knowledge associated with the rise of the sciences in the mid-nineteenth century led inexorably to the rise of the "expert," to the prevailing situation where "the rhetor who still attempted to sway public opinion out of general moral or political convictions took on the status of rank amateur" (321). Crowley calls for a return to teaching the "rhetorical awareness" of the Sophistic tradition that obtained in colleges of the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. By "rhetorical awareness," she means "the realiza-
tion that all acts of composing and interpretation occur within a complex network of social, political, ethical, and cultural parameters” (323). Crowley speculates about the success of the technical rhetoric of the current-traditional paradigm; she suspects that technical rhetoric, that which “can be applied like varnish, to any and all rhetorical situations that arise,” retains its popularity in the academy “not only because it is efficient, but also because it is value neutral.” It is a rhetoric that “can be taught without regard for issues which are difficult of definition, and which call for ethical commitment on the part of both students and teachers” (323-25).5

I, too, am dissatisfied with the sterility of writing and teaching based on technique. However, as I have indicated, all teaching, including current-traditional practice, presupposes ideology; there simply is no value-neutral pedagogy. For these reasons, my paradigm of composition is changing to one of critical literacy, a literacy of political consciousness and social action. Certainly, our notions of literacy must retain the seed of individual development. For example, Virginia Woolf speaks forcefully for the necessity of developing the individual in A Room of One's Own. As Woolf puts it, education should “bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities” among people (91). This goal for literacy itself runs counter to the Hirsches and Adlers of recent years, and properly so. As Henry Giroux notes:

The importance of developing a politics of difference . . . is seldom a positive virtue and attribute of public life; in fact, difference is often constituted as deficiency and is part of the same logic that defines the 'other' within the discourse of cultural deprivation.

Giroux describes the chauvinism of the Great Books movement and the conservative political interests of functional literacy advocates, understanding that “both ideological tendencies strip literacy from the ethical and political obligations of speculative reason and radical democracy and subjugate it to the political and pedagogical imperatives of social conformity and domination” (61-62). In most societies, distinction leads to judgments about relative quality, so a degree of relativism and empathy are necessary checks on the oppressions of a dominant ideology. From Adam Smith to Lawrence Kohlberg, the achievement of moral development (I believe we can use this phrase synonymously with the “literacy of social consciousness”) has been viewed not simply as an ability to make judgments but as a way to make judgments while looking at, accepting, and understanding the positions of “the other side” (Court; Kohlberg and Mayer). Literacy of the group, of socialization, is one desirable form; but a “higher” form of literacy is living in the etic world, resolving issues of difference. Like the Jeffersonian vision of democracy, models for responsible teaching in composition should celebrate this perspective.

Feminist and minority theorists articulate another approach to this
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issue. For example, Nancy Chodorow provides a psychoanalytic understanding of the ways in which male identity formation is an individuation process of boundary building. According to Chodorow, female identity develops differently, under the influence of the paradigm for child-rearing, emphasizing affective relations. Carol Gilligan's work affirms and develops this perspective. While oppositional thinking of this sort can lead to fallacious overgeneralization and insidious stereotyping, it is nevertheless instructive; the male mode of gender development seems to uphold literacies of personal growth, while the female mode leads us to literacies of social construction. Most of us have been sensitized to the possibility of different modes of thought and being. As I have discussed, all definitions of literacy are grounded ideologically, and most assume ontological necessity; however, we need not allow this perception to dissuade us from decision-making. We simply need to define literacy nondogmatically, remaining open to the ever-present possibility of error and change. We can all identify marvels of success in our traditions, in the arts, sciences, and political systems, all of which offer examples for admiration. Yet we have also seen the failures of the patriarchal Eurocentric view and the conservative literacies that spring from it; we cannot overlook our wars, our incessant damage to each other and our world. These processes alone should lead us to seek another way, a different mode of thought and being.

Madeleine Grumet considers the way of feminist teaching in *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching*. Grumet concludes that it is in the nature of the male way of being (at least as understood by Chodorow, since it evolves in a world where women do most of our mothering) to try “to get on teams of technologists who can’t remember that they are part of the world they are changing, into groups of professionals who claim that care and ethics can be derived from relations with another that are predicated on privilege and uneven distributions of wealth and power” (186). This raises a fundamental issue for educators: if we are to provide any positive alternative for students, the model of literacy that informs practice in composition should incorporate “relation” as a key element. If Chodorow is correct, the “male” way of being results not so much from biology as socialization; and while much of the effect of socialization is established early in life, education might be an available avenue for influencing socialization in later years. Gilligan suggests that college students can shift from moral ideology to ethical responsibility, in which the adolescent moral concept of “fairness” is replaced by an ethics of caring, respect, and personal responsibility for others (155). But the nature of our culture and its power structures—including the authoritarian models that most educational practices are built upon—tends to perpetuate adolescent morality, emphasizing “rights” and “justice” over “responsibility” and “caring.” Again, shifting the goals of literacy to a relational moral orientation might better support our social lives. Given the rhetorical nature of our practice, we who teach composition are well positioned to take action
Sidney Callahan, writing to overcome the rationalist tradition in ethics that makes emotions morally suspect, describes ways in which “emotions energize the ethical quest” (13). A valuable conception of literacy would celebrate the importance of emotions, extending to the development of care perspectives, as Gilligan and Jane Attanucci call them. Our goal would be to help students develop not simply an ideal of justice and fairness—of reciprocity and respect for others springing from the recognition of inequality and oppression—but also an ideal of care, attention, and response to need—a perspective springing from the recognition of detachment or abandonment (Gilligan and Attanucci 73). Sadly, Gilligan and Attanucci find a “virtual absence” of such care perspectives among males in their samples of “advantaged” North Americans (82). I believe that composition classrooms should enrich the affective component of morality, enhancing the likelihood of our survival on this planet.

Whether education can reasonably claim efficacy in this regard or whether we should bother ourselves with these speculations are both important issues. Some research on moral development suggests that moral judgment level correlates more specifically with level of education than with age; people apparently develop moral judgment through schooling, then remain at constant levels after schooling (Rest). Advanced composition classes may play an important role; we must not absolve ourselves of responsibility to develop moral perspective simply by virtue of higher course numbers.

**Kairos and the Imperative of Social Action**

Kinneavy shows one way that this concern may apply to compositionists in "Kairos, a Neglected Concept of Classical Rhetoric." Calling for a focus on *kairos*, or “situational context,” Kinneavy would have us base composition programs—and, perhaps, the entire educational enterprise—squarely in the realm of critical social consciousness: “What is required, if we are to be faithful to our historical analysis [of *kairos*], is to devise a college composition program that will have ethical, epistemological, rhetorical, aesthetic, and political dimensions” (93-94). Such programs must fulfill the ethical consequences of *kairos*, taking into account the value systems of writers’ and readers’ situational contexts. Thus, as Kinneavy states, “the student should be asked to inquire into the aspects of his or her discipline that will morally affect the student’s decisions in the present and in the foreseeable future” (98). Since it is questionable whether there is any ethic in a social vacuum, this writing program must frame the social context of the writer as well, including writing by students on political issues relevant to their own disciplines and on the political scene generally. That students might develop in this way a sense of historical consciousness is precisely Kinneavy’s aim—and, he believes, this result is exactly the social return to be desired for our
There are other ways to begin a transformation to critical social consciousness. In "Deconstruction and Pedagogy," Vincent Leitch suggests a starting point in "epistemological transformation." Leitch's deconstructionist view is simple: "In the realm of knowledge, everything is constituted during a certain time by one or more people" (22). The implications of this view are significant for teaching. Viewing "knowledge" as patterns of relationships and "learning" as the assertion of those relationships changes teaching and learning. If one assumes that knowledge is constructed and not merely transferred, students become active creators of their own knowledge (a process Janet Emig establishes in "Writing as a Mode of Learning"), and they may also come to understand that institutions and inequalities that seem to be given in society are themselves constructions, transient archives subject to social action. To use Freire's formulation of praxis, naming also entails transformation. For Freire, reflection and action go hand in hand. This was the crux of my concern about the multiple determinations my students made about my position in the world; they revealed to me that my teaching was predominantly reflection. Praxis must begin with reflection, but reflection alone is merely the "empty word," as incomplete as would be action alone, mere activism.

Clearly, in composition classrooms, this leads to the dialogical or sociological statement. Class discussions must continue to revolve around students' issues of concern. We must also continue to support the development of individuals. But we must focus more on the origins of the social institutions in which their issues are grounded, the origins in human activity. Further, our classes must emphasize perceptions of relationalism; the literacy experiences that allowed and reinforced my students' solipsism are inaccurate and possibly dangerous. If one aim of education is to promote moral development, then the social construction of knowledge and its concomitant, the role of perspective in the recognition of "truth," must be made clear. No longer can we assume that developing "personal voice"—speaking clearly on a topic that one cares deeply about—necessarily entails being heard. Nor can we assume that expressions of that personal voice are invariably worthy to be heard.

We must also seek critical consciousness of institutions and social practices vis-à-vis the self. For example, given the issues raised by students, my classes now include focused discussion on feminism. As students form their views through writing, it is important that they do so with an understanding of feminist perspectives. Of course, there are some risks here. Male teachers, especially, regardless of our views on feminism, may unwittingly misrepresent the psyche and lived experience of women, committing what Gayatri Spivak calls the imperialism of "translation-as-violation" (525). And as Elizabeth Berg and Elaine Marks have both advised, we must take care when addressing women's issues that we do not essentialize sexual
identity, reducing a diversity of traits and individuals to a simplistic masculine/feminine dichotomy and thereby reinscribing the binary oppositions that tend to maintain women's oppression (Berg 218-20; Marks 105). Nevertheless, avoiding these risks amounts to an untenably complacent acceptance of the status quo. At the same time, to turn away from these considerations for the ease of some imagined "objective" classroom is to present to students an inadequate understanding of the rich complexity of rhetorical contexts. Few among us would demand that students conform to our personal ideologies, but ethical practice requires that we lead them to consider the implications of their writing for the lives of others. That students formulate their personal statements should no longer satisfy; they must also explore the implications of those statements for political stasis or action.

Defining the place of our ideologies in composition classrooms is a subject fraught with ambiguity. What we can say is that we need to fulfill both aspects of Freire's praxis: reflection and action. As Knoblauch advises, we and our students must accept "the paradox of maintaining critical reflectiveness while making choices in the world" (53). In "Anger and Authority in the Introductory Women's Studies Classroom," Margo Culley argues that part of the feminist teacher's responsibility is to share the energy for personal and social change that comes from anger:

Only when our anger has been felt and acknowledged, not denied, when it has been demonstrated to be grounded in a personal and collective sense of self-worth and not their opposite, can we hope that our students will join with us in the remaining work to be done: a semester, and then a lifetime, of affirmation and work for social change. (216)

Of course, we must tread lightly on this ground, particularly those of us who are male. It would be undesirable to return to the days of the authoritarian patriarch behind the lectern, regardless of his motivation. Rather, a movement in the opposite direction is preferable: we need to call into question the illusions of authority inherent in oppressive mystifications of "the teacher as one who knows." But Culley offers an important perspective for all teachers: we have a responsibility to share with students the energy of our commitments.

Susan Stanford Friedman writes of the feminist teacher: "In our eagerness to be non-hierarchical and supportive instead of tyrannical and ruthlessly critical, we have sometimes participated in the patriarchal denial of the mind to women" (207). Friedman's observation applies to many who teach composition, regardless of gender. We are largely a caring and self-effacing lot. Like the women's studies teacher that Friedman describes, we often deny ourselves the authority that we seek to nurture in our students. No, we don't want a return to the kind of authority that makes students passive and
dependent; there is just no place for tyranny in our classrooms. Our challenge is to continue to nurture our students toward their own authority, an authority we might hope to sensitize with care, while at the same time finding a place in our classrooms for our own knowledge and experience. We all recognize teaching as a complex and ambiguous activity. But one certainty stands clear: the demands and responsibilities of literacy are too great for teachers to abdicate their proper roles as acting subjects in our society.

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Notes

1 That Voloshinov is the author of this text is a disputed and ambiguous point of judgment with a variety of scholarly perspectives beyond the scope of my discussion here. It may well be that Mikhail Bakhtin is actually the author, or that the two produced the text collaboratively. Tzvetan Todorov explores this issue in Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle and determines that the evidence does not support a firm conclusion. He uses "Voloshinov/Bakhtin" in his text to demonstrate this ambiguity, while retaining the prominence of Voloshinov as the author in whose name the text was first published (5-11). Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg support Bakhtin's authorship, basing their conclusion on a 1984 biography of Bakhtin by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist (924-25). In the present text, I accept the judgment of Matejka and Titunik, translators of Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (1986), who resolve in their preface to continue assigning authorship to Voloshinov, pending more satisfactory resolution of the historical uncertainty.

 Emphasis in all quotations of the present text is Voloshinov's.
2 See de Beauvoir 46-71; Hairston; and Kuhn.
3 For a related discussion, see Spring; Tyack and James.
4 See, for example, Rodriguez.
5 Also see Neel 202-11.
6 For an exploration of concerns about oppositional thinking and stereotyping, see Tronto.
7 Molefi Asante explores similar concepts when distinguishing between Eurocentric and Afrocentric views.
8 Ulmer nicely describes a view of knowledge as patterns of relationships in "Textshop for Post(e)pedagogy."
9 See Freire and Macedo 18-19.
10 On "authority," see Gallop 21.

Works Cited

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Ulmer, Gregory L. "Textshop for Post(e)pedagogy." Atkins and Johnson 38-64.