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A pedagogy of being: Humanising learning environments in the South African tertiary sector

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Abstract

In this study, we explore the theoretical underpinnings and the practical implementation of a one-year student-led and student-centred service-learning course called "IiNtetho zoBomi", translated from isiXhosa – one of South Africa's twelve official languages – as "conversations about life". The Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics, Department of Philosophy, at Rhodes University in South Africa, has been developing and implementing this course for the past decade in response to widespread calls for transforming South African universities and producing socially responsible, ethical graduates. "IiNtetho zoBomi" aims to show students how important the life of the mind is for cultivating autonomy and sociality, for bridging the gap between the lives of thought and action; and, by doing this, to show students the intimate relationship between thinking, reading, writing, human freedom, and the ethical life. Relatedly, the course challenges the widespread assumption that education's aim is capacitation rather than human growth and does so in a genuinely practical way that increases the likelihood of impacting affect and behaviour.

Introduction

This study is a collaborative effort between colleagues at the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics (AGCLE) in the Department of Philosophy at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa in which we explore our one-year student-led, service-learning course in ethics, "IiNtetho zoBomi: Conversations About Life". IiNtetho zoBomi (hereafter 'IZ') means "conversations about life" in isiXhosa, the principal language spoken in the Eastern Cape and one of the twelve official languages of South Africa. The Eastern Cape is one of South Africa's poorest provinces. It is blighted by extremely high levels of unemployment and grinding, even desperate, poverty. Rhodes University is the only research-intensive university in South Africa in a largely rural area. It was named after one of the British Empire's most notorious representatives, Cecil John Rhodes. Despite multiple attempts to rename the university, its original name remains. As its name suggests, Rhodes University was, until recently, a predominantly white elite institution, but it has undergone a radical demographic transformation in the last few years. It is now primarily a black working-class university, with many of our students coming from public schools for the disenfranchised located in rural or peri-urban townships.

South African universities are mainly derivative; they were set up to emulate Western universities. Indeed, it is in light of this that calls for the transformation of South African universities are widespread from the grassroots to governmental levels. The South African Department of Education's "Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation", aimed at guiding the direction of South African higher education in response to the demands of the new democratic and anti-racist dispensation, indicates that:

> Higher education will have to be more responsive to societal interests and needs. South Africa is a developing and modernising African country in a period of transition from racial discrimination and oppression towards a democratic order. Aspects of this context should be reflected in the content, focus and delivery modes. (Department of Education, 1996, p. 13)

Indeed, the "White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education", states that:

> Higher education has an unmatched obligation, which has not been adequately fulfilled, to help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests. (Department of Education, 1997, p. 4)

The ethics taught in South African universities varies little from what is taught in the global north. However, African ethics has increasingly found its way into many universities' curricula, typically as an aside. The AGCLE is the only academic unit in the country experimenting with new ways of teaching ethics beyond a purely theoretical engagement with the discipline. Our aim in IZ is to provide the conditions for our students to consider in a genuinely practical way how critical engagement with ethical issues plays a crucial role in allowing us to live the sorts of lives we would want to live were we given the opportunity to carefully reflect on what matters most to us. In what follows, we will explore IZ's theoretical underpinnings and practical implementation.

IZ is a student-led service-learning course aimed at promoting active engagement with the course content to foster students' intelligent growth. This humanising pedagogy finds concrete expression in the various aspects of the course, from student-led lectures to peer-to-peer dialogues and service learning.

In our first decade, AGCLE staff have worked with students, tutors, and teaching assistants to create and permanently renew IZ, a service-learning, student-led course in ethics that pays its qualified respects to the late 18th and early 19th–century German founder of the liberal university Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of *Bildung* or self-formation (Herdt, 2019). Our reconstruction of *Bildung* lacks the elitism characteristic of the original idea. This idea has largely been lost in contemporary global universities, and South African universities are no exception. Following the global social trend, education has increasingly become commodified and equated with mere training (Mckenzie, 1995; Wilkinson et al., 2023). In what follows, we explore what we think of as a humanising pedagogy – a pedagogy being consonant with D. Randy Garrison's (2016) Community of Inquiry – as well as how our thoughts find concrete expression in the service-learning component of IZ.

We aim to foster a love for learning in our students and a recognition of the importance of working to refine the practice of living by exposing students to the theoretical underpinnings of the course from the get-go and providing them with a host of opportunities for exploratory discourse. The course is laid bare in front of our students, so they are encouraged to understand the why of what we are doing at every point in the course. The principal form of assessment is the reflective journal. There, students integrate what is discussed in class, including tutorials and service learning, with their own experiences. We seek to encourage and enable them to think through what they are doing as students – including the role of education in self-formation or *Bildung* and the relationship between education, ethics, self-formation, and personal freedom. Once they understand the rationale behind IZ, they can critically reflect on higher education's purposes and take ownership of and responsibility for their learning in IZ and their other courses.

IZ is a response to dissatisfaction (e.g., Benson et al., 2017; Nussbaum, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2023) with the current state of higher education in general and South Africa, which is increasingly focused on upskilling students for employment to the exclusion of Bildung. Moreover, learning requires that students attend, and attention is biased; that is, people attend to what interests them, and what interests them is informed by their lifeworlds – or worlds of lived experience. As such, teachers must have a clear sense of who their students are and the schemas they bring into the classroom so that we can teach in ways that accord with their interests while gradually expanding their spheres of concern. To achieve this, we need to focus on how best to integrate the new into what is already there in the minds of our

students. This learning process is one of the central insights of Paulo Freire's (1970) defence of a humanising pedagogy, and one of the insights that guide Garrison's (2016) idea of a "community of inquiry" and the growing literature on compassionate teaching and a pedagogy of kindness (e.g., Aspland et al., 2022; Day et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). Just as we cannot teach advanced mathematics to someone who does not know the basics precisely because the new must be able to latch onto what is already there, so too does learner success depend on associating what is covered in class with what is already in memory, with students' pictures of reality.

Similarly, teachers are not paying sufficient attention to "the hidden lives of learners", to borrow the title of Graham Nuthall's (2007) pioneering study on what goes on in students' minds while in class; and hence, teachers struggle to deal with the inattentiveness pandemic affecting younger generations. Relatedly, by failing to take into consideration, or be attentive to, the social contexts in which our students live and learn and form their identities, and so creating what Boughey and McKenna (2021) call "decontextualised learners", we end up locating issues with student motivation and performance in students themselves and fail to see them as informed by systemic social or contextual factors.

Another concern is that universities and teachers are often blind to critical aspects of "the hidden curriculum", the indirect teaching and learning that happens mainly under the radar, typically without the knowledge or conscious reflection of teachers or students; teachings about disciplinary roles, values, literacies, and commitments. This is the dark matter of teaching and learning, and its effects can be beneficial or insidious. One of the insidious aspects is that we are not challenging the consumer capitalist ethos pervading contemporary society. Hence, in the eyes of many, if not most of our students, whether rich or poor, black or white, universities have become the ticket to remunerated employment and little more. We ask our students why they come to university in class, and they discuss this in their reflective journals. Some of the most common replies are that they are at university to 'secure the bag' – money – or 'the soft life' – the life of conspicuous consumption, exemplified by the lifestyles of celebrities or social media influencers. So, mainly by omission, universities perpetuate rather than challenge preconceptions formed in a neoliberal world where acquisitiveness has taken centre stage in social life and the imaginaries of those growing in an era of hyper-consumption.

Finally, there is the thought/action dualism that worried John Dewey – one of the most influential philosophers of education of the late 19th and early to mid-20th century – discussed throughout his corpus. We will elaborate further on this dualism below. However, its effect is that students typically do not understand the value of understanding, and 'bookish' people, something academics tend to be, are seen to 'live in the clouds', so the worlds of thought and action, of ideas and experience, remain dirempted in the classroom. For learning to succeed, we must place scaffolds below the point at which day one at university typically commences; that is, we must show students why learning should matter to them in the first place rather than wrongly assume, as is usually the case, that because what is taught matters to teachers, it must also matter to students.

These are some of our AGCLE team's concerns. More shall be mentioned below. We conceived of IZ to help address these concerns and others. IZ aims to induct students into the world of learning and to show them how reading, writing, thinking, and being are interrelated and how education will better equip them to navigate life and its travails as agents rather than leaves blown by forces they do not understand and over which they have little control. One way of characterising the central aim of IZ is to create conditions where individuals learn to have an ethical say in how their lives unfold. We invite our students to consider that this is what it means to be an agent in the superlative sense, an ethical agent.

This study will proceed as follows: In the next section, we will continue to explore the concerns that IZ is designed to respond to. First, through the lens of feminist standpoint epistemology, we explore the phenomenon of epistemic marginalisation to contextualise the university experience of many of our students, an experience that we need to understand to build the new onto what is already there in experience. In other words, we explore how, given our students' lived experiences, when confronted with university life, they often experience university as alienating, jarring with their preconceptions of what it means to know and of their pre-reflective understandings of the place of knowledge in life. Second, we explore threats to what Arendt (2006) calls the "two-in-one", the critical self-reflexivity that allows us to take authorial control of our lives. Third, we return to Dewey's concern with the thought-action dualism and the diremption of capacitation and growth in higher education to the detriment of our students' appreciation of the value of an education. Here, we explore the need for higher education to promote what Dewey termed intelligent growth, explored throughout his corpus. In the third section, we offer part of the solution that we have found to the problems described in the second section – the adoption of a humanising pedagogy that fosters students' love of learning, their intelligent growth, and the "two-in-one" – the life of active critical introspections – necessary for leading responsible, ethical lives. Here, we elucidate some of the theoretical underpinnings of the course, the ideas that explain its design and content. In the fourth section, we turn to the course's service-learning component, which exemplifies our pedagogical approach, describing IZ's service-learning through the lens of Garrison's Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, 2016; Kamali et al., 2024) before wrapping things up in the final section.

Concerns motivating the development and design of IZ

Before turning to the theoretical underpinnings of IZ, we will provide the reader with a more detailed discussion of the concerns motivating the development and design of the course. First, we explore the need to address the experience of epistemic marginalisation of many of our students, to speak to them from where they stand and enable them to see the true value of education. Second, we explore how global social trends threaten our students' ability to critically

and reflexively engage with themselves, their world, and their education. Finally, we turn to the need to address the thought-action dualism affecting both students and teachers, which prevents our students from understanding education as the existential endeavour we think it ought to be.

Addressing epistemic marginalisation

Our students find themselves in a world saturated with information; they are inundated with piles of cognitive overstimulation and face the vexing task of sorting through each pile and situating themselves within the chaos. This labour of locating themselves vexes epistemically marginalised students. Most of our students are black and working class and often come from rural or peri-urban environments. These are places where epistemic practices differ significantly from those in university classrooms. Their schooling does not adequately equip them to feel at home in universities, and their experiences are often profoundly alienating, frequently leading to feelings of inadequacy and being ignored. When asked, our students typically report that they come to university to acquire an education, but they spend very little time acquiring or producing knowledge; they often do not see the value of pursuing knowledge for personal growth. Their social positioning on the margins may alienate them from the collective mechanisms of knowledge production (Lave & Wenger, 2003; Wenger, 1999). As such, they might not see themselves in spaces of knowledge development and, in turn, may invest minimal effort in participating within those spaces. The distance between what they bring to class and what happens in class seems unbridgeable to many of them. In this sense, far too many of our students are epistemically marginalised.

With this in mind, it would prove helpful to approach our educative endeavours cognisant of where our students are coming from and link new knowledge to the understandings our students bring into the classroom. Again, in our curricular practices, we must respect how knowledge is acquired by associating the new with an already-existing pattern. Here, we turn to standpoint epistemology. This field of philosophy considers the knower's social position and works to determine to what degree one can be a knower and what factors impact or impair learning. The question informing this field of philosophy is, "How does the specific locus I occupy in society by my class, gender, sexuality, or race positively or negatively influence my understanding?".

According to Toole (2019), standpoint epistemology has three theses, the first being epistemic privilege, which is "committed to the [claim] that some epistemic advantage can be drawn from the position of powerlessness" (p. 600). Certain pockets of knowledge are only or best accessible to those on the margins, and to gain that knowledge, one must have faced a struggle, thus bringing us to the second thesis, achievement. Epistemic success is achieved by members of marginalised groups by "critically [examining] the relationship between one's social situatedness and one's oppression (or oppressive role) within a social system" (Toole, 2019, p. 600); this process is called consciousness-raising and requires a conducive environment sensitive to positionality's epistemic role. The third and most critical thesis is situated knowledge, which can be stated as follows: "For certain propositions p, whether an epistemic agent is in a position to know that p depends on some non-epistemic social facts about that agent" (Toole, 2019, p. 601). According to this thesis, the traditional epistemic features, such as truth, reliability, evidence and justification, and so on, are not the only features that a person can use to be validated as a knower; therefore, "it is this sense in which one's social identity, a non-epistemic feature, makes a difference to what one is in a position to know" (Toole, 2019, p. 601).

It may be the case that many of our students cannot fully articulate their experiences because they may lack the conceptual resources to do so. Conceptual resources are aids that epistemic agents use to make sense of, understand, and articulate their experiences; "these include language, concepts and their associated criteria for sorting [knowledge]… and do not stand independently of experience" (Pohlhaus, 2011, p. 718). If epistemic agents, in this case, our students, do not have the conceptual resources needed to adequately understand or express their apathy towards knowledge as produced and constructed in our largely derivative universities, then they will not be able to articulate their lived experiences either for themselves or to others. They can perform their apathy for all to see but cannot typically make sense of it or express their experience in words. Indeed, we contend that making sense of it in the classroom would help undermine the apathy we find there. This is something we do in IZ. We invite our students to reflect on the sources of their apathy.

As situated knowers, many of our students potentially struggle to find intrinsic value in an abstract – almost fantastical from their points of view – notion of knowledge that never had them in mind in its formulation. They have been given a basic education that they have commodified as a means to an end and relegated knowledge to those with the leisure of pondering the abstract as they navigate their real, often very challenging, lived experiences. When they reach for their conceptual aids – the hermeneutical resources at their disposal – they hesitate because what they know does not harmonise with the mainstream understanding of what it means to know, particularly insofar as what they know, even if they provide sufficient evidence for their claims, is often not deemed to be 'valid knowledge' from the perspective of those in positions of authority in the contemporary South African academy. Fricker (2007) discusses the issue of epistemic marginalisation in some detail. She argues that a person's disadvantaged social positioning negatively impacts how their lived experience is perceived and interpreted. Fricker calls this "hermeneutic injustice". This is when a person's "social situation is such that a collective hermeneutical gap prevents them from making sense of an experience which is strongly in their interests to render intelligible" (Fricker, 2007, p. 7).

To make sense of our experiences, we tap into our collective knowledge reservoir to understand and articulate them. However, when that reservoir cannot make sense of your experience or assist you, you may feel like your experience is invalid. Toole (2019, p. 609) exemplifies this sort of injustice with her experience as a bi-racial person experiencing

colourism for the first time:

> A college recruiter from a historically black college/university…visited to offer me a scholarship. But upon meeting me, he did not review the offer with me; instead, he handed me a packet with information and immediately departed. I later gathered that it is unusual for a college recruiter to behave in this way, and I inferred that what ultimately best explained what happened was that he was surprised (and perhaps disappointed) by the fact that I am a fairly light-skinned biracial woman. At the time, I knew that there was something unnerving and hurtful about the experience. But, as I did not possess the concept for colorism, I did not fully understand what had occurred, or why. It was not until many years later, when I acquired the concept, that I recognized this as an instance of colorism. Learning this concept threw into sharp relief an experience that had been somewhat vague for me until then.

All our students bring their lived experiences to the academy, which affects how they interact with knowledge creation in contemporary South African universities. This is to be expected. However, this interaction may negatively impact students' lived experiences from epistemologically marginalised backgrounds. Their experiences of knowledge creation in our universities may be of such a nature that they lack the conceptual aids needed to interpret their experiences properly. How they know needs to be looked at from the vantage point of their situatedness – considering their "hidden lives" and the contexts within which they were formed and are continually shaped as knowers. It may be the case that most of our students value education as a ticket to employment over knowledge or education as fundamentally related to self-formation and self-mastery. This is because of the apparent payoff that education as a ticket to employment is seen to bring coupled with their inability to understand and articulate their relationship to or lived experiences of an education system that treats them as "decontextualised learners", to borrow the language of Boughey and McKenna (2021) again. In contrast, they do not see the payoff of knowledge or education for *Bildung* because they rarely see themselves in the roles of knowledge creators in our universities. We consider these issues when designing and redesigning IZ and invite our students to reflect on them.

Addressing threats to the "two-in-one"

We now turn to the centrality of education in fostering lifelong refined critical reflection, Arendt's (2006) "two-in-one". This is a fundamental structural feature of agential existence; rather than an inner monologue, if not impaired, we experience an inner polyphony of voices where views are challenged and affirmed in the dynamic process we call thinking. Refining the "two-in-one" is a central dimension of *Bildung*. Indeed, self-formation demands the ongoing refinement of the "two-in-one" as selves form themselves through thinking. If thinking is not functioning correctly, it is at the mercy of forces over which it has no control, undermining our ability to shape our lives as agents.

As previously lamented, universities have become training grounds for professionals rather than places to promote human growth. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with preparing students for professional life. The problem is that professionalisation comes at the expense of personal growth in the mainstream contemporary university. Schools, on the other hand, have become training grounds for future university-goers. The market needs professionals who will embrace its commitments, and the education sector responds by producing them. However, significantly, the response has come about by neglecting the autonomous individual. Professionals are trained to align their expertise to the designs of their employers rather than engage as human beings in the necessarily collaborative job of helping to build a better world or, less grandiosely but by no means unrelatedly, professionals, indeed human beings, committed to self-mastery, something inseparable from working with others for the sake of improving the conditions of life and increasing our understandings of reality in all its variegated dimensions.

In a 2012 documentary directed by Raoul Martinez and Joshua van Praag, *The lottery of birth*, Jeff Schmidt (2000), author of *Disciplined minds: A critical look at salaried professionals and the soul-battering system that shapes their lives*, states that "Professionals are deliberately produced to be intellectually and politically subordinate". In *The lottery of birth*, Schmidt illustrates the idea of subordination with the anecdote of two young nuclear weapons designers working in a nuclear weapons design laboratory. When asked by a journalist what the worst part of their job was, they rejoined that it was dealing with unstable computers lacking sufficient capacity. They were not, it seems, able to consider the higher purposes they were unthinkingly serving. The scope of their concerns was subordinated to the aims of their employers. Again, this may be an example of thoughtless subordination that perniciously affects human life. The tragedy of this mentality mirrors the divorce in the education sector between vocational – capacitation – and non-vocational – growth – dimensions of education, as philosopher Richard Rorty (2000) would put it, where the vocational is privileged, and the non-vocational is at best grasped as a minor addition.

Thoughtless subordination is indeed a central theme of *The lottery of birth*. The documentary aims to show to what extent freedom or self-mastery is an achievement rather than a starting point. Indeed, the documentary shows us the extent to which believing that one is born free is one of the surest ways of not being so, of becoming the slave of forces over which one has no control. Nicholas Woodeson, the narrator of *The lottery of birth*, states, "In fact, to take our freedom for granted is to extinguish the possibility of attaining it" (cited in Schmidt, 2000). The documentary also explores the relationship between *Bildung* and the work required to contribute to improving social life. This relationship should come as no surprise, especially if one recognises the extent to which a blind allegiance to the rat race perpetuates injustice. This allegiance can be challenged by the practice of self-mastery, when individuals decide to take responsibility for the direction of their lives despite the nudging power of circumstances. To become responsible is to become imbued with a sense of personal autonomy, of

being one constitutionally embedded in a network of many.

We screen *The lottery of birth* in the first few weeks of the course. The documentary and our conversations about it help our students see to what extent we must struggle to grasp what lies beyond the veils of illusion partly constituted by ideological forces and commonplace psychological mechanisms, which we explore in some detail in the course.

Being subordinate in this manner is exemplified by the behaviour of *Schutzstaffel* (SS) officer Adolf Eichmann, as described in Arendt's (2022) *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. Eichmann, according to Arendt, was thoughtless. This, for her, is not the same as being stupid. Eichmann was, from the point of view of instrumental rationality, a highly effective bureaucrat in charge of the transportation throughout Europe of prisoners to an almost guaranteed death in concentration and death camps. He was an effective professional and a pathetic human being, a kind of thoughtless human automaton unable, it seems, to engage in the inner dialogue – Arendt's "two-in-one" – which is a central aspect of what Freire (2000) and hooks (1994) describe as "the practice of freedom", another way of describing the renewed conception of *Bildung* that informs IZ. It seems that Eichmann only had one inner voice, a monologue; hence, despite not being stupid, he could not interrogate his commitments critically. And it is in this regard that his behaviour was thoughtless. No voice in him could significantly challenge the genocidal life path he had taken. His relationship to the social forces set in motion by Hitler was unmediated by a conscience, something requiring the "two-in-one". It is not only that there was one Eichmann for all to see. According to Arendt, it was also the case that there was only one inner Eichmann, devoid of any conflict or an inner polyphony. The ability to evaluate requires the imaginative leap into alternative perspectives on a single issue. If Arendt's analysis is correct, Eichmann could hardly be said to have authorial control over his life. To have authorial control involves the "two-in-one" of mental life. In this regard, Eichmann was a poorly educated man trained, rather than educated in the proper sense, to follow projects set by others unthinkingly. He could perform his professional activities flawlessly as required by his superiors but lacked the inner life necessary to recognise that his contribution to existence was entirely negative.

Although Arendt does not use the phrase "practice of freedom", it is clear that this is at the heart of her concerns with the "two-in-one" of mental life. It is what allows for agential existence. Assuming Arendt was right about Eichmann's radically impoverished inner life, we can say that his existence resembles an automaton's. Eichmann is an extreme example, to be sure – more because of the consequences of his univocity than of his univocity as such, which is arguably widespread across the human population – but he is also a paradigmatic example of the subordination of professionals.

Eichmann lacked an inner community of inquiry, which can only exist amid an external community of inquiry. To a significant extent, his monologue is a function of those who surrounded him and encouraged him not to think or question. Instead, it fostered blind allegiance to a vision of humanity that was not dissimilar to a colony of ants. Indeed, the Nazi party operated in an echo chamber, a topic we return to below.

Graeber (2018) explores more mundane examples in *Bullshit jobs: A theory*. One can productively read Graeber through an Arendtean lens and argue that his book aims to show the extent to which mainstream employment and the educational sector that shapes professionals fosters thoughtlessness and, relatedly, banality in the sense of uncritical compliance to the status quo due to an impoverished inner life caused by the erosion of the "two-in-one" essential for agential existence.

Society, including contemporary educational institutions, fosters atomistic thoughtlessness, the solitary individual competing with others for goals considered sacrosanct given the impoverishment of the "two-in-one". Neoliberal consumer capitalism needs a compliant workforce subordinated to the aims of employers, so educational establishments provide them. Educational establishments also, arguably, do not do enough to create the conditions for dialogical encounters with others who challenge our preconceptions on an ongoing basis. In this regard, human autonomy, freedom in this sense, depends on adequately constituted communities of inquiry where the "two-in-one" can thrive. Insofar as this is the case, it has to be understood in relation to both the relationality and vulnerability at the heart of the human condition.

The examples explored above from Eichmann to the nuclear weapons designers highlight the central role that communities of inquiry play in what Dewey describes as intelligent growth, which requires, following Garrison and others, a collaborative learning space. All the above topics inform the design of IZ and are discussed in class.

Addressing thought-action dualism

According to Dewey, the aim of education is intelligent growth. Intelligent growth aims not at subordination but at personal and political freedom. In both cases, freedom is achieved when "Impulses and desires are … ordered by intelligence" (Dewey, 1997, p. 64). According to Dewey (1997), when they are not so ordered, they are ordered by "accidental circumstances" (p. 64), that is, circumstances that push people hither and thither without the critical intervention of the "two-in-one". For Dewey (1997, p. 64),

> Impulses and desires that are not ordered by intelligence are under the control of accidental circumstances. It may be a loss rather than a gain to escape from the control of another person only to find one's conduct dictated by immediate whim and caprice; that is, at the mercy of impulses into whose formation intelligent judgement has not entered. A person whose conduct is controlled in this way has, at most, only the illusion of freedom. He is directed by forces over which he has no command.

The examples presented in the previous section show that educating professionals ought to be connected to intelligent growth. Refraining from integrating capacitation

with growth, the vocational and non-vocational aspects of education foster thoughtlessness and, paraphrasing Schmidt (2000), intellectual and political subordination. This subordination motivated Orwell's (2003) *Nineteen eighty-four* and Arendt's (2017) *The origins of totalitarianism*. The novel and the treatise explore what life with others would look like if univocity replaced the "two-in-one" across the population and suggest the need for robust and critical communities of inquiry that foster thoughtfulness and intelligent growth.

According to Dewey (1997), intelligent growth is only possible if we work to eliminate the dualism at the heart of educative practices across the globe. He is speaking here of the thought-action duality. The consequence of this dualism is that thought fails to be adequately integrated into life. Again, this dualism helps explain both the high incidence of 'bookish' intellectuals who 'live with their heads in the clouds' and the pervasive anti-intellectualism of social life.

We can observe that this dualism plays itself out in the contemporary classroom. University teachers stand before the class and speak to an audience largely uninterested in what is being shared and are often frustrated to the point of bloodcurdling anger at witnessing this apathy. However, teachers need to recognise that central to successful teaching is showing students why what is being shared in class should matter to them. Recall that we learn by linking the new to the pattern of what is already there. So, students need to be able to add new information to a pre-existing pattern. For something to matter, it must fit into this pattern, where their specific lived realities have shaped it.

Related to this insight, Nuthall (2007), Hattie (2008), and others believe that too much focus has been placed on teaching rather than learning, that is, how students or learners learn. While it is undoubtedly true that we need to focus on how our students learn, the debate between proponents of child-centred education, teacher-centred education, and Biesta's (2022) "world-centred education" seems misplaced. Together, these focal points are imperative to the educative project in equal measure. But it is also true, and here we agree with Biesta that ultimately, the point of education is to invite students to grasp different aspects of reality either for the first time or renewed. This new or renewed grasp of experience is constitutive of intelligent growth.

Returning to the issue of dualism and mirroring the problem of 'bookishness', students often have little sense of how having thoughts – indeed increasingly sophisticated thoughts – is a central dimension of freedom understood as an intelligent practice aimed at growth. Most of our students see freedom as the freedom to do whatever they want without considering how those wants have been, for good or bad, shaped by circumstances that are essentially out of their control. Failings born of noxious ideologies illustrate the centrality of communities of inquiry. More often than not, we learn from others without even realising how those who share the world with us profoundly impact what matters to us and our knowledge pursuits. Where teachers tend to value experiencing ideas as valuable in their own right from their points of view, students often only hear words and more words. Our students have typically not come to university for the love of understanding. Indeed, our typical students do not relate understanding with growth beyond the monetary aspirations that acquiring a degree will typically fulfil. Given the neoliberal, consumer capitalist ethos shaping the lives of our students, combined with the precarious economic circumstances of most of them, the typical student is in a rush to get a degree understood as a key to a salary. So, for them, education becomes mere training. For the average student, growth is primarily confused with prosperity, with "having" rather than "being", to borrow Fromm's (2008) distinction. In Fromm's words, "the content [what is taught] does not become part of [students'] system of thought, enriching and widening it" (Fromm, 2008, p. 24).

For these reasons, as we see it, following Dewey, Garrison, and others, teachers should, at the heart of their pedagogy, be concerned with addressing the problem of how to engage with students such that the knowledge shared can be integrated into their students' own "system of thought, enriching and widening it" (Fromm, 2008, p. 24). To quote Fromm (2008, pp. 24-25) again, incorporating the above-quoted passages into the broader context of his thought at length:

> Students in the having mode of existence will listen to a lecture, hearing the words and understanding their logical structure and their meaning and, as best they can, will write down every word in their looseleaf notebooks—so that, later on, they can memorize their notes and thus pass an examination. But the content does not become part of their own individual system of thought, enriching and widening it. Instead, they transform the words they hear into fixed clusters of thought, or whole theories, which they store up. The students and the content of the lectures remain strangers to each other, except that each student has become the owner of a collection of statements made by somebody else (who had either created them or taken them over from another source).
>
> Students in the having mode have but one aim: to hold onto what they 'learned', either by entrusting it firmly to their memories or by carefully guarding their notes. They do not have to produce or create something new. In fact, the having–type individuals feel rather disturbed by new thoughts or ideas about a subject because the new puts into question the fixed sum of information they have. Indeed, to one for whom having is the main form of relatedness to the world, ideas that cannot easily be pinned down (or penned down) are frightening—like everything else that grows and changes, and thus is not controllable.
>
> The process of learning has an entirely different quality for students in the being mode of relatedness to the world. To begin with, they do not go to the course lectures, even to the first one in a course, as *tabulae rasae*. They have thought beforehand about the problems the lectures will be dealing with and have in mind certain questions and problems of their own. They have been occupied with the topic and it interests them. Instead of being passive receptacles

> of words and ideas, they listen, they hear, and most importantly, receive and respond in an active, productive way. What they listen to stimulates their own thinking processes. New questions, new ideas, new perspectives arise in their minds. Their listening is an alive process. They listen with interest, hear what the lecturer says, and spontaneously come to life in response to what they hear. They do not simply acquire knowledge that they can take home and memorize. Each student has been affected and has changed: each is different after the lecture than he or she was before it.

What we should add to Fromm's distinction is the idea that students in the having mode are primarily interested in having for purely instrumental reasons. On the other hand, students in the being mode are interested in growing and understand that ideas are living things that have potentially transformative power. For them, learning is continuous with intelligent growth. Contrary to students in the having mode – the bulk of our students – students in the being mode do not grasp what they learn as inert. Instead, for students in the being mode, learning is a journey of discovery rather than a shopping spree of ideas.

The fact that the having mode rather than the being mode of human existence has taken precedence in most societies across the globe has to do with the communities within which people are raised. To succeed pedagogically, we must create alternative communities, communities of inquiry where the being mode is privileged, where people learn to become active participants in a collective effort to learn. And this is indeed what we do in IZ. As ignorance is born of collectives that promote it, such as communities informed by consumer capitalism and the values primarily fostered by social media, so too is intelligent growth born of communities that critically engage with the status quo and promote the formation of the "two-in-one".

A pedagogy of being: Theoretical underpinnings and the nuts and bolts of IZ

In what follows, we continue to explore the basic ideas informing IZ, focusing on ideas that address some of the concerns described above. We discuss these ideas with students in class; they constitute the early content of what is taught in class and serve as the foundational ideas upon which the rest of the year's content is built.

We want to show our students early in the course that self-formation is not something an individual can do in isolation. Individuals are constituted by their interactions with others, which must be of a proper sort for unimpaired growth to take place. The proper social space for individuals to grow is a space of contestation, where a polyphony is heard, dialogue flourishes, and differing, even antagonistic, perspectives come together to foster critical reflection and the growth of all group members. As Garrison (2016, pp. 11-12) puts it:

> Critical thinking is more than self-reflection and is invariably socially situated. It is a form of disciplined inquiry that moves the individual beyond autonomous thought. Personal meaning must be put to the test. […] Only through the process of diagnosing misconceptions and considering alternative conceptions are we able to achieve confidence in our thinking. [...] To think is to question; to question is to inquire. Most importantly, to think is to question one's own thoughts and this requires intervention.

Most crucially, a space of open dialogue fosters inner dialogue. This "two-in-one" is central to the life of someone committed to the thoughtfulness that should be the main aim of any adequately constituted educative endeavour.

Students are invited to reflect on the idea that the space of open dialogue differs from what Nguyen (2020) calls epistemic bubbles and echo chambers, such as sects, where the echo of one voice resonates throughout, and the "two-in-one" that defines the life of the unimpaired mind is thwarted. In this regard, Nguyen's echo chamber is totalitarian, disturbingly similar to what is portrayed in Arendt (2017) and Orwell (2003). Thought requires others to think with us rather than passively echo the herd-like utterances of those whose ability to take responsibility for their lives has been impaired.

At this point, it is worth noting that the only way of leaving an echo chamber is if someone from outside rescues us, underscoring the importance of others in the mental formation of autonomous, self-propelled individuals. Only in this way can a second voice occupy the inner space of a captured mind. To rescue us, someone must work to repair our trust in those with different beliefs and values, those who represent different ways of experiencing the world, and those from different "worlds" to borrow Lugones' (1987) language. Even when not trapped in an echo chamber, however, working with others is crucial to developing the awareness of self, others, and social reality needed for growth. Parochialism forms parochial minds and a lack of openness to others and experience.

As discussed by Garrison and following, in particular, the thinking of the father of sociobiology, Wilson (2000), the success of our species – and the reasons for its potential downfall as attested by the rate at which our 'intelligent' greed is ravaging the living world – is a function of cooperation. But it is not merely cooperation. Ants and bees cooperate in complex ways, but they have been doing much the same for millions of years. Our richness is that our modes of cooperation are driven by our intelligence and the language that is its medium. Our ability to adapt, innovate, and learn is second to none in the animal kingdom.

Despite this, the educational sector today privileges a form of radical autonomy that is antithetical to the fact of our sociality. Students are encouraged to compete with one another rather than to work together to find solutions to problems. They are tested as atomistic individuals rather than as communities of inquiry. As Garrison (2016, p. 16) puts it:

> Competition can undermine group cohesion and the development of a community of learners by shutting down open communication and the sharing

> of ideas. Competition in a learning setting limits the possibilities of being exposed to new ideas, changing misconceptions, and developing new perspectives.

Competition can be essential to growth, but only if informed by a spirit of cooperation and mutuality.

We have, for a decade now, been attempting to challenge our students' misconceptions of self and personal growth as radically divorced from education and, relatedly, to show students that not actively engaging is deleterious to them from their own considered points of view.

What, then, is a pedagogy of being? A pedagogy of being foregrounds how we – as students and teachers – relate to one another, our perceptions of self and others, and the attitudes we need to bring to the project of learning and creating knowledge together if we want our students to seriously engage with content and integrate what they learn into their lives. IZ is designed to create alternative communities – critical and collaborative communities of inquiry – where the being mode is privileged. IZ is designed to engage our students in ways that enable them to actively integrate knowledge into their own "system of thought, enriching and widening it" (Fromm, 2008, p. 24) in collective efforts to learn or pursue intelligent growth. Through collective inquiry – including student-led lecture discussions, peer-to-peer dialogues, and service-learning activities – IZ aims to enable students to develop the "two-in-one" that fosters intelligent growth, autonomy, and freedom while undermining their experience of epistemic marginalisation in the academy and so enabling them to see themselves as part of different communities of inquiry.

Recall that since we are constituted through our interactions with others, self-formation is not something an individual does alone. As suggested above, critical self-reflective thought requires others to think with us in a space of open, honest, and critically engaged dialogue, in a space of contestation. Such dialogue fosters inner dialogue. However, interactions with others must be of a particular sort if growth is to occur, and learning environments characterised by certain attitudes towards learning with and relating to one another must first be cultivated for these kinds of interactions to manifest. In Garrison's (2016, p. 12) words,

> Thinking collaboratively is dependent upon constructing a culture of inquiry in the context of purposeful, engaged, and trusting communities. [...] Thinking collaboratively is a deep and meaningful approach to learning that relies on critical and creative thinking through sustained engagement with content and other learners. This collaborative approach to thinking extends beyond acquiring information or developing basic competencies. It necessitates that learners assume responsibility and understand intellectual inquiry as constructing personal meaning and confirming understanding through purposeful engagement.

The ability to evaluate, which undermines univocity, emerges in our dialogical encounters with others. But, because these encounters must be of the sort that can challenge our preconceptions, they have to be entered into with an attitude of openness and humility, which enables us to take the imaginative leaps into alternative perspectives required to "[confirm] understanding through purposeful engagement" (Garrison, 2016, p. 12). Laying the foundations of this environment or for this community, encouraging our students to adopt these attitudes, or establishing "social presence", to use Garrison's terms, is one of the first aims of IZ and is introduced to students at the outset of the course as the ethics of conversation.

The ethics of conversation speaks to principles that guide and underpin our interactions with one another and how we work with others in various learning spaces and activities in IZ. These principles are drawn from work in multiple disciplines – e.g., philosophy, cognitive science, education, and psychology – all of which suggest the need and lay the foundations for the openness and humility in our interactions with others required to create critical and cooperative communities of inquiry that recognise multiple voices, address epistemic marginalisation, and develop the "two-in-one" of healthy mental life.

Early in the course, we expose our students to *The lottery of birth* mentioned above, in which a central argument asks them to consider the arbitrary ways they come to hold some of their most deeply cherished beliefs and values. We expose them to Galef's (2021) work on motivated reasoning, Chabris and Simons' (2010) selective attention research, and Wallace's (2009) discussion of our "natural default settings", challenging students to consider what they see or fail to see and how they see it, and inviting them to want to see what is the case, to want to become lucidly aware of what is in front of them, of themselves, others, the world around them, and their role in (re)shaping themselves and this world.

We expose them to Fernbach and Sloman's (2017) work in *The knowledge illusion: Why we never think alone*, explaining how most of what we know or draw on in our thinking comes from outside us, from other minds, shattering the illusion of understanding that all of us hold to a greater or lesser extent, and hopefully, the epistemic arrogance that often accompanies it. These lessons also highlight the central role of collective inquiry for intelligent growth and foreground once again the openness and humility that we want our students to bring to collective inquiry as socially situated beings working together with others in collaborative communities of inquiry.

We expose our students to Freeman's (2015) work on attention that, drawing on the insights of Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch, suggests the need for displacing the ego – a "holding-in-abeyance" (Freeman, 2015, p. 165) – in our interactions with others to allow the other and what is other to emerge on its terms; of an "unselfing" (Freeman, 2015, p. 160) that provides the space and opportunity for the other to reveal themselves or itself free of our preconceptions and biases.

We expose them to the work of Lugones (1987) on playful "'world'-travelling", work that draws upon and supplements Frye's (1983) concept of "loving perception", the kind of perception that, again, allows what is separate to or independent from the self to emerge on its own terms.

Lugones claims that "we can learn to be through loving each other" (Lugones, 1987, p. 8). This phrase highlights three primary concepts at the heart of Lugones' work on recognition – concepts we want our students to explore, particularly as they relate to one another – learning, loving, and being. While Lugones' account of playful "world"-travelling focuses primarily on what it means to recognise the other – another person with different views, perhaps even one of a different culture, race, religion, and so on – through her writing, she points our students to an intersubjectivity that lies at the heart of being, learning, and growing. To know oneself, to be a complete subject and to make meaning with others, one has to recognise the other and oneself in the other's "world". There is a reciprocity inherent in this account of recognition. In travelling in and through one another's "worlds", we become fully subject to ourselves and one another. Through this process, we learn and grow – be and become – with one another. Learning this way with others enables the wholeness and certainty of the subject concerning other subjects. Lugones, once again, emphasises the importance of openness to our students – "an openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and construction or reconstruction of the 'worlds' [they] inhabit playfully" (Lugones, 1987, p. 17). To bring Lugones into conversation with Arendt and Garrison, engaging with Lugones shows our students how "'world'-travelling", recognising and working with others in purposeful communities of inquiry "defined here by purpose, interdependence and communication" (Garrison, 2016, p. 14) develops and fosters the "two-in-one".

What we call "the ethics of conversation" is fundamental to learning and intelligent growth, to "widening the lens", which Butler (2023) asserts in her ongoing defence of democratic struggle. While, like Butler, we must never forget that widening our lens can be difficult and that it can necessitate changing habitual ways of thinking and being, we must also be reminded that "stumbling is part of learning and making an error is part of learning, especially when we are learning something new" (Butler, 2023, 09:43). Akin to Lugones, Butler argues that we must be open to others to widen our lens. And we have to do this to be free. "Freedom is a struggle", she argues (Butler, 2023, 11:35). Indeed, according to Butler (2023), we have to claim our freedom because our selves are formed over time, and we do not know what our time and place will make of us. Rousingly, Butler (2023, 11:50) asserts that: "When we live in a democracy, we assume that we are living according to certain principles – to equality, freedom, justice – and yet we are constantly learning what freedom is, and what equality is, and what justice can be". To continue learning is to remain open to meaningful dialogue with others. In the same interview mentioned above, Butler (2023, 10:14) urges us "to allow ourselves to be challenged and accept the invitation to revise our ways of thinking because that is the only way of being open". We would add that being continuously open to revising our thinking in light of new evidence is the only way to grow.

Service-learning: A "purposeful learning environment"

In what remains of this paper, we turn our attention to one of the defining features of IZ – that it is a student-led service-learning course. We will focus on our student-led, service-learning work vis-a-vis the theoretical underpinnings and concerns of IZ, which we have already explored above, and Garrison's (2016) Community of Inquiry framework – particularly the three interdependent elements he speaks of when discussing the educational experience in a community of inquiry – namely, social, cognitive, and teaching presence. While Garrison's framework was originally derived to reflect on effective teaching practices in online teaching environments, work is beginning to emerge, bringing this framework to bear on effective teaching practices in face-to-face learning environments (see Kamali et al., 2024; Warner, 2016). We show that service learning in IZ offers a purposeful, collaborative, and cooperative learning environment, to use Garrison's terms, designed and facilitated to stimulate and foster all three presences and contribute to the creation in IZ of the kind of alternative learning environment we spoke of above in which *Bildung* and the being mode of education are privileged. Through engaging in service-learning, the process by which our students reflectively and actively integrate what they are learning into their "system of thought, enriching and widening it" (Fromm, 2008, p. 24) is furthered.

Before turning to service-learning itself and service-learning in IZ, let us quickly expand on Garrison's framework and our use of it here. Recall that Garrison's framework takes a leaf from Dewey's philosophy of education, according to which thinking and acting are inseparable, and reflective thinking draws connections or conceptualises relationships between the world of ideas and the world of experience, allowing, as Dewey would put it, for the ongoing reinterpretation of experience that constitutes education. Given this, many of Garrison's ideas are also unsurprisingly consistent with those of Fromm, quoted above. For instance, we could liken Garrison's distinction between "surface" and "deep" approaches to learning to Fromm's distinction between the having and being modes of education. Garrison's Community of Inquiry framework, that is, is a deep approach to teaching and learning that, we would argue, privileges the being mode of education. We can see this in Garrison's description of the process of inquiry in a community of inquiry, where he writes:

> The dynamic must be a rational process where members of the group are encouraged to collaboratively and critically explore (find new relevant ideas), interpret (relate to previous ideas), challenge (question accepted truths), and integrate thoughts (create new ideas) into more satisfactory interpretations of our experiences. (Garrison, 2016, p. 15)

Like Fromm, Garrison focuses not on rote memorisation of content in the having mode but on active, critical, and creative engagement with ideas and experiences, working to integrate the new into the old, make sense of it or question it. In line with this approach to education, Garrison argues that "collaborative thinking is a whole body experience [...] an

individual is fully engaged, cognitively and transactionally, in a purposeful group of learners" (2016, p. 12). Importantly, this kind of engagement needs to be planned for, fostered, and sustained in the community of inquiry since: "There is risk in engaging others in critical discourse [...] [which] can be an inhibitor if trust and open channels of communication are not established" (Garrison, 2016, p. 45). Garrison speaks about three interdependent elements that he identifies as co-constitutive of the educational experience – social, cognitive, and teaching presence – and claims that each needs to be planned for, fostered, and sustained throughout the inquiry process.

For Garrison (2016), social presence refers to a sense of community committed to an academic purpose and characterised by open communication, collaborative and constructive engagement, and cohesion born of "the ability of participants to identify with the group or course of study, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively by way of projecting their individual personalities" (p. 34).

Fostering social presence, for Garrison, takes time and relies on open communication. It should be among our priorities as educators to welcome students into a new course or community, as it sets the stage for and supports both cognitive and teaching presence moving forward. In this sense, social presence is often described as having primacy over both cognitive and teaching presences (see Kamali et al., 2024). As Garrison (2016, p. 36) puts it:

> Social presence is first focused on the purpose of the inquiry (identity to the group) and then on ensuring the conditions for free and open communication within the group… the focus must first be on group identity and cohesion established in an environment of open and free communication.

Cognitive presence, which, for Garrison (2016), is "the core of a community of inquiry and, as such, focuses on thinking and learning collaboratively" (p. 40), is once again understood in Deweyan terms. Inquiry, for Garrison, is a dynamic process in which we deliberate, act, perceive, and conceive. Or, put differently, inquiry leads from perception or awareness to deliberation or reflective thinking, to conception or the construction of ideas and confirmation of meaning, and finally to action, which once again leads us back to perception. For Garrison (2016), this process brings together the individual's world with the shared world of discourse through experience – "the complex process of constructing meaning reflectively and negotiating understanding collaboratively" (p. 35).

Finally, teaching presence speaks to "the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social presences" (Garrison, 2016, p. 37) in a community of inquiry – "the crucial element in establishing and sustaining a community of inquiry" (Garrison, 2016, p. 50). Because of its role in establishing and sustaining the community, Aspland and Fox (2022) argue for the adoption of a pedagogy of kindness, focusing on the interplay between kindness and teaching presence and how this enhances the quality of students' learning and engagement, as well as students' experience of education. Engaging with work emerging on what Tan (2022) calls the "heartware" of education resonates with our pedagogy of being and various aspects of the course including the adoption of mindfulness practices in class.

Garrison stresses that teaching presence is not teacher presence and that responsibilities "for constructing personal meaning but also for shaping the discourse of the group" (Garrison, 2016, p. 37) should be shared among participants in the community of inquiry "based on their knowledge and expertise" (Garrison, 2016, p. 17) or ability. Despite this, however, much of the literature employing this framework speaks of teaching presence in relation to the educator alone. Aspland and Fox (2022), for instance, speak of teaching presence as the "key responsibility of the academic" (p. 148). Because responsibility for teaching presence is shared, it is intimately related to developing what Garrison calls "shared metacognition" or "metacognitive awareness", an awareness of and ability to regulate the inquiry process for oneself and others. Metacognition, as he describes it, mediates between individual cognitive functions and collaborative learning activities and is "essential to monitor and manage thinking individually and collaboratively" (Garrison, 2016, p. 37). The shared responsibility for teaching presence is central to the student-led design of IZ.

Based on what has already been said, we aim to create a purposeful, collaborative community of inquiry in IZ. Indeed, the design and facilitation of each of the course's components, from student-led lectures to peer-to-peer dialogues and service-learning, can be considered in terms of encouraging, fostering, and sustaining social, cognitive and teaching presence. This should not be surprising, given that we share many philosophical influences with Garrison. What we describe as our pedagogy of being, for instance, is vital to establishing and sustaining social, cognitive, and teaching presence and, as Garrison recommends, is prioritised and highlighted in class from the outset of the course. We recognise, with Garrison and others employing his framework (see Kamali et al., 2024), the need to make social presence our initial priority and aim to establish an academic purpose and identity amongst our students that is underpinned by a critically reflective attitude of humility and curiosity about oneself, others, and one's context that can only be fostered by engaging in dialogue, action, and reflection with others (see Tan, 2022). As Garrison reminds us, we first need to establish the right kind of community in which our students feel able to participate and contribute their thoughts and values openly and honestly before we can genuinely expect them to learn from or even be motivated to participate in the kinds of dialogue and service-learning activities central to IZ. We want to focus on how IZ, as a service-learning course, exemplifies Garrison's picture of a purposeful, collaborative community of inquiry. Indeed, IZ's student-led service-learning component is part of a larger community of inquiry and hopefully comes to constitute further communities within it.

Learning through service stems from Dewey's ideas of experiential learning, where the interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is deemed vital to learning and so is consistent with the pedagogical philosophy underpinning IZ. Indeed, as we will see, service-learning bridges the gap

between thought and action that so worried Dewey and, in so doing, undermines the thought-action duality, creating a whole-body educational experience and prompting our students to begin to view their education as more than simple capacitation for future employers, indeed as a holistic journey of *Bildung*. Service learning is defined in the literature as

> a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in organised service activity that meets identified community needs, and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222).

Based on the above definition, four core characteristics provide a framework for course development, including "an emphasis on the different ways of learning and understanding, the value of human experience as a source of learning, the requirement for reflective thinking to transform experience into learning and an ethical foundation that stresses citizenship to community" (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000, p. 101).

In IZ, students serve as mentors and tutors in a year-long program of weekly, one-on-one, interactive sessions with younger learners at local, no-fee paying primary schools, engaging the content they are exploring in IZ with the learners. This is to not only enrich the learners' life orientation work at school and improve their English literacy, but also to work towards fostering the learners' self-formation, personal freedom, and love of learning – widening their lenses and enriching their thinking. Given that the learners are central to the community of inquiry fostered between mentor and mentee, our students must be metacognitively aware of the need to foster social and teaching presence between them. They invite their mentees into the IZ community of inquiry established during class. Just as they have hopefully fostered social presence working with one another in IZ, including a commitment to a shared academic purpose and community of inquiry before participating in service learning, they now work towards inviting their mentees into this community to explore the content they have been learning about underpinned by the ethics of conversation and a pedagogy of being.

For this reason, our students' first engagement with the learners revolves around playing games selected by the mentees. This activity builds trust in the relationship between mentor and mentee, paving the way for open and honest communication and for cognitive and teaching presence through acknowledging and recognising learners' skills, interests, and needs (see Aspland & Fox, 2022). Again, working towards social presence is our students' initial priority going into the primary schools and precedes any academic work they undertake with their mentees. Our students first foster social presence with their mentees to develop the requisite relationships and create the conditions to support their own and their mentees' cognitive and social presences moving forward in the programme. While doing this, they exercise and foster teaching presence; as student-teachers, they learn by and through teaching while directing their mentee's inquiry, including their social and cognitive presences. They develop metacognitive awareness and a better understanding of the why of IZ, sharing responsibility for the direction of the course. They also foster teaching presence insofar as they direct thinking and dialogue and shape discourse during their sessions with their mentees, developing, as they do, a different way of thinking about knowledge production and epistemic access and marginalisation. Teaching presence in IZ is deliberately shared among teachers, students, and learners in the service-learning component of IZ, which enhances cognitive and social presence by enabling students to co-construct meaning in IZ and form a collective identity, respectively.

Insofar as they draw upon, indeed teach and model IZ course content and principles in their service to their mentees, our students also get the opportunity to engage with their course content in a sustained, critical, and creative manner with each other and their mentees (see Howard, 2002), and learn from the experiences and perspectives of our community partners enhancing cognitive presence.

Service-learning students are typically said in the literature to learn vital skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and improved communication while learning about and from those they work with and serve (see Fisher et al., 2017). We would add that engaging in service-learning shifts the "hidden curriculum" in a positive direction, leading them to question tacitly dominant ideas about where they can learn, whom they can learn from, and who produces and shares knowledge and directs inquiry, as well as the value of human experience as a source of learning. Relatedly, and insofar as it draws on experience, IZ's service learning brings new content into conversation with the old, with the pictures of reality that our students and their mentees bring to IZ, giving students something to hook onto. In Garrison's (2016) terms, service learning in IZ provides our students with the invaluable opportunity to think and learn collaboratively with younger learners through meaningful discourse and action or collective inquiry – collective efforts to explore and make sense of the concepts covered in the course together in purposeful communities of inquiry. These opportunities not only enable our students and their mentees to engage in the dynamic process of practical inquiry iteratively – moving between perception, deliberation/reflection, conception, and action – but also enable different perspectives to play an equal role in deliberation and meaning-making, bringing personal "worlds" of meaning into contact with the shared "worlds" of discourse.

Students in service-learning courses work together with community partners and others to share their respective knowledge and experiences to find solutions to socio-economic concerns and, in so doing, learn while also affecting social change. Learning, here, is not confined to the four walls of the lecture venue or even to the hallowed halls of the university but is instead explored through interaction and engagement with local communities. Service-learning provides our students with access to alternative communities and perspectives, which enables them to "widen their lens", as Butler (2023) puts it, emphasising different ways of learning and understanding different knowledge claims. In

light of this, respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection are core values fostered through service learning. It is always important, for example, to respect the ways of being, circumstances, and outlook of the community one's students are serving (Butin, 2003).

Service learning should not only benefit the server but should also be a mutually beneficial process that encourages genuine participation and partnership with the community. For instance, the community should be involved by articulating and contributing to the programme from its inception (see Bringle et al., 2009). The primary schools, their learners, and the caregivers of these learners constitute our community partners in IZ and, together with the AGCLE team, identify the needs and interests of the community. They also continue to play a central and formative role in the continued deliberation about, design, and facilitation of the program as it unfolds each year. Teaching presence in IZ is fostered and shared more broadly among the mentees and our community partners as well. In contributing to the design and facilitation of IZ's learning content and spaces both at their schools and at our university in class, learners and community partners contribute to the construction of ideas and draw on their abilities, experiences, and expertise or situated knowledge to direct thinking and dialogue and shape discourse. Therefore, service-learning in IZ is not a linear process where students attend lectures and then go into disadvantaged communities to apply the knowledge gained in lectures. This program emphasises the assets in these communities, e.g., the knowledge and skills that learners and community partners can share with students during their interactions and brings these into the educational experience. This reciprocal process is where learning takes place. The learning process continues when community partners contribute to the course content. This co-creation of knowledge focuses on what students can learn from service learning and what community partners can contribute to co-creating course content. Their views, experiences, and skills cannot be found in textbooks and are invaluable to learning in IZ.

Recall that reflecting on service-learning is said to "transform experience into learning" (Roakes & Norris-Tirell, 2000, p. 101), enhancing what our students have learned during lectures and conversations (see Osman & Peterson, 2013) and providing further content and meaning for future deliberations, conceptions, actions, and reflections. Reflective thinking can be achieved through, for example, small group discussions that provide students with a platform to engage with one another critically, share their experiences, and unpack their learning processes (see Bellner & Pomery, 2005). These kinds of discussions take place weekly in peer-to-peer dialogues in IZ. Reflection can also be achieved by keeping a reflective journal in which students utilise concepts and theories from class to reflect on and (re)frame their experiences in and conceptions about communities (see Bellner & Pomery, 2005; Rhoads, 1997). Both our students and the learners keep private reflective journals, enabling them to think about and through why, how, and what they are learning and to integrate this learning into their own "system of thought" (Fromm, 2008, p. 24). Insofar as this is the case, service-learning and reflective thought about their service-learning engagements bridges the gap between our students' experiences and the world of action, on the one hand, and their ideas and the world of thought, on the other. Reflective practices of this sort are central to promoting Garrison's cognitive presence.

Research on service-learning courses suggests that students' personal and professional attitudes change through engaging in service-learning (Donaldson & Daughtery, 2011; Howard, 2002; Osman & Peterson, 2013). For instance, service learning has been shown to enhance civic responsibility in students, perhaps because of their improved understanding of those around them, their social context, and themselves, as well as their role in reshaping, indeed their capacity to reshape, this context. A review of the research suggests that service learning contributes to students' personal and social development – enhancing their self-esteem and leadership skills and building citizenship, civic and social responsibility – and improves their academic performance – e.g., their ability to apply concepts in novel and exciting ways (see Fisher et al., 2017). Thus, service learning creates collaboration and partnerships between communities and universities and works towards transforming both communities and students (Osman & Peterson, 2013). The IZ service-learning component exposes our students and primary school learners to different ways of learning about and engaging with their respective course content—encouraging them to work together and learn from and with each other, transforming themselves and their communities.

Service-learning in IZ plays a central role in responding to the concerns we outlined at the beginning of this paper – it speaks to more than mere capacitation; indeed, it speaks to transformation and *Bildung* through education; it challenges the thought-action duality by bringing the worlds of ideas and experience into direct contact with one another; and works with the operations of memory, enabling our students to build their growing understanding of content into their pictures of reality. Finally, it challenges the "hidden curriculum", shifting academic norms, values, and commitments, hopefully showing our students why learning should matter to them and, in so doing, humanising the learning environment of IZ.

Concluding remarks

We now offer a few words on how effectively we have achieved the educational ideals IZ was developed to achieve. In 2019, IZ received a glowing review from educational sociologist Kathy Luckett and feminist philosopher Ann Cahill. But we have never been complacent about our achievements; we constantly explore new possibilities. There are clear signs that students are responding positively to the course in large numbers. However, the course is embedded in a university system that remains relatively stuck in a business-as-usual approach to education. A course such as IZ would be more effective if its approach could be embraced more widely. Given the inertia characteristic of institutions of higher learning, we understand that to achieve our aims more fully, we will have to swim against the current for a while longer. An interesting aspect of our struggle is that contemporary vision and mission statements, and our university's is no exception, tend to align perfectly with our work. Still, this

alignment does not seem to translate into unambiguous institutional support.

We must now push hard to find spaces at our university and in the higher education sector more broadly to implement things we have learned throughout the years. We follow Dewey, Arendt, Freire, hooks, and many others in thinking that, at bottom, the ethical life is the self-reflective life, the life of the "two-in-one" that is at the heart of what Dewey refers to as intelligent growth, although he does not describe things in this way. We should note that this conception of the ethical life is identical to education as *Bildung* or self-formation divested of its elitist origins. Suppose we cannot intelligently and on an ongoing basis exercise our ability to have a say on how our lives will go. In that case, we end up being at the mercy of internal and external forces over which we have little control. In other words, we lose the ability to self-regulate and guide our lives with principles that we have thoughtfully helped to weave into the fabric of our lives. We should add that this process is not finite. It demands ongoing critical interrogation in light of ever-changing circumstances.

We are being approached by other South African universities expressing interest in our work, a positive sign that a commitment to changing our largely derivative pedagogical practices is slowly emerging in the South African tertiary sector. At the AGCLE, we continue to hope beyond hope that institutions of higher learning will take a leaf from the pedagogical experimentation that defines our deep commitment to transforming our students' lives and, in this way, helping to address the conditions of life in our troubled society.

In this paper, we have outlined the basic tenets that shape IZ and the vision of education informing it. We have explored the concerns and theoretical underpinnings of IZ as a student-led, service-learning course in ethics designed to respond to concerns with the state of higher education in South African tertiary institutions tasked with the "unmatched obligation" to transform and respond to societal concerns and interests by fostering a critical civil society. In response to these calls, IZ aims to transform the ways ethics is taught in South African universities from a purely theoretical discipline to a whole-body learning experience that allows our students to consider ethical issues in a genuinely practical way, revealing to them the stake they have in the ethical or the centrality of ethics to their lives as ethical agents as well as the intimate relationships that exist between education, ethics, and personal freedom or *Bildung*. In so doing, IZ aims to address the hidden lives of our students, including experiences of epistemic marginalisation and the thought-action duality – including the separation of capacitation and growth – in education that threatens the "two-in-one" or critical reflexivity needed to take responsibility for one's life.

As discussed above, IZ's conceptual underpinnings, content, and practical implementation converge. IZ is designed with a student-led pedagogical approach emphasising active engagement with the course content to promote students' intelligent growth. This humanising pedagogy finds concrete expression in the various aspects of the course, from student-led lectures to peer-to-peer dialogues and service learning. IZ's pedagogy of being is inspired by the philosophical work of Dewey, Freire, hooks, Fromm, and Rorty, among others discussed above, and the service-learning component of IZ brings their ideas to life, from the role of education in intelligent growth and Bildung, in enabling the reshaping or reinvention of the self, to critical, active engagement with societal concerns and interests. Here, we have described service learning in IZ through the lens of Garrison's Community of Inquiry framework, highlighting the interactions of social, cognitive, and teaching presence in a purposeful service-learning environment in which Bildung and the being mode of education are privileged. We hope to have succeeded in showing to what extent courses such as IZ are central to what should be happening in universities and, in particular, persuading the reader that IZ, or a course like IZ, is central to transforming South African higher education.

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