

## BOOK PROSPECTUS

### The Place of the Classroom and the Space of the Screen: Relational Pedagogy and Internet Technology

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#### Abstract

Computer and Internet technologies are commonly believed to hold out great promise for education. Conventional, technical and instrumental ways of defining and measuring this potential, however, have produced inconclusive results. In a field of research that is shot through with computational metaphors and frames of reference, this book draws on the human sciences in an effort to contribute to the fundamental human ends that computer technologies are to serve. By clearly explicating its own human science orientation and the relevance of this orientation to proliferating uses of technology for education, this book develops conclusions that are both new and urgent for education.

The hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective brought forward in the book is part of a rich and complex philosophical tradition, but it is simultaneously capable of producing unconventional insights from relatively modest means. This book uses short, first-person descriptive passages as a basis for examining, in a rigorous but non-technical manner, the experiential possibilities and limitations of online and offline settings for pedagogy. The book is therefore written in a style with the potential to attract a wide audience, including students and practitioners -as well as theorists and researchers- in the fields of education and e-learning.

The book investigates the experiences of engaging with educational technology in two particular ways:

- 1) As this engagement opens up limited but compelling experiential spaces or *lifeworlds* to students, similar to the way that a novel can open up an imaginary world to its reader; and
- 2) As this engagement makes possible certain kinds of *relationships*, as these can develop among students and particularly between student and their teacher.

The particular spaces and relationships that emerge through engagement with common educational technologies are the focus of the central chapters in the book, which compare the ways in which these spaces and relationships unfold on the screen and in the classroom. The book shows that a number of experiential and relational characteristics and possibilities that are familiar from classroom lifeworlds--but easily overlooked in research--are clearly and unavoidably attenuated online. But just as important are limitations in ways of thinking and speaking about education that have been legitimated and propagated by technologies and by computational discourses.

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Total length: 52,000 words

## Outline

Chapter one introduces the reader to the experiential worlds opened up by the everyday use of technology in general and online technologies in particular. It draws on Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" to interrogate the "setup" or "enframing" (*Gestell*) of experiential possibilities and places that online technologies are able to disclose.

Chapter two makes explicit the implications of a human science orientation to this question. It describes this orientation in sustained conterpoint to dominant instrumental and natural scientific understandings that are effectively instantiated in computer and Internet technologies.

Chapters three and four extend this comparative and contrastive approach to the language that is typically used to talk about ICTs in education, for example, labeling these technologies as "cognitive tools," and labeling students and teachers collectively as their "users." Identifying a limiting instrumental or means-ends bias in this language, these chapters also outline an alternative vocabulary for studying engagement with ICTs.

Chapters five and six take up this alternative lexicon in the context of an extended investigation of body, time and space as these are experienced in both virtual and conventional educational lifeworlds. These chapters emphasize how online lifeworlds readily facilitate experiences of

frictionless motion or “flow” (as terms like “browsing” or “surfing” suggest), and exclude experiences of encumbrance and opacity. While experiences of resistance and difficulty are readily encountered in the classroom, they can be simulated on the screen only as irritations or technical glitches.

Chapter seven extends this analysis to experiences of encounters with the human *other* in both online and face-to-face contexts, focusing on pedagogically-significant relational qualities as they emerge in online and classroom discussions.

Chapter eight teases out important differences that emerge in online and offline educational relationships, so specifically through an examination of the role of *silence*. Whereas silence in online communications is generally regarded as serious a problem to be solved, some silences in physical classroom settings have been observed to be rich with pedagogical significance.

The ninth chapter develops these differences further, through reference to the ethics of the interpersonal encounter--and its silences--provided in the philosophy of Knud Løgstrup and Emmanuel Levinas. The book thus arrives at an account of educational practices and experiences as: (i) subject to the relational ethics of the other and the "face" (Levinas), rather than of the word or the image; and (ii) not readily reducible to the means and ends of instrumental rationality.

The concluding, tenth chapter of the book shows how these understandings can offer an alternative to "technological" conceptions and practices in education--alternatives that affirm the potential value of the space of the screen, but within the places and relationships that are likely much more familiar from the classroom.

### **Audience:**

The theoretical foundation and the research and discussion presented in this book are all framed and written in a manner that, as indicated above, will be accessible to a wide range of readers. This audience can include educational practitioners, administrators and student teachers, as well as more advanced students and scholars in areas of educational research such as curriculum studies, educational philosophy or foundations, distance education, instructional design and educational technology.