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# Constructivism in the Shadow of a Dead God

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Objectivism and/or positivism are dead, leaving constructivism as the dominant philosophical position in the SoTL and educational development communities. Yet the death of objectivism has not been fully accepted, nor have the full implications of constructivism been recognized. As a result, the effects of constructivism's dominance in the minds of scholarly teachers and educational developers have been bewilderingly superficial. Thoughtful constructivists now find themselves facing situations in which constructivist pedagogies lead to counter-intuitive consequences – for instance, students forced to take surface learning approaches out of desperation. This unwelcome situation of absurdity is explored through a philosophical analogy, which unearths causes and indicates necessary changes to bring into practice a full and committed constructivist education.

**Keywords**

Constructivism, Deep and surface learning, Student workload, Philosophy of higher education

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## Abstract

Objectivism and/or positivism are dead, leaving constructivism as the dominant philosophical position in the SoTL and educational development communities.  Yet the death of objectivism has not been fully accepted, nor have the full implications of constructivism been recognized.  As a result, the effects of constructivism's dominance in the minds of scholarly teachers and educational developers have been bewilderingly superficial.  Thoughtful constructivists now find themselves facing situations in which constructivist pedagogies lead to counter-intuitive consequences – for instance, students forced to take surface learning approaches out of desperation.  This unwelcome situation of absurdity is explored through a philosophical analogy, which unearths causes and indicates necessary changes to bring into practice a full and committed constructivist education.

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> "After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave – a tremendous, gruesome shadow.  God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too."
> - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Froliche Wissenschaft* (The Gay Science), 1887, section 108

## The Death of God

In book three, section 125 of *Die Frohliche Wissenschaft* (translated as "The Gay Science" or "The Joyful Wisdom")[1], Friedrich Nietzsche (1882) presented the story of the madman.   In the story, a group of scholars and scientists, atheists to a one, is gathered in a marketplace – arguing, debating, pondering in their scholarly, somewhat arrogant manner.  Suddenly, a madman carrying a lantern approaches, raving and screaming.  Face contorted, he delivers his news: "God is dead!"

And how do these scholars respond?  With ridicule.  They don't understand.  So the madman tries to explain, "We have killed him – you and I.  All of us are his murderers!"  Still, no one listens.  Despondent and frustrated, he leaves the marketplace, wandering

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[1] As Walter Kaufman notes in his translation, to be properly understood, the madman story must be read in context – sections 108 to 124 build up to the story, which is contained in section 125, then its themes and implications are explored in sections 126 to 156.  Basically, it comprises most of Book III.  Much of the story is repeated and expanded upon in a new form with new implications, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

from church to church, observing what he takes to be funeral processions.  Funeral processions?   "What after all are these churches now," observes the madman, "if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

The greater problem was not the death of God itself.  Elsewhere in the same book, Nietzsche indicates the larger issue, one that occupied much of his intellectual life thereafter.  Alluding to Plato's oft-misunderstood Allegory of the Cave (in Book VII of *The Republic*), he argued that although God had been killed – murdered by advances in philosophical and scientific understanding that made the concept superfluous, even silly – Nietzsche argued that we still live in God's shadow.  The modern world accepted the deicide only superficially.  Our institutions, customs, and beliefs all rest on ancient theistic foundations.  We killed God – thus gutting Christianity – only to erect nonsensical secularizations of Christianity in its place.  The Enlightenment was victorious, the inevitable outcome of Protestant Christianity's own preoccupations, and everywhere the freethinkers and philosophers and scientists congratulated themselves and each other.  But none realized how hollow the victory was, nor the consequences it would entail if taken seriously.

The deicide forces us into a position for which we are unprepared.  Taking the death of God seriously would mean dramatically overhauling our values, our structures, our societies, in ways that took our terrifying new freedom into account.  Then, and only then, would we truly understand the implications of God's death, as we compared the new world with the Christian world it overcame.  In doing so, Nietzsche warned, we must take care that the new world is new at all levels, that it is not merely a fresh coat of paint on a crumbling old tomb.

This is not a paper about the death of God.  Nothing quite that dramatic.  This is a paper about the death of another orthodoxy, another tradition.  As is the case with the death of God, however, this other death has been accepted only superficially, resulting in absurdity, paradox, and dilemma.

## Lofty Ideals

Traditional philosophies of learning are often uncritically lumped together under the label of objectivism (or "positivism," both labels being equally misleading and having little to do with the actual philosophies that bear those names).  They are dead, we believe, and we have killed them.

What is this dead orthodoxy we call objectivism?  We use the term as shorthand for a set of beliefs: there are facts and structures out there that can be known; the teacher must know those facts and structures; and the teacher transmits them to students, an "expert" who fills eager student brains with knowledge, which they soak up like fleshy, sleepy, sponges (e.g., Bertrand, 2003).  It is a philosophy of learning focused on the teacher and what the teacher does.  And it seems to lend itself to values of conformity, uniformity, obedience, and passivity – and thus to "one-size-fits-all" approaches to teaching, which assume that everyone can learn the same content in the same way at the same pace, and indicate their learning by completing the same assessment tasks.  And because the knowledge they're to learn is out there in the world, once students have learned this knowledge properly, they will all understand it the same way; they will derive from it the same meaning.

With objectivism dead, the dominant learning philosophy – in fact, even the dominant epistemology – in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and Educational/Academic Development communities – is constructivism.  Constructivism has become the default, assumed to such an extent in our communities that we hear of other approaches only when they are being dismissed as naïve or dated.  Even those who are not constructivists tend to embrace approaches, such as self-directed learning and reflective practice, that are thought to share certain themes with constructivism.

While there are a bewildering array of constructivist theories, I use the label to denote any approach resting on the beliefs that a) knowledge is actively constructed by each person through a complex interplay of experiences, and b) because of that, education should focus on providing people with the means, conditions, and facilitation necessary to help them actively construct their own knowledge, ideas, beliefs, models, and meaning.

Following a convoluted thread that arguably begins with Kant (though Von Glasersfeld, 1996, traces it back to the ancient Sceptics), we constructivists of all varieties argue that students are active seekers of meaning who enter the classroom with conceptual frameworks into which new ideas must be integrated, to some extent making meaning personal, unique to individuals or groups.  Different conceptual frameworks will lead people to focus on certain details while disregarding others, apply different metaphors to make sense of an idea, and treat some information as more salient and relevant than the rest. Following Piaget, many constructivists believe that learning often or always involves altering one's conceptual framework in order to accommodate an influx of new information, a series of failures, or confrontation with contradiction or frustration.  This Piaget called "accommodation."  Others believe that "assimilating" ideas into an existing conceptual framework without altering it in any substantial way also constitutes learning, as long as one's pre-existing beliefs shape the newly assimilated ideas in some way.  In active learning and experiential learning pedagogies, for instance, students are expected to learn by applying latent ideas and new ideas alike to the present situation; through this application, and later reflection on the results of the application, students are expected to create a new synthesis.  This is also taken to be learning.

Finally, constructivists tend to believe that learning is helped or hindered by context.  An idea is best learned in an "authentic" context, that is, a situation in which all of the factors that would affect its use beyond the classroom are present.  Asking students to fill in bubbles in multiple-choice exams is an inauthentic practice that will not help students learn deeply, we constructivists believe leaving them unable to transfer learning beyond the classroom.

The pedagogical approaches allied with constructivist philosophy are myriad.  What they have in common is a goal of deep, lasting learning facilitated through active methods that place students in authentic contexts involving practice, reflection, and feedback.   A surface learning approach involves attempts to memorize information in order to perform well on tests, to try to feed back to the teacher what he or she supposedly wishes to hear, to treat facts and other information as isolated and meaningless.  Constructivists do not want students to take such an approach – no one does, really – and they believe that traditional, objectivist education encourages students to take it.  A deep learning approach, on the other hand, is defined as a properly constructivist orientation to learning, characterized by attempts to apply and test ideas, use them, relate them to each other and to life, critique

and evaluate them in order to create meaning (e.g., Biggs, 1987, 1993; Entwistle, 1981; Joughin, 2009; Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle, 1997; Marton & Saljo, 1976; Ramsden, 1992).

Both reflection and feedback are said to facilitate the development of metacognitive awareness of one's own thinking and learning processes. And metacognition, in turn, is thought to help students become autonomous deep learners who can take charge of their own thinking and learning habits. That, in turn, is thought to make students more aware of meanings and reasons, whys and hows, the relationships between ideas and the connections between assumptions and behaviours, so they can take a more coherent and holistic approach to their education.

Role-playing and simulations, for example, are believed to promote a deep approach to learning by giving students opportunities to practice using information in situations much like those they might encounter when they leave university for the wider world. Project-based courses actively engage students in their learning by giving them the opportunity to construct knowledge as part of a team, a simulation of a common work-force experience. Even discussion methods are intended to give students opportunities to use ideas in conversation and argument – a form of active learning that may also simulate some conversational situations likely to be encountered throughout life. Collaborative and cooperative learning methods, problem-based learning, Inquiry, experiential learning – all of these, while not *necessarily* grounded in a constructivist foundation, are *consistent* with constructivist ideas, and are *favoured* by many constructivists.

This is all quite appealing. Indeed, not only might we have good reasons to accept some aspects of constructivist philosophy, there is considerable evidence that many of the pedagogical methods associated with constructivism can facilitate deeper and longer-lasting learning, as well as increased motivation to pursue further learning, and better skill development than, say, lecturing (e.g,. Bligh, 1997). Still, while it is tempting to assume that we became constructivists on the basis of evidence, we should take care. Constructivism is a philosophical approach and as such, empirical evidence is largely irrelevant to its acceptability. Although there is some evidence that certain teaching and learning strategies associated with constructivism are more effective than those associated with objectivism, one may use those strategies without accepting a constructivist epistemology or theory of learning.

## Reality Intrudes

When switching from the passive, teacher-centred approaches (such as lecturing) favoured by objectivism to the active, student-centred approaches recommended by constructivism, one fact becomes immediately apparent: active approaches require a lot more time – more time to plan curricula and classes, more time to devise assignments, and most importantly, more time for students to complete the assessment tasks and prepare for class.

Let's consider a traditional (objectivist) humanities course. Classes are lecture-based, with perhaps a brief question-and-answer period at the end, if time allows. Students are assessed using a midterm and exam, both using questions that require one or two paragraphs from students in response, plus a term paper. Just as their forebears did a century ago, students tend to prepare for the midterm and final a few days before they have to write them, typically by trying to memorize passages from textbooks and lecture

notes.  They spend a few hours writing the term paper, over the course of a week or less.  Other than that, very little is expected of their time other than reading (which most of them neglect until assessment tasks loom) and attending classes in which information is dumped at a high idea-per-second ratio.  This class is unlikely to inspire deep approaches to learning.  Superficiality is rewarded.

That's a life many of us can recognize, with familiar pressures and rhythms.  Many students can, without much trouble, take five of these classes a semester.  Aside from a few peak periods during which they are assessed, especially adept students will have little trouble managing their time.  Some students struggle with a full schedule of such traditional courses.  It's worth noting that, while to some extent there may be truth to the assumptions that students who struggle with their time management may have poor time management skills or may need more time to master course material because they are not intellectually gifted, other domains of life affect their time as well.  Many students work at least one part-time job.  A few will have family responsibilities.  Some will perform volunteer services in the community or on campus, perhaps for the student newspaper or union.  Some will be involved in campus athletics.  Not every waking hour is devoted to their studies; nor should it be.

Now let's consider an active-learning, constructivist course, again in the humanities.  This time, classes use a variety of methods to engage students – including various discussion formats, role-playing, and problem-based learning.  Students are assessed on the basis of a collaborative research project, weekly study questions (to ensure they keep up with their readings), and a reflective journal that's handed in twice – once during midterm period, and again at the end of the course.  The collaborative research project involves the creation of a document similar in style and tone to those being studied in the class, say, 18$^{th}$ century political tracts.  The documents must address the issues of the day in whatever location and year the students have chosen, must resemble the real documents stylistically, and must advance a political argument using the tropes and rhetoric of the period under study.  The reflective journal consists of reflection on the students' development as a result of the classes, the study questions, and the research project.

To me, this course sounds like a lot of fun, a course in which students could learn much more than they would by sleeping through weekly lectures.  It seems much likelier to support deep learning, based on constructivist assumptions and the extant pedagogical literature.  But, let's be honest – much more is expected of students' time.

Constructivist courses, I would argue, are *likely* to demand a lot more time and work from students.  Even the most intellectually gifted students will need to invest more time in a constructivist course.  But those hit hardest will be the students least capable of handling an increased workload – those who struggle anyway and who could, conceivably, benefit *most* from constructivist pedagogy.  If five traditional courses constitutes a full load, five constructivist courses will present most students with an impossible situation.  Indeed, one or two constructivist courses alone may demand more time than students actually have.

Anecdotally, this is what I discovered several years ago.  I was teaching two courses in Health Studies at the time.  Each course required a great deal of student reflection, writing, collaboration, discussion, and problem-solving.  No lecturing, no exams, no passivity allowed.  The structure and strategy I'd created for these courses appeared sound.  And, after a couple of weeks of grumbling, students found that they were enjoying the

experience and learning a lot at the same time.  However, some students who were in both courses told me, on separate occasions, that they had to drop out of at least one of them because of the time commitment.  They found that the workload in my courses was forcing them to neglect other courses – they were skipping readings, or just skimming, missing classes to work on their reflective questions.  And they knew it wasn't long before their work in my courses suffered as well.

I was shocked.  Until then, I had never considered this possibility.  The amount of time I was asking students to invest in these courses had never crossed my mind.  To my discredit, I didn't attempt to address the problem.  It sat in the back of my consciousness.

Constructivists have long recognized that the quality of student learning is affected by the approach a student takes – *that* recognition lies behind the widely accepted distinction between deep and surface learning approaches.  Constructivists advocate deep learning.  Well, what affects the approach that students take to their learning?  The type of assessments used, probably – multiple-choice exams are thought to encourage a surface learning approach.  And the quality of teaching, perhaps – teachers who use active methods may have a better chance of promoting deep learning than teachers who lecture.  And the workload; what happens when students are presented with courses that make unreasonable demands on their time?  They adopt a surface approach to their learning.  They disengage from the ideas they're supposed to learn.  They skim readings.  They turn in shoddy work.  What choice do they have?  There are only so many hours in a day.

As Chambers (1992) writes, "an approach to learning should not be seen as characteristic of a student, but as a response to a situation. . . . [Thus] when teachers overload students they might be said to *cause* their students to take a *surface* approach to learning" (p.143).  Students who have the time to practice, reflect, and make use of feedback are being led into a deep learning approach.  Students who barely have the time to skim that week's reading before hastily scribbling an entry in their reflective journal on their way to a group project meeting are receiving the message that a surface approach is all that's expected of them.

We constructivists are aware that time on task is a critical factor in how much and how well students learn – they need to spend time engaged in relevant activity.  Thus we face pressure to ensure that there are enough opportunities or inducements to spend time in learning experiences even while we recognize that their time is limited and we may be asking for more than they can give.  It takes time to make meaning, to consider an idea carefully, to reflect, to revise, to apply, to relate and organize and evaluate.  It takes a lot more time to do these things than it does to skim a textbook or listen to a lecture.  Time is especially required for students entering a new discourse (Chambers, 1992).  First-year students dipping their toes into a brand-new discipline, for instance, need time to learn the rules of the game, the forms of argument expected, the standards for evaluation, the kinds of evidence recognized, the terminology and metaphors, the standards of relevance, and the investigative approaches characteristic of that discourse.

The issue is one of *context*, a favourite topic of we constructivists, so we must ask: Are we creating the conditions necessary for deep learning?  Are we creating contexts within which this learning is likely – or, at the very least, *possible*?  Or are we creating conditions best suited for leading students into failure, anxiety, and hopelessness?  Are we preventing students from coming to *understand* the new ideas they're constructing?

We are in frustrating, labyrinthine territory here.  The temptation is to avoid the problem, to turn a blind eye.  But if we take constructivism seriously, we must facilitate deep learning. By placing students in impossible-to-manage situations of overwork, we encourage them to take shallow approaches to their learning.  Out of necessity, they will not engage with the material.  They will not reflect.  They will not create meaning.  Placing students in situations that encourage superficial learning just because we cannot be bothered to attend to the thorny problem of workload gives the lie to the claim that we are learning-centred constructivist educators.  Our disillusioned students can tell us as much, as they turn back to traditional courses taught by objectivist faculty who still haven't accepted the death of their god.

Constructivists are faced with a true dilemma, that is, a forced choice between two equally undesirable options.  On the one hand, because constructivist education places greater demands on student time, it may force students to learn superficially, which means they are not likely to learn much from their constructivist courses unless they take a lighter course-load and thus extra time to complete their degree.  On the other hand we have traditional objectivist courses which promote superficial learning unawares, but which don't demand as much student time, therefore making it possible that not only will students find objectivist courses less stressful, they may also learn relatively more from them as a result.

Stop for a moment to consider the irritating absurdity of the situation.  Motivated by constructivism, we attempt to create opportunities for active engagement because we want students to learn deeply, yet the time and work involved in those very opportunities may force them into counterproductive, superficial approaches.  That means our efforts to apply constructivist principles may prevent students from seeing relationships between ideas, prevent students from constructing meaning, deplete intrinsic motivation, lead to stress and anxiety, and engender emotions of confusion, frustration, apathy and hostility.

None of these consequences are inevitable, yet they are possible.  The issue of workload should be a pressing issue for constructivist educators.

Some have responded to the workload problem by attempting to calculate the time required for various course components, calculations that could then be used to create courses that didn't require more than a set number of hours per week.  But this is an impossible task, primarily because different people require different amounts of time to complete different tasks.  Take reading, for instance.  If we calculate that the "average" student can read so many pages per hour, we must do so with the caveat that it depends on the kind of text, the students' prior familiarity with the discipline and topic, prior educational background generally, the writing style of the author, the student's general literacy level, the student's level of fatigue and overall health, the student's mood and stress level, environmental distractions, and myriad other factors.

How long would it take a student to write a ten-page essay?  We should resist the temptation to answer on the basis of our own experience because the fact that we're teaching in a university means that we probably were not "average" students anyway. Would it take, perhaps,  9-10 hours to write a 10-page essay?  I am in no position to say. Such neat and tidy estimates of writing time deserve to be treated with no less caution than estimates of expected reading speed.  No doubt each of us has written papers that seemed to flow fully formed from our fingertips, others that progressed at a snail's pace, perhaps

one usable page after a day's work. To say, for instance, that it takes me seven hours to write a 10-page paper is to speak on some days a truth, on others a falsity.

So let's reject the assumption that we can accurately estimate how long students will need to spend on each element of a course.

Here are some quick, utterly unscientific calculations. There are 168 hours in a week. A student getting the recommended number of hours of sleep per day (eight) will sleep 56 hours per week. A student who eats mostly fast food or processed food to cut down on cooking time, and who eats quickly, could spend just 1.5 hours per day eating, for a weekly total of 10.5 hours. A student working a typical part-time job can expect to work 15 hours per week. That adds up to 81.5 hours in which this student is otherwise occupied every week, which doesn't account, of course, for time spent getting from place to place, cleaning, buying groceries, and performing other mundane tasks. Let's say all of these tasks take 12 hours per week. And let us assume that this student is *not* responsible for the care of children or other family members. It seems reasonable to me to add 10 hours per week for recreation. That leaves us with 64.5 hours per week for education – *if* students eat quick processed meals, *if* they need to work no more than 15 hours per week, *if* they have no childcare or other responsibilities, and *if* they can complete daily chores and errands efficiently.

Now, are those 64.5 hours per week in this *ideal* situation enough – keeping in mind our earlier considerations about the nigh-impossibility of meaningfully calculating how long it should take students to complete basic academic tasks?

Recognizing workload as an issue that demands action, many educators, administrators, and university senates have responded by codifying the number of hours per week that a course should demand. Some of these are quite analytic and fantastical (e.g., Welch 1998). Universities in English-speaking countries tend to assume that a full-time student should face 40-50 learning hours per week, which guides their hours-per-class-per-week calculations. The traditional formula in North American universities has been "three hours out of class for every hour in." There are some variations, of course, and many people now believe that courses do (or should) require only two hours out for every hour in.

Whatever we call the hours we demand of students – "credit hours," "learning hours," "course hours" – the hours, not the labels attached to them, are what matter. Incorporating active learning techniques into a course on an "instead of" rather than "in addition to" basis won't solve the problem either – note that this is precisely the approach that was taken in the examples we considered earlier. And technology, though it may be intended to save time and ease workload, frequently eats away time and creates new tasks to compete for attention.

All of this takes for granted the assumptions that courses should require a set number of hours per week, that all students will or should be able to learn what they need within those hours, and that there must, accordingly, be a way to rationally decide what that number should be. We create policies on the basis of these assumptions. When the reasoning behind such policies is laid bare, we are able to see the absurdity of legislative, traditional, decision-making processes. Set number of hours, the same for all students and instructors, irrespective of individual and contextual variables – this is stereotypically objectivist

thinking in the most epithetic sense of the term.  It is close to a caricature.  And it dominates our institutions.

If we expect 40 learning hours per week for a full-time student, and that student has 64.5 hours available for such work, the situation seems *prima facie* reasonable.  But we need to remember that those learning hours guidelines were created for traditional courses, not constructivist courses – and that to arrive at that figure we had to assume an ideal situation that would reflect the reality of very few students.  We force ourselves into perverse contortions of rationality when we try to solve difficult problems within the very academic structure that created and perpetuates them.

## Aberrant Contortions

The problem is simple: Although objectivism is dead, we constructivists have acepted its death only superficially.  We still work within a traditional academic structure, resting on traditional academic foundations, a structure that was created and refined in the service of objectivist philosophies of education – as well as the broader social and cultural influences that found, in objectivism, a ready ally.

We still think in terms of "classes", in which students are expected to come to some sort of location regularly to engage in learning.  We still think in terms of work students do outside of class and work they do inside of class, as though these are or must be distinct.  We still think in terms of "courses," for instance, which students must complete in some sort of order (or at least as some sort of set).  We still think there is meaning to the idea of a "full course-load" in which students take a certain number of courses per semester.

Why do we constructivists accept any of these elements of objectivist education as given, as inevitable, as immutable? How did we end up in this absurd situation?  How could our efforts to promote deep, meaningful, long-lasting, transferable learning actually lead us to its opposite?

The problem of student workload cannot be addressed by thinking within the limits of a dead philosophy, using its terms, its conditions, its structures and institutions and assumptions.  Constructivist education takes more time.  Since this is so, constructivists must begin to reform higher education at its foundations, its deepest levels, if the philosophy is to succeed.  Until we can do this, our methods will continue to lead to absurdity, forcing students to learn superficially out of sheer necessity.  Unless we dispose of objectivism at its deepest levels, at the levels of foundation and structure and categories of understanding, constructivism and its allied methods cannot deliver on their considerable promises.

Consider, for instance, the cult of individualism still prevalent in the academy.  We constructivists reject the Apollonian emphasis on the individual, attempting to discern the secrets of the objective world.  We favour instead the Dionysian emphasis on collective identity and collaboration, the merging of multiple souls into one as they co-create meaning and knowledge.  But the academy's structures are still tied to the old way, the objectivist way.  They privilege individual endeavours, individual decisions.  They discourage teamwork.  They allow, if not encourage, faculty members to refuse to join their colleagues in efforts to improve the education they facilitate.  On the surface, this may appear mostly

harmless. But it is a manifestation of something deeper: a system still beholden to dead ideals.

It is in the practical realm of student learning that educational philosophies face their greatest test. Can they drive us to change the system, if required? Can they effect change at institutional and structural levels? Some have, in the past.

We constructivists have killed objectivism. But do we now live in a glorious and enlightened age in which education has been transformed along constructivist lines? Or are we like the atheistic scholars in the marketplace, arrogantly patting ourselves on the back within the very structures we sought to overthrow? Do we work within institutions – universities rather than churches – created to serve objectivism, repeatedly dedicating ourselves to the service of the god we've killed? Do we allow our decisions to be constricted by the old objectivist values of conformity, uniformity, objectivity, passivity, obedience?

Despite the death of objectivism, its gruesome shadow still darkens higher education. Certainly there are a great many enclaves of explicit objectivism scattered across campuses the world over, replete with traditional passive courses, reading lists, and multiple choice exams as objects of admiration and uncritical discussion. More importantly, however, the implicit shadow is cast across the entire landscape of post-secondary education, unrecognized, unacknowledged. Though dead, the putrefying corpse of objectivism fills the tombs and sepulchers of academia – the classrooms, the courses, the exams, the textbooks, the laboratories, the *concepts*.

As with the death of God, the death of objectivism is disorienting. The world in which – and for which – our universities were created has been swept away, and the values, structures and assumptions that constituted the old point of view must now be cast aside. This leaves us unsettled. So much depended on that lynchpin idea of objectivism, so much rested on that foundation, that without it we do not know how to proceed. "It has become colder, and night is closing in" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 97) – but because we cannot face the death of objectivism fully, because we cannot face the implications that would arise, the darkness and the cold, we have filled our lives with blankets and heaters to keep us warm, artificial light to ward off the night. We behave as though we still live in warm daylight.

Although constructivism has become the establishment position amongst those who concern themselves with teaching and learning in higher education, it has not become the establishment position amongst most administrators and legislators of universities, nor our colleagues who teach out of duty and habit, most of whom replicate old rituals. Even among those in its grip, even where constructivism has become the establishment position psychologically, perhaps even epistemologically, its influence *structurally* and *culturally* has been superficial.

Constructivism has been with us now for decades, and our system has not changed substantially to accommodate its demands. We constructivists have failed to recognize the consequences of operating within traditional assumptions and structures. At this point in history, we are able to dismiss objectivism only because we do not fully understand it, because we are blind to its influence in the internal and external structures within which we work. And we are able to accept constructivism only because we accept it superficially, naively, unwilling to implement the sweeping changes it requires.

The atheist scholars in the marketplace fooled themselves into believing that the death of God meant they lived in a post-Christian world, even while they used political systems steeped in Christian assumptions of charity and equity, ethics that maintained the Christian concepts of good and evil, notions of truth and falsity as things existing independently of human perspective.  This is, in part, precisely what led to God's death, which "describes the feeble worship of a God who is no longer useful or believable" – and whose apparent implications are now perceived as illusory (Berkowitz, 1995, p. 3).

Constructivists, analogously, do not realize the extent to which they work with objectivist ideals in objectivist contexts.  If constructivism is to succeed as an educational philosophy, it must move beyond shaping pedagogy and curricula; it must shape the structures and assumptions within which pedagogy and curricula operate.  Change at the surface level, the level of pedagogies and methodologies is necessary but insufficient.  The foundations laid in honor of the old god must be torn to pieces, new foundations laid in their place, for new scaffolding and new edifices.  Objectivism's corpse must be utterly destroyed, so that we no longer live within its calcified skeleton.  New contexts, new conditions, new concepts must be created if surface pedagogies are to help students become the deep, autonomous, reflective learners we know they can be.

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