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TIDAL VOLUME

Tidal Volume is an invitation to conversation about thinking and practice, over and in water—and about epistemological and pedagogical paradigms in marine environmental education. Produced as a response to David Jardine’s (1998) essay “Immanuel Kant, Jean Piaget, and the Rage for Order: Ecological Hints of the Colonial Spirit in Pedagogy,” *Tidal Volume* and this introduction are part of an ongoing inquiry into media-making as environmental education. The video is, in part, a depiction of struggle for balance between openness and fear. It is presented as exploratory research into some questions teachers and teacher educators might consider when facilitating student-made videos in the study of relationships with the ocean.

Setting aside questions of technique and technologies, my focus here is on the issues that emerged most prominently in my reflection on Jardine’s essay in the context of embodied experiences depicted in the video. First,

we are being forced by the sometimes gentle, sometimes violent guidance of the Earth, to reconsider what we understand ourselves to be, and what, therefore, we wish our children to become. We are being forced back into questions that form the core of pedagogy itself, and pedagogy, too, is being slipped back into its element. (Jardine, 1998, p. 103)

This applies to environmental education directly, as a reminder that Nature has its own forms of what we might call intuition, logic, rationality and wisdom. It may be possible, with technology, to alter or defer what Nature is or is to become, but we are increasingly reminded of limits. We are reminded to pay attention and listen. To do so may require considerable re-forming of educational thinking, if, as Jardine suggests, we have inherited from Descartes, Kant, and Piaget a “belief that we might somehow live independently of our Earthly inheritance” (Jardine, 1998 pp. 105-7). Jardine challenges Kantian categories of Reason and their reproduction, through Piaget’s developmental psychology, into pedagogies of colonization in which we are colonizing children “who are other than us,” and, further “raising our children to *become* colonizers—ones destined to believe that they give the Earth meaning through their activities” (p. 117). This is a problem requiring educators’ efforts. Are we teaching students to colonize the unknown of Nature into the realm of knowledge, with its illusions of control? Near the ocean the presence of the unseen and unknown are immediate. Particularly with the sea, the problem is provocative: How to explore and experience our personal relationships with the oceans, beyond systematic data? Marine education approaches through narratives, artifacts, and art provide cultural connections and complement scientific studies, but can we facilitate more personal connections? Can we and our students keep our thinking brains attuned, despite being surrounded by the unknown? For me, in an ocean context, the problem is not trivial.

As comfortable as I like to think I am in the water, I also recognize danger, and experience fear. The bodily situation of being in the ocean, walking, floating, or immersed, triggers enough distraction that to do other than gather samples and data presents a challenge. Because of my internal tension between anxiety and appreciation, any plan for “education” immediately tempts me back toward data, logic, and Reason. It is difficult to imagine or invent a different approach. It is easier to look at samples and communicate data than it is to experience, characterize, and share complex knowing of an environment. However, while difficult, perhaps it is not impossible to create and practice environmental education in ways that are

properly responsive to the place in which we find ourselves... and which issue up out of a place as a considerate response to that place (i.e., a response which somehow acts in accordance with the sustainability of that place). (Jardine, 1998, p. 118)

The more immediate problem, then, seems to be “What alternatives might be available to a Kantian approach of inquiry, not only in the design of learning experiences themselves and in pedagogical practice but, further, in the internal workings and external situation of an educator’s mind and body engaged in environmental education?” Is it desirable, or even possible, to contrive a situation that could lead to a sustainable design of environmental education that can accept that our environment “becomes, not an object displayed according to forms of human understanding, but a home that embraces” (Jardine, 1998, p. 120)? And if it does not feel like a home—though it is not in its own existence any more or less malevolent than water—might we question why we feel fear, and from who or what that fear grows?

If I can know the ocean as uncontrollable, is it not therefore uncontaminated by the chaotic malevolence Kant might attribute to it? In the ocean, I am readily presented with the adaptive option of humility. Whether walking, floating, or immersed, there is much I cannot see or know. I am vividly, immediately, and fluidly “connected to and dependent on what falls outside of the sphere of knowing,” and “must act on the basis of ignorance” (Jardine, 1998, p. 119). If I cannot then proceed with the humble assumption of belonging in an unknowable Nature, then I am in such a hostile environment that I must either avoid it as enemy or conquer it totally. In this mind-set, it will be difficult to gather data, let alone experience the environment as a part of our whole shared existence. Whether the environment of interest is the ocean or an urban block, would it not be worthwhile to let it move us, so that we can know our responses, and from those for us to question our fear and its true authors? From here, perhaps it is possible to move, not past fear, nor without fear, but with an entire range of emotions that are calibrated to, appropriate to, and emergent from the place, including fear as well as personal, vivid, relational awareness.

Tidal Volume is an example of and an attempt to stimulate further inquiry into practices of culturally- and personally-grounded, rich, experiential ways of learning about marine environments. I respectfully request responses, comments, and

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possible collaboration, in the hope that we might find more ways to communicate the richness of our experiences, and the circumstances in which they occur, the better to bring them and environmental education together more often.

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