This project is part of the Teagle Grant Preliminary Teaching as Research Project. My project consists of a theoretical analysis of the relation between idea and drama. I base my theoretical framework upon Gilles Deleuze's analysis of Ideas as dramas. However, the notions of drama and idea are used in a different context here. These notions are defined in a slightly different way than how we are used to thinking about them.

The reason why I became interested in this topic was to research some methods that might help me engage students with abstract topics, which, at first glance, seem complicated. I realized that people avoid abstractions because of the widely accepted belief that they are difficult. I believe this approach is false. In this project, I tried to find ways by which students can learn abstract concepts.

Consequently, the three methods I refer here are repetition, imitation, and role-playing.

Introduction

*In any institutionalized education, students have an access to knowledge via a figure of authority.

*Teaching and learning consists of a relational process determined by the nature of the pedagogical relationship between a teacher and a group of students. How the authority figure sets out the principles of the pedagogical relationship between herself and the students reveals her way of approaching the question of what it means to teach and learn.

*Jacques Ranciere notes that this relationship is mediated by the third factor, that is, the texts and materials chosen to be engaged with throughout the semester. There is thus another world taking place between the professor and the students: “It is the third thing which is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (Ranciere 27).

*This third element introduces an element of chance, indetermination, improvisation, and freedom (of interpretation) to the relationship between the professor and the students.

*The basic aim of the field of humanities is to teach students how to read, write, and think. Understanding theoretically dense texts and maintaining a critical engagement with them necessitates that we know how to approach ideas. Therefore, the first question that needs to be addressed here is the following: what does it mean to think? What does it mean to think and write about a text?

Theoretical Framework

* In his paper entitled The Method of Dramatization, presented to the Société française de Philosophie in 1967, Gilles Deleuze describes ideas as dynamic and active entities with a specific orientation, width, force, direction, speed, length, and rhythm. The most radical and novel contribution of the presentation, however, is Deleuze's delineation of these tendencies, or what he calls the “dynamisms,” of the ideas as dramatic: “I will try to define dramatization more rigorously: they are dynamisms, dynamic spatio-temporal determinations” (107). The Method of Dramatization consists of the analysis of the spatiality and temporality of thought in conjunction with the concept of dramatization with a particular focus on movement. Deleuze here takes up the question of the relation between drama and thought within the horizon of space and time.

*To this end, the notions of spatiality and temporality play the main role in the apprehension of Ideas as dramas: “Everything changes when the dynamisms are posited no longer as schemata of concepts but as dramas of Ideas” (218). Formulated as the dramas of space and time, Deleuze's conception of Ideas bring to the fore a radical approach to the act of thinking, in that this formulation describes thinking as a dramatic production.

*If thinking is a dramatic production, then we produce ideas by and through plays. This is why playing is a crucial notion in teaching. From very early on, people learn things via play.

Henri Bergson  Matter and Memory

“In learning a physical exercise, we begin by imitating the movement as a whole…We are right when say that habit is formed by the repetition of an effort; but what would be the use of repeating it, if the result were always to reproduce the same thing? The true effect of repetition is to decompose and then to recompose and thus appeal to the intelligence of the body. At each new attempt it separates movements which were interpenetrating; each time it calls the attention of the body to a new detail which had passed unperceived; it bids the body discriminate and classify; it teaches what is essential; it points out, one after another, within the total movement, the lines that mark off its internal structure. In this sense, a movement is learnt when the body has been made to understand it.” (137)

This quote notes the significance of the repetition and imitation in learning. However, Bergson has a different approach to what repetition and imitation mean. According to him, both repetition and imitation are about the decomposition and recomposition of behavior. Therefore, the notions of repetition and imitation do not denote here exactly copying ideas or movements. Contrarily, they imply a creative process in learning.

Relating Bergson’s approach to Deleuze's description of Ideas as dramas, the technique I emphasize here is role-playing.

What is Role-Playing?

Steps:

1. “Preparation and instruction: the first stage, covers problem selection, warm-up, and general and specific instructions to participants and audience.”
2. “Dramatic action: the second major stage, covers both the role playing itself and the subsequent discussion and interpretation of the action.”
3. “Evaluation: the final stage, must follow the enactment and discussion of the role-playing situation.”

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