

---

## FOR A PEDAGOGY OF AMBIVALENCE

Dan Mamlok  
Concordia University

---

### INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the current political atmosphere, the increasing incidents of hate speech and hate crimes, and the rampant mass shootings in the United States inevitably requires educators to consider ways to confront the divisive political zeitgeist and to help students recognize the intricate layers of political life. This task is particularly challenging in times when the political leadership supports forms of “othering” minorities and frames them as a problem.<sup>1</sup> The attempt to revive a romantic national identity through demarcating minorities and marginalized groups as threats (or as “criminals”) and signifying the “others” as a means for gaining political power subverts the most basic democratic principles.<sup>2</sup>

In light of this poisonous atmosphere, it is not surprising that a recent study in the U.S. found that nearly 9 percent of school principals (who participated in the study) reported that the contentious political environment negatively affected the sense of community in the school, and more than 80 percent reported that there is a great inflation of racial remarks in their schools. In general, the study found an increase of uncivil behaviors among students and a growing sense of fear and anxiety among students from minority communities.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in this article is to consider ambivalence as a means for mitigating contentiousness and advancing a more critical understanding of political and social matters. In ambivalence, I refer to “the state of having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.”<sup>4</sup> Namely, in addition to being in the state of uncertainty, ambivalence encompasses a dilemma that is grounded in an opposite disposition toward something.

Previous work on ambivalence, ambiguity, and education addressed how the tension between contradicting dispositions and interests are essential for the development of critical thinking. For example, Philip Wexler deems that

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Perry, Tanner Mirrlees, and Ryan Scrivens, “The Dangers of Porous Borders: The ‘Trump effect’ in Canada,” *Journal of Hate Studies* 14, no. 1 (2019): 54.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018), 115.

<sup>3</sup> John Rogers, *School and Society in the Age of Trump* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access, 2019), 5–9. Retrieved from: <https://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/school-and-society-in-age-of-trump/publications/files/school-and-society-in-the-age-of-trump-report>.

<sup>4</sup> s.v. “Ambivalence,” accessed November 26, 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/ambivalence>.

developing a sense of ambiguity towards curriculum is necessary, especially as one considers how social, political, and cultural structures govern the design of a curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Following Blum, Levinson discusses the moral ambiguity of the “ally,” which relates to “the potential to forge moral solidarity in the face of racial injustice and other sorts of social divisions.”<sup>6</sup> Paulo Freire, in his rejection of fatalism, urges us to recognize that we are unfinished and that the construction of knowledge consists of ambivalent interests and emotions.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing from Bauman’s accounts of ambivalence or, more exactly, the rejection of ambivalence by modernity, I will consider the construction of the other. As a point of departure, I will review some key ideas of Bauman’s thoughts on modernity, ambivalence, and the other. Then, I will focus on two prime aspects of his theory: (1) The authority of knowledge in a liquid world,<sup>8</sup> and (2) socializing and indoctrinating members of society. I contend that both aspects render pedagogical implications, which I will elucidate. I argue that realizing how the mechanism of knowledge has been shifted is crucial for galvanizing a pedagogy that will move beyond instrumental reasoning and allow students to develop a more critical worldview of social and cultural issues.

#### PURGING AMBIVALENCE

In his book, *Modernity and Ambivalence*,<sup>9</sup> Bauman examines the promise of modernity to emancipate humanity and to advance tolerance and freedom. Yet Bauman also considers some of the limitations of modernity. He claims that, while the ideals of modernity aim to create a more open and secured life, the horrors of the twentieth century require reconsideration of modernity and its logic. Bauman points out that modern reasoning follows Kant’s notion of securing a “legislative power [which] resides in the mind of every man.”<sup>10</sup> This reasoning is detailed in Kant’s critiques, and in particular in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,<sup>11</sup> where Kant aims to redefine metaphysics by considering humans’

<sup>5</sup> Philip Wexler, “Curriculum in the Closed Society,” in *Critical pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, eds. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 94–95.

<sup>6</sup> Natasha Levinson, “Moral Identities and Moral Ambiguity,” in *Philosophy of Education yearbook*, ed. R. Curren (1999): 81.

<sup>7</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 102–104.

<sup>8</sup> Liquid world (or liquid modernity) is a key term in Bauman’s thought. It refers to the current historical state, governed by the rationality of globalism and hyper-capitalism. Unlike modernity’s striving for solid knowledge and power, current historical conditions are characterized by uncertainty. See: Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006), 1–14.

<sup>9</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason,” in *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics: That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science with Selections*

capacity to develop a priori knowledge, which refers to a type of knowledge that is not contingent upon experience. The motivation to delineate a coherent metaphysical theory was rooted in the effort of enlightenment philosophers to replace religious authority with human reason. In his political texts,<sup>12</sup> Kant elaborates on the importance of autonomous thinking, based on reasoning and self-judgment, as opposed to relying upon authoritarian directions. Yet Kant points out some limitations of this reasoning. For example, he distinguishes between the public and private use of reason. The public use of reason is the use that one makes of his reason based on his/her knowledge or expertise. The private use of reason obligates one to act within an existing set of rules by force of one's position or public function (e.g., teachers, soldiers, public servants). In order to simplify this distinction, it can be said that, according to Kant, intellectual autonomy and the freedom to be critical (especially as a duty of experts in their fields) must be encouraged. However, when one is in the position of a public servant, one ought to obey.<sup>13</sup>

The tension between the desire to emancipate human judgment, on the one hand, and structuring a restrictive distinction between the public and private uses of reason, on the other, are important components in Bauman's consideration of modernity. He claims that the philosophical task of modernity is to constitute a consistent and coherent metaphysical understanding, which endeavors towards certainty and rejects ambivalence. Maintaining the superiority of the reasoned order is centered in two interrelated tasks: The first task is to preserve the "unity and integrity" of the philosophical and political reasoning that must be perfected; this type of reasoning determines the discourse and signifies what is "in" and "out" of the discourse and, consequently, from the political, social, and cultural realms. In this sense, ambivalence goes against the wish for speculative and clear reasoning. The second task is making a clear distinction between the "inside" and "outside" and securing order: "Building and keeping order means making friends and fighting enemies. First and foremost, however, it means purging *ambivalence*."<sup>14</sup> Thus, ambivalence is not merely an opposition to certainty or an alternative to the *modus operandi* of modern rationality. Rather, ambivalence carries a threat to modern society's ability to thrive. In his discussion, Bauman shows how this reasoning is inherently related to the construction of the stranger, which entails intolerance and the desire to annihilate the other.

---

from the *Critique of Pure Reason* ed. and trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 137–200.

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in *The Philosophy of Kant—Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl Joachim Friedrich (1784; repr., New York: The Modern Library, 1949), 132–139.

<sup>13</sup> Kant, "An Answer to the Question," 134–135

<sup>14</sup> Kant, "An Answer to the Question," 24.

---

Bauman elaborates on this argument in his book, *The Individualized Society*,<sup>15</sup> and refers more concretely to education. He proposes two dominant tenets, which have guided educators since the enlightenment era:

The institutional centrality of knowledge and its practitioners was anchored, on the one side, in a state-national reliance on *legitimation* (Max Weber), *a ruling formula* (Gaetano Mosca), or a *central cluster of values* (Talcott Parsons) for the translation of domination into authority and discipline; on the other [side], in the practice of culture (education, *Bildung*) which was meant to shape individual members of society into social beings fit to perform, and willing to abide by, the socially assigned roles.<sup>16</sup>

In the following passages, I intend to elaborate on two aspects of Bauman's theory: (1) The authority of knowledge in a liquid world, and (2) socializing and indoctrinating members of society.

#### THE AUTHORITY OF KNOWLEDGE IN A LIQUID WORLD

The first aspect provides the authority (the sovereign, the leader, the government) the legitimacy to produce and control different forms of knowledge (i.e., Weber's analysis of the legal, traditional, and charismatic authorities' legitimation/*Herrschaft*).<sup>17</sup> The reliance on external authority forges one's worldview and does not leave much space for ambivalence. To some extent, the mechanism of being subordinated to the ruling formula goes against Kant's famous call for releasing people from their own "self-incurred tutelage."<sup>18</sup> Bauman argues that "the legislative reason of modern philosophy" had a great impact both on the intellectual and the political realms.<sup>19</sup> When considering the intellectual realm, eradicating ambivalence entails the rejection of any forms of knowledge that may be perceived as aberrant or uncontrolled. One can recall, for example, Spinoza's categories of [rational] knowledge and [false] knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualized Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 128–129.

<sup>17</sup> Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building, Selected Papers*, ed. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>18</sup> Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", 132.

<sup>19</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *The essential Spinoza: ethics and related writings*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Shirley Samuel (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 162–191. Spinoza's accounts on knowledge are developed in *Ethics*, where he distinguishes between three forms of knowledge: *Imagination/opinion*, *rational*, and *intuitive*. While each form of knowledge is essential, there is a hierarchy of knowledge, where the intuitive and the reasoned forms of knowledge are superior to the imaginative form of knowledge. For further reading, see: Sanem Soyarslan, "The Distinction between Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics," *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (March 2016): 27–29.

The problem, according to Bauman, is not centered in the desire of philosophers, such as Kant, Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza, to improve the human condition by perfecting individuals' sovereignty of the mind. Rather, the problem lies in the ways in which the state has harnessed modern rationality for exercising power, or as Bauman puts it: "The modern mind is legislative reason, and modern practice is the practice of legislation."<sup>21</sup>

The desire to attain certainty, to stand on a solid ground, and to feel secure is not merely a result of modernity. Ambivalence involves tackling unpredictable phenomena or situations, which push us beyond our comfort zone. Therefore, we tend to believe that unequivocal situations will bestow on us a sense of comfort and security. If the fear of ambivalence is intuitive, then modernity emphasizes the quest for certainty both as an intellectual and as an ideological endeavor.<sup>22</sup>

One would rightly argue that this *modus operandi* does not necessarily apply to our times, which are associated more with dynamic and flexible changes, or as Bauman notes: "In a liquid modern society . . . conditions of actions and strategies deigned to respond to them age quickly and become obsolete before the actors have the chance to learn them properly."<sup>23</sup> In this sense, ambivalence has become more of an individual's concern than a public one. "We are—most of us—," Bauman points out, "free to enjoy our freedom, but unfree to avoid the consequences of that enjoyment."<sup>24</sup> For example, the formation of identity in a liquid world involves ambivalent sentiments, whether one considers national, ethnical, racial, or gender issues.<sup>25</sup>

The retreat from the big ideologies and the move toward a global, commodified, and privatized world has not signaled the retreat from pernicious social phenomena. In a dialogue with Chouliaraki, Bauman clarifies how tribalism has been taking the place of utopian ideologies:

Certainty once fed by trust in progress (now orphaned by the collapse of that trust), drifts back to the regions which that cult stripped of trustworthiness. "Back to the past" (the currently prevailing trend) pulls behind it the present-day utopian sentiments—best branded as "Retrotopias." But "back" means as well "back to Hobbes," "back to Tribes" and "back to self": The purpose of the tribe is to determine whom to support and whom to kill . . . My tribe is superior to

<sup>21</sup> Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Bauman, 57–59.

<sup>23</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Life*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 69.

<sup>25</sup> Bauman argues that the so-called freedom contemporary people enjoy is governed by the apparatus of neoliberalism and consumerist culture. As societies have become less reliant upon major ideologies that evoke societal ambivalence, the rationality of the free market has become more dominant in forging people's mindsets. This rationality, according to Bauman, signifies the deregulation of ambivalence.

your tribe because we do “this,” and you do “that,” no matter what this or that represent. This is, as the Americans would say, “a totally new ball game.”<sup>26</sup>

This new “ball game” has been institutionally manifested in two different, almost opposite directions. On the one hand, the practices of the steady, conservative, and restrictive state have been replaced by a “functional” consumerist apparatus, which has stripped-off the great ideologies. On the other hand, those rigid practices have been maintained towards minorities, the marginalized, and other communities whose voices are unheard. Considering the immigration crisis, the revival of extreme rightwing groups, the growth of anti-Semitism, the attempt to target Muslims as a danger, and the general approach of drawing a line between “us” and “them,” where “them” are signified as criminals, rapists, as lazy, dirty, and so on. Associating groups with specific characterizations entails that, while all ethnic groups have their outcasts, targeted groups are perceived as flawed by nature, or as Jason Stanley astutely notes: “They are criminals. We make mistakes.”<sup>27</sup>

In one of his last commentaries, Bauman warns of the resurgence of Hobbes’s daunting description of human nature as *homo bellus*.<sup>28</sup> But unlike Hobbes’s vision for having a strong sovereign which mitigates rampant aggression and uncontrolled violence, current days are characterized by having numerous sources of power that fail to balance the growing antagonism among the different groups in the society.<sup>29</sup> The mechanism of current, growing hostility towards the other rests on the tension between the death of identity based upon solid notions of territory, the lack of meaning of having a stable national identity, and the feeling that, under current, plutocratic and consumerist culture, too many people feel that they have been abandoned and have been excluded from social welfare.

What is at stake is how we can effectively engage young people in political life in times of post truth. Peters rightly argues that post truth “is often taken to mean ‘post-fact.’ It’s not so much that facts are futile, it’s just that they take a while to collect and marshal into a knock-down argument.”<sup>30</sup> This claim should be discussed further in respect to the proliferation of the right populism

<sup>26</sup> Zygmunt Bauman & L. Chouliaraki, “On the Future of the Moral Subject: A Dialogue Between Zygmunt Bauman and Lilie Chouliaraki,” ed. K. V. Horvat, *Anthropological Notebooks* 23, no. 1 (2017), 135.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, 115 (Emphasis in original).

<sup>28</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, “Back to Hobbes,” *Tikun* 32, no. 1 (2017): 24–29.

<sup>29</sup> Bauman considers how tribalism is proliferated, despite the transition from authoritarian regimes to a globalized and cosmopolitan world. He contends that a possible explanation of tribalism is rooted in cultural mismatch: “we are already cast, whether we like it or not, in a cosmopolitan situation; and yet we haven’t started in earnest to develop cosmopolitan awareness,” “Back to Hobbes,” 29.

<sup>30</sup> Michael A. Peters, “Education in a Post-Truth World,” *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 49, no. 6 (2017): 565.

around the world.<sup>31</sup> Yet my intention in this brief article is to focus more on how the mechanisms of knowledge have been shifted and how we, as educators, can revitalize a more critical understanding of the world. I argue that education is placed on the border of the solid and liquid world. On the one hand, modern rationality is perhaps the endemic practice of education hitherto. Knowledge is standardized and evaluated and does not leave much space for ambivalence, particularly when education is perceived as an efficient endeavor.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, knowledge in a liquid world is not static as might be presented in schools. I suggest that the border of the solid and liquid world merits consideration, and encouraging students to develop ambivalence, at least as a starting point for making reasoned judgements, is crucial in the post-truth era. The authority of knowledge has indeed been a central aspect of the rationale of education. Understanding how the authority of knowledge is still relevant requires us to look more carefully at the second aspect that was noted earlier, relating to socialization and indoctrination.

#### SOCIALIZING AND INDOCTRINATING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The second aspect (shaping “individual members of society into social beings fit to perform, and willing to abide by, the socially assigned roles”) aims to increase social docility. Bauman contends that, despite Kant’s call for one’s maturation, his metaphysics had great impact on the creation of what Bauman calls “the gardening state,”<sup>33</sup> which cultivates rationality and rejects uncertainty and ambivalence. The concept of the gardening state is used as a metaphor for the scientific rationality to govern, control, moderate, and plan everyday life.<sup>34</sup> This project, according to Bauman, is not limited to technical aspects of managing society, but is a type of rationality that designates who is included and excluded in public life.

At the center of his discussion in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman focuses on the sociological mechanisms that provided the conditions for the Nazi regime to annihilate Jews, homosexuals, Gypsies, and other targeted groups that were perceived as inferior. He contends that the rational, managerial reasoning is essential for narrating the other as inhuman and inferior. Bauman notes:

Defining the Other as vermin harnesses the deeply entrenched fears, revulsion and disgust in the service of extermination. But also, and more seminally, it places the other at a[n] enormous mental distance at which moral rights are no longer

---

<sup>31</sup> Perry et al, “The Dangers of Porous Borders,” 54–55.

<sup>32</sup> Gert Biesta, *Good education in an Age of Measurement* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2010), 53–54.

<sup>33</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> The distinction between the private and the public uses of reason is one example of that principle.

visible. Having been stripped of humanity, the Other is no more an object of moral evaluation.<sup>35</sup>

Depicting groups in the society as a disease leads to the internalization of hierarchical categories within the society. Berger and Luckman demonstrate how people internalize the social world through the process of objectifying the externalizing world.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the internalization of certain assumptions about the social world are a product of a social construct. Internalizing social constructs of the other draws the line between the majority group and the other. But can we say that the construction of the other is the same for all minority groups? Are some groups in society considered as different and are yet respected, while other groups are considered problems? Bauman provides an interesting distinction between the “other” and the “stranger.” At least in the solid world, when territory was associated with specific national or ethnic groups, encountering the other was a matter of either friend or enemy.<sup>37</sup> The problem lies with the strangers, those who are not there and not here—those who cannot be categorically determined as the “other,” nor as one of “us”—those who live in between cultural worlds, who assimilate, look like a common “us,” but intrinsically relate to the “other.” In the solid world of the national state, building an artificial community, which embraces several groups and denies other groups, is essential for gaining political power. Hence, the social arrangement of the national state cannot tolerate those who assimilate and endanger the national identity.<sup>38</sup>

The process of alienating the stranger is by stirring fear and advancing stigmas against those groups which endanger the nation:

the danger must be signaled, the natives must be warned and kept on the alert lest they should succumb to the temptation of compromising the separate ways that make them what they are. This can be attained by discrediting the stranger; by representing the outward . . . this is the social institution of *stigma*.<sup>39</sup>

Bauman’s analysis merits some further consideration, especially in light of his later work, in which he describes the world as liquid.<sup>40</sup> If one accepts the idea that current times are “liquid,” then how can we explain the growth of racism and tribalism? How can it be that, more than 70 years after World War II, extreme groups in the United States, the country that freed people from

---

<sup>35</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 48.

<sup>36</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 59–67.

<sup>37</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 53–65.

<sup>38</sup> Bauman, 64–65.

<sup>39</sup> Bauman, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Life*, 14.

---

concentration camps, march with Nazi flags in the streets of Charlottesville? One cannot dismiss those sentiments by asserting that they are fueled by a marginal mob, whilst the rhetoric of hate is well addressed by the President of the United States, who “effectively distinguishes between self and other, good and evil, order and chaos, recycling falsehoods and fears in condensed stereotypes to mobilize (identity) politics.”<sup>41</sup>

In his last book, *Retrotopia*, Bauman provides an insightful analysis of the rise of the divisive and pernicious ideologies in times of liquid world.<sup>42</sup> The term *retrotopia* refers to the longing for a mythic past and the negation of utopian visions that are grounded in modern ideologies and practices. Bauman suggests that one such practice is the gardening state. This practice was based on big ideologies—the desire to attain social transformation for the future. Indeed, the history shows how some of those great ideologies fell under the worst regimes in the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> In times of liquid world, however, utopia is no longer the focal point of political life. Instead, the absence of an Archimedean point in public life and the vacuum of leadership, combined with growing social inequalities, lead to the reverse of political visioning, which Bauman defines as *retrotopia*—instead of stirring hope for the future, there is a growing tendency to invest in a nostalgic vision of the past.<sup>44</sup>

Galvanizing a mythic past blurs reality and provides justification to erase the nation’s past misdemeanors. Twisting history also serves as a tactic to attack political adversaries as creating false narratives against the nation. That’s how progressive ideologies are perceived by some groups in the country as disloyal, by spreading conspiracy theories against the country.<sup>45</sup> *Retrotopia* is a fruitful soil for the populist who gains political power not by providing well-founded ideas for the future, but by relying upon nostalgia for a distorted mythic past. Evoking nostalgic sentiments serves well populist messages that draw the line between different groups in society. For example, suggesting that we need to make the country great again implies that “our” bad faith is caused by “them.”<sup>46</sup>

In such a divided and contentious world, the importance of advancing critical views of reality is crucial. Having informed, critical citizens who question political axioms is essential for a dynamic and vibrant democracy to thrive. In the last section of this article, I will elaborate on how ambivalence might serve as an essential element for this purpose.

---

<sup>41</sup> Richard C. King and David L. Leonard, “The Resurgence of Hate: Introductory Notes on the 2016 US Presidential Campaign,” *Journal of Hate Studies* 14, no. 1 (2019): 1.

<sup>42</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopia* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 26–30.

<sup>44</sup> Bauman, *Retrotopia*, 8–11.

<sup>45</sup> Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, 15–19.

<sup>46</sup> Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera, “After *Retrotopia*? The Future of Organizing and the Thought of Zygmunt Bauman,” *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 34, no. 4 (2018): 335–342.

## A CALL FOR A PEDAGOGY OF AMBIVALENCE

In the last pages of *Retrotopia*, Bauman follows Pope Francis's call for a genuine cultural dialogue that will include the myriad groups in the society. He urges that advancing tolerance in an uncertain world requires us to "brace ourselves for a long period marked by more questions than answers and more problems than solutions."<sup>47</sup> This approach stands in opposition to the modern quest for certainty. Preparing people to live in an uncertain world, where geopolitical conditions are rapidly changing, requires educators to move beyond instrumental strategies for preparing students to gain twenty-first century skills and to make an epistemological shift. Bauman clearly describes this epistemological shift as follows: "Preparing for life—that perennial, invariable task of all education—must mean first and foremost cultivating the ability to live daily and at peace with uncertainty and ambivalence."<sup>48</sup>

I argue that, instead of considering ambivalence as a threat, we shall consider it as an individual and social state, which helps us to look at and to re-observe reality. Ambivalence, as I noted in the beginning of this article, refers to one's ability to suspend judgment, to carefully observe, and to tolerate mixed feelings about certain issues. Ambivalence does not mean that one has renounced the desire for sustainable knowledge of the world. But in times when knowledge is rapidly changing and misinformation disseminates quickly through social media, the rush to make instantaneous convictions endangers the capacity to maintain healthy and vibrant discussion. Ambivalence, in this sense, is essential for suspending judgment and allowing people to explore different dimensions of a phenomenon in order to attain a more sustainable understanding of the world.<sup>49</sup>

The call for a pedagogy of ambivalence should not be perceived as a shortcut for rigor and thorough teaching and learning. A caveat must also be taken into consideration when people abuse ambivalence as a means for advancing post-truth ideas. My call for a pedagogy of ambivalence should be understood as an opposition to indoctrination, particularly when considering how issues of citizenship, identity, and community are oversimplified and addressed in schools through the hegemonic lens and present a narrow understanding of the world. In this respect, a pedagogy of ambivalence is not a method, but a predisposition of how one deliberates issues pertaining to race, gender, and ethnicity. Recognizing ambivalence as an inherent part of life is crucial for fostering a more critical understanding of the world in teaching and learning and for advancing tolerance.

---

<sup>47</sup> Bauman, *Retrotopia*, 167.

<sup>48</sup> Bauman, *The Individualized Society*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Callon, Pierre Lascoumes, and Yannic Barthe, *Acting in an Uncertain World: An essay on Technical Democracy*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 251–254.

---