Vernacular Education

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Wrangling

"Even the youngest scholars are accustomed never to keep silence; they are always asserting vigorously whatever comes uppermost to their minds, less they should seem to be giving up the dispute. Nor does one disputation, or even two a day prove sufficient, as for instance at dinner. They wrangle at breakfast; they wrangle after breakfast; they wrangle before supper and they wrangle after supper. At home they dispute, out of doors they dispute. They wrangle over their food, in the bath, in the sweating room, in the church, in the town, in the country, in public, in private. At all times they are wrangling."

Juan Luis Vives(1493-1540)

Why Vernacular?

"We need a simple adjective to name those acts of competence, lust, or concern that we want to defend from measurement or manipulation by Chicago Boys and Socialist Commissars. The term must be broad enough to fit the preparation of food and the shaping of language, childbirth, and recreation, without implying either a privatized activity akin to the housework of modern women, a hobby or an irrational and primitive procedure. Such an adjective is not at hand. But vernacular might serve."

Ivan Illich
Shadow Work (1981)

Ivan Illich

"By speaking about vernacular language and the possibility of its recuperation, I am trying to bring into awareness and discussion the existence of a vernacular mode of being, doing, and making that in a desirable future society might again expand in all aspects of life."

Shadow Work (1981)

Coase's Penguin

In the context of Ron Coase's two forms of control, the market and the firm Benkler has a third form akin to Illich's Vernacular.

"Commons-based peer production, the emerging third model of production I describe here, relies on decentralized information gathering and exchange to reduce the uncertainty of participants."

Yochai Benkler (2002)

Illich's discussion of the Vernacular

Illich makes a political distinction between "mother tongue" and the vernacular when he discusses how Spanish monks, led by Antonio de Nebrija, set out to become a new class of "letrado" – the learned – who would use Castilian to strengthen the power of the elite.

Antonio de Nebrija (1441 -1522)

"Soon Your Majesty will have placed her yoke upon many barbarians who speak outlandish tongues. By this, your victory, these people shall stand in a new need; the need for the laws the victor owes to the vanquished, and the need for the language we shall bring with us."

Nebrija addressing Queen Isabella

Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540)

- Educated in Spain by opponent of Nebrija
- Family burnt by Spanish inquisition
- Spent time in Flanders and England
- Advocated teaching Latin as an everyday language
- Significant contribution to the development of educational theories

Irruption of Untutored Self-Education in England

- Big concern during reformation
- State control over access to bible and how it people read it
- Turmoil for about two centuries
- Impact of new technology: print
- Emergence of non-conformism and restrictions of access to higher education

Parallels in
Twentieth Century Russia

- Development of "Workers' Circles"

- Student-led self-education

- Mass phenomenon after massacres of 1905 Revolution

- Influenced the Vpered wing of Bolshevik Faction in Russian Social Democracy

Vpered

- Maxim Gorky (1868 -1936)
- Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933)
- Alexander Bogdanov (1873-1928)

Based in Capri, 1909

Advocated "Workers' Encyclopedia"

Collapsed due to sexual politics

Vpered and Leninism

- Lunacharsky rejoins Bolsheviks and becomes first People's Commissar for Education

- Bogdanov active in *Proletkult* and *Proletarian University* – still active in promotion of "Workers' Encyclopedia

- Gorky remains independent

Great Soviet Encyclopedia

- Published 1926 to 1990
- Leninist adaptation of *Vpered* idea
- Encyclopedia *for* the people rather than *by* the people
- 105% reliable under Stalin
- New pages mailed out when "unpersons" had to be removed

Aksel Berg (1893-1979)

- Naval officer on Submarines in World War I
- Pioneer of Soviet naval radio
- Served time in the gulag
- Deputy Minister of Defence under Kruschev
- Translated Norbert Weiner's *Cybernetics*
- Advocated cybernetic encyclopedia but still under the watchful eye of the Leninist party (1962)

Ivan Illich: "Learning Webs"

- Illich calls for "educational *webs* which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring."

Deschooling Society (1971)

Three Purposes of a Good Educational System

- it should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives

- empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them

- furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known

Deschooling Society (1971)

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