

WHAT IS BRIDGING SCHOLARSHIP  
AND PEDAGOGY?

JON A. LEVISOHN

The Initiative on Bridging Scholarship  
and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies

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Brandeis University

Mandel Center  
for Studies in Jewish Education

MS 049  
P.O. Box 549110  
Waltham, MA 02454-9110  
[www.brandeis.edu/mandel](http://www.brandeis.edu/mandel)

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## ABSTRACT

*Many people seem to share an intuition that something is askew in the field of Jewish education, that there is an unhealthy chasm that ought to be bridged between something called “scholarship” and something else called “pedagogy.” This intuition has given rise to the research initiative at the Mandel Center: the Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies. But precisely what is the intellectual or practical problem represented by this metaphor? This paper suggests a set of five inter-related answers to that question, each of which points to an issue or a concern about contemporary Jewish education. Taken together, they represent the agenda of the Mandel Center’s Bridging Initiative.*

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The idea of “bridging scholarship and pedagogy in Jewish studies,” as the focus of a research initiative at the Mandel Center, began to germinate in 2002, influenced by two significant articles: Peter Seixas’ 1999 paper about efforts to help history educators become more sophisticated in “doing the discipline” of history<sup>1</sup> and Deborah Ball’s 2000 paper about the divide between content and pedagogy in teacher education more generally.<sup>2</sup> But at least initially, the name signaled an intuition more than an argument. That intuition was fundamentally negative: that something was askew in the field of Jewish education or more specifically in the teaching of classical Jewish studies, that there was an unhealthy chasm that must be bridged between two things that ought not to be held apart. Precisely what two things? What exactly is the intellectual or practical problem represented by the image of a chasm? And what would constitute a “bridge” across that chasm? This paper articulates an answer or rather a set of answers to those questions.

But before pursuing those answers, I should note that the intuition itself, while insufficient on its own, has a cultural context. In the 1960s, Seymour Fox launched an effort at the Melton Center at JTS to develop curricula for Jewish schools that employed the best Jewish studies scholarship of the day. This effort, to which he managed to enlist a number of leading scholars including especially

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*Jon A. Levisohn is assistant professor of Jewish education at Brandeis University, where he is also assistant academic director of the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education and directs the Initiative on Bridging Pedagogy and Scholarship in Jewish Education.*

<sup>1</sup> Peter Seixas, “Beyond content and pedagogy: In search of a way to talk about history education,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 31:3 (1999).

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Ball, “Bridging practices: Intertwining content and pedagogy in teaching and learning to teach,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 51:3 (2000).

Nahum Sarna and Moshe Greenberg, was motivated in part by his sense of the poverty and flatness of curricula in Jewish education when compared with the richness and excitement of contemporary academic scholarship in classical Jewish studies. Fox's subsequent focus on the importance of vision for Jewish education, especially beginning in the early 1990s with the "Visions of Jewish Education Project" at the Mandel Foundation, derived from a similar motivation: for someone with a sense of the depth and profundity with which Jewish studies could be pursued at the highest levels, it was almost unbearably painful to see the emaciated content of a typical Jewish education, uninspired by any compelling vision of the purposes of Jewish life and learning.<sup>3</sup> Fox, in other words, was motivated by a similar kind of negative intuition, a dissatisfaction about what might be called a chasm between scholarship and pedagogy.

Fox's approach in the 1970s attempted to "apply" scholarship to education or to "translate" scholarship to curriculum.<sup>4</sup> But these verbs are problematic, because they establish a hierarchy between the scholars, who generate knowledge, and the educators, who merely apply or translate it. Moreover, they treat the knowledge itself as static, a thing to be translated, and thus they avoid the complex intellectual challenges of teaching – challenges which are not only about "how to teach" in a generic sense but also and more importantly about how to teach this specific subject to these particular students in this particular context. These are the kind of questions that require deep subject matter knowledge, to be sure, but knowledge of a specific kind. And they are the kind of questions that are faced by *all* teachers, implicitly or explicitly – teachers in formal settings and informal settings, teachers in university courses and Hebrew School programs, adult education classes and Jewish day schools.

Upon analysis, the initial intuition regarding a chasm between scholarship and pedagogy comprises no fewer than five aspects, five discrete problems or arguments, interrelated to be sure but still distinct. These five are as follows:

1. a practical issue about the lack of interaction between two groups of people, university scholars and Jewish educators, and an argument about the potential benefit of bringing them together;
2. a problem with the standard model in which teachers ought to know their material, on the one hand, and possess generic pedagogic techniques on the other, and a programmatic

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<sup>3</sup> Fox suggested these motivations in personal communication, but also see his opening chapter to the volume that he edited with Israel Scheffler and Daniel Marom, *Visions of Jewish Education* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003): "Without a guiding purpose, an educational system is bound to be scattered and incoherent, incapable of consecutive effort, unable either to grasp the possibilities of effective action or to avoid the obstacles in its path. Lacking a directive guide to the future, the system becomes repetitive and uninspired, prey to past habit, incapable of justifying itself to new generations of our youth in the worlds they will inhabit.... Current Jewish educational practice is too often spiritless, a mere recapitulation of conventional lessons and past practices, lacking both systematic connection with the depths of Jewish lore and the energy to make such lore come alive convincingly in the hearts of contemporary youth" (p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> In 1973, Fox convened a conference on "Applying Jewish Scholarship to Contemporary Programs of Education" at the Ohio State University, which resulted in an edited volume entitled *From the Scholar to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum*, Seymour Fox and Geraldine Rosenfeld, eds. (Melton Research Center for Jewish Education, 1977).

claim about the importance of subject-specific pedagogy in teacher education and professional development;

3. a suspicion about the salience of the scholarship-pedagogy dichotomy itself, based on an argument for their epistemological isomorphism, i.e., the way in which the two knowledge practices share a common structure;
4. a brief on behalf of scholarship in pedagogical thinking, in the specific sense of a larger structure of meaning and significance – a conception of the field or subject – to which pedagogic decision-making is responsible; and
5. an appeal for the development of a particular kind of scholarship about pedagogy in Jewish studies, i.e., a “scholarship of teaching.”

In what follows, I will explain each of these five aspects of what we have labeled “bridging scholarship and pedagogy in Jewish studies.”

## PART ONE: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS AND EDUCATORS

The first aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy focuses on the lack of interaction between two distinct groups of people, university scholars and Jewish educators. As Barry Holtz says, “Scholars and educators live in almost parallel universes.”<sup>5</sup> And so, programmatically, the Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies is committed to bringing those two groups of people together, in seminars and conferences. But of course, merely bringing people together is not enough. After all, many Jewish studies academics enter the field out of a deep commitment to Jewish culture and tradition that is expressed in other aspects of their lives as well, and so are already involved in Jewish communal institutions, in one way or another. They teach adult education courses and sometimes children as well; they participate with their families in synagogues and Jewish communities of one sort or another; they send their children to schools or summer camps or other educational programs sponsored by the Jewish community.

In this sense, academic Jewish studies is far more engaged with education than, say, physics or anthropology. Most academic physicists and anthropologists are content to remain in their ivory towers,<sup>6</sup> teaching their students, doing their research and writing their books and articles. With a few notable and important exceptions – a textbook here, a science education commission there, and every once in a while, that odd creature who becomes engaged in the intellectual challenges presented by teaching the subject – they don’t spend a lot of time out in the physics education community or the anthropology education community. Jewish studies academics, on the other hand,

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<sup>5</sup> Barry Holtz, “Across the divide: What might Jewish educators learn from Jewish scholars?”, *Journal of Jewish Education* 72 (2006), p. 5. Holtz goes on to identify three factors that separate educators and scholars in general: social status, which seems to be indexed to the age of the students; gender, since education is far more “feminized”; and finally, the absence of esoteric knowledge in education (in part because “everyone has been to school after all”).

<sup>6</sup> Physicists typically do their research in labs, of course, while anthropologists do theirs out in the field, and each of these can lead to a degree of engagement with the real world. But the issue here is engagement with education, specifically.

quite frequently *do* have such experiences, either first-hand as teachers or second-hand through their children, and quite frequently *do care* about the quality of Jewish education, for their own children and for others.

So the problem is not merely that Jewish studies scholars and educators do not interact, and the solution is not merely to bring them together. It all depends on *how* they're brought together, on the character of the interactions and their substance. Those interactions can be hierarchical, with scholars invited to the table (figuratively or literally) as subject matter experts and educators invited to come learn from them. Note that this can be even be done respectfully, treating educators as experts in their own domain (namely, in the domain of pedagogy, understood as the “how” of teaching) just as scholars are experts within *their* domain (namely, scholarship, understood as the “what” of teaching). But that model, as I've already said, is not only unlikely to work, but more importantly is conceptually flawed, because it treats knowledge as static and assumes that the goal of education is the transmission of that static knowledge into the heads of the learners.

A better model is to bring people together to engage in shared discussion, common conversation, joint inquiry. What are the goals of teaching this subject (Bible, or rabbinic literature, or other sub-fields)? What are the challenges? How do teachers choose which texts or ideas to teach, and how do they decide *how* to teach those texts or ideas? What do teachers need to know to teach well, and what do they need to be able to do with that knowledge? What sense do students make of what teachers teach, and how do we know? What do teachers actually *do* in the teaching of the subject – what do they say, what questions do they ask, what representations of ideas do they use, what learning tasks do they assign, what kind of assessments do they employ – and what might be considered the *core practices* of teaching the subject? Obviously, the answers to these questions will differ depending on the setting and the age of the students, but it seems just as obvious that a conversation about the questions *across* settings and ages, but *within* the subject area,<sup>7</sup> has the potential to be enlightening for all involved.

And in fact, based on our experience in the seminar on teaching Bible in 2003-2004, some of that potential was realized. One participant wrote compellingly as follows:

I am thinking in much more conceptual terms about my teaching and have been able to articulate a clearer methodology regarding my pedagogic choices. Slowly, what is emerging for me is a theoretical “substructure” for my practice. I've arrived at many of my choices when teaching from a fairly intuitive approach and through trial and error. The [seminar has] given me a greater perspective on my work.

Because the participants in this type of interaction share a common subject area, they have the basis for a robust joint engagement with subject-specific pedagogical questions. And at the same time, the

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<sup>7</sup> Conversations across subject areas are potentially instructive as well, especially when commonalities emerge. Many practitioners seem to operate with the preconception that their own area is unique, and are surprised to see how much commonality they find or can construct, and how much they learn from those commonalities. So the present argument is certainly not intended to preclude those kinds of inter-disciplinary discussions.

diversity of their settings can generate a kind of creative tension, an asking of questions that otherwise are not asked, a challenging of assumptions. A conversation among day school teachers will be richer with the participation of informal educators; a conversation among educators of children will be deepened with the participation of educators of adults; and, specifically, a conversation about those who consider themselves to be, primarily, “Jewish educators” will be intensified with the participation of those who are, primarily, “scholars” – and vice versa. As Holtz notes, “When scholars are asked to think seriously about questions of education, they are forced to look at their underlying assumptions ... in ways that general scholarly discourse may not allow.”<sup>8</sup>

## PART TWO: OVERCOMING THE DIVISION OF LABOR IN TEACHER EDUCATION

I have already alluded to a model of the work of teaching in which teaching is a product of a division of labor. According to that model, one group of people, the scholars, produce the knowledge; they generate the material to be taught, the “what” of teaching. Another group of people, the teachers, transmit the knowledge; they are experts on the “how” of teaching. (In addition to the producers and the transmitters, there is a third group of people in the model – the students – who are conceived as consumers.) Pedagogy, according to this model, is content-neutral, or generic. It involves techniques for getting students to do their work or to cooperate with each other or to be motivated. It is like form without content,<sup>9</sup> or to the extent that it involves content at all, it focuses on the development of efficient means of getting knowledge – any generic knowledge – into the heads of students.

The place where this is most easily seen is in teacher education and professional development. If one accepts the division-of-labor model, then teacher education should follow a similar division between content and pedagogy, the courses that teach teachers *what* to teach and the courses that teach them *how* to teach.<sup>10</sup> And this applies not just to pre-service teacher education but to all efforts to promote teacher learning, at any level. Thus, professional development programs frequently focus on *content*, on the one hand, or on *pedagogy*, on the other. History teachers go to the Holocaust Museum and study history, on the one hand, or they sit with their colleagues and learn about writing across the curriculum, on the other. Teachers of Tanakh go to hear lectures from masterful scholars of Tanakh, or they learn about Multiple Intelligences. Doctoral students on their way to the professoriate become expert in their specialties, and grab a few lessons along the way about leading discussions or

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<sup>8</sup> Holtz, “Across the divide,” p. 26. Note that the argument depends on the reality that scholars, at least most scholars, are teachers as well. And so, the very separation of the two categories of people, “scholar” and “pedagogue,” is called into question, with the result that there is nothing to bridge! I will pursue this point more vigorously below, but at this stage of the argument, it is enough to remind ourselves of the common-sense point that some people are identified primarily as university teachers and some as Jewish educators, and that the first aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy is to bring these two groups of people into a common conversation about the teaching of their shared subject matter.

<sup>9</sup> I am using “form” and “content” here in a metaphorical sense rather than a technical one. Note that, while it sometimes makes sense to think about a contrast between content and form as conceptual categories, nothing in our world is pure content or pure form.

<sup>10</sup> The exception here are “methods” courses, which have the potential to go beyond an overly practical approach that emphasizes technique in favor of a more intellectual approach that emphasizes subject-specific pedagogical challenges. It is also important to mention that the division-of-labor model also leads, in some cases, to a comprehensive skepticism about pedagogy (or, to be precise, about whether it is possible to be taught the practice of teaching) altogether. Among those who are disappointed in traditional content-plus-pedagogy teacher education, some advocate content-only teacher education since the pedagogy component seems so weak, generic, and ineffectual. Leon Botstein, president of Bard College, is an example here; see “Teachers learn more than just how to teach,” *New York Times*, Monday, December 15, 2003, p. 7.

grading exams. “Teacher education,” writes Deborah Ball, “has consistently been structured across a persistent divide between subject matter and pedagogy.”<sup>11</sup>

What is wrong with dividing up the necessary knowledge base of teaching in this way? Ball continues:

The overarching problem ... is that the prevalent conceptualization and organization of teachers’ learning tends to fragment practice and leave to individual teachers the challenge of integrating subject matter knowledge and pedagogy in the context of their work.<sup>12</sup>

So instead of working on the subject-specific pedagogical issues with the help of experienced teachers, novices are left to make pedagogic sense of their subject on their own. Thus, individual teachers come up with their own idiosyncratic integration, their own conception of what’s worth teaching in the subject and what should students know, their own anecdotally informed understandings of the challenges and their own ideas about how to represent the subject in order to overcome misunderstandings. And, since there is usually little opportunity within professional development settings to engage around the issues of subject-specific pedagogy, these positions remain private rather than public and available for critique.

Ball’s solution is to try to understand more precisely what good teachers actually know about their subject: “Inquiries that begin with practice are revealing subject matter demands of teachers’ work that are not seen when we begin with lists of content to be taught derived from the school curriculum.”<sup>13</sup>

The image of a “list of content” is a powerful one, representing a particularly impoverished conception of what teachers ought to know – and Ball’s argument is that adding a “list of pedagogic techniques” hardly helps matters. If we start from the actual practice of teaching and ask questions like, “what does this teacher have to know about this subject (as well as about a lot of other things) in order to do what she is doing?”, we may well find ourselves overwhelmed with the complexity of the work – but we might also be able to take steps towards a richer understanding of teacher knowledge within the particular subject. That richer understanding will then be the starting place for another

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<sup>11</sup> Ball 2000, p. 242. Lee Shulman, who started talking and writing about the problem in the early 1980s in terms of a “missing paradigm” of research on teaching that would focus on subject-specific pedagogical issues, argues that while the content-pedagogy division is well entrenched, it is in fact a relatively modern phenomenon (Shulman, “Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching”, *Educational Researcher* 15:2, 1986, 4-14).

<sup>12</sup> Ball 2000, p. 242. Ball is working in the tradition initiated by Shulman, who coined the term “pedagogical content knowledge” to refer to that area of knowledge that is neither straightforward “content knowledge” nor pure “pedagogy”. He writes: “Within the category of pedagogical content knowledge I include ... the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others.... [It] also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the preconceptions or misconceptions that students ... bring with them...” (Shulman, “Those who understand,” 1986, p. 9). But while Shulman’s formulation posits a third area of knowledge, Ball’s focuses on the way that the two areas are typically studied in abstraction from one another, and the way that this hampers the teacher, who is left to overcome the fragmentation on her own. Teachers are not sometimes teaching using one form of knowledge, sometimes a second, and sometimes a third. Rather, they (like all practitioners) are always in the position of integrating everything they know in order make effective practical judgments.

<sup>13</sup> Ball 2000, pp. 244-245.

complicated inquiry, this time an inquiry into what kinds of learning experiences would help novices develop that teacher knowledge, or alternatively, what learning experiences would promote it among experienced teachers in the field.

Now, it is certainly true that teachers ought to learn certain things that are relevant across different subject areas. For example, teachers of children ought to know something about developmental psychology. Teachers in any setting ought to learn how to think about planning and assessment, or establishing classroom norms, or promoting intellectual virtues, or the use of power in the classroom. But these things are not *all* that teachers need to know. Teachers also need to learn how to think about the methodological issues in their subject areas in ways that are appropriate for teaching. They need to think about what it means to learn that particular subject, and what the obstacles typically are. They need to think about the purposes of studying any particular subject in order to construct a curriculum that is defensible in terms of those purposes. “Bridging scholarship and pedagogy,” in this second sense, means overcoming the division-of-labor model of the work of teaching, in order to focus on subject-specific pedagogic questions, in the conviction that greater thoughtfulness and sensitivity about these questions will contribute to greater sophistication in our own teaching and that of others.<sup>14</sup>

### PART THREE: SCHOLARSHIP-PEDAGOGY AS A FALSE DICHOTOMY

If the first aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy focused on the practical issue of bringing together two groups of people, and the second aspect focused on a practical problem of the inter-relationship of content and pedagogy in teacher education, the third aspect is a more philosophical point about the surprisingly similar structure of the knowledge of the subject as held by the scholar and the teacher – not that they *know* the same things, exactly, but that they do the same things, that they pursue parallel cognitive or intellectual practices.<sup>15</sup> One might call this a kind of epistemological isomorphism, or alternatively, one can consider the point to be a rejection of the dichotomy between scholarship and pedagogy itself.

“Every study or subject,” writes Dewey in a famous passage, “has two aspects: one for the scientist as a scientist; the other for the teacher as a teacher.” He then elaborates what the subject matter means for each person.

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<sup>14</sup> The assumption here – that being more conscious of and more articulate about subject-specific pedagogic issues makes one a better teacher – is subject to challenge. After all, there are many excellent teachers who are not at all articulate about their teaching, and may even be less than fully aware of the things that they do. What is less questionable, however, is the necessity for discussion and articulation as an instrument for the education of educators. As an example, consider a university course taught under the title, “Teaching American Jewish History.” The instructor of the course composed a syllabus that focused on a series of topics in the field: the purposes of teaching American Jewish history, the issue of periodization of American Jewish history, the similarities and differences between American Jewish history and other kinds of history, the tension generated by the teaching of critical history in a Jewish educational setting. At the end of the course, the instructor lamented that he was unable to teach the students how to teach the subject – but I find his pessimism misplaced. It is certainly true that he did not provide practical tips, nor did the students study curricula, nor did they plan and carry out model lessons. Nevertheless, the issues that were covered in the course are fundamental to the students’ understanding of the subject and their capacity to think about it in a teaching environment and for teaching purposes – and without the course, they might have gone unexamined.

<sup>15</sup> For the present purposes, I am setting aside the reality that almost all scholars are teachers as well, and instead treating “scholar” and “teacher” as ideal types. One result is that my argument can be taken to mean that real-life scholar/teachers are not as bifurcated as they sometimes believe or seem to others, but rather pursue the same epistemic activity throughout.



For the scientist, the subject matter represents simply a given body of truth to be employed in locating new problems, instituting new researches, and carrying them through to a verified outcome.... The problem of the teacher is a different one. As a teacher he is not concerned with adding new facts to the science he teaches; in propounding new hypotheses or in verifying them. He is concerned with the subject-matter of the science as representing a given stage and phase of the development of the experience... He is concerned, not with the subject-matter as such, but with the subject-matter as a related factor in a total and growing experience...<sup>16</sup>

We might say that the scientist is concerned with science for its own sake; the teacher, on the other hand, is concerned with science because of the way that it captures some aspect of the child's experience or has the potential to do so.

The claim has a kind of *prima facie* plausibility to it. Scientists do tend to differ from science teachers in their priorities and their concerns, and it seems not unreasonable to distinguish them in this way. In fact, Sam Wineburg and Suzanne Wilson say something similar about historians and history teachers: whereas historians “face inward toward the discipline,” history teachers have to face both inward to the discipline and outward toward their students.<sup>17</sup> Barry Holtz' term for this is “dual focus – on the one hand, thinking about the subject matter and on the other being mindful of how their *students* will encounter the subject matter.”<sup>18</sup> But is this depiction accurate? One red flag in the Dewey passage is Dewey's reference to the subject as a “given body of truth” to which are added new facts, a strikingly un-Deweyan over-simplification of the nature of scientific inquiry.<sup>19</sup> Another reason to think more carefully about this is the suggestion that the scientist is concerned with the subject matter “as such,” as if were possible to disengage science from the rest of the world. And a third concern: In Wineburg and Wilson, their casual distinction between scientists' creation of “knowledge” in the discipline, on the one hand, and teachers' creation of “understanding” in the

<sup>16</sup> John Dewey, *Child and the Curriculum* (1902), pp. 478-9.

<sup>17</sup> “We are also suggesting that the goals of the history teacher differ from those of the historian. The lodestar for historians is the discipline of history... Teachers of history pursue other goals. Their aim is not to create new knowledge in the discipline but to create new understanding in the minds of learners. Unlike the historian, who only has to face inward toward the discipline, the teacher of history must face inward and outward, being at once deeply familiar with the content of the discipline while never forgetting that the goal of his understanding is to foster it in others” (“Subject matter knowledge in the teaching of history,” *Advances in Research on Teaching* 2 (1991), p. 335).

<sup>18</sup> Holtz, “Across the divide,” p. 10. Holtz continues by quoting both Wineburg & Wilson and Dewey!

<sup>19</sup> Consider, too, Dewey's arguments in “The Relation of Theory to Practice” (1904, in *John Dewey on Education*, ed. Archambault). “The present divorce between scholarship and method [i.e., pedagogy] is as harmful upon one side as upon the other – as detrimental to the best interests of higher academic instruction as it is to the training of teachers. But the only way in which this divorce can be broken down is by so presenting all subject-matter ... as an objective embodiment of methods of mind in its search for, and transactions with, the truth of things” (Dewey 1904, p. 331). That is, scholarship and pedagogy will be reunited via a more nuanced understanding of what subject matter is, one that recognizes the human elements (“methods of mind”) that are always involved. This seems not to cohere with his claim in *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) that I have cited, about a stark epistemological divide between the scientist's straightforward knowledge of a body of truth and the teacher's more complicated knowledge of a subject in its relation to a set of learners. So, one may wonder, why would Dewey write about scientific knowledge in this way? At the risk of over-speculation, his point in *The Child and the Curriculum* is to emphasize that teachers must think carefully about where their students are and what they will find meaningful in a subject, and ought to avoid a conception of teaching as the transmission of scientific conclusions. Perhaps in focusing on this point, he allowed himself to caricature scientific knowledge itself.

students, on the other, begs for some close scrutiny.

In contrast to Dewey, and Wineburg and Wilson, I would like to emphasize the similarity in the relationship of scholars and teachers to their common subject. Consider what scholars and teachers actually do.<sup>20</sup> A teacher takes some subject and constructs the best possible understanding of it for herself. As she does so, she encounters problems, things that she doesn't understand or that don't make sense, or perhaps she simply find her curiosity piqued by this or that aspects, and so she does some more digging until she is able to re-construct a coherent picture of the whole. With her own understanding as the background, she then makes a judgment about what the students' prior understanding of the particular subject is, and makes a further judgment about what kinds of activities are likely to move the students from where they are, now, in their understanding of the subject, to where the teacher thinks they ought to be.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes, the teacher can just communicate some new information to the student directly or frontally. Often, however, when the subject is not mere information, straightforward communication is not enough. So the teacher assigns readings, or writing, or problem sets, or sets up some other kind of educational encounter. The pedagogical techniques that she chooses are always (or should always be) in the service of the learning objective, that is, the goal of having the students move from where they are to where the teacher wants them to be.<sup>22</sup>

Now consider what scholars do. The scholar takes some subject and constructs the best possible understanding of it for herself – just like the teacher. As the scholar constructs that understanding, she encounters problems, things that she doesn't understand or that don't make sense, or perhaps she simply finds her scholarly intuition piqued by this or that aspect, and so she does some more digging until she is able to re-construct a coherent picture of the whole – just like the teacher. With her own understanding as background, the scholar then makes a judgment about what her target audience's prior understanding of the particular subject is – just like the teacher, with the difference being that the scholar's target audience is made up of her colleagues, or the readers of the particular scholarly journal, or the "field" to which she intends to contribute, or the public at large.<sup>23</sup> Next, the

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<sup>20</sup> The following is not a representation of the *entirety* of what either scholars or teachers do, of course. Scholars and teachers do lots of things, for lots of different purposes. In particular, teachers may well see their work as primarily devoted to the development of intellectual and moral virtues. (I appreciate Jeff Spitzer's help in clarifying this point, to which I will return below.) Instead, what I would like to portray is a schematic picture of the ways that they *relate to and work with their subject matter*, keeping in mind that this is only one part of the whole.

<sup>21</sup> Notably, Feiman-Nemser & Buchman describe this aspect of pedagogical thinking using the metaphor of bridge building: "thinking about how to build bridges between one's own understanding and that of one's students" ("The First Year of Teaching Preparation: Transition to Pedagogical Thinking?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 18:3, 1986, p. 239). My claim is that scientists, too, must construct this bridge, between their own understanding and that of the imagined audience for their scholarship or that of the field to which they intend to contribute.

<sup>22</sup> This final formulation, "having the students move from where they are to where the teacher wants them to be," is intentionally broader than the preceding sentences, because I want to signal that nothing that I have said should be misconstrued to suggest that the teacher's goal is to get the students to assent to her specific interpretation of a text. Teachers may well be interested in promoting learning goals that have more to do with interpretive skills or interpretive virtues, rather than knowledge of specific interpretations, and may well want to preserve the possibility of multiple interpretations, even as they want to help students move towards interpretations that are more nuanced, more defensible, more sophisticated, or more insightful. At the same time, to do this well, the teacher needs to have a clear sense of what she thinks are good interpretations (of the text, say) and especially why. (I appreciate Jeff Spitzer's help in clarifying this point as well.)

<sup>23</sup> My claim, in other words, is that scientific inquiry and the generation of scholarly knowledge incorporates an intended audience. Naturally, much scholarly inquiry is individual, and some scholars do not bother to publish their conclusions.

scholar makes the further judgment about what kinds of communication are likely to move her audience from where they are to where she thinks they ought to be – just like the teacher. And like the teacher, for the scholar too, straightforward communication is often not enough. The scholar has to convince a skeptical audience by the use of evidence and argument – she has to write her article in a compelling way, or present the relevant data, or document the key piece of evidence – techniques that she hopes will serve the objective of moving the audience towards an acceptance of her position.

This sketch of the work of the scholar and the teacher is intended to demonstrate the common structure underlying the intellectual work that they do, what I have called their epistemological isomorphism. This is not to deny the reality of relevant distinctions. It is surely relevant that scholars tend to spend more of their time interacting with their subject (doing research, writing) as they construct their own understanding of the subject, and less time interacting with their audience, while teachers do the reverse.<sup>24</sup> It is surely relevant that scholarship propels one towards specialization, whereas teaching often demands flexible knowledge of wider areas.<sup>25</sup> It is surely relevant that the scholarly community acknowledges and rewards novelty in subject matter knowledge in a way that the teaching community does not.<sup>26</sup> And it is surely relevant that the teachers' responsibilities encompass the promotion of the *general* growth and development of their students – not just the growth in their understanding of or capacity in a particular subject but the growth of their intellectual and moral character in general – in a way that researchers' responsibilities do not. These distinctions need to be carefully examined and their epistemological significance considered. But the basic argument here is that the rigid dichotomy of scholarship and pedagogy is itself fundamentally flawed.

Some readers may not be convinced. “This reconstruction of the intellectual work of teachers and researchers is all very nice,” they might respond, “but the fact remains that their purposes are different. Researchers are discovering or generating new ideas, with no concern other than the pursuit of truth. Teachers, on the other hand, as you’ve admitted, are concerned primarily with the development of their pupils – academic progress, yes, but also social and emotional growth, that sort of thing. And in the case of religious education, the contrast is even more dramatic, since teachers are also expected to promote belief, devotion, commitment, or some kind of fidelity to the religious tradi-

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But I believe it is a mistake to view those instances as “pure” science. Of course, it doesn’t actually matter whether an article gets published or not. What matters is that scholars are not facing their subjects alone: they build on prior scholarly conceptions; they make their arguments in reaction to others’ arguments; they engage in dialogue with (real or imagined) colleagues. This point recalls Lee Shulman’s amusing anecdote that he began his scholarly career with the belief that his scholarship would be lonely but at least his teaching would be collegial – only to find the exact reverse (Shulman, “Teaching as Community Property: Putting an end to Pedagogical Solitude,” *Change*, Nov.-Dec. 1993).

<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, if it is true that we learn by communicating (rather than merely communicating what we learn), then the distinction between research and teaching itself is, likewise, undermined. I will return to this point in a moment.

<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, some forms of scholarship – developing the big theories, the over-arching frameworks – may be attainable only by those who do not over-specialize. See, for example, Ernest Boyer’s proposal to distinguish the “scholarship of discovery” from the “scholarship of synthesis,” in his book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, one wonders whether the claims of new knowledge are themselves a product of the brick-by-brick image of science (or scholarship in general), rather than the more complicated reality of science. When one publishes a paper in a respected peer-reviewed journal, one must pass a minimum threshold of novelty, to be sure – one cannot simply say something that everyone already knows – but there is rarely if ever a simple yes-or-no determination on whether something qualifies as new knowledge. A better formulation, because more nuanced and flexible, is the one we often use for doctoral dissertations: it must “make a contribution to the field.”

tion, the sort of thing that researchers would consider anathema to their scholarly calling.”

This issue may be familiar to us from discussion of subjects such as objectivity in academic research, advocacy in the university classroom, or the relationship between history and civic education. I have argued elsewhere, however, that the supposed contrast between academic teaching towards a critical perspective and school teaching towards loyalty or commitment is untenable.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the only defensible stance to take towards a subject, regardless of the context of one’s teaching, is one that is both critical and committed. This does not mean that teaching should look identical everywhere, of course. One must account for considerations of age and intellectual maturity, the background and expectations of the audience, and the range of purposes appropriate to the setting in question. But the point is that teaching in a university and in a school is not *inherently* different – that the differences do not derive from any clear-cut epistemologically-significant division between the two – because university instructors foster certain kinds of personal growth in relation to the subject, just as schoolteachers do, and schoolteachers must be responsible to the discipline, just as university instructors are.<sup>28</sup>

A similar argument holds for my interlocutors’ objection above. The research enterprise is never entirely value-neutral; the researcher (in determining what to study and how to pursue the argument) is not immune from considerations of what she believes is good for the intellectual and moral growth of her audience. And the teacher, while certainly concerned for the general development of her students, has a subject-specific consideration as well: to foster understandings of the subject that are defensible, nuanced, insightful, and as true as possible. The work of the scholar and the pedagogue is certainly not identical – but the underlying structure of their relationship to their subject is a shared one. We might put the point as follows: *insofar as, and to the extent that, teachers of a subject are engaged in an epistemic relation to a subject, their knowledge practices are isomorphic with those of scholars.*

This has at least two implications. One implication is that it forces us to rethink the relationship between scholarship and teaching as they are carried out in the academy. On a practical level, academics who are invested in their research commonly lament that time spent on teaching is time away from research, and vice versa. Regardless of any well-intentioned rhetoric about the way that the two activities are mutually reinforcing (an argument that is essential to the self-conception of the modern research university), teaching and research are unavoidable competitors for that precious resource, time. On an *epistemological* level, on the other hand, teaching is scholarship by other means – and vice versa. We may be immersed in a culture conditioned by the division-of-labor model to expect that teachers are the transmitters of knowledge produced by disciplinary experts, and many teachers find themselves expected to play the role of expert-transmitters, but the epistemological structure of teaching suggests that teaching is a way in which we assemble and re-assemble our

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<sup>27</sup> I pursued this argument in the context of the debate over the teaching of patriotic history for the purposes of civic education in “Young Patriots or Junior Historians? An Epistemological Defense of Critical Patriotic Education,” *Philosophy of Education* 2005. I then argued similarly regarding the teaching of American Jewish history in “Patriotism or Parochialism: Why Teach American Jewish History, and How?”, *Journal of Jewish Education* 70:3 (2004).

<sup>28</sup> This is the point of the fourth aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy, discussed below. I use the term “discipline” here as shorthand for what I later call a “larger structure of meaning and significance” – which need not be the discipline as it is practiced in the academy.

understanding of the subject.

A second implication of the present argument – that the dichotomy of scholarship and pedagogy is a false one – is that it forces us to take much more seriously the knowledge that is held by teachers at all levels.<sup>29</sup> This knowledge is not merely a pale imitation of the correct knowledge as determined by academic scholars. Consider my colleagues at two ends of the educational spectrum, Shira Horowitz (who teaches Bible to first graders) and Marc Brettler (who, in addition to his scholarship, teaches Bible to undergraduates and graduate students). It is surely the case that Brettler knows more Bible than Horowitz does, by whatever measure we might care to use: he has studied more of the texts, he has studied more about the texts, he knows the scholarly field in a way that she does not. There is no need to pretend otherwise, and so, in one sense, it is surely possible to compare them and to say, in a common sense way, that Brettler knows more. But in another sense, the knowledge of Bible that Shira Horowitz possesses is not merely a pale imitation of the knowledge of Bible that Marc Brettler possesses, because the difference between them is a difference in kind, not merely in degree. Nor is it correct to characterize the former as knowledge of how to teach Bible to first graders, and the latter as knowledge of Bible itself. Each knows a lot about how to construct understanding in Bible *for their particular audiences*. Each is an expert, but their field of expertise is distinct.<sup>30</sup> Each is, in this sense, both a scholar and a pedagogue.

The second aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy focused on overcoming the division of labor, and instead called for attention to subject-specific pedagogical issues. Pedagogy, we might say, is always pedagogy of *something*, and thus inevitably scholarly. This third aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy, on the other hand, has emphasized that scholarship is always scholarship for *someone*, and thus, in a sense, inherently pedagogical.

#### PART FOUR: SCHOLARLY FRAMEWORKS FOR PEDAGOGIC THINKING

The fourth aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy takes the term “scholarship” to refer to the larger enterprise into which we induct students when we teach a particular subject. We do not necessarily intend to train professional scholars of Jewish studies when we teach Jewish studies, any more than we intend to train professional mathematicians when teaching mathematics. But we do, on the other hand, want to introduce students to a field, a discipline, a language, or a body of literature and a set of approaches to that literature; we want them to know certain facts and certain ideas, but more importantly, we want them to know what this subject area is all about.<sup>31</sup> Bridging scholarship and pedagogy, then, is an effort to more closely align the pedagogic decision-making,

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<sup>29</sup> Not all teachers of course; for the sake of this discussion, I am referring to good teachers with robust subject-matter knowledge.

<sup>30</sup> Earlier, I rejected the idea that scholars are experts in content and educators are experts in pedagogy. The present point does not contradict that earlier point: Horowitz and Brettler are *both* experts in content of a certain kind and pedagogy of a certain kind.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Schwab called this the “substantive” and “syntactic” structures of a discipline (“Structure of the Disciplines: Meanings and Significances,” in *The Structure of Knowledge and the Curriculum*, ed. G. W. Ford and Lawrence Pugno, Chicago, 1964). The former refers to the big theories that organize the discipline substantively; the latter refers to the methods of the discipline, the syntax of its language. While I think the distinction between the two is helpful, ultimately I find Schwab’s scheme too rigid to account for the dizzying and constantly evolving variety of disciplines, fields, subjects, and areas of inquiry.

within the subject, to that larger enterprise.<sup>32</sup>

The question here is how decisions are made about what and how to teach. What are the criteria for these decisions? What norms govern or influence pedagogic thinking? This is not something that we tend to discuss. In part, this is because we tend not to discuss pedagogic decision-making in general, but in the specific case of Jewish education, my concern is that the divide between scholarship and pedagogy leaves us adrift when trying to make decisions about what approaches to use and how to defend ideas. I suspect that many teachers of Jewish studies simply feel compelled to teach whatever comes next – the next verse or the next chapter – and thus find themselves searching for anything that might make that verse or that chapter interesting or meaningful, unable to see the forest for the trees.

For example, I recently read a transcript of “Rabbi Kaufman,” an experienced teacher in an Orthodox day school, reflecting on a class in which he taught the interpretation of the *S’fas Emes* (Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Ger, 19th Poland) on a passage in Leviticus. As it turns out, Rabbi Kaufman chose the particular interpretation of the particular verse, at least in part, because he happened to encounter the *S’fas Emes* the previous night, while preparing, and thought it might be interesting. That’s not the entire story, of course; this same teacher certainly has a sense of what he wants students to learn. He surely has ideas about where his students are, as readers of text, and ideas about the central concepts of Leviticus. But those ideas are mostly unarticulated and privately held. And in this case, the choice of the *S’fas Emes* was made without reference to any of those ideas. Rather it came about in an idiosyncratic way, as a result of Rabbi Kaufman’s own learning the night before.

Now, on the one hand, Rabbi Kaufman’s preparation is admirable. He treats his subject as an area of inquiry, rather than a set of topics already mastered; he knows that the subject is more than simply a collection of facts to be memorized. Nor is it the case that Rabbi Kaufman was simply staying one chapter ahead of his students, in that desperate mode familiar to us from the practice of novices. Rabbi Kaufman’s knowledge of his subject is broad and deep, and his desire to re-engage with it, every time he prepares to teach, is worthy of commendation.

However, such preparation is all too often a kind of browsing, an unfocused exploration with no clear conception of or stance towards the purposes of studying Jewish texts in general or this text specifically. And preparing to teach, then, means preparing to tell, preparing to *transmit information* that the teacher has discovered. So, while Rabbi Kaufman’s commitment to the preparation of the text demonstrates that the subject is more, to him, than a pre-determined collection of facts, on the other hand his approach suggests that he remains constrained by a model of teaching as transmission. As Rabbi Kaufman candidly admitted about his own pedagogic choice, “I knew I wanted to tell them the new interpretation.” How ironic! Rabbi Kaufman apparently lived his entire life without knowing this information – but suddenly, literally overnight, the interpretation of the *S’fas Emes* has become so important that the primary goal of the lesson was that the information should

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<sup>32</sup> This section of the paper is adapted from my article entitled “A Plea for Purposes,” *Jewish Educational Leadership* 4:1 (2005), available online at <[http://www.lookstein.org/online\\_journal.php?id=66](http://www.lookstein.org/online_journal.php?id=66)>.

now reside, at least temporarily, in the students' heads.

One might object that my interpretation of Rabbi Kaufman's pedagogical decision-making is too harsh. Perhaps his purpose in sharing the interpretation of the *S'fas Emes* is something like this: he wants his students to see their teacher as a role model for them to emulate, in the specific sense of a person who loves to learn, who never stops learning, who embraces new interpretations (and shares them) because this is the way to live a Jewish life. On this interpretation of Rabbi Kaufman's teaching, he is not teaching Leviticus, and not teaching the *S'fas Emes*, but rather teaching learning.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, this claim seems defensible, especially in the light of Dewey's observation that one is always learning "attitudes" while one is learning a subject.<sup>34</sup> And yet, is it enough to say that one should therefore teach whatever one encounters? Should not the teacher still be responsible for a defensible approach to the subject towards which he is helping the students grow? After all, Rabbi Kaufman has some unarticulated reason why the *S'fas Emes* is a good commentary, either in general or in this case. Shouldn't he work, in a deliberate fashion, to articulate those reasons, to examine them, and – if they are sound – to allow them to guide his pedagogical decisions more consciously?<sup>35</sup>

Consider another anecdote, from a very different point on the ideological spectrum. I recently observed "Carol," a young but already experienced Reform supplementary school teacher, as she encountered a source-critical analysis of the interwoven strands of the Korach narrative (Numbers chs. 16-18). She found the study session intriguing, stimulating, even compelling, yet she opined that she would never teach this material to the pre-teens in her classes. A principled pedagogic position! But consider that Carol does not, herself, believe in the Sinaitic origin of the text. Her students' parents do not, their rabbi does not, and it is almost certain that the students' themselves will not as they grow into adolescence. Why, then, does she reject the exploration of the text through a critical lens to her students? What purpose does the temporary preservation of a relic of traditionalism serve? What does Carol think about why she is teaching Torah in the first place? What principles, in other words, ground her pedagogic position?

The point of these anecdotes is that these teachers of Jewish studies often lack a sense that curricular choices ought to be responsible to some larger framework of purposes. In Rabbi Kaufman's case, there seems to be nothing other than the instinctive inclusion of something that feels right. In

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<sup>33</sup> This possibility was pointed out to me by Devora Steinmetz.

<sup>34</sup> "Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he's studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning" (John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Macmillan: 1938, pp. 49-50). These lines serve as the frontispiece to Francis Schrag's *Back to Basics: Fundamental Educational Questions Re-examined* (Jossey Bass: 1995).

<sup>35</sup> The response, then, might be that Rabbi Kaufman does have a coherent approach, namely, to encounter the text sequentially and to try to make sense of it in small verse-by-verse segments. But this is just a technique, not an approach to the subject; it provides no basis for decisions about what to say or do with each verse, no criteria to discriminate among interpretations, no grounds for assessing how well he is accomplishing his goals. I should add that it may well be unrealistic, and even unwise, to expect teachers to bring their pedagogic decision-making under one comprehensive regime. Flexibility, eclecticism, variety, spontaneity – all these should have a place in one's teaching. But it is not unrealistic, and certainly not unwise, to foster a teaching culture in which decisions have reasons behind them and in which teachers learn to ask themselves and their colleagues for those reasons on a regular basis.

Carol's case, there is nothing other than an instinctive exclusion of something that feels wrong. In each of these cases, the teachers in question seem to lack a conceptual framework – a larger structure of meaning and significance, a conception of the field into which we are or should be introducing our students through deliberate strategies – within which to construct an argument one way or the other.

What is Tanakh or Talmud, for example, as a subject, beyond a book or set of books? What constitutes an intriguing question or a compelling answer within these subjects? What are the particular skills or intellectual habits that are associated with these subjects? What are the multiple orientations to the subject itself, and how are they importantly different from each other? What, in the end, do we want students to know and be able to do in the study of these subjects – and why? And what kinds of educational experiences will promote those goals? There must be a conception behind our pedagogic decision-making that is richer and deeper, a conception that allows us to establish and prioritize the goals of teaching and learning this particular subject, a conception of the subject area to which we feel responsible and to which we want to hold ourselves accountable.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to emphasize that there may be multiple appropriate conceptions of the field to which we feel responsible; it's not a matter of establishing an artificial unification of the field and then imposing that unified conception on the Jewish educational system. Nor do those conceptions need to be academic, necessarily. Sam Wineburg, when setting out to conduct comparative studies of experts and novice in history, turned to the academic discipline of history because it seemed like the only reasonable and culturally sanctioned locus of expertise.<sup>37</sup> In the case of Jewish studies, the issue is more complicated, because traditionalist study of classical Jewish texts – to the extent that it is coherent and articulate, a practice in healthy condition as Alasdair MacIntyre might say<sup>38</sup> – may be understood to constitute its own scholarly enterprise. For the present purposes, what is fundamental is not *which* conception of the field serves as the source of guidance and accountability for pedagogical decision-making, but the fact that *some* conception of the field does so serve. In this fourth sense of bridging scholarship and pedagogy, pedagogical choices must not be separate from the conception of the field that ought to inform them.

## PART FIVE: DEVELOPING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING IN JEWISH STUDIES

Finally, there is a fifth aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy, which focuses on the development of a scholarship of pedagogy, or as it is more commonly called, a scholarship of teaching.

The idea of a scholarship of teaching originated with Ernest Boyer in 1990, as a call for academics

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<sup>36</sup> Along similar lines, Barry Holtz, in "Across the divide," suggests that "scholars of Judaica can help answer a set of questions that are crucial for any pedagogic exploration" (p. 9). Not surprisingly, there is significant overlap between his list of questions and mine. Holtz goes on to propose one way that researchers ought to pursue these questions, by "[exploring] the thinking of Judaica scholars about the nature of their discipline and to see, in doing so, what we can learn about the various ways that subject matters can be conceptualized" (p. 11). Later on in his article, however, Holtz also acknowledges that it is unrealistic to expect teachers to keep up with the latest trends in the field (p. 22).

<sup>37</sup> Wineburg, "On the reading of historical texts: Notes on the breach between school and academy," *American Educational Research Journal* 28 (1991), p. 516.

<sup>38</sup> See chapter 14 in MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).



and academic institutions to take the work of teaching more seriously, to treat their teaching as a fourth realm of scholarly activity alongside the scholarship of discovery (i.e., original research), the scholarship of integration, and the scholarship of application.<sup>39</sup> But since that time, it has developed the more specific meaning of scholarly inquiry into the practice of teaching, making teaching and/or learning the focus of study – especially the kind of study that only those with a deep and rich knowledge of the subject matter can conduct. Like other forms of scholarship, the scholarship of teaching must become publicly accessible and subject to peer review and critique, turning teaching – which Lee Shulman famously calls the second most private act we do – from private property into communal property.<sup>40</sup> Paradigmatically, the scholarship of teaching is a product of inquiry into the teaching that one knows best, namely, one’s own. In this sense, the scholarship of teaching can be distinguished from other kinds of research on teaching as conducted by educational researchers.

When teachers (in whatever setting) encounter the idea of the scholarship of teaching, there are a number of misconceptions that typically arise. The first misconception is that pursuing the scholarship of teaching is an effort to *evaluate* teaching – but the purpose of scholarship is understanding, primarily, not evaluation. A second misconception is that the scholarship of teaching is designed to diagnose and fix problems – but again, scholarship promotes insight or analysis, not the fixing of problems. And a third misconception is that the scholarship of teaching, in order to be properly empirical, must be generalizable across a range of phenomena. In fact, excellent work in the scholarship of teaching has focused on single instances, without pretense to generalizability. On the other hand, a fourth misconception is that the scholarship of teaching can be pursued simply by reflecting on one’s teaching. Reflective practice is a desirable feature of good teaching, but the scholarship of teaching requires the clarification of a researchable question, the identification of appropriate data (student work, videotapes of teaching, teachers’ lesson plans and journal entries, or even targeted interviews or focus groups), followed by careful analysis of that data.<sup>41</sup>

What kind of questions does the scholarship of teaching ask?<sup>42</sup> Since the paradigm for the scholarship of teaching is the study of some aspect of one’s own practice, the questions that one asks are often the questions that one already has about one’s teaching. Sometimes these are questions about problematic aspects, challenges that one encounters in one’s teaching, where the goal is to examine the relevant aspects of one’s practice in order to understand the challenges with greater nuance and sophistication.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, a teacher might imagine and design a particular intervention – an

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<sup>39</sup> Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> Shulman, “Teaching as community property,” *Change* 25:6 (Nov/Dec 1993). In addition to the salutary effects of making teaching public in terms of peer review, there is also the reality that teaching is ephemeral: it evaporates as soon as it is over, leaving few traces. The scholarship of teaching makes teaching more permanent and thus the basis for ongoing communal learning. Furthermore, the scholarship of teaching also serves to undermine the assumption that teaching is and may comfortably remain personal and idiosyncratic. <sup>41</sup> Barry Holtz quotes Argyris and Schon who argue that practitioners are not the best theorists of their own practice, at least not without help: “We cannot learn what someone’s theory-in-use is simply by asking him. We must construct his theory-in-use from observations of his behavior.” (Argyris and Schon, *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*, Jossey-Bass, 1974, p. 9).

<sup>42</sup> I owe the following ideas to a conversation with Sharon Feiman-Nemser.

<sup>43</sup> Randy Bass has nicely articulated the contrast between the positive valence to the word “problem” in the discourse of research and the negative valence in the discourse of teaching. “In scholarship and research, having a problem is at the heart of the investigative process... But in one’s teaching, a ‘problem’ is something you don’t want to have, and if

exercise for students or a new approach to teaching a topic – and document the implementation of that intervention and its outcome.<sup>44</sup> Most basically, the scholarship of teaching can pursue a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of one’s teaching or of the student’s learning about which one is simply curious. In these cases, the guiding question may in fact be deceptively simple, some version of the question, “What does it look like when a teacher adopts this particular approach, or when a particular phenomenon happens in a classroom)?”<sup>45</sup> By gathering records of practice and analyzing those artifacts, teachers can generate new insight by displaying the key features of the pedagogic phenomenon in question, describing them carefully and closely, without claiming that such features are always or necessarily present – and avoiding the jump to directly normative arguments about what ought to happen.<sup>46</sup> While the scholarship of teaching is not necessarily focused on subject-specific pedagogical questions, the narrow focus and close attention to practice almost inevitably mean that the question will be pursued with deep awareness of the specifics of the context, including the disciplinary context.

Like the first aspect of this framework – bringing scholars and educators together – the scholarship of teaching is merely instrumental to the pursuit of insight and understanding. It’s a means to an end, where the end is the deeper and richer understanding of the teaching of Jewish studies – its purposes and practices, its problems and its possibilities – that can then serve to improve educational practice. But also like the first aspect, it’s not *merely* a means to an end. The very idea of making teaching the focus of serious study is itself an important point, a central aspect of bridging scholarship and pedagogy in Jewish studies.

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you have one, you probably want to fix it... Changing the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about” (“The Scholarship of Teaching: What’s the Problem,” *Inventio* 1998-1999).

<sup>44</sup> Pat Hutchings and Lee Shulman write that “many faculty gravitate to questions that might be described as ‘instrumental’: Does this new method I’m trying lead to more or better learning than the traditional one?” While they are clearly unexcited about such questions – the term “instrumental” is a giveaway – they are not inherently opposed to them. But what is the difference between this kind of instrumentalism, on the one hand, and the evaluation question that I placed outside the bounds of the scholarship of teaching, above? In the former, the rush to evaluation tends to crowd out thoughtful observation for the purpose of understanding. Assessing a new method runs that risk too: I may be so focused on proving the success of my method that I neglect to actually learn anything (about the method or about teaching and learning more generally) in the process. In both cases, however, it may be possible to defer the question of whether this teacher does x well, or whether this program ‘works,’ in order to learn more about the kinds of effect that the teacher or program has and why those effects happen. That is why I wrote that the teacher might “document the implementation of that intervention and its outcome,” which is more expansive less instrumentally oriented than simply asking, “Does it lead to more learning?”

<sup>45</sup> Possibly the thorniest questions focus on assessing student learning. Our tendency is to assess what is easiest to assess, rather than assessing what we actually want students to know and be able to do – our highest aspirations for meaningful learning. But there’s a reasonable argument to be made that we will only be able to help teachers do more of the latter and less of the former if we can display what a range of accomplishment (in those aspirations) actually looks like. What is low/medium/high accomplishment in becoming an “independent and literarily astute reader of the biblical text in Hebrew”, which is the first of the eight standards for the teaching of Tanakh in the AviChai Tanakh Standards project? What does it look like when a university student displays immature/appropriate/insightful engagement with the theological issues within a text? To borrow Nili Perlmutter’s formulation for teacher education, what does it look like when a student displays pre-professional/approaching/enacting/excelling degree of accomplishment of some central aspiration for a scholar of classical Jewish texts?

<sup>46</sup> Thus, Hutchings and Shulman encourage a broader perspective than the instrumentalism to which I referred in the previous footnote. “The scholarship of teaching can also make a place for ‘what’ questions – questions in which the task is not to ‘prove’ but to describe and understand an important phenomenon more fully: What does it look like when a student begins to think *with* a concept rather than simply *about* it? How can we describe the character of learning in a service-learning site?”

## CONCLUSION

Some readers may have arrived at this point surprised that I have not directly addressed the question of studying Jewish texts from an historical-critical (or “academic,” or “contextual”) perspective. For many people who share the intuition to which I referred at the outset – the intuition that there is an unhealthy chasm between two things that ought not to be kept apart – this may well be the primary meaning of the need to bridge scholarship and pedagogy. And the issue is certainly important, in particular because of the poverty of our language in talking about it; for the most part, those who write about Jewish studies and Jewish education are stuck in overly broad and inflexible categories of piety versus criticism, the hermeneutics of trust versus the hermeneutics of suspicion.

However, in teasing apart the five aspects of bridging scholarship and pedagogy, it turns out that the issue of historical-critical approaches is not a separate category, but is instead woven into several of them. For example, it seems clear that when we bring scholars and educators together into one conversation about purposes and practices of teaching classical Jewish studies, one of the questions on the table (along with, one hopes, many others) will be the extent to which the approaches that are standard in the academy are appropriate to Jewish educational settings.<sup>47</sup> In opening up the question of what kinds of subject-matter knowledge teachers of classical Jewish studies ought to have, likewise, one cannot avoid considering academic perspectives on the texts (regardless of the position that one ultimately takes). When we introduce the idea of subject-specific pedagogical questions, here too the theological and epistemological challenges of critical approaches demand attention, alongside many others.<sup>48</sup> And finally, the idea that pedagogical decision-making ought to be responsible to what I have called “a larger structure of meaning and significance” raises the question of whether academic study of classical Jewish texts supplies the appropriate structure. Again, regardless of the position that one ultimately takes, the intellectual work of pedagogy demands that one pursue the question. If Torah in Jewish schools, for example, is not to be a simulacrum of Bible in the university, well then, what *should* it be?

At the same time, however, it should be clear – following the elaboration of the five aspects of bridging scholarship and pedagogy in Jewish studies – that it would be a mistake to narrow the scope of the project to the promotion of critical approaches to classical Jewish studies within Jewish educational settings. The project is, first and foremost, an effort to promote a different kind of discussion, among a broad range of people, around the pedagogy of Jewish studies: richer language, deeper understanding, greater insight. And thus, of the five aspects elaborated above, the one that most captures our ambitions for the project as a whole is the final one, about the scholarship of teaching in Jewish studies. If the project is successful, we will have contributed to the development of a new

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<sup>47</sup> See Beth Cousens and Jeremy Morrison, “Using the Contextual Orientation to Facilitate the Study of Bible with Generation X” (Working Paper No. 4 of the project), and Susie Tanchel, “‘A Judaism That Does Not Hide’: Curricular Warrants For the Teaching of the Documentary Hypothesis in Community Jewish High Schools” (Working Paper No. 5).

<sup>48</sup> My own paper, “Introducing the Contextual Orientation to Bible: A Comparative Study” (Working Paper No. 3), is primarily *not* about the theological or epistemological challenges of the contextual orientation, but rather an attempt to describe some key features of this particular approach to teaching this particular subject – to ask the question, “what does it look like?”

research tradition in Jewish education, which will generate new ideas for teachers of classical Jewish studies at all levels and in all settings.

*This paper is one of a series of working papers on the teaching of Jewish studies, available for free download from the website of the Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies, a project of the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University.*

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