

## **Editorial: Politics and the Beast**

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Oh dear. In recent times, in English speaking lands (but not just there), the kind of politics that ignores complex stories of life journey and avoids engaging in compassion for and with the Other has risen to power. The reason in my view lies largely with people devoid of the necessary conceptual frames for complexity—difference of and in the Other thus inducing in these voters a sense of feeling overwhelmed rather than it being ‘of interest’—these people being or having become tired of complexity and its workload. They want the simple life. They want things black and white. With an emphasis on the white...

Is it right? Hell no. It betokens a view of the human based on the most ridiculously superficial of signals for identity, that of skin colour and birth location. Oh dear. Yet without a countervailing (simple) other explanation of what the human is and on account of which we can consider our futures as communities, some of us—indeed many of us—retract compassionate togetherness and exchange it for simulations of sameness. It’s easier, conceptually. What does such a rise to power for simpler stories of who is who signal for alternative education?

First there is the concern of control without consent: to ensure this sameness in the face of the complexity of difference education has historically and rather blindly opted for a one size fits all, one voice fits all policy: no excuses and no deviation; all in the mould deemed “right” at pain of failure and expulsion or exclusion. A politics of simple means a lack of thinking in education about uniqueness. Huge problem number one for any child (or their parent/s) wishing to be valued for who they are, rather than who the controlling bodies intend or hope them to be. A key concern of alternative education is of course to maximise attention to uniqueness. What we are encountering socially around the world is a minimisation of uniqueness as a principle linked to financial control (and the social goods finance provides). Obviously this is nonsensical because diversity breeds growth whereas similarity breeds stagnation. Ask Mr Darwin.

Second there is a loss of the richness and stimulation for alternative thinking to suit all, not just those in the mould, involved in having a diverse population—other ways of thinking: the “seeing through other eyes” (see, e.g., Andreotti & de Souza, 2008). This possibility for other thoughts, other ways of conceiving reality, is at the heart of the pursuit of alternative educational pathways. Such pathways are not for

the faint-hearted and do require a conviction borne not just of possibility but also of available communities of thoughts, stimulating support (Lees, 2011; Neuman & Avriam, 2003; Stevens, 2003).

Third there is the rise of a mentality of punishment for deviance away from the norm—is this due to fear of what the Other begins to represent as a threat to a chosen, simple, status quo (the threat of their complexity and its burden)? Such responses can only end in tears and I don't just mean for the victims of punitive attitudes. Being cruel, uncaring, thoughtless and mean never did anyone any good, not in the short or the long term. Fact.

So with a “politics of the simple,” and the beast of the ugliness of this, alternative education finds itself in a difficult position. Alternative education does not *offer* simplicity—it develops complexity in order to find negotiated simplicity: a process and indeed a political process of a kind not on offer through our present political systems because it is extremely local and intimate in its interpersonal holding-to-account. An entirely different approach from a mechanistic slash and burn policy of applied law. The beauty of the former is in its truth regarding people: every one of us is different and every one of us is of value and has something good to offer. Especially in the context of an education that works for this rather than against it. If only the message about this could go viral.

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## References

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