

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

I S S N 1 5 4 5 - 4 5 1 7

A refereed journal of the



Action for Change in Music Education

**Volume 14 Number 1
April 2015**

Vincent C. Bates, *Editor*

Brent C. Talbot, *Associate Editor*

ACTing for Change: An Editorial Introduction to ACT 14.1

Vincent C. Bates

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ACTing for Change: An Editorial Introduction to ACT 14.1

Vincent C. Bates, Editor

Abstract

Dystopian fiction runs parallel to critical theory. In this editorial, I explore how the apotropaic function of the former could also apply to the latter, particularly as it relates to publishing in ACT. ACTions for change (articles published in ACT) can serve to reinforce the status quo, when critique is so far outside the mainstream and/or so strident that it is easily dismissed as nonsensical, thereby reifying “common sense” beliefs about music teaching and learning. ACT authors may avoid (and many arguably have avoided) these apotropaic potentialities by recognizing their own reliance on and complicity in the field they wish to critique, by working to re-contextualize and mediate technical rational practices, and by continuously emphasizing the ethical dimensions of music teaching and learning.

Keywords: *technical rationality, apotropaion, apotropaic, critical theory, music education, dystopia*

The joyful and at times challenging presence of two middle class American teenage boys in our family led to our recent attendance at several dystopian films, including the third and penultimate installment of *The Hunger Games*. This post-apocalyptic series pits a female teenage hero from the poorest of twelve geographical districts, against an oppressive, corrupt, gluttonous Capitol. In true Hollywood fashion, surface themes of justice, love, and female power conceal female objectification and male dominance within a *cornucopia*¹ of violent and sexualized images (Rad-femological Images 2012). Despite contradictions, I will admit that I was thoroughly entertained by this movie, generally fascinated, as many people are, with dystopian fiction. The portrayal of a technical rational armageddon can feel vindicating for those who feel deeply the ills of society, while the nascent

prospect of utopia—peace, justice, and order “rising from the ashes”—can be equally entertaining and personally fulfilling.

Dystopian fiction runs parallel to critical theory (see Booker 1994).

Corresponding themes of environmental degradation and de-humanization are apparent, for instance, in the following from Herbert Marcuse (1964):

In advanced capitalism, technical rationality is embodied . . . in the productive apparatus. This applies not only to mechanized plants, tools, and exploitation of resources, but also to the mode of labor as adaptation to and handling of the machine process, as arranged by “scientific management.” (22)

Marcuse’s framing of *technical rationality* is similar to Ellul’s discussion of *technique*.

The term *technique*, as I use it, does not mean machines, technology, or this or that procedure for attaining an end. In our technological society, *technique is the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency* (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity” (Ellul 1964, xxv, italics in the original).

Critical theorists have applied the concept of *technical rationality* (by various names)² in social analysis as a ubiquitous and hegemonic force (or collection of forces) underlying industrialization, scientific management, dehumanization, corporatization, commercialism, environmental and human exploitation and oppression, and so forth.³ As Marcuse puts it, “in the contemporary period, the technological controls appear to be *the very embodiment of Reason* for . . . all social groups and interests—to such an extent that all contradiction seems irrational and all counteraction impossible” (Marcuse 1964, 9, italics added).

Much of the technological tyranny identified in critical theories from 50 years ago, as well as in dystopian classics such as Huxley’s *Brave New World*⁴ or Orwell’s *1984*, is reflected in current realities. For example, the following is from a recent front-page story in *The New York Times* trumpeting the accomplishments and approach of the Success Academy chain of charter schools in New York City:

Rules are explicit and expectations precise. Students must sit with hands clasped and eyes following the speaker . . . Incentives are offered, such as candy, for good behavior . . . For those deemed not trying hard enough, there is “effort academy,” which is part detention, part study hall. . . . Teachers [are] under constant monitoring, by principals who

make frequent visits, and by data-bases that record quiz scores. . . . [O]ne boy's struggles were there for all to see: On two colored charts in the hallway, where the students' performance on weekly spelling and math quizzes was tracked, his name was at the bottom, in a red zone denoting that he was below grade level. (Taylor 2015, A1, A18)

More generally, Giroux (2014) describes the current neo-liberal conditions in the United States of America:

This is a state in which people participate willingly in their own oppression, often out of deep insecurity about their freedom and the future. . . . The rulers . . . no longer care about the social contract . . . [and are] more than willing to condemn young people, often paralyzed by the precariousness and instability that haunts their lives and future, to a savage form of casino capitalism. (n.p.)

The reach of technical rationality has not waned; it continues to increase exponentially. Naturally, an underlying sense of apprehension and alienation stimulates parallel narratives in popular culture and in more “scholarly” domains—dystopian fiction and critical theory respectively. Literary critic, Christopher Schmidt (2014) suggests that dystopian narratives serve a therapeutic purpose by providing a chance to contend with current problems—albeit while being at once a part of the same problems and without actually doing anything about them.

One irony of the post-apocalyptic mode is that, were the apocalypse actually to arrive, viewing these films would be an impossible luxury. The post-apocalyptic film thus functions something like an *apotropaion*, a totem warding off bad fortune by containing the catastrophe it represents. The hidden logic of spectatorship is this: if I possess the freedom and technological resources to enjoy such a film, then I cannot live in the dystopia depicted within it. (Schmidt 2014)

The virtual pages of *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* contain critiques of an array of music educational practices, identified as ethnocentric, patriarchal, unsustainable, oppressive, restrictive, static, and/or generally disconnected from vital human needs and social/cultural realities. The professional and scholarly field within which we (the ACT “audience” or “community”) interact continues to be primarily about school music—the deliberate and systematic teaching and learning of music within formal institutions “internationally” (i.e. throughout the “developed” world). Given that music education

is immersed in the same dehumanizing technical rationality that shapes contemporary public education, there is plenty to critique. The MayDay agenda of “action for change” calls on us to thoroughly and deliberately interrogate and expose these underlying realities in hopes that critique will lead to change. I suggest, however, that the critical picture we paint in ACT (or elsewhere) runs the risk of becoming *apotropaic*, insulating the field against change rather than encouraging or facilitating it. I will explore this *apotropaic* potential briefly and discuss some possibilities for avoiding it.

“Action for change” signifies that the MayDay Group is about much more than isolated theorizing; we intend to *do* something about the legitimacy crisis facing institutional music education. With this in mind, a more “active” form of this statement might be warranted as it relates to the work of this journal: “*acting* for change” rather than “*action* for change.” The former speaks more directly to the performative (see Gould 2007) nature of writing for ACT— what we could call “ACTing for change.” More importantly, though, if acting for change consists strictly of criticism and that’s the extent of it or, in other words, if criticism fails to outline viable alternatives or strike the right chord with the right audience, then it basically serves a cathartic purpose for the author and possibly a handful of like-minded readers. All involved can feel personally fulfilled in their literary and scholarly efforts, but little has changed here and now, or even in the near future. Acting for change, in this instance, is akin to dystopian fiction, it is an *act* in a strictly theatrical sense, a temporary diversion with negligible long-lasting impact. In this respect, the MayDay Group has always been wary of scholarship as an end-in-itself or to achieve personal and/or professional goals. In the inaugural issue of ACT, Wayne Bowman (2002) wrote, “We would expect to see people’s efforts devoted to goods internal to the practice rather than to personal gain, or at least, to see efforts directed to personal gains of the kind that simultaneously benefit the practice” (12). Later, Thomas Regelski (2007) warned against research “conducted according to the paradigms, interests, and needs of the Ivory Tower rather than to the down-to-earth conditions and needs of schools and schooling” (2). When we act for change, in other words, it is vital to actually want to and intend to do scholarship for the primary aim of improving practice.⁵

Another distinct possibility is *over-acting* for change—the use of a particularly strident voice in an effort to increase critical impact and audience. I suggest that, for those within the field of music education most likely to be offended by and resistant to critique, the *apotropaic* function may increase in direct proportion to the severity of the criticism. Whether or not criticism is warranted is somewhat beside the point. If it paints a picture so vividly outside the realm of socially and politically sanctioned practice, it can also more easily be dismissed and, thereby, serve to reinforce the status quo. Imagine, for instance, the gargoyles perched atop the Notre Dame Cathedral (as the one pictured below). They are placed on the outside of the edifice as *apotropaia* to ward off evil and, thereby, preserve the sanctity of the interior. Their effectiveness depends on the stark contrast between righteousness and evil—the more grotesque, the clearer the distinction. To stewards of the status quo, harsh criticism may serve simply as antithesis to all that is “good and holy,” thereby deepening resolve to preserve and cherish what is threatened.



Chimera of Notre Dame Cathedral (photo by Brian Jeffery Beggerly)

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I am not necessarily suggesting that we should withhold or dilute criticism simply because it could offend. However, I would like to explore briefly how “ACTing for change” might avoid becoming primarily apotropaic. In *The Hunger Games*, two representatives (one male and one female) from each of twelve geographical districts are confined to a technologically elaborate arena where all twenty-four combatants are compelled to fight to the death. The competition is broadcast to all districts, serving as a form of social control for oppressed populations—forced to watch (on large flat-screens)—and as entertainment for the privileged residents of the Capitol district who clearly revel in the spectacle. The droll irony is that the movie-goers find entertainment value in the same spectacle depicted on-screen, while simultaneously feeling incredulous and indignant that the Capitol audience could enjoy watching such carnage.

By the same token (albeit not to the same degree!), deconstructing the music education institutions to which we owe our own professional existence—the same houses we live in—could also be considered ironic. Our individual and collective professional identities are inextricable from the institutional vestiges of technical rationality (e.g. specialized courses of study, professional standards and degrees, hierarchical/bureaucratic organizations). Here we might empathize with Ellul (1964) in his critique of *technique*: “I am keenly aware that I am myself involved in technological civilization, and that its history is also my own” (xxvii). Rather than a “ragtag band of rebels fighting against the Galactic Empire,”⁶ the MayDay Group is completely situated within the international field of formal, professional music education. Our “actions, criticisms, and theories” are offered, to a degree, *for ourselves*, in efforts to preserve and sustain as well as change (hence maintaining the viability of) the profession to which we owe so much. To put it another way, we are passengers on the plane sending the distress signal—“Mayday!”

In the fourth volume of ACT, Bowman (2005) led a symposium on Erkki Kilpinen's *The Enormous Fly-wheel of Society: Pragmatism's Habitual Conception of Action and Social Theory*. As discussed in that issue (and eloquently revisited in this issue by Mantie and Talbot), William James applied the metaphor of the Enormous Fly-wheel to habitual societal actions. A fly-wheel is employed to maintain

consistent momentum like, for example, the heavy stone wheel at the base of a pottery wheel (pictured below).



Photo courtesy of lockerbiekickwheels.com

Once kicked into motion, the spinning can be adjusted gradually. In like manner, even though mechanistic institutions are resistant to sudden or drastic change, gradual changes in momentum are achievable and, as Bowman (2005) points out, habitual; they are built into the system and are, in other words, completely expected. This metaphor, applied to music education, speaks to the importance of recognizing the worth of formal music education institutions along with the likelihood and necessity of incremental change as the most we can hope for or expect without severely damaging the institution. My point, to put it another way, is that specific, constructive, and actionable critique focused on gradual change might be less entertaining, but will probably have the most impact in the long-term.

Next, it does not appear that technical rationality will ever be put back into the scientific/technological box from whence it sprang. Its hegemonic reach will likely endure in all its alienating, reductionistic, atomizing glory (pending some sort of apocalypse, of course). But, maybe there are ways to work within that reality. Marcuse's (1964) central point was that the power of technical rationality resides in its one-dimensionality—the unassailable “bottom line” of production, profit, and

efficiency. It is this singular focus, not the actual technology, that dehumanizes and objectifies—that treats *people* like machines.

Indeed, while it is true for Marcuse that our technological inheritance perversely captures and alienates late-modern life within a formalized rationality of exchange, instrumentality, and control, it is also true for him that this inheritance can be redeployed under other values in order to ground a project of human liberation from our struggles against scarcity, necessity, toil, and alienation. In other words, technology does not have to be guided by the values of neoliberalism, neoconservatism, exploitation, or profit; other, more communally sensitive and environmentally sound values can also legislate technological life. (Vieta 2010)

So, all is not necessarily lost. As Andrew Feenberg (2002) maintains, one-dimensionality can be addressed dialectically through processes of *recontextualization*—“a corresponding systematization through which the decontextualized objects are connected with each other, with human users, and nature to form devices and technical organizations” and “a corresponding mediation of technical devices by aesthetic and ethical qualities that are incorporated into their design” (178).

The MayDay Group, by centering sociologies of music education, has played and continues to play an important role in recontextualization. In fact, social context permeates the MayDay Group *Action Ideals*—for example, Ideal V reads:

We recognize that musicing takes place in a context created by the relationships that connect us to one another and to the myriad modes through which we construct knowledge. We embrace opportunities for insight and innovation presented by encounters with other disciplines in pursuit of meaningful musical action.

Also, in his introduction to ACT 5:2, Regelski (2005a) voiced the need for *Reconnecting Music Education with Society*. He wrote that

for music education to ‘reconnect’ with society, for it to reconnect with the very social roots of all musicking, a major conversion is needed from traditional aesthetic premises to an expanded philosophy of music that considers music a central praxis of humankind, a vital part of our individual and social ‘being’. . . . Focus on the praxial aspects of music, thus, stresses music “in action”; it focuses on music as it has been and is used in society for a multitude of ‘goods’ that, regardless of aesthetic rationalizations, are never devoid of the sociality brought by and invigorated by the music that occasions its use. (11)

Furthermore, two of the thirty-one issues of ACT (3:3 and 13:1) have been devoted to sociology in the form of edited proceedings of *International Symposia on the Sociology of Music Education* (ISSME). Along with other sociology articles appearing in ACT, (including a considerable number based on ISSME presentations), two full issues on identity (ACT 9:2 and 6:2), and numerous articles on everyday musicing (e.g. ACT 1:2), these “ACTs for change” attempt to “put a human face on” decontextualized practices in music education.

Finally, social recontextualization isn’t sufficient if the social context is still oppressive or inequitable. In other words, placing practices within social contexts will not necessarily ensure that they are ethical or just—that they have been situated within ethical contexts. Consequently, ethical considerations have been paramount in ACT from the outset, evident in numerous calls for *phronesis*.

[C]ritical theory teaches us to concern ourselves primarily with the phronesis of “right action” that guides and sustains all helping professions. In this, right action is understood as rational action that satisfies criteria of right results for the clients served, our students. . . . [T]he emphasis of critical theory on praxis also points to the benefits of understanding music itself in praxial terms—which is to say, to teaching music in terms of what it is “good for” in human life. (Regelski 2005b, 18–19)

In fact, phronesis has been discussed regularly in almost every issue of ACT. Plus, multiple issues of ACT (e.g. ACT 11: 1 and 2) have been devoted to the ethics of music education and to social justice (e.g. ACT 6:4)—and more specifically to race (e.g. ACT 4:3), gender (e.g. ACT 5:1), and place (e.g. ACT 10:1).

In light of this interplay of social and ethical contexts, Rosita Sands’ (2007) discussion of curriculum is instructive and could apply just as well to theory and criticism.

The application of social justice and equity ideals should be a curriculum that explores fully and accurately the range of musically related concerns—the aesthetics, the artistic achievements, and music-making endeavors—of peoples who are like and unlike the students themselves. *Not only is this the right thing, the just and equitable thing to do, it is a step towards better understanding among peoples, leading to, perhaps, a more just and equitable society.* (49, italics added)

I concur with Sand's use of "perhaps." Social recontextualization is an important phronetic first step, but it isn't sufficient. It accompanies and opens the way for more direct appeals for justice, goodness, and humane-ness. We need to continue making that case. And we need to do it in ways that will have lasting transformative influence. Sometimes music educators might respond to forceful or aggressive social/ethical appeals—deep down we want to do the "right thing, the just and equitable thing." More often than not, however, I believe it is the kind and gentle voice that will prevail.

This Issue

In this issue, we offer five "Actions for Change" well within the ACT tradition. The first three articles are based on provocations given at MayDay Colloquium 26 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, adeptly and graciously hosted by Brent Talbot. A general invitation was extended to all colloquium participants to submit manuscripts for publication in ACT pending our customary rigorous blind peer-review process.

Hakim Williams, a member of the education faculty at Gettysburg College gave the first keynote address at the colloquium, positioning himself as "an educator who happens to love music." Within the fields of education and music education, he identifies a "colonizing ethic" involving a "resurgent hyper-positivism" ("positivism on ideological speed") and accompanied by a "corporatization of education." Williams challenges educators to remain ever vigilant—to "guard against that ever-creeping complacency"—in consistently and carefully employing "the art of persuasion." "For vested interests, with their amalgamated powers, never surrender easily, never rest, are always on the hunt, accumulating more power, decimating dissidence, shifting silhouettes so as to co-opt pointed and sharp critiques."

Hyperpositivism, the current resurgence of positivist colonization, is based on problematic ontological assumptions that the social world adheres to orderly and predictable laws. This limited view effectively "forecloses options, possibilities and diversity." In fact, through the technical rational focus on testing and accountability, educational policies and organizations "may very well reproduce the inequalities they seek to disrupt." Williams suggests an approach to education that honors its inherent complexity, non-linearity, and dynamism.

Music education, Williams postulates, can be a powerful tool in countering the colonizing effects of hyper-positivism in education and in the world. He draws from numerous music education researchers/theorists to argue that school music is at once part of hyper-positivism's resurgent colonization as well as marginalized by the same. He recommends a critical music education—"the micro-revolutionary work that critical educators do on a day-to-day basis"—because, "When the music teacher anchors her critical pedagogy in the students' lived experiences and employs it in a problem-posing way, then that child . . . can possibly envision radically different alternatives from the existing state of affairs."

Juliet Hess outlines a thorough and practical case for anti-racism as "a crucial framework for music education" necessary to addressing and overcoming the covert workings of white supremacy. She highlights an important "distinction between individuals and political structures" that implicates the latter in sustaining white supremacy globally, rather than to assert that racism rests with the acts or individuals. It is the structural supports for white supremacy that are addressed by anti-racism. "Taking an 'anti-' stance allows us to actively work against hegemony . . . and strive toward breaches in racist discourse" by critiquing modern liberalism, pointing out matrices of domination, problematizing marginalization, unmasking unequal power relations, and challenging "the institutions in society that facilitate unequal power relations." She further argues that, while sharing some important qualities, anti-racism is distinct from critical race theory in its "action orientation"—the latter being primary an analytical tool.

Hess provides situated instances, drawing from qualitative data, of how music teachers can understand and disrupt "positionality and the matrix of domination," foster "multicentricity as a curricular structure," and "pursue an equity agenda." She discusses the case of a female teacher in a predominantly white and socioeconomically privileged Canadian secondary school who seemed adept at noticing systemic inequities such as access to private instruction—"differential degrees of privilege and access among her student population." This same teacher focused on curricular differentiation to ensure that all students were actively engaged and to counteract socially constructed/biased perceptions regarding ability. Another teacher immersed her students in performing in a Gamelan ensemble in an effort to

foster multicentricity. “The nature of the inclusion of the Gamelan, then, was far from an additive approach. Instead, it was integrative and relational, allowing students to recognize the multiplicity of ways it is possible to know music.” Finally, a third teacher in this study pursued an equity agenda through “a diverse approach to Afrocentric music in the Americas” that included thorough exploration of the “sociohistorical and sociocultural context for all music taught.”

In an especially engaging article, **Adam Patrick Bell** problematizes the common assumption that “possession of music technology is the key to unlocking the hibernating musician within.” The potential of digital audio workstations (DAWs, such as GarageBand) to democratize music making, he contends, is sorely overstated. “Adroitness with music technology such as a DAW is not necessarily indicative of musical mastery just as being adept with a word processor does not make one a literary laureate.” The concept of “affordances”—the potential utilities of a given object—is key to Bell’s reasoning. Affordances are not deterministic; even when affordances are not clearly apparent, musical instruments are regularly used in creative ways or “repurposed” to achieve desired effects. The garage band, for instance, provides a space for expressive innovation, but what about the DAWs like GarageBand?

Bell maintains that DAWs can, indeed, enable music-makers in ways not readily available through other means. However, he brings up the possibility that a lack of adequate “musical knowhow and technical facility” might lead to people being used by, rather than using, technology. Because software designers use standard cultural conventions (e.g. an image of an analog mixing console), some knowledge of these “perceived affordances” is assumed. In addition, the capabilities of DAW users are necessitated or enhanced by computing skills, awareness or discovery of a variety of program “privileges,” “provisions,” “protections,” and “preventions.” Bell cautions teachers relative to the DAW slogan, “If you can tap, you can play.” “The capabilities of the DAW continue to expand in tandem with the processing abilities of the electronic devices that host them and their affordances will evolve in parallel.”

The final two articles in this issue are regular submissions to ACT. In the first of these, **Tom Parkinson** and **Gareth Dylan Smith** address issues related to the increase in the academic study of popular music, particularly within higher education

contexts. They begin with a thorough discussion of the problematic concept of *authenticity* in higher popular music education (HPME) evident in a variety of dichotomies (e.g. commercial/non-commercial, formal/informal, institutional/non-institutional, constructed/natural). In their study they draw from a complex array of data, including interviews with stakeholders, and suggest that “critical engagement with the conceptual scope, intersectionality, and hybridity of authenticities within the field will promote a multi-vocal HPME identity that gives space to difference, and that empowers students to self-actualize and fully realize their identities.”

Parkinson and Smith explore the inherent tensions between popular music’s development outside of and its subsequent inclusion within formal academic settings— “popular musics might even be said to be *anti-academic*.” They discuss how various HPME entities attempt to resolve or address this tension relative to both the liberal and vocational aims of higher education. Popular music programs in the UK, they point out, were at first vocational, preparing guitarists, for example, to make a living in the music industry, thereby mirroring “the traditional conservatoire model, in which student musicians are nurtured to attain professional status.” They suggest that the liberal aims were initially imposed from without to satisfy “external expectations of academic practice.” “This confluence of the liberal and the vocational can be considered in the context of two processes: . . . *epistemic drift* in societal demand away from pure knowledge towards utilitarian knowledge [and] an *intellectualising shift* in applied disciplines away from their practical foundations and towards more theoretical curricula.” Following this pivotal point, the authors explore at length how it relates to the concept of employability. In the remaining sections of this thoroughly researched and carefully argued paper Parkinson and Smith address musical authenticity, gender and authenticity, and pedagogic authenticity. They conclude with a strong recommendation for meso level collaboration in HPME. “Open knowledge shared across the field will go some way towards establishing a collegial critical mass, enabling educators, students, institutions, and the field as a whole respond to external pressures, internal anxieties and changing cultures confidently and assertively.”

The final article, **Roger Mantie** and **Brent Talbot** provide an innovative and enlightening analysis of an article they submitted to a “mainstream”

practitioner's journal in music education. The journal's reviewers gave suggestions for revisions and, even though the authors felt they had addressed reviewer comments and concerns, the revised article was not accepted for publication. The resulting analysis is intended as a sincere introspection considering how best to communicate critical ideas to a broader audience (rather than a critique of the target journal or its reviewers). In the words of the authors, "The present article is a story about our efforts to raise and critique issues of social reproduction in the American music teacher preparation process, and our subsequent re-thinking about where we may have strategically erred in our attempt to bring such issues to greater consciousness." Their narrative includes the full text of the original revised article within a larger theoretically-grounded discussion.

Mantie and Talbot assert that the "most difficult challenge was to *demonstrate* uniformity in the profession." To do this they made use of a metaphor to make the argument accessible to a wider audience, and a "systematic and rigorous web-based examination of randomly-selected, NASM-accredited institutions." These efforts, however, fell short in satisfying the reviewers. "Unfortunately, we failed to fully grasp the message from the reviewers that what they (or at least some of them) were looking for was a clear articulation of alternatives to the status quo—something we offer, in hindsight, toward the end of this article." In addition, the authors suggest that they may have positioned the profession as particularly villainous, "members of the profession as mindless and unthinking," and "all members of the status quo" as "guilty of failing to diversify the profession, thus threatening its long-term survival." Still, they [rightfully] maintain the importance of criticism in promoting the vitality of the profession.

On a personal note, I appreciate the open dialogue with Roger Mantie and Brent Talbot (and their patience!) throughout the extended period of time during which their manuscript was prepared for publication. Their reflections on and re-introduction of the fly-wheel metaphor into the ACT conversation obviously shaped my own thinking regarding the place of ACT within the international music education "community." There is no doubt in my mind that ACT (as Mantie and Talbot note) has already been a healthful influence within the profession. However, we need to continue to explore the central questions of how best to extend and

deepen that influence, to build on what has been accomplished, and to enhance our actions for change as we move forward.

ACT News

This issue of ACT includes some important changes. First, we welcome Anita Prest to our ever-so-diligent production team. Second, we have transitioned from our “house style” to Chicago author-date format with some minor modifications, but authors will please submit manuscripts in Chicago author-date format from now on. I anticipate that this will be especially helpful to those who use the automatic source management function in Word. Finally, we are adding a discussion feature with this issue. Readers can follow the link in the index page for this issue which will take them to the MayDay Group Forum where a discussion thread will be devoted to this issue of ACT. Subsequent issues will have their own discussion threads as well. Thank you, Roger Mantie, for your work on the website and for setting up this exciting new feature!

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Notes

¹ For those who haven't seen the movies or read the books, this is my attempt at a pun. The combatants in the Hunger Games compete for access to an assortment of weapons and supplies contained within a large metal cornucopia.

² Marcuse more often uses a slight variation, “technological rationality.”

³ Bowman (2000) discussed technical rationality in the first issue of ACT—equating it with *techne*, as opposed to *praxis*. More recently, Bowman (2015, drawing from Dunne 2005) wrote that “our infatuation with technical rationality (our shortsighted assumption that technical knowledge is the gold standard of professional know-how) has led us to technicize philosophical practice. . . . The technicization of philosophical practice reduces something properly regarded as a complex, coherent, cumulative, and cooperative mode of ethically guided action to a mere set of techniques and proficiencies, answerable neatly to determinate criteria and nicely amenable to dispensation in brief instructional units” (51–52). From this framing, one might assume that technical rationality is acceptable within limited spheres. Drawing from

Marcuse and Ellul, I am seeking, somewhat conversely (at least in nuance), to emphasize the overall ubiquity and insidiousness of technical rationality. In this sense, hegemony is more of a defining characteristic. Even within technological and scientific domains, technical rationality can be overly controlling and limiting, effectively eliding ethical, aesthetic, or other considerations. Vieta (2006) writes: “For Herbert Marcuse, ‘technological rationality’ is a rationality of domination and social control characteristic of advanced industrial societies. Underpinned by a formal rationality that overrides the more substantive, values-laden forms of reason distinguishing pre-industrial societies, technological rationality fashions everyday life into a ‘technological rationality’ that encloses the subject’s perceptions, experiences, and thoughts by projecting the world’s objects and nature as ‘a world of instrumentalities’” (1).

⁴ Huxley and Ellul were well aware of each other’s work. Ellul described *Brave New World* as “Hell organized upon earth for the bodily comfort of everybody” (quoted in Terlizzese 2005, 100) and of his own account in *The Technological Society*, he wrote: “Here is a future Huxley never dreamed of” (quoted in Greenman, Schuchardt, and Toly 2012, 36). In addition, it is important to note that the English translation of *The Technological Society* was undertaken at the behest of Aldous Huxley (see the Statement of the Publisher in Ellul 1964).

⁵ We might call this “ACTing for change” in the sense of “change” as money.

⁶ I remember this important meme from when I saw the movie, *Star Wars*, as a child.