The Paradox of Change
How Change and Stasis Combine in Education

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Change fills our lives and baffles our intellect; it is one of the most elusive phenomena known to us. Yet education reformers and policymakers use the word "change" as though its meaning were plain and uniform. We hear continually about how the world is changing and how we must do everything in our power to keep up—but what world is this, and how do we know it is changing? Are we obligated to embrace change, or does our resistance help refine the change itself? Change itself mutates before our eyes; from situation to situation, it has different characteristics and implications. To describe a change, and to determine whether or not it is desirable, one must have a backdrop of constancy, continuity, or stasis. If everything is changing at once, then it is difficult to perceive and assess the change. To allow for transformation (in art, pedagogy, or institutions), we must allow certain things *not* to change—and must use our best judgment when deciding what should change and what shouldn't. A sudden, sweeping change can backfire, whereas a subtle change can expand and deepen over time.

What is change? We know intuitively what it is: an alteration in the appearance, state, substance, or context of a thing. In M. C. Escher's lithograph "Curl Up" (*), you see a lizard-like creature moving along a page (with text that describes the creature) and rolling itself up as it goes. The lizard's anatomy does not change, but its position and state do. Its final state, if taken out of context, would be difficult to interpret; one might not recognize this figure as a creature at all.

Change need not be gradual, however. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "change" (in its first definition) as "The act or fact of changing; substitution of one thing for another; succession of one thing in place of another." In the spirit of this definition, I show you a cedar tree (*) and now a lollipop (*). The objects themselves have little in common except that they can be found on Earth and both happen to be represented here in slides*. One could legitimately say there was a change from one slide to the next, but the change doesn't make much sense unless I give it context.

A few definitions down, in no. 4, the *OED* reads: "The act of changing; alteration in the state or quality of anything; the fact of becoming other than it was; variation, mutation." So now we have "variation" and "mutation" added to the mix. In other words, "change" can be anything from a complete substitution of one thing for another, to a gradual divergence. Given the range of possibilities, it's likely that the word "change" will be misused—or at least used without clarity. This indeed happens a good deal of the time.

In education, one hears frequently about the need for change and the stubbornness of the defenders of the status quo. In an interview with the *Star-Ledger* in New Jersey, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "What keeps me up at night is the historic lack of urgency, the

acceptance of the status quo. We need to change. Anyone who is defending the status quo is part of the problem."[i] To his credit, he explained what he meant by "status quo"—schools with clear indications of ongoing trouble and failure. Still, there is a lot to unravel even in his use of the term. Within the status quo, is good work taking place? If so, should that good work be recognized and defended? Within the proposed reform, is there a possibility of a backslide, of a regression to a worse situation? If so, isn't a bit of caution in order?

The term "change" becomes even more confusing when applied to art, since the various arts undergo and grapple with change in markedly different ways. There is a sharp distinction, for instance, between art that serves concrete practical purposes (such as design) and art that does not. The former is naturally under greater obligation to change with the times. The latter— insofar as it strives to last over time—may have a much more ambivalent relationship to the exigencies of the day.

In the year 2000, the International Council of Graphic Design Associations published its first "Design Education Manifesto," in order to begin defining a "future of design education" (*). Hugh Dubberly (known for his work at Apple Computer and beyond) criticized this manifesto for its vagueness. "The manifesto acknowledges change without quite defining it," he writes on his website, "and lists attributes of an emerging practice and education without quite prescribing them." He goes on to explain what change actually means in the context of design, and what the future of design might be.[ii] His suggestions are included in the essays published along with the 2011 edition of the Manifesto and appear to have affected the Manifesto's contents as well. In a preface to the 2011 Manifesto, Audrey Bennett writes, "We wrestled with the keywords intent on finding the precise terms to instill understanding and motivate appropriate action in the reader." Indeed, the current Manifesto itself goes farther than the 2000 version in defining change and explaining how it affects the future of design.[iii] One could ask for even more clarity: for instance: distinctions among different areas of design, distinctions made regularly by the design specializations themselves. (Some of these distinctions are made in the essays that follow the Manifesto.)

When one uses precise language in this manner, one can clarify the relation of innovations to each other and to the past. For all its participation in the technological revolution, design responds to the past and, in doing so, transforms it. Many cutting-edge designs and inventions have their source in ancient myth: take, for instance, the invisibility cloak. For centuries, humans have dreamed and fantasized about the possibility and moral dangers of invisibility. In Book II of the *Republic*, Plato relates the myth of Gyges, who puts on an invisibility ring and proceeds to seduce the queen, murder the king, and become king himself (*).[iv] Today we have not only technology for actual invisibility cloaks (*) but an array of innovations in nanotechnology, cryptology, and other fields. Today, when reading Plato's narrative, we understand it not only as myth, but as reality; the very myth has been transformed, although the story itself has not changed.

In other words, even a rapidly changing field such as design does not detach itself entirely from the past; instead, it recasts the past and is recast by it. In terms of its immediate utility, a new invention or design may owe little or nothing to the distant past—but in terms of its meaning, its relation to our imagination, it receives from the past and gives a great deal in return. Although we may have no need for obsolete designs—for text-based computer games, for instance, or movable type—they represent a striving similar to ours, a striving to do something unprecedented with the materials at hand. One can even gain inspiration from an obsolete device—or use it as part of a new design.

In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot writes:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. … The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.[v]

Eliot refers primarily to poets here, but the same applies, in different ways, to artists of all kinds. They transform tradition as they contribute something new to it.

Like individuals (yet in a different manner), institutions sustain and alter their traditions. All art schools must grapple in some way with questions of modernization, and they respond in different ways. For example, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the nation's first art school, has preserved many aspects of its early curriculum, including its focus on drawing, painting, sculpture and printmaking. It has made changes over time (for instance, granting degrees in conjunction with other institutions, and making room for experimental art) but continues to emphasize the fundamentals of representational art. By contrast, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago encourages students to tailor their own programs of study—yet specific courses may be highly traditional in their approach (in the sense of invoking the school's own traditions and educating students in artistic traditions). It is important to have such a variety of art schools, as they keep the possibilities open. Each one articulates a different relationship between tradition and change.

Let us return to the idea that a change needs a stable backdrop in order to make sense. Here we have, again, the cedar tree and the lollipop. If I present them one after another, and call this "change," I have not said much (*). Now let's make each of them part of a forest with a river running through (*). Although the lollipop forest is imaginary and impossible, it makes more sense, juxtaposed with the cedar forest, than the lollipop alone did when juxtaposed with the cedar. One might say, "Oh, I see, someone has yanked out all the cedars and put gigantic lollipops in their place." Or else: "This is meant as a statement of some kind." Or even: "This is terrible art." We can then begin to ask questions: "Was it really such a good idea to turn this into a lollipop forest? Do the lollipops have seeds? What will happen when it rains?" "Why would anyone design this piece of absurdity?" and so on. It is the constants here that allow us to begin to interpret the change.

This leads to the paradox: good change depends on an element of stasis, or relative stasis. To change everything at once is to create chaos. Computer programmers know this well: when debugging a program, they must isolate one possible problem at a time. It may be that several parts of the computer program are contributing to the bug, but one can identify them only by testing out the various pieces carefully, in isolation and in combination (unless one happens to spot the cause of the problem right away). Similarly, in education it will not do to speak of the "need for change"; one must define what needs changing and then make the necessary changes

perspicaciously. (Consider the very word "perspicacious," which derives from the Latin *perspicax*, "sharp-sighted," or "having the power of seeing through." One must be able to see through a change in order to implement it wisely.)

I will discuss three kinds of education change, all of which apply to art and design schools and to education in general: curriculum change, pedagogical change, and change in the use of technology.

Curriculum change—that is, a substantive change in the content and sequence of what is taught—arises frequently as a topic in policy discussion. The term is often used carelessly, as it may mean an array of different things, from an entire restructuring of a course sequence to a minor adjustment within a course. Most courses undergo minor changes while they are in progress; most undergo even more changes from one iteration to the next. A truly static "status quo" in curriculum is a rarity, if it exists at all. Yet the call for curriculum change (cast in vague terms) usually carries an equally vague criticism of the status quo: we hear that we must radically revise our curriculum because it is not "current" or not "working." Teachers and professors may feel pressure to make changes against their better judgment. In her book *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform*, the education historian Diane Ravitch describes the curriculum change movements of the 1930s and onwards (in K-12 schools). Sociologists and psychologists were beginning to apply social engineering techniques to school change; thus, when a district undertook change, it would have teachers work in groups to discuss the change process. The groups would identify teachers who questioned or resisted the particular change, and try to bring them into the consensus; once they reached consensus, they would revise their curriculum, typically dropping courses in classic literature, mythology, and languages, and adopting courses in basic living, so-called "common learnings" (focusing on students' personal lives) and driver education.[vi] The problem here lies not in change itself, but in the group pressure to adopt sweeping change without considering the losses.

When considering curriculum change, one must clearly define what needs to be changed and why, as well as what should be preserved. Let's say a college has prided itself on its courses in medieval and Renaissance art. Now it is trying to create a more modern image and emphasis, so it considers replacing those courses with a general survey course, and adding some new courses on 20th and 21st century art. There is nothing wrong with adding courses on contemporary art. The problem lies in the assumption that "newer" art is more "relevant" to the times, by virtue of its newness, and that "relevance" should be immediately felt. In fact, we may learn a great deal about our own times. when studying artistic works and upheavals of the past. Did Renaissance art evolve gradually from medieval art or make a radical break with it? One could argue both ways and in between (as people do). Consider, for instance, Giotto di Bondone's Lamentation of Christ (*), painted between 1303 and 1310 as one of the 37 panels of his decoration of the interior of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. Here one sees many aspects of medieval painting, but there is also dimension, an attention to human anatomy and emotion, and much more. The point is not that all artistic changes are incremental, but rather that great changes in art involve a complex relation with the existing tradition. Art historians will continue to disagree over the relation between medieval and Renaissance art—so the study of these periods helps students understand just how difficult these questions are.

Curriculum change is inevitable and often good; the danger lies in assuming that it *must* happen because the times are changing, or that everyone must change the curriculum in the same way. It is also dangerous to assume that curriculum is static unless it undergoes drastic

revision. In reality, teachers and professors make subtle changes from day to day, semester to semester, and year to year. A curriculum may undergo transformation over time, without any fanfare. The so-called "status quo" may be in constant motion.

One can make similar points about pedagogy. Across the fields and levels of study, we hear about the need for an entirely new approach to teaching, where the instructor is no longer the conveyor of information but instead the coach who guides the students along as they pursue their studies independently (or, rather, in groups). Reformers disparage so-called "traditional" teaching as a relic of the Industrial Era. In K12 schools, teachers are continually reminded to keep their talk to a minimum and give students multiple opportunities to speak in multiple configurations (such as whole-group discussion, "turn-and-talk" activities, and small-group discussion). In higher education, entire departments (such as the physics department at MIT) have been abandoning their introductory lecture courses in favor of workshop-style courses (*). Art schools have been entertaining the idea of the "flipped" classroom—where the students learn the material at home and then work on projects in class.

All of these initiatives are promoted by people with good intent (and, in many cases, inspiration). Again, the problem lies not in our thoughtful individual experiments but in the war-cry for change: the mantra that because we are in a new era, we must all change our pedagogical practices right now in the same way, or perish. The history of education is full of reforms that failed because they were pushed recklessly and dogmatically, without consideration of critics' reasonable concerns or of the things worth preserving.

As it happens, so-called "traditional" models still have great possibility and variety. I bring in my own teaching as an example, with full recognition that the conclusions I draw from my experience do not hold true for all. When I teach high school students, I like to begin with a short presentation that grounds them in the material and raises some questions. (This is especially important when I am introducing a new topic—but it comes into play on other days as well.) From there, I proceed to lead discussion, beginning with straightforward questions and progressing to more complex ones (the kind that many would call "higher-order"). I emphasize listening, which takes practice and is a powerful antidote to our chatty, reactive culture. Yet there are also days when I ask students to start a discussion with their own questions or to lead the entire discussion. Thus I employ what might be called a flexible traditional approach. I would not expect another teacher to do exactly what I do, just as I would not copy exactly what another teacher does. The point here is not that "anything goes" but rather that education involves many seemingly opposing principles. To bring out students' ideas, one must also help them develop patience and concentration. To foster imagination, one must provide substantial working material. Each teacher finds different ways of counterbalancing one principle with another—tradition with innovation, listening with speaking, and so on.

I use the term "traditional" with caution, as it carries the connotation of something fixed, something that must be handed down as is, without interpretation or variation. David Bromwich criticizes this conception of tradition in his outstanding book *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking* (published in 1992 but at least as important today as it was then). He shows how such a conception gives rise to two opposing (but similarly rigid) cultures: a "culture of assent" (that accepts the supposed tradition without questioning) and a "culture of suspicion" (that distrusts said tradition precisely because it has been accepted without questioning"). These two cultures ignore a richer kind of tradition, much like what Eliot describes in the quote I read earlier. This is a liberal tradition continually in dialogue with itself

and those who enter it, a tradition *of* invention and reinterpretation. Bromwich describes such a liberal tradition as follows:[vii]

> Self-respect, and a natural piety which consists in reverence for things that come to the world before me or apart from me, are the complementary virtues that the liberal idea of tradition works hard to keep together. The pressure to keep them together is as consistent from the side of Kant, Mill, and Rawls as it is from the side of Hume and Burke, even if the latter more steadily adopt the good of a tradition as their starting point. The good of a thought that is mine, like the good of the monument or possession which represents that thought, is that it reflects feelingly my relation to persons not only whom I do not know but whom I cannot know. If liberal education adds up, it shows me a way to think for myself as if under their eyes, or at their half-acknowledged promptings. In doing so it suggests a way to act for something beyond myself.

Far from suppressing or supplanting independent thought, a liberal tradition may in fact help make such thought possible—not by telling us what to say or think, but by offering exemplars, questions, and challenges. What does this have to do, though, with so-called "traditional" instruction? To put it simply, "traditional" instruction (with all its possibilities and variations) rejects solipsism. It rests on the principle that we have much to learn from others—be they artists, writers, composers, or the teacher. Granted, some forms of traditional instruction take this idea too far, leaving students no opportunity to articulate their own ideas. We are dealing with a question of proportion: one must learn something about a subject before interpreting it, but one can begin interpreting as one learns, knowing that one's interpretations will change over time. A traditional pedagogy (involving some dialogue and discussion) allows students to interpret what they learn, but also asks them to take in a corpus of material—not a fixed canon, but a body of important works. This body may change but does not discard its own bones.

At their best, traditional teaching and curriculum allow students not only to perceive but to evaluate and even transform the world around them. A recent Harvard report points to the role of the humanities in developing discerning and critical minds: "Without the tradition of philological critique, we … lose what footholds we have to withstand the mesmerizing, often dehumanizing force of powerful institutions, whether political or commercial. All great humanistic pedagogies need to provide students with a critical corrective voice that stands aside from, and looks beyond, the manipulative, dehumanizing forces of the present." It goes on to explain how the study of the humanities can effect change: "The Humanities require that everything, including their own status and standing, be questioned constantly. In a historical perspective, the Humanities can thus be seen not simply as traditional, but, to the contrary, as essential to the never-ending unfolding of tradition understood as transmission and transformation: the simultaneous reconstruction and dismantling of history and combination of memory and recreation that constitutes an essential part of all human societies."[viii] One could say something similar about art, design, music, theater, dance, and film.

The danger to liberal education, artistic education, and professional education lies not in change itself but in the jargon of change, a jargon that ironically insists on a kind of stasis, a reactionary dogma of change. In insisting on change, it ignores the tricky questions of what should be changed and how much, and how change and stasis (or change and tradition, or change and continuity) should interact with each other. One must raise these questions not only with respect to curriculum and instruction, but also with respect to technology. Technology is in

some ways the emblem of the future; when people speak of a changing world, they often refer to technological changes.

The technology revolution has affected every field, even medieval studies. We have, for instance, three-dimensional printers that can produce anything from architectural models to machines to works of art. One can use a digital scanner to scan a sculpture in a museum, and then "print" out a three-dimensional replica (*). In nanotechnology, a few researchers recreated the Mona Lisa, making it about one-third the width of a human hair (*).

On a more immediate (and affordable) level, current technology allows for interactive classroom presentations (one can rotate a model, for instance), videoconferences, online courses around the world, assessments on the fly (with clickers), and much more. All of these developments open up exciting possibilities for the classroom. Problems arise when schools and instructors feel compelled to use technology because it *is* technology, because it is the latest, and because refraining from using it would look bad. In New York City public schools, for instance, until recently, one of the standard forms for classroom observations included a check box for "evidence of technology"—nothing about the precise kind of technology or its appropriateness for the lesson. Moreover, schools and districts make contractual deals with technology companies and then require instructors to use the technology they have purchased. Let us say a district has a vision of "one laptop per child" or "a SMART Board in every classroom." Schools procure laptops and SMART Boards and mandate their use. Then they run into problems: the wireless connection is spotty, the laptops start to fall apart, and students using them become inordinately distracted in class. Moreover, the technology actually gets in the way of lessons that call on students to pay close attention to a poem or puzzle their way through the abstractions of a mathematical theorem. A school adopting such technology should make sure that (a) the technology suits the intended purposes; (b) the curriculum stays intact; and (c) the school has the capacity to support the technology it has acquired (with bandwidth, repairs, and so on).

But those are transient and fixable problems. The deeper problem with technology is not that it fails to work properly, but rather that it can work all too well in the service of questionable ends. We are looking not only at SMART Boards and three-dimensional images, but at software that picks up keywords in students' group discussions, detects students' "engagement" levels, and monitors students' activity outside of school. The developers and supporters of such technology believe fervently that we can perfect our classrooms through its use. For instance, if teachers know which parts of the lesson had the greatest student "engagement," then supposedly they can figure out how to maximize the overall engagement. Few people ask whether such "engagement" *should* be maximized; few ask whether students, in the privacy of their minds, need some room to wander and rest now and then. Instead, there's a mistaken belief that by perfecting "engagement," we can perfect the classroom, and with it, achievement. This effort puts human freedom at risk; as Evgeny Morozov writes in his book *To Save Everything, Click Here*, "imperfection, ambiguity, opacity, disorder, and the opportunity to err, to sin, to do the wrong thing: all of these are constitutive of human freedom, and any concentrated attempt to root them out will root out freedom as well."[ix] Those who worry about the effects of technology in the classroom cannot be dismissed as retrogrades or technophobes; many of their concerns are not only legitimate, but essential.

A person might question a given change (technological or otherwise) for many reasons, not all stemming from "fear of change" or blind adherence to the past. First, the change may be

misguided or, at best, flawed. Those who point out the problems constructively are doing a great service to those promoting the change. They function, in a sense, as "Quality Assurance Engineers," looking at the possibilities from this and that angle, toying with the possible outcomes, and pointing out things that could go wrong (or are already going wrong). They may also have a healthy skepticism of fads. Instead of dismissing such skeptics, an institution or leader should listen to them carefully.

By contrast, if a given initiative has room only for enthusiastic cheerleaders, if it writes off critics as hysterical, misinformed, or partisan, then it will have nowhere to turn when real problems arise. Here is a typical scenario: an individual, group, or organization decides to fund a pilot program in the schools. In addition, said philanthropist ensures positive media coverage—by hiring skilled PR people, limiting access to the project, and commissioning numerous laudatory reports. Soon the newspaper reporters themselves are waxing euphoric over this reform. Critics try to raise concerns, but since they are outsiders, with little concrete information, they are easily dismissed. For a while, the pilot program enjoys the glow of seemingly unanimous praise. But then problems start to leak through to the public. Teachers, students, and others start to give hints that the program isn't quite what it was made out to be. Suddenly it is dropped; the donors realize that it isn't working out as planned, and they decide to put their money somewhere else. Unfortunately, any lessons from this situation may go unacknowledged, since there was no public dialogue about the program and no place for raising legitimate questions. Those involved end up with a double or triple loss: the loss of their efforts and time, the loss of the program itself, and the loss of an opportunity for discussion and greater understanding.

Critics and skeptics of change often enrich the overall terrain of thought. What John Stuart Mill wrote in his 1859 treatise *On Liberty* applies to our education discussions today. He argues that when an opinion, even an erroneous opinion, is suppressed, the ones who suffer the most are those who hold the "received" or accepted opinion, for they lose an opportunity to clarify and refine their thought. "But it is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most," he writes, "by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm done is to those who are not heretics, and whose whole mental development is cramped, and their reason cowed, by the fear of heresy." He goes on to explain that great thinking must maintain integrity instead of aiming at a particular conclusion: "No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize, that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think."[x] In other words, good independent thought does more to bring us to the truth than do answers we already assume are correct.

Now to return to the paradox: one of the most compelling reasons to regard change skeptically is that change and stasis work in close relation. Something that changes does not only change. An aspect of it remains unchanged, or relatively stable; not only is that stable aspect as important as the change, but it works in dialogue and counterpoint with the change. So, those who cry, "let's not change X or Y" may actually be *showing* the way to a change of Z—which would likely go awry if X and Y were also changing. An important example here is interdisciplinary study. Some schools, believing in interdisciplinary studies, have tried to make all their courses interdisciplinary. The problem is that you cannot understand connections between fields unless you also perceive the discrete fields. To have rich interdisciplinary courses, one must also have disciplines.

Total transformation, especially when it happens too quickly, is somewhat suspect, in education and in life. It does happen, but rarely. One thinks of the person who starts a new diet and reports a complete change of life. "I have never felt so positive or energetic," he declares. He tries to get friends to join him on this diet; since it did so much for him, it will probably work wonders on them, too. Then, bit by bit, the old problems start coming back (at work, in his marriage, and in his own mind); it turns out that things were not on a permanent upward swing. He experiences great disappointment—precisely because the thought the change was drastic and unidirectional. But this is precisely where the challenge lies: in taking those ongoing difficulties, which probably won't disappear, and handling them just a little differently when they recur.

Individual and institutional change are by no means the same—but they both have a complex relation to the things that persist and endure. The institution that adopts a promising, glittering reform, such as a new curriculum or pedagogy, must still contend with the ongoing problems of education: the challenge, for instance, of getting students to look beyond their immediate interpretation of a text or work of art. "Yes, but there's more—keep on looking." In essence, the best response to change is informed and creative: it involves grappling with the possibilities and resisting reckless action. (Recklessness has its place, but it carries risks.)

Yet the prospect of total transformation has tantalized us from antiquity to the present. Is it possible for a selfish person to become generous, for an ugly city to become beautiful, and for a society headed toward destruction to save itself? In education, is it possible to open up possibilities that have never been considered before—that will change everything about how we think and act? Overall, there are two schools of thought on the matter. Some believe that we are capable, in some way, of working toward a more perfect society, of overcoming our limitations and weaknesses. One day, even death might not be a given any more. Others hold that the "old verities" (to quote a phrase from William Faulkner's Nobel speech) remain with us—that, despite the appearance of a changing world, we continue to struggle with basic human problems. There is a third possibility: that transformation takes place all around us, subtly—and that its subtlety makes it all the more profound.

To explain how this third possibility might be true, I refer to a passage in *Kaddish* by Leon Wieseltier—a spiritual journal of his daily reciting of the mourner's kaddish for a full year after his father's death. He writes, "I have read of people whose lives are transfigured in an instant. I do not believe that such a transfiguration can happen to me. For what changed these people was not only the instant, but also their subsequent fidelity to the instant. This is the paradox of revelation. It disrupts the order of things and then depends on it."[xi] In other words, the person who changes entirely in an instant must maintain a steady and loyal relation to that change, which must retain its essence and its meaning. *I was such-and-such before, and then this happened, and I changed into what you see now*. But what if one comes to reinterpret that transformative instant a few years later? Then it is clearly not a single instant anymore; a subsequent change must have altered the interpretation. Those who continually reinterpret their lives (and the world around them) cannot have been transformed in an instant. They may still be transformed—perhaps more profoundly than the one who was changed overnight.

Even on our most ordinary days, we witness unprecedented combinations of things. The cat may have jumped up on the windowsill for the first time. The light may cast an unusual shadow on the wall. Insofar as we take in these new combinations, we have something that we did not have before. Or something may affect us on a greater scale: a work of art, or the death

of a friend, or the sight of a child we haven't seen for several years and who has somehow grown up in the meantime. Or a new cohort of students seems to alter a school with its unprecedented enthusiasm or character. What happens during these moments of change is difficult to describe. There may be a sensation of leaving behind one's old self or place—but it is usually just a sensation. Instead, the old self or place persists, but tinged somehow. Each detail of the day has a slightly different color or sound.

Complete change is an impossibility, but it tantalizes us in glimmers. In his sonnet "Archaic Torso of Apollo," Rainer Maria Rilke shows an ancient torso that transforms the viewer through its vitality, its mysterious power of sight. It is worth considering this sonnet in full (*). The injunction at the end, "You must change your life," is paradoxical in itself; in one sense, the change has already occurred; in another, it has not, nor do we know that it will.

If art schools, colleges and universities, and K-12 schools honor the complexities and particularities of change, they will protect themselves from two great errors: dogmatic espousal of change and dogmatic resistance to change. A dogmatic response seeks to eliminate complexities, but they persist; they make up the core of our work. There would be no art, no poetry, no history, if change were complete and unidirectional, if involved no memory or return. Instead of changing with the times, a school can regard the current changes as an addition to the range of possibilities. To enjoy such wealth of possibility, one must be able to recognize it; thus, part of education's goal is to cultivate discerning minds; mind independent of fads, economic incentives, or group pressure; minds that can create, dignify, question, and transform the surrounding world.

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*Asterisks inside parentheses indicate where slides were used to illustrate this presentation.

[i] "A Q&A with Arne Duncan: The Eyes of America Are on Newark's School Reform," *Star-Ledger* (N.J.), April 3, 2011, http://blog.nj.com/perspective/2011/04/a_qa_with_arne_duncan_the_eyes.html.

[ii] Hugh Dubberly, "A Proposal for the Future of Design Education," Dubberly Design Office website, December 5, 2011, http://www.dubberly.com/articles/design-education-manifesto.html.

[iii] International Council of Graphic Design Associations, *ICOGRADA Design Education Manifesto 2011*, http://toolkit.icograda.org/database/rte/files/PR_IEN_Manifesto2011_webres.pdf.

[iv] Plato, *Republic*, 2.359a–2.360d.

[v] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot,* ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 38–39.

[vi] Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 337-343.

[vii] David Bromwich, *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 164.

[viii] David Armitage et al., "The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future," Harvard College, Division of Arts and Humanities, 2013, http://artsandhumanities.fas.harvard.edu/files/humanities/files/mapping_the_future_31_may_2013.pdf, 19, 38.

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