

Chapter 1

“The World is Gone, I Must Carry You”: A Provocation for Doing Post- Critical Educational Research With the Anthropocene

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the Anthropocene the world will be gone. Or at least it will be gone from a human habitation point of view. What does this mean? Clearly ‘the world’ will no longer exist- because there will be no one on it to know about its existence. This brings up a very important question that needs to be faced: If the world’s existence depends on human knowledge of it, is the bifurcation that most Western modern capitalo-science rests on- between the ‘human’ and ‘nature’- correct? This chapter explores some of the implications of this question for doing post-critical educational research.

INTRODUCTION

First: A Poem (Is This the First Step in Doing Post-Critical Research?)

*Vast, glowing vault
with the swarm of
black stars pushing them-*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5317-5.ch001

*selves out and away:
onto a ram's silicified forehead
I brand this image, between
the horns, in which,
in the song of whorls, the
marrow of melted
heart-oceans swells.
In-
to what
does he not charge?
The world is gone, I must carry you.
(Paul Celan, as cited in Quozio, n.d.)*

Second: What Do I See?

Paul Celan (1920-1970) is a famous post-World War 2 German (Romanian-born), Jewish poet. His poem gives me pause. Literally it stops me in my psycho-semio-soma tracks. I am not sure what the poem means.

But I can feel it affect me into the pit of my stomach. It makes me want to cry.

So one idea emerges to hang on to and to which we (you and me) will return shortly- 'the pause'.

Stop before judging.

Stop before knowing.

Feel things deeply first. Then...

Another idea is that "I must carry you". This short phrase summarises I think what it is that 'we' need to do in light of the Anthropocene. That is, "carry one another". This carrying is not only a human affair now- it 'operates' across humanism and its 'posts'.

We, humans of the "West" (the Globalised North), have separated out ourselves from 'nature' – to make 'it' comprehensible, knowable, substantial, exploitable.

And we have done the same thing to one another.

We have made ourselves knowable. Separated ourselves out; one from another.

And now we have lost our sense that this partitioning between one another is not the truth. Before anything else we are not individuals- we are in this together- and more than that we are in this together with 'the world'.

Vulnerably so.

When we are born- we can not live without the support of others. Likewise our death is not ours alone.

'The world is gone'. The world has carried 'us,' and now it is gone.

In the poem, I think what Paul Celan is saying is that when you die the world dies.

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