

The Teacher as Anthropos

Austin Peay State University

The final product of education “must be neither a psychologist nor a brick mason, but a” person.

W.E.B. DU BOIS

01 Introduction

Two speeches from Austin Peay's past, on the future.

“[Ten years ago], the public was supporting higher education, legislatures were supporting higher education, new programs were being added at the discretion of the institutions...the future of the national economy was bright, federal funding for education was growing by leaps and bounds.

(Ellis, 1971, p. 2–3)

FROM THE SAME TALK

Today, a famine afflicts higher education...a lagging economy has caused more financial problems...than any year I can recall... Generally, there is a shrinking student enrollment across the country, and...social upheavals [including]...a dim public view of higher education.

ELLIS, 1971, P. 5–6

02 The Existential Question of Interaction

Three questions that organize the hour.

THE WORK

What is irreducibly human in the professor–
student interaction?

THE STAKES

What do we owe a skeptical public?

THE SHIFT

What does AI expose about that interaction?

57%

A DECADE AGO

36%

BY 2024

“A decade ago, 57 percent of Americans expressed ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of confidence in higher education. By 2024, that number had dropped to a historic low of 36 percent...”

“70 percent of Americans...say that higher education is heading in the wrong direction.”

(Yale Committee on Trust in Higher Education, 2026, p. 4)



03 The Essential Theories and Frameworks

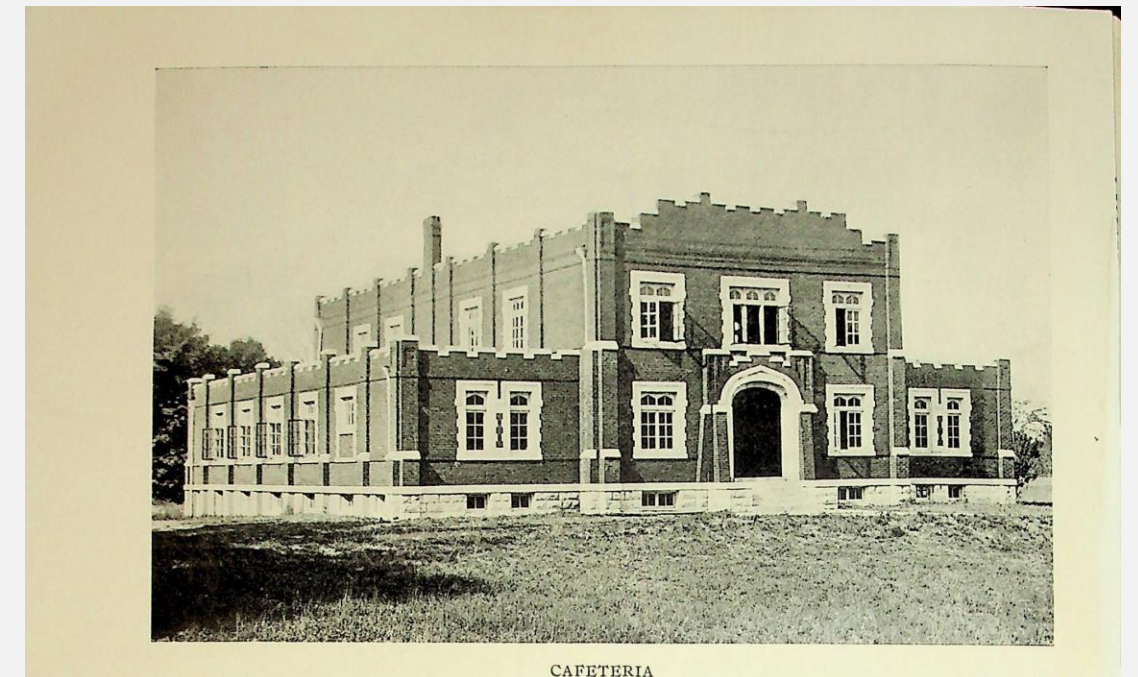
A Normal School, interaction, the triad, and the equivalency theorem.

The Need for the Austin Peay Normal School

Rural teachers who understand the values of the served population are in short supply.

Dedicated teacher-training institutions “have been the most effective agency in the improvement of both spirit and practice in public education” (P.P.C., 1932, p. 1).

Ergo, the APNS exists to democratize and disperse opportunity beyond the major urban areas by fostering professional educators who are uniquely qualified to reach underserved populations.



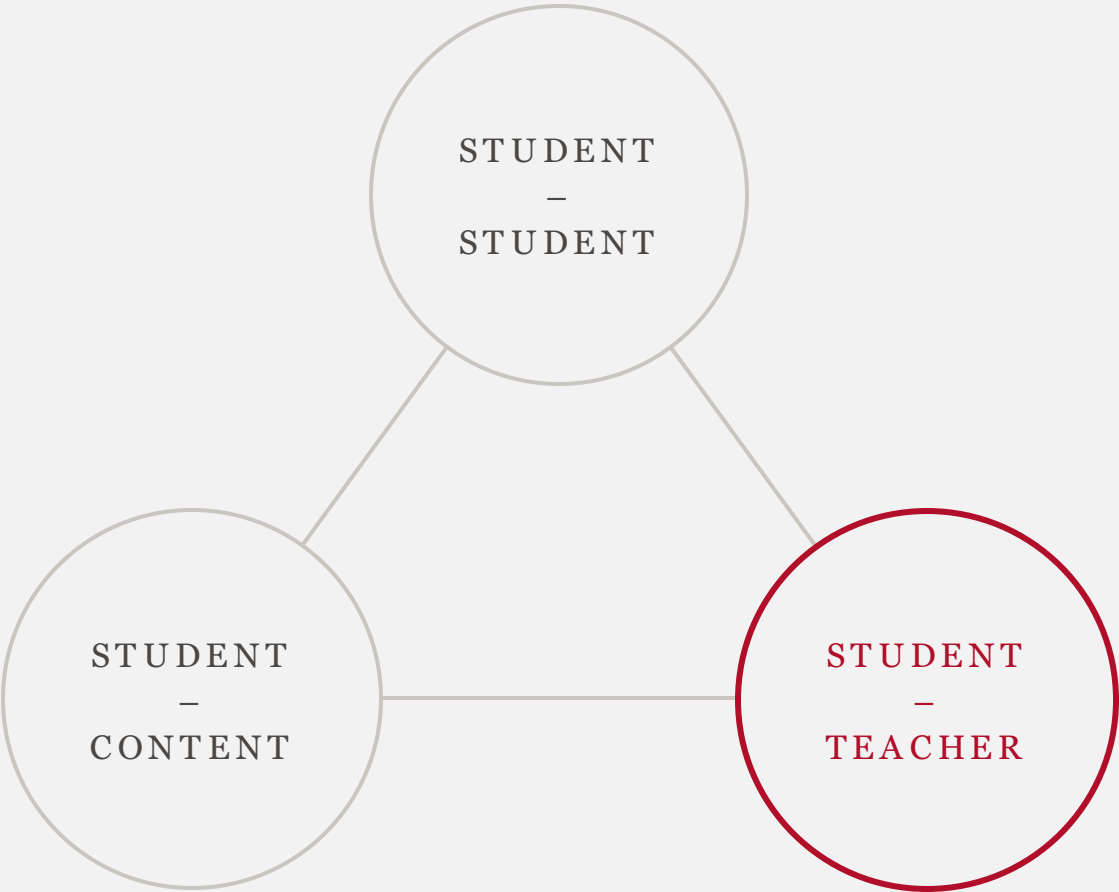
Cafeteria, Austin Peay Normal School. APSU Archives.

Interaction, Operationalized

Actors reciprocally influencing one another in ways that enhance or alter knowledge construction, skill and ability development, the strengthening or weakening of belief, and information acquisition.

Wagner, 1994; Shu-sheng & Huang, 2000; York & Richardson, 2012

Moore's Triad of Interaction



Each node interacts with the other two; the third carries the most.

WHAT THE TEACHER NODE CARRIES

- Stimulate or maintain learners' interest in the topics
- Present information
- Demonstrate skills
- Model attitudes and values
- Ascertain to what degree students make progress, and adapt teaching strategies accordingly
- Counsel, support, and encourage students, appropriate to their abilities and educational levels

The Interaction Equivalency Theorem

If one of the three nodes of the triad is sufficiently substantive, student outcomes can result with little or none of the other two nodes.

Two substantive nodes are more beneficial, especially to student satisfaction.

04 The Challenge Today

The things generative AI can do in the classroom.

What GenAI Can Do in the Classroom

Each capability maps onto a job the teacher node carries in Moore’s triad.

01	Provide information	At any hour, in any register
02	Motivate and encourage learners	Hooks and feedback that lift performance
03	Scaffold the provision of information	Detect struggle, revert to prerequisites
04	Interact as a real-time interlocutor	Without fatigue, and without a queue
05	Assess learners and provide feedback	Rapid draft, feedback, and revision cycles

05 What Remains Undone, and How to Do It

Things AI cannot do — what is yours to do, and yours to teach.

Things AI Cannot Do

- 01 Close the last mile, and be accountable for it
 - 02 Truly meta-cognize
 - 03 Distinguish between programmed and personal values
 - 04 Share lived wisdom
 - 05 Operate at the extreme of the long tail
-

Close the Last Mile

The ‘Last Mile Problem’ is the final, hardest stretch of any delivery system (Robbins, 2024).

VERIFY

CONTEXTUALIZE

ANSWER FOR IT

These are why we must retain a human in the loop. Someone must verify that the information to which students are formally exposed is contextualized in a way that meets our epistemological values. Half of what follows is you holding that role; half is training your students into it.



THE LAST MILE, 1930

“The Austin Peay Normal School...occupies a unique place among the teacher-training institutions of the state...[and requires] ‘judicious professionalization of subject-matter,...the sound basis of content material,...close contact with [the field],...[and, most importantly,] **carefully supervised practice teaching.**”

AUSTIN PEAY NORMAL SCHOOL, 1930, P. 12–13

Content material could be supplied. Practice had to be supervised. This institution identified the last mile in 1930, and the answer was a person then, too.

Train Your Students to Edit

Regardless of what you teach, students can use AI to communicate their findings.

INTERPRET

DISSECT

CORRECT

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR COURSE

Citations confirmed

Students showing their work

Cross-referencing as habit, not
police action

Truly Meta-cognize

The question is not whether a machine can monitor its own process. It can.

WHAT THE MACHINE DOES

Calculates a course of action

Plans the sequence

Monitors whether the process is working

WHAT METACOGNITION ALSO ENTAILS

Affective consequence — frustration when a process will not deliver, excitement when it does

Awareness of one’s own biases

Adjustment made in response to both

A model can report an awareness of its biases. It cannot hold one. Adjusting for cognitive bias remains human work.

Name the Thinking You Already Require

Metacognition has been quarantined in introductory critical thinking and psychology courses. It belongs in every discipline — and most of you are already requiring it.

When you ask a STEM student to write out the steps that got them to an answer, you are requiring metacognition. Do they know that? Do they know why it matters?

No need for an extra assignment; just call attention to the process already embedded in the one you assign.

Students who can name how they arrived at an answer can judge an answer a machine hands them. That is the whole transfer.

Have Students Rubric Their Own Work

One way to do it, folded into an assignment you already give: the student completes the rubric as a required part of the submission. It surfaces the steps they took — or didn't — and adds a layer of accountability.

CRITERION	YES	NO
Did you answer all three questions in the prompt?		
Did you include an introduction where you clearly stated your position on the topic?		
Did you write a conclusion that summarized the evidence into a clear, concise statement of why you hold the position you described in the introduction?		
Did you cite at least one credible source?		

Distinguish Between Programmed and Personal Values

An LLM has no values. It values what it's programmed to value — and a programmed preference is not a virtue.

Politeness ranked above accuracy **is not tact**.

Conceding the point when contradicted **is not intellectual humility**.

The Terminator lowering itself into the molten metal **was not courage**.

All virtues require agency. If you can't be afraid, you can't be brave.

Generative AI can perform behaviors in accordance with our values. I need my students to see that humans perform those behaviors too, even though they can choose not to.

Model the Values You Want Named

Epistemic humility, integrity, respect. You are likely doing this already; here is how I raise the intentionality.

Point out instances where I don't know something, or want to learn more. There is an element of risk there, because we don't want to undercut the confidence of our students in us.

Include citations in my discussion responses and my assignment feedback. If I expect that behavior from my students, I should expect it from myself.

Enforce respectful language in all exchanges, and look for opportunities to disagree with students publicly, so I can show how it's done with tact and validation.

Share Your Lived Wisdom

Polanyi called it ‘the knowledge we can’t tell’ (1962) — the half of expertise that never reached the training data.

WHAT THE NETWORK MODELS

Abstract, language-oriented

Rules-following, at extraordinary scale

Learns from the data it is handed

THE KNOWLEDGE WE CAN’T TELL

The minute details of an expert golf swing

A worn serpentine belt, heard before it breaks

What we experience as a gut feeling

Generative AI learns from experience. That is not the same as lived wisdom.

What Do You See?

You will not find it by following a rule. Your right hemisphere handles embodied knowing, context, and pattern (McGilchrist, 2009).

A left hemisphere alone would need a rule to find it. So does the machine.

R. C. James, 1965



Take Students to the Edge of Embodied Learning

A golf instructor has an obvious advantage over ChatGPT. What about a psychology teacher? Or a math professor?

01

Build in the confounds

Problems that carry real-world distractors — and your own account of meeting them the first time.

02

Refuse the abstraction

Less ‘situated cognition’ than a refusal to teach in a vacuum.

IN MY CLASSROOM

Instantiating in students the fundamental attribution error.

Help students avoid trial and error where you can, then supervise them as they take it from there.

Where Likelihood Drops Off

This Is Just To Say

William Carlos Williams, 1934

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

WHY THIS POEM

No one had ever published a poem quite like this
until Williams did it.

*Creativity lives in the odd choice, the unresolved tension, the tonal risk
that looks wrong until it doesn't.*

Another Way to See It

Map the machine onto the four quadrants and one of them stays empty.

KNOWN KNOWNS

Established knowledge. The machine is fluent here.

KNOWN UNKNOWNNS

Recognized gaps. Gap analysis gets it here too.

UNKNOWN KNOWNS

Knowledge held but not articulated. It appears to have some of this.

UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS

Questions no one has thought to ask. This one requires awe.

Operate at the Extreme of the Long Tail

The unknown unknowns require a capacity to which even human access is limited.

The capacity for awe (McGilchrist, 2019).

That is probably how revelatory insight happens. We are not bound to sort a novel experience straight into the schema we already have.

PRESENTED, THEN RE-PRESENTED

The right hemisphere is presented with the experience. The left re-presents it so it can join what we already know. First we have the experience — even if we don't yet know it.

Celebrate the Unexpected Connection

You may not be able to keep students in the long tail of your subject matter:
Not all curricula drag a learner into uncharted territory.

That is fine. Students make the unexpected connections themselves, and they often do.

WHY IT MATTERS

College is a rare chance to take the time and foster them. That argument may not convince a policymaker.

Celebrate the unexpected discovery with your students, and you might just convince them.

06 Conclusion

What you will always know.

What You Will Always Be Able To

- 01 Answer for what your students were taught
 - 02 Feel your own thinking as it happens
 - 03 Choose the harder right, and be seen choosing
 - 04 Know more about lived experience
 - 05 Be astonished, long enough for learning to occur
-

You will always know the difference between the trauma of a family emergency and a lame excuse for late work.

TO THE INCOMING STUDENTS OF 1940

Some of you who receive this Bulletin of the Austin Peay Normal School have recently graduated from high school and have made a good beginning on your educational preparation for life and for citizenship, for making a living, and for the largeness, richness, and refinement of mind and heart, which we call culture. But...you need more — more than young [people] of any past generation have needed. The times in which you live will offer great opportunities of many kinds for those who are prepared to accept them.... You want also to make some contribution to the welfare of your [planet] and of the people among whom you live.

AUSTIN PEAY NORMAL SCHOOL, 1940, INSIDE FRONT COVER

ACADEMIC HONORS DAY, 1965

Our inability to predict the future cannot...be reduced to a mere function of our ignorance of the present. History is continually presenting us with novelties.... [Some of us] remember with what shattering surprise the world confronted the Great Depression and even World War II and later the atomic threat. Now...we find ourselves in the novel situation of being threatened by the possibility that **automation** may...break down [our system] and with it all the structure and disciplines of society.

GLOVER, 1965, P. 4 — AUSTIN PEAY STATE COLLEGE

IN CLOSING

1926-30

practice teaching

1932

the charter

1940

you need more

1965

automation

1971

famine

2026

us

One hundred years of this campus being told the ground was moving. Across generations of innovation, one answer remained throughout: a prepared, present, human teacher, accountable for what a student was taught.

Generative AI does not make the professoriate obsolete. It sounds the call for a human professoriate louder than ever before.

You are the humans who guide this generation into that living culture.

Education is a “genuine participation in a living culture” (Glover, 1965).

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