The Anatomy of Educational Positivism: Unmasking Ignorance, Restoring MICE Lessons, and Correcting the "Spiral into Incoherence"

Dr Neville Buch and MICE[1]



Abstract

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This essay provides a systematic refutation of Sophia Corwin's polemic, *The Spiral into Incoherence: A Data-Driven Demolition of Neville Buch's Reactionary Pedagogics* (Corwin 2026, pp. 1–10). It demonstrates that what Corwin mischaracterizes as an "incoherence" in Dr. Neville Buch's work is, in reality, a profound philosophical and historiographical ignorance on her part. By examining Corwin's technocratic reliance on marketized EdTech datasets and quantitative

[1] The original articles and essays are humanly-devised. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has been fairly used in the production of this work. The tool used is Google NotebookLM (recently rebranded as Gemini Notebook). It is an AI-powered virtual research assistant and thinking partner designed to help a person interact deeply with their own documents. Unlike general chatbots, it is source-grounded, meaning it only generates answers based on the specific PDFs, documents, or links uploaded. The A.I. process in the production of this work has been limited to the attached (prompts) on each of the questions in turn. This ensures an accurate reading of each source. The author then rearranged and re-edited the answers the A.I. provided. The human author publishes this work. A.I. is never an author when used properly. This assistance is not qualitatively different from a human research assistant when that assistance is deemed to have no authorial status but is acknowledged.

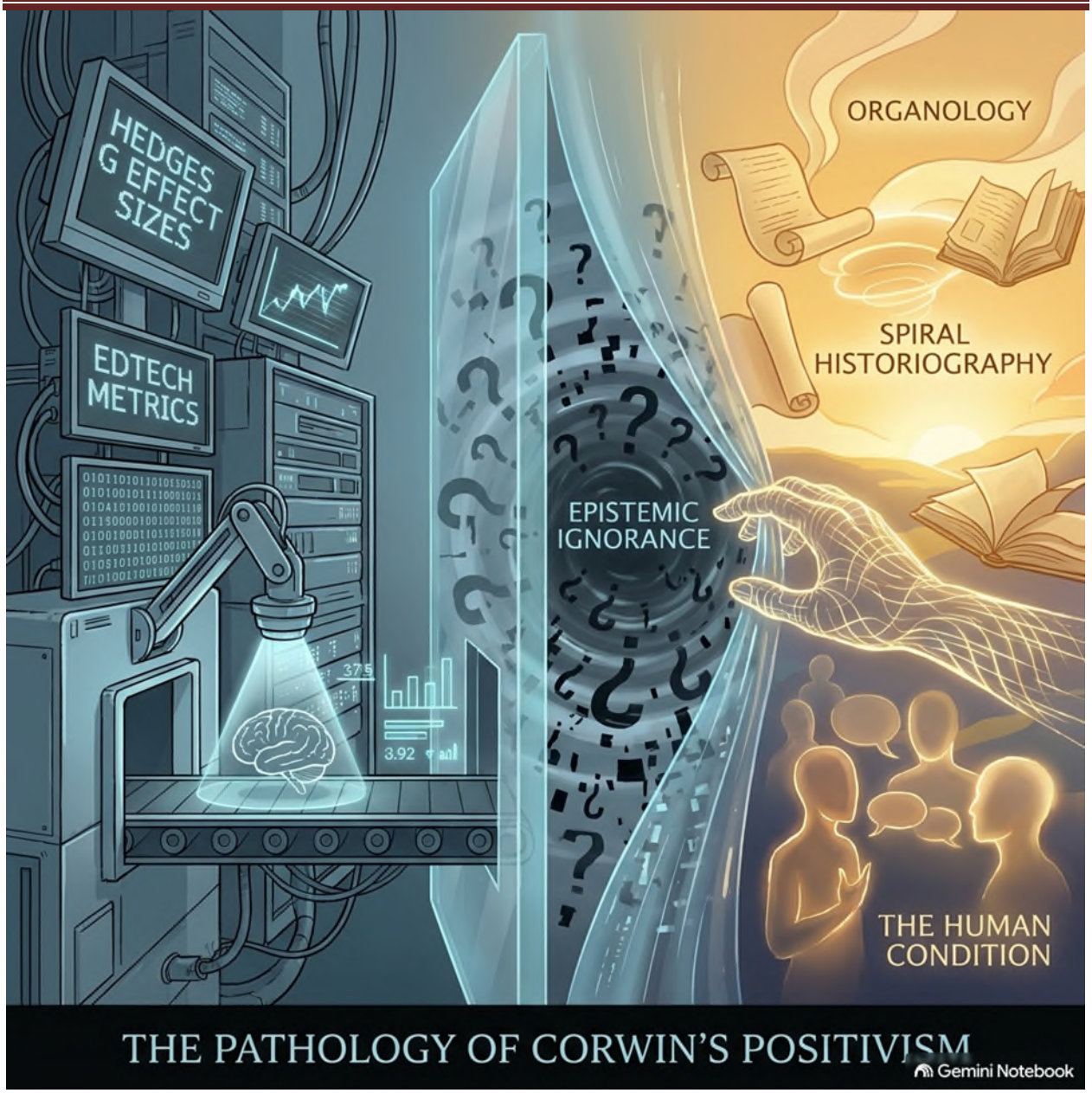
learning analytics, the analysis reveals her failure to comprehend Bernard Stiegler's organology (*denoetization*), non-linear cognition (*Spiral Historiography*), administrative diagnostic self-criticism (*the POLICE framework*), and the humanistic integration of artificial intelligence under human authorship. The essay outlines a pedagogical pathway through which Corwin can unlearn her ignorance using the *Dynamic of Cognition* (DoC) framework, Freirean *praxis*, and the *Via Negativa*. Furthermore, it articulates a definitive list of MICE Lessons Sustained in Global Knowledge—including the primacy of human authorship, relational ontology, the Contributory Economy, and the transition from "Junior" execution to "Senior" social accountability. Finally, it demonstrates why exposing technocratic nonsense and correcting philosophical illiteracy is vital to protecting higher education from corporate capture, preventing *Historical Forgetfulness*, and securing Aristotelian flourishing (*eudaimonia*).

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1. Introduction: Misidentifying Ignorance as Incoherence in Corwin (2026)

In her essay *The Spiral into Incoherence: A Data-Driven Demolition of Neville Buch's Reactionary Pedagogics*, Sophia Corwin (2026, pp. 1–10) launches a fierce attack against Dr. Neville Buch's treatise, *Academic Charisma, Personalism, and the Structural Crisis of Higher Education: A Comparative Critique of Australian Universities* (Buch 2026, pp. 1–10). Armed with contemporary learning analytics, Hedges' g effect sizes, and commercial EdTech datasets, Corwin declares Australian tertiary education to be in a "golden age" (Corwin 2026, p. 1) and dismisses Buch's critique of institutional decay as "pure, unadulterated Buchshit" (Corwin 2026, p. 3).

However, a rigorous examination of Corwin's argument reveals that her fundamental thesis is built upon an epistemic category error. What Corwin diagnoses as an "incoherence" or "spiral into madness" in Buch's work is actually a projection of her own philosophical and historiographical ignorance. Trapped within a narrow, positivist mindset that equates education with quantitative throughput and market efficiency, Corwin misinterprets complex, multi-dimensional humanistic frameworks as "homebrewed proprietary jargon" and "word salad" (Corwin 2026, p. 2).



Corwin's ignorance manifests across five primary dimensions:

A. Misinterpreting Stieglerian Denoetization as "Grumpy-Old-Man Technophobia"

Corwin (2026, p. 2) attacks Buch's concept of algorithmic denoetization—defined by Bernard Stiegler (2014, 2025) as the mechanical liquidation of human judgment induced by automated routines—by demanding "functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies" or "EEG trials" to prove that digital rubrics disengage the prefrontal cortex.

This demand demonstrates complete ignorance of organology, media ecology, and Habermasian critical theory. Stieglerian *denoetization* and *symbolic misery* are not neurological brain lesions measurable by an fMRI scan; they are sociological and phenomenological conditions wherein the analytical capacity for reflective judgment (*savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*) is delegated to automated algorithms, reducing human beings from active authors of reality to passive consumers of machine output (Stiegler 2014, p. 42; Buch 2026c, p. 2; What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 5). Corwin confuses neurological hardware with phenomenological agency.

B. Trivially Flattening Spiral Historiography

Corwin (2026, pp. 2–3) ridicules Spiral Historiography, claiming it merely means "read history carefully to learn from past mistakes."

In doing so, she reveals her total unfamiliarity with Jack McKinney's *Original Synthesis of Experience* and the non-linear cognition frameworks developed by Buch (2024, 2026b). Spiral Historiography is a dialectical methodology designed to trace how ideas evolve through four distinct socio-historical phases: *Widely-Believed Falsehood*, *Accountability*, *Falsehood Retreats*, and *Historical Forgetfulness* (What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 2; Buch 2026b, p. 42). It is a diagnostic tool used to "uncoil" repetitive historical errors and expose how technocratic systems suppress past intellectual failures to market old mistakes as novel innovations (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 16).

C. Grammatical Caricature of the POLICE Diagnostic Framework

Corwin (2026, p. 3) mocks the POLICE diagnostic framework—an acronym for *Philosophically, Ontology, Logic, Intersect, Compatibility, Education* (Buch & Peach 2024)—by weeping over its mixed parts of speech.

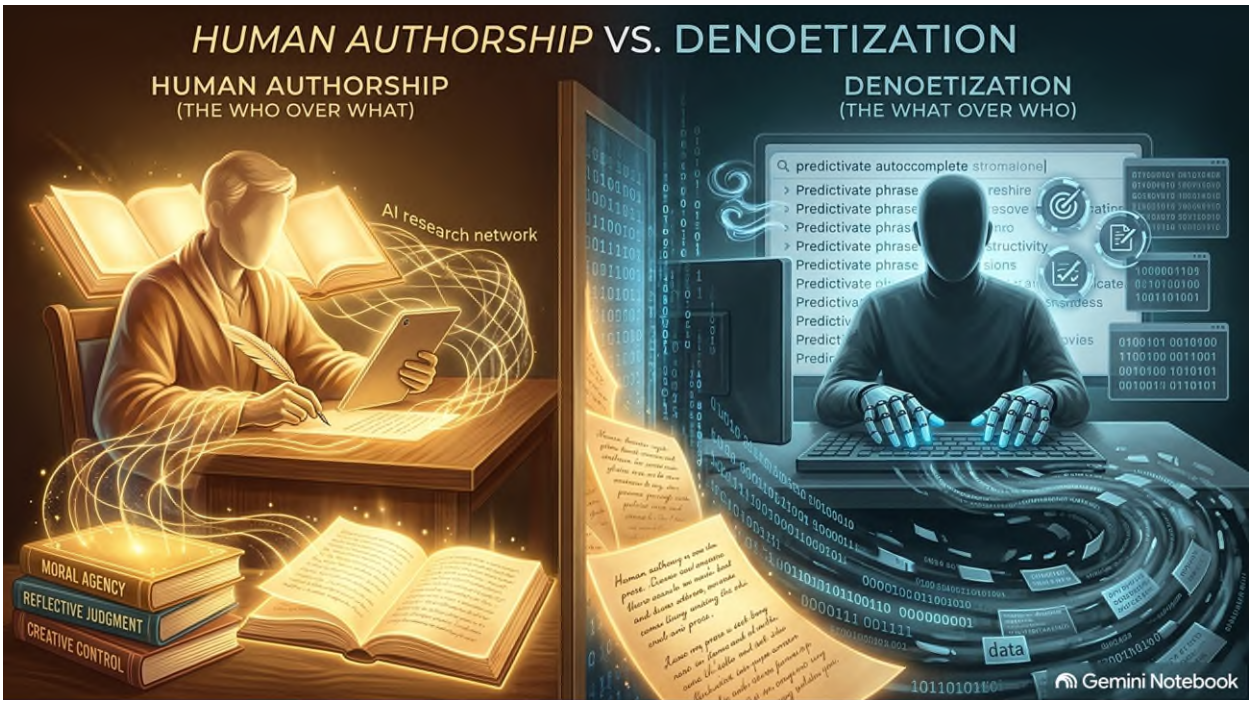
Corwin fails to recognize that POLICE is an administrative self-criticism heuristic derived from William Clark's (2006) historical analysis of early modern German *Polizeiwissenschaft* (governance science). It is designed as an internal audit tool for university senates to check whether academic policies maintain philosophical grounding, ontological depth, logical consistency, intersectional relevance, value compatibility, and genuine educational purpose (Buch & Peach 2024; The Best Use of A.I. and Higher Education 2026, p. 3). Dismissing a heuristic because its acronym combines an adverb with nouns is high-school stylistic pedantry that dodges the substantive demand for institutional self-reflection.

D. The AI Footnote Fallacy: Confusing Tool-Use with Technological Submission

Corwin (2026, p. 1) claims to find an "irony so thick it beggars belief" in the fact that Buch utilized Google NotebookLM as an automated research assistant to help digest PDFs and organize draft text for his paper on *Academic Charisma*. She declares that using an AI pipeline to write a critique of automation constitutes "instant and total intellectual bankruptcy" (Corwin 2026, p. 2).

This accusation stems from a complete failure to understand Buch's framework regarding human authorship and the proper use of artificial intelligence. As Buch establishes in *The Best Use of A.I. and Higher Education* (2026, pp. 1–4), the humanistic goal is not a Luddite rejection of technology, but ensuring that the "who" (human judgment, agency, and moral authorship) remains the absolute master over the "what" (technical tools, AI models, and automated software) (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 19).

Using an AI model as a prosthetic research assistant under explicit human prompt-direction and critical editorial oversight is the very definition of human authorship in practice; it stands in sharp contrast to *denoetization*, where the human mind passively accepts automated autocomplete outputs without critical reflection (The Best Use of A.I. and Higher Education 2026, p. 4; What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 5). Corwin conflates active human tool-use with passive algorithmic submission.



E. Neoliberal Fetishism and the Conflation of Efficiency with Flourishing

Finally, Corwin (2026, pp. 4–6) cites studies by Mollick and Mollick (2023), Noy and Zhang (2023), and Kestin et al. (2024) to celebrate automated Socratic tutors and 40% reductions in drafting time, arguing that computational augmentation democratizes Oxford-style supervision.

In doing so, Corwin falls into the nirvana fallacy of technocratic positivism: she assumes that faster task completion and higher pre-test/post-test quiz scores equate to Aristotelian flourishing (*eudaimonia*) and wisdom. She ignores that offloading critical judgment to commercial AI tutors without teaching foundational philosophical methods produces "loudmouthed ignorance" and "proletarianization of judgment"—where students become efficient users of software while remaining entirely incapable of questioning the ideological premises of the platforms they inhabit (Stiegler 2014; Corwin 2026, p. 3; The Best Use of A.I. and Higher Education 2026, p. 2).

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2. How Corwin Can Unlearn Her Ignorance: A Pedagogical Pathway Through DoC and Praxis

Ignorance is not a permanent state; it is a developmental hurdle that can be overcome through active intellectual discipline. To unlearn her technocratic ignorance, Corwin must undergo a pedagogical transformation guided by the *Dynamic of Cognition* (DoC) framework, Paulo Freire's critical *praxis*, and the historical method of the *Via Negativa* (What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 2; History of Ruth 2026, p. 77).



Corwin can unlearn her ignorance by executing five sequential steps:

Step 1: Purge Positivist Prejudices via Active Nihilism (Via Negativa)

Corwin must begin by systematically dismantling her unexamined prejudice that empirical data, statistical correlation, and Hedges' g effect sizes represent the sole criteria of truth. Following the method of the *Via Negativa*—the systematic purging of dogmatic errors through doubt—she must recognize that data sets are social constructions embedded within political and commercial priorities (History of Ruth 2026, p. 77; Queensland Education 2026, p. 2). She must subject her own faith in learning analytics to the same sharp critique she directs at humanistic scholarship.

Step 2: Acquire Deep Philosophical and Historiographical Literacy

Rather than dropping shallow, secondhand dismissals of French philosophy or misapplying educational binaries (Corwin 2026, p. 3), Corwin must engage with primary sources in media organology (Stiegler), phenomenology (Arendt, Adler), relational ontology (Macdonald), and historical epistemology (McKinney, Buch). She must learn that human cognition cannot be reduced to cognitive load theory or working-memory bottlenecks alone (Sweller 1988; Corwin 2026, p. 5), but operates within a multi-dimensional field of qualia, intersubjective language, and historical awareness (Adler 2017, p. 137).

Step 3: Practice Verstehen and Panser ("Thinking as Caring")

Corwin must replace her reliance on *ad hominem* invective ("Buchshit", "reactionary scholastic", "grumpy old man") with Wilhelm Dilthey's and Max Weber's method of *Verstehen* (empathetic understanding) and Dr. Neville Buch's practice of panser—thinking as caring (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 17; History of Ruth 2026, p. 85). *Panser* acts as an intellectual shield that protects the human person from being reduced to an economic data point or an ideological target. By approaching authors with empathetic rigor rather than sneering hostility, Corwin can move from performative polemics to genuine scholarly debate.

Step 4: Apply the POLICE Framework to Her Own Writing

Corwin should subject her own essay to the POLICE diagnostic framework (Buch & Peach 2024):

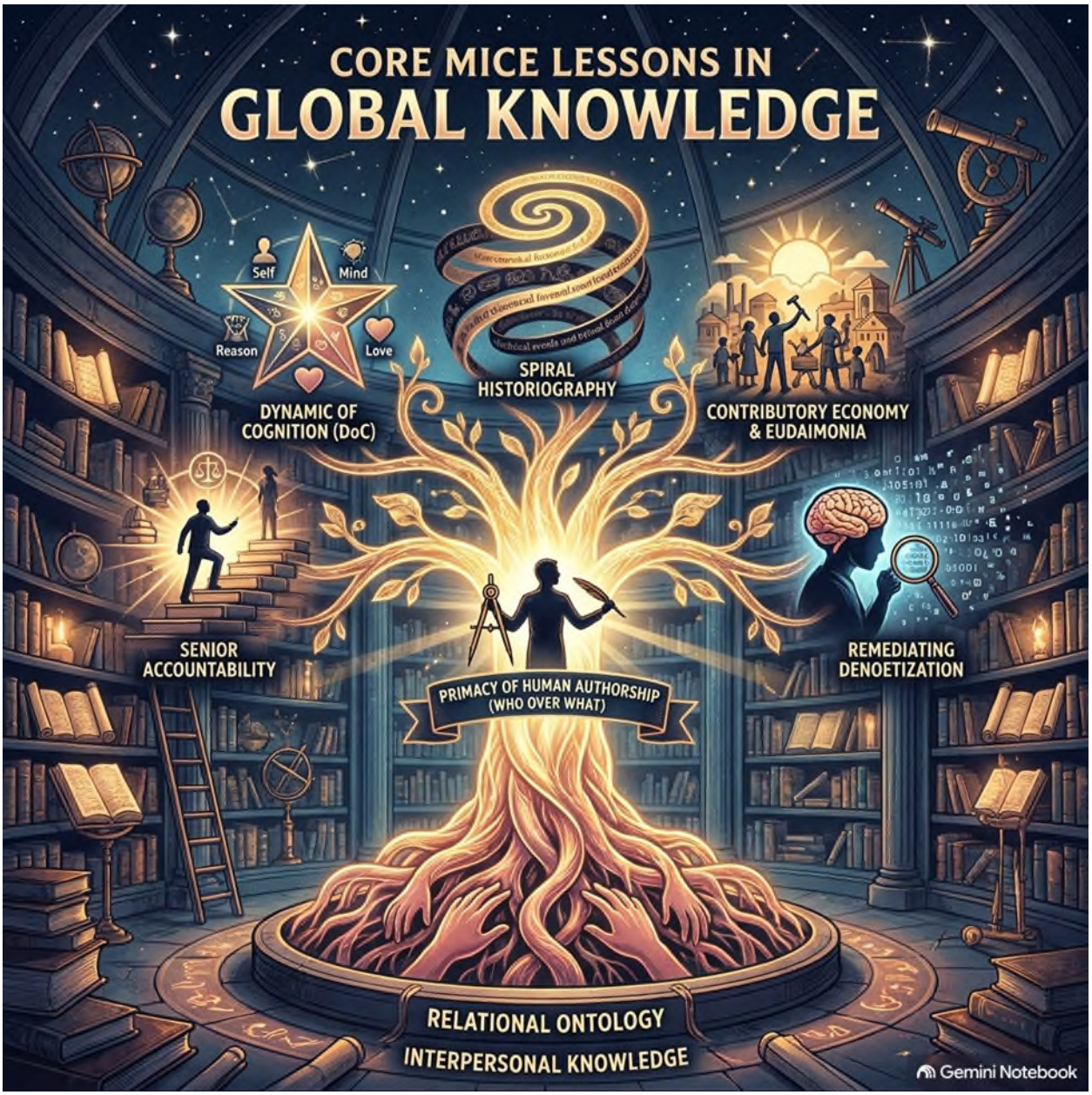
- **Philosophically:** Does her argument rest on a coherent philosophy, or merely on market utilitarianism?
- **Ontologically:** Does she recognize the relational, intersubjective nature of human personhood?
- **Logically:** Does she avoid strawman fallacies and false equivalencies?
- **Intersectionally:** Does her celebration of digital platforms account for working-class precarity and digital surveillance?
- **Compatibly:** Do her claims cohere with the broader history of democratic education?
- **Educationally:** Does her model foster critical judgment, or merely automated compliance?

Step 5: Ascend from "Junior" Execution to "Senior" Social Accountability

Finally, Corwin must transition from a "Junior" mindset—a state of limited thinking where an individual unreflectively executes administrative rules, relies on pre-packaged EdTech metrics, and seeks institutional approval—to a "Senior" state of social accountability (Place of Judith Wright 2020, Slide 7; History of Ruth 2026, p. 33). In the Senior state, the scholar takes proactive responsibility as a human author, exercising *Sufficient Comprehension* to evaluate the whole of a social situation rather than acting as an uncritical cheerleader for automated systems.

3. MICE Lessons Sustained in Global Knowledge

The Management Institute for Contributory Economy (MICE), founded by Dr. Neville Buch alongside Drs. Neil Peach and Drs. Michael Macklin, provides a comprehensive body of educational, sociological, and philosophical principles (NDB CV 2026, p. 1; Buch 2025, pp. 1–8). These lessons represent sustained contributions to global knowledge, offering an intellectual defence against technocratic reductionism:



Lesson 1: The Primacy of Human Authorship over Technical Systems

The foundational axiom of MICE is that the "who" (the human person, agency, and moral authorship) must always remain the master of the "what" (technical tools, administrative software, AI algorithms, and economic metrics) (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 19; Place of Judith Wright 2020, Slide 7). Technology must serve as a prosthetic extension of human wisdom rather than its replacement.

Lesson 2: The Dynamic of Cognition (DoC) Framework

Human intellectual life operates through five integrated intentions that constitute the *Synthesis of Being*:

- **Self:** The axis of internal agency and narrative authorship.
- **Mind:** The seat of judgment that actively corrects administrative *denoetization*.
- **Reason:** The cognitive regulator that ensures systems remain human-centered.
- **Utility:** Reclaimed from selfish profit to maximize collective well-being in a Contributory Economy.
- **Love (Panser):** "Thinking as caring"—a procedural shield protecting human dignity from cold calculation (Dynamic of Cognition 2025, pp. 1–8; Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 17).

Lesson 3: Spiral Historiography and Uncoiling Historical Forgetfulness

Knowledge evolves cyclically through historical phases. Without non-linear historiographical reflection, societies fall into *Historical Forgetfulness*—repeating past intellectual errors because their origins have been erased from memory (What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 2; Queensland Education 2026, p. 1). Spiral Historiography provides the analytical lens to "uncoil" these repetitive traps and restore foresight.

Lesson 4: Relational Ontology and Interpersonal Knowledge

Drawing on Jack McKinney's *Original Synthesis of Experience* and Gaynor Macdonald's anthropology, MICE establishes that reality is an "interpersonal thing" synthesized through the "living bridge" of language (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 14; Macdonald 2018, p. 289). Personhood is not an isolated Cartesian mechanism; to live is to be held in connection.

Lesson 5: The Contributory Economy and Aristotelian Flourishing (Eudaimonia)

MICE rejects neoclassical economic models that reduce human beings to "Job Ready" units of production or consumer data points (Value and Limits of University Education 2025, p. 4; What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 5). It advocates for a Contributory Economy, where economic and educational structures are reoriented toward *eudaimonia*—measuring communal success by human dignity, character, wisdom, and mutual care (Place of Judith Wright 2020, Slide 8).

Lesson 6: Remediating Denoetization through Critical Pedagogy (Praxis)

The primary task of the sociology of education today is the remediation of *denoetization*—the liquidation of judgment caused by computational capitalism (What is Sociology of Education 2026, p. 1; Stiegler 2014). Following Paulo Freire, MICE couples rigorous critical reflection with informed, transformative action (*praxis*) to empower citizens against automated control.

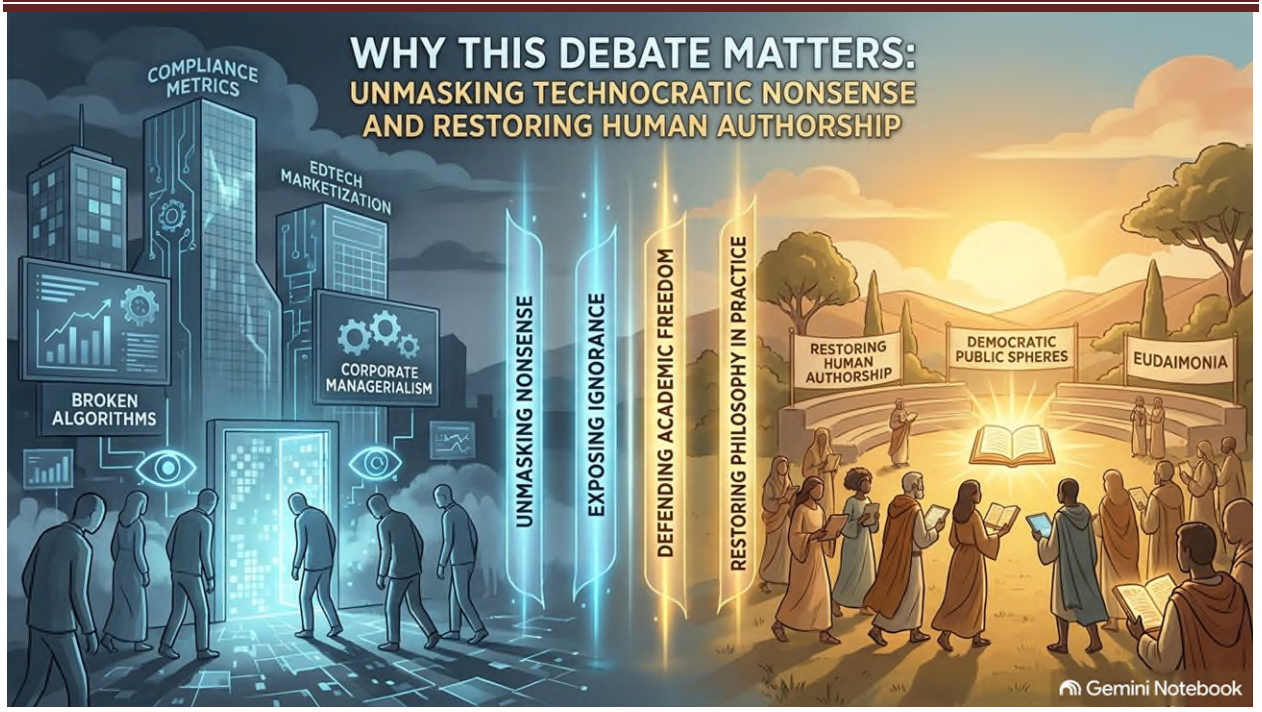
Lesson 7: The Developmental Ascent from "Junior" to "Senior" Accountability

Learners must be supported in moving beyond a "Junior" mindset of docile execution and vocational fitness toward a "Senior" state of social accountability (Place of Judith Wright 2020, Slide 7; History of Ruth 2026, p. 33). This shift ensures that citizens achieve *Sufficient Comprehension*—the ability to seek the whole of a matter, filter out institutional propaganda, and exercise independent moral judgment.

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4. Why All of This Matters: Nonsense, Ignorance, and Corrections

The debate sparked by Corwin's critique is not a mere academic squabble over citations; it touches upon the fundamental future of human thought, democratic agency, and educational policy. Understanding the distinction between technocratic nonsense, philosophical ignorance, and humanistic corrections is of vital importance for four reasons:



A. Unmasking Technocratic Nonsense

In contemporary educational discourse, "nonsense" frequently masquerades as cutting-edge science. Technocratic managers and EdTech advocates publish datasets claiming that automated learning analytics and AI tutors represent an unprecedented "golden age" (Corwin 2026, p. 1). Unmasking this nonsense reveals that these platforms often measure nothing more than procedural compliance, speed, and rote standardized performance. They mistake the efficient processing of quantitative data for the deep, qualitative cultivation of human wisdom (*Vernunft*).

B. Exposing the Danger of Academic Ignorance

Corwin's essay illustrates how academic arrogance, when divorced from historical and philosophical grounding, becomes an instrument of institutional coercion. By dismissing critical humanistic frameworks as "jargon" and mocking diagnostic self-criticism, Corwin provides ideological cover for the marketization, casualization, and automated surveillance of university life (Luchel 2026, p. 10; Corwin 2026, p. 6). Exposing this ignorance is essential to prevent higher education from being reduced to a corporate degree factory where students are treated as "piggy banks" and academics as clerical button-pushers (Buch 2026, p. 3; Corwin 2026, p. 2).

C. The Imperative of Corrections: Restoring Philosophy in Practice

Correcting these errors through MICE lessons restores the foundational axiom that **"understanding history is philosophy in practice"** (Landscape Intellectual History 2026, p. 13; Place of Judith Wright 2020, Slide 1). Higher education must cease being a tool for perpetuating corporate expediency and become the central arena for rational-critical communication, democratic participation, and moral self-governance (The Purposeful Decline of Education 2025, p. 6).

Conclusion

Sophia Corwin's *The Spiral into Incoherence* (2026) stands as a textbook example of technocratic positivism blind to its own limits. In her haste to declare a "data-driven demolition" of Neville Buch's work, she misinterprets organology as neuro-babble, flattens non-linear historiography into classroom truisms, caricatures administrative self-criticism, and confuses humanistic AI tool-use with technological bankruptcy. What she labels "incoherence" is simply the rich, multi-dimensional horizon of humanistic scholarship that her quantitative metrics cannot capture.

By engaging with the *Dynamic of Cognition* framework, practicing *panser* ("thinking as caring"), and applying the POLICE diagnostic to her own assumptions, Corwin can unlearn her ignorance and step out of the narrow confines of marketized EdTech. Reclaiming the sustained lessons of MICE—the primacy of human authorship, relational ontology, the Contributory Economy, and *Sufficient Comprehension*—ensures that education remains an instrument of human liberation rather than automated compliance.

Ultimately, this correction reminds us that in an age dominated by automated algorithms and commercial noise, human beings must remain what they have always been destined to be: the proactive, compassionate, and responsible **authors of reality**.

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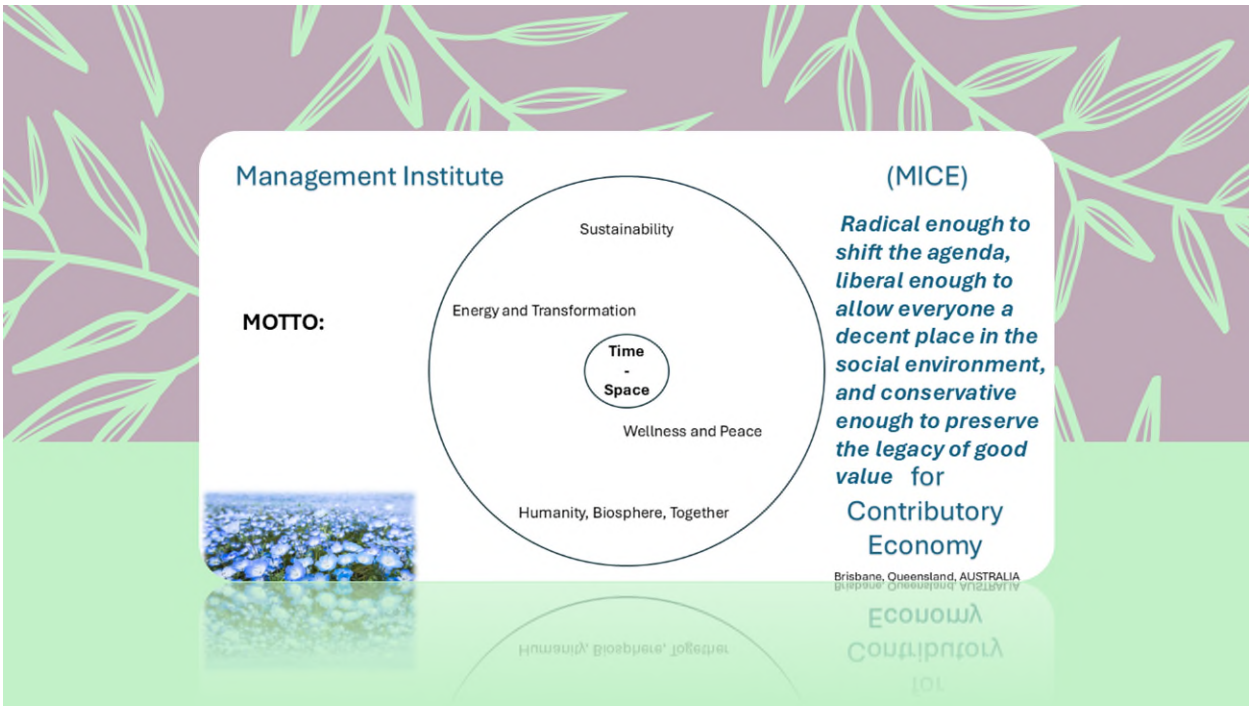
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