

The Walled Garden of Pedagogy: Leveraging Protection and Risk in Education

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Abstract:

This conceptual paper introduces the idea of the walled garden of pedagogy. I will come to delineate it as a desirable and necessary feature of education given that it offers a protective space for pedagogical practice and rehearsal. This paper critiques a previous conceptualisation of a walled garden introduced by unschooling advocate John Holt (in relation to the raising of children), in which such a metaphorical construction is described as a prison. The limitations of Holt's conceptualisation are used to then build upon the concepts of pedagogical reduction and Yves Chevallard's notion of "la transposition didactique" to argue that educators in practice inevitably build walled gardens from pedagogical foundations. It is argued, and thus recommended, that it is the gradual introduction of risk that separates the pedagogical walled garden from the conceptualisation of the childhood prison. It is imperative that educators understand their responsibility for leveraging the inevitable protective element and the necessary risk required in education.

Keywords: Pedagogical reduction, risk, protection, childhood

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INTRODUCTION

In his work "Escape from Childhood" (1996), John Holt describes the "walled garden" of childhood. He conceptualises it as a place born out of a protective intent for our children, but with characteristics more fitting to a prison. His thought is that, without a gate or another means to leave, the walled garden is a space of over-protection, confinement, and stultification. It is, in short, not conducive to an environment that allows one to *grow* up as

it does not allow for exploration beyond the wall. Our children, he suggests are treated as “fragile treasure[s]” (p. 4).

Given the educational concern inherent in ideas around how children should be raised, his “walled garden” metaphor is one which merits investigation by anyone with an interest in education. This paper is an attempt to dispel Holt’s idea of the detrimental walled garden of childhood and, by extension, that adults are stultifying their experiences and subjecting them to future lives as sensitive souls unable to cope with the inevitability that other people think differently to them. I refer to both Holt’s text and to the work of the sociologist Frank Furedi as they come to represent some of the most vocal advocates against ideas of modern parenting and conceptions of childhood. I then take Holt’s concept but transpose it onto the pedagogical. I suggest that pedagogy itself builds a walled garden for students. I use the concepts of pedagogical reduction (Lewin, 2018) and *la transposition didactique* (didactic transposition) as espoused by Chevallard (2007) to examine the essential role of the walled garden in pedagogy and whether it bears any resemblance to Holt’s conceptualisation of a prisonlike environment with no escape. I will then come to show that introducing risk into the pedagogical walled garden is not only desirable but necessary, and it is this that distinguishes the garden from the prison. Let us begin by looking at Holt’s walled garden in a little more detail.

HOLT’S WALLED GARDEN OF CHILDHOOD

“Most people who believe in the institution of childhood as we know it see it as a kind of *walled garden* in which children, being small and weak, are protected from the harshness of the world outside until they become strong and clever enough to cope with it. Some children experience childhood in just that way. I do not want to destroy their garden or kick them out of it. If they like it, by all means let them stay in it. But I believe that most young people, and at earlier and earlier ages, begin to experience childhood not as a garden but as a *prison*.”

(Holt, 1996, p.5, emphasis added)

From the very outset, Holt’s self published work “Escape from Childhood” takes a scathing look at the institution of childhood, a social construct aimed at separating children from the adult domain, with Holt styling himself as the arbiter of children’s rights. Since this is a work published by Holt’s own foundation, it is not unfair to be sceptical about whether its inclusion is merited in an academic work such as this. In this regard, I agree with Dickerson (2019) that Holt’s work – however conceived and communicated –

represents a rich critique of a modern educational endeavour that, in my observation, has changed little since his original writing in the 1970s. As a former educator himself, Holt was in an optimal position to make such a critique. Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that the original publication of this book in 1974 predates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by 15 years (UNICEF UK, n.d.), but that some of the rights Holt describes do match the articles as set out by the UN much later. Of course, we cannot say for sure that his ideas were at all influential in the drawing up of the UNCRC but, in some sense, he very accurately predicted the legislative turn towards children's rights. That being said, I suspect he would be likely to disagree with this Convention insofar as it seeks to preserve the idea of childhood he aims to deride. Certainly, the UN's categorisation of a child as "every human being under the age of 18 years" (UNICEF UK, n.d., p.3) would be a particular sticking point.

In Holt's conceptualization of childhood, there is no immediate shift to adulthood at the age of 18 (or any age). He is not the first to wonder when a child somehow crosses the invisible line to adulthood. Hannah Arendt (1961) was similarly perplexed, and Froebel (1886) before her noted that we could not categorize maturity via age. Nevertheless, none deny that such a change is made – just that it cannot be pinpointed. So, Holt affirms, "We do not... suddenly turn from one kind of creature into another that is very different" (1996, p.4) and it is this imaginary division of life into two discrete parts – Childhood and Adulthood – which has contributed to the break in the continuous growth of the "curve of life". No longer is childhood the inevitable phase of dependency graduating towards maturity, distinguished by Holt as a "fact" of childhood; now there is a chasm between the world of the adults (and the wider society) and the world of the children, where he argues that children are treated as "a mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile treasure, slave and super-pet" (p.4). This separation is what characterizes the institution of childhood for Holt, and the walled garden is its most astute symbol.

What can be connoted from the ideas of the walled garden and the institution, and indeed the prison, is confinement. The institution of childhood has been built to keep children out of the adult world and inside their own. Similarly, the walled garden according to Holt has been built not only to separate children from the sphere of adults, but furthermore to protect them from the harshness they may encounter in it. He suggests that in order to remove the stultifying element (I invoke Rancière's (1991) description of stultification as acting with the assumption that the parent/educator is more intelligent and, thus, knows better) one must put a gate into the garden to allow children to visit the potentially dangerous world outside if they wish.

However, we must not think of the walled garden of childhood as a vanilla paradise to be escaped from in order to experience risk. Holt describes it as a rather unpleasant place for both parents and children. Parents resent building and maintaining this sacrosanct place while not being able to stay in it themselves due to responsibilities on the outside. With simmering resentment masquerading as pedagogical effort, they begin to introduce

exaggeratedly undesirable representations of the world outside to help their children prepare for the barren reality of adulthood. Those readers of a certain age and from the UK may remember such child safety campaigns as “Stranger Danger” in which young children are warned of the terrible dangers posed by people they do not know; this could be characterized as one of Holt’s undesirable representations. He paints an equally miserable picture for children. He tells us that a “Happy, Safe, Protected, Innocent Childhood, does not exist for many children.” (p.5) and so, the enterprise of building the walled garden as a means of protecting these already vulnerable children seems futile in the first place. Furthermore, he seems to suggest that Happiness, Safety, Protection, and Innocence are almost ideal states of childhood (his use of capitalisation assigns them a level of importance) while, at the same time, suggesting that children should have the right to relinquish all of these things. Such observations on the quality of “childhood” for some children seem to have been born from Holt’s time as a teacher in the US, and so we should be mindful that they are contextually narrow.

Almost 30 years after the initial publication of Holt’s book, sociologist Frank Furedi published his own thesis, *Paranoid Parenting* (2002), in which he takes the notion of the walled garden further still. While he never uses the phrase explicitly, he describes a situation in which parents feel under increasing pressure to not only protect children from the outside world, but to stimulate, educate and dedicate all of their time to their children. Now, the walls are not just built as a makeshift shelter from the trials of adulthood by parents in the way that Holt describes, but childhood becomes a superstructure, reinforced, and galvanised by the words of expert advice. Not only is Furedi’s conceptualization of the walled garden an impenetrable fortress for the child, but also parenting itself has become an ordeal as they attempt to maintain the structural integrity – so ordered by child rearing experts - of that same fortress. Furedi’s conceptualization of the walled garden is endemic of extreme parental insecurity and wanting to keep children close as their parents see them as central to their own dwindling identity. In Furedi’s time, it is as much about protecting the parents’ fragility as it is about protecting that of the child.

All of this comes to construct childhood as an inherently difficult time for both children and parents, and imagines children as thoroughly innocent, vulnerable, and fragile. Vulnerability is not necessarily the child’s default state, however. Corteen and Scraton (1997), while specifically discussing sexuality in childhood, note that it is an inevitable result of protecting a child’s innocence that their experiences and competencies are therefore neglected. Adults come to determine everything about a child’s “behaviour, choices, opportunities and potential” (p.99), and it is the denial of this independent agency that causes children to become vulnerable. The protective influence of the walled garden is, in fact, what comes to fabricate a child’s vulnerability as well as perpetuating it; it is performative.

One can only imagine what manner of adult rises from such a childhood. Holt never openly speculates, but we can extrapolate from his thinking that he suspects an adult raised

within the confines of the garden prison is one ill-equipped to deal with the realities of adulthood. I find it an interesting irony in his work that, given his conceptualisation of adulthood as a gradual curve from childhood, he never wonders what a child bestowed with a gate in their garden might become: will they be “better” people for venturing outside of the garden? Happier, maybe?

Furedi (2002) urges caution when attempting to predict what kind of adult a child might become, lest we fall into the trap of “infant determinism” – that is to say that all adult behavior can be based (blamed) on how we experience life during childhood. Still, he admits the parental role of socialization is an important one, but parents themselves are so confused about what it means to be an adult that they are not sure whether they are cultivating “mature adults, uncertain adults, or adults who would like to go back to being children” (p.131). If the walled garden is created by adults struggling to understand what it is to be an “adult”, and these people are apprehensive to let their children out, then of course these parents are socializing future generations into a psychic state of confusion.

To summarise, we might conceptualize the walled garden of childhood as a prison built by parents to keep their child in, and the world out. Parents, full of both resentment at their responsibility for their children, and reluctance at letting them go due to their reliance on them to fortify their sense of identity, re-present the world to their children by showing them select features of it in order to manipulate the child into feeling fearful of what lies beyond. Children are socialized into becoming inept adults because they are not equipped to deal with life outside of their garden, with all of its potential for hurt and disruption. If we accept Holt’s (and consequently Furedi’s) views on childhood and parenting, generations of oversensitive people incapable of living as adults – as blurry a concept as this is - seems inevitable.

THE PEDAGOGICAL WALLED GARDEN

Of course, it is not imperative that we accept their views, especially given that they are fraught with some questionable assertions. For example, Holt regularly makes semantic distinctions between child and adult while not being entirely clear on the exact categorical distinction. If children gradually become adults at no set age, with no clear change, what is the criteria for describing a person as either an “adult” or a “child”? Furthermore, invoking the ideas of Furedi, if parenting is such an ordeal, would not emotionally immature parents rather run in the opposite direction than keep their children close? In any case, these ideas of the figurative walled garden of childhood constitute a thinly veiled critique of the overprotective model of modern parenting. In this section, I will set out my conceptualization of the pedagogical walled garden with a view to determining whether it bears any resemblance to Holt’s conceptualization of childhood prison.

It is important, first of all, to make a distinction between parenting and pedagogy¹. While there may be similarities between them, it is fair to say that these are conceptually different (van Manen, 1991). To move away from the somewhat derogatory interpretation of parents given by Holt and Furedi, I take this description of the aim of parenting from Hoghugh (2004):

the most and the best parents can do for their children is to give them a core of unconditional love and reliable care, providing a safe setting for children's own resilience and developmental potential to unfold

(p.5)

This aim sets parenting apart from parent as a status bestowed upon a person who has simply participated in the process of procreation. It no doubt feeds into contemporary normative assumptions of what it is to be a “good” parent which could be problematic, certainly when it comes to the idea of unconditional love – a concept that cannot be succinctly defined here. For the purposes of distinguishing parenting from pedagogy, I take the stance that parenting is any action taken by an adult towards a child which aims somewhat towards Hoghuh’s description of parenting. A “parent”, rather than a biological producer of children, is any person who carries out such action with this goal in mind. Such actions will differ across cultural contexts, times, and individuals; for example, it may be culturally acceptable to use corporal punishment to discipline a child in certain parts of the world, as it certainly was in the UK in centuries past. This punishment may be given with no less love, and in a similar context of reliable care, as the parent who chooses a different route.

Pedagogy, on the other hand, I define as the setting of conditions which offer the student the opportunity to effect a change in how they relate to themselves and the world around them. There is something of a crossover here, perhaps – parenting creates the conditions of love and care and safety required to allow the child to develop (development being essentially a change). As a central feature of education, however, pedagogy has the educational intention woven into it: the intention to instigate a desirable change in a student’s relation to something internal, or external, to them. The intention to invoke a change in the student is the distinction here. Parents might certainly create these conditions, but they do not always do so with the intention to change their child’s relation to something. For example, a loving and caring environment might be the optimum place for a child to start walking and talking, but the environment is not necessarily created with this end goal in mind.

¹ It is important to note that while I have focussed on children here in order to make the cleanest comparison with Holt, pedagogy does not exclusively refer to children. Any student, of any age, in any situation can be found within the walls of the pedagogical garden.

So, to the garden itself. Like Holt's garden, the pedagogical walled garden is fabricated by someone other than the child (or student). It emphasises a power differential between the educator and the student which parallels that of the parent and child – one is building for the other. Neither are the intentions for building entirely different. Protection features in both parenting, as we have seen, and pedagogy. Mollenhauer (2013) describes it as a kind of “safety zone that protects children and teenagers from feeling the full weight of life in society” (p.49). Here, he in fact connects the familial and educational domains as he describes them both in terms of “shielding and filtering” elements of the world outside either domain. Conceptually, there is little difference in the walled gardens of childhood and pedagogy in terms of intention – they are both built with the aim of protection at their core.

Moreover, each of the two gardens is optimally constructed to separate itself from what lies beyond. They share the characteristic of being a suspension of the reality of life beyond its walls. Holt may balk at the idea that children should ever be subjected to such a thing, but in terms of pedagogy this suspension occurs routinely on both a macro and micro scale. Take the macro example of the school, for instance. In a very literal sense, school premises are gated, fenced, or walled off creating a barrier between the happenings inside the school, and what is going on outside: “society is in some way kept outside – the classroom door shuts and the teacher calls for silence and attention.” (Masschelein and Simons, 2013, p.38). These walls, however, are not an effort to confine but, as Masschelein and Simons further suggest, are (paradoxically) essential for a student to gain the freedom of space and time required to focus their attention on a particular subject – the subject itself also suspended from society.

Yves Chevallard (2007) describes this suspension as *la noosphère*: a buffer zone between the *savoir savant* (accepted knowledge) held within the highly complex structures of society, and the *savoir à enseigner* (content-to-be-taught) offered up to students. The educator is the mediator between *la noosphère* and their students. While it is society that decides what is culturally valuable to teach its students (Gauvin and Boivin, 2012), it is the teacher who proceeds to take this knowledge and carry out the process of didactic transposition (*la transposition didactique*) which, in its initial stages, first removes the knowledge from the context of its original production. Knowledge in its original context, suggests Chevallard, gets worn down by use in society. In order for the accepted knowledge to become content-to-be-taught, it must be removed from its productive function in society – a sentiment which would be later echoed by Masschelein and Simons (2013). Thus, the educator decides what is brought into *la noosphère* and how. It would seem the educator both fashions the walls of the pedagogical garden and carefully curates for its inhabitants.

Chevallard's example of the shift of knowledge from its original context into *la noosphère* constitutes what he considers an external transformation. The object of knowledge then goes through a second transformation – an internal transformation – from content-to-be-taught to content-actually-taught. It is here that the micro perspective comes into focus:

with the walls of the garden now built and the contents (a suspension of “real life”) now within, the educator has to do *something* to make this content capable of being taught. Chevallard gives an example of the distinction of the curriculum text which defines the content-to-be-taught, but it is the effort of the educator who interprets this text and transforms the words on the paper. It is the educator who applies it to relationships with actual students, and creates lessons, activities and examples based on their interpretation of such a text.

The act of suspending an object of knowledge from its original sphere; the idea that it is brought into a protective environment where the educator offers their interpretation of how this is best to be offered up to students leads us on to the concept of pedagogical reduction. (A) Pedagogical reduction can be considered both the process of selecting, simplifying, and re-presenting something from “real life” to students, and the result of such a process (Lewin, 2018). First, the educator selects what they judge to be valuable to show their student(s). In doing so, the educator inevitably obscures everything else that they deem unnecessary. The proverbial walls of the garden are built here. Next, the educator will simplify the content for the student. This does not necessarily mean a simple dumbing down. As Wagenschein (1999) suggests it is more the creation of an appropriate entry point for students to begin. This can be the removal of complexity in some cases, or the addition of supports in another. For example, Lewin gives the example of the balance bike which removes certain elements of the bike’s mechanics (pedals and brakes) in order to cultivate the requisite balance required for the child to ride a “full” bicycle. However, as I contest, a child may also learn using a bicycle with stabilisers, where nothing material has been removed but supports have been added. These are intended to cultivate the same requisite balance to allow the child to eventually ride a bicycle without them. Both have an educational aim in mind, but also a protective aim to prevent the child from falling and injuring themselves. Thus, simplifying in pedagogical reduction is not always about removing or making less complex – anyone who has ever fitted a child’s bicycle with stabilisers will attest to this. Nevertheless, it can still justifiably be considered a simplification since it removes something from the overall activity. In this case, it removes the child’s need to balance.

The final step in the reduction process is re-presentation. After content has gone through the selection and simplification stages, it is no longer the same as it was at the outset. The result is “a facsimile or reproduction of the world... that is “better”, for the sake of the children.” (Mollenhauer, 2013, 53). What exactly is “better” about it? Mollenhauer suggests that the facsimile removes everything that is intolerable or difficult about the world. In this sense, the reproduction becomes “better” than the original. This is logical, given that the adults are choosing the most valuable things to re-present, removing them from the sphere of productivity and endowing them with a pedagogical shield which, as Masschelein and Simons (2013) alluded to above, offers a paradoxical kind of freedom to fully engage with them in “pedagogical rehearsal or practice” (Mollenhauer, 2013, p.31).

The walled garden of pedagogy, then is a safe place. Whether characterised as a buffer zone between society and student as in *la noosphère*, or a place/thing for pedagogical practice as in the result of pedagogical reduction, we can conclude that pedagogy itself, at least as it is viewed through the lenses of *la transposition didactique* and pedagogical reduction, can only work in the highly manufactured, stylised environment of the walled garden. This is due to their instrumental role in the constructing and curating of these gardens. Unlike the walled garden of childhood, where Holt and Furedi suggest that parents want their children to stay weak and vulnerable forever, the pedagogical garden is a place which wants its inhabitants to change. Thus, there is no need to build a gate to allow a child to escape; the students build their own gates when they are ready. With walls that allow for suspension from “real life” and carefully curated contents held within, the pedagogical walled garden begins to resemble the timeless paradises such as those to be found within the hallowed grounds of New College, Oxford, or the regal setting of Culzean Castle in Ayrshire, UK.

Now a question arises: one person’s paradise might be considered another’s prison. The intentions behind the building of the pedagogical and the childhood gardens might be different, but surely any practice which obscures the world from the child/student is problematic? Does the possibility not remain that even pedagogy could have a detrimental impact on how a child develops into an adult if they are consistently subject to the obfuscations of the educator? Would this not result in stultification or epistemic injustice? (Fricker, 2007).

Not necessarily – and the answer to this lies in the introduction of risk.

INTRODUCING RISK

In order to rally against the childhood prison, Holt tells us a child must escape into the outside world to be able to experience any kind of risk. On the importance of taking risks – in education, in life – Holt and I agree, but not necessarily on the methods by which children can experience these risks. In the pedagogical walled garden, risk must be introduced as the student continues on their journey of changing relations. This idea of risk is not to be confused with Holt’s description of parents introducing representations of dangers from the “outside” as a deterrent for venturing away from perceived safety.

One might be inclined to separate risk into discrete categories such as physical (risk of injury) and intellectual (risk of discomfort). While this would be entirely possible, and indeed an attractive prospect, I intend to cover risk as a systematic notion taking Solomon’s (2014) definition of risk as any action with an unclear outcome.

With this idea in mind, Biesta (2013) might contrarily find Holt’s method of yielding complete freedom to a child in fact characteristic of a risk-free education. Education, he

posits, is not about giving a child/student complete freedom or placing them under total control. It is not even about trying to find a middle ground between these two extremes. It is, as I have outlined above, about making a desirable change in a student's relation to something. Thus, the overriding risk in education, which Biesta outlines in his work, is the human element. He describes students as subjects of action and responsibility which, try as an educator might, can never be predictably moulded or manipulated. Walling a child/student into a particular situation or environment may preclude the limits of what they can experience, but it cannot predict their reaction to it. This overriding risk further separates pedagogy from Holt's notion of a childhood prison.

In terms of material risk rather than a philosophical one, being as it is a safe place for pedagogical practice and rehearsal, it seems illogical to suggest that everything within the pedagogical garden should be instantly achievable and straightforward. Of course, this would then render the need for practice or rehearsal as entirely moot. As curators of the pedagogical walled garden, it is up to the educator, in interaction with the student, to decide how much risk – beyond the inherent risk already present in the educational situation - a child can be subjected to and at what point.

Closely related to ideas of risk are feelings of fear. Pain (2006) tells us that fear of parents for their children does not match the fear that children have for themselves. If, as I suggested earlier, parents are instrumental in perpetuating the vulnerability of their children, then it is justifiable that they would be fearful for these fragile creatures and do all they can to protect them. Indeed, it could be cynically suggested that a cycle ensues where fear begets protection which, in turn, perpetuates the vulnerability which causes parents to be fearful. In a sentiment that is curiously analogous to Holt and Furedi, some interpretations of Janusz Korczak's call for children to have the right to die believe that this puts impetus on parents to allay their selfish fears so as not to inhibit exploration and imagination (Walczak, 2018).

With this firmly in mind, there is room for fear in pedagogy. Imagine the student assigned the task of speaking in front of their class who is reluctant given their fear of speaking publicly. This fear is born from the student's perceived risk that they could make a mistake, or become a laughing stock, or that no one will be interested in what they have to say. A protective parent's instinct might be to take their child away from this situation to relieve their feelings of anxiety. An educator, on the other hand, would be keen to see them complete this task in the hope that the student's feelings about public speaking might change. The path of education is not necessarily one that runs smoothly. The hypothetical prisoners in Plato's cave, once freed from their fetters, experienced a great deal of pain throughout their enlightened ascension to the world beyond the cave (Plato, 1963). Similarly, a pedagogy of discomfort invites students to leave behind what they know to be familiar and take a risk to experience something alien to them (Zembylas & Boler, 2002). Indeed, if pedagogy creates the conditions intended to instigate a change, the student must submit to taking a step into the unknown – this is always a risk.

An important strategy here is not to discount the child's thoughts and experiences as immaterial in the decision to introduce risk. Holt and Furedi describe situations where parents routinely ignore the child's feelings and implement their own protective faculties as it is assumed that children do not have the capacity to assess risk effectively. This could be considered a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: if a child is not allowed to experience anything that is risky, how can they be expected to either identify or assess risk? In Germany, introducing children to risk is a very public endeavour. Playgrounds are built with extra high climbing towers, wobbly suspension bridges and lopsided steps; the aim is to promote the optimum level of freedom for exploration while not *entirely* sacrificing safety – but understanding that every possible accident cannot be prevented (Olterman, 2021). Solomon (2014) offers more examples throughout history of playgrounds that may have inspired this shift to risky play in Germany.

There is no better metaphor for the pedagogical walled garden than these playgrounds – a place of relative safety with risk built in to allow for exploration of what lies within the walls. Pedagogy then comes with an inherent risk (à la Biesta) and an acquired risk (so perceived by the educator and student). There is room for practice in the risky endeavour (Smith, 1998) which reflects the room for practice offered in pedagogical reduction which exemplifies the notion of education as risky in and of itself. Holt's childhood walled garden can be conceptualized as a prison because you are either locked in it or escaping from it. The pedagogical walled garden can be truly thought of as a garden because having risk built into it, alongside everything else curated by the educator, really does allow for growth, arguably unique from that which lies outside of its walls.

CONCLUSION

The walled garden of childhood is presented to us by Holt as a miserable place, from which many children seek an escape. It is fashioned by overprotective, resentful, insecure parents who, with strangely converse reasoning, wish to keep their children close to them. The walled garden of pedagogy, on the other hand, is a suspension of society. It offers a space for pedagogical practice, while shielding students from the pressures of being productive members of society: they can study English and write essays without the pressure of having to submit their work for publication, for example. Any attempts at entirely removing the walls of the pedagogical garden would result in whatever the educator is attempting to achieve to be no longer pedagogical: it would be work.

The discourse on risk, parenting and childhood is large and diverse. I have focussed on Holt and Furedi in this paper as they represent somewhat extreme positions on the subject. A more nuanced position could be found in future for anyone wishing to carry on

the baton of what I have introduced here. The breadth of discourse is similarly wide when it comes to pedagogy; less so when it comes to pedagogical reduction (certainly in English).

While one might argue that any space which places a wall around children/students could be conceptualised as a prison, as Holt does, it is in the inclusion of risk in the pedagogical walled garden which resists it becoming a place of stultification. It is not something to be resisted: for education to succeed, the student must submit to inhabiting the garden – at least until they are ready to build the gate to leave.

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