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To cite this article: Aleida Luján Pinelo & Amalia Verdú Sanmartín (02 Jan 2025):
What Are You, Critical Legal Education? An Absurd Symphony, Law & Literature, DOI:
[10.1080/1535685X.2024.2429939](https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.2024.2429939)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.2024.2429939>



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Published online: 02 Jan 2025.



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What Are You, Critical Legal Education? An Absurd Symphony

Aleida Luján Pinelo  and **Amalia Verdú Sanmartín** 

Abstract, This paper challenges the dominance of technology in discussions about transforming the legal profession, which often overlooks crucial debates in legal education, such as curriculum transformation and teaching methodologies. Despite ongoing reforms, mainstream legal education remains largely unchanged, with critical approaches timidly included and to the margins. We question whether current legal education fosters the critical thinking needed to challenge established doctrines. For this, we position critical legal education at the center of the debate, rethinking the idea of “thinking like a lawyer”. We explore a co-writing methodology in a dramatic style inspired by the theater of the absurd.

Keywords, legal education, absurd, critique, co-writing, critical legal studies, banking education, positive law, drama, university education

PRELUDE

[Amalia and Aleida are walking in the street. There is a park and buildings in front of it.]

Amalia: Look! A critical bank! What a wonderful place to deposit our knowledge and watch it grow!

Aleida: Oh, yes! It is a big, stable, good-quality one. Come on, let's sit down for a while. You can chat, I will listen and think. *(Amalia and Aleida sit.)*

Amalia: We should deposit some knowledge. The students can withdraw it when they need it. We will become millionaires! *(with sudden anxiety)* But what if the bank fails? What if our vaults are filled with waste paper? Could we make gold ingots out of them? We would be producing the shiniest and most important ingots, approved by the very best economists!

Law & Literature, pp. 1–19. ISSN 1535-685X, ELECTRONIC ISSN 1541-2601.

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Aleida (*getting up from the bench*): By its looks, this one seems to be working perfectly: the shape, the color, the quality. You can see how the deposits of legal dogmatics buy perfect, timeless, universal, and unquestioning conformity. People look happy, sitting comfortably and immersed in reading lifelong newspapers. Their future is safe, no need to invest in something different.

Amalia: Well then, we can invest in our future, and think of the interest we will get if we make our deposits there. We need to invest in our future. Bitcoins! No, not bitcoins! Only algorithms!

Aleida: I'm tired. (*sitting on a different bench*) Those philosophers are always waxing poetic about ethics, as if we're running a moral salon instead of a legal circus! Maybe I'm getting old. I want my old one back, it was such a comfortable arrangement.

Amalia: Yeah... I want tradition back. I miss him. His body, his muscles, his skin, his virile presence! Centuries of legal dogmatics emasculated for bitcoins with no power.¹

[*Basilium is an abstract nondefined entity, whose pronoun is "they" and who only interacts with specific characters.*]

Basilium (*entering out of nowhere*): POWER, wake up! You're trapped in a Kafkaesque nightmare. Legal education should be a festival. Let's go to the rave! The algorithms are hacking the system and Critical Legal Studies approved bitcoins; they are searching for the essence, or the nonessence, or the nonsense, of justice.

[*Aleida and Amalia are wearing overalls with several tags, one of which says "avant-garde academia." They are walking toward something unclear that resembles a music stage.*]

Amalia: The rave! There we can join the secret society. Then we become "the critical," we play, we "break the rules" and whisper about law and power while drinking sparkling wine under moonlit palm trees.² We smuggle Paulo Freire and bell hooks into the textbooks and curricula.³ We want students to get addicted; they'll be rebels in three-piece suits.

Aleida: What if the student doesn't like our music? We should teach them how to like our beats. I don't have time to learn new steps, I only want to do the same dance I've always done and get as many wristbands as I can.

Amalia: They might prefer Hart over Deleuze, even Crenshaw.⁴ In the end, the rebels in suits only quote legal codes.

Basilium: How wonderful to imagine a world where the beat of ethics syncs with the rhythm of rebellion! Your duty is to orchestrate a symphony that dances

between the absurd and the norm. You must teach the musicians of the orchestra not just to like your beats, but to feel and question the very essence of the music they hear.

Aleida: After all, in today's avant-garde academy, the rebels in suits will need to pirouette through moral questions with the finesse of ballerinas, challenging the very fabric of conventional wisdom with every graceful step.

Amalia: We will always have our journals. Empty ATMs of existential angst.

Aleida: We are heroes with footnotes. We teach law, publish in obscure journals, and fade into legal oblivion. But fear not!

Basilium: Ethics is the moonlight of enlightenment! Come to the light and join the architects of legal thought and continue building castles of power to raise the sheep of the future. No! The system devours us all and our ethics evaporates. Ethical, technological, and pedagogical threads woven in the fabric of our absurd legal rebellion!

BECOMING...

[Somewhere in a nervous system a synapse is firing.]

Aleida: I did not arrive directly at the subject of legal education. As is often the case, it all started with my experience. In my public high school in Oaxaca, we were taught sciences and arts at the same time. The pedagogies always stressed how these were related and intertwined. This approach has had a strong impact on how I understand knowledge to happen and on my own subjects of interest: the embodied element in knowledge production. On the other hand, the political and critical aspect of pedagogy came to me through my family experience. My parents were schoolteachers and were strongly influenced by critical pedagogies such as those of Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Pablo Latapí, and Sylvia Schmelkes. I also developed a strong ethical sensitivity thanks to my feminist and philosophical education. The fact that these theories were discussed at home and that I related them to my education meant that, when I had to start teaching, all this background informed the design and implementation of my courses. Education, for me, is a great responsibility, and the body (*Leib/flesh*) plays an important role in it.

My interest in critical education and pedagogy is informed by this lived experience. However, my specific interest in legal education emerged through dialogue with Amalia, when I commented on one of her draft papers in 2020. I was intrigued to read about the status of legal education, particularly because I do not come from a legal background. What is going on with legal education? How are critical pedagogies at play in it? How has critical education influenced

legal education? And what is the role of the body perceived to be in legal education?

Amalia: My lived experience—in academic terms, my situated knowledge—differs greatly from yours. I had a noncritical upbringing. I grew up in Spanish post-Franco society. In the world in which I grew up, arts, criticism, and the act of challenging traditions were completely disapproved of. It was a world dominated by reason, rigid thinking, and tradition. The existing norms and beliefs were there to stay because that was simply the way it was. There was a shadowy fear—a fear that silently wielded power and shaped relationships within society, family, and school. Emotions and criticism had a bad connotation and were cast aside. The principle was conformity over curiosity, dependence over independence.

I was very far from any contact with critical approaches—not at school, even less at the university. However, driven by curiosity and the feeling that things could be different elsewhere, I traveled constantly in search of something, even though I was not sure what I was looking for. In this search, I returned to the university, this time to study law. Naively I thought law would help me to change society, but the experience mirrored my previous ones. I had to wait until I started my PhD to discover the “others.” It was then that I realized that critical approaches were not new and had a long story.⁵ However, I also discovered that often the “critical” was merely a line about acquiring “critical thinking” skills placed in the curriculum to attract students, while the essence, the core, the substance, the teaching, stayed within the bounds of established and accepted knowledge. Critical perspectives were wasted paper for the majority. I was anxiously searching for an unknown something when suddenly I stumbled upon Paulo Freire and bell hooks. The large number of writings that tended to be dismissed as mere anecdotes in comparison to what was considered “true” knowledge left me frustrated. It was as if everything worth saying had already been said, yet little action had been taken. Frustration led to a battle to put all those texts into practice. The emergence of AI and the rapid advancements in technology echoed age-old questions, yet it felt like we were reinventing the wheel. But the wheel didn’t need reinventing; it was there, waiting to be set in motion through experimentation and perseverance until it worked flawlessly.⁶

[This is how we came together to discuss legal education, arriving by means of different roads and different stories to the city where the Aura River and the Baltic Sea meet.⁷]

ACT 1: THE LEGAL EDUCATION CHECKUP

[Meanwhile, in the valley ...]

What is the situation of legal education? We both are working in Finland, renowned globally as the country with the world’s best education system, but is

legal education in Finland reflecting this excellence? To answer these questions, turn your eyes to the curriculum, to actual teaching, and to the words of students.⁸ Education there continues to be traditional [*what is tradition?*]. Although many of us claim to be critical and teach critically, maybe we are failing to close the gap between critical thinking and teaching critically [*if that is even possible*].⁹

The Socratic method is commonly employed in legal education to promote dialogue and critical thinking. However, its emphasis on established principles limits exploration of creative solutions.¹⁰ Dialogues typically focus on modern values and positivist perspectives, leading to a normative understanding of legal knowledge. There is always a right answer to reach, the one that was and will be shaping students' perception of how the world is and should be experienced.¹¹

We both have taught elective courses in law, and we both explore ways to teach critically. And what do students think? Let's grant them the stage to express themselves [*otherwise it might seem we alone are making up the problem*]. Many law students attending our classes have expressed opinions such as, "I had never been taught like this, I had never been exposed to these things [emotions, the unsaid, the critical, the invisible, the other, my agency],"¹² or, "The teacher did not push her perspective on us and this is different from many classes I have had before."¹³ The feedback from the students makes us wonder: If we are all critical and we are all teaching critically, why do students not always feel that they have been exposed to critical perspectives and encouraged to think critically? Is it only a matter of teachers' and students' different approaches? Neither of us is the most radical of teachers; we are just curious to know and explore. We also do not have the true answers. We are not role models to follow, and we do not want followers; we are just asking questions while looking in the mirror.

Our students, who come from different backgrounds, countries, and experiences with law education, have limited knowledge about critical theories such as gender, feminist, and decolonial perspectives in law. It is not just a question of "what" legal theories they learn and "how" they learn them, but also a question of the essence of legal knowledge and what is understood as legal knowledge. Following the core curriculum, we have come to realize that the legal knowledge that is imparted primarily consists of black-letter law and established jurisprudence. Lectures and seminars in which written texts play a main role are the means of knowledge transmission.

Law promises the power to bend the world to our (lawyers') will, and it empowers us to force change by understanding its rules. A poignant irony emerges: it's astonishing how many remain oblivious to their own rights and responsibilities. The Master speaks and we listen. Knowledge is imparted and we grow complacent. We are educated and trained passively to accept law's dictates

without questioning (banking education).¹⁴ We are lectured about the norm, “the” truth, “our” rights, “my” rights, “your” responsibilities, the *habitus*.¹⁵

[*First we know, and only after this can we learn to be critical.*] Growing up we (un)consciously continue to accept our own place in the universe of hierarchies, performing our days as students, absorbing opinions and unassailable truths constructed by the green, red, blue, and black Masters. We all know(ledge). And now, in this cycle of power, there comes a sudden disruption, the virtual truth bursts into being, and a new Master rises.¹⁶

Digital technological developments are precipitating a fundamental socio-cultural transformation of the legal sector and its associated professions, but they are also having significant impacts on and implications for the nature and status of legal education. In legal education, the initial emphasis has been on acquiring IT skills and using them in teaching, and on how to source and handle information among the vast amount now readily available online. However, law students are not simply “information miners,” and legal education is not merely the teaching of skills for doing so. So far, the changes wrought by digitalization have left the core of legal education largely untouched. They have precipitated supplementary rather than substantive effects. In our increasingly data-driven world, digitized legal knowledge and its use, transmission, and learning should pose a profound educational and ethical challenge that requires a wholesale reassessment of legal education in order to adapt to the changing needs of society.¹⁷

[*Basilium is coming back from picking mushrooms in the forest and is now baking a mushroom cake.*]

Basilium (*eating a piece of mushroom cake*): Where are you? I do not know. I am here in the middle of a journey. I am flying but I do not like it ... *cogito ergo sum?*¹⁸ Where am I? I want to walk, run, jump, fly, swim ... I want to move around and feel. The radio is on. An orchestra plays the melodies; the “Other,” the “Self,” and “Them.” The quest is to listen, to see, to feel, to understand and dance to the music in which they are all and one and nothing. How did I get here? *Sentio, ergo sum!*¹⁹ The thoughts that arise from me are the offspring of experiences and encounters—talking with you, with students, and with a multitude of others, as well as friends, movies, books, and the journey into my own thoughts and emotions. My emotions? Do they think? Put that away! Think, brain, think ... neurons do not feel, cerebrum, they think, they transmit only information! My body, a symphony of intuitions, whispers of the unconscious: flow, move, dance ... New research is saying that my brain and neurons feel and regenerate. Whether we like it or not, thinking is a complex interplay of factors,²⁰ a rave of synapses firing and connecting.²¹ Now that I know, why don’t I dare to join the dance?

[Basilium is entering a law-school classroom while reading a book out loud.]

Basilium: “In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing ... the teacher teaches and the students are taught.”²²

An Interpellated Teacher: But that’s not me, not us! We all design our teaching according to constructive alignment and a learning-based teaching approach.²³

The once sacred truth—the blue, the one, the red, the black—blurs into the same nebulous virtuality. What purpose does it serve? Shhhhhh, that’s not the question. Quietly read the text, it will give you guidance, let the text speak by itself. Who holds the key to my truth, to your reality, to our truth, to my rights? Where does it live in this entangled virtuality? Who knows the answers? It’s ironic, isn’t it? We are all trapped in this endless loop, chasing after the same truth you once chased.²⁴

A Critical Teacher: The experiential learning commonly associated with Finnish education becomes less distinct in higher education, emotions are sidelined, and rational thinking takes precedence. Law students are instructed to learn how to apply black-letter law, adhering to established principles and norms. They offer no resistance, remaining anchored in their seats. Their movement and physical awareness fade into oblivion until we grant them the right to move again. Then, when someone asks them to move around or walk, students remain seated, fearing their bodies will wake up and become aware of their breathing, as if they too can think. They are confused by reason. They write incessantly, searching for the right answers, the ones accepted by the teachers, by the electronic exams, described in handbooks and inscribed in the legal codes. They wait for instructions, yearning to be educated, to evolve into critical thinkers, always evolving within the structural boundaries of knowledge, “becoming anew” within the confines of erudition.²⁵

[Basilium turns their back on the teachers and addresses the audience.]

Basilium: Do you see them? You’d probably rather hear the melody of that symphony. Analysis, interrogation, logic, formality, skills to amplify the critical faculties, bringing creativity into practice in order to advise, to rule, to exist
within the world.

We are so embedded in the same melody that we forget to listen, to feel the rhythms, to see the beauty and breathe quietly, feeling the air—breathe in,
breathe out—feel. We hear the music.

We are the posthuman lawyers who forget to be human. And so, the question arises: How can we integrate empathy and other relational abilities into legal

practice, especially when the sole focus is on thinking like a lawyer and mastering the technicalities of the law?

Critical teaching perspectives involve blurring the normative power hierarchy and reconnecting with the body and emotions, fostering a deeper understanding of their impact. Mainstreaming critical perspectives and integrating the role of the body in thinking and knowledge are still a challenge. It's almost as if we are asking to play a different tune, isn't it? And I am flying again and the radio is still on. We all sing the melody, but the sounds are unheard and the rhythm unfelt. We continue to play the same symphony, hoping for a different dance.

ACT 2: CRITICS CRITICALLY CRITICIZING CRITIQUE

[Basilium is sitting on a rock in the middle of a deserted island on an unknown planet, taking out pieces of paper from a box next to them.]

Basilium: *(reading out loud each paper they take out of the box)*: "Can we teach someone to be critical? Can a handbook on teaching critically be an aid for teachers and students?"

I believe it's possible to teach using diverse types of publications about various theories, but teaching students critically is a different aim. There is no single recipe for developing a critical perspective, as no one arrives at the same topic or issue for the same reasons or by the same steps.

Where do we draw the line on what is critical? How can we tell someone, "You are not critical," or, "You are critical?" Can we categorically define what is considered "critical?"

"We can, for example, give an account of critical theories made up to this moment regarding the past and present. In particular, critical theorists emphasized questioning certain traditions that were considered the norm—each era has one. They focused on the weak points of those traditions. The fact of questioning those traditions is what would be considered critical." "Basilium works with new materialism, a theory that acknowledges this aspect of critical theories, but that also paves the way for proposing new alternatives. Critical education, for Basilium, involves evaluating traditions and seeing how they are working in our present and thus informing the future."

To teach is not only a matter of what I teach in terms of content. It is more about: Why do I teach what I teach? And how does this help to understand this past-present? And how does it help to imagine the future? To make the future?

For us, the critical aspect in education has to do with that: not only understanding the past, not only putting our feet in the here and now, but also having the creative capacity to respond to the challenges of the future. And, most importantly, thinking critically does not happen in isolation ...

What is my position as a teacher? What values am I reproducing in the classroom? Why am I evaluating? What am I evaluating? What is the meaning of this evaluation? Am I evaluating only the students or am I also evaluating myself? Why do I choose this content and not other content? These pedagogical questions are related to my being, who I am as a teacher and a (human) being. Answering these questions is not easy, since you have to dedicate time to it, and we teachers already don't have enough hours in the day.

We are more than two: we are body, we are mind, we are emotions, we are I and you and others and they. And we continue to divide ourselves all the time and perform in front of people in dualistic ways—you and him and her—and the dance is in between the two. The multiplicity of you and them is reduced to me and you. Mind and reason in my professional role, body and emotion in my private niche.

No text can tell you how to teach critically; being critical does not follow a single logical method that works for everyone.

Critical thinking and critical pedagogies demand a radical ethical stance, a process that is inherently political and time-consuming, and which is never done once and for all.

Let the performance begin!

[Basilium leaves the isolated island full of fear and insecurity, murmuring, "When?" "Where?" and, "What for?"]

Inquisitive Student: It seems to me that here in this room, you are merely filling my vaults with empty words, a waste of paper! Do you realize your active role in maintaining the banking education system and its consequences?²⁶

Critical Teacher: I am maintaining nothing. It is a matter of perspective. I see myself as transmitting legal knowledge, the law which you all have to learn in order to become a law professional and make a living of it.²⁷ I am making you understand the law, apply norms logically, and describe critical approaches to the law. Before thinking critically, you need to understand the structure, the power of law.

Inquisitive Student (*murmuring*): Dogmatic image of thought... political correctness...

Critical Teacher: Law is the ruler of representation. It is reason, truth, and the norm. And legal education is the gatekeeper. I can include critical stances and teach you critical thinking, but the core of law is what it is, the logic of reason and the practical analysis of facts. Once you have trained in it and established it, then you can do whatever you want with critique. Of course, in law education we offer you the option to develop critical skills in elective courses. But first things first: time is linear, and so is the process of knowledge and learning.²⁸ Maybe you don't see this because you like mushroom cake.

Inquisitive Student: Mushroom cake is delicious! I started eating it on the first day of my studies. And certainly, the world looks very different since then. We can bake one together if you like. Baking together is fun, and we can both learn something.

[*Critical Teacher and Inquisitive Student bake a mushroom cake together.*]

Critical Teacher: Tasty!... You were right. My approach is not working. The truth is that the way we are performing legal education is not profitable for critical thinking. We all claim to be critical thinkers, most of us use critical theories, and we all have acquired critical skills of some sort... So, I am tasked with enhancing your *critical skills* to achieve *critical thinking* by introducing you to *critical theories*. But the reality is that I cannot do that by only depositing legal theories in your heads. But why would it matter anyway? Why is critique sooooo important? (*Teacher eats another slice of cake.*) Are we teachers really helping students, future lawyers, to challenge the growing multicolored reality?

[*Meanwhile, in a flexible classroom a group of students wait for the start of their class.*]

Student X: I think positivism was probably considered critical at some point.

Student Y: Yes, exactly. In fact, it was a response to metaphysical theories of its time. It was the result of questioning the status quo.

Student Z: We need to understand the context in which the traditions emerged. Some of them were revolutionary. They were the outcome of critical thinking.

Student X: I think that if a person says, for example, "I am a (critical) positivist," and that person is saying it with the knowledge of what other perspectives or theories argue is valid and critical, it is different than when a person says, "I am a positivist," without having expanded their horizons and knowledge.

Student W: What a surprising element this "critical" is in academia! In education and research, critical thinking seems to be cool, fancy, trendy, and supposedly embedded in all academic practice. Still, somehow, even when critique has been around for so long, it feels as if everything remains unchanged.²⁹

Student X: Exactly! Do critique and critical thinking, the gown jewels of academia, ever go beyond the academic realm? And how are they reflected when we do our work in courts, law firms, and the like? Or are they a gown we can take off in everyday life?

Student Z: Why is critical legal education necessary? Not just for people in academia, but also for students who are instead going to act as public servants, corporate lawyers, or any of the many professions they can choose from? Why should we invest our time and energy in it? Why go through this process that can be traumatic?

Student X: Isn't it already traumatic that our emotions and bodies have been suppressed since primary and secondary school?

Student W: Critical education can help us develop skills to use in our profession. For example, by paying attention to our body and mind, we can be more receptive and empathetic. We listen to clients and others in a different way, understanding that not everything is black and white; there are also shades of gray that start to become more visible. In other words, we will be able to see connections that were previously invisible to us.

Student Y: And we can make an ontological "leap back," rebuilding the sense of community that was eroded by the liberal emphasis on individuality.

Student Z: Yet, despite the new melodies and players, the big maestro liberalism seems to underpin our critical legal orchestra, capitalizing the tones of the symphony and producing the same old song that we all sing.

Student M: I'm confused again. I lost the critical thread of the argument. What are we aiming for when we study law? Critical legal knowledge? Critical thinking? Critical theories? All of these? Or some of these? We are technicians of the law! We need critical skills based on logic and formality.

Student X: I guess the main question here is rather how our legal education embodies the "critical." Maybe it is just we students who are not able to appreciate how our legal education is critically embodied?

Basilium: Welcome to the grand spectacle of the Critical Orchestra! Tonight, we have had a symphony of intellect and skills! In the strings, we had the master of analysis, the virtuoso of logic and reasoning, playing the complex melodies of Legal Realism: please put your hands together for Mrs. Analytical Skills. On the woodwinds, a maestro of Constructivist Theories: give a warm round of applause for Mr. Communication Skills! Now, in the brass section, playing the powerful horn of legal positivism, we present Mr. Research Skills. On percussion, the rhythm of Critical Legal Studies and Law and Economics: applause for Mrs. Creativity and Mr. Practical Skills. And finally ... Directing this orchestra of virtuosos, the most sought-after conductor in the world, the maestro of discernment and judgment, Mr. Critical Thinking!

They all together played a tapestry of legal theories and skills, creating a symphony that resonates with the music of law.

ACT 3: REIMAGINING LEGAL EDUCATION FOR A COMPLEX REALITY

[Basilium returns to the island on an unknown planet. Students W, Y, Z, M, and X are rhizomatically moving around the scene murmuring as a mantra, "What?"

“Why?” “How?” “Impact!” “Infrastructure!” “Innovation!” while eating mushroom cake.]

Basiliium: How can we reimagine the future of this critical legal education orchestra so that it harmonizes with the diverse melodies of our vibrant and multicolored virtual reality? How can we create a space for communication and dialogue among everyone? Dialogue is the alchemy of knowledge!

Amaleida: Transformative education is a continuous process for which we need to acquire the skills useful to help grasp this constantly changing reality.³⁰ Skills such as radical listening,³¹ complex thinking, and ethical reasoning, relating, creating, feeling, producing, and receiving. It's like having permanent antennas on.

Alelia: If we really want to transform legal education we need to start embodying our critical theories and mainstream them in all layers of our being. The fact that they are called “theories” does not mean they are ethereal, belonging to another world and applicable only to academic knowledge.

Leidalia: This is so important because it implies the self-awareness necessary to reinvent ourselves from time to time in order to adapt to the future, without falling into a hypercreative transformation anxiety. That is what the concept “transformative” brings in: the ability to reinvent oneself and become aware of one's agency in this process.

Amaleida: Our desire is to allow everybody in the legal orchestra to perform their unique solos, if they wish to. In this transformation, however, we are evading the fact that some structures have an allergy to change and try by all means to remain fixed, always playing and listening to the same music, changing no more than the key.

Alelia: So we can also say that there is no single future. We both have come to agree that it is profitable to invest in “transformative education.” Are we trying to be creative? No, our message is not new, what we are saying is nothing that hasn't already been said or written. Look at our footprints! However, we emphasize that the execution should be multiple.

Leidalia: “Becoming anew!”

Aidamalia: Each person can build their “own” critical points; it helps to have as much information as you can get and be in conversation with others (different critical points, different experiences, different others, different non-others and more-than-others).

Alelia: But critical thinking does not happen in isolation and is not solely the outcome of a single author, teacher, or person. Developing critical skills also requires more than self-reflection alone.

Leidalia: Maybe this inter/cross/trans/multi-disciplinary twist in education involves all actors in society, not only universities. Communication with institutions, with the private sector, with civil society ...

Alelia: But digitalization is one of the many processes in the digital technologies pressing us to realize that the boundaries of legal knowledge are being pushed to their limits. It can no longer be sustained as it is.

Leidalia: The digital might be taking that preeminent place within knowledge, becoming what guides us. But the core has not changed; it has evolved and adapted to a new milieu.

Aidamalia: Technologies have been affecting law and the legal profession for a long time now, but maybe the current speed at which technologies are impacting all fields of our life triggers the speculation that our legal education will be impacted and transformed by it.

Alelia: And it's true that changes are inevitable, and many of them are welcome. Still, many of the problems we have been experiencing will remain, though transformed and adapted, insofar as the structure and the curriculum remain the Same. We need more than cosmetic reforms. Legal education needs to be renewed to account for the challenges of the present-future (virtual).

Leidalia: Questions ... questions upon questions and nothing more than questions ... there will always be questions to ask ... [*Copilot please formulate this as a question.*]

Basilium: In the multicolored symphony of our virtual reality, the future of legal education stands at the crossroads. Not only legal education but all education is transforming, adapting to the changing needs of the becoming of the world.

Many do not want to drive, play, or dance, but the journey continues and the radio will be on. As we orchestrate this digital symphony, all we can do is try to ensure that the composition is guided by the rhythm of ethical reasoning, the harmony of corporeal critical thinking, and the new interplay of voices, pictures, sounds, and affects that are part of a transformative education.³²

[*Meanwhile on the stage, the cleaners, the producer, the technicians, and the audience join together to play and try out the instruments in different ways. Some play jazz, others bossa nova, and there are even those who play pure noise.*]

Basilium: Yes, dear audience, you are no longer just spectators. You have transcended that role and have become integral to this grand orchestra. The answer might lie not only within the orchestra but also within the audience, the producers, the assistants, the cleaners, the singers, the technicians—you get me. Look at them: the black and white of the musicians is now a rainbow of colors! The color brightens the melody. The audience is not just passively listening, and the musicians are now experimenting with other instruments.

Remember, dear audience, a symphony is not just about the melody. It has a color that can resonate with different rhythms to which we can all vibe together.

You have the answer; you decide what the orchestra plays. Let the music
play on!

All different tunes, radically changing the very fabric of our known symphony, introducing a whole new repertoire of rhythms to it.

And, in this rainbow, we might piece together broken relationships or weave communities. The orchestra is not just about the score (text) and its interpretation (discourse); it is also light, and sound, and images, and materiality. We are about the relationality, the cross-disciplinarity of our existence.

And you might ask, But what about those that like black and white? And what about those that love their instruments and want to master them? What
about glossophobics?

It is the structure of the orchestra and the stage that need to transform, but we are used to that setting; we might even believe that this is the only way in
which music can exist.

What can a violinist do without an orchestra? How can a trumpeter play the role of a guitarist? In an orchestra where everyone has a clear role, there is always room to have guest musicians and singers, and the public can also be invited onto the stage. The orchestra can even play in the woods. But at the end of the day, the orchestra remains, and its transformation is only possible within the same frameworks that define it as an orchestra. Current academic critique
continues to occur within this framework.

The brilliant future of the legal education orchestra might lie in the radical
transformation of the economy of this very structure.

The answers elude me, as they elude us all. It is a cruel irony to find myself not having answers when everything has been written. IT seems to have the answers. Here I am waiting for you to tell me. Everything continues, the quest for understanding that IT understands and prompts, and we evade. Our becoming follows the same direction as before. We remain trapped, without reacting, complicitly entangled in the invisible fabrics of a truth that serves only one melody, while we, playing our roles, perpetuate the cycle.

[Time has collapsed. Basiliium is sitting back on their island, maybe another island. They are critically thinking about the collapse they are witnessing. Basiliium has won: they are the Master of critique.]

NOTE BY THE AUTHORS

[In this note we want to explain our methodology, how it emerged and where (Turku, Tampere, Tromsø), the dialogue, the transcript, the process of putting it

together, the emotions (craziness, fun, tensions, tiredness, complicity, laughs...), the intra-action, space-time, Basilium, etc.]

We have been discussing knowledge and education for a long time, ever since we met, but we have specifically been discussing legal education since Amalia's first draft paper "Diffractive Possibilities for Critical Thinking in Legal Education" in 2020 (the never-ending article, at some point hopefully "forthcoming"). At the same time, we have been discussing and experimenting with new ways of doing academic work. Our first experiment was in the online Gender Studies Conference 2020 organized by Tampere University. In that presentation, we had agreed on some points to address and the format of an interview, but we had not elaborated the plan any further. Aleida improvised and started the presentation as though she were performing a guest expert interview on a certain TV debate program. Amalia was taken by surprise but followed her lead. The experience was rewarding, so we decided to continue our experimentation. Since we are tired of traditional conference settings, we found the Legal Critical Conference a place suitable for our experimentation, and in 2022 we made our next trial in Tromsø. In it, we used invisible theater.³³ The topic was critical legal education, and we only had a working script. Amalia played the role of the critical teacher teaching critical legal education, and Aleida played the role of the inquisitive student. This arrangement was not arbitrary: we wanted to play as well with prejudices around age, authority, and knowledge. The audience was small and there were two colleagues present who already knew that we were collaborators, so we believed our experiment would not be as invisible as we had imagined. Aleida sat among the audience, and Amalia began the presentation with a PowerPoint, as would normally occur. A few sentences in, the inquisitive student interrupted and challenged the speaker. One person in the audience asked the student (Aleida) to let the presenter talk. A bit of tension was generated, but Amalia and Aleida continued in their roles. We left ourselves room to improvise our moments of agreement and disagreement, and the physical space also played a role. After a while, it became evident that we were working together. The feedback on this presentation was very good, and the points we were making resonated with many in the audience.

This "paper" is the result of these experiences, and of our attempts to defamiliarize ourselves and embody the theories we work with. This time we decided to explore the idea of "co-writing," but taking it seriously, not simply having one person do *a* and another *b*, then writing *c* together. We acknowledge that our informal conversations can be very rewarding and fruitful in terms of ideas. So we elaborated a set of questions we wanted to cover and engaged in a conversation *via* Zoom, which we recorded. We then transcribed it using Word tools (it was a bad transcript, though). Curiously, the transcript brought in a new character called *good by Lenin* who faded away in the text. The conversation provided us with some ideas and points we wanted to make, which served as guidelines.

Since we wanted to explore other alternatives to mainstream academic (legal) writing, we decided on a dramatic style inspired by theater of the absurd, particularly Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*. "While someone may not be able to define absurd literature, one knows absurd literature when one encounters it."³⁴ Inspired by our reading experiences, we wanted to experiment with language, with a style that might not necessarily read as logical in its progression, with dialogues that might read as absurd/ridiculous/Kafkaesque/surreal, to convey the critical message about the absurdities of the legal education system that lead to tragicomic outcomes.³⁵ After the prelude, the section "Becoming" situates us, the authors, by responding to the question, *How did you become interested in critical (legal) education?* Then the first act tackles the questions, *What is the status of the banking legal education system?* and, *How is the current legal education and knowledge "acquired" at law faculties adapting to meet emerging legal and ethical challenges?* Act 2 deals with the questions, *What is the status of critical legal education?*, *How are critical theories, critical thinking, and critical education related?*, and, *How is (critical) legal education helping students—future lawyers—to address the challenges of growing complex reality?* In act 3 we engage with the questions, *How can we reimagine the future of legal education so that it meets the demands of this complex reality?*, *How is your teaching reflecting/exploring these ideas?*, *What is critical in this way of teaching?*, and, *Is your critical approach reifying normative thinking or transformative?* The character of "Basilium" is inspired by "bacillium," who is the collaborative creation of Aalloilla during a wave writing session in 2023.³⁶

There have been moments of major inspiration and others of blockage. We have also had personal issues that have impacted each of us differently, and which have helped to put our writing in perspective. We embodied the day-to-day in our writing, which is palpable throughout in the writing style. We have been working together online, on site, and separately. We thought writing this text would be easier, but, in reality, it has been a time-consuming experiment. Still, we have enjoyed and appreciated the experiment. This is not our comfort zone. This form of co-writing has demanded a process of learning to listen to each other for real, to go through the work processes together, to understand each other's creative habits, and to negotiate. It did not go as we "planned" because of the agency of "others," humans and more-than-humans, the becoming anew of the unpredictable. Each of us considers herself critical to a certain degree and in different ways. We co-create but we are not the same; nor is our being reduced only to this, nor are we just us. We help each other to find the strength necessary to expose the uncritical critical by analyzing, researching, questioning, feeling, listening, and understanding, always trying to feel what is there but hidden. We like to dance, and through our dynamic movements we like to *sentipensar* the past, the present, and the future without fixing it in place.³⁷

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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35. Bennett, *Cambridge Introduction*, 19. The initial version of this text was chaotic, with abrupt shifts in images and meanings. After consulting our editor Matthew Gleeson, a writer himself, we refined it while preserving its original sense. Although inspired by the dramatic genre, this text is a hybrid, not purely dramatic.
36. <https://sites.utu.fi/lawspacejustice/seili-research-retreat-2023/>.
37. The Spanish word *sentipensar* can be translated as “feeling~thinking.” It is a communitarian concept coming from epistemologies of the South (Colombian Caribbean fishermen), which was introduced to academic discussion in the mid-’80s by Orlando Fals Borda, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina* (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores/CLACSO, 2009).

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