2. Studying Online: Virtual Studio Spaces

Thus far we have outlined the pataphysical space-time machine of the studio. We have done so by returning to images of the studio that might indeed seem rather ancient or antiquated. But what do these images have to tell us now, in this moment of e-learning? This is a pressing problem. It would seem that while digital interfaces hold some promise for expanding and intensifying the pataphysics of the studio, digital platforms are also consistently constrained by institutional limitations placed upon them—for example, as through Learning Management Systems (LMS). The question facing educators in an era of increasing e-learning concerns the type of space and time of education as it exists in the gap that separates and conjoins the virtual and the actual, the material and the immaterial. Will the rise of pandemic e-learning interfaces become yet another form of control, or can postdigital experimental zones be envisioned as pataphysical studio space-time situations?

These questions are educational equivalents to those first asked by Johanna Drucker in her reflections on the rise of digital humanities in the university. On the one hand, digital tools and platforms have offered new and exciting research opportunities for humanistic inquiry. On the other hand, insights into complexities of interpretation have often been subordinated to the practical requirements and constraints of computational protocols. In other
words, the digital humanities have historically maintained the pri-
macy and authority of computational methods inscribed within
logical systems. The result was, according to Drucker, the forced
concession of many insights gained through critical, social, and de-
constructionist theory to the functionality of workable, transparent,
accurate, efficient, and solution-oriented standards of data access
and display. In sum, Drucker warns, “Theoretical issues that arise
are, therefore, intimately bound to practical tasks, and all the lessons
of deconstruction and poststructuralism—the extensive critiques of
reason and grand narratives, the recognition that presumptions of
objectivity are merely cultural assertions of particular, historical
formations—threaten to disappear under the normalizing pressures
of digital protocols” (2009, 7). Drucker’s formulation of specula-
tive computing attempted to render inoperative the instrumental
and standardized approach to digital humanities through experi-
ments at SpecLab. It also did so by returning to the infrastructure
of knowledge production and distribution, hacking into its ordered
and rational systems to produce complexity, ambiguity, and a sense
of imaginative play. These “aesthetic provocations” (18) were di-
rectly informed by Jarry’s pataphysics. No longer conceptualized
as a mechanistic tool for solving problems, computational protocols
were reconceptualized as toys to be played with a la pataphysical
“rules” for producing impossible solutions that posed their own
problems. Speculative computing “is driven by a commitment to
interpretation-as-deformance in a tradition that has its roots in
parody, play, and critical methods such as those of the Situationist
International, Oulipo, and the longer tradition of pataphysics with
its emphasis on ‘the particular’ over ‘the general’” (25).

For us, speculative computing is a kind of postdigital experimen-
tation with technological and institutional infrastructure that re-
leases pataphysical potentialities within systems otherwise defined
by their mechanical functionality. The lessons Drucker offers from
her experiments at SpecLab are instructive for educators now facing
the challenge of teaching in hybrid or virtual formats. Indeed, the
educational translation of Drucker’s problematic concerns the ways
in which the metaphysics of learning become inscribed within the very technological infrastructures that teachers and professors are required to employ in order to generate digital “classrooms.” In this chapter, we will turn once again to Studio_D as an experiment undertaken at the very beginning of the pandemic in the United States that is poised between virtual and actual, material and immaterial dimensions of educational life.

**Studio_D: Drifting toward Study**

The spring semester of 2020 was truly unprecedented as college professors around the world had to suddenly pivot to online instruction as a response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. While there had been trends toward online learning systems in higher education for years, it seems likely that the accelerated changes provoked by coronavirus are here to stay. As such, this is an apt time to reflect on the learning metaphysics underlying the development of digital platforms now and in the foreseeable future. As Siân Bayne and colleagues point out (2020), digital education all too easily becomes a symptom of learnification discourses and attending notions of education as transactional and quantitative. Bayne’s call for a new kind of speculative (dare we say pataphysical) approach to online teaching breaks with instrumental logics and welcomes “uncertainty, risk, complexity” (23). Furthering this line of inquiry, we offer up Studio_D as a platform for experimenting with the space and time of another kind of educational life: study.

But before we offer Studio_D as an example of e-study, we first want to sharpen the distinction between learning and studying first raised in our introduction, this time in relation to the phenomenological question of movement. We do so to make clear how the educational pataphysics of studioing concerns the unleashing and exploration of studious movements. Such a distinction might at first appear rather odd, considering that most illustrations of classrooms or studios depict individuals as sitting still. Yet despite such appearances, there is much movement in these spaces—movement that
involves thinking as well as various gestures of learning and studying (such as writing, taking notes, reading, gazing, and so forth).

For instance, the gestures of learning might be referred to as gestures of work and communication. Drawing on Vilém Flusser (2014), such gestures are first and foremost directed at materials, and these materials are meant to communicate something to someone. The work of learning is to exhibit development, growth, or progress through the work one accomplishes (homework), and this work is meant to communicate to others what has been achieved. Learning as a gesture of work and communication is like the arrow of education, pointing to a future anterior state wherein ignorance will have been overcome by knowledge and deficits will have been overcome by mastery that, in turn, can be exhibited through works for others to inspect, grade, and evaluate. The learner has a certain intentional aim (such as learning how to play a sport), this intention helps organize a set of experiences, which can be evaluated according to certain success conditions (such as winning an increasing number of matches that convey mastery to peers, teachers, and fans). Throughout the development process, the intention is actualized through the apparent active force of the will, creating various manifestations of the potentiality to grow, develop, and progress toward an intended goal. When the going gets tough, the will steps in to help overcome moments in learning when the initial intention is not enough to sustain progress toward reaching success. The will, in other words, unites means to ends, suturing up the relationship through the concretization of works that externalize the learning process for the benefit of others to recognize according to a certain standard. Or perhaps more accurately, the will acts as a conceptual cover for nonintentional (unwilled) forces deeply harnessed to modes of production. In either case, the appearance of the will and its agency serves a key function within the narrative of learning, which focuses on producing works and communicating to others. This investment in the will exhibits a certain metaphysical commitment to controlling, predicting, and ultimately regulating/managing contingencies in the name of efficiency, excellence, and so on. Stated
differently, one is tested so that educational systems can predict future outputs and to manage the direction of the educational arrow that is learning (even if the predictions are inaccurate). This is thus a game of probabilities, which determine what potentialities can and should be invested in, what kinds of debts should be taken on, and what kinds of returns can be expected. An entire economy builds around the arrow of learning in order to maintain the need for lifelong learning and testing.

As work and communication, learning is a movement that we might describe as summiting. At first, the aim is distant, and seems insurmountable. But through consistent, willful experiences, the aim can be approximated one step at a time. Fatigue might set in as the learner continues the arduous summiting process, but the will simultaneously develops its own fortitude and resiliency. A growing sense of progress is also, of course, encouraging to the learner who, from the vista of the summit, can gaze back over the long trail and take a certain amount of pride in the work completed. While various routes and paths might be available, the key point here is that they are predicated on the promise of summitting that enables the learner to stand above the various routes and paths and evaluate performance in order to communicate such performance to others. Or, even if such a cumulative moment never comes, the summit is still posited as a horizon that orients all pseudosummits and gives them meaning (as minor successes within a lifelong trajectory).

This type of educational movement can be contrasted to browsing the internet. Browsing lacks both (a) an overtly intentional directionality and (b) the appearance of willful struggle that is involved in learning-as-summiting. There is something casual and incidental about browsing that lacks intentional directedness. Likewise, there is little resistance online that might force one to exert willful force. Internet features such as hyperlinking help illustrate this point. Starting from any given webpage, it is entirely possible for one to click on hyperlinks indefinitely. Coming across a dead or broken link disrupts and underscores the perpetuating nature of browsing. Search engines also provide seemingly endless routes
for exploration. Ironically, this “openness” of browsing more often than not ends up steering casual browsers into increasingly more and more tailored searches, resulting in a perpetually echo chamber in which there is never any exposure to otherness. Browsing, in this sense, becomes solipsistic—an illusion of “effortless” and “free” wandering that nevertheless increasingly restricts what can be seen and heard.¹ And finally, there are minimal success conditions to browsing. Because of this, there is no way for the learner to measure progress or regress. There is no summit to reach, no end that can definitively justify the means taken, no work that can be completed. Instead, there is a sense of skimming along a flat surface that lacks peaks and valleys. There is no topography here (no above or below). Instead, there is only a passive sense of undergoing (rather than willful undertaking). Hence the pervasive feeling of getting lost in the stream of content the internet offers.

The distinction between summitting and browsing is important to note as it sets up the problematic underlying e-learning. The struggle of e-learning is how to ensure the possibility of summitting (which is effortful and directional) within an environment that lends itself to effortless and directionless browsing and surfing. On a minimal level, we can see evidence of this in the corralling of browsing into scrolling timelines and harnessed into “liking,” both of which give some directionality to the virtually flat features of the internet, allowing one to “learn.” In an overtly educational context, this problematic includes everything from the instructional video (as found on YouTube) to more interactive forms of gamification to MOOCs. We are not here to evaluate the success of any of these models. Rather we want to highlight how each model calls for evaluation: an evaluation of how means and ends are conjoined

¹. The ease of browsing we are discussing is not open and available to all. Indeed, search engines reproduce White privilege and discriminate against women of color through “algorithms of oppression” (Noble, 2018). In this sense, the ideal conditions for browsing are implicitly White, het erot normative, and male.
with relation to certain success conditions. Browsing lacks success conditions. One cannot assess whether one browsed well or surfed well without losing the directionless and effortless wandering that defines the experience of browsing. Learning dictates that the digital must become a means to an educational end. In other words, learning must yoke the infinite resources of browsing to a particular end for the purpose of evaluation. If browsing lacks works, learning must force browsing to produce some kind of work that communicates what has been done or achieved, and this means corralling browsing’s endlessness toward a specific end.

It is our contention that e-study is different in kind from e-learning. Instead of transforming browsing into summitting, e-study takes up the pure means of the internet and makes the experience of such means educational in and of itself (without uniting it to an end). Once again drawing on Flusser (2014), we would argue that studying is a distinct gesture of education that is without work and does not communicate anything. Because studious gestures do not gesture toward completion of a work, they are, in a sense, disinterested, meaning that they are not concerned with ends. And instead of conveying a message to someone else, they circle back around and are ultimately directed at their own activity. In this sense, they are ritualistic gestures. A genuine ritual is an “unpractical practice” (124). The unpractical nature of ritual practice means that it is not beholden to the functionality of communication or the concretization of work. It produces nothing beyond its own iteration as a kind of pure means (instead of a means to an end).

Instead of mere browsing, the disinterested and unpractical ritual of studying can be characterized by yet another mode of educational movement: drift. The movement of study as educational drifting is best captured in this brief description of a moment of study offered by Agamben: “Those who are acquainted with long hours spent

2. For a more detailed overview of the relation between Flusser’s theory of gestures and study, see Lewis 2019.
roaming among books when every citation, every codex, every initial encountered seems to open a new path, immediately left aside at the next encounter or who have experienced the labyrinthine allusiveness of that ‘law of good neighbors’ whereby Warburg arranged his library, know that not only can study have no rightful end, but does not even desire one” (1995, 64). In this citation, Agamben highlights how study is not oriented toward ends so much as the experience of moving from one text to the next without closure or completion. Good neighbors in this sense does not mean that every book resembles every other book. Instead, it means that the books—when neighboring each other—evoke thought through abrupt juxtapositions, allegorical connections, unexpected resonances, and so on. One does not know where one is heading as one is drawn into the tangle. Instead, the studier “roams” among citations that emerge between good neighbors. These recursive movements of back and forth drag on for “long hours” in an indeterminate manner, and through this prolongation, there is no clear or easily determined sense of development, growth, or progress. The mention of the labyrinth is important to note. While a maze has an entrance and a separate exit, labyrinths have only one point of entry, and as such are meant to be inescapable. Because of this, one’s movements left or right, this way or that, cannot be evaluated in relation to achieving a certain aim. Instead, the movements are simply that: movements without an end to guide them. In the labyrinth, one cannot learn to improve. Instead, one is constantly “stupefied” (64). Stupefaction is itself a vibration or “shuttling between bewilderment and lucidity” (64). In this sense, stupefaction is not a state of not thinking. Rather, it is thinking brought to a halt in front of its own potentiality to think. It is thinking the place (or s-pacing) of thinking. For this reason, one cannot conclude the act of studying as it has no content beyond its own potentiality.

Unlike summitting, the drifting qualities of study lack an end to orient them. Because of this, there are no criteria constituting a completed work or capable of communicating success. Study is, as Agamben describes, endless and stupefying (meaning that it never
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knows where it is in a course of growth, development, or progress). This makes study sound like it is nothing more than an educational equivalent to internet browsing. Certainly the two share features, but there is an important, though subtle, distinction to be made here. Drift highlights tension or what Agamben refers to as a rhythmic shuttling between states that provokes stupefying contemplation. To drift, one must yield to the push and pull of a certain flow that is beyond one’s control and get taken up by the strange, internal resonances that emerge when forces start to swirl. Here we can turn to Deleuze’s appeal to “analysis in terms of movements” (1995b, 121): “All the new sports—surfing, windsurfing, hang-gliding—take the form of entering into an existing wave. There’s no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The key thing is how to get taken up in the motion of a big wave, a column of rising air, to ‘get into something’ instead of being the origin of an effort” (121). There is no summit here to stand outside and above the currents. Instead one is always immersed in studious drifting. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) specify, a “line of drift” is composed of “different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sonorities” (311–12). To survive, one has to yield to the internal forces that tug and toggle this way and that within the loops of drift. While spatially flat like the space of the internet, the space of drift is restless with various vectors of force that can draw a studier into something only to suddenly be abandoned by an emergent current of thought that intercepts and throws one off course. These currents and tensions provide a minimal structure for study—a minimal force field to hold the uncertainty of study. Think here of Agamben at drift in the library: the ritual of turning and returning to certain books or circling back and forth around a possible topic are not practical (as they delay completion, efficiency, graduation, and so forth), but they are practices that flow through and within the limitations of the library. On our reading the library can be thought of as a loosely knotted space and time for studious drift. The “good neighbors” provide the loops and sonorities between ideas, but in such a way as to remain pliable and open for drift to circulate.
Such circular, repetitious drift is not willed. Study is a special kind of yielding to or getting taken up by a big wave. The need to yield (or be utterly fatigued or pulled apart) is not easy, and can send the studier into dangerous territory. As studiers eschew the stability of e-learning structures to embrace more volatile structures that always threaten to destabilize, they can lose their bearings, intentionally so, and risk foundering. Risk, therefore, is integral to studious drift. In this sense, study is an achievement (like learning) but one that lacks a goal and identifiable outcomes (like browsing). Perhaps another way of summarizing these distinctions is as follows: learning is willful, browsing lacks a will, and study is willing (in the sense of disinterested and yielding to a drift, even if it strains).

And finally, study can be thought of as purposive without a purpose. Learning is an example of an educational movement that has both purposiveness and a purpose. The purpose (as final cause) orients the purposiveness of the activity, giving it shape and directionality. Browsing, on the other hand, lacks both purposiveness and purpose. This is precisely why browsing feels like a “waste of time” or a “meaningless” or “frivolous” activity. Drifting is perhaps more paradoxical. We would characterize this kind of movement as releasing purposiveness from any determinate purpose. Certainly studious drift feels like it is not meaningless or frivolous. Indeed, for the studier, his or her life might be at stake in the act of study, existentially speaking. Yet such movement is not directed by an overarching purpose. In divorcing purposiveness from purpose-as-final-cause, one also simultaneously relinquishes the need for destinations, so the originating and terminating points associated with the summiting process are replaced with a perpetual unfolding of potentialities. Hence the difficulty of spelling out what has been achieved or where one is heading when one is perpetually caught in the drift of study. Instead, one is more inclined to scratch one’s head as if stupefied at where one has been and how one is proceeding. Because one is immersed in the drift—and thus indifferent to ends—one might even get annoyed with pragmatic questions such as, “What work has been produced from all this?” While learning
involves the risk of failure and browsing lacks any sense of risk, study involves the risk of exposing the self to an activity that cannot be evaluated and in which one might lose one’s bearings, dissolving into an activity that, paradoxically, seems to deactivate itself in the moment of stupefaction.

As such, the problematic for e-study is different from that of e-learning. E-learning must resist the movement of the medium. Learnification of the internet environment commands the insertion of structures for evaluating progress or regress, thus abruptly halting browsing through means-end directionality. It must implement forms of testing that activate the agency of the will on the part of the learner, so that the learner can develop through the trials and tribulations of summitting. The popular LMS software used by American universities offers a case in point. Such platforms are put in place to establish summiting structures, including dashboards, settings, reports, assignments, gradebooks, and so on. Their intent is to centralize and organize learning mechanisms and achievement indicators, intentionally inhibiting students’ ability to browse, as is necessary to yield measurable learning outcomes. The problem is how to make the pure means of the internet educationally useful without inserting an end. How to engage currents so that browsing becomes drifting? This means entering into the flow of the internet through hacking and tinkering (Lewis and Friedrich 2016) in such a way that the movement of the internet is phenomenologically felt in a new way—a way that stupefies, that causes thinking to think itself without being captured by the apparently effortless flow of hyperlinks, that opens the internet up for new uses that are not necessarily modulated forms of control. Here we are not referring to hacking in the common sense of gaining access to information without authorization. Rather, hacking means taking up a practice in order to decouple means from ends, thus unleashing uses that might not have been foreseen ahead of time.

This of course is a pataphysical educational question, which, to be answered, demands an ontology of the internet. What is the space and time of the internet? This is not an easy question to answer,
as the internet seems to be both a striated, controlled space and a smooth space simultaneously. Yet we would propose that both are possible only because the internet taps into and throws into relief the pataphysics of ethernity. As introduced in chapter 1, Jarry (1996) describes ethernity as a “circularly mobile” “elastic solid” (104) that is equal parts real and virtual. We are interested in how to produce studios that can act as a skiff for drifting across and between material and immaterial, virtual and actual, striated and smooth faces of postdigital experience. Neither total striation nor smoothness, e-studios willingly embrace the push and pull between the two as a space and time for educational experimentation within the loops and knots of ethernity that continually shift the parameters of when, how, and who can engage in educational experimentation. How then do we create a space-time machine that can willingly enter into the drift? What kind of studio is this?

An example of this can be found in our small-scale experiment called Studio_D. The challenge of Studio_D was to take up digital devices and platforms and suspend or render inoperative the infrastructure that supports e-learning in order to unleash studious use in a postdigital world. In other words, Studio_D attempted to deactivate means-end logics internal to learning through certain forms of drift. For us, this meant finding an alternative to e-learning that was nevertheless still educational. To do so, we had interdisciplinary teams of scholars work together to design protocols or experimental prompts that took up various e-learning platforms and introduced an alternative kind of movement—a shift from summitting that nevertheless does not merely resume browsing. We had participants from diverse, international institutions including the University of North Texas, University of Texas at Dallas, Moore College of Art and Design, Columbia University, Arizona State University, KU Leuven, Aalto University, and Hangzhou Normal University. A variety of disciplines and fields were represented by the protocol teams, including art education, studio art, philosophy of education, curriculum and instruction, curatorial studies, language arts, and cognitive engineering.
Once the protocols were designed, they were then posted on the Studio_D website and opened up for experimentation. Teams of students and professors at the aforementioned colleges and universities designated a specific week in the spring of 2020 to complete as many of the protocols as possible. The “results” were then housed on the Studio_D website to be shared publicly. Currently, the website is still active, with hopes that others might take up the protocols and continue the experiments and that more protocols will be added in the future.

At this point we turn toward several of these experiments, grouping them in terms of specific modes of studious drift. Of course, these modes are not perfectly distinct categories, as once a particular drift is set in motion, it has a tendency to spin off into other modes. Instead, the following are pliable (like the space-time machine of the studio itself) and open to contamination and combination with other drifts.

**Glitchy Drift**

Several participants produced protocols that intentionally hacked into and tinkered with the functionality of basic, taken-for-granted e-learning formats. The key here is to produce protocols that first and foremost render inoperative the metaphysics of learning that are inscribed within certain digital platforms and formats. Such dismantling is, as we explore more fully in the final chapter of this book, anarchic suspension of the laws underlying the instruments, processes, and categories of e-learning. One example is the following protocol designed by Joris Vlieghe and Nancy Vansielegmeth titled “Knowledge Clips.” The background for the protocol is simple. As Vlieghe and Vansielegmeth write:

> The backdrop against which we propose the following protocol is the difficulty not to respond to the request by many universities today to create digital educational resources on demand, and more specifically to create online learning materials that are fully catered to individual students’ needs and learning trajectories. In our own university, to be more specific, lecturers are expected to provide
short video fragments (literally translated: “knowledge clips”) to students, as this is believed to be a powerful and up-to-date learning resource.

The authors then hacked into the knowledge clip format—thus suspending the ends of learning—in the following way:

With the help of your own digital devices (smartphone, laptop, etc.), make a six-minute-long knowledge clip about precisely one well-defined topic, concept or principle. This video should be as concise and clear as possible and deal with a subject you deem important and relevant. This video can be posted on the conference website or on YouTube so that it can be publicly streamed.

It is required that:

1. Instead of avoiding or minimizing noise/interference, your “knowledge clip” should explicitly seek out noise/interference
2. This clip should avoid addressing the student-viewer in any direct way or personal manner
3. Making full use of the specific features of videos, you should avoid that the video straightforwardly leads to a thorough processing of the offered content

Before discussing implications of this protocol, here is one more example titled “Sounds Like Education” submitted by Sebastian Schlecht, Tomi Slotte Dufva, Taneli Tuovinen, Juuso Tervo, and Annika Sohlman. As they explain it,

This protocol explores sounds and silences as educational media, focusing specifically on the educational aspects of sound recording.

In education, sound recordings may be used to support or replace note-taking, to verify what was said during class, or, in case the listener was not present in the lecture, to distribute teaching beyond the confines of the physical classroom. In other words, they function as tools of remembrance and distribution—two activities that have close ties to the history of education. Recordings are also political. In the U.S., some conservative groups encourage students to record their “liberal” professors in order to “expose” their ideological basis.

However, speech is but one sound of education. The other sounds—the sound of the room, of the furniture, of bodies moving and acting—constitutes the very milieu, a soundscape, where educa-
tion takes place. How, then, to remember and distribute this milieu? What could we learn from it, what would it mean to study it?

The resulting protocol consisted of the following steps:

1. Record—with a phone, laptop, or a digital recorder—10 minutes of any lecture you’re attending.
2. With the help of editing software (such as Audacity [open source]), remove all spoken words from the file. Coughs, laughs, mumbling, etc., may be left.
3. Give the file a title that tells what the lecture was about and submit your manipulated recording.

In both cases, notice the movement here from summitting to drifting. The typical knowledge clip or sound recording is outcome oriented and views digital technology as an instrument (means) for achieving a desired (learning) end. Technology is a mere tool to be used to accomplish a task or gain a certain kind of knowledge. Yet these protocols interrupt or suspend this implicit logic of learning using the very technological infrastructure meant to achieve an end to subvert such ends. In other words, they do not negate or destroy the knowledge clip or the recorded lecture, but rather deactivate the metaphysics of learning founding the logic of functionality. When means are released from ends, drift sets in. Drift, in this specific sense, is not unlike the pataphysics of détournement first theorized and put into practice by the Situationist International through which infrastructure was rendered inoperative and then put to new artistic use (Debord 2006, 15). In our case, one is no longer oriented toward learning outcomes so much as around the implicit educational atmosphere or technological infrastructure that support learning. The viewer suddenly becomes aware of the media, which is no longer merely a transparent conveyer of information to be learned. Watching or listening to these clips and recordings, one asks, “What aesthetic possibilities are excluded when technology functions according to predefined ends?” or “What is not heard when I listen to the teacher?” In such cases, the situation opens
up to drifting away from the means-end metaphysics of learning embodied in the voice and actions of the teacher and supported through technological tools for promoting efficient learning. A drift sets in that reconfigures the glitch less as an obstacle to learning and more as an aesthetic event that has potentials to knot together new speeds and gestures, new forms of distraction and attention, new postdigital forms of awareness of how technological infrastructure has become a transparent and taken-for-granted aspect of educational life in general.

Because of the nature of these hacked clips, the intention to learn on the part of the viewer cannot be consummated. The viewer’s will cannot overcome the interference of the medium (bad editing, distorted audio, and poor videography) in order to reach its end (mount the summit). The hacked clips demand that a detour be taken that drifts the learner away from learning to consider more or less “extraneous” details or “annoying” failures. While such clips might be quickly dismissed if they were posted on YouTube as “useless” or “pointless” (inevitably receiving poor reviews from those eager to learn), within Studio_D, they trigger a specific kind of study on the part of the audience. Drift is induced in the viewer, who is suddenly caught up in a current of content that leads nowhere in particular; lessons do not seem to teach anything; outcomes are conclusively inconclusive; practices are impractical, and yet there is nevertheless a sense of purposiveness propelling the clips even if this purposiveness does not generate knowledge.

Induced glitches are therefore breakdowns in the use of technological infrastructure that open them up to alternative forms of educational life that drift away from learning, but in doing so, open up moments of surprising pleasure in the unexpectedness of a detour. Algorithmic manipulation would be another way to produce glitchy drift, one that is much more structural in nature, disrupting the encoding of learning in terms of computational infrastructure that supports e-learning apps and environments. It is important to note that such algorithmic glitches would not sim-
ply destroy or adapt to their various logics of control, but rather suspend the connections between means-end educational metaphysics and the executability of code in order to open up new use through algorithmic alchemy.

**Iterative Drift**

Another mode of drift we would like to call “iterative.” Here, the linear logic of learning that leads from teacher to student, from input to output, from distribution to assessment is interrupted, creating circular, seemingly endless recursive patterns. If the communicative logic of learning concerns a simple economic exchange between teacher and student (Bietsa 2006), wherein the teacher verifies what has been received through an assessment, iterative drift creates a diagonal line of flight away from this verification, producing various vortexes and eddies that no longer lead *toward* (another outcome) so much as *back* to the very preconditions of educational communication as such. One such protocol is WeChat/WeiXin, written by Hu Jun and Christopher Moffett. The background of the protocol is described as follows:

As one possible entrance into the following para-educational protocol, we might simply evoke what Paulo Freire calls “the great achievement of Gabriel Bode.” Bode’s great contribution was to solve the recurring impasse of people failing to decode a singular politically-compressed image, by showing next to it a variety of other “auxiliary” images that would keep the conversation from lapsing into silence. From image, via images, to spoken words.

We should recall, however, that the sonorous, for Freire, is linked to banking education, where inputs match outputs. So is it that the image—or of great necessity, that mother of invention—images, trouble the too facile, or too silent, mouth?

Without answering this, let us throw up another image, next to that of this sonorous bank. The term, familiar in German, that is translated as “Nuremberg Funnel” can be traced back, at least, to Georg Philipp Harsdörffer. It suggests a mechanical aid to learning that funnels knowledge through the head or mouth. But what is of interest is that in the baroque Europe of 1647, Harsdörffer evokes this image in a work entitled *Poetic funnel: The art of German poetry and rhyme, without*
using the Latin language, poured in VI hours. In this work on poetry, Harsdörffer explores a mechanical, combinatory practice for producing poetry that involves laying different words up against each other in order to computationally evoke latent poetic effects.

The protocol has no comment on this juxtaposition. It simply attempts to produce, within a fixed number of hours, a combinatory effect of images and poetry, be it as it may.

The authors then suggest the following protocol:

**One Week in Advance**
1. Email to potential participants with invitation.

**Three Days in Advance**
1. Participants install WeChat on their phones, and add the coordinators as contacts.
2. Participants are arranged in a cycle, alternating as much as possible between native languages.
3. Each participant is connected with the next participant in the cycle as a contact, and accepts the connection of someone else in turn.

**First Hour (Morning, Central; Evening, China)**
1. Each participant chooses a 3” × 4” vertical, found or made image (copyright free), and sends it in a chat to the next participant.
2. Each participant combines the image they sent and the image they received into a horizontal diptych, with their image on the left.
3. Each participant sends this diptych to the next participant, along with the original image they received.

**Ongoing for the next 47 Hours**
1. Upon receiving a diptych (with single image), participants compose a one-to-two-line poem in response to the diptych, and forward it to the next participant, along with the single image they received.
2. Upon receiving a poem (with single image), they are to add a new image to the image received, that responds to the poem as translated by We Chat, creating a new diptych. This diptych, as well as the received image, are passed to the next participant.

**Upon Completion**
1. Individual threads will be shared to Group Thread of all participants. A discussion of the process can follow in the thread.
In this protocol, the space-time of the studio takes on a certain circular, almost labyrinthian quality. Recall that for Agamben, the library-as-studio is not so much a maze as a labyrinth that is organized according to the “law of good neighbors” wherein each book suggests a lead, thread, clue, or drift that sets in motion the loops of contemplation. Likewise with WeChat/WeiXin, word and image merge and diverge in such a way as to continually repotentialize the act of communication. Something new can always emerge from within the repetition through the tiniest of drifts. The native translation feature in WeChat further extends and intensifies the poetic variability of language, often leading to inscrutable or surprising drifts. This, in turn, creates the preconditions for the contemplation of the potentiality of communication as such, or the communicability that lies not at the end of any act of communicating (“message received”) so much as with experimentation with the means of communicative iteration as such.

**Parodic Drift**

Another mode of drift is captured in the protocol titled “Self(study)ies.” Originally inspired equally by the photographs of studio spaces (as images of potentiality) presented by Agamben in his book *Autoritratto nello Studio* (2017) as well as the work of photographer Ian Wallace, who turned the camera toward his own studio space, Tyson E. Lewis and James Thurman created “Self(study)ies.” Throughout his many books, Agamben has demonstrated a consistent fascination with images that reveal their potentiality without putting it to work, such as Diego Velázquez’s famous *Las Meninas* (1656) in which the painter paints himself painting, thus manifesting the potentiality to paint in the painting itself. The same can be said for Agamben’s images of the humble studios he has used over his lifetime: these are images that turn thought away from the content of thought toward the act of thinking, the potentiality to think (thinkability, or the infrastructure supporting the gesture of thinking). Wallace utilizes a similar approach in his photographs
of studios but perhaps with the reverse intent: not to depict the
potentiality of actuality but rather the actuality of potentiality! In
both cases, images of studios take the internal, individual capacity
for revery and contemplation and ultimately turn outward, reveal-
ing its own possibility.

In “Self(study)ies,” Lewis and Thurman offer a studious parody
of the selfie. They write,

Selfies usually are forms of personal branding or personal image
crafting to convey the message of living up to expectations of a suc-
cessful, beautiful, productive, exciting, fulfilling life. For this pro-
tocol, we want to hack into and render inoperative the function of
the selfie turning it into a self(study)ie, or a self-portrait of you as
a studier.

The protocol that follows is summarized in two simple moves:

1. Produce an image of you studying and/or your equipment for
study. It ought to capture moments of intense study, or moments of
free time when playing with materials or ideas becomes possible,
when the expectations for productivity and efficiency are left idle,
when individuals put a pause on their outcomes-based learning in
order to take time to get lost, repeat themselves, wander, stumble
upon a question when an individual experiences create intellectual
vertigo, and when the impulse to do busy-work is suspended, un-
leashing another rhythm to educational life.

2. Write about what you see in the self(study)ies. What does the im-
age reveal about the conditions that make study possible for you as a
studier? Think about contextual (time, place, objects), physical (rest,
relaxation, or tension), and psychological (mood) conditions that the
image reveals.

Lewis and Thurman hack into the format and function of the selfie
in order to create a parody of a taken-for-granted trope in con-
temporary, digital culture. Parody, in this sense, remains close to
the original but with a slight difference that somehow renders the
intended meaning or function of the original inoperative. It is a
profanation of the original that opens it up for new uses that sub-
vert expectations. If selfies promote self-commodification (the self
as image spectacle), then self(study)ies parodically pick up this common form of self-objectification and open it up for study. The resulting images are not sexy or romantic or interesting or exciting. They are quiet, almost silent meditations on a self thinking its own possibility through the objects of its thinking. This strange moment is the precise point of contact when subject and object distinctions seem to collapse, inside becomes outside, and potentiality and actuality mix without one extinguishing the other. The result is an image of the self at the precise moment when it disappears into its own potentiality.

In the spring of 2020, this protocol became particularly interesting as it was a moment when schools and universities were moving online and out of classrooms. Everyone was reconfiguring rooms, beds, closets, nooks, and crannies as temporary “studios.” Studioing thus made various spaces within the house into spaces adjacent, small pockets of potentiality carved out from the utility and functionality of household spaces for the sometimes-inoperative ritual of study to take place. The images and memories captured in “Self(study)ies” is a record of this awkward, postdigital moment when questions of studioing suddenly became urgent in the face of shutdowns and lockdowns, provoking experimentations with a reconfiguration of the relationship between the solitary self and the virtual community, between the operative space and time of the household and the inoperative space and time of study, between distance and nearness, between inside and outside.

**Citational Drift**

If we conceptualize an essay as a closed system with a beginning, a middle, and an end, then the citation is almost like a space adjacent to the text from within the text yet beyond the text. It is a tiny drift within the text that opens up the text to its outside. The “law of good neighbors” induces citational drift across, between, and within texts. This strange capacity of citations to lead the reader astray from the text that they are a/part of was eloquently captured
by Kim Lesley, Maya Pindyck, and Daniel Tucker in their protocol “One Sentence Research Paper, Reiterated.” Their protocol is described as:

1. To prompt different modes of digital research that facilitate critiques of existing systems of categorization/naming.
2. To explore where different selections, condensations, and assemblages of language can take us.
3. To engage search constraints as a mode of research.

This threefold intention was operationalized in terms of the following protocol steps:

1. Create a one sentence research “paper” stating a topic of interest. Think of the sentence as a distilled and condensed abstract.
2. Then, do any number of the following prompts, depending on how you see them relating to your particular project:
   - Hyperlink each word in your sentence to digital resources constrained by a library’s database.
   - Hyperlink each word in your sentences to YouTube content only.
   - Hyperlink each work to any internet source (website, video, article, image, etc.).

If you do more than one, observe the differences created by each constraint. What do you notice? What has this exercise suggested to you about the power of framing? What about the power of sequencing? What about research practices? How is language used to organize information in the digital contexts you engaged? How do we—or can we—interface with controlled vocabularies in our research processes?

If you only do one, observe differences across peer creations. Take the sentence you wrote and experiment with rewriting it three different ways. Explore informational ways of re-iterating the sentence as well as more poetic, surrealist, or literary ways. Hyperlink each word in each of those sentences to any digital resources. Consider where language can take us and how it affects constructions of knowledge.
Like Drucker’s pataphysically inspired speculative computing experiments (2009), this protocol is an attempt to suspend the rather mechanistic approach to data organization and retrieval found in entity-driven approaches to knowledge and to foreground principles of subjectivity, emergence, contingency, complexity, multiperspectivalism, and heteroglossia. Taking up Drucker’s lead, this protocol pushes the boundaries of what counts as research by inverting the typical proportionality between text and citation. Here, citation overtakes the text. The outside effectively becomes the inside; the marginalia becomes the message! If the citation is a manifestation of the potentiality of the text making itself present (without exhausting itself), then here the potentiality overtakes the actuality of the text without negating or destroying the text. Instead, the radical potentialization of the actual text sets the text adrift. Unlike traditional hyperlinked browsing, the minimal structure provided by the research sentence institutes the law of good neighbors, which always orients the links back to the question of the potentiality left within the text that has yet to be developed. Instead of a definitive meaning (supported by citations) that one can learn from, or an endless array of meaningless digressions in which meaning is always delayed or deferred (nothing but hyperlinks that lose their citational reference point), the research sentence as conceptualized in this protocol offers a constantly renewed experience of potential meaning (through the implosion of text and citation). These are citations that don’t work or prefer not to work as citations within the structure of the text. The text does not summit the citation (forcing it to work), and the citation does not destroy the text through an endless stream of browsing. Instead, the text-as-citation and citation-as-text always drift back to the studious question of the meaningful nature of communication’s indeterminacy displaying itself (a communication that communicates nothing beyond its own communicability).

As Drucker summarizes: the effects of speculative computing conduced at SpecLab “serve as an example of work that began with-
out any clear outcome, highly risky and much laughed at—only to be realized and recognized as useful in fact as well as concept” (2009, 35–36). Pataphysical experimentation in and through postdigital studioing risks ridicule as “pointless” precisely because it is! Drift has no point (or rather, points cannot contain or modulate the direction of lines). It is an unpractical practice, as Flusser would say. Yet there is an underlying sense of purposiveness for those caught up in the drift, a unique kind of pleasure that accompanies one along the path of the detour (which of course never actually gets someone to the original destination). This might be laughable for those constrained by the metaphysics of learning, but for the studier, it is as stupefying as it is edifying.

At this point, it is important to highlight the unique features of Studio_D as a space that induces modes of drifting. Unlike e-learning, which is a structured space (think of the knowledge clip or Canvas homepages), or the internet, which is completely unstructured, flat, and purely rhizomatic (think here of hyperlinks), Studio_D is a platform containing the protocols that knot together ideas, gestures, speeds, objects (“good neighbors”), and so forth into a situation of study. Study traces out the twists and turns in the knots. Thus the structure of the studio is the structure of the knot. Protocols interacting with ideas and bodies produce resonances that push and pull. Instead of spiraling out as with browsing, or up as in summitting, the studier drifts further and further into the experiments induced by the protocols. In the case of Studio_D, loose, minimal infrastructure to support the experimentation involved a basic website housing a project statement, the protocols themselves, and the resulting material manifestations of study. Whereas e-learning spaces might be thought of as mazes to be navigated through in order to “win,” Studio_D is configured as a labyrinth, which is a closed, finite space (a neighborhood of references and resources that loop toward and away from one another) that is nevertheless endless, circular, and, for these reasons, generative for studious drifting.

Likewise, we can think of the time of studious drift as introducing
a temporal de-completion of learning. It is a slow haste. Whereas browsing is pure haste (quick and effortless time) and learning is slow, willful perseverance, drifting is a pataphysical time between. Viewers of Studio_D watch, puzzled; they are pulled in (against their will to learn) and linger on strange images and activities that seem to suspend the ends that are assumed to accompany any “legitimate” educational enterprise. Suddenly, they are adrift in a space and time adjacent to learning—under it, behind it, above it, or to the side of it. And in these anomalous, limbo-like spaces, there is a sense of rhythmic swaying back and forth to the point where progress and regress lose all meaning, and one is instead left with the sensation that something is happening but it is impossible to evaluate it or calculate its duration. One falls off the clock. Temporality ceases to be unidirectional, neutral, or homogenous and instead becomes circular, meandering, indeterminate. This sensation is the temporal manifestation of the potentiality of the ritual turning and returning of disinterested study that studioing makes possible. Both enacting and viewing the protocols in Studio_D reveal a pataphysical educational experiment with and through time, or an experiment that is active through an unpractical and dispassionate practice that only “produces” solutions if they remain imaginary. Perhaps we can say that these are spatial and temporal anomalies of eternity effecting the gravity of learning as a dominant educational practice. Like dark matter and energy, the ripples of eternity produce aberrations in the space-time continuum, causing drifts to happen.

In sum, Studio_D refers equally to a digital studio and studio drift. They come hand in hand. Stated differently, studioing taps into and maximizes the educational potentials that are unique to the eternality of postdigital techno-cultural-educational contacts without collapsing this potentiality into mere browsing. And the cultivation of such studious drift is particularly meaningful in the face of events that unmoor societies, such as the coronavirus pandemic. Educational logics that have been taken for granted are suddenly put under great stress. Physical, intellectual, and virtual spaces are reconfigured. Normal modes of human interaction are problema-
tized. Addressing these issues cannot be done through means-end directionality alone. As studious drift is risk-oriented, it provides an avenue for the development of experimental, imaginary solutions and intrepid thinking. In this sense, digital space-time machines such as Studio_D might offer an alternative to e-learning spaces, and they do so by experimenting with the educational use of postdigital means. Such experimentation is paramount, given the push toward increasing levels of online education that will most likely follow the coronavirus pandemic. In this sense, the pandemic is offering a challenge and an opportunity to think differently about what higher education might look and feel like beyond the metaphysics of learning and its spatialization and temporalization in the form of the brick-and-mortar classroom.