

The Self That Rereads Itself: Dilthey, Jameson, and the Presuppositions of Matusov's Uniqueness Model



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Abstract

This article offers a critical supplement to Eugene Matusov's uniqueness model of educational justice by interrogating the very figure it presupposes: the learner capable of authorial self-evaluation. The authors argue that this self is not a natural starting point but a product of a specific cultural technique—rereading—whose genealogy they trace from August Böckh's philological principle of "cognition of the already cognized" through Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics of the human sciences. The article demonstrates how continental philosophy, from Nietzsche through Bakhtin, transformed the book into a machine for producing critical subjectivity through aphoristic rereading, revealing Bakhtin's central concepts as effects of this operation rather than its premises. Fredric Jameson's theory of the novel is introduced as the democratic counterpart to this elite practice, training mass readerships in the retroactive organization of experience that manufactures the coherent bourgeois self. Through a close analysis of Matusov's own pedagogical episodes—the index card exercise, the distinction between learning and education, retrospective re-evaluation—the authors show that his classroom practice unconsciously instantiates the very rereading structure whose history they excavate. The article contends that the uniqueness model would be strengthened by recognizing that the self-evaluating learner is a cultural achievement dependent on narrative and hermeneutic techniques that must themselves be taught and transmitted. This reframing introduces a new dimension of educational justice: equity of access not to outcomes but to the very means of self-production. The metaphor of the mask guides this inquiry, with the self that pronounces its learning educational serving as the mask, while the endless process of rereading constitutes the unseen face beneath it.

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1. What the Discussion Has Achieved—and What Remains Unasked

Eugene Matusov's "Against Equity" has, by any measure, succeeded in its primary aim: it has provoked a genuinely dialogic response. The four commentaries published alongside this one—by Shugurova (2026), Rahimi (2026), Sobral and Giacomelli (2026), and Listiadi (2026)—attest to the fertility of the uniqueness model as a framework for rethinking educational justice. Each commentary extends the conversation in a distinct direction. Shugurova sharpens the ideological critique of equity by drawing a Marxian parallel and introducing the cyborg as a figure of post-scarcity self-education. Rahimi offers the Compassionate Impactful Communication Cycle as a practical mechanism for operationalizing dialogic coordination. Sobral and Giacomelli ground the uniqueness model in the Brazilian tradition of *alteritary dialogic education*, with its emphasis on listening to the Other on their own terms. Listiadi presses the hardest questions: the structural preconditions of self-education, the risk of romanticizing autonomy, the need for dialogic accountability rather than mere negative liberty.

These are substantial contributions, and each deserves the serious engagement it has already begun to receive. But there is a question that none of the four commentaries has asked, and that Matusov's target article itself does not pose. It is a question about the very figure at the center of the uniqueness model: the learner who exercises authorial agency, who evaluates their own learning positively or negatively, who defines and pursues self-authored educational goals. *Where does this self come from?*

The question may seem odd. Surely the self is simply there—the person, the learner, the *lichnost'* that Bakhtin describes as occupying an unrepeatable place in being. Matusov (2026) takes this as his starting point, and all four commentaries follow him in this. Shugurova (2026) speaks of *lichnost'* as the "irreducible, responsible, embodied center of being" (p. C3). Sobral and Giacomelli (2026) frame uniqueness as an ethical given to be honored through alteritary listening. Listiadi (2026), despite his sophisticated post-colonial critique, ultimately treats the self-directing learner as the premise that requires structural support. Rahimi's (2026) communication cycle is designed to surface what students already value and desire.

We do not wish to dispute any of this. But we want to suggest that there is a prior question that the uniqueness model must eventually confront: *Is the self that authors its own education a starting point, or is it a product?* Is the capacity for "positive value judgment about one's own learning" (Matusov, 2026, p. E11) a natural human endowment, or is it a culturally specific competence—one that has a history, a technique, and a set of institutional conditions under which it emerged?

Our argument, developed over two decades of collaborative work on the ontology of the mask (Shtayn, 2013), is that the self that experiences itself as the origin of its evaluations is, in a precise sense, an effect of a prior operation: the operation of *rereading*. This operation has a philosophical genealogy that runs from classical philology through Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of the human sciences to Fredric Jameson's theory of the novel as a machine for producing bourgeois subjectivity. What Matusov's uniqueness model presupposes—the learner who can look back at their own learning and pronounce it educational—is, we suggest, the product of a long cultural training in rereading, a training that the novel form, among other institutions, has installed in modern subjects. The uniqueness model is not wrong; it is simply incomplete. It begins one step too late.

2. Rereading as the Engine of the Human Sciences: From Böckh to Dilthey, and from Nietzsche to Bakhtin

The concept of rereading has a specific and largely forgotten history in the German hermeneutic tradition. August Böckh (1785–1867), the great classical philologist and student of Schleiermacher,

formulated the foundational principle of philological understanding as *das Erkennen des Erkannten*—the cognition of what has already been cognized, the knowing of the already known. This formula, which appears in his posthumously published *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften* (Böckh, 1877), is deceptively simple. It does not mean merely reading something twice. It means returning to what has already been understood—a text, an artifact, a historical event—and knowing it *again*, differently, with the fuller awareness that the first act of cognition has made possible. The first knowing produces an object; the second knowing cognizes not only the object but the first knowing itself, its conditions, its blind spots, its unfinished business.

This is the principle of rereading in its most precise formulation. For Böckh, the first reading of a text yields only a preliminary, superficial comprehension. It is the *second* reading, the return to the text with knowledge of its whole, that constitutes genuine understanding. The part is understood through the whole, and the whole is revised through the parts, in a circular movement that is only possible because the reader returns to what they have already traversed. But the crucial point—the point that Böckh's formula captures with epigrammatic precision—is that the object of the second cognition is not the same as the object of the first. The text has changed, because the reader now knows what the text will become. The ending has retroactively reorganized the beginning. *Das Erkennen des Erkannten* is not repetition; it is transformation.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) generalized this principle from philology to the entirety of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the human sciences. In his *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (Dilthey, 1883) and subsequent works, Dilthey argued that the human sciences differ from the natural sciences precisely in their relationship to their object. The natural sciences explain (*erklären*) phenomena by subsuming them under general laws. The human sciences understand (*verstehen*) their objects by re-experiencing (*nacherleben*) the lived experience that produced them. And this re-experiencing is always a *rereading* in Böckh's sense: a *Wiedererkennen des Erkannten*, a return to the traces of past life—texts, artifacts, institutions—with the fuller awareness that the passage of time and the accumulation of interpretive effort have made possible.

Crucially, for Dilthey, this operation of rereading is not merely a scholarly method. It is the fundamental structure of self-understanding as such. In his later work, particularly *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* (Dilthey, 1910), Dilthey argued that autobiography is the paradigm case of historical understanding. The autobiographer looks back at their own life, rereads its events in light of their outcome, and discovers a coherence that was not visible at the time of living. This is *das Erkennen des Erkannten* applied to the self: the autobiographer cognizes their own life, which they have already lived, but cognizes it *as a life*, as a meaningful whole, which they could not have done while living it. The self that emerges from this operation—the self that can say "this was my life, and it meant *this*"—is a product of rereading. It is not the author of the life but its most accomplished reader.

2.1. The Nietzschean Rupture: The Book as a Machine for Rereading

The irony of this Diltheyan genealogy is that Dilthey himself refused to recognize its most radical practitioner as a philosopher. In his writings on the history of philosophy, Dilthey classified Friedrich Nietzsche as a philologist and a writer (*Schriftsteller*) rather than a thinker in the proper sense (Dilthey, 1910). The classification is revealing precisely in its blindness. For what Nietzsche practiced—and what would become the defining gesture of continental philosophy after him—was the most thoroughgoing application of *das Erkennen des Erkannten* that the West had ever seen. Nietzsche took Böckh's philological principle and applied it not to texts but to the entirety of Western civilization. He reread the whole archive and extracted from it aphorisms that retroactively transformed the meaning of everything that had come before.

But to grasp the philosophical function of the Nietzschean aphorism, we must understand its peculiar relationship to the book that contains it. Nietzsche's declaration "God is dead" appears in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Nietzsche, 1882/1974, §125). It is not a standalone proposition that can be extracted and debated in isolation. The entire book—its arguments, its poetry, its provocations, its shifts in tone and register—is, in a sense, written *for the sake* of this aphorism. The book is the path that must be traversed for the aphorism to do its work. And yet, once the aphorism is reached, it retroactively transforms everything that preceded it. The reader who has arrived at "God is dead" must now *reread* the entire book in its light. The first reading was a journey toward a formula; the second reading, now guided by the formula, discovers that the journey was never what it appeared to be.

This is the structure that defines continental philosophy as a tradition. A book is written around an aphorism that it cannot state at the outset, because the aphorism would be unintelligible without the path that leads to it. But the path itself is only revealed as meaningful once the aphorism has been reached and the reader turns back. The aphorism is not the conclusion of an argument; it is the key to a rereading. And the rereading is not an optional supplement; it is the very act by which the reader becomes the subject the book intends to produce.

Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) exemplifies this structure with almost geometric clarity. The entire book moves toward the concept of "being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*), which is not introduced until Division Two. The phrase is an aphorism in our sense: a condensed formula that names something everyone already knows—that we die—but cognizes it anew as the structuring principle of authentic existence. And yet, to understand what "being-toward-death" means, one must have worked through the entire analytic of *Dasein* that precedes it: the being-in-the-world, the they-self, the thrownness, the care-structure. Without that path, the aphorism is merely a bleak observation about mortality. With it, the aphorism becomes the key to rereading one's own existence. And once the reader has grasped it, *Sein und Zeit* itself demands to be reread: the early sections on equipment and the ready-to-hand, on anxiety and the nothing, suddenly appear as anticipations of a formula that had not yet been stated.

The same structure governs Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant* (1943), which builds toward the aphorism "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*)—a formula that rereads the entirety of social conduct as a systematic flight from the burden of freedom. It governs Badiou's *L'Être et l'événement* (1988), which builds toward "fidelity to the event" as the principle by which a subject is constituted through its persistence in the truth of a rupture. It governs Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1995), which builds toward "bare life" (*nuda vita*) as the hidden foundation of Western politics. It governs Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (1967), which builds toward the aphorism "there is nothing outside the text" (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*)—a formula that rereads the entire metaphysical tradition as a series of attempts to escape the trace. And it governs Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (2004), which builds toward "untranslatability" (*l'intraduisible*) as the principle by which philosophical languages resist absorption into any universal idiom.

In every case, the book is a machine for producing rereading. The first reading is linear: the reader follows the argument from beginning to end, accumulating concepts, distinctions, and analyses. At a certain point—often late in the text, sometimes in its final pages—an aphorism crystallizes. This aphorism is the book's *raison d'être*, the formula for which the entire edifice was constructed. But its meaning is accessible only to someone who has made the journey. The aphorism cannot be quoted as a freestanding proposition without losing its force. It requires the book as its condition of intelligibility. And yet, once it has been reached, it demands that the book be reread from the beginning—because only now, with the aphorism in hand, can the reader understand what the book was doing all along.

This is the deepest meaning of *das Erkennen des Erkannten* as a philosophical practice. The first reading cognizes the book. The second reading—guided by the aphorism—cognizes the first cognition. It

sees not only the book but the act of having read it, the assumptions that governed the first reading, the ways in which the aphorism was already secretly at work before it was named. The subject who emerges from this double reading is the critical subject of continental philosophy: a subject constituted not by what it knows but by its capacity to reread what it thought it knew.

2.2. Bakhtin as Continental Philosopher: The Once-Occurrent Event as *Erkennen des Erkannten*

This is the context in which Mikhail Bakhtin—the central philosophical authority for Matusov and for the entire dialogic pedagogy tradition—must be understood. Bakhtin is routinely classified as a literary theorist, a philosopher of language, a thinker of dialogism. But he is, first and foremost, a *continental philosopher* in the precise sense we have just defined. His central concepts are aphoristic condensations produced by rereading the entire Western philosophical and literary tradition according to the principle of *das Erkennen des Erkannten*. And like all continental philosophers, Bakhtin writes books that are structured as machines for producing rereading.

Consider Bakhtin's concept of the "once-occurrent event of being" (*edinstvennoe sobytie bytia*), which emerges from *K filosofii postupka* (Toward a Philosophy of the Act), written in the early 1920s but published only posthumously (Bakhtin, 1993). Every human being already knows that they exist, that they are alive, that they occupy a particular place in the world. This is the first cognition, the *Erkannte*—banal, universal, philosophically uninteresting. Bakhtin's gesture is to reread this banal fact and to cognize it again, differently, as something of absolute ethical weight: "I occupy a place in once-occurrent Being that is unique and never-repeatable... and in this place I am answerable" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 40). The "once-occurrent event of being" is *das Erkennen des Erkannten* applied to existence itself. It takes what everyone already knows—that they are here, now—and transforms it into an ethical demand. The entire book is the path that must be traversed for this aphorism to do its work; once it is reached, the reader must reread their own existence in its light.

The same structure governs Bakhtin's other central works. *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics) builds toward the aphorism "polyphony"—a formula that rereads the entire history of the novel and discovers in Dostoevsky a new principle of artistic organization in which "consciousnesses with equal rights" encounter one another without being subordinated to the author's finalizing word (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6). Everyone knew that Dostoevsky's characters had distinct voices; Bakhtin rereads this fact and cognizes it as an ethical and metaphysical revolution. The aphorism "polyphony" cannot be understood without the hundreds of pages of analysis that precede it—the reading of Dostoevsky's novels, the critique of monologic criticism, the philosophical excursus on dialogue. But once it is reached, it demands a rereading not only of Dostoevsky but of the reader's own position in the world of voices.

"Unfinalizability" (*nezavershennost'*) is a second cognition of the human person: everyone knows that people change and develop, but Bakhtin rereads this fact and cognizes it as the fundamental ontological structure of selfhood, the resistance of the person to any final definition by another (Bakhtin, 1984). "Surplus of seeing" (*izbytok videniia*) is a second cognition of the fact that we cannot see our own faces: everyone knows this, but Bakhtin rereads it as the structural basis of the self-other relationship, the asymmetry that makes dialogue both necessary and impossible to complete (Bakhtin, 1990).

In every case, Bakhtin performs the operation that Böckh defined for philology and that Nietzsche unleashed upon the cosmos. He takes something already known, rereads it, and produces both a new concept and a new way of being a subject. The book is the path; the aphorism is the destination; the rereading is the act by which the reader is transformed. Bakhtin is a post-Nietzschean thinker, whether or

not he would have acknowledged the affiliation. His thought belongs to the tradition of continental philosophy that begins with Nietzsche's aphoristic rereading of the Western archive. And his central concept—*lichnost'*—is, we submit, the product of this operation, not its starting point.

We can now see why Dilthey's exclusion of Nietzsche from philosophy is more than a biographical curiosity. It is a symptom of a deep tension within the *Geisteswissenschaften* themselves. Dilthey wanted to ground the human sciences in a method—*Verstehen*, understood as the scholarly application of *das Erkennen des Erkannten*—that would be as rigorous as the natural sciences' *Erklären*. But the method he described contains within itself a radical potential that Dilthey could not fully acknowledge. *Das Erkennen des Erkannten* is not only a scholarly technique for understanding past life. It is a *productive* act: it produces the self that it claims merely to understand. The autobiographer who rereads their life does not discover a pre-existing self; they *create* a self through the act of rereading. And the book that is built around an aphorism is the most powerful technology for this production that Western culture has devised.

Nietzsche grasped this productivity and made it the engine of his entire philosophical practice. His books are not treatises that happen to contain memorable phrases. They are aphorism-production machines: the aphorism is the destination, the book is the path, and the rereading—*das Erkennen des Erkannten* applied to the book itself and, through it, to the reader's own existence—is the act by which the reader is transformed. Dilthey, committed to the scientific respectability of the human sciences, could only see in Nietzsche a dangerous conflation of philology and prophecy, a philologist who had abandoned the discipline of method for the intoxication of style. But the subsequent history of continental philosophy has vindicated Nietzsche and revealed Dilthey's anxiety as a failure of nerve. From Heidegger to Derrida, from Sartre to Badiou, from Bakhtin to Cassin, the defining gesture of continental thought has been the production of critical subjectivity through the aphoristic rereading of tradition—a rereading that is inseparable from the book that makes it possible.

2.3. Jameson and the Novel as a Democratic Machine of Subjectivation

If continental philosophy, from Nietzsche through Bakhtin, is the elite practice of *das Erkennen des Erkannten*—a practice that produces critical subjectivity through the aphoristic rereading of the archive—then Fredric Jameson's theory of the novel reveals the democratic, mass-cultural version of the same operation. What the philosophical aphorism does for the initiated reader, the realist novel does for the reading public. Both are machines for producing selves through rereading. But where the philosophical book demands that the reader traverse a difficult conceptual path to reach the aphorism that unlocks it, the novel installs the structure of rereading in the most ordinary acts of narrative consumption.

Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981) and *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013) argue that the realist novel is not a representation of bourgeois subjectivity but the cultural technology that *manufactures* it. The novel trains the reader in the very operation we have been describing: the rereading of social relations as individual experience, the retroactive organization of disparate events into a coherent life-story, the production of a self that appears to have been the origin of the story all along. This is *das Erkennen des Erkannten* democratized. The reader cognizes the protagonist's life for the first time by reading the novel from beginning to end. But the novel's ending retroactively reorganizes everything that came before. Events that appeared contingent or opaque become, in light of the conclusion, necessary and meaningful. The reader who finishes the novel now *knows* the protagonist's life differently—and this second cognition, this rereading, is what produces the protagonist as a coherent self.

Jameson's analysis of the temporal structure of the novel is decisive here. The novel's ending retroactively reorganizes the entire narrative sequence. The protagonist's choices are revealed to have been leading *to this outcome* all along. The self that "made" those choices—the coherent, intentional agent

who navigated the story—is an *effect* of this retroactive reorganization. It is produced by the act of rereading that the novel form demands. The protagonist did not exist as a unified self before the story; the story creates the protagonist by narrating backward from its conclusion (Jameson, 2013).

What Jameson describes in the register of literary history is, we suggest, the deep structure of the very self that Matusov's uniqueness model takes as its starting point. The learner who can look back at their own learning and evaluate it positively or negatively—the learner who can say "this was my education"—is exercising a competence that the novel form (and its successors: autobiography, cinema, the social media profile) has made available. The self that authors its own education is not the origin of the story but its most accomplished rereader. Jameson's later work on allegory and ideology (Jameson, 2016) extends this analysis to the broader field of cultural production, showing that narrative structures are not reflections of social reality but active producers of the subject positions that inhabit it.

This is not a criticism of Matusov's model. On the contrary: if we are right, the uniqueness model is *more* historically profound than Matusov himself claims. What he describes as a natural right—the right to evaluate one's own learning—is actually a cultural achievement, a hard-won competence that specific historical forms have made possible. The danger is that, by naturalizing this competence, the uniqueness model risks obscuring the very conditions of its own possibility. If the capacity for self-evaluation is a product of narrative technologies—of the novel, of autobiography, of the philosophical book built around an aphorism—then those technologies deserve a place in our theory of educational justice. The ability to reread one's own learning and to discover, retroactively, that it was educational, is not a primitive human faculty. It is a cultural acquisition, and not all learners have equal access to the forms that make it possible. This is a different kind of equity question—not equity of outcomes, but equity of access to the means of self-production—that the uniqueness model cannot formulate in its current state.

3. Matusov's Own Pedagogy as Unconscious Rereading

Strikingly, Matusov's own pedagogical practice—as described in the target article and in his earlier work—provides the best evidence for our claim. Consider the episode with the index cards (Matusov, 2026, pp. E20–E21). Matusov asks his students to imagine that they arrive at their classroom to find a sign reading "Class is cancelled" and to record their emotional reaction. The majority express happiness: "YEAH!", "Terrific!", "Sleep!", "Great news!" (Matusov, 2026, p. E21). Matusov then asks whether they would want *their* future students to be happy when *they*, as teachers, were sick and class was cancelled. The students are puzzled. They begin to "dream" of alternative pedagogies. And then one student brings the exercise to its crisis point: "It's impossible because school forces us to attend the classes, professors force us to study what they, not us, think is important, and grade our work. Until this continues, most students will be happy when their teacher gets sick, and the class is canceled" (Matusov, 2026, p. E21).

What is happening in this episode? Matusov presents it as an awakening to dialogic consciousness, and it is. But notice the structure of the event. The students are asked to *reread* their own emotional response. The first reading—"Class is cancelled: great!"—is spontaneous, unreflective. It is an *Erkanntes*, something already known. The second reading—"Would I want my students to feel this way about me?"—is *das Erkennen des Erkannten*, a return to the first cognition that transforms its meaning. The students are led, through Matusov's skillful intervention, to discover a contradiction in their own experience, a contradiction that was invisible at the first reading. The critical student who brings the exercise to its crisis point is performing the most advanced form of this rereading: she rereads not only her own response but the entire institutional structure that produced it.

This is brilliant pedagogy. But it is also, we want to suggest, a demonstration of the very mechanism we have been describing—a mechanism whose genealogy runs from Böckh's philological seminar through

Dilthey's autobiographer, Nietzsche's madman, Heidegger's Dasein, Sartre's waiter in the café, Bakhtin's polyphonic reader, and Jameson's novel reader, all the way to Matusov's classroom. The "uniqueness" that Matusov's pedagogy cultivates—the student's authorial judgment about their own educational condition—is not liberated from within; it is *produced through an act of rereading* that the teacher's intervention makes possible. The student who says "this system is incompatible with genuine education" is exercising a competence that the pedagogical structure has installed. She has learned to reread.

Consider also Matusov's distinction between "learning" and "education," which is one of his most original contributions to educational theory. Education, he argues, requires not only that learning occur, but also that the learner notice it and "evaluates its content positively" (Matusov, 2026, p. E11). This is a precise description of *das Erkennen des Erkannten* in the pedagogical domain. The first cognition is the learning itself—the acquisition of a skill, the absorption of a concept, the experience of a classroom event. The second cognition is the evaluative return to that learning, the rereading of it as *educational*. And this second cognition, Matusov insists, is what transforms mere learning into education proper. We could not ask for a clearer illustration of our thesis: education, in Matusov's own definition, *is* rereading. But Matusov does not name it as such, and he does not inquire into the history of the operation he is describing.

Once more, consider Matusov's example of retrospective re-evaluation. He describes how, years after a frustrating mathematics course, a student "finds that the mathematical concepts learned are essential for analyzing data in their profession" and retrospectively reevaluates the learning as educational (Matusov, 2026, pp. E11–E12). The first cognition—"this math course is irrelevant to my life"—is replaced by a second cognition—"this math course was essential to my professional development." The learning has not changed; the student's relationship to it has. And this changed relationship is the result of rereading: the student returns to the memory of the course with the knowledge of their subsequent career and discovers, retroactively, that the course was educational all along. The "positive value judgment" is not a report on a pre-existing state of affairs. It is an act of *production*: the learning *becomes* educational through the act of rereading it as such.

Our point is not that this is coercive or paternalistic. It is precisely the opposite: the rereading structure is what makes genuine authorial agency possible. Without the capacity to return to one's own experience and evaluate it differently—without *das Erkennen des Erkannten* as an existential competence—there can be no self-education in Matusov's sense. But recognizing this structure as a structure—as a technique with a history and a genealogy that runs from Böckh's philological seminar through Dilthey's autobiographer, Nietzsche's aphoristic books, Bakhtin's dialogic philosophy, and Jameson's novel reader—is essential if the uniqueness model is to be more than a liberal celebration of individual autonomy. The self that evaluates its own learning is a product of the cultural forms that teach it to reread.

4. Implications for the Uniqueness Model and the Discussion

If our argument is accepted, several consequences follow for the ongoing discussion initiated by Matusov's target article.

First, the relationship between uniqueness and rereading requires theoretical articulation. The four commentaries have enriched Matusov's model by adding ideological critique (Shugurova, 2026), practical mechanisms (Rahimi, 2026), ethical grounding in alterity (Sobral & Giacomelli, 2026), and attention to structural conditions (Listiadi, 2026). But none has asked *how the self that exercises uniqueness is produced*. Our contribution is to suggest that the answer involves rereading as a cultural technique—a technique that has a history reaching back to Böckh's *das Erkennen des Erkannten*, that was generalized by Dilthey into the method of the human sciences, that was radicalized by Nietzsche and the continental

tradition into a machine for producing critical subjectivity, that was democratized by the novel (as Jameson has shown), and that finds its pedagogical application—without being recognized as such—in Matusov's own classroom practice. The uniqueness model would be strengthened by acknowledging that the self it champions is not a given but an achievement—and that this achievement depends on cultural forms that must themselves be taught, preserved, and transmitted.

Second, the question of "who determines the limits of self-education" gains a new dimension. Listiadi (2026) asks: if self-education can be immoral, exploitative, or manipulative, who judges? His answer is dialogic accountability. We agree, but we would add that the very capacity for such judgment—the ability to step back from one's own immediate desires and evaluate them against communal norms—is itself a product of rereading. The democratic assembly that adjudicated the Gaga Ball Game Corporation dispute (Matusov, 2026, pp. E16–E18) was exercising a collective form of *das Erkennen des Erkannten*: it looked back at the proposed rules, reread them in light of their consequences for others' freedom, and revised them accordingly. Democratic self-governance, in this sense, *is* institutionalized rereading. It requires precisely the competence that the novel, the autobiography, and the philosophical book have cultivated in modern subjects: the ability to return to a decision or an experience and to cognize it differently in light of its effects on others.

Third, Shugurova's invocation of AI takes on a different significance when viewed through our lens. Shugurova (2026) argues that AI dissolves the scarcity on which equity depends and enables a cyborg extension of *lichnost'* through Haraway's (1985) concept of the hybrid being. We would add that AI is, among other things, a *rereading machine*. It processes vast archives of text, returns to them, reorganizes them, and generates novel configurations. The human-AI hybrid that Shugurova describes is a hybrid not only of biological and technological intelligence but of two modes of rereading: the slow, affective, meaning-saturated rereading of the Diltheyan tradition, and the rapid, pattern-extracting rereading of the machine. The educational question is not whether AI will replace human rereading, but how the two modes can be productively coordinated without losing the ethical density that human rereading—the rereading that produces *lichnost'*—requires. A cyborg *lichnost'* would be a self-produced through the interplay of human and machine rereading, a self whose "once-occurrent event of being" is co-authored by an intelligence that has no being of its own but that can return to the archive of human experience with a speed and scope no human can match.

Fourth, our argument implies a research program that the uniqueness model currently lacks. If the self that authors its own education is a product of rereading, then educational justice requires not only the negative liberty to pursue self-defined goals but positive access to the cultural techniques—narrative, autobiographical, hermeneutic, dialogic—that make self-authorship possible. This is a different kind of equity: not equity of outcomes, but equity of access to the means of self-production. It brings us closer to Listiadi's (2026) invocation of Sen's (1999) capability approach, but with a specific cultural content: the capability in question is the capability to reread one's own life—to perform *das Erkennen des Erkannten* on one's own experience—and thereby to become the author of one's own education.

Fifth and finally, Matusov's Bakhtinian commitments are deepened, not weakened, by our argument. We have shown that Bakhtin belongs to the continental tradition of aphoristic rereading that runs from Nietzsche through Heidegger and Sartre to the present. This does not diminish Bakhtin's originality; it reveals the depth of his connection to the broader philosophical currents of his time. And it suggests that Matusov's uniqueness model, which draws so heavily on Bakhtin, is itself an exercise in *das Erkennen des Erkannten*: it takes the familiar practices of democratic schooling and rereads them through the Bakhtinian aphorisms of "once-occurrent event" and "unfinalizability," transforming them into a model of educational justice. Our contribution has been to extend this rereading one step further: to reread Matusov's model itself and to discover, retroactively, that its central operation—the production of the self-evaluating learner—has

a history that the model has not yet acknowledged. The face beneath the mask of uniqueness is the act of rereading that produced it.

5. Conclusion: The Mask That Rereads Itself

We close with the metaphor that has guided our collaborative work for two decades (Shtayn, 2013). The self that Matusov's uniqueness model places at the center of educational justice is, we have argued, a mask—not in the sense of a deception, but in the precise sense of a form that presents itself as a face. The mask is the narrative coherence, the retroactive unity, the "I" that says "this was my education." The face is the process of rereading that produced it—a process that the mask, by its very structure, cannot see.

The four commentaries in this discussion have enriched the mask, added features to it, defended it against its critics, and extended its reach into new domains. Shugurova has given it a cyborg extension; Rahimi has given it a communication cycle; Sobral and Giacomelli have given it an ethical grounding in alterity; Listiadi has given it structural conditions and dialogic accountability. Our contribution has been to turn the mask around—to ask about the process that produced it. The face beneath the mask is not a truer, more authentic self. It is the act of rereading itself: the endless, unfinalizable return to the traces of one's own becoming that Böckh defined as *das Erkennen des Erkannten*, that Dilthey called *Verstehen*, that Nietzsche and the continental tradition made into the engine of critical subjectivity, that Jameson identified in the machinery of the novel, and that Matusov's own pedagogy, at its best, exemplifies.

This recognition does not diminish the uniqueness model. It completes it. For if we are right, the "uniqueness" that Matusov champions is not a biological endowment or a metaphysical given but a cultural achievement of the highest order. It is the product of centuries of training in rereading—a training that has been carried out by novels and autobiographies, by philosophical books built around aphorisms, by philological seminars and democratic assemblies, and, increasingly, by the pedagogical interventions of dialogic educators like Matusov himself. To educate, in this light, is to teach the art of rereading. And to be educated is to acquire the capacity to return to one's own experience and to discover, retroactively, that it was educational all along—a discovery that is also a creation, a *das Erkennen des Erkannten* that transforms both the knower and the known.

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