



Creative Love in Heutagogy: Reconciling Learner Autonomy and Value Inheritance

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Abstract: This paper develops the concept of *Creative Love* as a theoretical expansion of *Whatever Love*, grounded in Agamben's thought, to resolve a central dilemma in heutagogy: how to preserve self-directed learning autonomy while inheriting transformative educational values. Based on Critical Educational Theology principles, Creative Love creates a mutual relationship generating a space of mutual self-directed learning. In this process, each participant's existence "creates" the other's consciousness by serving as an existential boundary that enables self-discovery, with values reflecting the existential necessity of this mutual interdependence. The framework offers practical implications along with ideas for empirical research to examine its implementation.

Keywords: heutagogy, whatever love, creative love, critical educational theology, self-directed learning.

Introduction

Heutagogy, defined as self-directed learning with a character of lifelong learning persistence (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2000), poses central questions for the philosophy of education concerning the nature of the relationship between teacher and student. Since its presentation by Hase and Kenyon (2000), the heutagogical approach emphasizes the learner's ability to take complete control over their learning process, including setting goals, choosing methods, and evaluating outcomes.

Based on the current definition by Singh and Sisodia (2024), heutagogy is a form of self-directed learning that emphasizes the learner's ability to take control over the learning process, set their own goals, and choose their learning strategies. Blaschke and Hase (2019) emphasize that the goal in heutagogy is to effectively prepare learners for the challenges of the modern workplace while emphasizing autonomy and supporting learning. Canning and Callan (2010) describe heutagogy as "spirals of reflection for empowering learners in higher education." Similarly, Ashton and Elliott (2007) characterize heutagogy as a balance between different life domains from the perspective of students in flexible and engaged heutagogy. Accordingly, Ashton and Newman (2006) note that heutagogy provides an enriched teaching methodology for lifelong learning in higher education institutions.

Blaschke (2012) presents the PAH continuum (Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy) as a framework for understanding the learner's development from dependence on the teacher to complete independence. In pedagogy, the teacher controls all aspects of the learning process. In andragogy, the learner takes more responsibility, but the teacher still guides the process.

Additionally, a central point in heutagogy is the transition from planned, linear learning to parallel and informal learning, which aligns with the way people learn outside formal academic frameworks. As Hase and Blaschke (2021) note, this includes "reflection and metacognition" – learners examine what they learned and how they taught it. One of the prominent practical expressions of heutagogy is the flipped classroom. Singh and Sisodia (2024) describe a flipped classroom where students take responsibility for their initial exposure to new content, while classroom time is used for discussions and activities where the teacher serves as a guide.

In this format, the need for continuous learning stems not from external pressure but from internal curiosity. The learner discovers that there are still interesting things to discover, more connections to explore, and more skills to develop. He does not learn because someone told him he must, but because he finds in learning a source of pleasure and development.

However, this emphasis on learner autonomy in heutagogy raises a fundamental tension in educational discourse. This tension revolves around the question of instilling transformative educational values, which necessitate a transformative process in the student, while simultaneously preserving the student's autonomy. Formulated as a question: How is it possible to instill transformative educational values while simultaneously preserving autonomous self-directed learning?

This question becomes sharper when viewed through the lens of educational love. Love has long been considered a fundamental component in educational practice, from Plato to the present day (Cho, 2005; Freire, 2000; Lanas, 2017). However, the troubling question is: How is it possible to love students unconditionally, as required by true heutagogy (the belief in preserving the student's autonomy and creating self-directed learning), while preserving the ability to transmit educational values that will enable students not only to be loved (dwelling within an enabling space of self-directed learning) but also to become loving (to undergo transformative processes that penetrate the personal space and change it, in order to teach them to be adults themselves who enable the next generation to maintain self-directed learning)?

In this context, Jasinski and Lewis (2016) presented a groundbreaking idea through the concept of Whatever Love. This approach, based on Giorgio Agamben's thought, proposes an educational love that focuses on the student's potential, regardless of the direction in which it is realized. This love seeks to avoid imposing preliminary ideals on the student, thereby enabling authentic self-directed learning. However, as will be seen later, Whatever Love creates a new and complex challenge: it focuses on improving the relationship between the teacher and the student, rather than dealing with the question of instilling the value of unconditional love itself.

This complexity becomes particularly pronounced when we consider the unique challenges posed by heutagogy. As mentioned, Blaschke (2012) describes heutagogy as an advanced stage in a continuum that begins with pedagogy (teacher-guided learning), passes through andragogy (self-guided learning), and reaches heutagogy (self-directed learning). Within this framework, the learner becomes the "architect" of his learning experience (Snowden & Halsall, 2016). However, a central question arises: if the learner indeed controls all aspects of learning, what is the place of educational love between teacher and student in this relationship?

Moreover, heutagogy raises additional dilemmas related to the nature of knowledge and the teacher's role. If the learner determines what to learn and how to learn, what is the place of the professional knowledge that the teacher seeks to transmit? Does knowledge in didactics, educational psychology, and learning theories become secondary? These questions challenge the traditional status of academic knowledge and necessitate a reevaluation of the relationship between pedagogical expertise and self-directed learning.

Simultaneously, recent developments in the field of Critical Educational Theology offer a new theoretical framework that enables bridging these gaps. Recent studies demonstrate how theology can be integrated with critical thinking to create an educational framework that respects both the learner's autonomy and the need for value transmission (Luzon, 2025a, 2025b). This approach offers an alternative to the traditional tension between theology, sometimes perceived as imposing preliminary values, and criticism, perceived as opposing all value determinations.

This question stems from the central issue of this research: Is it possible to develop a model of educational love suitable for a heutagogical framework, enabling authentic self-directed learning while preserving the transmission of educational values? In particular, is it possible to expand the idea of Whatever Love in a way that enables a transition from unidirectional love to mutual love, where the student is not only loved but also becomes loving?

The central argument of this article is that such educational love can be realized through what I call Creative Love. This love is based on the principles of critical educational theology and enables a transition from Whatever Love, focused in one direction from teacher to student, to mutual love where the teacher and student serve each other as both lovers and beloved. Within this framework, educational values are not dictated from outside but are derived from within the encounter itself between teacher and student.

Creative Love offers a solution to the central paradox of heutagogy: how to love students unconditionally while transmitting educational values. The solution lies in creating a relationship where values are generated from within the encounter itself, rather than being imposed from outside. Thus, the learner's autonomy is preserved while maintaining the ability to transmit vital educational values.

The argument will be developed in three main stages. First, I will examine the theoretical background of Agamben's thought and its translation into the idea of Whatever Love by Jasinski and Lewis. I will present the innovations and contributions of this approach while identifying its limitations within a heutagogical framework. Second, I will present the theoretical framework of critical educational theology and explain how it enables the development of Creative Love as a substantial expansion of Whatever Love. At this stage, I will clarify the uniqueness of Creative Love and its characteristics. Third, I will present the practical application of Creative Love within a heutagogical framework, while demonstrating how it

solves the presented dilemmas and provides a response to the challenges of self-directed learning.

This article contributes to the broad discourse on love in education by theoretically expanding existing concepts and their connection to a heutagogical framework. Moreover, it provides a practical framework for educators operating within frameworks of self-directed learning. Theoretically, the research contributes to the interdisciplinary discourse connecting theology, philosophy, and education, and demonstrates how seemingly contradictory approaches can be integrated into a coherent and practical educational framework.

A methodological clarification is in order. This article operates within the Agambenian theological-political tradition rather than within the broader discourse on pedagogical love developed in humanistic and critical educational theory. The distinction matters because the questions differ fundamentally. Thinkers such as Rogers and Freire ask how the teacher can form a caring, non-hierarchical relationship with the student – addressing the relational and ethical dimensions of education within a social-critical framework. Agamben’s thought, drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s theological-political insight that “the order of the profane assists, through being profane, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom” (Benjamin, 1921/1996, p. 305), poses a different question altogether: what happens when theological-political mechanisms of sanctification subjugate human potentiality itself? It is this insight that Agamben develops into the concept of profanation – as will be elaborated below – which operates not as a social-critical strategy of liberation or dialogue but as a theological-political operation that neutralizes the sacred structures through which power captures life (Agamben, 2007; Agamben & Fort, 2007). The theological dimension of this analysis is not incidental but constitutive (Luzon, 2025c; Newheiser, 2020).

Accordingly, Whatever Love and Creative Love, as will be developed in the following sections, are not variants of “pedagogical love” or “loving relationship” in the humanistic sense. They emerge from a theological-political genealogy – potentiality and non-potentiality, profanation and gesture, pure communicability and existential boundary – that asks different questions and arrives at different formulations. The reader who expects a general theory of pedagogical love, or a differentiation from romantic or Christian models of love, will find that these questions, while valuable in their own right, are not the questions this article sets out to address.

From Agamben to Whatever Love: An Integrated Theoretical Process

Giorgio Agamben's thought offers a comprehensive conceptual framework that bridges theological-political critique with educational philosophy. This framework raises fundamental questions about the nature of power, human potential, and, in particular, the possibility of true freedom within learning frameworks. To understand Agamben's contribution to educational thinking, one must examine his central ideas as an integrated process leading to the development of the concept of Whatever Love.

Agamben examines the intricate relationship between theological-political mechanisms of oppression and contemporary educational realities. He argues that the individual in modern society – whether a student in education or a citizen in politics – is subject to the constant possibility of oppression that disguises itself in sacred values (Agamben, 2011). Within this framework, modern governmental power derives from a theological paradigm that links the transcendent with the arrangement of ruling powers, creating a system of “glory” that justifies a status of superiority (Newheiser, 2020).

The concept of glory, as developed by Agamben, is particularly relevant to understanding the mechanisms of education. He demonstrates how educational systems can adopt similar patterns of glory, in which knowledge, pedagogical authority, or educational ideals become “sacred” and serve to justify power over students. In other words, education can also become a system where the student is subject to oppression, perceived as justified by the higher values that the teacher or system represents. It is important to note that this critique also applies to negative theology. Agamben shows how approaches that emphasize divine mystery or what cannot be known about it can also serve as tools for reinforcing a status of superiority. When mystery becomes a tool of rule, it loses its liberating power and functions as another mechanism of oppression. This provides important background for understanding the challenges posed by developing educational love based on recognition of the limits of knowledge (Newheiser, 2020).

At the centre of Agamben's thinking stands a unique conception of human potentiality. He places the individual's potentiality at the centre of his philosophical thesis, while emphasizing what he sees as a unique human capacity: the ability to be capable of his non-potentiality. Unlike other living

beings who are capable only of their specific potentiality, humans can choose not to realize their potential (Agamben, 1999).

This conception provides an anthropological basis for thinking about education. If humans are characterized by their ability not to realize potential, then proper education must recognize this right and not force realization. The implication is that an educational system that forces potential realization in a specific direction, harms what characterizes humans as human. In a heutagogical context, this highlights the importance of self-directed learning while also raising questions about the limits of autonomy.

Furthermore, the idea of non-potentiality challenges traditional conceptions of educational success. If humans are characterized by their ability not to realize, then an educational system that defines success only in terms of ability realization might miss what is essential to humanity. This provides a theoretical basis for thinking about educational love that is not conditional on achievements or potential realization.

In response to theological-political mechanisms of oppression, Agamben proposes the concept of profanation as a mechanism of liberation. Profanation differs from secularization in that it does not transfer ruling mechanisms from one place to another but neutralizes them completely. Instead of converting “heavenly” values to “earthly” ones, profanation neutralizes their coercive power and returns them to free use (Agamben & Fort, 2007).

In an educational context, profanation provides a framework for thinking about how to liberate the relationship between teacher and student from the imposition of preliminary ideals. Instead of dividing pedagogical authority or creating a more democratic system (which would be secularization), profanation enables a return to a basic encounter between person and person, where external ideals do not mediate love.

Related to this concept is the idea of gesture as an activity that reveals pure communicability. Gesture, as developed by Agamben, is an activity that reveals language itself without being bound to specific contents (Agamben, 2000; 2007; 2018; Sjöblom, 2025). In an educational context, Whatever Love can be seen as a type of gesture that reveals the possibility of a pure relationship between teacher and student. Expectations or preliminary goals do not mediate this relationship.

Jasinski and Lewis (2016) translate Agamben’s conceptual framework into the educational field in a way that creates a direct connection between

theological-political critique and educational practice. They identify a unifying line between Agamben's theological-political apparatus and his educational idea, while emphasizing the importance of preventing the imposition of preliminary ideals on the student. From this, they construct the concept of Whatever Love. This idea of avoiding the imposition of preliminary ideals on the educational relationship resonates with theological movements that emphasize refraining from establishing favourable conditions that dictate the relationship with God through the existence of binding preliminary requirements—negative theology advocates that God is not grasped positively and is not contained within the limitations of human perception (Aquinas, n.d.; Baker, 2024; Eckhart, 1958; Kondrla, 2016; Maimonides, n.d.; Otten, 1999; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, 1987; Rowlands, 2021). While Agamben does critique Dionysius's negative conception of God, his criticism specifically targets how divine hiddenness reinforces the dimension of glory (Agamben, 2011; Newheiser, 2020). His critique does not extend to the core negative principle of avoiding preliminary conditions for establishing authentic relationships.

The concept of Whatever Love is based on Agamben's idea that love is not directed toward a specific characteristic of the beloved, but rather the lover wants the beloved with all their characteristics, with their being as it is (Agamben, 1993). In an educational context, this translates to love where the teacher loves the student not because of what they do or achieve, but because of their very being as a bearer of potential, potential that can be realized or not.

The idea of Whatever Love profanes, in the Agambenian sense, the sacred element of preliminary educational ideals. Instead of the teacher loving the student in order to achieve a specific goal, such as academic achievements, personality development, or even "becoming a good person," the love focuses on the potential itself, regardless of the direction in which it is realized. This enables authentic self-directed learning because the student is not required to meet preliminary expectations in order to receive love.

Jasinski (2015) extends this idea to the point of calling for silencing the teacher's voice as representative of disciplinary power. He notes that this silencing enables students to enter their personal space in search of true educational freedom. This connects to the idea of gesture as an action that reveals pure possibility without dictating specific content. Accordingly, Jasinski proposes an entire practice of curriculum structure in childhood philosophy that educates children to think like philosophers while

emphasizing the freedom of thought. This freedom corresponds to the fundamental idea of heutagogy, which is self-directed learning.

From Whatever Love to Creative Love: Contributions, Limitations, and Theoretical Deepening

Whatever Love provides an important contribution to thinking about heutagogy by offering a strong theoretical basis for self-directed learning. It offers an alternative to educational approaches that set preliminary goals and enables learning where the student is not required to meet external expectations (Jasinski & Lewis, 2016). Furthermore, Whatever Love responds to the central challenge of heutagogy – how to maintain a meaningful relationship between teacher and student when the teacher does not dictate content or goals. Love that is not conditional on achievements or potential realization provides a stable basis for a relationship that can support self-directed learning.

However, Whatever Love raises complex questions in a heutagogical context that necessitate theoretical deepening. The central question concerns the unidirectionality of the approach. While the teacher loves the student with Whatever Love, the student does not develop the ability to become loving – the approach focuses on improving the relationship from the teacher's side but deals less with instilling the value of unconditional love itself. In a heutagogical context, this problem becomes sharper, since heutagogy aspires to develop independent learners capable of taking responsibility for their lifelong learning, yet if the teacher loves without providing a model for transmitting this value, the student might remain in a state of emotional dependence without developing true independence (Blaschke, 2012; Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Additionally, if the approach opposes imposing preliminary ideals, how is it possible to educate toward fundamental values such as empathy or responsibility – is avoiding setting preliminary values not itself a type of preliminary value? Furthermore, while Jasinski's (2015) call for silencing the teacher's voice provides an important theoretical direction, it raises questions about the role of the teacher's professional knowledge and about maintaining a meaningful educational relationship. Finally, Whatever Love focuses primarily on the teacher-student dyad and deals less with broader social and communal contexts (Snowden & Halsall, 2016). All these limitations provide the conceptual basis for developing Creative Love, which seeks to enable a transition from unidirectional love to mutual love.

Critical Educational Theology: An Expanded Theoretical Framework

To address the limitations of Whatever Love, a theoretical framework is proposed that integrates theology with critical thinking, creating a new basis for educational love. Critical Educational Theology provides such a framework through a combination of theological principles and critical thinking, thereby creating a response to the challenges of self-directed learning.

The theoretical foundations of Critical Educational Theology have been developed at length in recent studies (Luzon, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c); the following presentation focuses on the principles directly relevant to the derivation of Creative Love within a heutagological framework.

Recent studies demonstrate the feasibility of constructing a framework that integrates the recognition of a transcendent dimension, which is incomprehensible in its directness, with critical thinking that highlights the limitations of human knowledge (Luzon, 2025c). This approach offers an alternative to the traditional tension between theology and criticism by recognizing that each approach provides important insights that can enrich one another.

Critical Educational Theology is grounded in three central principles that collectively form a coherent framework. The first principle, a critical-philosophical one, emphasizes that human reason is limited by nature, and its boundary is what is unlimited—the infinite. This recognition provides a basis for intellectual humility that prevents humans from claiming absolute knowledge or unshakeable authority.

The second principle, the theological, proposes that God cannot be grasped directly, but his existence can be inferred through a process of regressive thinking. When humans confront the boundary between the finite and infinite, they reach recognition of what is called “the paradox of infinity” – the fact that even the infinite is limited by the existence of the finite. This paradox leads to recognition of the existence of a God who is beyond the categories of finite and infinite – he is a God who cannot be grasped at all directly but only indirectly, as one about whom it can be inferred that he is the one who created the paradoxical space between the finite and infinite.

The third principle, the principle of repetition, describes how every encounter with reality evokes repetition of the processes described in the two previous principles. Every meeting with a phenomenon in reality reminds humans of their limitation and of the existence of the transcendent in its completely incomprehensible sense, thereby creating an opportunity for repetition of the process of self-recognition and divine recognition. Every encounter with reality in its particulars will necessarily be translated into an educational-moral commandment whose characteristics will be documented in the structure of a practical commandment, the way the specific phenomenon in reality evokes the repetition process in its unique hue.

From the theoretical framework of Critical Educational Theology, Creative Love is derived – a type of educational love that expands upon Whatever Love. Creative Love is created when two individuals meet in such a way that each of them experiences his unique presence through the encounter with the other, who constitutes a local boundary for himself. As a result of the three principles, the other does not constitute a threat to the existence of the self, but rather enables him to experience himself as a separate and distinct entity – in a theological space that enables paradoxical existence even for the finite and infinite to exist side by side, there is space for everyone to exist. Moreover, in such a space the other is not only a boundary but he is a boundary that defines my very existence just as the infinite defines everything that is finite – my existence depends on the existence of the other, so that the other actually ‘creates’ my existence even if only on the consciousness level and hence my obligation, my appreciation, and naturally also my affection toward him.

The uniqueness of Creative Love lies in several central characteristics that distinguish it from other types of love. First, it is characterized by mutuality instead of unidirectionality. Unlike Whatever Love, where the teacher loves the student, Creative Love creates a situation where each side is simultaneously lover and beloved (each one is an existential boundary for the other). The student does not remain passive as a receiver of love, but becomes an active source of love.

Second, Creative Love is characterized by creating identity through encounter. The unique identity of each participant in the encounter is created through the presence of the other. The teacher discovers her unique consciousness through the specific encounter with this specific student, and the student discovers himself through the encounter with the teacher. As mentioned, this creates a situation where each participant in the encounter

“creates” the consciousness of the other in the sense of providing the possibility for self-discovery.

Third, Creative Love is characterized by the fact that educational values are derived from within the encounter itself and are not dictated from outside. Unlike approaches that set values as preliminary conditions for encounter, Creative Love enables values to crystallize from within the need to preserve and cultivate the authentic encounter. Values are not imposed on the encounter but are created from within it.

Fourth, Creative Love enables a natural transition from potentiality to actuality. Unlike approaches that try to force potential realization or approaches that ignore it completely, Creative Love enables learning where potential becomes actual as a natural result of the encounter. The student develops his skills not in order to meet external expectations but as part of a process of self-discovery and creating authentic connection where he constantly discovers, not his omnipotent existence, the all-knowing (which can anyway oppress the other), but his limited existence, the incomprehensible, full of humility, leaving room for the existence of the other as a source for his existence.

Creative Love offers a direct response to the primary challenges posed by heutagogy. Regarding the question of instilling values, Creative Love offers a way to instill values without imposing them. Values are created from within the encounter itself (as educational-moral commandments that directly concern the continuation of the existence of the other as perpetuating the consciousness of limitation of the observer, and as a boundary that creates the very consciousness of the existence of the observer). Therefore, they are experienced by the student as part of self-discovery and not as external dictation.

In the context of developing independence, Creative Love provides a conceptual expansion to Whatever Love. Instead of leaving the student in a state of emotional dependence on the teacher, it develops his ability to become a lover himself. This aligns with the heutagogical goal of developing independent learners who are capable of taking responsibility for their lifelong learning.

Furthermore, Creative Love offers a framework for considering an educational relationship that respects both the teacher’s professional expertise and the student’s autonomy. Instead of silencing the teacher’s voice, it enables the teacher to share information and knowledge while

recognizing that this knowledge is limited and subject to interpretation and development by the student.

Creative Love also addresses the challenge of preparing students for participation in broader social spaces. While the encounter between teacher and student is the starting point, the principles of Creative Love can spread to other relationships. The student who experiences himself as creator of the other's consciousness develops the ability to act similarly with other people, while recognizing their uniqueness and their contribution to self-discovery.

Creative Love operates through specific mechanisms that distinguish it from other types of love. The central mechanism is what can be called mutual recognition of limitation. Each participant in the encounter recognizes that they are limited in their knowledge and understanding and simultaneously recognizes that the other provides them with the possibility to discover new aspects of themselves. This creates a situation of mutual humility that enables authentic learning.

Another mechanism is what can be called continuous repetition. Based on the principle of repetition from Critical Educational Theology, every encounter between teacher and student reminds both of them of their limitation and their need for each other. This prevents the system from becoming fixed in hierarchical structures and enables continuous renewal of the encounter.

A third mechanism is what can be called creating values from within the encounter. Unlike approaches that bring values from outside, Creative Love enables values to crystallize from within the need to preserve and cultivate the authentic encounter. This creates a situation where values are experienced as natural and relevant, and not as imposed from outside.

A fourth mechanism is what can be called expanding the circle. Creative Love is not limited to the initial encounter between teacher and student, but spreads toward other relationships. The student who experiences himself as the creator of the teacher's consciousness develops the ability to act similarly with others and thereby becomes a source of Creative Love in broader circles.

Based on these mechanisms, Creative Love offers a practical framework for implementing heutagogy, integrating autonomy with value transmission, independence with connection, and freedom with responsibility. This constitutes a significant step forward from Whatever Love toward an educational model that provides a more complete response to the challenges of self-directed learning.

Implementation of Creative Love in Heutagogy: From Theory to Practice

The previous theoretical discussion showed how Creative Love provides a conceptual response to the challenges of Whatever Love within a heutagological framework. It is now necessary to examine how this theoretical framework can be applied in actual educational practice. The central question is whether Creative Love can provide not only a conceptual solution but also a practical guide for teachers operating within frameworks of self-directed learning.

The central uniqueness of Creative Love lies in its ability to change the fundamental dynamics of the educational relationship. Unlike Whatever Love, where the teacher remains the exclusive source of love, Creative Love fosters a relationship in which the student becomes an active partner in the love process. This occurs not through explicit dictation or guidance, but as a natural result of the encounter itself.

Within a heutagological framework, this transition receives special meaning. In heutagogy, the learner is supposed to take responsibility for their learning process; however, this approach might leave them in a state of emotional dependence on the teacher. Creative Love addresses this issue by recognizing that the student is not only a recipient of love but also a giver of it. He discovers that his presence affects the teacher and shapes her consciousness and thereby develops a sense of agency that is an essential element in self-directed learning.

This process occurs through what can be called mutual discovery of dependence. The teacher discovers that she needs the student not only to fulfil her professional role, but in order to experience herself as a unique educational entity. The student discovers that he is not only a passive receiver of education but also an active contributor to the learning process. This creates a situation where both sides recognize their mutual dependence, and from this recognition emerges a love based on real need, rather than an absolute, preliminary ideal.

One of the central challenges of heutagogy concerns the question of how to instil educational values without harming the learner's autonomy. Creative Love offers a unique solution to this problem through a mechanism where values are generated within the encounter itself and are not imposed from outside.

The process begins with the recognition that every encounter between teacher and student constitutes a phenomenon in reality that evokes the principle of repetition from Critical Educational Theology. The teacher experiences the student as a boundary to her existence, something that reminds her of her limitations and her dependence on others. The student similarly experiences the teacher. From this experience of mutual limitation, specific educational and moral commandments are created that relate to how the encounter should be preserved and cultivated.

For example, if a student presents an idea that challenges the teacher's knowledge, the natural response within the framework of Creative Love is not a defence of authority, but rather recognition that the student provides the teacher with an opportunity to discover her own limitations. This fosters a value of intellectual modesty that is not imposed from outside but arises from the encounter itself. The student sees that the teacher responds to the challenge with openness and gratitude and learns from this to develop a similar attitude toward others.

Similarly, when a student struggles with a particular subject, the teacher, within the framework of Creative Love, does not see this as failure but as an opportunity to discover new ways of understanding. The student learns that difficulty is not a source of shame but a natural part of the learning process and develops an attitude of patience with himself and with others. Again, the value is created from within the encounter and not from a lecture about the importance of patience.

A central paradox in heutagogy concerns the question of how to develop true independence. Many interpret independence as disconnection from others, but Creative Love offers a different understanding. True independence develops through conscious recognition of dependence on others, not through its denial.

Within the framework of Creative Love, the student develops what can be called independence while being aware of their dependence. He learns to make decisions himself, not because he is independent of others, but because he recognizes his dependence and chooses to take responsibility for it. This creates a different type of independence, not independence of recognition that he needs others, but decides how to manage this relationship.

In practice, this is reflected in the fact that the student learns to ask for help in a deliberate and calculated manner, not out of weakness, but out of strength. He understands that the assistance he receives from the teacher

does not weaken his independence but rather strengthens it, provided that he takes responsibility for how he uses this assistance. Similarly, he develops the ability to offer help to others, not to demonstrate superiority, but to recognize their mutual dependence.

One of the challenges of heutagogy concerns the role of the teacher's professional knowledge. If the student controls the learning process, does the teacher's pedagogical and content knowledge become unnecessary? Creative Love provides a solution that preserves professional knowledge without turning it into a tool of oppression.

The solution lies in understanding that the teacher's professional knowledge is part of her uniqueness as a person, not a tool of rule. When the teacher presents professional knowledge within the framework of Creative Love, she does so while acknowledging that this is her limited knowledge, which may be helpful to the student but does not obligate them. The student receives this knowledge as a suggestion for discussion, not as a dictate. This process creates a dynamic in which professional knowledge becomes a collaborative resource, rather than a tool of control. The teacher presents her knowledge transparently, including its limitations, and the student decides how to process and use it. The student also brings his knowledge, whether formal or experiential, and the two together create a more complex understanding.

While Whatever Love focuses mainly on the dual relationship between teacher and student, Creative Love can expand toward creating learning communities. The student who experiences himself as the creator of the teacher's consciousness develops understanding that he can act similarly with others.

This process begins with the recognition that every person the student meets can serve as a boundary that evokes the repetition of recognizing his limitations. Classmates, other teachers, or even people outside the educational institution can serve as learning sources not because they help achieve defined goals, but because they provide an opportunity for self-discovery and recognition of one's limitations. This creates what can be called a decentralized learning community where every member recognizes their dependence on others and their contribution to them. Learning occurs not only through information transfer but through real encounters where every participant discovers new aspects of themselves through others.

The practical application of Creative Love to heutagogy requires developing a curriculum structure that supports these principles. Such a

structure would be flexible enough to accommodate the unique needs of each student yet provide a sufficient framework to enable meaningful encounters.

A central element in such a structure is what can be called mutual reflection circles. Regularly, the teacher and student dedicate time to examining the way their encounter affects each of them. This is not an academic discussion about learning theories but an honest examination of what each discovers about himself through the other.

Another element is what can be called encounter-based projects. Instead of the student choosing a project based on personal interest or professional goal, he develops a project that stems from the encounter with the teacher or with others. This can be a project that examines a subject that arose in dialogue, or a project that attempts to solve a problem revealed during the encounter.

A third element is what can be called dependency mapping. Through dedicated practice, the student develops an awareness of the network of people they depend on for learning, as well as the network of people who depend on them. This is not an intellectual exercise but a practical tool that helps him navigate the complex world of relationships and influences.

The assessment system within the framework of Creative Love moves away from the traditional model of external judgment toward a model of mutual assessment. The question is not “Did the student meet the goals?” but “What did each of us learn about himself and the other through the encounter?” This is evident in the fact that the teacher also assesses herself, not just the student. She examines how the encounter with the specific student affected her understanding, her methods, and her professional identity. The student recognizes that assessment is a mutual process and develops the ability to evaluate not only himself but also the quality of his encounters with others.

The result is an assessment system based on mutual recognition of growth and change, rather than measuring adherence to fixed standards. This aligns with the heutagogical principles of self-directed learning but provides a value framework that prevents slipping into indifference or a lack of direction. In this way, Creative Love provides not only a theoretical response to the challenges of heutagogy but also a practical guide for developing an educational system that integrates autonomy with responsibility, independence with community, and freedom with love.

Concluding Discussion

Current models in the research literature in the field of educational love deal with the implementation of the teacher's love within the framework of the educational-moral worldview that she creates, and relate to the contribution of love to the correct educational approach that the teacher should adopt (Aldridge, 2019; Garrison, 2010; Kenklies, 2019; Luzon, 2016). The central contribution of the current research to the field of educational love lies in developing the concept of Creative Love as an expansion of Whatever Love, while addressing challenges that were not resolved in the original approach. This research provides a substantial contribution to the discourse on love in education through proposing a new theoretical framework that connects theology with criticism in a heutagogical context. While Whatever Love provides an important basis for thinking about unconditional educational love, it leaves open the central question of value instillation. Creative Love responds to this challenge through a mechanism where values are created within the encounter itself, rather than being dictated from outside. This enables authentic self-directed learning while preserving the transmission of vital educational values.

Several questions arise from the theoretical framework presented above, and they deserve direct clarification. First, the question of what kind of love is possible within heutagogy if the relationship between teacher and learner is not guaranteed. Within the present framework, the love in question is not emotional-pedagogical but existential-theological – it emerges at the moment when the other constitutes an existential boundary for the self, regardless of the institutional form the encounter takes. Second, the question of the teacher's professional mission and curricular commitments. Creative Love does not abolish the teacher's professional knowledge but repositions it – as will be recalled from the discussion above, the teacher's expertise functions as part of her uniqueness as a person who constitutes a boundary, not as an instrument of authority. Third, the question of whether values can develop outside the framework of Creative Love. The present article does not claim exclusivity for this mechanism but rather offers a specific account of how values are derived from within the theological structure of the encounter itself, leaving open the possibility that other frameworks generate values through different means. Fourth, the theological question of whether the values in Creative Love are derived from God or from the encounter. They are derived from the encounter, through a regressive inference to an incomprehensible God whose existence is recognized retrospectively as the condition enabling the mutual, paradoxical

coexistence of finite beings (Luzon, 2025a, 2025c). The divine does not function here as a direct prescriptive source but as the horizon (that is, an incomprehensible horizon available to recognition only through backward inference) inferred from the experience of mutual limitation. Fifth, and by way of broader clarification, the traditions of thought upon which this article draws are not those of humanistic pedagogy or critical social theory but those of the Agambenian theological-political tradition – rooted in Benjamin’s theological-political thought and expanded through apophatic theology into the framework of Critical Educational Theology, as detailed in the preceding sections.

It should be noted that while the present article focuses on the theoretical development of Creative Love within a heutagogical framework, the practical implications of this concept have been elaborated elsewhere. Recent work has demonstrated how Creative Love generates concrete educational practices – including epistemic humility in classroom conduct, constitutive mutual responsibility, encounter-based assessment, and the derivation of specific educational values in domains such as art education and ecological awareness (Luzon, 2025a). These practical dimensions, though beyond the scope of the current article, confirm that the theoretical framework developed here is not confined to abstraction but yields implementable educational strategies.

Furthermore, the research contributes to understanding the relationship between theology and criticism in an educational context. It demonstrates how seemingly contradictory approaches can be integrated into a coherent educational framework. Critical Educational Theology offers a philosophical foundation that enables the recognition of the transcendent dimension while preserving critical thinking, thereby bridging a fundamental gap in modern educational discourse.

In the field of heutagogy, research offers a solution to the central paradox of how to preserve the learner’s autonomy while instilling values. Recent studies in this field emphasize that heutagogy is a framework of “self-directed learning” that empowers learner engagement (Wehmeyer et al., 2017). Accordingly, Creative Love offers a practical framework that enables teachers to operate within frameworks of self-directed learning without compromising their educational role. This is particularly relevant in an era where education deals with increasing demands for personalization and individual adaptation.

Methodologically, the research demonstrates the possibility of connecting different traditions of thought in a way that creates new understanding. The

application of Agamben's thought as a basis for theoretical development demonstrates how general philosophical ideas can inform the development of specific educational approaches.

It should be noted that the current research focuses on theoretical development and does not include empirical examination of implementing Creative Love in actual educational settings. This is a significant limitation that requires future research. It is possible that the practical implementation of the ideas will raise challenges that were not anticipated at the theoretical level, or that adaptations will be required for a variety of educational contexts.

Another limitation concerns the focus mainly on the dual encounter between teacher and student. While the research explores the possibility of expanding to learning communities, it does not provide a detailed response to the specific challenges of implementing Creative Love in group or complex institutional settings. Additionally, the research is grounded in a specific theological framework that may not be applicable to all social and cultural contexts. The question is whether Creative Love can function in secular settings or different religious settings from the one proposed by the research.

This leads to several directions for future research. First, there is a need for empirical research that will examine the practical implementation of Creative Love in classrooms and educational institutions. Such research can include tracking teachers as they implement the principles, examining student responses, and evaluating the effects on learning processes.

Second, there is room to examine the implementation of Creative Love in diverse cultural and religious contexts. Comparative research can examine how the principles are translated in different settings and how they can be adapted to local values and norms. Third, it is essential to investigate the connection between Creative Love and advanced educational technologies. In an era of digital learning and artificial intelligence, the question is how to preserve the personal and human elements of Creative Love in technological settings. Fourth, there is a need for research on teacher training for implementing Creative Love. Such research can examine how theoretical principles can be translated into practical training programs, and how teachers can be supported in the process of change from traditional approaches to an approach based on Creative Love.

However, in relation to the research objective, the study demonstrates that it is possible to develop a model of educational love suitable for a heutagogical framework, while preserving both the learner's autonomy and

the instillation of values. Creative Love responds to the central paradox of heutagogy through creating a mutual relationship where values are created from within the encounter itself. The central contribution of the research lies in presenting a way in which theology and criticism can work together to create an educational framework that neither rejects the spiritual dimension nor compromises critical thinking. This provides a new direction for modern education, addressing the need to balance the development of autonomy with the transmission of shared values.

In an era where education deals with increasing challenges of personalization, digitization, and cultural diversity, Creative Love offers a way to preserve the human element of education while adapting to changing needs. It provides a framework that supports self-directed learning without compromising the deepening of the human connection between teacher and student.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates the importance of preserving the dimension of love in education, not as an emotional addition but as an essential element in the learning process. Creative Love demonstrates how love can serve as a foundation for transformative education that respects the uniqueness of each learner while fostering a community of mutual learning.

Ultimately, the research makes a significant contribution to the broader discourse on the role of spirituality in contemporary education. It demonstrates how theological dimensions can be integrated into education without conflicting with the principles of freedom of thought and criticism. This is particularly relevant in a world where education is increasingly polarized between secular and religious approaches.

Creative Love offers a way to think about education as a profound human encounter that contains within it the potential for mutual transformation. This provides hope for education that can be both professional and personal, both challenging and containing, both respecting autonomy and transmitting values. In this sense, the research contributes not only to educational theory but also to the daily practice of teachers and students seeking more meaningful and authentic ways of shared learning.

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