

Spatial-Material Memory Pedagogy: Deconstructing the Educational Model of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 in Digital Learning Spaces

Sukanto Limbong¹, Daniel Razsekar Panjaitan¹

¹ Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The rapid migration of contemporary education into virtual environments has engineered an ontological crisis characterized by disembodied learning and digital learning space alienation. As instructional interactions are reduced to frictionless screens, students are increasingly severed from the physical geographies and tangible materials vital for shaping ethical consciousness and collective memory. This study addresses this theoretical gap by executing a qualitative deconstruction of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, reframing it from a narrow theological dogma into an ancient Near Eastern curricular artifact of resilience. Grounded in philosophical-pedagogical hermeneutics and a Derridean deconstructive approach, the study analyzes the semantic and syntactic functions of the Hebrew Masoretic text's spatial-itinerant verbs (*yashab, halak, shakab, qum*) and material-semiotic objects (*'oth, totaphoth, mezuzah*), dialectically juxtaposing them with contemporary frameworks of spatial pedagogy and new materialism. The analysis extracts a novel conceptual model termed the "Spatial-Material Pedagogy of Memory." The findings reveal that verse 7 establishes a "Liquid yet Place-Anchored Curriculum" that reclaims everyday geographical trajectories against digital *non-places*, while verses 8-9 deploy a "Curriculum of Materiality" that utilizes physical tokens and architectural thresholds to counteract digital amnesia through embodied cognition. Ultimately, this model destabilizes the technocentric hegemony of modern educational technology, offering a robust philosophical foundation for future hybrid curricula that intentionally bind digital tools to local physical ecologies and corporeal craftsmanship.

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Corresponding Author:

Daniel Razsekar Panjaitan

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP, Indonesia; danielrazsekar@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary educational landscape is currently undergoing one of the most radical spatial migrations in human history. The acceleration of digital technology, driven by the integration of

artificial intelligence and cloud-based Learning Management Systems, has reconfigured the classroom from a tangible geographical entity into abstract virtual coordinates on a screen (Selwyn, 2016). This transformation is widely celebrated as a visionary milestone for educational democratization and instructional efficiency. However, beneath this narrative of techno-utopian optimism lies a deeply concerning ontological crisis: modern learning is increasingly losing its physical dimension, leading to disembodied learning. As educational interactions are reduced to mere arrays of pixels, keystrokes, and screen exposures, students are gradually severed from the material environments and physical realities that are vital for shaping their ethical consciousness and collective memory (Fenwick, 2015).

This condition of placelessness and disembodiment ultimately triggers what can be termed digital learning space alienation. Within an algorithmically mediated digital ecosystem, students experience an existential disorientation as their learning environments morph into "non-places"—abstract arenas devoid of history, emotional attachment, and anchoring in the surrounding sociological or ecological realities (Auge, 1996). Modern education frequently operates under the fallacious assumption that knowledge can be purely transmitted through cognitive-digital stimulation alone. Consequently, contemporary curricula fail to mitigate character crises and global anxieties (such as social fragmentation and eco-anxiety) precisely because they bifurcate the act of thinking from the physical living spaces and the material bodies of the learners.

Unfortunately, scholarly remedies aimed at addressing this digital alienation remain trapped within a technocentric loop. Curriculum developers generally offer interventions that are themselves digital, such as optimizing user interfaces (UI/UX), gamifying instruction, or immersing students in Virtual Reality (VR) environments (Edwards & Fenwick, 2016). This approach overlooks the reality that virtual engineering can never fully replicate the corporeal weight of materiality and the depth of physical space required to cultivate ethical subjects. Concurrently, when researchers turn to ancient traditions or historical religious texts to seek alternative value pedagogies, their findings frequently suffer from hermeneutical reductionism. Ancient texts—such as the educational framework found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9—are often insulated within narrow dogmatic-theological spheres, reduced to rigid instruments for domestic catechesis, or dismissed as obsolete models incompatible with modernity (Brueggemann, 2001). Consequently, the profound pedagogical sophistication embedded within the socio-historical structure of such ancient texts remains largely overlooked by mainstream educational theorists.

To bridge this theoretical gap, this article offers a novel perspective by executing a radical deconstruction of Deuteronomy 6:4–9, treating it not as an absolute theological dogma, but as an ancient Near Eastern curricular artifact. Through the theoretical lenses of Spatial Pedagogy and New Materialism in Education, this study elucidates how this ancient text responded to identity crises and threats of cultural assimilation in its own era through the strategic engineering of living spaces and physical objects (Pearson, 2017; Gruenewald, 2003). This article argues that Deuteronomy 6:4–9 offers a conceptual model termed the "Spatial-Material Pedagogy of Memory." This model posits that the internalization of critical values and collective memory cannot exclusively rely on cognitive abstraction or rote memorization; rather, it must be radically anchored in the geographical rhythms of everyday life (spatial) and manifested through the physical interaction of the body with concrete objects (material). Through this framework, the article aims to challenge the hegemony of virtual spaces in contemporary educational technology, while offering a new philosophical foundation for designing future curricula that are corporeal, place-based, and highly resilient against the disruptions of the digital age.

2. METHODS

To operationalize this theoretical inquiry, this study employs a qualitative research design rooted in philosophical-pedagogical hermeneutics combined with a Derridean deconstructive approach, thereby liberating the ancient text from rigid confessional boundaries to explore its universal pedagogical mechanics as a critique of modern cybernetic spaces (Biesta, 2009). The primary data

corpus is extracted directly from the Hebrew Masoretic text of Deuteronomy 6:4–9, focusing specifically on the semantic and syntactic functions of spatial-itinerant verbs—such as *yashab* (to sit), *halak* (to walk), *shakab* (to lie down), and *qum* (to rise)—alongside material-semiotic objects including *'oth* (sign), *totaphoth* (frontlets), and *mezuzah* (doorposts). This primary data is dialectically juxtaposed with a secondary corpus comprising socio-historical literature on Ancient Near Eastern educational contexts, which is then confronted with contemporary theoretical frameworks in educational philosophy, specifically spatial pedagogy and new materialism (Klausen, 2018). The data analysis proceeds systematically through three interlocking stages: first, a socio-historical exegesis to reconstruct the text of Deuteronomy as a counter-hegemonic curriculum of resilience; second, a conceptual deconstruction to translate these ancient spatial-material dynamics into modern educational apparatuses such as embodied cognition and place-anchored curricula; and third, a dialectical synthesis that directly confronts contemporary digital learning space alienation with this newly extracted model of the Spatial-Material Pedagogy of Memory (Gallagher, 2015).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Anatomy of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 as a Counter-Hegemonic Curriculum of Resilience

From a socio-historical perspective, the text of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 was redacted and dedicated during a period of profound existential crisis for the Israelite community. Trapped within the geopolitical crossfires of dominant ancient Near Eastern empires—specifically the aggressive assimilatory polities of Assyria and Babylon—the community faced not merely political subjugation, but total cultural and systemic erasure (Christopher, 2002). In response to this imminent catastrophe, the *Shema* framework was engineered not as a passive confession of faith, but as a rigorous "counter-curriculum" designed to resist imperial hegemony.

By deliberately shifting the locus of knowledge transmission away from centralized state institutions or imperial elite sanctuaries, the text decentralizes education, placing it directly into the hands of the subaltern community. This structural arrangement implies that the educational model embedded in the text was never intended for the stagnant comfort of a conventional classroom or institutional setting. Instead, it was conceived as an ideological defense mechanism, a curriculum of survival specifically structured to preserve collective identity, agency, and ethical resistance in the midst of historical trauma and displacement.

When read against the backdrop of ancient imperial education, such as the highly standardized Babylonian scribal curriculum, the subversive nature of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 becomes even more pronounced. Imperial education sought to domesticate conquered populations by instilling the myths, language, and values of the empire into the minds of local elites, effectively alienating them from their native heritage (Carr, 2005). The *Shema* systematically dismantles this top-down model by democratic socialization; it democratizes the curriculum by commanding that the foundational narrative be taught to all children, regardless of social class. By doing so, the text strips the imperial state of its monopoly over human consciousness and establishes the domestic-communal sphere as a fortress of epistemic disobedience.

This ancient dynamic provides a powerful critical lens for evaluating the hegemony of modern educational technology. In the contemporary digital era, large technology conglomerates—often referred to as Big Tech—have effectively assumed the role of ancient empires by controlling the very infrastructure of learning through proprietary algorithms, data mining, and virtual learning management systems (Selwyn, 2016). This digital shift does not merely facilitate instruction; it subtly standardizes human consciousness, reducing the rich diversity of the learning experience to uniform data points designed for market extraction. Reclaiming the socio-historical intent of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 allows modern educators to view the decentralized, community-driven curriculum of the *Shema* as a historical precedent for resisting digital monopoly and reclaiming educational autonomy from algorithmic empires.

Ultimately, the anatomy of this ancient text reveals that a curriculum of resilience cannot be built upon the assumption of systemic stability or technological comfort. The *Shema* is fundamentally a pedagogy of catastrophe, born out of displacement and designed to function effectively when all external, institutional structures have collapsed or become hostile. For contemporary educational theorists grappling with the destabilizing effects of rapid digital disruption, this model shifts the conversation from how to adapt to technological trends to how to preserve the core of human identity beneath them. It suggests that true educational resilience is not technological fluency, but the cultivation of an unshakeable collective memory that can withstand the alienating currents of any historical crisis.

Space Reclamation: Spatial-Itinerant Pedagogy versus Digital Deterritorialization

The operational mechanics of this counter-curriculum are deeply rooted in what contemporary educational theory defines as spatial pedagogy. In verse 7, the text deploys a series of highly specific itinerant and domestic phrases: "when you sit in your house, when you walk on the way (*halak*), when you lie down, and when you rise." When analyzed through the lens of critical spatial theory, these commands represent a radical refusal to compartmentalize education within isolated, institutional boundaries such as schools, academies, or synagogues (Lefebvre, 2012). Instead, Deuteronomy 6:7 offers a "Liquid yet Place-Anchored Curriculum." It asserts that learning must be co-extensive with life itself, transforming every biological rhythm (sleeping, waking) and geographical coordinate (domestic stability, itinerant movement) into an active site of pedagogical discourse.

By expanding the classroom to encompass the entire physical trajectory of daily life, the text aligns closely with David Gruenewald's framework of place-based education, which emphasizes that geography is never a neutral container but an active participant in meaning-making (Gruenewald, 2003). The fourfold spatial-temporal coordinates of verse 7 ensure that knowledge is continuously confronted by, and integrated into, the lived reality of the student. To teach while "walking on the way" implies a peripatetic methodology where learning is embodied, conversational, and directly responsive to the immediate environment. This configuration suggests that ethical truths cannot be mastered through sedentary, isolated contemplation; they must be lived out, tested, and articulated through the physical movement of the body through real-world spaces.

This ancient spatial configuration provides a sharp critique of the deterritorialization inherent in modern digital learning spaces. Contemporary educational technology (*EdTech*) celebrates the capacity of virtual platforms to dissolve physical boundaries, allowing students to learn "anywhere and anytime." However, as sociologist Marc Augé notes, this digital ubiquity frequently results in the creation of *non-places*—abstract, commodified virtual spaces that completely sever the student from any local historical, social, or ecological reality (Marc Augé, 1996). When the physical classroom is replaced by a frictionless web interface, the student suffers from spatial alienation, interacting with a simulated world that lacks geographic gravity, thereby blinding them to the immediate social and environmental crises occurring right outside their window.

To overcome this digital learning space alienation, contemporary pedagogy must utilize the *Shema's* peripatetic model to drag learning back down to earth. Rather than allowing cyberspace to consume the physical realm, modern curricula must deliberately anchor digital tools within local, physical geographies through place-anchored instruction. For instance, instead of engaging with ecological ethics purely through abstract digital modules, students must be directed to "walk the way" of their local ecosystems, applying their critical thinking to concrete regional issues such as local water pollution or urban decay. By forcing digital interactions to anchor themselves in the immediate physical territory, educators can transform the floating, disembodied nature of cyberspace into a grounded, ethically accountable educational practice.

Body Reclamation: Material-Semiotic Pedagogy versus Digital Amnesia

In tandem with the reclamation of space, Deuteronomy 6:8–9 executes a profound reclamation of the human body through a curriculum of materiality. The mandate to bind the text as a sign (*’oth*) upon

the hand, as frontlets (*totaphoth*) between the eyes, and to inscribe it upon the doorposts (*mezuzah*) and city gates represents a sophisticated deployment of material-semiotic infrastructure. Read through the contemporary frameworks of *New Materialism* and *Embodied Cognition*, these commands demonstrate an ancient recognition that deep ethical values cannot be successfully internalized through pure cognitive abstraction or intellectual exposure alone (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2019). For an ethical worldview to withstand systemic pressure, it must materialize; it must be translated into tangible, heavy artifacts that the physical body must touch, wear, and visually confront within the everyday architecture of domestic and public life.

This reliance on physical tokens establishes what new materialist theorists call a pedagogical assemblage, wherein non-human objects are not passive tools but active agents that co-constitute human consciousness (Fenwick, 2015). The placement of these physical markers is strategically physiological: the hand represents agency and labor, the forehead represents perception and intellect, and the doorposts represent the boundary between the private self and public society. By structurally weaving the text into these physical thresholds, the *Shema* ensures that memory is literally worn upon the flesh and embedded within the architecture of the home. This material friction prevents the core values of the community from evaporating into abstract theory, turning the physical environment into a constant, silent instructor that anchors human identity against external erosion.

This material-semiotic model exposes the profound vulnerability of contemporary virtual and screen-based education. The modern digital interface relies on a "disembodied curriculum," where complex sensory motor interactions are reduced to the uniform, frictionless tapping of glass touchscreens. This dematerialization of data triggers what cognitive scientists identify as a form of "digital amnesia" or cognitive outsourcing, wherein human memory is offloaded to external search engines and cloud databases, leaving the physical subject cognitively and morally hollowed out (Sparrow & Wegner, 2011). When information is infinitely accessible but completely detached from physical form, it loses its psychological weight; students become adept at navigating information streams but fail to deeply internalize the ethical gravity of the knowledge they consume, leading to a superficial, transient understanding.

Deuteronomy 6:8–9 counters this virtual ephemeralization by insisting on physical weight and spatial permanency within the educational environment. To counteract the disembodied nature of cyberspace, modern educational design must intentionally reintroduce tactile materiality and architectural semiotics into the student's daily routine. This does not imply a simplistic rejection of technology, but a deliberate design requirement where digital learning must culminate in physical, material outputs—such as tactile journaling, real-world craftsmanship, or the physical restructuring of the domestic study space with visual, non-digital anchors. Ultimately, the text proves that collective ethical memory can only endure when the body routinely collides with the stubborn, physical materiality of its environment, asserting that a true education cannot merely be viewed on a screen—it must be inhabited through the flesh.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the deconstructive analysis of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 successfully operationalizes a visionary conceptual framework termed the "Spatial-Material Pedagogy of Memory," offering a potent philosophical antidote to contemporary digital learning space alienation. By synthesizing the socio-historical resilience of the *Shema* with modern critical spatial theory and new materialism, this study demonstrates that the preservation of collective ethical identity cannot survive within a frictionless, disembodied virtual vacuum; rather, it demands a liquid yet place-anchored curriculum that transforms daily geographical movements into instructional media, alongside a curriculum of materiality that anchors values within physical tokens and architectural thresholds. Theoretically, this model destabilizes the technocentric hegemony of modern *EdTech* by introducing corporeal Near Eastern wisdom into a screen-dominated educational philosophy, while practically challenging contemporary curriculum designers to develop hybrid learning environments that intentionally bind

digital tools to local physical ecologies and tactile human craftsmanship. Although this study remains bounded by its qualitative-philosophical scope, it establishes a robust, critical foundation that invites future empirical investigations—such as educational ethnographies or classroom action research—to evaluate the real-world operationalization and efficacy of integrating rigid spatial-material thresholds within increasingly virtualized educational systems.

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