LARS LØVLIE

THE FREEDOM OF PARADOX

CHILDHOOD AND TEENS

I still remember the joy of reading my first book. It was as if the words and the sentences promised a world of endless surprises – and that I had unlocked the door to freedom. The next book I fondly remember was – of all things – a dictionary of foreign terms. It came in a blue hardcover published by Gyldendal, literally the golden valley, the name a pleasure on the tongue. The pages had a nice shiny touch to them and the paper an agreeable smell, what more could I want? The book turned out to be a treasure chest of secret meanings – and it released my parents from my persistent questions of word meanings that increasingly went beyond their ready answers. The taste for grasping what words promised to reveal came to good use when many years later I took a university course in Latin, and got as far as to appreciate the brisk syntax of Caesar's de Belle Gallico. In my primary school days I read whatever came my way after the literary attrition of the Second World War. I went from some traditional cartoons to translations of *Reader's Digest* and to books for boys and girls: But a five-volume leather-bound *History of Nations* was my first guide to the world at large. It set me on a journey of wonderment at the beauty and brutality of history, and it introduced me to cultures that kindled my imagination. So I persisted in a pursuit that came to enrich my life beyond mere curiosity and ambition. I didn't yet know the enduring joy of getting to know contemporary life through the raster of history. And I didn't see that my fascination with history was about finding my place in it.

In my teens – we are now in the 1950s – I discovered the Pelican Books blue series, sold from a tiny bookshop in downtown Oslo. I took a special interest in the academic readings: the social sciences, psychology in particular, which went along with reading popular books and the texts on the natural sciences and technology that came my way. The Norwegian classics were my constant companions; I got them from my grandfather's library. But it was Arthur Koestler's books that caused my intellectual awakening and gave it direction – or so I liked to think. Koestler was a Hungarian who fled from the Nazis, became a British citizen and began writing in English. He rose to a star intellectual on the European scene after the war, his fame comparable to Sartre's. I was particularly taken with his autobiography *An Arrow in the Blue* (1952) and his novel *Darkness at Noon*, originally written in German (1940). *An Arrow* was a text deeply inspired by psychoanalysis. I admired it as a blueprint for coming to terms with my teenage

L.J. Waks (ed.), Leaders in Philosophy of Education, 175–195.

confusion. It provided me with a method in the wide sense of a road to be taken; and it gave direction to my reading by offering no less that the promised land of knowledge and self-understanding. Or am I deceived? Leafing through the book now doesn't support what I seemed to remember. Apart from the fact that Koestler, as a young student of engineering in Vienna, spent a semester in the local library furiously reading Freud, he explicitly refers to psychoanalysis as unscientific, much the way Karl Popper and other critics did. And there is precious little in the tale of a young man and budding journalist in Palestine and Paris that reminds us of Freud. So my interest in psychology must have originated elsewhere, from reading Neo-Freudians like Erich Fromm and from what I imbibed from my immediate surroundings – psychoanalysis had enthusiastic followers in Norway between the wars and the effect lingered on in the decades after 1945. My bookish life had taken shape.

If *An Arrow* introduced me to the personal and subjective, *Darkness* opened my eyes to world politics, to the weird rationality of Stalin's and Hitler's minds, and to the state terror they unleashed upon Europe. The book describes Stalin's purges in the late 1930s of political enemies across the board – from high up in the cadres of the Communist Party, to the military hierarchy and to the secret police. The so-called Moscow show trials presented the most improbable confessions of anti-Communist conspiracy by people whom Koestler, as a member of the German Communist Party from 1931 till 1938, had met during his travels in the USSR. Koestler tried to explain the strange fact that defendants confessed to trumped-up charges that they knew would lead to their certain execution. His answer was that they were compelled by their dedication to the cause and by an utterly confused revolutionary logic. What drove them to false testimony was not Stalin, the torture in the prisons or even the wish to spare their families from persecution, but the belief that their sacrifice and death would save Communism for the future. I like to think that *Darkness* forever inoculated me against revolutionary rhetoric, whatever its guise. More important, it directed my interest to the political history of the 20th century and to the twisted logic of revolutionary movements both on the left and the right. So it came as no surprise that I chose history as my first subject when I entered the University of Oslo in the early 1960s.

STUDENT YEARS

My early intellectual inspirations came from books rather than from persons. My teachers in primary school were admirably tolerant and reasonably firm towards a restless boy of occasional mischief. I can't remember any teacher who infringed or humiliated me or my peers. We were probably helped by the fact that the rules of conduct were few and well defined and that a breach of rules had mild material consequences – there was no psychological fuss about it. In upper secondary school, or Gymnasium, two of my teachers had Ph.D.s, not unusual in those days because teaching in the Gymnasium was a step towards a university position. They impressed me with their knowledge and wisdom, but I can't remember that I ever discussed my extracurricular readings with them. It didn't occur to me that

Koestler could be of any interest to them, and even less so my intellectual flutterings – my fascination with psychology was an utterly personal thing. Neither can I remember that they asked about my intellectual predilections. Other teachers I remember more for their enthusiasm in teaching and for their dedication to us, their students. They left me to the fancies of my own growing universe of experience while I followed the routines of school life. Later, at the university, I didn't have any sustained supervision, and felt all the better for it. I may have needed the personal authority of a teacher both at school and in the university, but for better or worse studying was for me a personal and even idiosyncratic quest. My days in the Departments of History, English and Education were rather uneventful. I was eager to learn, and critique came after I had left my Alma Mater. When I had finished history, I opted for English, and became an Anglophile. I felt uncultured because I did not take to Dickens, and Thackerey's *Vanity Fair* did not win my young heart. But I still thank God for English poetry and for giving us Shakespeare's plays and the Scottish philosophers!

For all my newly acquired knowledge I left the university with a feeling that I really knew nothing. But in my youthful confidence I had already decided that psychology – my initial intellectual inspiration – did not answer the deeper questions of existence. So I turned to philosophy and caught a passing interest in theosophy. I tried religion but was repelled by the doctrines, the pressure to believe, and the personal whims of those who represented both the Protestant and Catholic faith. I realized that I was a secular person in a secular country. Later I learnt that Kant had similar reactions to the emotional practices in Collegium Friedericianum, his Pietist grade school in Königsberg. But I didn't have any qualms reading religiously inclined philosophers and I found "existentialist" philosophers like Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers particularly interesting. I had in fact already knocked on the door to existential philosophy after having submitted my final thesis on existentialism and education.

I tried "pure" philosophy while I was teaching full time at Sagene Lærerskole, a teachers college in Oslo, and visited university seminars in philosophy in the spring of 1969. It was a sobering experience – I could hardly breath in that rarefied air. I blamed myself for it but even more the dogmatism of Neo-Marxist students and the aggressiveness that dimmed the discussions – it was decidedly not the place for pondering existential questions. I was indeed grievously disappointed and decided that my practical interest in questions of truth, freedom and existence would not be satisfied in philosophy departments. Neither did departments of education give me much comfort – they did not teach philosophy of education. I had to seek other pastures. One had already emerged – I became engaged in the so-called "critique of positivism." I found my first intellectual home in a growing group of like-minded philosophers, sociologists and educationists. But I became an absentee member. I had a family and landed a job at a teachers college in Bodø located 1200 kilometers north of Oslo by car. We didn't have any car and travel by air was too expensive. We stayed there for two years. I became enchanted by the incredible beauty of North Norway nature with its call to outdoor life – and I enjoyed teaching in the faint glow of the Paris riots of 1968.

THE CRITIQUE OF POSITIVISM

The critique of positivism started as a discussion or Auseinandersetzung between Theodor W. Adorno and Karl Popper at a conference for sociologists in Tübingen in 1961, and later grew into a more general conflict between the young philosopher Jürgen Habermas, a defender of "Critical Theory" in the tradition of The Frankfurt School, and Hans Albert, a defender of Popper's "Rational Empiricism." The Streit or quarrel turned on the political role of the social sciences. Popper, a Viennese fugitive from the Nazis, had already in his exile in New Zealand during the war written a searing critique of Hegel and Marx in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Popper wanted to build modern democratic society on the pillars of the empirical sciences, and gave his critique an interesting, or should I say: colloquial twist. Theories were hatched not only in science departments, but could be collected from nearly every source, myth, literature and art. Theory should be tested against the facts yet truth was not a property of facts but of the logic of science. To top it all, no theory, not even that of evolution could be finalized as true because in principle there was always the possibility that it could be falsified. This view, which was based on his argument against induction, released me from the idea that facts are all there is to science. I took great pleasure in Popper's two tenets of freedom: that we can learn from our mistakes and that we should try to kill our theories – both aspects of his "fallibilism." With his brisk no-nonsense prose he became to me the embodiment of a common sense intellectual who never minced words and put philosophy and science into a practical setting in the service of democracy. There was, however, a hitch: Popper was an epistemologist who saw things in terms of a rational method modeled on the natural sciences. I felt that his concept of rationality could not fully answer my pedagogical questions. Still I would not call him a "positivist," for his philosophy was open-ended, practical, and politically informed. As for method, dialectics held a more promising future for pedagogy – or so it now seemed to me.

In 1959 Hans Skjervheim, a young Norwegian student of philosophy, published his first book: *Objectivism and the Study of Man*. During a subsequent three-year stay in Munich he acquired a firsthand knowledge of the new generation of German philosophers, particularly Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Skjervheim was an independent practical thinker who used philosophy to address problems in politics and in the academic professions, particularly sociology. Around 1970 he also published several essays that turned out to be a philosophical critique of pedagogy and of educational policy in general. Thus he became the spiritual father of Norwegian philosophy of education, which until then had existed as a history of ideas without the critical bite that was inspired by The Frankfurt School and later by the May 1968 student riots in Paris. In other words, the 1960s had already prepared the intellectual scene for those of us who found professional pedagogy wanting. I did not become a political activist, that is to say, part of the more or less militant and politically active generation of 1968. I was a few years

too old and the radicals, to my mild consternation and amusement, chided me for having written a thesis on existentialism. That was deemed a bourgeois pursuit and I was a political laggard. That set me free from wasting my radical mettle in Marxist circles, and I could devote myself to a critique of the existing pedagogy the way Skjervheim had marked it out as a critique of positivism.

What shape did the critique of positivism take in pedagogy? First of all, it was a critique of the experimental psychology that came to dominate education after the war. Before 1940 Norwegian educationists looked to German psychology and sociology, and to its Reformpedagogik. After 1945 educational studies were progressively covered by American empirical psychology, and around 1970 behaviorism became en vogue. B. F. Skinner's method of operant conditioning was used in the construction of learning machines and practiced in the treatment of severely handicapped people. There were a few scandals when such treatment escalated into severe physical punishment. Skinner himself had warned against punishment because it only taught young people to revolt or protest or drop out of school, so he was not to blame on that count. On the other hand, his political utopia in Walden Two seemed to be a society where everyone was set to reinforce the behavior of everyone else, a good example of how the best of intentions may lead down the road to fascism. The anti-positivist critique pointed out that the connection between a behaviorist theoretical scheme and its practical regime issued in objectivism, that is to say, in a third person perspective that missed the educative relation between adult and child. The critique was not directed at scientific inquiry, but at the unmediated transfer of experimental knowledge into the classroom, and at a vocabulary that described the child as a repository of drives, motives, and capabilities that could be utilized for educational purposes. This particular view was labeled "instrumentalism." Skjervheim put Dewey squarely into the instrumentalist camp. That was unfair. After all, Dewey was true to his Hegelian past when he rejected "the spectator theory of knowledge," and he gave pedagogy a much wider scope than experimental behaviorism could ever do.

But there was still the wider problem that bothered the critics: the idea of a value-free social science seemed to insinuate itself into social and political life. Some scientists acted as if the scientific facts described the world as it truly was. It was for politicians, social workers, and teachers to transfer scientific findings into practical measures, and that included ethical education. In the 1970s Habermas described this as the system's colonization of the life world. This was more than a professional squabble; it grew into a cultural war in which a Continental hermeneutic tradition was pitted against an Anglophone scientistic one. I felt the debris of that war many years later, when lecturing on the possibilities of the Internet. My optimistic views were countered by anti-technological arguments. I took that to be a mistake. The classical critique of instrumentalism was directed at education as forms of manipulation. Today instrumentalism finds its way into systems of tools for testing and behaviour modification that aims at improving education. I hope that later generations will see this line of thinking as one of the less successful fads and follies of the early 21st century. The critique of the early 1970s was more than a passing fashion. It drew on Kant and Hegel and the

aftermath, which included Heidegger and Gadamer's hermeneutics and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. But it was Hegel that made a lasting impression on me.

A WINDFALL

At the same time a windfall came my way, a surprising invitation to say the least. In 1970 I was asked to apply for a position as a Lecturer at a Regional College that was to be located in Lillehammer – and still on the drawing board! In other words the heady future of joining a group of like-minded colleagues and start a brand new institution, unhampered by a settled culture, fell into my lap. The conservative political establishment would allow us to test our brand of the educational critique as part of its higher education policies! My guess is that this could only happen in a country of less than four million people, a land tucked away on the very edge of Europe, ethnically homogeneous and with a long national tradition of fighting itself free from foreign dominance: from Denmark (1814), Sweden (1905), and German occupation (1945). The background was this: the Parliament had decided that new colleges be erected in 12 regions across Norway. They should offer one- and two-year vocational courses preferably adapted to the local needs of the region. At Lillehammer a one-year study in general education, soon followed by two others in history and political science, could hardly be said to be vocational in the narrow sense, all the more since the teachers were a select group of young and able people just out of university departments of the social sciences and the humanities. Since I left for the University of Oslo in 1990, Lillehammer University College has grown to today's full-fledged academic institution of 4000 students. But I am ahead of myself.

In the fall of 1971 our teaching careers at Lillehammer began, and we went along struck with a zest for change. During the first semester we worked out the regulations and exam procedures in cooperation with the students, most of them teachers who wanted to add another year to their former vocational training. We belonged roughly to the same age group, there were no senior professors and authority in matters theoretical and practical was spread among teachers and students and depended on negotiation and argument. The 1970s gave us unique experiences with serious students eager to learn as well as the stray opportunist and the power-seeker. It was the closest we could get to Dewey's idea of school as a society in miniature. I look back upon that decade of professor bashing and student power with joy and gratitude, both for what we did – and did not – accomplish. At the end of the decade revolutionary Marxism had exposed its futility, Popper had already prepared me for killing darling theories, and German philosophers marked out the path ahead.

THE HEGELIAN INSPIRATION

My first flash of enthusiasm for Hegel came after reading Habermas' early article, titled "Arbeit und Interaction" ("Work and Interaction"), an interpretation of

Hegel's so-called Jena Lectures. I came across it in a Norwegian translation in 1969, and did not at that time know what had struck me. Only later did I see that it was dialectics: the to and fro between opposites that were deeply related. I did not really go into Hegel till 1973, and this is a fact, because I have scribbled that year down on the first page of my Suhrkamp edition of Hegel's Collected Works. There was a quite rational – and it also turned out: naïve – motive that made me buy the work. I wanted to know more about dialectics, and he apparently was the original source. The word dialectics was at that time bandied about by orthodox Marxists and rejected by critics like Popper who thought that Hegel's dialectics was a high-flying sham. They both missed the point, I felt. The Marxists went on with their revolutionary predictions till history itself shattered their dreams. Popper's rejection of dialectics I didn't take seriously because he seemed to repeat the bygone critique of Hegel's idea of reason's march through history, and he missed out what was the gist of dialectics: the force of ironies and paradoxes that worked from within practical life. The basic opposition in this cultural war between positivists and their adversaries was one of logic, that between an epistemology of testing causal relations and a hermeneutics mindful of practical or performative paradoxes between what you intend and what you say; and between what you say and what you do. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, shorn of its metaphysics, appeared to hold a treasure of formative and future-directed oppositions.

It was Hegel's dialectics that set me on the course towards the pedagogical paradox and its importance in pedagogical thinking. I will get back to that. I first presented Hegel as a pedagogical thinker in a book titled *Dialektikk og pedagogikk* (Dialectics and Education), published as a monograph at Lillehammer Regional College in 1979. The book grew out of the need for putting my initial fascination to paper. I had already embarked on a study of John Dewey, and had spent much time reading him and the other great American Pragmatists. On the face of it the written results were puny, two articles on Dewey and one on William James to this day. I saw Dewey as a good social democrat, but he didn't excite me, and I realized that I now had Hegel and not Dewey on my mind. What they had in common, though, was a relational view of the world, apparent in Dewey's description of mind as not confined to the brain but rather as "a course of action," or if you will: a distributed intelligence expressed in bodily movement and interaction. I returned to Dewey in several later essays. He had left a "permanent deposit" in my thinking, to use his words about Hegel's influence on his own philosophy. My trouble with Dewey, as with Popper, was their "methodolatry," the idea that problems of politics and education could be solved by a method of inquiry.

Why this fascination with Hegel? For me it was the mystery of the *Phenomenology*, a book I have read almost to tatters. It held the promise of getting to know culture or Bildung in its radical expression, as we shall soon see. The movement – Bewegung – of dialectics kept my philosophical fire aflame during the 1970s, for me a time of intellectual exile from a formalist philosophy that had untied itself from lived life. Only later I translated the force of dialectics into pedagogy with the pedagogical paradox as its particular term. I made the first step in *Det pedagogiske argument* (The Pedagogical Argument), published in 1984. On

the face of it the book was based on Habermas' theory of communication, and was a frontal critique of what I felt was a Neo-Traditionalist backlash in Norway of the 1980s, a badly argued back-to-basics call in teaching and in moral education.

To forward a bit, in an article published in 1995: "On the Educative Reading of Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit,'" I scaled the Phenomenology down to the interplay between three figures that appear in the book: the implicit author, the implicit reader, and the protagonist, "natural consciousness." In other words I went literary and saw the book as a unique Bildungsroman, the story of the formation of the Western mind till the dawn of constitutional democracy. I also suggested that the apotheosis of the book, called "absolute knowing," was just another word for the mutual transparency and reconciliation between these characters engaged in self-formation. By following their story I, the present reader, would repeat the educative process of the Western mind till about 1807, when the book came off the press. Hegel also presented a surprising intellectual gap. The man who gave us the *Phenomenology* also offered up a disastrous idea of pedagogical psychology. Not only was he on all accounts a dull teacher in his years as Rector at the Neo-Humanist Gymnasium in Nuremberg, he also embraced a contemporary trope, the distinction between the child's "first" and "second" nature, and proceeded to say that we have to root out the first, animal one in order to make way for the second, cultural one.

What surprised me was that John McDowell, as late as in the 1990s, could restate the dichotomy without batting an eye. It was undialectical, and it also ignored Kant's liberal reception of Rousseau. I would not criticize Hegel for rejecting the Romantic child, but for disregarding dialectics in matters educational. So I left Rector Hegel behind and decided to carve out pedagogy from his general dialectical philosophy. For this was Hegel's radical observation: dialectics arises when social and political institutions take on historical shapes or Gestalten that generate their own internal stresses and strains. A theory, an institution, or a habit, produce contradictions that lead to their disintegration from within, as witnessed in the demise of feudalism, described by Hegel in the famous struggle for recognition between master and slave. Recent examples are the crumbling of the European welfare system that takes place when solidarity is replaced by ego-related entitlement; or pursuing democratic aims of participation by turning schools into boot camps for efficient learning.

The *Phenomenology* as the story of civilization repeated in memory, also made me abandon perfectionism, the idea of the perfectibility of man as the apotheosis of life and the goal of Bildung. Perfectionism was a household idea among contemporary intellectuals and deeply connected with the idea of a call or vocation to live a Christian life. My move may seem implausible, for on the face of it the *Phenomenology* supports a linear view of history and biography, and thus a version of perfectionism. But as already mentioned, in my 1995 article I had decided to pass over Reason's march through history, and see the text as a story about our Bildung, with the title *Phenomenology of Spirit* on the front page. This literary turn revealed a Bildungsroman that actually presented life in a circular fashion: real history repeated and grasped in interpretation or "thought." Add the fact that the

present reader recollects his or her biography by melting it into the history of culture as such, and you have an interesting theory of Bildung. Education is partly cultural anamnesis and a person's *ex post facto* self-creation as a historical individual. This effort traces in general features what is forgotten in our common history and hidden in the reader's biography. I came to think that Freud's psychoanalysis around 1900 was just another version of Hegel's dialectics of culture. In a 1999 article "Hegels dannelsesbegrep – noen synspunkter" ("Aspects of Hegel's Concept of Bildung"), I pursued the idea of education as formation as bound to include a retrospective reflection on the cultural past realized in the here and now of a person's life. I still hold the *Phenomenology* to be a breathtaking feat by the author of a highly idiosyncratic book.

IN GRATITUDE

In 1982 I went as a Visiting Scholar to Cambridge in the spring semester. Paul Hirst had wished me welcome to the Institute of Education at Trumpington Street. There I met Terry McLaughlin and a few weeks later, Joe Dunne. They became my friends. Terry introduced me to his students and to colleagues at Homerton College, at that time an independent teachers college, and aided my further integration into the network of Anglophone educationists. I enjoyed their blend of ordinary language approach and taste for rationality, and my stay in Cambridge did much to inspire *The Pedagogical Argument*. I was on my way towards a more explicit pedagogical point of view. In the spring of 1989 I spent a semester in the Department of Psychology at the University of Aarhus, invited by a colleague of mine, Steinar Kvale. I was asked to give seminars on education, particularly on Habermas' theory of communication. But Kvale, with his intellectual curiosity, was already well into "postmodernism." I remember we both greatly enjoyed Jean Baudrillard's *America* – the book ran like a road movie by a latter-day Tocqueville. I pursued my reading of French philosophers, in particular Jacques Derrida. It came as a relief. I had tired of the relentless rationality of Habermas' diction – my pedagogical imagination had come to a standstill. Kvale edited a book in 1992, *Psychology and Postmodernism*, in which I had a piece titled "Postmodernism and Subjectivity."

In 2001 I was called to Örebro University as a Visiting Professor. Tomas Englund and his students had established a milieu of scholars on curriculum theory and education for democracy. My article "Education and Democracy" (2007) grew out of this setting and confirmed my belief that educational critique had to start with the nitty-gritty details of educational policy and its effects on the daily life of teachers and students in our schools. From the middle of the 1990s on I regularly met with German colleagues, a result of my philosophical inclinations – after all, I read British philosophers but studied the German ones. In the Institute for Educational Research in Oslo I ran yearly courses in what we dubbed the Educational Classics. "We" included Stefan Hopmann and Christopher Lüth, two scholars who blended the German scholarly tradition with independent thinking. The seminars turned into intellectual happenings to deep satisfaction both for us

and for our students – if I may talk on behalf of us all. Throughout these years research societies, the NERA in the Nordic countries, the PESGB in Oxford, the INPE internationally, and the DGfE in Germany among them, acted as key venues for professional learning and exchange. The trusted backdrop for these excursions was my benefactors and colleagues abroad, in the Institute, and elsewhere in Norway. In 2002 my colleague Tone Kvernbekk and I had the pleasure of hosting the biennial INPE conference in Oslo. Over the past decades several of our fellow philosophers of education have given lectures and seminars in the Institute, from 2007 home to the Humanities Studies in Education research group. Throughout these years my students contributed greatly to academic life. – At the end of the day I wouldn't trade that life for any other.

JOYRIDES

During the 2000s I went from interpretation of classical texts to writing imaginative essays. Imaginative here means something like the joy and fun in making forays into the future and putting the ideas that came my way to paper. In the "Promise of Bildung" (2002) I saw education in terms of the image rather than of the text. The essay came out of my fascination with the representative arts and photography: look at a photograph and you have a prime case of history abbreviated in the now – here the influence of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* made its appearance. My conclusion that Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of freedom in interplay might unfold on the Internet was, and now is even more, a bit over the top. In any case, Sherry Turkle's seminal book Life on the Screen (1995) suggested that the Internet could spawn new concepts of self and interaction, just what I was looking for. In another article, "Teknokulturell danning" ("Technocultural Education") (2003), I introduced two concepts, the cyborg and the interface, the first inspired by Donna Haraway, as part of a different description of man and machine, mind and nature. In a piece with the title "Is There Any Body in Cyberspace? Or the Idea of a Cyberbildung" (2008), I suggested that the distinction between virtual and real didn't hold because the computer is not a machine but rather an extension of our mind, with its interfaces modelled on the situated body as described by Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. These and other essays in the same genre were joyrides partly inspired by two fellow Internet enthusiasts, Morten Søby and Winfried Marotzki. If in "The Promise" I tried to refashion classical Bildung by introducing the image, I now tried to move further into the age of the Internet. For me the metaphors "interface" and "cyborg" did away with the age-worn dichotomy between man and machine, and between the sciences and the humanities. It was therapeutic: I had finally put the dated struggle about positivism behind. More important yet was that I now saw how the the old dichotomy between naturalism and humanism could be shelved; it was as if I could strike an arc from the moral beauty of nature (Kant) to neuroscience! That goes with two caveats, though: don't think we can explain mind by brain, or poetry by the firing of synapses: and beware of the wave of brain-training programmes that will soon inundate our schools!

SUBJECTIVITY REVISITED

Derrida's texts first struck me as extremely imaginative and often far-fetched; I approached them in bits and pieces. I saw that his "deconstruction" offered up a new take on Hegelian dialectics. I hardly overstate my case if I say that reading his texts persuaded me that paradox was an indispensable part of pedagogical freedom. Which freedom? What immediately comes to mind are the *aporias* that contrary to expectation may bring you out of deadening intellectual and practical routines, or the dead-ends that ironically promises freedom from the petrified ideas and habits that are part of our academic institutions. Add the freedom of pondering intangible and indefinable first-order values like justice and human dignity, and you get an idea of what I was at. For me this transcendental effort morphes naturally into the image of the open-eyed imagination and anticipation you can often find in a child's face. It was Derrida, not surprisingly for some readers, who also brought me back to Kant and to the force of transcendental thinking. The influence of Kant is obvious in Derrida's juxtaposition of justice and the law. Justice is evasive and mysterious, and rightly so. It is more than just a fact in the sense of statutory laws or regulations that positively determines what is or is not a breach of the rules. When can we say of the law that it is unjust? We can when justice is untied from established institutions, practices, and habits by the transcendental gesture. Justice in the untied sense, as "pure" principled justice, give us the freedom to question what is usually taken for granted, it points to alternative interactions and standards of critique. This freedom exists and comes into existence by analysis and interpretation, imagination and reflection. Derrida's intellectual independence added new features to my idea of dialectics. It also reminded me that Kant, as the author of anthropological descriptions of humans in their common social settings, could set me free from the communitarian Hegel. That meant another look at subjectivity, autonomy, and critique.

I still think that Hegel got it basically right 200 years ago when he said that in the course of experience or Erfahrung, both the object observed and the standards used by the observer undergo a change. This relation or "identity" between thing and thought I hold to be the essence of a concept of Bildung or culture as transformative. But it turns radical only when you realize that identities or historical forms of life break up owing to their self-engendered contradictions. The discrepancy between our conceptions of the world and the world as it actually turns out to be makes a form of life tremble and dissolve from within, like an organism from its own autoimmunity. I tried to translate this insight into pedagogy, and gradually the pedagogical paradox came into clearer view. I don't think of it as a theory of education that should replace other theories or even a method that should surpass other methods in education. I think of it rather as an "existential" that pertains to pedagogy because it is essentially a practice based on the asymmetric relation between child and adult. As for the school as an institution, the paradox works more like the ironic gaze that unties the knots that old habits and schemes have tightened. So what is the pedagogical paradox and what is the practice that

goes with it when it is neither a theory nor a method? The preliminary answer was: In the beginning was Rousseau.

REREADING ROUSSEAU AND KANT

In the middle of the 1990s I sat down once again to read Rousseau's *Emile* in order to see what I had missed in my earlier readings of that marvelous book. I then wrote a paper for the *Norwegian Journal of Pedagogy* in 1997 on the well-known fact that Rousseau pronounces the freedom of his charge to make authentic choices, and then immediately adds that he, the teacher, will decide on the boy's behalf. That Emile should freely choose Sophie for his wife, but that his teacher should actually make the choice for him, I saw as a particularly bad case of the pedagogical paradox. I took it for granted that the author was to blame for not seeing the contradiction that shattered his idea of a pedagogy of freedom. But my conclusion lingered uncomfortably in my mind. I felt there was something amiss in my reading, and I could not leave it behind and put my doubt to rest. I first tried to explain the flawed logic – after all one of the greatest minds of his generation just doesn't make such simple practical mistakes! Since *Emile* was a so-called Bildungsroman, could the paradox be part of the plot, a teaser directed at the reader? Or did the author regard himself as a godly representative of the new science of man? Some of his compatriots had already written tracts on naturalistic man. Or could it be that the teacher regarded himself a friend of Emile, and that the paradox was just the good counsel given within the bounds of a growing friendship between teacher and student? Or did it result from his view of a person who should act both according to his ability and to another's counsel and care, in itself a great advance in educational thinking? Apart from the last question, which Rousseau obviously answers in the positive, my questions were skewed, and I realized that I went down the wrong path. So I returned to Rousseau around 2000 and made another try in an article first published in connection with his 300 years anniversary in 2012.

My question now was this: Can we take Rousseau's embrace of paternalism as native to education? If answered in the affirmative his gentle paternalism states our essential duty to educate the child according to our best intentions and adjusted to the child's ability to fashion its own life. This view meshes with quite reasonable ideas of ordinary adult responsibility and care for the young. Why not, then, stop beating about the bush and admit that the paradox simply describes the necessary business of pedagogy, and that even to call it a paradox is to conjure up a ghost that disappears with the dawn of day? But I persisted: Rousseau's paternalism was paradoxical, and the irony of the paradox did exist. That consideration made me pick out the significant differences between Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel on education. My answer goes something like this: Rousseau sidesteps the paradox by making it into a mere dilemma and so setting the scene for what later generations of the Romantic bent came to defend as child centeredness in its fierce opposition to traditionalism. Hegel seemed to split his allegiances: he opted for a straightforward paternalism in pedagogy, yet the dialectics of the *Phenomenology*

gave us the actualization of selfhood in a series of paradoxes. Kant, on the other hand, saw the paradox as immanent to pedagogy and – this was his great contribution – profoundly related to subjectivity and personal autonomy. In his *Lectures on Education* he first states the obvious: that we are bound to educate our children. Then he reminds us that we cannot instruct children to be moral persons because morality depends on the independent or autonomous judgement of the child. I took up this theme in "Does Paradox Count in Education?," first presented at the PESGB conference in Oxford in 2008, and later in "Kant's Invitation to Educational Thinking," in 2012. This double take on pedagogy: that you must and yet cannot teach children to be independent persons, came as more than a mild satisfaction – I was on my way to a better appreciation of pedagogy as an open-ended and infinite relation between subjects in their struggle for autonomy. Hegel for his part fell short of Kant's insight by underrating subjective independence. I still wonder what may have happened if Hegel, the philosopher who breathed life into Kant's formalism, had made the paradox the linchpin of a dialectical pedagogy! To sum up, to me it seemed that Rousseau brought us to see the pedagogical paradox as existing for pedagogy; that Kant took a decisive step further by his concept of autonomous judgement; and that Hegel in his concept of mutual recognition retained the social dynamic of the paradox. My next step was to reintroduce the Kantian subject within Hegel's social dialectics.

In hindsight the pedagogical paradox depends on the subject-object distinction that was common in the Norwegian critique of positivism in the 1970s. I felt that Kant's idea of subjective freedom make us appreciate the significance of the paradox. In order to get there I went beyond Kant's transcendental philosophy to embrace his "anthropology," of which pedagogy is a part. With the distinction he draws between the intelligible and the empirical, mind and world, I was now better able to define the boundaries of the self and the place of selfhood in ethical and social life. Words like violate, insult, offend, and hurt all point to this selfhood and its boundaries, and to the emotional universals that form human experiences. We know that there are psychological limits to intervention in children's lives, but Kant is particularly clear about the limits of a pedagogy that has moral education as its aim. Kant's' acute sensitivity for protecting the child's integrity from the best intentions of adults is expressed in his concept of dignity. Dignity is not an individual capability or even a character trait; it is something he ascribes to human beings as such, and it cannot, like knowledge and skills, be defined and determined. Dignity is a dialectical concept, that is to say, it is the other of infringement or humiliation. Dignity comes to mind when personal boundaries are threatened by injustice and disrespect, be it by bullies or patronising adults. It's relational, as witnessed in personal conflicts and legal disputes, and it yields to social or relational descriptions. The bottom line is, however, that dignity is ascribed to children and adults universally as members of humanity. Dignity is proper to a person in the sense of property or *proprium*, his or her selfhood and integrity. Despite the fact that I am deeply intertwined with others, I cannot be your self and you cannot live my life without forfeiting your subjectivity.

There is another aspect to be considered. If we hold on the idea of dignity as intrinsic to humanity, we can also appreciate it as non-developmental. Educators will at first sight see this proposal as wrongheaded: since children and adults grow and change, often at a fast pace, pedagogy is and must be based on the idea of human development. I agree, but let me try the following argument. If for a moment we let development aside, we also do away with perfectionism, for without the idea of development there will be no idea of perfection of man's capabilities. Philosophers generally take rationality as a pure intellectual capacity and as the sign and standard of perfection, the final goal or "finality" of education – they are perfectionists to the hilt. I have already suggested that a circular reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* disproves rationality as perfection. I would now suggest that the Kantian ascription of good will and dignity to all humans performs the same trick: it presents an alternative to rationality as the end product and criterion of human development. The alternative may be called distributed rationality: rationality as the ability to cope with the world at any and every stage of a child's development. It is to see the child as perfectly rational according to his or her – at times astounding – capacities for relating to other persons and the world. Children are citizens of the same world with adults. In order to come to its own, pedagogy needs to avoid the fallacy of perfectionism as it figures in contemporary philosophy. What I would call the philosophy of place is a step in that direction – more about that below.

Hegel pursued a social logic, the idea that contradictions were resolved historically in a step-like fashion. The Kantian approach, on the other hand, suggests that dignity is "outside of history" and thus constitutive of humanity. To put it crudely: dignity is ascribed to man, irrespective of time and place; we even respect the newborn's boundaries, less out of principle than of sensing its extreme vulnerability as a human being. Mutual recognition, though, seems to appear only in modern history and marks the achievement of enlightened thinking around 1800. But a closer look makes us see that they are deeply connected. Dignity and humiliation refers to us humans in general, albeit under different historical and social conditions; the struggle for recognition carries the passion for solidarity: the "'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I,'" as Hegel had it. If mutual recognition is a force in life, dignity is an intrinsic feature of that life. It is on par with other existentials, like friendship, trust, or love. I like to think of the pedagogical paradox as an existential, a product both of modern 1800th century subjectivity and of the intrinsic difference between self and other. A paradox that is pedagogical too, depends on subjectivity and the boundaries of the self, but comes to its own in the discrepancy between what we say and what we do. From the point of view of socialisation it may puzzle you that there is freedom in the limits between self and other. But within the social self there is an "I" who, as George Herbert Mead had it, reacts towards the social "me." The "I" is always beyond our intellectual and social grasp; it is the personal presence that dwells within the heart, in Rousseau's famous metaphor. It was Rousseau's radical idea that freedom is first expesseed as a feeling in the voice of the heart.

THE POLITICS OF PARADOX

It was time to free the play of contradiction from the restraints of the Hegelian logic. I went to literary theory to bolster my case. The genres of irony, parody, and satire gave me a lead, enriched by the new rhetoric of writers like Paul de Man and Stanley Fish. Without my literary studies I would hardly be able to fathom the depths of paradox and find a place for it within pedagogy. My penchant for paradox began as a wild card, but I thought it was worth pursuing until I was beaten by the game. Now to describe the "I" and personal dignity as undefined and a matter of the heart seem to make them phantasms that belong more to the psychiatry ward than to reality. I think not. Even to say that the factual is negated or undone by the undefined or abstract is more than lofty talk. Just to take some relevant examples from political life. Civil disobedience began when a general idea of human rights challenged the discrimination of blacks in America of the 1960s. In Norway the UN Child Convention was recently used to confront the Government's handling of child asylum seekers threatened by forced return to their country of origin, a country in which many of them had not even set foot. The ubiquity and force of the abstract as the most practical is all around us, for example in children's role-play. Children show an early acquaintance with the abstract – they are indeed masters of make-believe and counterfactual thinking, and that mastery makes a difference in life.

Tradition would have it that children are either noble savages or barbarians outside the citadel of reason. But the distinction is a *non sequitur* – neither view can be resolved as true or false, and the stale opposition has indeed worked as a trap for reasonable thinking in pedagogy. If children are the future of nations, we should take a look at future's freedom, and freedom is not found in the either-or categories. Dewey's idea of inquiry took care of future's freedom, but that's old hat. Now our current educational institutions anticipate the future of their students by tight goal-related learning schedules in a competitive society. In the Neo-Liberal society there is a freedom of choice between different preferences and courses of life, under the general anticipation that the young ones should find their slot in the workforce. This way of thinking eclipses the indefinable, replaces it by habits and puts the future in chains. What Hegel once used to call the "infinite" is not the trajectory of endless infinity. It is rather the twin of the finite, or to put it like this: without the infinite ideas of humanity, dignity and hope we become hostages of mere habit. If the infinite is an anticipation only of things to be achieved, we pre-empt the future by steering towards fixed goals. The governed perfectionism of today's education is oblivious of its roots in a moral figure of thought, and reduces education to management. The deep paradox of contemporary schooling is the growing chasm between the aims of moral education and the tools that are used to bring it about.

What does this interplay between the finite and the infinite tell us? To begin with, they show us as a contrast to dialectics that whenever you see this and other relations as dilemmas, you end up with the tiring conflict between entrenched positions and the endless turf wars that make the freedom of one party the

unfreedom of the other. For me the alternative turned out to be the twisted road that took me from Popper's conjectures and refutations over the Unruhe or restlessness of Hegel's dialectics and to Derrida's idea of the "messianic." That is to say, to experiences without origin and finalities. Derrida's messianic struck me as Romantic beyond Romanticism. It made me mindful of experiences that simply happen to people, of things that comes into being by surprise, and of insights that may occur without forewarning. This became for me the most uncompromising description of freedom in pedagogy, particularly in the life of children. Children are living instances of the messianic; the young ones live without origins and finalities – that is the strength of their vulnerability, and that's where their creativity lies.

Why the pedagogical paradox? To sum up, the paradox is embedded in the Enlightenment idea of subjectivity and the later idea of a democracy based on rights, common values and interaction. In that general sense the paradox is historical. Yet I would say that the paradox is inherent in a pedagogy that builds on the ideas of moral autonomy and authenticity in upbringing. And I would even say that in one sense it is constitutive of pedagogy. To put it this way: as long as there is the asymmetry between adults and children there is also the pedagogical paradox. Second, the paradox is not a tool or a method, but the expression of an uneasy and troubled freedom in pedagogy. It's brought into play by an experience of frustration and disappointment, of being stopped in your steps, of being caught in mental dead ends. The irony lies in the fact that dead ends may morph into new experiences and alternative avenues of action. The paradox shakes off the authority of paternalism, and that's practical freedom. What to do with the pedagogical paradox? Well, it may give you a good laugh at your own follies. Or you may turn to inquiry and discussion. Or you may put your judgement on hold, wait out the situation and let it come to its fruition. After all, the paradox only points to relational knots that may be untied. With children this last option offers itself as a gift to pedagogy. If you are given to wonderment, children are great companions.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This description of the pedagogical paradox is theoretical in the sense of being discussed in academic seminars. I was keenly aware of the need for a political perspective and the view from the classroom. The ground – literally – of pedagogy I found in Heidegger's philosophy of place. I toyed with the idea of topos in some essays in the 2000s and tried to sum up my position in "The Pedagogy of Place," a NERA conference keynote given in 2006 in Örebro, Sweden. The conviction that experience and pedagogy originates in place rather than in someone's mind was neither new nor radical. For me it agreed nicely with my own observations of children, with recent children's psychology, and with the fact that experiences unfold from situations. Pedagogy starts in medias res, it sets out from the here and now and grows, as Dewey emphasised, out of situated experiences. It seemed that I now had the outline of a critical education: a notion of freedom, a place for it in everyday life, and the idea of paradox that would get pedagogy moving along paths

of experience. To marry philosophical thinking with contemporary pedagogy was, as with so many of my colleagues, a task I had set myself before I wrote *The Pedagogical Argument* back in the early 1980s. The question was how to meddle in the politics of schooling.

The answer turned out to be a series of critical observation about present educational reforms in Norway from the middle of the 1990s, even before the PISA-shock of 2001. My views have been published in Scandinavian journals and the stray newspaper article, in talks to teachers, interviews and blog contributions, preferably in the polemic genre, but I believe sufficiently parsed with philosophical argument. In 1998 I highlighted three related paradoxes in the preamble to the new Education Act of 1997, in an essay with the title "The Paradoxes of Educational Reforms: The Case of Norway in the 1990s" The first was the be-independent-on-my-authority paradox that urges teachers to be bold, enthusiastic and independent – on the premises of the then wilful and patronising Minister of Education. The second was to hail thick moral values and portray teachers in terms of their performance in the new "competitive democracy" – teachers as their "own best tools." The third and more serious paradox was that teachers were expected to represent and present the national moral tradition without being given the independent professional voice to go with it – the Minister fought the teachers unions much like a true Thatcherite. The paradoxes pointed as far as I could see to a growing paternalism in a public school system that still caters for around 95 percent of the more than 600 000 students in Norway's primary and lower secondary education.

In later pieces I criticised the authorities for imposing a system of tests on children who are not eager to compete for excellence in the first place – actually an exclusion of children who are interested in making friendships and relate to teachers rather than to fill out tests. The PISA impacted education by making it a race for more screening and knowledge tests. I found it futile to speak in general terms. For me the hand-on criticism of national public policy, as found it in the Official Norwegian Reports, the Education Act, the National Frameworks for teacher education, and the public debates, was important. Now – and this is 2013 – the Ministry of Education has, in cahoots with the market, introduced behavioural programmes for 6-year-olds in order to prepare them for schooling. In the article titled "Verktøyskolen" ("The Tool Kit School"), I argue that the Ministry engage in a power play that violates the general aims of the Education Act and parental rights. This is an example of the new instrumentalism as based on the misuse of bureaucratic governance and the market. It disregards formative learning, elementary children's psychology and the basic aims of democracy.

WRITING THE SELF

In 1998 I wrote an essay, "The Internet and the Rewriting of the Self," a sweeping tour of self-presentations, starting with Leonardo da Vinci's painting in the Uffizi, the Adoration of the Magi, and ending with research on Internet-made personalities. Ten years later I penned another essay: "Dannelse og profesjonell

tenkning" ("Education and Professional Thinking"). There I suggested – among other things – that the education of the self is best expressed in the autobiography, in this case John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*. Wilhelm Dilthey had long ago persuaded me that autobiography performs a beautiful dialectics: by one stroke it both inscribes the biographee into history and lets the author – literally the individual auctor and augmenter – appear as a character in his or her own right. The autobiography as a genre realizes the two basic aspects of education: culture and selfhood. Biography on the other hand lacks this intimacy. A biography is quite literally a description of a person's life, often reflected on the title page of such books, usually the name of the biographee followed by A Life. Biographies are at best research works by independent scholars subject to the strict rules of professional fact-finding and interpretation. Autobiographies belong to a different genre, for here the author is also the protagonist of the story. The difference between the two genres can be indicated by the words truth and truthfulness: the biographer is responsible to truth, the autobiographical writer to truthfulness. We criticize the former for falling short of truth, and we reproach the latter for being dishonest. Autobiography is subjective and ethical rather than objective, is part of everyday life of the civil society where everyone has a say. We all relate to the genre. Writing diaries, memoirs or telling stories to family members, even browsing through an album, takes part in the genre. And then there are the invisibles: the "I" that cannot be pinned down, the imagination that cannot be harnessed, the impressions that cannot be determined. And don't forget the poetry. About 20 years after he began writing his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe commented on the title to a friend. He had found that truth belonged to the facts of his life, to persons that had a name and events that had a date. Poetry on the other hand belonged to the author's imagination, his ways with the language, and to the art of story-telling. – I like to think of Goethe's autobiography as a "thick" personal retake on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

THE TASKS AHEAD

What are the tasks ahead? First, education needs to take back and renew a children's psychology based on relational thinking, scientific research and the accumulated knowledge of children's needs in their interactions with adults. Education is more than getting children to learn. We should give teachers the chance to practise moral imagination by asking themselves in their encounters with children: Who are you? Where are you coming from? What do you think about me? How do you feel about being here with us? Moral imagination connects to what is now called empathy or mentalisation; it is to sense and to make sense of the other – the child – in its particular world, a world that aligns itself with the adult's universe without copying it. Second, pedagogy should take its historical roots seriously, not only in order to learn from its mistakes, but also because history circumscribes our pedagogical concepts: like it or not, their genealogy also plays significantly into their future success. When history is reduced to the local history of the teacher profession, the loss of vision endangers the profession itself. Third,

pedagogy should be brought back to where it belongs, to the practice of organized cooperation. The so-called academic drift and the idea that professional teaching should rely almost exclusively on evidence-based research, disregards the sense of place that goes with reflective pedagogy. What is needed is a radical overhaul of the relationship between theory and practice, radical in the literal sense of going to the root of pedagogy. Last but not least, philosophers of education should, as quite a number of them actually do, regard themselves as citizens with a special expertise and obligation to bring pedagogy into the broad public discussion – free discussion is not a given, but has to be won every day.

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