

Routledge International Studies in the Philosophy of Education

JUSTICE, EDUCATION, AND THE WORLD OF TODAY

PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Edited by

Inga Bostad, Marianna Papastephanou, and Torill Strand



Justice, Education, and the World of Today

This edited book challenges the limits of current educational philosophical discourse and argues for a restored normativisation of education through a powerful notion of justice.

Moving beyond conventional paradigms of how justice and education relate, the book rethinks the promotion of justice in, for, and through education in its current state. Chapters combine international and diverse philosophical perspectives with a focus on contemporary issues, such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, and migrant crises. Divided into three distinct parts, the book explores the ontological and socio-political grounds underlying our notions of education and justice, and offers self-reflective meta-critique on education philosophers' tendency of promoting and upholding orthodox visions and missions.

Ultimately, the book offers contemporary and innovative philosophical reflections on the link between justice and education, and enriches the discourse through a multi-perspectival and sensitive exploration of the topic. It will be of great interest to scholars, researchers, and postgraduate students in the fields of philosophy of education, education policy and politics, education studies, and social justice.

Inga Bostad is Professor of Philosophy, Department of Education, University of Oslo, Norway.

Marianna Papastephanou is Professor of Philosophy of Education, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Cyprus.

Torill Strand is Professor of Education, Department of Education, University of Oslo, Norway.

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Philosophical Investigations

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Inga Bostad, Marianna Papastephanou,
and Torill Strand



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Editors and Contributors

Evi Elisabeth Beck is Professor at the Department of Education, University of Oslo. Evi does research in the areas of computers and society, limits of academic knowing, and skills of academic teaching (STS-informed). Emerging interests are mindfulness in higher education, and how higher education teaching might contribute to transitioning to a sustainable future: What ideas about teaching at university do we teachers need to change to address this rewarding challenge? Some of her recent publications are “Means and Meanings of Research Collaboration in the Face of a Suffering Earth: A Landscape of Questions,” “Wandering Intellectuals; Establishing a Research Agenda on Gender, Walking and Thinking” and “Educating for Professional Responsibility: From Critical Thinking to Deliberative Communication, or Why Critical Thinking Is Not Enough”.

Inga Bostad is Professor of Philosophy at the Department of Education at University of Oslo (UiO). She is former Pro-rector and Director of the Centre of Human rights at UiO. Currently, she is head of the research project “The Nordic Education Model” and the humanities studies in pedagogy (HumStud) research group at UiO. She teaches philosophy of education at the graduate and postgraduate levels. She has written articles and books on a variety of epistemological, ethical, and political topics, and some of her recent titles are “Rooms of Togetherness: Nordic Ideals of Knowledge in Education”, “An Ethics of Rhythm—Reflections on Justice and Education” and “Gratitude and Education”. She is also Professor at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway.

Mark Debono is Junior College Senior Lecturer II at the University of Malta. He teaches Systems of Knowledge, an interdisciplinary course that covers the fields of politics, art, environment, and science/technology. He recently received his doctorate in pedagogical sciences from the University of Cyprus on the effects of hegemonic “truth” on dialogic education. His research supervisor was Professor Marianna Papastephanou. His most recent articles have addressed the political implications of eugenics, as well as the concept of autoimmunity in democratic societies. His research interests about the concept of authority in a post-truth context are influenced by the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida.

Teemu Hanhela is a Postdoctoral Researcher affiliated with the University of Oulu, Faculty of Education, Finland. He has taught and held several lectures and courses on educational science and philosophy at the graduate and postgraduate levels. His research interests include the theories of education, Bildung and educational institutions, the theory of recognition, and educational and social justice. His recent publications include “Towards Educational Justice: What Difference Can Recognitive Justice Make?”; “Justice in Education and Recognitive Justice”; “Axel Honneth’s Critics of the Hermeneutic Experience (in Finnish), Axel Honneth on Role, Form, and Output of Public Education Revisited”; and Axel Honneth on Moral Growth” (co-authored with Rauno Huttunen).

Kjetil Horn Hogstad is a Lecturer in Education at the University of Oslo. He received his PhD in philosophy of education from the same university and wrote his thesis on the educational concept Bildung in light of Catherine Malabou’s theory of plasticity. His academic interests are in semiotic understandings of educational issues such as change, power, justice, conceptions of temporality and democracy. Among his recent work are publications in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, and *Ethics and Education*.

Liz Jackson is Professor and Head of the Department of International Education at the Education University of Hong Kong. She is also the Immediate Past President of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia and Former Director of the Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong. Her most recent books include *Beyond Virtue: The Politics of Educating Emotions* (2021), *Contesting Education and Identity in Hong Kong* (2021), and *Questioning Allegiance: Resituating Civic Education* (2019).

Wills Kalisha is Associate Professor of Education at NLA University College in Norway. He holds a PhD in education from the University of Oslo and wrote his thesis on the phenomenological experience of waiting for asylum by unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Norway. His work focuses on continental education, phenomenology of practice, and the intersection between education (continental) and migration. He currently co-chairs the research group Education Displacement and Belonging at NLA University College. He teaches education foundational questions, intercultural education, Identity and belonging in migration and research methods at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

Ole Andreas Kvamme is Associate Professor at Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo. In his research, he explores the ethical-political dimension of environmental and sustainability education, including perspectives from critical cosmopolitanism and environmental ethics. He has been particularly interested in the mediations between cosmopolitan values and specific contexts, also rethinking a critical pedagogy of place and the concept of Bildung. His research often

crosses the borders between well-established research fields. He teaches religious and ethics education and professional ethics in the teacher education programmes.

Elin Rødahl Lie is a doctoral research fellow at the Department of Education, University of Oslo. She also usually has a position as a Lecturer there. Lie has a master's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary gender research from the University of Oslo. Her professional interests are critical aspects of education and *Bildung* in relation to gender, equality, and democracy. Amongst others, Lie has contributed to the anthology *The Nordic Education Model in Context. Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations* (2023). Recent titles are "Gender, Equality, and Education—Are We about to Abandon Our Nordic Ideals?", "When Unhappiness Is Not the Endpoint, Fostering Justice through Education", and "Fragments of *Danning*. A Critical Analysis of a Key Concept in Norwegian Core Curricula between 1997 and 2020".

Helgard Mahrtdt has studied at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and the University of Nanterre (Paris). She holds a PhD in German literature (University of Tromsø) and a MA in philosophy. She has been teaching at the University of Bremen, Germany; the University of Tromsø; and the University of Oslo. She has been a guest Researcher at the John W. Kluge Center, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, and the Danish Centre for the Studies in Humanities, University of Copenhagen, and she has been a guest Professor at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Currently, she is a guest Researcher at the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo. She has written articles and edited books on a variety of topics in German literature, ethics, and political philosophy. Some of the titles are *Dichtung und Diktatur – Die Schriftstellerin Herta Müller*, "Hannah Arendt: Self-Disclosure, Worldliness and Plurality", "Denken und Schreiben – 'Ansiedlungsversuche' in der Welt: Ingeborg Bachmann und Hannah Arendt", "Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Alfred Kazin", "Refugees and Europe: A Dilemma or a Turning Point?"

Marianna Papastephanou is Professor at the University of Cyprus. She has studied and taught philosophy at the University of Cardiff, United Kingdom. She has also studied and researched in Berlin, Germany. She is currently teaching philosophy of education in the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus. She has written articles on a variety of political, epistemological, linguistic, and ethical topics, including cosmopolitanism, learning, utopia, postmodernism, and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. She has authored and edited books on the themes of curiosity, utopia, and cosmopolitanism.

Torill Strand is Professor at University of Oslo, Department of Education. Her competencies range from meta-theory to social epistemology, political philosophy of education, cosmopolitanism, and semiotics. Strand has published widely in international journals and edited numerous books

and special issues. Some recent titles are “Educative Justice in Viral Modernity”, “Cinema, Philosophy and Education”, “Rethinking Ethical-Political Education”, “Alain Badiou and Education”, and “A Semiotic Model of Learning”. Torill Strand teaches political philosophy of education at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

Yusef Waghid is an African Philosopher of Education intent on advancing democratic citizenship education, cosmopolitan education, and global citizenship education in the context of equitable redress and change, equality, non-discrimination, non-sexism, and justice for all. Epistemologically, he draws on multiple traditions of thought, most notably combining dominant aspects of Western and non-Western theories of knowledge to rethink philosophy of education in Africa. His position is at the University of Stellenbosch.

Baldwin Wong is an Assistant Professor of the Department of Religion and Philosophy at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). He is also a Research Fellow of the HKBU Centre for Applied Ethics. Before coming to HKBU, he taught at the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. He holds a PhD in government from the London School of Economics and Political Science. His academic interests lie mainly in public justification and Confucianism. His works were published (and forthcoming) in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, *Philosophia*, *Philosophical Forum*, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, *Social Theory and Practice*, and *Res Publica*.

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Introduction

*Inga Bostad, Marianna Papastephanou, and
Torill Strand*

This book argues for a restored normativity of education through a powerful notion of justice. Today, the foundational issue of justice seems to have lost its power as a qualifier for ethical-political education since the current educational-philosophical discourse tends to narrow down, singularize, and limit the spaces of justice in, for, and through education. Opposing this tendency, the chapters included here move beyond conventional paradigms while exploring the relationship between education and justice in the world of today. The book has three parts. The chapters in the first part explore the ontological and socio-political grounds underlying our notions of the relation between education and justice. The next part contextualizes this exploration through tangible examples. Next, the third part offers a self-reflective meta-critique by exploring how we, as philosophers of education, suffer from onto-epistemic blindness and perform symbolic violence, as we tend to promote and uphold conventional or standardized visions and missions. In short, this collection of essays offers a new eye on the link between education and justice and enriches the discourse through its multi-perspectival and more sensitive exploration of justice in, for, and through education today.

Introduction

Judith Shklar once wrote that “traditionally political theory has turned around and around two poles, the notions of power and of justice” (Shklar, 2020 [1957], 271); this can be said of contemporary educational philosophy too. Much has recently been written on both justice and power, and diverse trends in the corresponding philosophical-educational research have already emerged. Concerning the pole of power, the influence, for instance, of Michel Foucault is still prominent and the relevant (post-)Foucauldian trend has covered important ground in exploring the multiple forms and distributions of power in, for, and through education. Concerning the pole of justice, diverse and major educational-philosophical trends have been consolidated. A trend which owes much to John Rawls revolves around a liberal conception of meritocratic justice and investigates how educational justice reflects or affects the social distribution of resources, goods, privileges, and benefits. Another trend focuses on social justice and the representation and

recognition of groups' rights and identities in schooling. This trend has largely drawn on a wide spectrum of philosophies that study the politics of difference. Furthermore, the trend which derives from communicative Critical Theory, especially from Seyla Benhabib's version of it, underpins endeavours to infuse educational theory and policy with democratic justice sensibilities.

Certainly, the two poles, power and justice, are interconnected; power, regardless of being theorized as positional, structural or distributive, enables or disables endeavours, educational or other, toward justice. On its part, to be doled out and to promise a new education justice needs appropriate handlings of power. As Nuraan Davids and Yusef Waghid have recently put it, education as a site of active pursuit of justice by all those involved in, and affected by it, requires the light that an educational theory of power (Foucauldian or other) sheds on "forms of domination, exploitation and subjectivity" (Davids and Waghid, 2021, 32). The interconnection of power and justice is indisputably significant for a critical-normative approach to pedagogy (that we differentiate, in the next paragraph, from the conventional, functionalist normativism of some educational policies). However, for methodological purposes and for reasons of focus, the present collection of essays will leave the pole of power aside to concentrate on the pole of justice and its relation to education today from a philosophical-educational point of view. The aim is to explore, challenge and rethink how justice relates to education in awareness of how this relationship has philosophically been theorized in the world of today. However, before we proceed to deploy how this collection of essays spirals towards this aim, we will say a few words about how some educational-theoretical contemporary sensibilities of justice have developed and become enriched with ever-new philosophical insights and commitments. Since this collection of essays is not descriptive of the historical-philosophical course of the relation of justice and education but rather concerns this relation and the world of today, our introduction purposely focuses on recent sensibilities and not on, say, ancient philosophies of justice.¹

The Normativity of Education and Contemporary Educational-Theoretical Sensibilities of Justice

For clarification purposes, let us first underline that we here adopt a broad notion of education, which we take to denote formal and informal practices within and beyond pedagogical institutions. In general, "education" covers the scope of "those phenomena through which a community or society preserves and renews itself" (Strand, 2020a, 1). This minimal account of education invites some specification of what counts as "preservation" and "renewal" of a society. Different tasks of education and different meanings of normativity emerge thereof: if emphasized, societal preservation may require the kind of renewal that leaves many social realities unaffected and secures only that the society will not be harmed by stagnation and endless

repetition of the same. Thus, the new that is welcomed and served through education concerns moderate adjustments of society that increase its resilience (Papastephanou, 2004). Acceptable then tends to be the educational contribution to the change – that is, uncritical of the bigger picture of society, recuperative of society in times of crises that compel modifications and adaptability, and not drastic enough to usher along a radical overhaul. In this context, normativity largely amounts to normality and usual normalcy – that is, to a conventional ethico-political outlook that is reproductive of society and asserts existing and dominant societal values over a more critical and transformative ethics and politics. By contrast, when renewal is emphasized and meant as radical openness committed to ethico-political principles, and not as neo-liberal restructuring committed to pre-given economic priorities, normativity goes beyond the preservation of societal conventions and norms. The corresponding approach to education can be construed as critical-normative – that is, critical rather than reproductive of established societal patterns and values. The present collection of essays, being focused on justice,² presupposes and simultaneously serves this critical-normative sense of education.

To make the earlier nuance in meanings of normativity more visible and further to explain the underlying tension between an education conceived in reproductive, functionalist terms and an education conceived in more critical-normative terms, let us refer to the co-option of learning by conventional, though by now global, educational policy discourses. In such discourses, education is depoliticized, de-normativized, and reduced to learning (lifelong, hybrid, etc.). As Kenneth Wain puts it, education qua learning acquires a “vocationalist, managerialist thrust”. It becomes “oriented towards the requirements of the market and the global economy and the needs of employers, and subjected to the principle of performativity” (Wain, 2000, 36). The normativity involved in such developments is more of the functionalist, norm/normality-related kind. It lacks the ethico-political criticality that a more philosophical sense of educational normativity has had from the times of Plato and Aristotle down to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and beyond. The latter sense of normativity always derives from a discontent with reality, the injustices of which it seeks to address rather than cover up or legitimize. Instead, the former, conventional and functionalist, sense of normativity construes the existing societal priorities as acceptable or even the best possible and seeks to advance them even further. To return to Wain, the outcome of such *uncritical-normative*, indeed, normalizing and functionalist managerial “developments towards the universal marketization of learning is more or less predictable; considerations of ‘justice’ go by the board” (ibid., p. 42). Wain specifies that “at least considerations of distributive justice go by the board, and the notion itself becomes unfashionable”. He considers this trend as “supported by” and, indeed, “symptomatic of the more general trend of hostility towards the welfare state from all quarters”, a hostility which, in education, leads to the promotion of a “corporatist programme for the ‘reform’ of schooling” which abuses “progressive ideas and humanistic

pedagogies” and supports the “new”, “training” priorities and “agendas for human capital in a post-industrial society” (ibid.). Hence, a new normativization of education may be needed, one that will restore the theoretical perception of how education and justice are inherently connected and ought to remain so. The normativization that we suggest should be critical and not excessive, namely, it should not entail that education is the cure for all social ills. This normativization, that is, this radicalization of the normativity of education through the notion of justice, will constitute an important first part of this collection of essays and will underlie all the chapters in one way or other.

In light of the aforementioned, we clarify that we mean education in the critical-normative sense that it requires if it is to be interrelated with a powerful notion of justice (beyond weak, legalist confinements of justice to litigation affairs). This is not just our own choice but a much broader commitment of most educational philosophers, a major recent sensibility that also paves the way for our discussion of other sensibilities of justice that are vitally presupposed by this collection of essays. A basic and well-founded assumption of recent approaches to the topic of education and justice is that “education requires a normative grounding”, for it “must not be conceived as functionalist adaptation to whatever social changes might be presently occurring” (Culp, 2019, p. viii). Importantly, also for Julian Culp, just as for us, such a normative function should be granted to justice rather than to other ethical or political notions. His own conception of justice that fulfils this role is the democratic and internationalist (ibid.). Still, what sense of justice is most relevant to a desirable education for the world of today is no simple matter and reflects precisely the sensibilities of justice that now frame responses to the world of today. Though the democratic and internationalist sense of justice is of undiminished importance and has carved its own niche in educational philosophy for justice nowadays, it does not provide the whole normative ground that education requires and, thus, in fact, it does not fulfil justice for education: it does not do justice to the true relevance and potential contribution of education to making a better world. In other words, it does not cover the full ground of the normativity of education. The many years’ hindsight since the transformation of philosophy of education into an autonomous educational field of research proves that the various faces of justice that come centre stage wax and wane, and interest is often shifted from one determinant of justice (e.g., distributive) to another (e.g., relational, postmodern, recognitive). Indeed, the 1970s, after Rawls, were dominated by the engagement with a redistributive sense of justice that continued unabated and has had a long future in educational theory ever since. Even now, much of the educational concern with justice focuses on what is known as “educational justice” (Nielsen, 2020), which is marked by redistributive and egalitarian sensibilities and focuses on educational facilitation of just and equal distribution of goods (justice through education). Then, the political theory of the 1980s was characterized by a paradigm shift “from *redistribution*, a politics of structural difference, to *recognition*, a politics of cultural

difference” (Dallmann and Lenz, 2007, p. 5). The latter made multiculturalist and feminist claims more visible and effected a sensitization of educational experts and publics to the cultural realities of group identities. As a parallel development, concerns related to social justice and deriving from Paulo Freire’s influential, critical pedagogy and the sensitization to the politics of one’s existential and social positioning increasingly gained attention. Later, in the light of a postmodern self-understanding of the Western world, an ethic and a politic of recognizing rather than suppressing difference were promoted. Justice was then theorized through a postmodern emphasis on cultural heterogeneity rather than on communal homogeneity, on affirmation of group diversity rather than on state uniformity, and on unassimilated alterity rather than on conformist concordance.³ Emblematic of this development was Iris Marion Young’s book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990). Transferred to education, such sensibilities entail that schooling should be a preparation for the advent of such an inclusive and open society, and justice could be advanced in and through education.

From the 1990s onwards, these emphases intensified, as political philosophers of postmodern leanings have gradually criticized or deconstructed those essentialist accounts of identities that had been lying beneath modern conceptions of justice. Such accounts are used to block the visibility of the just claims of people uncomfortable with neat placement within established groups and categories as well as of several, “othered” others. Thus, the deconstruction of essentializations of identities revealed along the way the limits of what typically passes for a “proper” body-politic and a suitable allocation of place within a body-politic, as democratic as this may have seemed to be. Such, then new, concerns meant novel philosophical and educational challenges. The blow they dealt to traditional democratic theory also meant that standard conceptions of democratic justice and citizenship had to be reformulated. Therefore, the world, from then on thought as multicentric, globalized, or even cosmopolitanized, presents the politics of justice and the concomitant education with issues that transcend the parameters of the nation-state and the corresponding confines of democracy as had earlier been conceived. For instance, a related challenge to both social and democratic justice is the very possibility that their common cause may require an appropriate division of labour between them: if the goal of social justice is the free and active participation of all social groups in a public life and polity that is to respect the needs of all, the process for achieving this goal involves a democratic justice of fair participation. This sense of democratic justice advances inclusive practices – that is, justice in education – and a “power with” instead of “power over” paradigm that keeps away the risk of trying to end domination through ever-new forms of coercion that perpetuate old, or create new, forms of injustice (Adams and Bell, 2016, pp. 21–44). Regardless of the suggestion on offer, it is worth noting that acknowledging the complex relationship of the social sphere of equitable participation and the political sphere of democratic power increasingly leads to revisiting hegemonic notions of justice.

As some commentators have put it, the acknowledgement of “the radical hybridity, polyvocality, and ‘transculturality’ of all cultures and societies” compelled the pursuit of “new directions in democratic theory” and “visions of ‘deliberative’ or ‘communicative’ models of democracy” (Dallmann and Lenz, 2007, p. 5). Such was, for instance, Seyla Benhabib’s response to the spirit of the times in her book-length engagement (*The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* [2004]) with the constellation of democracy, citizenship, cosmopolitanism; the rights of immigrants; and the extended responsibilities of bodies-politic to the just claims of others globally. Social justice claims are not always concurrent or consonant with claims of global justice, and citizenship obligations are re-theorized in a context of enlarged global and environmental responsibilities. Oppositions such as the rooted and the rootless, universalism vs particularism, the territorial and the de-territorialized (Deleuze), have rendered established meanings of justice less operative and invited semantic renewals and reshufflings both of justice as such and of education as conducive to such justice. Even more recently, post-humanist sensibilities have been added in global discourses on justice (Strand, 2020b) that increasingly pollinate the educational rethinking of justice, leading it to valuably less anthropocentric directions (Drousioti, 2020).

However, this brief, indeed, skeletal itinerary should not be construed as affirming a linear process of successive movements toward a cohesive 21st-century theory of justice, or toward better determinations and approximations of justice where supposedly obsolete 20th-century notions are left behind on the way to an ever-more “accurate” and deservedly hegemonic notion of justice. Consecutive shifts to new emphases and sensibilities do not mean that we have now reached a much desired epistemic and semantic transparency of what counts as just and who counts as wronged – and, by implication, of what the related educational provinces, potentialities, and tasks may be. That we have moved from economic accounts of unjust distribution of goods and power to culturalist accounts of unjust misrecognition, exclusion, and marginalization does not efface challenges of democratic justice and tasks of negotiating the social and the global. Nor does it efface the real, material, social, and global pathologies that perpetuate structural injustices and our blindness (occasional or consistent) to them. Indeed, “structural inequality is a crucial form of injustice” (Young, 2011, p. 41) and remains so in 2023, demarcating a broad terrain of responsibility for justice that exceeds the interpretive confines of one’s individual liability for her misfortunes or education’s leeway for societal change. Acknowledging such structural inequality then indicates the limits of education’s ability to change the world on its own and, in this way, it constitutes what we call “justice for education” (that is, it gives education its due by not blaming it for injustices that do not burden it primarily or exclusively but precede it and need to be addressed through political, systemic change). Yet, in our view regrettably, despite Young’s major posthumously published work on it in 2011 and many other works that make similar claims, this insight has not yet obtained the attention that it deserves in educational theory. And it has not been thought through to its deep implications

for how we educate students for the world that they will encounter as citizens later in their life. Thus, it is still largely overlooked even in related educational discourses which tend to focus on individual responsibility and on preparing the student to undertake such a responsibility, often to lifelong levels, in order to become more competitive within and across borders. Against such individualizations of the responsibility for justice, it is evident that structural injustice is not wished away just by merely ensuring equal access to education or by paying lip service to a culturalist politics of difference. As Young aptly put it, “[T]he turn-of-the-twentieth-century hope that public education can equalize the relationship among children of very unequal parents, giving each child an equal chance to compete with others from more privileged backgrounds, seems like a strange dream” (Young, 2011, p. 21).

It is also evident from our own field perspective – that is, from a philosophy of education prism – that the concept of “educational justice” has, in recent years, acquired a prominent status in international research – a status that should not remain exclusive to it at the expense of other theorizations of justice (e.g., those which focus on determinants of justice other than the educational qua meritocratic/distributive one). At the same time, this term, “educational justice”, has acquired an unhelpful conceptual elasticity since numerous contemporary studies adopt it to research and debate even topics which are only loosely or indirectly connected to justice and to liberal-egalitarian/meritocratic political philosophies and theories of education. Typically, the international educational research literature reveals a unilateral social science approach and an exasperating one-sided focus on equal distribution of resources and opportunities or on opportunities as an outcome of education, even when it superficially borrows from the three historically formed paradigms on social justice that we have roughly described in this chapter as having obtained broad academic visibility: the distributive, the recognitive, and representative/democratic justice paradigm. In other words, many disciplines outside educational studies often offer richer engagements with many aspects of justice than those offered within educational sciences, even within educational philosophy when this is limited to a liberalist framework. We may explain this point by adapting an early but apposite remark by Shklar on how different the issue of “individual versus society” may look if seen from diverse perspectives: the liberal perspective “sees the rights of individuals as based on justice or utility” (Shklar, 2020 [1957], p. 231). The perspective that originated in modern, romantic critiques of liberalism and, we add, culminated in the postmodern worldview

makes a virtue of self-expression as an end in itself, and sees individuality as necessarily involving an opposition to prevailing social standards. The liberal fears majorities, because they may be too powerful to be just, and too ignorant to be wise.

The romantic was “revolted by their docility, their indifference to genius, their undistinguished emotional life”. The postmodern fears them for their forming communities based on sameness and promoting a homogeneity that

constantly treats unjustly those who differ. “The liberal sees only the dangers of power abused”; this means that there is a rather limited set of injustices that the liberal can thus perceive or acknowledge. To these usually perceptible abuses of power the liberal, and, let us again update Shklar’s claim, the neo-liberal responds by requesting that “the state may not interfere with society”. This sanction is of “an entirely different order than the idea” that a person’s prerogatives vary from opportunities “to develop an original personality” to opportunities that go beyond the two central themes of liberal thought – that is, majority rule and minority rights – and touch upon the threats that massification presents for the unique individual (Shklar, 2020 [1957], p. 231).

The Structure of This Book and Its Contribution to Rethinking Justice and Education

What thus becomes clearer is that, as we claimed earlier, the relationship of justice and education is complex and multiform, while the approximation of a helpful, guiding conceptualization of justice does not proceed in a linear way where previous tasks of justice are either once and for all fulfilled or surpassed and become obsolete by ever-new, single-focused challenges. Even in the context of an enrichment of perspectives on justice and determinants of it that accommodate the claims of ever-more wronged groups or individuals and of nature, there can be no simple answer to the problems of justice and of education’s synergy with justice. Indeed, “notions of justice may actually compete in some circumstances”. They may not cohabitate, or they may be antagonistic (Tuck and Yang, 2018, 6). We think that this is all the more so if we enlarge the scope of relevance of justice to be that of a justice in, through, and for education. More critical awareness about the normativity of education (and the complexities of this normativity) is obtained when we realize how the prepositions “in”, “for”, and “through” nuance the relation of justice to education and help theorists better perceive the need to normativize education – that is, to emphasize that education, despite limits, has a very active part in the production of (in)justice. Justices and injustices occur *in* education – that is, in its settings and in the interactions and learning activities that these settings host. For example, some measures or practices in education are inclusive and promote justice to all those affected by them, but other realities in education produce exclusions, oppression, discrimination, and other kinds of unjust treatment. Justices and injustices also occur *through* education, for instance, when education becomes, as an institution, a mechanism for social selection, for sifting the future achiever from those who will lag behind. And (in)justice often occurs *for* education – that is, in relation to the limitations and affordances of education. For instance, a frequent injustice to education is to blame it too much for societal pathologies that education cannot remedy of its own accord alone: such is the case of educational inequalities that reflect social inequalities that should be addressed through mechanisms other than education (e.g., through redistribution of wealth or welfare policies). Justice

for education in this case requires deeper consideration of the complex relationship of justice and education, away from slogans and oversimplifications. Various, related disclosures of how (in)justice operates in, for and through education will pervade the book, against the backdrop of some current, de-normativizing tendencies within global educational policies.

Therefore, the present collection of essays sets out from a given philosophical context that is rich, ever developing, and informative of many of our current, educational perspectives on justice and its promotion in, for, and through education today. As explained earlier, we differentiate between justice in education, justice for education, and justice through education. Justice in education concerns content and institutional practices; justice for education concerns the acknowledgement of the political limits and affordances of access to education and the societal recognition of educational programmes concerning their leeway for realizing justice; while justice through education concerns fostering principles, attitudes, virtues, and visions of justice for the sake of a just future society. These distinct issues are interconnected, but they are not reducible to one another. The question of what promotes justice in, for, and through education thus invites deeper engagements with what counts as just and how to investigate, analyze, and theorize the promotion of justice in, for, and through education. At odds with the acknowledgement of such complexities, the current meanings of the ideals of “justice” seem to be taken for granted. Various dilemmas, conflictual values, and norms are concealed or glossed over and operate as inconsistent, vague, and ambiguous grounds for educational theory, research, and policies. Consequently, there is a call critically to examine the normative conceptions of justice beneath and beyond educational theory and research. The authors of this collection of essays respond to this call.

A cautionary remark is needed here, one that strengthens the claim that the rethinking of justice alongside education is a daunting and complex task: the often conflictual and intricate nature of aspects and claims for justice and their relation to education that we have acknowledged in this chapter should not obscure that such aspects and claims often make common cause and are not always incommensurable. For instance, claims for justice which emanate from an ethic of *refusing exploitation* and radically asserting “connection, particularly to land” are not as far apart from recognitive claims as they may seem at first sight. We are reminded that we better appreciate this insight when we stress the “distinction between liberal theories of *justice as recognition* and critical Indigenous theories of *justice as refusal*” (Tuck and Yang, 2018, p. 13). Therefore, and in line with Nancy Fraser’s notion of “abnormal justice”, the present book approaches and rethinks issues of justice and education in awareness and appreciation of the fact that, “in abnormal times” (Fraser’s term), aspects and frames of justice have an unstable, undetermined, unshaped, and “freewheeling” character. In her words, “[E]ven as public debates about justice proliferate, they increasingly lack the structured character of normal discourse” (Fraser, 2008, pp. 394–5). With no intention either to normalize or to over-systematize the discourse on education and

justice, we will rethink aspects of the complex relationship of these notions by exploring it along lines of (a) ontological and socio-political premises, (b) critical concretizations and contextualizations of issues of (in)justice, and (c) self-reflective (meta-critical) elaborations on premises and contexts.

This division of labour pays due attention, or so we hope, to equally important dimensions of our topic, which, in their synergy and intersection, help the book reflect the complexity and intricacy of the relationship of education and justice. The first part, which concerns the ontological and socio-political grounds underlying the relation of education and justice, innovatively addresses presuppositions of the normativization of education through justice: which ontology may provide a substratum of normativity that would make education much more than just an endeavour to instruct the young and prepare them merely for work within and across borders. In other words, what ontological givens establish that education and justice are interconnected and thus that education should be rethought as critical-normative against some current policy positions that treat it as so reproductive of society that, in Wain's terms, as quoted earlier, "justice goes by the board"? Are these ontological givens limited to the human world (Bostad, Chapter 1)? And in what socio-political settings does the relationship of justice and education get deployed today? What ontologies help us rethink such settings in a way that would make the enactment of justice in, through, and for education a realistic prospect for change rather than a chimera? The ontology which affirms plasticity (Hogstad, Chapter 2) and the consideration of the person's position in the current socio-political settings that proves the person fragile and vulnerable (Strand, Chapter 3) enable a better insight into expanded normative tasks of education.

The second part, which covers an extended and also valuable ground in this book, comprises critical concretizations and contextualizations of the relationship of justice and education. It is one thing to ground the relation of justice and education in a firm ontology and relevant socio-political settings that justify the claim that the inherent normativity of education is and should be more critical and transformative than current neo-liberal discourses acknowledge. Another, and related, important thing is to translate this tenet into actual critique of how this relation of education and justice emerges in specific contexts and vis-à-vis specific challenges of the world of today. Critical nodal points arise when we consider how social values (e.g., happiness, Lie, Chapter 4) may be at cross-purposes with justice; through what means (e.g., dialogue, Debono, Chapter 5) justice is thought to be advanced in education; which other normativities (e.g., forgiveness, Mahrtdt, Chapter 6) should accompany justice in, for, and through education; how the local and the global intersect (Kvamme, Chapter 7; Wills, Chapter 8) when concrete challenges of justice (e.g., issues of ecology or migration) are at stake in education; and how divisions between East and West or North and South may be turned into fruitful ground for further contextualization and specification, in cosmopolitan and decolonial directions (Jackson and Wong, Chapter 9; Waghid, Chapter 10), of the relation of justice and education in the world of today.

However, as has already been educationally acknowledged, “to merely critique what we observe and experience as academics” (Davids and Waghid, 2021, p. 46) does not suffice to effect actual change. The tasks of rethinking justice alongside education require not only to critique “certain issues and injustices”, not only “a preparedness to change that which requires change”, but also “to hold ourselves to the same scrutiny to which we subject others and the world around us”. We consider this to be a self-reflective, meta-critical task that is absolutely necessary for obtaining a heightened consciousness of the risks of committing or perpetuating injustices (despite one’s best intentions) by being too absorbed in head-on critiques of situations and contexts that have already been safely marked as unjust. That is, what is constantly at stake is the possibility of missing, overlooking challenges of justice because of one’s immersion in one’s established theories or perceptions of who counts as wronged and what matters as wrong in a given context. We enter our contexts, professional or other, with our own “blinkers and biases”, which we must acknowledge, inasmuch as we might think we are alert to possible pitfalls (Davids and Waghid, 2021, p. 46.). To respond to this caveat, the book concludes with some meta-critical considerations of the relationship of the self and the world of today which constitute its third and final part. Meta-critical self-reflection on how we construe the relation of justice and education may concern: the very phrase “world of today” that sets the stage of this book and involves the risk of making justice and education “answerable” to what this world has already thematized as injustice (Papastephanou, Chapter 11); self-reflective attention to theorizations of the normativization of education that educators themselves are ready to undertake, for instance, how they demarcate their leeway and ability to remedy wrongs through their practice (Hanhela, Chapter 12); and negotiating the “inward”, e.g., the auto-biographical critical perspective, with the “outward”, e.g., the head-on critique of glaring pathologies in order to target the “will to injustice” (Beck, Chapter 13) that often pays only lip service to justice in, for and through education.

Therefore, in line with the above tripartite structure, Inga Bostad begins this collection of essays by seeking a profound grounding of the normative relation of justice and pedagogy in an ethic of rhythm. She enriches the discourses on the social ontology of justice by showing how rhythms inhibit or promote, and generally, affect recognitive justice. Whilst most handlings of the normative substratum of justice and education in the relevant educational-philosophical scholarship resort to polity-based notions such as the gregarious character of humanity or the anthropological omnipresence of political communities, Bostad searches deeper and outside the confines of exclusively human parameters of life: it is in the cosmic notion of rhythm as constitutive also of human society that she finds the ethical premise for fine-tuning human relations. She thus provides a much-needed rethinking of the very foundations of the relationship of justice and education, while indicating how this would shed a different light on the normative tasks of an education for justice.

Many of the unjust practices of our socio-political, and more specifically educational, world can be pinned down to the structural injustice that stems from a standard, Western socialization of natural selection (that is, a turning of natural selection into a social practice). Students are expected to compete with one another and the fittest of them to survive. Kjetil Horn Hogstad does not wish to concede the notion of natural selection to such neo-liberal educational discourses; he sets out to rescue this notion, avoid those of its connotations which are inimical to justice, and deliver it back to education in new, normative-friendly shape. To this end, Hogstad turns to the ontology that better suits this original and thought-provoking task – namely, the ontology beneath Catherine Malabou’s concept of “plasticity”. If our educational world is to open up to justice, he argues, a question that arises concerns how we might shake the rigidity of natural selection by showing its pliable, unexpected and unplanned nature for the sake of a concomitant education for justice whose ontological origins also rest on malleability.

But what are the challenges of the world of today, and how do they affect the normative tasks of education toward justice? This question grounds Torill Strand’s chapter and is followed by equally important and relevant questions. Other than the ontological premises, or precisely in a complex relationship with them, there are also the socio-political premises that her question puts centre stage. The vital question Strand pertinently asks renders more specific: what may educative justice look like? In order to highlight the educational potential of tangible experiences of justice, we should rather speak about “educative justice”, not “educational justice”. “Educational justice” refers to the promotion of justice in, for, and through education by applying various theories, principles, or doctrines of justice. However, our task is not to promote doctrines of justice, but rather to think educative encounters with justice in real life situations.

The socio-political arena of today also invites critical scrutiny, especially with regard to specific contexts and the concrete obstacles that the world of today raises to educational normative tasks such as those related to justice. For this arena is marked *inter alia* by dominant narratives of happiness that make a privatized sense of joy and success an imperative, in fact, an interpellation, from which even education has not escaped. Many educational policies involve a promise of a certain kind of happiness, especially when learning and knowledge become vehicles for the achievements and distinctions that a liberal worldview cherishes as key to well-being. Following Sarah Ahmed’s critique of the hegemony of happiness in the Western world, Elin Rødahl Lie engagingly and critically revisits this socio-political premise of what counts as good education and reveals the multiple ways in which the very normativization of happiness and the summoning to be or become happy may be unjust: it fails seriously to harken to the affective realm in education and to consider and valorize the affect that exceeds what the liberal socio-political setting privileges.

Another concrete example of how a rethinking of education alongside justice requires a critical stance to existing normativizations that dominate in our socio-political settings and educational frameworks is cogently given by

Mark Debono's chapter. Debono critiques the current normativization of dialogue; justice for education requires perceiving also the normative limits of valorized educational tools. The unqualified celebration of dialogue in education has elevated it to a panacea. Injustices which may lie or occur beneath this elevation of deliberation to an unchallenged norm are typically glossed over. Debono helps us perceive them and shows that the empowerment of the subject that is expected from dialogic education is in no way guaranteed, especially when dialogue is one-sidedly considered the vehicle through which the "truths" of the system reach the student via the dialogically engaged teacher. By exerting control over the deliberative process, this mechanism, which is inhospitable to truths of others, produces the injustice of silencing more independent student voices. The spectralities of such voices that Debono astutely singles out through deconstructive moves raise hopes that socio-political complicities of contemporary education could be unmasked from within.

Regardless of how we may theorize or critique it, the context within which the drama of justice and pedagogy becomes unravelled, the worldliness that is both a curse of repetition and a promise of renewal, invites educational responses and specifications of educational normative tasks. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Helgard Mahrtdt sets apposite, corresponding questions: Will these responses and tasks be of a loving attitude to the world of today? What does it mean to take responsibility, not just for your own self and your future but also for the world, for the injustices that are at times structural, at times individually remediable, or at other times reducible to the fundamental human frailty and finitude? As Mahrtdt pertinently argues, an education for undertaking such responsibilities and for effecting justice in, for, and through its structures inevitably involves specific considerations of the place that forgiveness, retribution, and reconciliation may claim in pedagogy.

The responsibility for the world, therefore, compels a criticality that is context-sensitive concerning context-specific challenges. Ole Andreas Kvamme situates such challenges to the Norwegian context by addressing issues of justice that transcend the distributive logics that have so far infiltrated the normative task of an education for sustainable development. In so doing, Kvamme offers to this collection of essays an excellent example of philosophy of education applied to state-specific indigenizations of international conventional "wisdom" and concomitant directives. The tensions and dilemmas concerning justice which have emerged in discourses, such as the United Nations Agenda 2030, and exemplified in discourses on Norwegian oil and gas production, provide Kvamme fertile ground and an ecological vision for context-specific explorations of unjust structures and of their accommodation in curricular provisions.

Focusing on a different set of challenges but also involving the entanglement of the local and the global, the chapter following Kvamme's theorizes another Norwegian response to an issue of justice: that of migration policy. Wills Kalisha provides us a thought-provoking chapter on ethical, political, and educational dimensions of the harsh existential situation that

unaccompanied minors are in while awaiting an official Norwegian response to their asylum request. He pertinently complicates current policy discourses by drawing attention to traumatic lived experiences and educational disadvantages of unaccompanied children not only after their arrival in Norway but also prior to it. He thus valuably offers us pedagogical insight into higher demands of justice in and through education that should consider the vulnerability of young migrants who have suffered injustices that dominant accounts typically overlook.

A collection of essays on education and justice should also benefit from (and enact the epistemic justice of) including engagements with the topic that aim to cross East vs West and North vs South divides. Liz Jackson's and Baldwin Wong's chapter is one such critical concretization of challenges that emerge when various issues of justice, which could be a "world apart", so to speak, are at stake. Jackson and Wong engage with a long-overdue and highly significant project, that of exploring how Confucian thought connects its own conception of justice, virtue, and ritual, with civic education. These authors compare Confucian and liberal, different views of justice and their certainly different implications for moral/civic education across societies. They insightfully draw our attention to further implications for international and cross-cultural classrooms. These implications become palpable when, given the diversity in many contexts, a person from one cultural tradition becomes confronted with a curriculum that reflects drastically different views on justice.

The next chapter focuses on decolonial challenges of justice that higher education in Africa should meet. Yusef Waghid exposes and critiques the fact that the function of several African universities as Eurocentric pedagogic spaces is by no means a past reality of colonial and apartheid education. On the contrary, many universities preserve this Eurocentric function, along with many related injustices. Against this fact, Waghid sketches the desired normativity of a just university which is in tune with the demands and tasks of restorative justice. By turning to the "restorative" as a determinant of justice that is still crucial for places such as Africa, Waghid also offers a masterful application of philosophy of education to a context-specific challenge of justice in and through education. And, more, he valuably, though indirectly, reminds us that our focus on issues of justice that preoccupy our localities may make us oblivious of aspects of justice that our localities neglect or, worse, complacent as to how the seemingly global *we* theorized justice. None of the usual – and, in our discourses, popular – determinants of justice suffice to fulfil the normative tasks that restorative justice fulfils for situated educational visions; in this way, Waghid's chapter also contributes to justice for education, to doing justice to education's potential for pursuing still neglected normative tasks.

Waghid's reminder of what remains unperceived and unfulfilled eases the passage to our last chapters, which are preoccupied with the issue of self-reflectivity and meta-critique when justice is at stake. Thus, our next-to-final chapter engages with justice and the conspicuous. Marianna Papastephanou's

chapter is a sequel to her previous critical intervention in related educational-philosophical research through which she has shown that neglected, though by no means negligible, faces (determinants) of justice and their right to visibility invite explorations of different optics of justice, less single-focused than the dominant perspectival one (Papastephanou, 2021a). Presupposing the meta-critical ground that was thus covered, Papastephanou's chapter directs some self-reflective attention to theorizations of "the world of today" – a turn of phrase that is also in the title of this collection of essays. Though situating justice and education in our times cannot be overestimated, she points out a potential risk: the under-theorized discursive operation of locating issues of justice and education within the spirit of the times, in the here and now, may make our discourses just answerable to the world of today. It may limit our sight to conspicuous injustices – that is, to injustices that are already visible and reprehensible in the here and now – at the expense of noticing egregious injustices that currently escape the Western eye and considering more affirmative and crisis-independent visions of justice.

Teemu Hanhela drives home the issue of how injustices are perceived and how justice operates in and through education by directing attention to the self-reflective teacher and the school straightforwardly. He turns to how educators are said to experience injustices that occur in education and its settings and, concomitantly, to how educators demarcate their leeway concerning the ability to intervene and possibly to correct wrongs in classrooms. Hanhela's conceptual perspective helpfully sets in critical dialogue Meira Levinson's and Doris Santoro's discussions of this issue with Axel Honneth's cognitive notion of (in)justice. In playing one conception of injustice off against another, this chapter crucially advances a meta-critical engagement with what counts as injustice, with the differences between feeling wronged and experiencing how others are wronged and with the nuance that related distinctions add to how we conceive emancipatory education.

Our collection of essays ends with a most appropriate turn inwards for the sake of arriving at a more outward and centrifugal outlook on justice and education: Eevi Elisabeth Beck's chapter searches for auto-biographical traces of the will to injustice. Critiquing self-indulgent and complacent self-understandings that celebrate one's verbal commitment to justice with no awareness of, let alone vigilance concerning, one's practically benefiting from injustices, Beck develops a fascinating account that seeks uncomfortable learning about hidden responsibilities for (in)justice. Class, race, and education benefits along with convenient positionings in institutions and systems, local or/and global, perpetuate climate destruction, aloofness toward animal rights issues, and blindness to subtler claims for justice. Their consideration heightens consciousness, expands the normativity of education while also acknowledging limits to success, and makes higher demands on the subject than merely acknowledging injustice verbally in a self-congratulatory manner. As Beck puts it, they place the subject in the perpetual position of the learner where the goal of learning is never fully achieved.

Avoiding all resort to easy solutions, the final chapters of this collection, as much as the chapters that preceded them, indirectly assert the irreducibility of justice and education to normal discourses. Through this collection of essays, we hope to have rethought education and justice in some of their complexity, while making evident the surplus of normativity in them that justifies the impression of an abnormal justice in, through, and for an abnormal education in abnormal times. Let us, now, end this introduction by returning to where we started. As mentioned in the beginning, the poles of power and justice in, for, and through education are inextricably connected, spiralling, and interdependent. Much of what our collection of essays critiques and revisits touches also upon multiple and mobile forms and distributions of power within old and current socio-political settings and across geographical and educational loci. Likewise, many of our visions about what tasks justice sets to education or how to approximate the tasks' fulfilment, along with much rethinking of what passes for justice and what such rethinking may require, resonate with the not-so-distant echoes of discourses on power operations. But that can only be the subject matter of another, future collection of essays.

Notes

- 1 This in no way implies irrelevance of ancient, pre-modern, or modern theorization of the relation of justice and education. It only implies that, for methodological reasons of scope and focus, this introduction is no place for constructing a coherent and linear narrative of the philosophical mapping of this relation. After all, such narratives abound in well-known reference books (see, for instance, David Johnston's [2011] *A Brief History of Justice*) that have already given long accounts of theories of justice and their discussion of education as a mode of creating a more just world.
- 2 Justice is a paramount critical-normative term, given that, for Aristotle (in his *Politics*), justice is a political virtue that requires conscious choice (prohairesis) and critical deliberation (Papastephanou, 2021b).
- 3 Because an introduction to a collection of essays has other, more specific purposes than descriptive and explanatory accounts of basic or terminological issues surrounding a topic, for more on determinants of justice such as (re-)distributive, recognitive, postmodern, on the meaning of related terms and on major philosophical figures associated with each of them, see Papastephanou (2021a).

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Part I

**The Ontological and Socio-
political Grounds for
Normativising Education
through Justice**



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1 An Ethics of Rhythm and the Philosophical As-If

Educational Aporia and Reimagining Justice as Interdependence*

Inga Bostad

An Ethics of Rhythm¹

A conception of justice is dependent on thinking justice – that is, a conception of justice that is at the same time situated in time and place but also located at places that do not exist (yet). Investigation into how a powerful notion of justice could be restored today is needed for two reasons: Firstly, because the world is fundamentally changing and calls us to be historically informed and at the same time adjust to new crises and challenges for an uncertain future. Secondly, a basic feature of pedagogical relationships is that there is always a present interdependence. Dependency relations as a starting point for justice is, for instance, discussed by Eva Kittay in her *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (2020).

This interdependence may take different forms. According to Mathisen (2015), Rudolf Steiner sees rhythms as a way of being and of relating, intending to create an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual respect in classrooms: “I would say that a musical quality must pervade the relationship between teachers and students” (Mathisen, 2015, p. 58) quoting Steiner 2004, p. 106). Seeing teachers as both “conveyors of prepared learning contents, but also as fellow humans sharing the time spent together at school in a fuller way” (Mathisen, 2015, p. 58). The relation between listening and participation or interrelation could be visualized as a rhythmic variation, or “rhythmically sustained relation” (Mathisen, 2015, p. 58) between someone talking and listening, being silent and repeating or remembering what the other has said (a kind of “mental sleeping” or wondering as Steiner frames it), and shifting tempo into a faster talking-speed. Where Steiner, however, connects this to his holistic understanding of the spiritual self and the developmental stages of a child, I find his call for increased fine-tuned listening and sensitivity for the other useful not only in a dialogue reminding us to be aware of how the tempo changes when you listen and when you speak, respectively, but as an existential ethos.

My argument is that listening to rhythms and following rhythms is a fundamental feature of educational justice, at the same time it informs a deeper

* This chapter builds on and is a further development of a previous article printed in *Ethics and Education* (Bostad, 2022).

understanding on the norms embedded in being together and being prepared for the unknown future. My hypothesis is that these two perspectives on educational justice will function as a relevant critique of current educational policies on educationalization and neo-liberal tendencies of seeing school as a primary socio-economic contributor to society.

Living Together as Rhythmic Lives

In a collection of lecture notes, *How to Live Together. Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (Barthes, 2012), Roland Barthes looks for the idiorhythmic life, which he sees glimpses of first and foremost in classic novels and texts. It is an invitation to think through how we can live together with respect for different life forms and rhythms, different individual life rhythms, and with the sufficient distance that a community requires (Barthes, 2012; Stene Johansen et al., 2018). Barthes introduces the concept of ‘idiorhythmy’ (from Greek *rhuthmos*)² and systematically reviews both classical texts such as Thomas Manns’ *The Magic Mountain*, Defoes’ *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, as well as actual and imagined places such as the monastery, the colony, a room, but also principles and conditions such as utopias, events, bureaucracies, marginalities, and beginnings, all of which promote fantasies about life rhythms and interactions between people and places. Barthes’ originality is shown first and foremost in how he shifts attention from living together as a confrontation between the self and the other to the question of rhythm, process rather than outcome, and finality (Tygstrup, 2018. *Rhuthmos* “is a rhythm that allows for approximation, for imperfection, for a supplement, a lack, an idios: what does not fit the structure, or would have to be made to fit (...) Now, only a subject (idios) can ‘delay’ rhythm – that is to say, bring it about” (Barthes, 2012, p. 35).

In Barthes’ exploration of life rhythms, the concept works as a prism to describe and critically reflect on literary and actual places where coexistence and interaction between rhythms are lived out. By uncovering some of the rhythms of life created in different communities, we see both how wonderfully organic and well-structured some places seem to be, and how vulnerable and alienated other life situations are. The individual rhythms of life are a “flexible, free, mobile rhythm” (Barthes, 2012, p. 35) that stands out in contrast to the disrhythmy (heterorhythmy) of others. Barthes gives, for instance, one striking example of an imposed life rhythm of a child:

From my window (December 1. 1976), I see a mother pushing an empty stroller, holding her child by the hand. She walks at her own pace, imperturbably; the child, meanwhile, is being pulled, dragged along, is forced to keep running, like an animal or one of Sade’s victims being whipped. She walks at her own pace, unaware of the fact that her son’s rhythm is different. And she’s his mother!

(Barthes, 2012, p. 9)

In this example, the reader imagines both a disharmonious relationship between the mother and the child, as well as being reminded of possible alternatives, preferably and more desirable life situations. The coming-to-be-fantasy about a different way of relating between a mother and a child, still interdependent, but respecting the child as well as the mother, could be a ground for addressing present norms for educational justice. Our desire to be respected as an individual with life rhythms, shifting in time and place, stands out in opposition to our living together in an organized society with thoroughly regulated institutions and life schemas, appealing to flexibility, attentiveness, and a listening mood. Rethinking, exploring, and understanding how we live together respecting others' personal boundaries, needs, and integrity, and how to organize different institutions and communities with respect for diversity, should therefore form a continuous part of the essence of educational justice and its arguments.

Rhythm arises, or becomes visible, when it meets power, according to Barthes. At the same time, the individual rhythm opposes power and wants to be flexible; i.e., it is not the case that an authoritarian social rhythm should be imposed on us. But the individual is also set in motion through participating in the rhythms of society; it is created in and it creates a coexistence with others. *Idiorrhythmi*, therefore, has two interpretations (Tygstrup, 2018, p. 229); it refers both to a break with a common rhythm (the individual creates a rhythm that also creates the community), and it refers to the fact that it is the rhythm of the community that creates the individual and that we must live with and together in a social rhythm and a community.

Kittay and the Labour of Loving Relationships

According to Kittay (2020), the existence of caring relationships is not only an expression of love but also her starting point for criticizing classical liberal theories of justice for omitting responsibility for dependents outside the political, belonging to the citizens private rather than public, concerns (Kittay, 2020, p. 84). Conceptions of equality start from an interdependence surrounding all humans, a similarity identifying all persons, and not from the individual asserting characteristics pertaining to that person (Kittay, 2020, p. 31). However, for something to be a moral and political claim to equality, it has to be a certain kind of dependency, and to Kittay, this dependency is found in the relation between a dependent and her caregiver, as a connection-based equality rather than an individual-based one. This reconceptualization of equality to human dependency has thus moral obligations for social and political organization. "The nesting dependencies extend beyond the state, for these are nested in larger regional and global economic and political orders" (Kittay, 2011, p. 119).

But what are the moral claims of a relational subject, and on what normative grounds can we accept contextual reasoning and responsiveness as bases for moral judgements (Kittay, 2020, p. 66)?

Rhythm towards an Uncertain Future

The concept of rhythm is itself aimed at an uncertain future. When rhythms are repeated in a body, by a child being pulled by his mother or a student repeating arguments for a theory, there is always a new event that takes place. A “repeated” rhythm is not a repeated sameness but is always rhythm differentiated, always potentially “poly-rhythmic” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). A rhythm is simultaneously something that occurs every time and again, and is thus a promise of a new beginning, a becoming. A hug can never be exactly the same as another hug, a played note can never be played exactly the same way again, given that it is a new voice that sings it, a new finger that hits the piano key – so, too, an educational relationship can never be fully controlled. There is always a new imitation: even if we repeat something, reread a text, for example, something new enters the world.

In other words, rhythm happens with some kind of intention in relations, not as a blind repetition, nor as an impulse (Brighenti and Kärholm, 2018). At the same time, our individual lives, more than anything, are repetitions in a largely similar rhythm, wanting a life dominated by repetitions – and, as Barthes says, repetitions are rhythmic.

Rhythmos, *Paideia*, and Ethical Dilemmas

I am not primarily concerned with how the use of rhythm can renew and stimulate didactics and different learning situations, the possibilities that lie in using rhythm awareness, body awareness, play, and improvisation as tools in pedagogy, but on the other hand, I see rhythm as an existential. That is, I am interested in describing the existence of *de facto* different rhythmic lives and communities, as these serve as critical lenses through which we may observe and reveal unjust practises, suppression, and power hierarchies.

As I see it, ethical insights are expressed primarily, but not exclusively, in our actions, in our way of being, and are dependent on us continuously justifying our actions – and, moreover, that they are first and foremost about ongoing reflections on the durability of these reasons. At the same time, ethical dilemmas are constantly and thus currently at stake, and have to be justified within different contexts in different parts of the world at different times. At the same time, the question of justice for, in, and through education is basically an ethical issue. How should we act, and how should we live together?

My first suggestion on the way forward to an ethics of rhythm is about not only respecting but also creating rhythms that facilitate a relationship between people; at the same time, an investigation into the rhythmic presence in interpersonal relationships can shed a critical light on conditions for togetherness, recognition, and, ultimately, love. And here I distinguish between flexible and shifting conditions and more or less predetermined bodily or material contingencies.

My second suggestion is that an ethics of rhythm can shed light on what promotes and inhibits recognition between people across our vulnerable

lives and the need for a renewal of a philosophy of pedagogy. Here, I argue that philosophy itself has contributed to a certain oblivion regarding how we follow and create rhythmic societies and the demand for an idiorhythm in opposition to power, and that “safeguards a flexible, free and mobile rhythm” (Barthes, 2012, p. 35). I argue that we need a more profound and fine-tuned listening attitude as a philosophical-ethical turning point and guideline, stimulated by imagination of different and unknown rhythmic lives.

Barthes understands the Greek word for education and learning, *paideia*, as a way of exercising and stimulating the imagination and a ‘fantasmatic’ thinking. All of us academics, he stresses, should – at least once a year – set out to conduct a research project induced by a fantasy, unfolded by experiences and imagination. Barthes shows us that imagination is not the opposite of reason, of the rational and logical; rather, through imagination, we can experience counter-perceptions, opposites, and ambiguous scenarios, images and counter-images. In Barthes’ thinking, imagination is an open source of knowledge. Living together is not only something that happens in a place, but it also happens in time, and through imagination, a transcendence of place and time occurs – through *chronotopos* or temporal imagination (Stene Johansen et al., 2018; Bondevik and Bostad, 2021). Imagination requires a place, a scenario. Barthes compares the imagination to an abrupt floodlight where the imagination leads the way and sheds some disruptive light on selected fields. Simultaneously, there is no direct transition between literary simulations and moral actions, according to Barthes. It is the philosophical space of opportunity that opens up and with a certain normative requirement perhaps to look for, look around, and imagine more or less harmonious communities – and, in this way, a space of solidarity may emerge.

Rhythm and Time

Rhythm is closely connected to time. A rhythm happens in time – *expressing* time, one could say. Our bodies are rhythmic in the sense that they are always in motion. Here, we can for a moment lean on Aristotle and his four types of motion or change: the quantitative change (our body grows, we put on weight or lose weight, our hair grows, it falls off) and the qualitative change (we develop identities and habits and change characteristics, from being diligent in a subject or learning to knit, then get a disease and have to learn it all over again—it goes more slowly, time passes and rhythms are changed). And the third type of change is change of place: we may move to another country where the rhythm of life is different and we have to adjust in one way or the other, learning to live with it, or we are refugees having to flee and finding ourselves in a reception centre in a foreign country with an unknown circadian rhythm (dinner at five and not at nine, the light goes out in the corridor at ten). And the last of the Aristotelian types of change of motion is the substantial change: when we change fundamentally or existentially from being alive to being dead. Then, we are no more, and our rhythm of life ceases into complete rest.

And as I see it, placing a concept of rhythms (inspired by Barthes idiorhythms or individual life rhythms) in time, or as time, provokes a normative scale and a mapping or measuring indicator seems to emerge; being diagnosed with a developmental delay for a child, for instance, signifies a specific standardized life rhythm. And the consequences of different kinds of standardized divisions into time and time limits, duration of school hours, length of free time in relation to children's life rhythms, etc., appear essential to education. So, we must ask ourselves: In what way could time as a qualitative measurement of progress promote or hinder educational justice?

A Room of Harmony or Disharmony

To create a rhythm is also a verb, closely connected to harmony or harmonious forms and structure, as, for instance, seen in *My School* by Tagore, where education and upbringing are characterized as a form of harmony. An ethics of rhythm linked to education as a pedagogical room (Bostad and Solberg, 2022) calls upon us to ask how our bodily rhythms may constitute a room with certain harmony or disharmony, whether the distance between people in different public places and in institutions like schools are regulated so as to maintain and also preserve human integrity, or whether the experience of living together and respecting different life rhythms, different expectations and needs, desires and longings, cannot be taught or translated from one culture to another – only seen as an invitation to investigate how much distance we can tolerate in interpersonal situations, in everyday life, and in social spaces (Bostad, 2018).

In Marxist terms, being alienated as a human being is partly due to the structure or system of labour and profit, where being unable to practice solidarity towards your neighbour is embedded in the system: alienation resembling what, according to Barthes's conceptual apparatus, may be labelled an 'architecture of hyper-distance', an overgrown or 'muted distance'. In other words: what forms of alienation prevent or promote just education, and in what way is this about respecting life rhythms and 'time autonomy'? The concept of distance (Bostad, 2018) is seen as a prism through which we are aware of the inflicted alienation – as, for instance, seen in the monastery where the distance between young boys and older monks is part of the routine that both prohibits and stimulates the desire after bodily closeness and thus creates alienation between people to prevent human desire: this is another backdrop of increasing community engagement and community participation – as well as increasing spaces for interacting.

In Barthes' more complex concept of distance and bodily rhythm, it is also the child who guides the mother, at the same time wanting to create distance, which I interpret as respect for boundaries.

Pedagogical Tact and Rhythm

Now, let me turn to Herbart's use of the concept of pedagogical tact, which could be said to refer to the ability of an educator/teacher to interrelate

pedagogical theory and practice, or between pedagogy as a science and the art of education, with the individuality of the single case. Herbart introduces the concept of tact in “The First Lectures on Pedagogy” (*Die ersten Vorlesungen über Pädagogik*) in 1802 (Herbart, 1964). He argues that tact can only evolve from practice and is “a quick judgment and decision, not proceeding like routine, eternally uniform, (...) it at the same time answers the true requirements of the individual case” (p. 20) and, further, is “a mode of action which depends on the teacher acting on (his) feeling and only remotely on his conviction, a mode of action rather giving vent to his inner movement, expressing how he has been affected”.

And along with this, I will elaborate on how tact forms itself in the teacher and how it is performed in practices within special education institutions. Transferred to the pedagogical relationship between, for example, a mentally disabled person and a pedagogue, we can say that there is a precedent if the teaching is based on a predefined, theoretical framework and does not primarily start with listening to the other’s rhythm. The one central source of knowledge is listening, we can say, while the secondary is theories and methods.

At the same time, there is a basic hermeneutical insight here: what we experience while listening is largely made possible through our newly experienced horizon of understanding. This progress and decline are nevertheless not a counter-argument against separating primary from secondary knowledge bases: having listening competence or rhythmic competence is therefore a prerequisite for being responsive in the individual situation (see also Weisethaunet, 2021). We can say that a newcomer in a classroom cannot be included and understood theoretically but must be read, felt and experienced.

The Boy with the Cloth

Peter is 17 years old and arrives at a boarding school institution for youth with disabilities,³ with an assistant named Knut. Peter has very restless body language and holds a large square of light cloth in front of his face. Knut tries to hold Peter’s hand but has to let go several times when Peter runs away from him. Knut looks tired. Peter makes a stream of loud noises that vary between exclamations and repetitive mumbling. It is Peter’s first day in the boarding school, and he is unfamiliar with the staff and the other students who live there. One of the older and experienced female employees walks over to Peter and leads him into the living room. She sits him on her lap and begins to sing into his ear as she rocks him slowly from side to side. Peter still has the cloth in front of his face. After a while, he calms down a bit, but a few minutes later, he breaks out of her lap and strikes out with his arms and kicks his legs on the floor. Another female employee with yet many years of experience has been sitting and watching and now approaches Peter. She sits down next to him and lifts him into her arms. She, too, sings into Peter’s ear as she rocks him from side to side. The same thing happens: Peter calms down for a while before he becomes restless again and breaks free. A third employee, also with many years of experience, takes over, sitting Peter on his

lap. As it continues, the employees take turns holding Peter, and after a while, the rhythm of the rocking calms him down. Knut sits next to him and watches. After a few days, Peter is more relaxed. The music is used more systematically by scheduling a time thrice daily when Peter is invited to sit next to or on the lap of one of the employees while they sing in his ear. After a few weeks, they replace the cloth with a toy animal – a monkey with soft fur.

This story about the ‘boy with the cloth’ is a single example of how rhythms are redirected by professional teachers: how singing in the ear and using a lullaby that soothes and provides care and warmth respectfully follows another person’s rhythm. Here, we also see a parallel to the pedagogy of music. Practicing a listening attitude is a question of listening to, and trying to understand, the premises of music itself (Weisethanuet, 2021) – and in school or in a pedagogical relationship, being responsive to the other person’s own experiences, feelings, and life situations are fundamental.

A Rhythmic Justice

We can think quite concretely: when initiating a lesson in sign language for a deaf-mute girl, we must, together with her, explore new and often unfamiliar ways of understanding something. Her rhythm has a different rhythm, we might say. The rhythmic justice rests on a recognition that there is no obvious way for her to learn a new sign, and we must recognize that different children are not necessarily better at communicating than others simply because they follow or imitate the traditional signs. At the same time, tact has a double meaning: it can be dogmatic, to keep pace, but also tactile, as in being touched by the other.

Being a good educator, according to Herbart, “is solely this – how tact forms itself in him (so as to be faithful or so as to be false to the laws enunciated by pedagogic science in its universality?)” (Herbart, 1964, pp. 20–21). “It is only performed during practice, and by the action of our practical experiences upon our feelings. This action will result differently as we are differently attuned. On this, our mental attuning, we can and should act by reflection” (Herbart, 1964, p. 21). Pedagogical imagination is “a practice for what is in the making, which is created in that which is fulfilled, when a question gives an unexpected answer, or a relationship is confirmed or denied by a new insight and cohesion” (Løvlie, 2015).⁴

In reform pedagogy, we see arguments for how the child’s own pace, its natural development and exploration, is fundamental for teaching: the child should give the teacher the instructions she needs, as seen for instance in the works of the Norwegian reform pedagogue and school leader Anna Sethne (Løyte Harboe, 2021)

The Ethics of Listening

In his essay “Ecoute” (2012), Barthes describes listening as an act of creativity, it re-creates music with the body. According to Barthes, being together

(ensemble) has a double meaning, referring to an orchestra, but also to the ensemble as a metaphor for life – where we, in occasional glimpses, experience a fine-tuned interaction as a collective (Refsum, 2018). Barthes seems to imply that to listen is to be sensitive both to your own biorhythm and to others, and to be present: the sound is simultaneously in our ears and at the same time in the room, intimate and social.

The interdependence between the listener and the one who listens expresses relational responsibility as well as new beginnings. Listening to silence is part of a rhythmic attentiveness to body language in caring for persons with severe mental disabilities. Creating rhythms to facilitate the mentally handicapped and following their rhythms enhances and fosters recognition and respect. Listening in the sense of taking the other seriously, following alongside an interest in and focus on the other (and here lies the critique of a philosophy of pedagogy), requires both knowledge and a culture of attitudes and respect for the unknown (see also Kristeva, 2008; Kittay, 2009, 2020; Lindemann, 2010; Bostad and Hanisch, 2016; Grue, 2019; Hanisch et al., 2021).

An Existential Relationship

In her writings, Julia Kristeva has emphasized the unknown and foreign in every human being, and that we are ‘foreign’ to ourselves, as well (for example, in her books *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) and *Letters to the President: On People with Disabilities* (2008)). This can be interpreted in several ways: first, that we need to see ourselves through the eyes of others to see what we do not normally see; secondly, in order to understand oneself, one must have an idea of oneself seen from the outside; or thirdly, that our identity is constantly changing, and therefore we also become strangers to ourselves (Bostad, 2010).

According to Kristeva, it is not the case that man has a fixed or unchanging identity, nor is it the case that there is an ideal identity or a norm that everyone can or should strive for. Rather, we are all affected by a changing world. This perspective that we find in Kristeva can therefore emphasize the insight of the discourse of formation or *Bildung* that is so important today: we must, as I see it, avoid one-sided education based on performance goals or predefined rhythmic-regulated settings, or the belief in absolute goal achievement; it is the process that takes place that initiates a deeper reflection – often a learning of something we previously took for granted – towards a greater trust and commitment to the outside world. At the same time, defining or setting up ideals for personal development and growth is something that can hinder, discriminate against and suspend the freedom of people who fall outside the stamp of normality.

Kristeva emphasizes that it is necessary to see a society (or a nation) as a melting pot of strangers in order for it to be regarded as an almost-free society. At the same time, this political relationship will be reflected in an existential relationship: living with others, with strangers, confronts us with how we

want to be part of or avoid the unknown in others. Seeing oneself in the light of the foreign also leads to a self-reflection of oneself, either as more similar or more different, as stronger or weaker, and we try to restore order by incorporating the unknown into what we already know. Kristeva emphasizes how categorizing others as strangers or as different protects us from the unknown in ourselves.

Towards an Ethics of Rhythm?

As we have seen, rhythm arises, or becomes visible when it meets power, according to Barthes. At the same time, the individual rhythm opposes power and wants to be flexible, i.e. it is not the case that an authoritarian social rhythm should be imposed on us. But the individual is also created through participating in the rhythms of society; it is created in, and it creates, a coexistence with others. *Idiorrythmi*, therefore, has two interpretations (Tygstrup, 2018, p. 229); it refers both to a break with a common rhythm (the individual creates a rhythm that also creates the community), and it refers to the fact that it is the rhythm of the community that creates the individual and that we must live with and together in a social rhythm and a community. What does the rhythm of recognition sound like? In this chapter, I have tried to apply a concept of rhythmic pedagogy to the human way of life and interpersonal relationships. That we live different rhythmic lives opens up fundamental challenges about how we can think about educational justice today: how do we live together and at the same time recognize different rhythmic lives? How can we be inspired to live more spontaneous and less repetitive lives? How can we be more alert to differences and uniqueness? And, as I see it, pedagogical philosophy can show us a more humane life through examining, experiencing, and better understanding a rhythmic presence in our interpersonal relationships.

Notes

- 1 Barthes shares his interest in rhythm with several of his contemporaries in the 1980s, like Henri Lefebvres and his *Rhythmanalyses*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and George Perec with his *Life: A User's Manual* (Tygstrup, 2018, p. 225).
- 2 In 1977, the French literary theorist Roland Barthes, newly appointed professor at the College de France in Paris, introduced the concept of 'idiorrythmy' in his opening lecture on the semiology of literature; the title of the lecture was "*Comment vivre ensemble. How to Live Together: Literary Simulations of Everyday Spaces*".
- 3 This story describes a real observation I had in 2018; it is rewritten; names are changed so as to preserve the involved persons their integrity and privacy.
- 4 'Den er mellomrommet, pausen og ettertanken del av det vi kaller pedagogisk fantasi. Takt er med andre ord en praksis for det som er i emning, som blir til i det den fullbyrdes, som når et spørsmål gir et uventet svar, eller et forhold bekrefte eller avkreftes ved en ny innsikt og samhörighet'. My translation to English.

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2 ‘Plastic Justice’

A Metaphor for Education

Kjetil Horn Hogstad

On Justice and Education

The theme for this chapter is justice, so it’s useful to start by considering education’s long tradition of maintaining its obligation towards morality – ‘the good’ – on a general level. In the Allegory of the Cave from the *Republic*, Socrates makes the point that education is not about teaching the student how to learn but about directing the student’s gaze towards the good. His conversation with Glaucon goes as follows:

- But our present discussion, on the other hand, shows that the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good. Isn’t that right?
- Yes.
- Then education is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it. It isn’t the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn’t turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately.

(Plato, 1997, 1136)

It’s prevalent still, this notion that education is something that in one way or another lays the grounds for, refines, or brings about ‘the good’. Whatever ‘the good’ might be. Of course, education would be a foolish endeavour were it not based on the idea that it might be of benefit in some way. But as I shall return to later on, some thinkers suggest that education is not a societal ‘outsider’, a neutral source from which society can collect ‘the good’. To them, education should rather be seen as a constitutive and conservative part of modern society. If not a ‘necessary evil’, education might not be an

unequivocal ‘necessary good’ either. This appears perhaps as a trivial point. It would certainly be unexpected to find something that was uniquely good or bad. However, what I would like to discuss here is how exactly we might navigate this dichotomy.

Taking the example of Martha Nussbaum’s book *Not for Profit* (2010), we find the suggestion that education is in crisis because of the global emphasis on skills instead of directing the gaze towards the good. More specifically, curricula across the world tend to focus on skills that are thought to increase a nation’s economic prosperity instead of allowing students to study the humanities, which to Nussbaum are essential to developing critical thinking and, crucially, democratic attitudes.

One of Nussbaum’s examples is from India and the then-ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party aggressively pursuing economic-growth politics. The BJP issued schools with a textbook Nussbaum considers incommensurable with good education:

These books (now, fortunately, withdrawn, since the BJP lost power in 2004) utterly discouraged critical thinking and didn’t even give it material to work with. They presented India’s history as an uncritical story of material and cultural triumph in which all trouble was caused by outsiders and internal “foreign elements.” Criticism of injustices in India’s past was made virtually impossible by the content of the material and by its suggested pedagogy (for example, the questions at the end of each chapter), which discouraged thoughtful questioning and urged assimilation and regurgitation. Students were asked simply to absorb a story of unblemished goodness, bypassing all inequalities of caste, gender, and religion.

(Nussbaum, 2010, 21–2)

For Nussbaum, humanities education can provide an antidote to such authoritarian attempts by laying the grounds for critique in a general sense (Nussbaum, 2010, 2). This is what Nussbaum sees as the ‘silent crisis’ in education: Nations that consider humanities education irrelevant to the global economic competition tend to give it less and less space in the curriculum. This dynamic, according to Nussbaum, causes them to “rapidly [lose] their place in curricula, and also in the minds and hearts of parents and children” (Nussbaum, 2010, 2). The result is that these minds and hearts become less capable of directing their gaze towards the good than they otherwise would.

Not for Profit is a manifesto (Nussbaum, 2010, 8, 121), written in the form of diagnosis/prescription. Nussbaum identifies a number of issues she deems important for justice, among them whether the goal for education should be national profits or human prosperity, whether weakness should be perceived as deeply human or despicable, and whether the political discourse should be rhetorical or argumentative (Nussbaum, 2010). Nussbaum’s prescriptions consistently return to humanities education. According to her, the skills that humanities education cultivates have the potential to (re)direct

education's focus to human prosperity, weakness as a fact of life, and argumentative politics. *Not for Profit* is but one example of the idea that 'the real questions' concerning education are not about whether it can provide 'the good', but about its role in laying the grounds for, or even providing 'the good', in what appears to be fairly concrete terms.

If we cautiously take Nussbaum's manifesto as symptomatic of one type of thinking that frames education as "something that provides justice", it seems we should inquire about what education, justice, and their relation are. Some thinkers contend that education is a governmental structure with its main identity in schools and schooling but has implications that stretch beyond the institution as an isolated entity. It seems impossible to think a society without schools, which suggests that schools are not an isolated institution in the modern, Western (and increasingly, global) society, but constitutive of it (Foucault, 1988; Jaeger, 1986; Peim, 2020). Education appears as necessary in modern life, as Nick Peim calls it: "An offer you can't refuse" (Peim, 2012). In this perspective, education appears as a bio-political force that functions at least in part as an instrument for governmentality. Peim argues that this force is seeping into philosophy of education, (re)constructing it as a handmaiden for education's structure of improvement and salvation (Peim, 2012). Furthermore, Jan Masschelein and Norbert Ricken argue that even the concept *Bildung*, previously thought of as a critical element emanating from the individual's creative encounter with history and curriculum, now has turned into an integral and therefore toothless part of the governmental structure that education has become (Masschelein and Ricken, 2003).

Focusing on doctoral thesis writing, Peim (2011) argues that the top of the hierarchy of institutionalised education, the doctoral thesis, inhabits a 'spectral' space between originality and obeisance to the canon of the field. The term 'spectrality' is a reference to Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, in which ontology's conflicting nature of being the original and therefore final name of the thing, and of the mourning which is caused by laying the thing to rest for eternity while observing its continued effect on the world. Like a ghost, its presence is predicated on its absence (Derrida, 2006, 9). For Peim, education appears as a spectre in the sense that it balances between validating the student's knowledge as conforming to the one represented in the 'archive' while encouraging the student to create or express themselves and their new-found knowledge in original ways (Peim, 2011).

A 'Plastic' Balancing Act: Expectations and Creations

In a previous study, I suggested that education, in the broad sense, conducts a balancing act of on the one hand, what 'education' expects or even demands from the student, and on the other, the possibility for the student to bring something new and unexpected into the world. This balancing act might be described in terms of Catherine Malabou's reconfiguration of Foucault's term 'bio-politics' (Hogstad, 2020a). Her reconfiguration is built around the concept *plasticity*, which implies in very short terms an ontological model

according to which ‘form’ exhibits the capacity for receiving change from outside, causing change to itself and other forms, and the capacity for losing form altogether. Plasticity concentrates on the change that form goes through over time – the difference that form gradually acquires from itself – instead of the difference between forms. This model finds its material exemplification most clearly in the plasticity of the brain, the organ formerly thought of as the supremely material substance, given at birth and barely modified throughout life. Over the last few decades, this image has given way to that of ‘brain plasticity’, the notion that the brain does indeed keep on changing and repairing itself throughout life. Sometimes this happens in astonishing ways, for instance, the brain’s ability to reconfigure its neural networks even after serious brain damage. The philosophical upshot is that fully materialist theories might grasp even contentious dualisms such as symbol/matter or brain/thought (Malabou, 2008, 2012, 2016b).

For Malabou, ‘form’ is what ‘différance’ expresses – that is, our way of sorting the world in terms of discernible units of thought (Hogstad, 2021a; Malabou, 2010, 49). In that sense, it resembles a semiotic ‘floating signifier’. Nevertheless, it should be understood in concrete and material terms (Hogstad, 2021a; Rathe, 2020). Plasticity sees power both as something being exerted on form from without and as something provided by form itself (Malabou, 2015a). While plasticity as a concept concerns itself with the thinking of the human and the thinking that humans do, if it is a humanism, it’s one that flattens the usual humanist hierarchy (where humans transcend the order of other things) because forms stand in necessary and supplementary relations to one another. One of the main features of plasticity is its lack of centre; its construction of the world as a synaptic network of forms continually interacting with each other (Hogstad, 2020b).

On this basis, education cannot be thought of as an absolute power, but a governmental structure nonetheless. At a fundamental level, education is an institution integral to modern life, a structure imposed on us from the outside, stratifying and selecting us via exterior and previously agreed-upon criteria. While it’s “an offer you can’t refuse”, for some groups, it can be seen as “an offer you can’t accept” because it presupposes capacities, aims, and goals that the student might not have or share. In those cases, the governmental aspect of education steps clearly into the foreground (Peim, 2012).

Even so, education can be considered a semiotic and plastic instance in the sense that it is a fleeting, changing concept that embodies history. While it appears governmental in modernity, that does not mean that education’s essence is absolute or permanent; it is unthinkable that a ‘pure’ version somehow exists outside of the tissue of our intelligible world (Derrida, 1998; Hegel, 1977; Malabou, 2005; Peim, 2012). Education is impermanent in the sense that it is not today what it used to be, and the education of tomorrow will have changed in ways that are unforeseeable for us today. At least some of this change has been, is, and will be caused by the student, the teacher, and their relationship – from actors who are both within and part of the system.

In the following, I will suggest the outline of a process of dealing with questions concerning education and justice. Extending Catherine Malabou's concept 'plasticity', which suggests an alternative to Derrida's 'messianicity without messianism', to the field of educational thinking, I propose a model for educational justice which I will call 'plastic justice'. 'Messianicity without messianism', according to Derrida, allows us to think that justice is 'to-come', i.e. unknowable in the present and only discoverable once it has arrived. When it does, it will be as an 'event' (2006). For Malabou, on the other hand, time does not work like that. The future event does not have a form, as an event or otherwise, until it has come to be formed (Crockett and Malabou, 2010). In other words, the 'to come' *is* not until it has been thought, until it has been formed (Malabou, 2012). One might perhaps then say that Malabou's plasticity puts an even stronger emphasis on the 'always already' than Derrida did. As a consequence, the notion of educational justice I will be outlining in this text has a somewhat clearer tone of creation than of fulfilment.

Plastic Justice

What I will call 'plastic justice' follows a line of critique that Clayton Crockett and Catherine Malabou explore in their article "Plasticity and the Future of Philosophy and Theology" (2010). While their article concentrates on deconstruction's apparent adherence to a Christian model of salvation, their argument presents what they call 'plastic time' (Crockett and Malabou, 2010). 'Plastic time' is a reconfiguration of the future, the to-come, positioning it as a continually renewing and (partially) created feature of the world. This reconfiguration is a response to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (2006), in which the idea of the 'messianic without a messianism' – the to-come that can't be expected, foreseen, or conjured – is presented.

Derrida suggests that justice must be thought as an event, something currently unknown, which is *to-come* but we can't expect to come. Yet we must still hold the spot open for it, show it "hospitality without reserve", and thus provide its condition of possibility and therefore also its condition of impossibility (Derrida, 2006, 81). Justice in this perspective is a messianic event, something that comes if and when it must. However, as Derrida urges us to show it "hospitality without reserve" and thus also prepare the grounds for justice's condition of impossibility, we are

[a]waiting without horizon of the wait, awaiting what one does not expect yet or any longer, hospitality without reserve, welcoming salutation accorded in advance to the absolute surprise of the arrivant.

(Derrida, 2006, 81)

Justice, then, is something we await by not awaiting it. We leave it to justice to decide if it is to come or not. Attempting to separate this model of the messianic event from its theological (and therefore teleological) roots,

Derrida claims that the ‘messianic without messianism’ is our only possible way to justice. Without it we “might as well give up on both justice and the event” (Derrida, 2006, 82).

Even in Derrida’s ‘messianicity without a messiah’, the deeply Western and Judeo-Christian pattern of linear time from Creation through salvation towards eternity remains. While Derrida suggests that justice should be awaited without awaiting and expectation, the image remains that we are moving towards some sort of temporal conclusion where the will of the world is realized – or not. The horizon is there precisely because it is not there. It transcends. By extension, the model of time implicit in this model contains a movement towards the future which is (not) to come, thereby – in Malabou’s view – upholding a Western, Judeo-Christian, salvational understanding of time (Crockett and Malabou, 2010). The same model appears true in certain prominent strands of educational thinking (Hogstad, 2021b).

‘Plastic time’ reconfigures this model and flips it on its head. Instead of accepting that we are taken along on time’s ride towards the horizon, plastic time counters the idea of a formless future that’s to come or not to come with the idea of time as a plastic form, capable of giving, receiving, and losing form through the plasticity of the brain. Through our capacity for plasticity, we are creating time and not simply experiencing it (Crockett and Malabou, 2010).

If we reconsider the concept of justice as related to education with ‘plastic time’ in mind, it would establish justice as an immediate concern instead of a distant goal. The difference is subtle but potentially important: In the Derridean model, justice as a salvational figure must remain a transcendental ideal. As with Christian salvation, justice as a salvational figure remains unachievable until it is achieved, and it can’t be brought forth by us. On the other hand, plastic justice would not exist in an unknowable future but be created continually by us. Perhaps, then, plastic justice is best described as the void that we must keep open so it can allow us to identify and react to injustice.

In what follows I will give an outline of how ‘plastic justice’ might be exemplified in a question concerning some internal workings of education – namely, the principle of social selection. In a text on the role and function of materialism after Marx, Malabou reads Althusser as Althusser reads Darwin. She asks whether it might be possible to think a materialism that refrains from relying on predetermined criteria, or in other words, presupposing the future.

Plastic Selection

As I have touched upon already, Malabou’s plasticity opens up for a reimagination of biology. In this reimagination, biology is not the solid and unchanging ‘given’, substantially different from ‘thought’ or ‘symbolism’, but the continually changing and changeable material aspect of being. Symbolism and matter are aspects of form, interrelated and reciprocally

affective (Malabou, 2005, 2015b, 2016a). What this reimagination implies, according to Malabou, is the outline of a materialism because they share some fundamental characteristics:

Materialism is a name for the nontranscendental status of form in general. Matter is what forms itself in producing the conditions of possibility of this formation itself. Any transcendental instance necessarily finds itself in a position of exteriority in relation to that which it organizes. By its nature, the condition of possibility is other than what it makes possible. Materialism affirms the opposite: the absence of any outside of the process of formation. Matter's self-formation and self-information is then systematically nontranscendental.

(Malabou, 2015b, 48)

But what kind of materialism should this be? In line with Althusser's position in the text "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter" (1982), Malabou argues that dialectical teleology is disqualified because it effectively transcendentalizes the telos, which must reside outside the system to organize it. Instead, Malabou suggests that we consider an alternative she finds in Althusser's discussion of Darwin: A "materialism of the encounter". This materialism finds its inspiration in Darwin's writings on natural selection, which are all about a non-teleological, non-presuppositional, non-transcendental materialist encounter of forms (Malabou, 2015b, 49).

Since plasticity is an ontological model – i.e., one that concentrates on forms – any 'thing' we can think of will in principle be 'plastic'. According to Malabou, symbolic forms should be understood as plastic in the same sense that the human is plastic, whether it is theory (Malabou, 2011), society's organising metaphors ('motor schemes', Malabou, 2010), or history (Malabou, 2015b). What is of particular importance here is that we might spot the outline of a materialism without a telos, one which might allow us to think the encounter between the form 'education' and the form 'the student' anew.

The foundation for this rethinking is Althusser's insistence that the new materialism 'of the encounter' should be fundamentally biological and Darwinist, but in what Malabou sees as a 'plastic' interpretation: natural selection should be understood as an aleatory, non-intentional encounter between a species and its environment. According to this model, both the species and whatever the species encounters should be considered forms in the sense that they are recognizable as forms, that they have 'taken form' over time and consequently have a history, and that their fundamental feature is its changeability. In other words, natural selection, the extinction or survival of a species in face of environmental adversity, is a contingent encounter between plastic forms (Malabou, 2015b, 52).

However, Malabou points out, what we usually understand as social selection does not parallel natural selection when it comes to this important point. Instead, social selection happens on the basis of an intention, organized around pre-existing criteria. Malabou writes,

Why – in the logic of exams, in competitions, or in professional selection in general, the discrimination of candidates regarding aptitude functions, of competencies, or of specific technical capacities—does selection seem to lack plasticity; that is, fluidity on the one hand and the absence of any predetermined selective intention on the other? Why, most of the time, does social selection give the feeling of being an expected or agreed-upon process, a simple logic of conformity and reproduction, whereas natural selection is incalculably open to possibility?

(Malabou, 2015b, 51)

In situations such as these, where you want to test whether the students know what they are supposed to, or check who runs the quickest 100 m dash, or find the best candidate for a job that consists of certain tasks, what we have is a fundamentally conservative type of selection. Such a type of selection is unable to select the most resistive, the one most apt for action or political struggle, or the one most likely to challenge fundamental structures. The only solution to the conformist structure of social selection, according to Malabou, is “to know that criteria do not preexist selection itself” (Malabou, 2015b, 56). This knowledge gives priority to the act of selection instead of setting criteria and selecting for those. This might help us focus on the plastic potential of the situation and avoid thoughtless reproduction.

However, plasticity needs a void, a space for thinking where ‘unassignability’ – the place where nothing is or can be assigned, placed, categorized – resides. Without that space, there is no ‘nothing’ from whence something new can arise. It is philosophy’s job to identify and explain this void, even if we must also assume that it might not exist (else it would itself be a telos) because this void “opens up all promise of justice, equality, legitimacy” (Malabou, 2015b, 56).

Conclusion

Identifying and explaining this void, then, is perhaps not only the next task for philosophy but the start (or continuation) of a continual process of rethinking the relationship between justice and education. Perhaps keeping this void open is the most important task if we take it to be the place where something new is created. ‘Plastic justice’ as a metaphor for education might help us identify and create new attitudes and reactions to injustice by thinking beyond the ideals of justice that we know so well we have stopped thinking them. The void – the thinking of the unknown and unknowable – could be a source for a vital and continual rethinking of concepts and conceptualizations of justice and injustice, including the notion of ‘plastic justice’ itself.

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3 What Does Educative Justice Look Like?

Or: What Happened as I Read Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*

Torill Strand

I will here use my experience of reading Toni Morrison's short story "Recitatif"¹ as an entry point to elucidate Badiou's theory of justice. In doing so, I hope to illuminate the question: What may educative justice look like?

I adopt a philosophical methodology with the dual ambition to describe Alain Badiou's theory of justice in light of his later writings, and to acquire deeper insights into the distinctiveness of Badiou's philosophy for conceptualizing educative justice. However, before going further, I should clarify the distinction between educational and educative justice. *Educational* justice refers to the promotion of justice in, for, and through education by applying various theories, principles, or doctrines of justice. *Educative* justice, by contrast, refers to the ways in which justice – as a tangible phenomenon – may educate.² Badiou's philosophical system models educative justice. According to Badiou, justice emerges as generic truths-in-worlds imbued with educative potentials. Justice is "not a concept for which we would have to track down more or less approximate realisations in the empirical world" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 99). On the contrary, justice belongs to our being in the world, not to philosophy. Moreover, encounters with justice transform the thinking subject and propose a radically different direction in regard to true life. The task of philosophy is therefore not to promote doctrines of justice, but rather to think educative encounters with justice. My experience of reading Toni Morrison's *Recitatif* is here taken to illustrate such an encounter.

In brief, Toni Morrison's *Recitatif* tells a story about the friendship between two 8-year-old girls of different races. However, we never get to know which of these girls is black and which is white. When I read the short story, I was eager to guess, but I was never sure. Despite following the girls as they grew up and occasionally met as adults, I still do not know. In this way, this short story comes forward as a puzzle, a riddle, a mystery that played with my mind. Educative justice seems to be the name of that game.

As I read the short story, I was at first fascinated by the narrative of the two girls' ethical-political formation. Next, I became captivated by Toni Morrison's style of writing, her technique of playing with, and thereby teasing and enchanting, annoying and fascinating the reader. Third, I came to realize – because of my long-lasting and in-depth engagement with Alain Badiou's philosophical texts – the way in which this short story acted on my

mind, and thereby intrigued, disturbed, challenged, and educated my idea of what justice looks like.

To follow the itinerary of my experience of reading Morrison's *Recitatif*, I start with a brief summary of the narrative of this short story. Next, I comment on Toni Morrison's method of suspending the finitude of identity politics as she twists the story toward unnamable truths. Third, through the lens of Badiou's philosophical system, I explore the ways in which this short story promotes encounters with justice before I sum up by responding to the question, What does educative justice look like? However, before taking a closer look at the short story, let me briefly summarize Badiou's theory of justice.

On Alain Badiou's Theory of Justice

To Badiou, justice designates an ethical orientation generated, upheld, and justified by the axiom of equality (Badiou, 1996, 2005a, 2019). To hold equality as an axiom implies that Badiou conceives equality to be self-evidently valuable and true. Also, the postulate of equality serves as a premise and starting point for his further reasoning and arguments for justice. Accordingly, the value of equality represents the very essence of justice. Moreover, the phenomenon of justice appears under the condition of the political. "Justice' is the qualification of an egalitarian moment of politics *in actu*" (Badiou, 2005a, p. 99). Badiou thus conceptualizes justice as a *truth in action*.

Let me briefly explain: Within Badiou's philosophical system, there are four spheres through which truths emerge; art, science, love, and politics. "Truths", to Badiou, are existential, ongoing, and open-ended ontological operations emerging in tangible situations. Truths designate "the ensemble of the production in time and space of something that we may, for solid reasons, assume to have a universal value" (Badiou, 2022a, p. 11). Truths thus belong to real-life situations, not to philosophy. The task of philosophy is therefore *not* to produce truths, but rather to identify and strengthen emerging truths-in-worlds, be it within the sphere of art, science, love, or politics. Political truths, however, stand out by having *the axiom of equality* as a premise and by being concerned with the collective. The sphere of politics³ is thus the only sphere in which truths are "generic" – or universal – both in their condition and in their outcome. Consequently, politics, to Badiou, is not about the seizing of power. True politics is not a form of the state. By contrast, true politics concerns the collective and "is organically linked to the category of justice" (Badiou, 2019, p. 5), as it is an immanent orientation holding equality as valuable and true. True politics thus begins with an "either-or" choice of sides. Either to side with power or to side with justice. "And by consequence, we are within justice, or we are not" (Badiou, 1996, p. 30).

In other words, justice designates an *orientation* generated by and affirming the axiom of equality. Consequently, justice is a phenomenon impossible to capture by a clear definition. We cannot achieve justice by applying a

theory of justice. Nor can we achieve justice through a programmatic approach, by obeying to a set of rules or submitting to some pre-given norms of conduct. By contrast, justice is a thought in action, a political orientation, a truth procedure immanent in true life (Badiou, 2017).

[J]ustice, which is the philosophical name for the equalitarian political maxim, cannot be defined. For equality is not an objective of action, it is an axiom of it. There is no political orientation linked to truth without the affirmation – affirmation which has neither a guarantee nor a proof – of a universal capacity for political truth. Thought, on this point, cannot use the scholastic method of definition. It must follow the method of *the understanding of an axiom*.

(Badiou, 1996, p. 30, my accentuation)

Badiou's theory of justice thus describes an operational, axiomatic, and immediate figure designating not what must be, but rather what is. "We are within justice, or we are not" (Badiou, 1996, p. 30). In this way, justice is imperative to philosophy since justice signifies the philosophical seizing of a latent egalitarian axiom. In short "we shall call 'justice' the name by which a philosophy designates the possible truth of a political orientation" (Badiou, 1996, p. 29). So what can we learn about educative justice from reading Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*? To explore, let me start with a summary of the short story.

A Recitative

In brief, *Recitatif* tells a story about the development of the friendship between Twyla and Roberta, two girls of different races, from their early childhood encounter until they as adult women again occasionally meet a few times. Narrated in Twyla's voice, the short story opens with Twyla telling about how she and Roberta met as 8-year-old wards of the state,⁴ placed in the same room at St. Bonaventure shelter.⁵ There, they stay together until Roberta leaves after four months. Later, they meet a few times as young adults – at a service area, a shopping mall, a protest march, a diner – and talk a bit about their time together at the shelter. Their memories are rather blurred, so the plot of the short story is their joint recollection of memories in light of the different situations in which they later meet. The short story closes with Roberta in tears. "Oh shit, Twyla. Shit, shit, shit. What the hell happened to Maggie?" (Morrison, 2022, p. 40).

The title of the short story – *Recitatif* – is French for "recitative," which denotes a free, rhythmic vocal style that imitates natural speech. A recitative is often used for the dialogue or narrative parts in operas, oratorios, and cantatas (Wikipedia, 2022). A recitative allows the singer to imitate the rhythms and music of ordinary speech, so the recitative resembles ordinary speech more than a formal musical composition. Morrison's short story may thus be Twyla's recitative, her free vocal delivery of a narrative that resembles, but is never similar to or representative of, the reality of the drama she

portrays. Nevertheless, Twyla's recitative paints a picture of a – to her – line of noteworthy, emotional, and unexpected events occurring over several years, from the day she as an eight-year-old girl was taken away from home and placed in a shelter until she as a grown-up woman unexpectedly bumps into her earlier roommate on a Christmas Eve. In short, Twyla's recitative narrates a drama in five episodes, each episode portraying situations taking place at different moments in time and at different sites.

The very first episode of the drama takes place at the shelter and opens with Twyla and Roberta's first meeting. We would immediately assume that girls of different races would distance themselves from each other. However, Twyla and Roberta soon become allies against "the real orphans" and "the big girls on the second floor".

We didn't like each other all that much at first, but nobody else wanted to play with us because we weren't real orphans with beautiful dead parents in the sky. We were dumped. Even the New York City Puerto Ricans and the upstate Indians ignored us.

(Morrison, 2022, p. 5)

Twyla and Roberta were both outcasts. "So for the moment it didn't matter that we looked like salt and pepper" (Morrison, 2022, p. 7). Moreover, they were equally fascinated with Maggie, an old woman working in the kitchen and who had even lower status than they did.

The kitchen woman with legs like parenthesis. ... Maggie couldn't talk. The kids said she had her tongue cut out, but I think she was just born that way: mute. She was old and sandy-colored and she worked in the kitchen. I don't know if she was nice or not. I just remember her legs like parenthesis and how she rocked when she walked.

(Morrison, 2022, p. 7)

Maggie had no voice. The girls did not relate to her as a person, but rather as a strange and silent object working in the kitchen. "She wore this really stupid little hat – a kid's hat with earflaps – and she wasn't much taller than we were". At one occasion, they observed how Maggie fell over while the big girls laughed at her.

"But what about if somebody tries to kill her," I used to wonder about that. "Or what if she wants to cry. Can she cry?"

"Sure," Roberta said. "But just tears. No sounds come out."

"She can't scream?"

"Nope. Nothing."

"Can she hear?"

"I guess."

"Let's call her," I said. And we did.

"Dummy! Dummy!" She never turned her head.

“Bow legs! Bow legs!” Nothing. She just rocked on, the chinstraps of her baby-boy hat swaying from side to side. I think we were wrong. I think she could hear and didn’t let on. And it shames me even now to think there was somebody in there after all who heard us call her those names and couldn’t tell on us.

(Morrison, 2022, p. 8)

When Roberta leaves St. Bonaventure, the girls lose contact. However, eight years later, they meet by chance. In this second episode of the drama, Twyla’s recitative depicts a different situation. Twyla and Roberta are now teenagers, belonging to different youth cultures. Twyla is working behind the counter at Howard Johnson’s, a service area on the east-west highway.⁶ Roberta and her friends stop by on their way to the west coast to keep an appointment with Jimi Hendrix.⁷ It soon turns out that Twyla does not know about Jimi Hendrix, so Roberta and her friends giggle, “Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix, asshole. He’s only the biggest – Oh, wow. Forget it.” They leave without saying goodbye.

The third episode of the drama takes place 12 years later when they again meet by chance at the Food Emporium, a new gourmet grocery store. Roberta approaches Twyla in the checkout line. “Twyla!” “You look great.” Roberta was “dressed to kill. Diamonds on her hand, a smart white summer dress.” However, despite the obvious socioeconomic differences, they get along well. They even have a good laugh when Twyla mistakes Roberta’s driver for her husband: “You married a Chinaman?” (Morrison, 2022, p. 23). They agreed to have a chat over a coffee. Twyla recalls,

We went into the coffee shop holding on to one another and I tried to think why we were glad to see each other this time and not before. Once, twelve years before, we passed as strangers. A black girl and a white girl meeting in Howard Johnson’s on the road and having nothing to say. One in a blue and white triangle waitress hat – the other on her way to see Hendrix. Now we were behaving like sisters separated for much too long. Those four months were nothing in time. Maybe it was the thing itself. Just being there, together. Two little girls who knew what nobody else in the world knew – how not to ask questions. How to believe what had to be believed.

(Morrison, 2022, p. 23)

As they sit down in the booth at the cafe, they start to chat casually about their present lives. Roberta demonstrates that she has learned to read. They exchange information about their husbands and children – but very soon, they begin to reminisce about their time together at St. Bonaventure.

“I don’t remember a hell of a lot from those days, but Lord, St. Bonny’s is as clear as daylight. Remember Maggie? The day she fell down and those gar girls⁸ laughed at her?”

Roberta looked up from her salad and stared at me. “Maggie didn’t fall,” she said.

“Yes, she did. You remember.”

“No, Twyla. They knocked her down. Those girls pushed her down and tore her clothes. In the orchard.”

“I don’t – That’s not what happened.”

“Sure it is. In the orchard. Remember how scared we were?”

(Morrison, 2022, p. 25)

Roberta’s story truly worries Twyla. Yes, she nods politely to Roberta’s invitation to stay in touch but admits to herself that she is quite upset. “‘Okay’, I said, but I knew I wouldn’t. Roberta had messed up my past somehow with that business about Maggie. I wouldn’t forget a thing like that. Would I?”

The fourth episode of the drama takes place during racial strife over forced integration in schools.⁹ Twyla drives by the school and spots Roberta among a group of protesters, demonstrating with a poster saying “mothers have rights too”. Twyla stops the car, pulls down her side window, and confronts Roberta. “What are you doing?” When they start to quarrel, the other protesters surround Twyla’s car and start rocking it forcefully back and forth.

I swayed back and forth like a sideways yo-yo. Automatically I reached for Roberta, like the old days in the orchard when they saw us watching them and we had to get out of there, and if one of us fell the other pulled her up and if one of us was caught the other stayed to kick and scratch, and neither would leave the other behind.

(Morrison, 2022, p. 31)

However, this time the police came to the rescue. “Okay ladies. Back in line or off the streets”. Roberta was not willing to help.

“Maybe I am different now, Twyla. But you’re not. You’re the same little state kid who kicked a poor old black lady when she was down on the ground. You kicked a black lady and you have the nerve to call me a bigot.”

[...] What was she saying? Black? Maggie wasn’t black.

“She wasn’t black”, I said.

“Like hell she wasn’t, and you kicked her. We both did. You kicked a black lady who couldn’t even scream.”

“Liar!”

“You’re the liar! Why don’t you just go home and leave us alone, huh?”

(Morrison, 2022, pp. 32–3)

Twyla recollects,

It didn’t trouble me much what she had said to me in the car. I mean the kicking part. I know I didn’t do that. But I was puzzled by her

telling me Maggie was black. When I thought about it, I actually couldn't be certain. She wasn't pitch-black, I knew, or I would have remembered that. What I remembered was the kiddie hat, and the semicircle legs. I tried to rescue myself from the race thing for a long time until it dawned on me that the truth was already there, and Roberta knew it. I didn't kick her; I didn't join in with the gar girls and kick that lady, but I sure did want to. We watched and never tried to help her and never called for help. Maggie was my dancing mother. Deaf, I thought, and dumb. Nobody inside. Nobody who could tell you anything important that you could use. Rocking, dancing, swaying as she walked. And when the gar girls pushed her down, and started roughhousing, I knew she wouldn't scream, couldn't – just like me and I was glad about that.

(Morrison, 2022, pp. 36–7)

The fifth and last episode takes place years later, possibly in the early 1980s, when Twyla and Roberta unexpectedly meet at a diner on Christmas Eve. Roberta spots Twyla, seated in a booth by herself, and sits down next to her.

“I have to tell you something, Twyla. I made up my mind if I ever saw you again, I'd tell you”

“I'd just as soon not hear anything, Roberta.”

[...]

“It's about St. Bonny's and Maggie.”

“Oh, please.”

“Listen to me. I really did think she was black. I didn't make it up. I really thought so. But now I can't be sure. I just remember her as old, so old. And because she couldn't talk – well you know, I thought she was crazy. She'd been brought up in an institution like my mother was and like I thought I would be too. And you were right. We didn't kick her. It was the gar girls. Only them. But well, I wanted to. I really wanted them to hurt her. I said we did it, too. You and me, but that's not true. And I don't want you to carry that around. It was just that I wanted to do it so bad that day – wanting to is doing it.”

(Morrison, 2022, p. 39)

And here, at a diner on Christmas Eve, the short story ends with Roberta in tears: “Oh shit, Twyla. Shit, shit, shit. What the hell happened to Maggie?” (Morrison, 2022, p. 40).

Suspending the Finitude of Identity Politics

So how may my reading of Toni Morrison's *Recitatif* illustrate encounters with justice? In general, to read Tony Morrison's *Recitatif* is to be confronted with the many faces of silenced, muted, and unacknowledged suffering. To me, it was deeply uncomfortable, even painful, to read about

how Maggie, the mute old woman, was treated like nobody. Also heart-breaking to hear Twyla admitting that “she [Maggie] wouldn’t scream, couldn’t – just like me” (Morrison, 2022, p. 37). Moreover, it was extremely challenging to relate to Roberta’s deep desire to hurt Maggie: “I wanted to [...] I wanted to do it so bad that day” (Morrison, 2022, p. 39). However, as the short story closes with a question, Morrison does not offer any solution on how to cope with that pain. The only thing she does is to uncover it.

One of Morrison’s techniques of doing so is to suspend the finitude of identity politics and thereby brilliantly reveal the silent suffering of the women and children at the shelter, the teenagers longing for recognition, and the anger, fear, and hopelessness of the grown-up women taking part in the racial strife. A good example is the way in which Morrison creates a sharp contrast between the straightforward friendship of the two 8-year-olds, to whom “it didn’t matter that we looked like salt and pepper” (Morrison, 2022, p. 7) and the later awkward incidents when they meet as two adult women, to whom identity politics clearly matters. Morrison herself states that this short story – originally published in 1983 in an anthology of African American women – was specially intended as “an experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about two characters of different races for whom racial identity is crucial” (Morrison, 1993, p. xi). Yes, Morrison’s *Recitatif* touches upon societal power relations, such as race, class, and disability. The five episodes of the drama clearly illustrate the situatedness of these power relations by portraying how they alter according to time and place. However, the genius of Morrison’s style of writing, Zadie Smith (2022) holds, is that she is continuously experimenting with the readers’ thoughts on these issues. She does so by removing any given racial codes and thereby leaving it to the reader to interpret the signs, and thereby identifying blackness and whiteness. Not even the rhythm and music of Twyla’s recitative can be identified as either African American or white natural speech. Additionally, Morrison disrupts any attempt at categorization, by frequently twisting the deeply embedded cultural, racial, and class codes that represent familiar ways of characterizing “blackness” or “whiteness.” Morrison thus renders common signifiers – such as the food Twyla and Roberta eat, the way they do their hair, the music they like, where they live, or how they work – invalid. One example is Twyla’s comment on how the school parents every now and then shifted sides during the protest against forced integration. Third, Morrison is clearly contesting binary thinking. The most striking example is how the five-episode drama portrays how the girls’ relationship changes in accordance with racial politics in the United States, while concurrently making the racial discourse irrelevant. On the one hand, the particular codes of a youth culture, community, or social group evidently matter to Twyla and Roberta. On the other hand, the plot illustrates how the two girls are crossing socially constructed boundaries between “us” and “them,” and between “we” and “the others”. Overall, Zadie Smith (2022) identifies

Morrison's style of writing as a "unique mixture of poetic and scientific method". By withholding crucial details, undermining any attempt at categorization, and contesting binaries, Toni Morrison is clearly experimenting with the readers' preconceived beliefs. The result is a transition from knowledge to thought.

Transforming the Thinking Subject

Following Badiou (2014, 2022b), such a transition – from knowledge to thought – implies that the effect of literature takes place at the level of thought. Literature carries the power to contest and transform thinking. In general, literature creates a sensation of being confronted with something unthinkable, of seeing a reality at the edge of disappearance, of encountering an existence at the very limit of thought. To read literature is thus to take part in a form of thinking.

The idea that literature thinks [...] can only mean that it opens up the realm of the particular – subtle psychological insights, social differences and cultural specificities – to the field of knowledge. For that must mean, as we know from experience when a novel secures a victory in our minds, that literature's effect takes place at the level of thought.

(Badiou, 2014, p. 133)

Consequently, the potential power of literature is to transform the thinking subject. First, because literature signifies an encounter with a real that is situated in the fluctuation between story and history. Second, because literature uses language to mercilessly express that which has been covered over, silenced, and not yet said. Third, because literature – by speaking about the unspeakable – invites our thinking into a hidden, closed, and silenced place. This also goes for Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*.

First, by merging a historical and fictional world, Morrison's *Recitatif* opens up to a real that oscillates between story and history. On the one hand, the plot of this short story clearly adheres to tangible and recognizable historical-geographical events that coexist with encyclopedic facts, such as Jimi Hendrix's iconic status during the 1960s or the racial strife over forced integration during the 1970s. On the other hand, however, the fictional plot follows open itineraries. To illustrate, Toni Morrison uses a dance metaphor to link Twyla's "dancing mother", the protesters' rocking of Twyla's car, and Maggie's way of "rocking, dancing, swaying as she walked" to the movements of Twyla's educational journey. "I swayed back and forth like a sideways yo-yo", Twyla recalls. Thus, in weaving together the historical and fictional world, a closed world and open itineraries, Morrison's *Recitatif* points to a reality worthy of recognizing. This unique real is situated in the flux between story and history. Samuel Beckett writes about flux (quoted from Badiou, 2008a, p. 251):

Flux causes
 That every thing
 Even in being,
 Every thing,
 Thus this one here,
 Even this one here,
 Even in being
 Is not.
 Let's speak about it.¹⁰

The flux is a site in which the real simultaneously can “be held in the place where it is and in the place where it is not” (Badiou, 2008a, p. 251). This real is not in the synthesis of being and non-being, as a Hegelian scholar would like to believe. Nor is it a transcendent real, as a Heideggerian would like to believe. It is rather the very site of being, which is at the edge of disappearance. In this way, Morrison’s short story leads our attention toward a unique reality, a being, in the breaches of history and story. Thereby, the short story directs our thinking toward a being that takes place outside of our thinking. In other words, Morrison’s *Recitative* opens to a pure being, a generic humanity that, according to Badiou, may be “the essence of all reality” (Badiou, 2014, p. 137).

Second, Morrison marks this reality with the seal of the unique as she uses language to reveal this silenced and hidden being. Adopting a Badiouan terminology, we can say that *Recitative* uncovers something that has been covered over. To cover over is to neutralize “any detection of an infinite potentiality in a situation” (Badiou, 2022b, p. 198) by superimposing a kind of finitude over the potential infinities in it. Covering over does not happen in the background of a brute denial of these potentialities. It is rather an outcome of the assumptions and considerations we derive from the initial situation and which next serve to conceal “any supposition of infinity and render it [the situation] unrecognizable” (Badiou, 2022b, p. 198). Badiou states,

The essence of covering-over by finitude is to assign every figure of what appears to be “that one,” that thing, assigned its place and meaning by category of language.

(Badiou, 2022b, p. 206)

Thus, the stroke of genius in Morrison’s style of writing is that she manages to use language to describe the mechanisms and consequences of such covering-over operations while concurrently articulating the unnamable phenomena that have been silenced and covered over. A key example is Twyla’s recitative, which testifies to the birth of a new language. Usually, a recitative intends to imitate the music of natural speech. However, the language and rhythm of Twyla’s recitative differ from any music and tone of everyday black or white speech. This unlikely language thereby avoids naming

situations with old meanings. In this way, the unique and somewhat unlikely “music” of Twyla’s recitative avoids covering the situation with untrue identities. In allowing another language to take root in the language itself, Twyla’s recitative produces something artificial that contests, not only natural speech but also the covering-over operations embedded in given conceptions of the world that it signifies. In this way, *Recitatif* generates something artificial that contests the given.

Third, Morrison’s *Recitatif* invites our thinking into a hidden, closed, and silenced place. It does so by interweaving two ontological sites that are opposite to each other and thereby opening a space at the intersection of what is and what is not. Morrison’s technique is to speak about the unspeakable by offering an image that contains a contradiction inscribed in the image itself, such as how she frequently refers to deeply embedded cultural, racial, and class codes while she concurrently twists our ideas of what they might signify. This contradiction between two incompatible elements, of what is and what is not, is never a representation. Rather, the contradiction offers an image that in itself is a comment on and a new way of thinking the real. This incompatible, contradictory image refutes calculative thinking. By contrast, the impossible, contradictory, and paradoxical image offered by Morrison’s *Recitatif* invites our thinking to follow an uneven path while concurrently thinking about the obstacles to that path.

[I]f you are navigating a situation in a state of wandering and risk, it is only when you encounter a paradoxical phenomenon, a point of impossibility, that you are put to the test of the real of the situation.

(Badiou, 2022b, p. 37)

Consequently, Morrison’s short story does not only contest our ideas about “blackness” and “whiteness.” It also guides our thinking into a place that challenges the orthodoxy of preconceived thoughts. In doing so, *Recitatif* invites the reader to sense the conflict between what is of value and what is not.

Acts of Truths

I must admit that I sensed this conflict throughout my reading of *Recitatif*. My experience of reading this short story triggered a deep sensation of conflicting values and worldviews. Consequently, my experience of reading *Recitatif* does not adhere to an intellectual exercise of demystifying Morrison’s writing technique. Rather, it was a sensation of diving into the narrative and recognizing the conflictual values inherent in the situations portrayed: Yes, I liked that I could recognize some geographical places and historical events, such as the service area at the I-90 freeway, the busing, and the hype around Jimi Hendrix. Yet, the narrative on Twyla and Roberta’s ever-changing relationship was the thing that really swept me away. It was heartbreaking to imagine the two 8-year-olds being taken away from home, comforting to know how they took care of each other, painful to read about

how the girls at the shelter treated Maggie, somewhat disturbing to see the clash of cultural and social codes, and I was really upset by the serious fights among the protesters. In short, I should describe my reading of Toni Morrison's *Recitatif* as inseparable from the sensations created by the shifting faces of Twyla and Roberta's relationship. Taking a Badiouan outlook, this sensation can be associated with the act of a truth, a truth that calls for a vital decision. Because I somehow came to realize that either "we are within justice, or we are not" (Badiou, 1996, p. 30). So how does Badiou conceptualize the acts of truths? To explore, let me briefly explain Badiou's theory of truths.

Alain Badiou develops his theory of truths in his Being and Event trilogy (Badiou 2005c, 2009, 2022b).¹¹ Taken together, these three books are key to his overall philosophical system. However, the three books – published over a period of 30 years – also clearly demonstrate that his philosophical system, and thereby his theory of truths, has developed and matured over the years.

In the first book, *Being and Event*, Badiou develops his main concepts of *being*, *event*, and *truth*. Here, he exposes an ontological position that elegantly deconstructs the idealism and romanticism in Heidegger. *Being*, to Badiou, is an inconsistent multiple. However, as we necessarily base our understanding of being on operations of thought that constitute the features and elements of a situation, it is beyond our intellectual capacity to grasp the inconsistent multiplicity of being. The only theory that can grasp this multiplicity is mathematical set theory.¹² Consequently, Badiou claims that set theory¹³ is the appropriate discourse on being.

However, there is an inconsistency between being and appearing, which takes the form of an *event*. Thus, an *event* is a conceptualization of the possibility of change. The event is unexpected and unpredictable, something that vanishes and disappears. Nevertheless, it may institute a radical rupture, as it brings to pass conventional outlooks, knowledge, and opinions. An event will never appear sensible in the light of everyday rules of life or the rules that usually apply to the situation because it strikes a radically different logic. Thus, an event is "an ultra-one relative to the situation" (Badiou, 2005d, p. 507). As such, the event is an ontological "impossibility" because it is both situated and something that goes beyond the situation: On the one hand, an event is conditioned by a lack – a situated void – around which a plenitude of outlooks, knowledge, and opinions circulate. On the other hand, an event carries the possibility of a deep-seated change that implies that it is impossible to see the world in the same way as before the event. Within Badiou's philosophical system, *truths* are subject to such unpredictable events. Truths go beyond the situation as they reveal or unfold something entirely new, something that we cannot grasp or apprehend by the already-established categories of thought. Truths are thus immanent exceptions that emerge, appear, and disappear depending on the conditions they are part of. Accordingly, truths imply some kind of "logical revolt" against the situation. This also goes for the truths we come across while reading Morrison's *Recitatif*.

In the second book of his trilogy, *Logic of Worlds; Being and Event II*, Badiou attempts to describe in more detail the appearing and disappearing of truths. “I insist, since this is the very problem that this book is concerned with: truths not only are, they appear” (Badiou, 2009, p. 9). Truths emerge as immanent exceptions in tangible worlds. Subsequently, in his second book, Badiou leaves the idea of a world as an ontological closed set. Here, he states that we have to conceive a world, or situation, in both its being and in its appearing. “The world is the place in which object appears. Or the ‘world’ designates one of the logics of appearing,” (Badiou, 2009, p. 598). Thus, truths appear. Badiou comments,

I basically moved from being qua being to being there: To appear is to be localized. It could also be said that, after the thinking of being, I developed a thinking of existence. In particular, after showing in 1988 how truths, in the form of universal, generic multiplicities, may be exception of the particular laws of the situation in which they arise, in 2005 I demonstrated how truths may appear and really exist in a particular world. (Badiou, 2022b, p. 24)

Consequently, during the '90s Badiou explored truths and their subjects as post-evental forms of being. However, after the turn of the century, he explored truths and their subjects as real processes in particular worlds, as existential forms that all the same have universal value. This shift in Badiou's logic helps to understand better the link between Twyla and Roberta's tangible lived experience and the emerging ethical-political truths.

In the third book, *The Immanence of Truths; Being and Event III*, Badiou reverses the perspective by examining truths, not from the point of view of the worlds in which they are created, but from the point of view of truths themselves. Truths are existential, ongoing, and open-ended ontological operations that do not belong to any epistemic category. Badiou now returns to the notion of immanence, while stating that truths are immanent, or integral, in a threefold sense: First, truths are immanent creations of a particular world. Next, truths are at the same time exceptions to that particular world. Third, becoming-subjects are always immanent to a truth procedure. Consequently, this third book in the Being and Event trilogy strengthens the pedagogical theme of Badiou's philosophical system.

“The immanence of truths” has this threefold sense: the immanence of production of truth to a particular world; the immanence of truth to a certain relationship between the finite and the infinite as a sign that it touches the absolute; and the immanence of any subject thus constituted, above and beyond its particular individuality, to a truth procedure. (Badiou, 2022b, p. 28)

Taking the narrative in Morrison's short story as an example, it illustrates – for one – that the ethical-political truth emerging in Twyla and Roberta's

world is necessarily conditioned by that world. Hence, despite being universal, this ethical-political truth is a local construction difficult to separate from the time and place in which it appeared. Second, Morrison's short story illustrates how this truth is an exception to the world in which it emerged. Truth unfolds something entirely new, an insight that goes beyond the situation. The simple reason is that a truth has universal value. So, "even though it is produced in a particular world, it retain its value when it is transported, transmitted, translated, to other possible or actual worlds" (Badiou, 2022b, p. 27). Third, Morrison's short story portrays Twyla and Roberta as becoming-subjects to this truth. In other words, at one level, the short story portrays Twyla and Roberta's ethical-political formation. At a profounder, and more important, level, however, the short story depicts how the girls, after several unpleasant back-and-forth confrontations, submit themselves to the pedagogy of this ethical-political truth. "Oh shit, Twyla. Shit, shit, shit. What the hell happened to Maggie?" (Morrison, 2022, p. 40). So, by depicting the many faces – pretty and ugly – of Twyla and Roberta's joint recollection of what happened at the shelter, the short story portrays how Twyla and Roberta's ethical-political formation depends on their abilities to embody an ethical-political truth. Badiou claims, "an individual's or a group's becoming-subject depends on its ability to be immanent to a truth procedure" (Badiou, 2022b, p. 27). Morrison's *Recitatif* may thus stand out as an example of truth as a unique driving force imbued with educative potentials. Moreover, this truth bears witness to the absolute. Not only in the fabric of the particular world in which it emerges, but in any world in which its universality enables it to revive.

In sum, in *Being and Event*, Badiou addresses the being of truths, claiming that truths *are*. In *Logic of Worlds. Being and Event II*, Badiou underlines that truths not only are, truths *appear*. In *Immanence of Truths. Being and Event III*, however, he addresses the *action* of truths, claiming the possibility of being subject to their effects. It is upon this background we should read Badiou's theorem that "the only education is an education by truths" (Badiou, 2005c, p. 14).

An Education by Truths

Although Badiou has not written extensively on education, the pedagogical theme is vital and ongoing throughout all of his work (Strand, 2020). In an essay on art and philosophy, Badiou formulates his theorem that "the only education is an education by truths" (Badiou, 2005c, p. 14) and conceptualizes education as transformative, open-ended, and ongoing procedures. In his latest book, the *Immanence of Truths*, he further explores the educative works of truths, and in his hypertranslation of Plato's *Republic* (Badiou, 2012), he illustrates how the tangible open-ended pedagogical operations of truths cultivate the young (Bartlett, 2011, Strand, 2016). Furthermore, in an essay based on lectures delivered to groups of youths in high schools and seminars, Badiou encourages the students "to struggle against prejudices, preconceived

ideas, blind obedience, arbitrary customs, and unrestricted competition” (Badiou, 2017, p. 8). Because an education by truths operates through a subtraction from the state of the situation and proposes a different direction as regards true life (Bartlett, 2006; Heyer, 2010). Literature carries the power to open up for encounters with such educative truths.

To Badiou, art is a key to education. Art

is pedagogical for the simple reason that it produces truth and because ‘education’ has never meant anything but [...] to arrange the forms of knowledge in such a way that some truths may come to pierce a hole in them.

(Badiou, 2005b, p. 9)

This goes well with Badiou’s claim that literature creates a sensation of being confronted with something unthinkable, of encountering an existence at the very limit of thought. Therefore, we cannot use literature to promote any philosophies, theories, or doctrines of justice. On the contrary, literature – as a form of art – conditions philosophy. Art may even produce thinking that is generative to philosophy. Badiou’s long engagement with the work of the Irish poet, novelist, and playwright, Samuel Beckett stands out as an excellent example (Badiou, 1994, 2003, 2005b, 2008a, 2022b, Lecercle, 2010), as Beckett’s texts inspire Badiou to introduce new concepts and procedures to his philosophy.¹⁴ Hence, within Badiou’s philosophical system, literature conditions and generates philosophy. There is no such thing as a philosophical truth because truths belong to other spheres of life. However, philosophy contains the resources to reveal and preserve the appearance of truths-in-worlds. “Philosophy is the place of thought where the ‘there is’ (*il y a*) of these truths, and their compossibility (*sic.*), is stated” (Badiou, 2008b, p. 23). Badiou’s philosophy thus deals with logical transformations, the effects of truths as creation. Hence, Badiou’s claim that art is a key to education may substantiate my assumption that my experience of reading Toni Morrison’s *Recitatif* was experiencing a truth procedure at work.

Accordingly, to recognize a Badiouan conception of what happened as I read Toni Morrison’s *Recitatif* is to recognize his novel position on the triadic knot of art, philosophy, and education. Badiou links education – the transformation of the thinking subject – with finite and infinite conditions. Moreover, he considers the work of art as a truth procedure *sui generis*. In art, truth is both immanent and singular. “Immanent” indicates that art coexists with the truths that it generates. “Singular” indicates that these truths exist in art only. Consequently, a didactic, romantic, or classical model of the triadic knot of art, philosophy, and education fail to seize the immanent and singular truths in art.

A *didactic* model fails as it reflects an idea that truth is external to art. This model turns art into an instrument, a device to “shape” the students within an already given template, or an apparatus for “educating” the young. A *romantic* model fails because it reflects an idea that only art is capable of truth. It glorifies art and makes art absolute. The *classical* model fails because

it mirrors an idea that art is “innocent” of truth. As the classical model delegates to art to capture, mirror, and shape communal desires and ambitions, it limits art to those aspects recognized as meaningful. Moreover, it reduces philosophy to aesthetics. In short,

Didacticism, romanticism, and classicism are the possible schemata of the link between art and philosophy – the third term of this link being the education of subjects, the youth in particular. In didacticism, philosophy is tied to art in the modality of an educational surveillance of art’s purpose, which views it as extrinsic to truth. In romanticism, art realizes within finitude all the subjective education of which the philosophical infinity of the idea is capable. In classicism, art captures desire and shapes [*éduque*] its transference by proposing a semblance of its object. Philosophy is summoned here only qua aesthetics: It has its say about the rules of “liking”.

(Badiou, 2005c, p. 5)

To Badiou, these three models distort the relationship between art and philosophy and cover over the potential truths of arts. With the ugly consequence that the pedagogical theme collapses. “None of these schemas operates a pedagogical form that is both singular and immanent” (Bartlett, 2006, p. 53). Badiou thus proposes a fourth model based on the consideration of art as a truth-procedure *sui generis*:

Art itself is a truth procedure. Again; the philosophical identification of art falls under the category of truth. Art is a thought, or rather, the truths that it activates are irreducible to other truths – be they scientific, political, or amorous. This also means that art, as a singular regime of thought, is irreducible to philosophy.

(Badiou, 2005c, p. 9)

The pedagogical form is simply a question of encountering art itself. Because art itself is a truth procedure. The task of philosophy is simply to unveil these artistic truths in their very being. In this way, philosophy is the go-between in the encounters with artistic truths. Because philosophy has the power to point to the configurations of these truths, reveal their thinking subjects, and help to distinguish truth from opinion. In short, Badiou’s undeniably novel position on the triadic knot of art, philosophy and education firstly recognizes literature and art as genuine truths in action; secondly refuses to mix philosophy up with these truths while concurrently stating that the task of philosophy is to make these truths visible; and thirdly claims that the only education is an education by truths. In short, “education amounts to nothing more and nothing less than establishing the effect of an encounter as a transformation” (Bartlett, 2006, p. 55). Again, with reference to my experience of reading Morrison’s short story, it is pertinent to state the question: What may educative justice look like?

What May Educative Justice Look Like?

To sum up, Badiou conceptualizes justice as an ethical-political truth procedure generated, upheld, and justified by the axiom of equality (Badiou, 1996, 2005a, 2019). This implies, first, that equality constitutes the very essence of justice; second, that justice emerges as truths-in-worlds; third, that justice concerns the collective; and fourth, that justice is not merely the absence of injustice, but rather an act of a truth imbued with educative potentials. “‘Justice’ is the qualification of an egalitarian moment of politics *in actu*” (Badiou, 2005a, p. 99). What is more, as Badiou theorizes justice as a truth procedure and conceives art – including literature – as a truth procedure *sui generis*, it is tempting to assert that my experience of reading Morrison’s *Recitatif* signifies the work of an ethical-political truth. However, according to Badiou, we cannot jump to that conclusion. There are three objections. First, the fact that there is a clear distinction between the four spheres of life. Second, the fact that a truth has to be embodied. Third, that educative justice calls for a decision.

First, it is vital to take into account that Badiou distinguishes between four spheres of life: the spheres of art, science, love, or politics. Educative justice belongs to the sphere of politics. My experience of reading Morrison’s *Recitatif*, however, belongs to the sphere of art, not to the sphere of politics. To Badiou, it is vital not to mix up art and politics because the truths in the two spheres have different characteristics, and their work is based on different grounds. The works of artistic truths are based on an object – namely the artwork – while the works of political truths are based on becoming – namely a utopian idea of the good society. To put it simply, artistic truths are based on material objects. In the case of my reading of Toni Morrison’s short story, the work of truth is based on the tangible text written by Toni Morrison, as it appears in the materiality of the very book and the symbolic sphere that the text is a part of. “Every work pertaining to the artistic truth procedure is in the form of an “object” containing its own ending” (Badiou, 2022b, p. 472). An ethical-political truth, by contrast, is future oriented. Political truths are preoccupied with collective forms of action and based on an understanding of novelty in terms of “revolutionary transformations where that which was not shall in the end be all” (Power and Toscano, 2010, p. 94).

Second, to consider what educative justice may look like, it is not sufficient to conceive justice as an ethical-political truth generated by the axiom of equality and based on a utopian idea of equality for all. In addition, it is vital to recognize that the work of any truth requires that a subject embodies the truth. For a truth to emerge and have an impact, it needs subjective incorporation. In other words, to understand a truth fully is to embody it. On the very first page of his latest book, Badiou states that a truth is “a-subjective (universal) while at the same time requiring a subjective incorporation in order to be grasped” (Badiou, 2022b, p. 19). So again, for justice to emerge, we cannot adopt a scholastic method of definition. Justice, as an ethical-political

truth in action, requires that we follow the method of understanding. This is the only way to breathe the axiom of equality into life.

Third, but not least, educative justice calls for a decision. To be attentive to and understand fully the phenomenon of justice, we should develop a deep sensitivity and an ontological awareness. Moreover, we have to make an ethical choice. Badiou argues that we cannot prove fully the axiom of equality through a theory of justice, convince people by arguments at the level of abstraction, or demonstrate the validity of justice. In doing so, we adhere to the methods of covering-over. “What I call fundamental ethics recapitulates all of this. It is the commitment to what must be undertaken in order to be on the side of the good, as I understand it – that is, on the side of the thesis according to which it is not true that everything can be covered” (Badiou, 2021). Consequently, in the end, we have to take a stance, choose a side, and make an ethical choice. In other words, justice calls for a decision: “Either we are within justice, or we are not” (Badiou, 1996, p. 30).

Notes

- 1 “Recitatif” is Tone Morrison’s only short story, initially published in 1983.
- 2 See Strand (2022) for a further clarification of this distinction.
- 3 To Badiou, “politics” is not a form of the state or an act of governing. “Politics” rather designate a mode of the activities or the truth procedures that are oriented towards the collective (Bosteels, 2012, pp. 29–30).
- 4 “Ward of the state” refers to a minor or incapacitated adult placed under the protection of a legal guardian. It is common to think of non-adopted, parentless, or abandoned children or foster children as wards of the state, which implies that they are under the state’s care through one or more of its agencies.
- 5 St. Bonaventure, New York is today a Franciscan shelter for homeless people and other people in need.
- 6 The Howard Johnson’s at the Thruway opened in 1970 and remained a Motor Lodge and Restaurant until 1993. The service area was close to Buffalo’s airport and sited immediately along I-90, the east-west transcontinental freeway.
- 7 Jimi Hendrix (1942–70), guitarist and songwriter, was a youth culture icon during the 1960s. He was playing the role of both a rebel and a revolutionary during a youth movement of love, peace, music, and sex. It is worth noting that the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (2022) now describes him as “arguably the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music”.
- 8 “Gar girls” – a pun of gargoyles, a fantasy or horror monster – is Twyla and Roberta’s nickname for the older girls staying at St. Bonaventure.
- 9 In an effort to branch out racial segregation in schools, the US Supreme Court ruled in 1971 that students could be transported to schools within or outside their school districts. This forced integration met substantial opposition from both white and black people.
- 10 This is Steven Corcoran’s translation of one of Samuel Beckett’s irregular, small poems (*mirlittonades*) recited in Badiou’s text on Beckett (Badiou, 2008a, p. 251). In French: *Flux cause / Que toute chose / Tout en étant / Toute chose / Donc celle-là / Même celle-là / Tout en étant / N’est pas. / Parlons-en.* (Beckett, 2012).
- 11 Alain Badiou’s Being and Event trilogy contains three books on his logic. First, *Being and Event* (2005c), published in French in 1988; next, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II* (2009), published in French in 2005; and third, *Immanence of Truths: Being and Event III* (2022b), published in French in 2018.

- 12 Badiou's philosophical system is based on the theorem that "mathematics is ontology" (Badiou, 2005c, p. 4). The fact that ontology equates mathematics, however, does not imply that being is mathematical. What it does imply, is simply that mathematics is the appropriate discourse on being.
- 13 Set theory studies sets, or collections of mathematical objects. Since every mathematical object can be viewed as a set and every theorem of mathematics can be logically deduced from the axioms of set theory, pure set theory has today become the standard foundation for mathematics. Badiou names this theory "a pure theory of Multiple". He writes, "[B]eing itself is pronounceable in the field of a pure theory of the Multiple. The entire history of rational thought appeared to me to be illuminated once one assumed the hypothesis that mathematics, far from being a game without object, draws the exceptional severity of its laws from being found to support the discourse of ontology" (Badiou, 2005c, p. 5).
- 14 In their introduction to the 2003 collection of Alain Badiou's essays on Beckett, Nina Power and Alberto Toscano write, "[W]hilst Badiou's writings on Beckett function to some extent as occasions for rehearsal or *mis-en-scène* for the principal components of his philosophy – event, subject, truth, being, appearance, the generic – they are by no means a mere 'application' of Badiou's doctrine to a figure writing (ostensibly) in another discipline. Rather, we shall argue that the encounter with Beckett forces Badiou to introduce concepts and operations which, if not entirely new to his thinking, nevertheless constitute considerable, and possible problematic, additions to, or variations upon, the fundamental tenets of his enterprise" (Power and Toscano, 2003, p. xii).

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Part II

**Contextualising and
Situating the Relation of
Justice and Education**



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4 Encountering the Promise of Happiness

In Search for a Critical Space in Education

Elin Rødahl Lie

Introduction

Addressing the relationship between education and justice is a fundamental task for a philosophy of education. In a time where measurement and accountability in education are emphasised, and where students' learning and achievements are highlighted (Biesta, 2004, 2010; Mølsted and Karseth, 2016; Sahlberg, 2016), this seems more crucial than ever. A recent introduction of 'life skills' in Norwegian national curricula illustrates this.

For the uninitiated reader, it is important to note that Norway has a long tradition of nationally adopted curricula, functioning as primary and secondary education guidelines. Accompanying the subject curricula is also a core curriculum, which, according to the Norwegian Education Act, outlines the fundamental values of Norwegian education and its most important aims (Hörmann and Karseth, 2022). With the latest curriculum revision (LK20) in Norway, life skills was implemented in the core curriculum, as part of a new interdisciplinary topic, Health and Life Skills, i.e. as part of the fundamental values and most important aims of Norwegian education.

Outlining educational aims for life skills is not necessarily problematic. Acquiring such skills is, after all, a vital aim of education. However, in line with the curriculum as competence-oriented (Karseth et al., 2021), 'life skills' was presented as a final competence, as something acquirable for the students through education. Consequently, something important disappears from view: the pedagogical process leading to this competence, including the possibility to raise critical questions relevant to students' mental health and emotional life, and regarding educational justice. Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine whether feminist and cultural scholar Sara Ahmed can inspire a way to open up a critical space for this where, moreover, emotions also get a prominent place.

In addition to the introduction, the chapter consists of four parts. The first part consists of three smaller parts, in which I describe the context for the introduction of life skills in Norwegian education and discuss whether it can be interpreted in the light of educational justice. I also introduce 'the norm problem', a theoretical reference point to which I will return. Part two introduces Ahmed's critical thinking on happiness based on Ahmed (2010). In

part three, I introduce yet another pedagogical reference point, ‘the pedagogical relation’, before examining, in the rest of the chapter, how Ahmed’s thinking can contribute with new insights and critical perspectives, relevant to student’s mental and emotional life, but also in regard to educational justice.

Justice and Education – an Example from Norway

The school’s interdisciplinary topic health and life skills shall give the pupils competence which promotes sound physical and mental health, and which provides opportunities for making responsible life choices.... Life skills refers to the ability to understand and influence factors that are important for mastering one’s own life. This topic shall help the pupils learn to deal with success and failure, and personal and practical challenges in the best possible way.

(Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 14)

The quote is taken from the description of the new topic of Health and Life Skills in the Norwegian curriculum. Since the 1990s, mental health issues have increased for Norwegian children and young people (Bakken and Sletten, 2016), and, in recent surveys, school-related stressors have been highlighted as contributors (Eriksen et al., 2017; Lillejord et al., 2017). Consequently, requests to include mental health in education have been raised (Elevorganisasjonen, 2015; Kristiansen, 2018). Although it became an object of public debate in Norway, among other things criticised as unclear and demanding for practical implementation for schools and teachers (Holte and Halstensen, 2020; Madsen, 2020a), it *was* also a welcome answer to the aforementioned call to include mental health in education (Madsen, 2020a).

Norway has historically strong political and popular support for the ideal of a school for all, a distinctive feature of the Nordic education model (Blossing et al., 2014). Central characteristics are a publicly funded comprehensive and inclusive school where children come together across differences and backgrounds, and which aims to provide equal educational opportunities and contribute to social equalisation and justice in the society at large (Blossing et al., 2014; Bostad and Solberg, 2022; Kristiansen, 2013). Compensating through education for students’ mental issues can be seen in relation to this, i.e., as part of these social and political ambitions. Such compensating, in this case striving for everyone’s access to a given competence or ability characterised for people with life skills, is thus understood as an educational task democratically rooted in an intention to avoid reproducing unfortunate differences based on class, ethnicity, and language, often described as *distributive justice* (Rawls, 1999; Kristiansen, 2013).

Promoting distributive justice is undoubtedly an important task for education. However, the concept of justice is intricate and complex. Justice in, for, and through education, as this book takes as its point of departure, involves *more* than equal distribution of access to certain knowledge or benefits. Distributive justice is only one of many perspectives of justice that one can

choose. Moreover, according to the philosopher of education Marianna Papastephanou (2021a), a perspectivist approach to justice is in itself problematic as one perspective risks blinding other perspectives, and it also fails to address interconnections between different face(t)s of justice.

Papastephanou raises an important while also challenging contribution to the philosophy of education regarding its normative foundations for formulating theories of justice in education.¹ She directs her critique at theories within the philosophy of education; however, it is the concept of justice with which she is concerned. However, I find it important to contextualise justice precisely *in* education, because a very distinctive form of normativity characterises the context of education. Therefore, worrying about the other part of this two-sided concept, namely, how one understands *education*, is just as important I would argue. A philosophy of education concerned with justice in, for, and through education must not forget that one's conception of this latter – regardless of how one understands justice and which of the combinations of the two words 'justice' and 'education' one prefers – is crucial, especially when addressing normative premises for educational justice. The introduction of life skills in Norwegian education exemplifies this.

The Curriculum Renewal

“With The Curriculum Renewal, we give the school a value lift, and we make it easier for students to learn more and better. We will equip students for working life, but also for life itself,” the Norwegian Minister of Education said in his speech during the presentation of the new national curriculum, of which the topic of Health and Life Skills is part (Sanner, 2019, author's translation). The quote is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, because it exemplifies a quite common response of today's politicians towards the challenges young people experience in the face of a demanding working life: Students must 'learn more and better'; they must develop competence. Secondly, it is interesting because it testifies to a shift towards consideration for utility, at least in Norway, consequently affecting which normative premises politically underlies the life skills- education.

It is worth noting that this Norwegian example reflects a historical change of direction of the Norwegian education system starting in the 1990s and continuing in the 2000s towards a greater focus on knowledge and learning outcomes, following the transition from an industrial to a knowledge economy (Mølsted and Karseth, 2016; Volckmar, 2016). Interestingly, in the 1990s, Norwegian politicians aimed to meet the knowledge society's demands to raise students' performances and thus avoid the risk of losing “valuable resources”, i.e., students with untapped potential, while considering Norwegian education's two traditional main motives: social integration on the one side and utility-oriented knowledge on the other (Volckmar, 2016; Thuen, 2017). In the 2000s, this dual ambition has to some extent continued, but the focus on competence has increased, and the framing has become more individualistically oriented (Evenshaug and Lie, 2023).

The shift to a competence-oriented curriculum model and assessment system in 2006 as a result of a major curriculum reform (LK06) emphasising what students should master rather than work with (Sivesind, 2013), is undoubtedly partly to blame. The traditionally content-oriented Norwegian educational system then had to give way to the argument that a knowledge-driven society had more use for the acquiring of basic skills, learning methods, and the willingness to learn than for academic breadth (Møller et al., 2013). The main features of the curriculum change from 2006 were continued after the renewal in 2020. One difference, however, has been a more theoretical grounding in cognitive and sociocultural learning theory (Gilje et al., 2018), as testified by the introduction and prioritisation of terms such as self-regulation, metacognition, and deep learning.

The Norm Question in Education

Education is about the future, about *wanting* something with the future. Consequently, education and educational practices are fundamentally normative, even if the normative ambitions behind them can be more or less explicitly stated and justified, the Danish educational philosopher Alexander von Oettingen (2010) writes. Oettingen's theoretical starting point is an engagement with the Western modern tradition of *Bildung*. A modern understanding of the concept of *Bildung* (by Oettingen viewed against a pre-modern one) relates to a process that happens inter-generationally, characterised by a necessary interaction between an individual and the existing world, and meaning that it consequently involves open questions concerning the final results of the process. This creates a distinct 'architecture' for the concept of *Bildung* and thus becomes defining for the understanding of education. Education becomes an antinomian practice, a practice that is fundamentally contradictory because it involves contradictions and possible tensions that cannot be resolved, but that require reflection and stand-takings. A teacher's responsibility both for the common, i.e., what society has designated as worthy of preservation, *and* for the individual's individuality, is an example of such a contradiction. How should the teacher act without disregarding either the general or the individual? Oettingen describes these contradictions as fundamental 'norm problems' or 'norm questions' of education, considering them a basic condition for educational practice.

The concept of *Bildung*, traditionally a key term in Norwegian education (Willbergh, 2015; Evenshaug and Lie, 2023), can be said to correspond to this norm problem by being a verbal noun: it refers at the same time both to an ideal or aim *and* to the process that leads towards it, thus drawing the attention to both these aspects of education. Nevertheless, the norm question is not reserved for the concept of *Bildung*. Oettingen stresses on the contrary that it raises a *permanent* problem in Education. Hence, if one replaces the concept of *Bildung* with alternative terms such as 'competence' or 'learning', the norm question does not disappear. The alternative terms also require reflection, stand-takings, and normative justification.

The aforementioned terms, now dominating in Norwegian curricula, are thus not problematic in themselves. More problematic, however, is the tendency that the discursive framing of these terms corresponds very well with a utility-oriented understanding of education (Biesta, 2010; Riese et al., 2020). As noted, in light of the historically rooted social and political ideals of a school for all, one can interpret the introduction of life skills in Norwegian education as part of an ambition to promote distributive justice. The question, however, is to what extent this, politically speaking, really is what underlies it.

From a general perspective, one could say that education has two parallel, partly overlapping tasks that deal with aspects of everyday life at which life skills are aimed. Firstly, education prepares and qualifies children and young people for later adult and working life. Secondly, it aims to be enriching in itself, contributing to the student's character formation and development, or *Bildung*. However, depending on the society and current work life, these two tasks may overlap. Nevertheless, there is an important difference in how they are justified. The first task is justified by utility, by what is needed in the current society. Preparing children and young people for later societal participation must consider societal needs, recognising that young people are not educated for unemployment. The second task is ethically-politically justified. While education enriches character formation, it also contributes to human communities, fostering the ability to live morally good, fair, and equal lives together.

Norwegian culture has a tradition to appoint political committees and panels to present and discuss the knowledge base and possible courses of action on various public measures before initiation. It was the committee, appointed before the curriculum revision, which initially proposed the subject of Health and Life Skills in Norwegian education. It is worth noting that this proposal was not justified by ethical-political arguments, but rather by its utility "in light of increased individualisation of society" (NOU 2015:8, p.50). Particularly interesting in this context, moreover, was that the committee combined this proposal with a call for a stronger emphasis on *social and emotional skills* in student academic learning, such as motivation, collaboration, and emotional regulation.² This was also demonstrated by the claim that the proposed subject would contribute to developing students' self-regulatory competence and metacognition (NOU 2015:8, p.52).

The notion that education has a role in developing social and emotional skills (e.g. critical thinking and responsible behaviour) is familiar in Norwegian education. However, while these qualities traditionally have been related to *Bildung* and ethical-political justifications, the new discursive framework in which the new terms are part, testifies to a shift towards a more individualised and performative discourse, emphasising what the student shall master or perform (Riese et al., 2020). Consequently, the normative justification for promoting student development of social and emotional competence is thus less rooted in an ethically and politically justified concept and instead seen as related to *utility*, to the individual's possibility of succeeding academically, occupationally, and socially.

This brings us to the second reason why the quote from the Norwegian minister of education is interesting: it reflects this discursive framework. Hence, it does not express an overlap between the two justifications mentioned earlier, although, at first glance, it may seem so. Instead, there is a mixture of the two justifications favouring the former, i.e., utility. ‘Learning more and better’ is thus understood as a student’s way into working life, yet it is also believed to be the path to life itself, including its mental aspects. The description of life skills in the Norwegian curriculum clearly expresses this assumption.

Education is about the future, about wanting something with the future. However, it is also, about what is happening here and now, concerning relations and encounters between people, knowledge, and emotions: formative experiences that most likely leave impressions for life. Notwithstanding, the curricular description of life skills says nothing about this. In line with the curriculum as competence-oriented, ‘life skills’ is presented as competence, as something students shall get or achieve through education. Therefore, it omits to say anything about this ‘through’, i.e., about the pedagogical process on which it depends. Consequently, something very important disappears: a space for saying anything about this process, including the possibility to raise critical questions relevant to students’ mental health and emotional life, but also regarding educational justice. In the following part, I will therefore examine whether British feminist and cultural scholar Sara Ahmed can inspire a way to open up such a critical space, a space that also lends emotions a prominent place.³

The Promise of Happiness

Sara Ahmed’s academic work lies “at the intersection of feminist, queer and race studies”.⁴ Ahmed has been seen in opposition to the New Materialism (Coole and Frost, 2010), as a feminist phenomenologist (Weiss, 2021), yet it is perhaps especially her feminist contribution to affective theory and methodology that has gained influence (see, e.g., Åhäll, 2018; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed’s phenomenological-inspired analyses are often based on a concept that she pursues, drawing on philosophy, literature, as well as feminist and queer perspectives. In her cultural critique, Ahmed (2010), the concept of ‘happiness’ is the subject of her conceptual analysis.

Ahmed’s interest in the feeling of happiness is not directed at understanding what happiness is. Rather, what interests her is the lived experience related to it, as she examines what happiness *does*, especially what ‘the promise of happiness’ as an imperative means to our lives. Ahmed describes happiness with three components: (1) *affect* (to be happy is to be affected by something), *intentionality* (to be happy is to be happy about something), and *evaluation or judgement* (to be happy about something makes something good). According to Ahmed (2010), happiness is associated with objects, which she calls ‘happy objects’ described as “those objects that

affect us in the best way” (p. 22), “refer[ring] not only to physical or material things but also to anything we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practice, styles, as well as aspirations” (p. 29).

Ahmed does view happiness as a spontaneous feeling; however, she frames it as more than that. Happiness is also seen as a social construct – as what is *promised* to us while reaching for certain objects. Consequently, “[h]appiness involves a form of orientation: the very hope for happiness means we get directed in specific ways, as happiness is assumed to follow from some life choices and not others” (p. 54). Although Ahmed mainly focuses on what the promise of happiness means for more feminist-oriented aspects of life such as our choice of partner or being a migrant in the face of a new majority culture, she also sees it playing a crucial role in education. Education is about orienting, Ahmed writes. Including orienting children and young people towards happiness, towards what we consider a good life. The crucial point is that this approach *promises* that education can bring about a good life and happiness.

By expressing a definite understanding of what life skills competence consists of, and thus how life should be lived, the description of life skills in the Norwegian curriculum can exemplify this promise of happiness. Consequently, Ahmed’s critique becomes relevant.

The Importance of Making “the Invisible” Visible

In her influential text *The Crisis in Education* from 1954, the philosopher Hannah Arendt conveys in a most distinct yet beautiful way how education is primarily aimed at children and young people, a group of humans who are “newcomers ... in the process of becoming but not yet complete” (Arendt, 2006, p. 183). Moreover, that education demands a particular responsibility from the adult generation “for the life and development of the child *and* for the continuance of the world” (Arendt, 2006, p. 182, author’s italics). Accordingly, in contrast to justice in general, education and educational justice are aimed at a group of humans who are ‘on their way’, who should be allowed to experience, try, and fail – to whom adults, parents, teachers, and educators, in particular, have an educational responsibility to support and guide.

With her phenomenological-existential approach, the Norwegian philosopher of education Tone Sævi (2011, 2013) demonstrates a way of understanding education that emphasises this educational responsibility by placing the pedagogical relation at the centre. With reference to a continental tradition of education, Sævi considers the relationship between adult and child as the basis and fulcrum, or as a condition, for educational activities. In contrast to an outcome- or competence-oriented view of education, where the learning objective is determined in advance, Sævi’s approach gives the content a different yet essential role as the pedagogical relation takes the actual world of experience as its point of departure. She describes the pedagogical relation

as “a form of togetherness between adult and child about something other than the persons themselves” (2013, p. 244, author’s translation). This localisation enables, according to her, an “empty” relation, open to the unplanned and spontaneous, to the possibility of transcending the established and conventional, and echoes thus what philosopher of education Gert Biesta has called “the beautiful risk of education” (Biesta, 2013).

Meanwhile, Ahmed distinguishes herself from approaches to happiness that consider it an outcome of what one does, as a reward for hard work (Ahmed, 2010). Instead, her phenomenological approach sees happiness as something that arises socially, experienced and partaken of through “the drama of contingency”: “how we are touched by what comes near” (22). Ahmed continues, “[it] refocuses our attention on the ‘worldly’ question of happenings” (22), thus emphasising, as Sævi, the importance of considering the children’s actual world of experience.

In Ahmed’s thinking, the promise of happiness further presupposes alignment, where an individual *believes* that a given action or achievement (i.e., an ‘object’ or ‘happiness-pointer’ in her words) *will* produce happiness. This belief is how the promise points towards certain choices and away from others, offering *direction*. Although people may think they decide which objects will bring them happiness, they do not consider this neutrally. Instead, these judgements arise and are passed on culturally and socially. Thus, before we encounter them, the objects are already given positive or negative affective value and social status. Moreover, objects believed to bring forth happiness by a community will circulate as ‘social goods’ in that community – that is, something worth striving for. Education could be an example, aimed at children and young people. Thus, Ahmed demonstrates how education is culture-dependent, influenced by prevailing cultural ideas and discourses that affect us *affectively*.

However, it is important to distinguish Ahmed’s radical cultural critique, directed at society as such, from the context of education. As already pointed out, children and young people are subject to an educational responsibility. Consequently, one must distinguish between educational and political freedom. While political freedom concerns adults, persons of legal age, and includes, among other things, the opportunity to raise one’s opinion in political debates or to live life according to own convictions, educational freedom has a different starting point. As Belgian professor of education, Jan Maaschelein, in an interview, puts it,

Pedagogical freedom is a kind of freedom to form one’s self, that everybody can learn everything. In the sense that it is not predefined what the body, or any-body (and mind), is able to do. It is not naturally pre-given what you have to or can learn. In that sense, everybody can learn everything. There is a kind of freedom which is related to the possibility of shaping one’s life, together with others. It is kind of a starting point, and then we see how far we get.

(Maaschelein cited in Sandvik, 2020, p. 119)

Although there is a clear and historically rooted connection between political and educational practices, they cannot be equated. An important reason for this is that while political relations, at least by definition, are based on equal relations between people, the pedagogical relation is asymmetrical, as adults have power over children. The pedagogical relation, being inter-generational, thus actualises questions related to power, freedom, and authority (Sævi, 2013). Consequently, “it is particularly important that educational activities become the subject of research that seeks to safeguard children’s dignity and humanity, both in individual situations and in the child’s overall life” (Sævi, 2013, p. 237, author’s translation). This illustrates thus the importance of aiming for this “empty” relation, meaning that adults must not use education as a means for themselves, but also that the “norm problem”, as emphasised by Oettingen, *is* a permanent problem, constantly requiring reflection.

However, a reflection on the norm problem should take into account Ahmed’s demonstration of how emotions come into play: what ‘the promise of happiness’ *does*, how it affects us emotionally.

By participating in a community’s orientation towards happy objects and social goods (i.e. presented in the context of education), an individual aligns with community values, *affectively* participating in the belief that the current object will also lead to happiness (s. 38). Essentially, for the individual student, it does not just concern how she, more or less benevolently, is doing her best in school. It concerns her *emotional* investment in her happiness, in finding a place in society. Thus, Ahmed not only shows us how we are directed but also how emotions come into play, for better and for worse. This is an important contribution, as Ahmed here demonstrates a possible way or entry point to see how emotions necessarily *will* play a part, as a motivating factor or driving force on the positive side but also in cases of possible negative confrontations with ‘happy objects’, such as ‘life skills’.

Ahmed herself points to a possible unfortunate consequence: “The very expectation of happiness gives us a specific image of the future. ... This is why happiness provides the emotional setting for disappointment” (p. 29). Failing in all or parts of a ‘happiness project’ an individual sincerely believed in can become an emotional defeat. If this defeat, for example, comes after the prescribed techniques for increased mental health (such as ‘power posing’, an example debated in Norwegian media (Halvorsen and Hesselberg, 2019; Madsen, 2020b)), have not produced the desired result, it adds a certain irony to the educational life skills agenda as such. However, when education is the issue, such negative confrontations with ‘happy objects’ also raise questions beyond the individual level.

In an educational context, criticism has been raised of corresponding life skills programmes (see, for example, Suissa, 2008; Williams, 2022). In Norway psychologist Ole Jacob Madsen has been particularly critical of introducing life skills in education, believing that it testifies to an individualised culture that sees the students as responsible for solving what in reality are political problems. Madsen asserts that rather than reducing the pressure young people experience, one asks them to do *more*. Rather than viewing

good mental health as an integral part of a safe and stable upbringing environment, one considers it something that must be trained (Madsen, 2020a), thus creating an implicit expectation of the students.

Following this critique, we see how education is used as a means, exactly what Sævi writes that one must not. Consequently, there is a threat to the pedagogical relation. Meanwhile, in light of Ahmed's thinking, another relevant issue concerns the students' experience of this, i.e., what this expectation *does*. Notably, from this question, we see a clear link to educational justice, or perhaps more precisely, injustice.

As a feminist, Ahmed is concerned with power: how discrimination is maintained through social power structures. To illustrate her point, she turns to 'unhappy archives' that contain alternative descriptions of happiness found in feminist, anti-racist, and queer perspectives in literature and film. These alternatives demonstrate how cultural expectations for happiness can be out of step with actual experiences. For example, feminist literature in the 1960s painted an entirely different picture of women's experiences of being at home, responsible for domestic work, and child raising against a prevailing narrative of 'the happy housewife'. Although Ahmed primarily is concerned about other aspects of life, her critique is relevant to education. Through her examples, she shows how difficult it can be to break with expectations, even if one wishes to do so, since participating in the happiness narrative may be a prerequisite for participating in the community. As previously demonstrated, life skills competence is thus understood as an entrance ticket to working life and all of life. Ahmed's point is that the promise of happiness can become a 'happiness duty', something one *must* follow up on to maintain a social position and relationships with others.

Furthermore, the happiness duty may not be a personal commitment towards future happiness. A possible break with expectations might also have emotional and moral consequences in the individual's surroundings, especially with those closest, such as family. Although Ahmed is not referring to education here, breaking with educational expectations could also be emotionally tricky when disappointing loved ones like parents. Hence, social obligations will also play a part since the promise of happiness is created and played out within *desired* social and affective relational networks.

The promise of happiness, promoted in schools and elsewhere, thus functions as an affective orientation tool, guiding us in specific directions. It helps maintain societal traditions and structures, becoming, according to Ahmed, "the social pressure to maintain the signs of getting along" (p. 39). By showing how the promise of happiness illuminates the right path, emphasising how it has infiltrated our relationships with others, Ahmed shows how the promise of happiness helps justify social oppression, making alternative lifestyles difficult. Thus, "happiness becomes an exclusion of possibility" (p. 217). Transferred to education for life skills in Norwegian education: The curricular description is problematic because it excludes 'alternatives', and it excludes 'unhappy archives', even though it is precisely these archives that need to be brought to light, to inform the ongoing discussion concerning the norm problem of the topic.

Encountering the Promise of Happiness

Reducing the pressure on students, as advocated by Madsen, could likely alleviate the situation in Norway. There are sound pedagogical reasons for such a proposal, even if they primarily raise political questions. However, how feelings could be related to educational justice remains, requiring an exploration of the interesting relationship between the political and the emotional.

Ahmed's feminist work includes an attractive option for education, I would argue, towards a greater degree of justice – not through distributive justice's inclusion or adaptation but by breaking with the problem of expectations of the individual through *unhappiness*. Ahmed explains, "If injustice does have unhappy effects, then the story does not end there ... Unhappiness is not our endpoint" (p. 217). Instead of arguing that we should overcome bad feelings by developing perseverance and thinking positively, Ahmed suggests a different approach to bad feelings as "creative responses to histories that are unfinished" (p. 217). Notably, she does not aim to glorify bad feelings or create a romantic relationship to feelings that are unbearable. Nevertheless, she suggests that "we need to think about unhappiness *as more than a feeling that should be overcome*. Unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson on the limits of the promise of happiness" (p. 217).

Ahmed is concerned with what feelings *do* and how they create boundaries (Ahmed, 2010, 2014). By emphasising unhappiness as something pedagogically fruitful, she thus demonstrates a possible way out of the imperative of happiness, beyond the boundaries. Moreover, by drawing attention to the pedagogical space of opportunity related to unhappiness, I would suggest she perhaps also hints at where we could turn in our search for educational justice. As exemplified by the introduction of the topic of Life Skills and Public Health in the Norwegian curriculum, today's educational rhetoric lacks both space and will to ask questions related to the meeting between normative educational ambitions and the students, in other words, what our normative ambitions *do*. However, Ahmed's thoughts on unhappiness could inspire a reply.

"Unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson on the limits of the promise of happiness", she writes, thus demonstrating a possible way out of the imperative by making the boundaries visible, an ambition I interpret aimed at both individuals and society as such. However, by replacing the preposition "on" with "at", and thus changing the focus of the sentence from the boundaries to the individual's confrontation with them, we see a parallel to Oettingen's antinomian concept of education, and that makes it more relevant for educational contexts: Unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson *at* the limits of the promise of happiness. Alternatively, formulated as a question: When encountering the limits of the promise of happiness, what do we learn? "To kill joy [...] is to open a life, to make room for life, to make room for possibility, for chance" Ahmed writes (2010, p. 20). While she primarily sees chance related to other aspects of life, I apply this idea to education.

Consequently, the vital educational question should not be how to make students *not* enter the room of unhappiness, as is encouraged in today's competence-oriented educational vocabulary. Instead, the question should be what we, as educators, should do when this room emerges, when encountering bad feelings, such as unhappiness, that *affect* us. Thus, the question should not be how we avoid unhappiness but rather: how can we – pedagogically speaking – *move on* from unhappiness, in the name of justice?

Education is a social practice that differs from other social practices by aiming at a group of people who are “in the process of becoming but not yet complete” and subject to an educational responsibility. The question is how we as educators manage this responsibility while not *excluding opportunity*, i.e., that we keep the possibility open to the unforeseen; that we dare the risk – described by Biesta as beautiful – of education. Following this, we could say that promoting justice through education calls for balancing our educational responsibility with Ahmed's approach to unhappiness. Hence, rather than formulating competence aims about life skills, we should discuss and rethink what negative emotions such as unhappiness do require from education. I see this as an important task for the philosophy of education.

“Unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson on the limits of the promise of happiness”, Ahmed writes. In my reading, these words do not only demonstrate how educational ideals and ambitions may not be as reasonable as we believe. They also show us where we – as educators and philosophers of education – should turn in our pursuit of justice, simultaneously reminding us of a crucial educational realisation: It is in fact when it becomes *difficult*, when we face adversity that we learn and develop, alone and together with others.

Notes

- 1 Papastephanou further argues for using the metaphor ‘stereoscopic optics’ as a reply to this. Reference is made to (Papastephanou, 2021a, 2021b), for those interested.
- 2 In the final version of the curriculum, this was toned down “to avoid inclusion of social and emotional skills as part of the students’ subject competence and to avoid standardized assessment of such skills” (Restad and Mølstad, 2021, p. 446). Meanwhile, the Ludvigsen committee in Norway is not alone in asserting the significance of this relation. Among international premise providers, such as the OECD, the development and measurement of the student's socio-emotional competence are now high on the agenda (see, e.g., OECD, 2015; Restad and Mølstad, 2021).
- 3 Ahmed does not distinguish between ‘affect’ and ‘emotion’. See the afterword in Ahmed (2014, p. 208).
- 4 <https://www.saranahmed.com/bio-cv>

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5 Justice in Dialogic Education

The Hegemonic Use of “Truth” in Dialogue and Its Educational Limits

Mark Debono

Introduction

In the opening lines of his *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida presents the following questions: “Who would learn? From whom? To teach to live, but to whom? Will we ever know how to live and first of all what ‘to learn to live’ means? And why ‘finally?’” (1994, p. xvii). These questions besides giving us an idea about the dialogic nature of the teaching and learning processes, also reveal the complex issue of whether “truth” can be used as a criterion that determines the direction of the exchange of information in a final way. This thematic introduces the main currents of this chapter, which deal with a critique on how excessive authoritative positions of “truth” in dialogue/dialectics can control what others say, where at times such a situation can end up in the worst-case scenario in which others are silenced.

To this end, this chapter has three sections. In the first section, I revisit the following list of thinkers and pedagogues – Socrates, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Richard Rorty, Jürgen Habermas, and (more recently) Seyla Benhabib – for two purposes: firstly, to cover, with broad strokes, a number of aspects regarding their conceptions of the nature and effect of dialogic exchange on societies and individuals,¹ and, secondly, to indicate how this philosophical/pedagogical conceptual background has influenced the positions of the philosophy of education on dialogue that rely on or draw from this list of thinkers.

After charting this conceptual background, I move on to the second section of this chapter, where I discuss the issue of justice in dialogic education by focusing on how an absolute sense of “truth” can silence others by controlling their deliberative and communicative processes. More importantly, this position does not imply that we can opt to abandon an authoritative sense of “truth”, as this will also risk turning education into a free-for-all enterprise where the lack of direction of what others say ends up creating difficulty in reaching consensus or even difficulty in understanding that we disagree on a subject. With this difference in mind, in the third section, which covers the concluding remarks of this chapter, I broach the issue of how dropouts from the system of education acquire a spectral quality, one which through its silence keeps challenging education to adopt more hospitable approaches in its pedagogical methods.

Section 1: A Sketch of How Philosophical and Pedagogical Theories Have Influenced the Concepts of “Dialogue” and “Dialectics” in the Philosophy of Education

A Preamble on Dialogue and Dialectics

In education, the teaching and learning processes appear to be based on methods that support dialogue and dialectics. To counteract the interchangeable use of “dialogue” and “dialectics” and to make the deliberative and communicative processes clearer, Manolis Dafermos confirms that, most often, scholars perceive dialogue and dialectics as separate processes that are either compatible or incompatible rather than as one method with two labels. As he argues, what continues to corroborate such dissension is the fact that scholars keep selecting either the “Bakhtinian Dialogic [or the] Vygotskian dialectic”² (Dafermos, 2018, p. A1). For Dafermos, this one-sided view fails to acknowledge that converging points can exist between dialogue and dialectics.

The meaning of dialogue as a conversation that brings about “a serious exchange of opinion”³ indicates that, in its process, it involves what Marianna Papastephanou calls a “form of engagement and relation with the other” (2012, p. 154). The dialogic process always carries the mark of our interest in the other as someone who is different from us. In such an exchange, we will have “the opportunity to stimulate unpredictable meetings between the participants and build bridges across differences” (Dafermos, 2018, p. A5). At this level of dialogic exchange, the two sides keep enjoying an equal level of communication, which at times carries an element of surprise. This spontaneity reflects that the two sides are concerned that the “truth” they use should remain at an experimental level, one that remains open to the reception of new ideas.

On the other hand, when dialogic exchange uses “truth” dialectically, we notice each side attempting to refute the ideas of the other through a verification process. This verifying process owes its origins to Aristotle’s endoxic method. Carlo Davia remarks that we see this type of process occurring “wherever Aristotle gives an account of some phenomenon that both resolves at least one theoretical difficulty and proves the truth of at least the most authoritative *endoxa*” (2017, p. 387). For Davia, Aristotle always employed his dialectical method either to settle “theoretical difficulties” (2017, p. 387) of an opinion or at least to “prove the truth of at least the most reputable opinions about [a] subject” (2017, p. 387). From this Aristotelian legacy, we have kept inheriting the perception of the dialectical process as a method that examines issues and verifies them by means of “truth”.

As I see it, the discussion about dialogue and dialectics as communicative processes that differ in spontaneity and formality continues to add up to the difficulty of coming to terms with the issue of how “truth” determines the course of the exchange of information and how this in turn affects the

shaping of individuals and societies. To start investigating the detail of this matter, I will first consider Socrates as a figure who leaves us perplexed about his aporetic vision on “truth”, according to which its value appears both emancipatory and oppressive.

Socrates: “Truth” as Emancipation/Oppression in “Dialogue” and “Dialectics”

The preoccupation in education regarding how we learn to live and who teaches us to live properly can be traced to Plato’s *Apology*, which quoted Socrates as claiming that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (2005, *Apology*: 38a, p. 133). This line depicted Socrates as a peripatetic teacher who walked across the market communicating the highly relevant point that a life without deliberation is a wasted one. In education, the perception of Socrates as an exemplary “teacher” has been that of a figure who prioritised thinking as an essential element of critical questioning, a process that allows us to re-evaluate the priorities of our lives.

This re-evaluation happened through a process of deliberation, a process which Tomas Englund defines in terms of a “mutual and carefully-balanced consideration of different alternatives” (2006, p. 506). Englund derives this interpretation of deliberation from the “roots of the word, which are the Latin *deliberare* and *libra*, meaning ‘to weigh’ and ‘balance’” (2006, p. 506). Because of this meaning, teaching circles have always endorsed the picture of Socrates as someone who, through his deliberative process, used “truth” to make others “weigh” and “balance” their uncritical opinion in order to move to higher levels of knowledge.

This mantra of Socrates as an ideal teacher does not always hold for, as James Michael Magrini argues, our perception of the Socratic project depends on how we read the gradational process of knowledge in Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” and on our awareness of the distinction between zetetic and echronic philosophy, one that I explain in this chapter. In his interpretation, Magrini notes that the gradational change of knowledge carries a “distinction between *zetetic* and *echronic* philosophy [and this] has crucial implications for the way in which we view education” (2014, p. 1323). In the *echronic* model, all inquiry is drawn towards the objective of a unifying “truth”. In this model, a central position of “truth” standardises all various positions in dialogic exchange in a process where individuals move from an uneducated state to an enlightened one, from “*apeidenisia* to *paideia*” (Magrini, 2014, p. 1324).

In the *zetetic* model, the process differs from the *echronic* model in that its procedure of inquiry remains on an experimental level. Basically, the interpretation consists of “philosophical deconstruction, which might be said to express the indisputable negative function of philosophical critique. Here we move through dialectic inquiry to disturb the prejudices, opinions, beliefs and habituated practices that have a hold on us” (Magrini, 2014, p. 1324). In practical terms, the *zetetic* model challenges us to constantly keep revising

our own asserted positions in order to experience a renewal of knowledge through an “appropriation of new forms of understanding” (Magrini, 2014, p. 1325).

For now, this relevant distinction serves its purpose for, if we see Socrates as constructing his deliberative process according to the *echonic* model, he appears as a sole authoritative figure who weighs and balances the agenda for others. The procedure here looks more like a dialectical process that uses “truth” as part of a verification that aims to refute the arguments of others. When Socrates constructed his deliberation according to the *zetetic* model, we notice how he was more prepared to mellow the standard of “truth” in order to engage dialogically with others on an experimental level.

In education, this distinction allows us to see that the teaching/learning processes have an aporetic dimension. If we see teaching through the perspective of the *echonic* model, our tendency is to conceptualise the teacher as a master dialectician possessing an authoritative “truth” to verify and forcefully standardise all opinions. I argue that this feature carries oppressive traits because it denies others the opportunity to engage critically regarding how to plot their own destination in the course of events. Beyond these gestures, which may lack justice, teaching can have another dimension: if perceived through the lens of the *zetetic* model, we can note the teacher as a skilful dialoguing master who uses “truth” without a hegemonic force. In this situation, a different story can unfold – one where we see the participants engaging in a deliberative and communicative process that takes note of the *different* “truths” of others.

Socrates leaves us with a legacy by which we perceive the authority of “truth” as carrying an aporetic dimension that allows us to see it as oppressive (its threatening side) and emancipatory (its promising aspect). This factor has influenced the evolution of the meaning of “truth” in education, particularly regarding how its use in dialogue and dialectics affects the direction of the teaching and learning processes. To continue giving more shape to this discussion, in the next section, I look at John Dewey’s point on the relevance of dialogue in education by focusing on the issue of whether “truth” in the transmission of knowledge in schools makes or breaks the way students develop their future.

John Dewey: Schooling as an Experience That Makes or Breaks the Future of Students

In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey asserts the basic point that the exchange of information is vital for the survival of communities. He tells us that societies “not only continue to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication” (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). For Dewey, the act of communication carries an aporetic dimension, as he sees it as both a threat and a promise in the way societies continue to exist. From this line of thinking, Dewey moves

on to discuss schools as hubs that transmit information in a strategic manner, where classroom communication can also be perceived as either a threat or a promise for the sustainable experience of education.

To illustrate this point, in his text *Education and Experience*, Dewey presents us with a distinction between traditional and progressive schooling. What preoccupies Dewey is not the fact that traditional schooling offers *only* (my emphasis) knowledge in a gradational manner, where the students get their necessary grades and that is it. What is troubling for him is the fact that such schooling does not provide students with the experience of being in “connection with further experiences” (1997, p. 27). On the other hand, and not necessarily in opposition to traditional schooling, the progressive school offers an experience that grants students the space to connect with other experiences “fruitfully and creatively” (Dewey, 1997, p. 28). Dewey’s distinction tells us clearly that the manner in which schools deliver their information generates an experience that makes or breaks the way students develop, an experience that affects the way they view their future.

For the discussion of this chapter, the aforementioned point by Dewey becomes highly relevant, as it shows us that the dialogue that happens in the classroom is not only connected to the way students develop their knowledge but also to the question about the kind of future education delivers to them. David Kennedy looks at the Deweyan sense of traditional schooling and proposes that the restriction of opportunities for teachers and students develops out of a process called a “monological schooling [one that is dedicated to] the (re)production of calculated, pre-ordained outcomes (whether test scores, skills, dispositions, workers, consumers, ‘citizens,’ or even ‘self-actualized’ persons)” (2017, p. 282). In monological schooling, the authoritative “truth” of standardisation dictates the procedure of the teaching/learning processes, as has been noticed in the previous discussion on the Socratic *echonic* model of dialectics.

In contrast to this type of schooling, Kennedy tells us there is “*skholé*, [which] as a form of dialogical gathering and action, is dedicated to emergent inquiry, individually, collaboratively, and sometimes collectively undertaken” (2017, p. 282). According to this experience, the homogenising tendencies of standardisation will be less excessive; they will allow space where teachers and students can be spontaneous. At times, this spontaneity, this imagination to be fruitful and creative (as Dewey pointed out), is naively interpreted as leaving others in a state of a natural impulse without any sense of direction in their teaching and learning processes.

These brief remarks on Dewey’s distinction of types of schooling suffice to show us the tension that characterises the teaching and learning experiences as processes that lie between the forces that authorise the teacher as the main actor in directing (and at times, maybe, silencing) the student’s development and the points that mellow the authority of direction to allow teachers and students to develop their own initiative together. In the next section, I will continue developing this point through Paulo Freire’s pedagogical work, which I find is also characterised by this tension between the excess of

direction that oppresses the exchange of information between teachers and students and the forces that limit such an excess in a way that allows dialogic exchange to grant a fairer treatment to the debating sides

Paulo Freire: Dialogue and the Emancipatory Force of Conscientious “Truth”

In analysing Brazil’s education system, Paulo Freire first registered the factors that characterised his epoch. As Peter Rule remarks, in the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil, Freire perceived “the basic contradiction of the epoch as between oppression and liberation, leading dialectically to humanization, which liberates both the oppressor and the oppressed to become more fully human” (2011, p. 930). For Freire, like the contradictory elements of the epoch, Brazil’s schooling system through its large numbers of illiterate people continued to reflect oppressive and unjust traits that were neither humanitarian nor emancipatory in their approach.

To prove this point, Freire showed how schools in Brazil’s system of education were more monological in character than dialogical. These types of schools are structured hierarchically to privilege the distinction between the teacher as an authoritative source of knowledge and the student as a passive recipient of knowledge. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire noted that this “banking concept of education” (2005, p. 72) was oppressive because of its excessive direction in the teaching and learning processes.

To counteract these dominant characteristics, Freire looked at a system that was more circular in its approach, one that granted teachers and students the motivation to move beyond curriculum demands to find alternative spaces where they could produce a critique about their life-world experiences. According to this “new” approach, both the teacher and student are perceived as collaborators in the educative process. In the “new” teacher–student relationship, teachers are wrongly labelled as having lost their sense of authority in the educative process. On this point, Drew D. Chambers remarks that the teacher’s role in “a Freirean model is not to avoid directiveness by hiding one’s own beliefs or refusing to teach course content in a didactic manner at times but rather to consider how directiveness can exist in the classroom in a non-authoritarian manner” (2019, pp. 26–7). For the non-authoritative teacher, as Chambers remarks, the difficulty lies in generating a dialogic process that encourages the students to explore new avenues of thinking by balancing the sense of directiveness in didactics with the authoritative use of “truth”.

This is not the end of the story, as education has at times promoted Freire’s “new” critical pedagogy with a certain fanfare in a way that appears to create rivalry with other pedagogical methods. This factor also runs the risk of transforming Freire’s critical pedagogy into a slogan that proclaims the “truth” that the only purpose of education is to develop knowledge on an axis that recognises and changes the oppressive factors. In her discussion on the utopian and dystopian trends of Freire’s critical pedagogy, Papastephanou

points out clearly that education is more complex than generating a dialogue in the classroom that critiques the hierarchical structuring of power. For her,

dialogical symmetry does not automatically entail transformative commitment concerning extra-mural or extra-dialogical realities. The pro-treptic/apotreptic axis requires articulation of a more consistently Freirean critique of existing educational programmatic textuality and discursivity such as the curricular and points to higher ethico-political demands than dialogical relativization of power positions.

(Papastephanou, 2016, p. 44)

As she remarks, when pedagogical studies single out Freire's notions of hope/curiosity, they are themselves repeating a hierarchical structuring that causes the marginalisation of other significant issues, such as the demands that arise from "ethico-political" grounds. In this sense, Freire's pedagogy itself must remain open to its own critique, one that questions whether it advocates its theory and practice in a dogmatic way. To keep reading the fabric of our educational systems conscientiously means also to be prepared to address the hegemonic "truth" that can turn emancipatory channels into an oppressive system. What this means is that we must invigilate that any directional level of "truth" remains functional at an experimental level, through an inventiveness that grants space on how we read our lives and the world anew. It is this level of experimentation, of trying out new ideas, that brings me to the next section, where I discuss how Richard Rorty's concept of contingency affects the way we speak about the role that "truth" plays in education's sense of direction.

Richard Rorty: On the Contingent Nature of "Truth"

In his text *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Richard Rorty includes a chapter entitled "Education as Socialization and as Individualization".⁴ In this chapter, Rorty explains how the American left and right political camps dominate the debate on education. As he remarks, the discussion on education must shift away from limited points of "freedom" (favoured by the left political side) and "truth" (preferred by the right political side) to a position that considers the practical interaction between "socialisation and individuation" (1999, p. 2).

Rorty explores the connection between the indoctrinating processes of societies and the beliefs individuals hold to produce a critique of the grand narratives⁵ that have dominated the landscape of 20th-century politics. He does not shy away from telling us that political authority has its roots in the language of politics. Probing the matter of language, Rorty perceives that the system of language runs its meanings either in a fixed (static) or in a dynamic (fluid) mode. Rorty writes that what inspired him to go for the dynamic side of language, where meanings are in constant flux, was the "Nietzschean [sense of] history of culture, and Davidsonian philosophy of

language [to] see language as we now see evolution, as new forms of life constantly killing old forms" (1996, p. 19).⁶ Rorty concludes that language is a product of "time and chance" (Rorty, 1996, p. 22), and so are the "truths" we construct from it.

The authority of education, like that of politics, also depends on language. If we go for the dynamic mode of language where meanings are contingent, it appears strange and unfamiliar to say that education is still an authoritative enterprise. If Rorty himself claims that "education is a matter [that moves with the task] of inducing or educing truth" (1999, p. 3), how can a contingent sense of "truth" make someone believe in the "truth" of direction in the teaching and learning processes? When the meaning of "truth" turns contingent, it becomes difficult to see how teaching can develop knowledge in a persuasive way through dialogue/dialectics.

If "truths" are, as Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out, "illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins" (1992, p. 84), how can we still believe that it still makes sense to claim that "truth" has value? Ironically, as J. Hillis Miller points out, Nietzsche used a metaphor to discredit "truth" that recalls the validity of "truth" to distinguish the "true" coin from its counterfeit. What Miller suggests is that, for the issue of "verity", we have to look at "the issuing authority, not the object itself, the substratum which is the bearer of the image of that authority" (1981, p. 48). So, in applying this argument to the dialogic/dialectical exchanges of the teaching and learning processes, can we still claim that education's emphasis on the authority of direction makes sense? For education, this implication can be devastating, because if one thinks that contingency means the complete abandonment of a sense of direction, we are crossing the dangerous threshold of the malaise of modernity, which Charles Taylor referred to as the phase where we "*shut out* history and the bonds of solidarity" (1991, p. 40).

At this point, I think even Rorty admits that, in order not to close off this connection with others, we still need to keep a sense of authority. Alexis Deodato Sitoy Itao imagines Rorty addressing our

standardized educational institutions [by telling them]: change your language-games. Do not impose. If you should communicate certain standards to be observed, see to it that the preferred language-games of the teachers and students alike are not suppressed, because there are many ways to express a "truth". You don't have to bend your standards, but you can rephrase their definitions, reword them and make them relevant and suitable for all.

(2020, p. 60)

A pluralistic attitude towards authority and "truth" in the protocol-determined structures of education can hint at enlarging the horizons of meaning in the way we deliberate and communicate in our teaching and

learning processes. This is not an easy task, and at times this difficulty arises from the circumstance where the apparatus of instrumental rationality limits the inventiveness required in the rewriting of communicative action. This point will be elaborated in the next section, where I discuss Jürgen Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas: Consensus as the Basis of Communicative Action

One can say that Jürgen Habermas's departing point is the realisation that the Enlightenment project was contradictory because the promise that reason would emancipate us from the myths that dominated our systems of beliefs ended up itself electing reason into a position of sovereignty. In his text *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas discusses how the instrumental course of rationality can monopolise language in a way that breaks down the dialogic fabric of language.

In a dialogic space, language develops out of the “symbolic interaction between societal subjects who reciprocally know and recognize each other as unmistakable individuals. This communicative action is a system of reference that cannot be reduced to the framework of instrumental action” (Habermas, 1971, p. 137). For Habermas, the core of communicative action forms the basis of “unconstrained consensus” (1971, p. 176) and directs “the possible action-orienting self-understanding of individuals and groups as well as reciprocal understanding between different individuals and groups” (1971, p. 176). This Habermasian line of thinking, which sees the individual's reflexivity as contributing to the social connection between people, has influenced the perception of schools and classrooms as “public spaces”.

In the classroom as a “public space”, as Thomas Englund suggests, the “deliberative communication” between teachers and students brings together various “individuals with differing knowledge and experience and differences in authority, formal as well as real, deliberating within a ‘weak public’” (2006, p. 7). Through such openness, individuals can experience multiple “truths” working together. When education channels this pluralism of “truths” into the ideal of democracy, there is a risk that it will motivate its democratic project according to the lines of the Enlightenment's *sapere aude*, which dares to emphasise the individual's capability of making rational self-decisions.

The democratic projects of education cannot themselves turn out to be dominant “truths” for, as Habermas has warned us, any grand narrative that dominates our life will prevent us from “intervening in a life-world” (1971, p. 262). In education, the meaning of “intervene” plays a significant role, as it implies a sense of being “involved in a difficult situation in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse”.⁷ This point again evokes the debate over whether the dialogue in the classroom initiates students into becoming interested in the political world, where they are concerned with the activities of government, or whether they should look at the moral dimension, where they will focus on issues of the common good.

As Estelle Ferrarese points out, the separation between the political and the ethical ground leads to the “*splitting-up* of ethical life into morality and legality – which is typical of modernity – that a process of will- and opinion-formation was able to find a space and become institutionalized” (2015, p. 9). Through this remark, we can read the edifice of education as one full of deep cracks because its “public space” is dominated by the dispute over whether the basis for deliberation and communication should be political and ethical depending on the issues at stake. When education tries to settle the distinction between the legal and the moral rationally, it will again prioritise the standards of rational processes. Is this always possible? Rationality, at times, may appear too weak to contain the excess of crudeness that accompanies our life-world experiences. What this means is that education’s rationality appears like an automaton, where in its repetitive process there is no room for our spontaneous reaction. In the next section (which also concludes Section 1), through Seyla Benhabib’s concept of democratic iteration, I discuss how re-enactment can reintroduce a spontaneous course in the process of iteration.

Seyla Benhabib: Empowering Individuals through “Democratic Iterations”

For Seyla Benhabib, populism and the rise of fake news have diminished the hope of people to make legitimate claims about global issues like Euroscepticism, terrorism, right- and left-wing fundamentalism, *etc.* She argues that this democratic deficit lies in the fact that, today, people remain passive “subjects” without taking an active part in their democratic destiny. Benhabib suggests how “democratic iterations” could restore this gap by allowing people to become “authors” who create anew their democratic fate. She explains democratic iteration in terms of a process of

how the unity and diversity of human rights is enacted and re-enacted in strong and weak public spheres, not only in legislatures and courts, but often more effectively by social movements, civil society actors, and transnational organizations working across borders.

(Benhabib, 2011, p. 15)

For Benhabib, people are practically involved in the process of democratic iterations that occur in institutions and in public spaces through various

processes of linguistic, legal, cultural, and political repetitions-in-transformation – invocations that are also revocations. Through such iterative acts a democratic people, considering itself bound by certain guiding norms and principles, reappropriates and reinterprets these, thus showing itself to be not only *subject* to the laws but also their *author*.

(Benhabib, 2011, p. 112)

To broaden our understanding of what Benhabib is saying in terms of the authorship of those who are genuinely involved in the creative process to give us a “fresh” interpretation on how to read our experiences in the life-world, I make reference to Jacques Derrida’s discussion on Socrates’ *logos*, in his text *Dissemination*, as the “rite of the *pharmakos*: evil and death, repetition and exclusion” (1981, p. 134). Interestingly enough, Derrida speaks about the writing process while at the same time taking note of the ills and the benefits of the repeating process. Writing has its ills because it is “pure repetition, dead repetition that might always be repeating nothing, or be unable *spontaneously* to repeat itself, which also means unable to repeat *but* itself: a hollow, cast-off repetition” (1981, p. 135). Derrida presses the point that the repetition of writing does not animate others – in his own words, “[w]riting is not the living repetition of the living” (1981, p. 136). Contrary to this type of repetition, the “‘good’ repetition (which presents and gathers being within living memory) can always, left to itself, stop repeating itself” (Derrida, 1981, p. 135). According to Benhabib’s understanding of iteration, we note the latter kind of repetition – one where authors are creative enough to animate the repetition by enhancing and broadening our fields of imagination in the way they reappropriate and reinterpret (to use her terms) our life-world experiences.

I argue that, in education, particularly in the teaching and learning processes, we need to gain this sense of authorship, especially in the manner in which the exchange of information happens in the classroom. Teachers and students can also end up trapped in a system of education that transforms them into hollow beings where, for teaching/learning purposes, they keep repeating repetition upon repetition (Derrida’s doubling of the repeating process) without any space to critique their position or to see an alternative path for renewal. In her exploration of the connection between Benhabib’s democratic iterations and pedagogy, Elaine Untelhalter gives reasons why, today, this sense of authorship makes it more worthwhile to emphasise the point that teachers matter.

For Untelhalter, the authorship of teachers allows them to “articulate our visions” (2017, p. 35), but this process requires an “alert pedagogical practice. [For this reason] [t]eachers matter because they are well placed to learn both what is and be alert to a range of values to interpret this empirical world” (2017, p. 27). Untelhalter’s conclusion emphasises that teachers, as vehicles who develop negotiating skills, have to act as sensitive authors following the dynamics of the events of the world and the reactions we give to them. In education, she remarks, these efforts will always lead to an attempt to achieve change. This change is not a defunct issue that makes someone’s experience more burdensome through dead repetition; rather, it serves as a force to rejuvenate one’s present experience by maintaining the spontaneous element of surprise in the future, where (unlike in education’s teleological plans) the end is not foreseeable.

This type of renewal will grant a space in the classroom where, as David Skidmore suggests, students are invited to

retell the story in their own words and voice their own evaluative judgments; this form of dialogue has a semantically open structure, tending not towards convergence on a single agreed standpoint, but towards a recursive process of intersubjectively accomplished understanding.

(2000, p. 293)

It is through this exchange of emotions and ideas that the experience in the classroom becomes empowering. Lisa Delpitt tells us directly that through these “interactions [we may come to notice] the most powerful and empowering coalescence yet seen in the educational realm – for all teachers and for all the students they teach” (1988, p. 297). This concluding remark on the retelling of narratives as a source of empowerment serves both to end my discussion on Benhabib’s concept of “democratic iterations” and to conclude Section 1. After this broad review on how the exchange of information shapes individuals and society, I introduce the second section of this chapter by focusing on the issue of whether, in the classroom, “dialogic exchange” serves as a pretentious term to disguise the instruction purposes of curricular programmes. The one-way direction of this trend continues to be emphasised by the fact that the progress of students is measured by a grading system. In view of this, I argue that such a system produces dropouts and that, ultimately, it is this latter category that keeps haunting education to reminding us of our infinite task to keep answering in a responsible manner for the other.

Section 2: The Spectral Quality of Justice in Dialogic Education

After this broad review of various significant points of thinkers and pedagogues on how exchanges of information shape individuals and societies, this section discusses a number of factors in education that continue to highlight dialogue as an effective means for the teaching and learning process without necessarily noticing that such an exchange can serve as a disguise for the instruction purposes of curricular programmes. This trend is always reflected in the system that still perceives the marking and grading of students as a valuable asset for measuring their progress.

In education, we find an ongoing trend that classifies students into two categories: those who make it and those who do not (referred to in this chapter as “dropouts”). Most often, this classification makes us reflect on the effectiveness of dialogical exchange in the classroom. A more difficult question accompanies this reflection when we ask, “What kind of ‘truth’ best serves the dialogical/dialectical method to ensure fewer failures in terms of ‘dropouts’?” Today, in education, as in other fields, the abandonment of “truth” is facing more of a crisis created by a sense of the decay of “truth”.

This feeling that things are getting worse because the sense of “truth” has lost its ability to affirm issues in a truthful manner has led, as Robert Alexander remarks, to the dissemination of false notions and “fake news”. Unfortunately, such a scenario has led to conclusions like the following, where he advocates that “teachers and students, [having to keep] faith with the Enlightenment

may be the best we can do” (Alexander, 2019, E13). But is it not this adherence to the traits of the Enlightenment that again brings up the contentious point about the privileging of the authority of “truth” by means of rationality? At this point, we must pay attention that the reclamation of “truth” by the authority of reason does not repeat what Bernard Stiegler asserts to have been the “perverse” turn of the Enlightenment, particularly where reason turned into a hegemonic apparatus to control individuals.

For Stiegler, the Enlightenment represents the situation where progression leads to regression and instrumental reason enters into an inverting process that leads to unreason. And this is in turn justified

under the mask of reason itself, rationalization consisting in posing and in having accepted as a conclusion that “nothing can be done,” that is, that there is no alternative. This prostitution proceeds, moreover, from a vast subjugation of individuals to apparatus.

(2013, pp. 160–1)

Stiegler’s use of the noun “subjugation” clearly shows that the process of instrumentality through privileged rational processes deindividuates others. Following this line of thinking, we can ask whether education as an apparatus of reason uses dialogue/dialectics as a means to control what others deliberate and communicate. In this sense, the main thematic of this chapter has been to address the issue of whether the standards of “truth” used in dialogue/dialectics make others lose their individual personality. It is also this factor that prompts education to propose an endless list of suggestions on how the dialogical/dialectical teachable experience can treat the other more as a person and less as an impersonal object in an instrumental process.

Whether dialogue leads us to the path where we see others as persons depends on how we experience others, which means also what level of justice we attribute to the way we position our own value of “truth” about others. For Catherine Malabou, the unconditionality of the otherness of others always escapes the logic of that kind of “truth” that always attempts to condition the thinking of (and about) others dogmatically. This is why, after reading Quentin Meillassoux’s “After Finitude”, a text that lodges radical contingency at the heart of our experience, Malabou asks whether we can ever relinquish the transcendental, whether we can ever break the triangular relation between “truth”, knowledge, and experience. For her, giving up the transcendental also implies giving up Immanuel Kant’s transcendental positions of philosophy on the role “truth” and knowledge play in the judgement of our experience, and this is why Malabou concludes that, if such an event were to happen, European philosophy would also face its demise. The way we appropriate others and the things around us will always bring us to the question Friedrich Nietzsche asks in his *Gay Science*: “To what extent can truth endure its incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 170). To sustain “truth” in knowledge and experience means to leave it at an experimental level, which also means using new

methods that use “truth” in a manner that leaves the relationship between knowledge and experience unperturbed. Malabou herself attempts to redirect the dogmatic route of “truth” when she asks whether it is possible to look at our knowledge and experience of the “earth [as] a space that is not ours. We have to think of it as it was before colonization” (2014, p. 248). The use of the term “colonisation” clearly indicates that Malabou is conscious that this whole affair of experience can be compromised when “truth” turns dogmatic. To show this limit, she remarks that the “Other has been said to be absolute out of the absolute impossibility of our reason to prove its absolute-ness” (Malabou, 2014, p. 251). Instead, we recognise and accept this limit, and we keep attempting to use “truth” in a manner that keeps trying to fix the connection between knowledge and experience within the frame of reason.

This may also be what happens in the enterprise of education, particularly through Derrida’s perception of the pedagogical process as an “address as education, and address as taming or training [dressage]” (1994, p. xviii). The verb “to tame” implies the situation where, by means of “truth”, we domesticate what others have to tell us differently about our knowledge and experience. This point also reflects the thematic of this chapter, which questions whether “truth” in dialogue/dialectics is used hegemonically to tame others by teaching them their final lessons, thus unjustly producing more dropouts in the system of education.

Section 3: Concluding Remarks

The dropouts, as students who are no longer registered on the class lists, acquire a spectral quality that keeps haunting education by reminding it of its infinite task of responsibility towards the other, which comes before any exchange that can be determined by the “truths” implied in dialogical/dialectical methods. Many times, this unconditional exchange does not happen, and unfortunately, the dogmatic use of “truth” in dialogue/dialectics will end up producing dropouts. As Michalinos Zembylas points out, even when we attempt to hold a “conversation with the ghosts of [the] disappeared” (2013, p. 70), this exchange can take a wrong turn, because through reason (evocative again of the Enlightenment trend) one can

stylise the spectral others by again perceiving the spectres as “ontologized” beings on the basis of epistemic terms and thus are absorbed into the past; any notion of a “trace” through time that extends to the future is rejected because this trace points only to what is now gone.
(2013, p. 77)

The spectral quality of students cannot be framed within the ontological and epistemological parameters of reason, and therefore no educational programme can be fit to hold their request for justice. When education keeps nesting its pedagogical and curricular demands inside the ideology of

reason, we notice, as Zembylas remarks, a process that makes us lose the ability to see others concretely because there will be a “highjack[ing] [of the] meanings of memory, justice, and (re)conciliation in order to obliterate some memories, unfulfilled justice demands, and irreconcilable tensions; and to push the boundaries of witnessing loss and trauma” (2013, p. 86). For this not to happen, the “truths” involved in dialogue and dialectics, have to keep addressing the memory of the dropouts to help remind us of the injustices, of the times when, instead of empowering individuals, education ended up disempowering them by erasing their names from school registers.

When we stop reminding ourselves of this *infinite* task, of this absolute fidelity towards “the place and subject of all responsibility, namely, the *person*” (Derrida, 1995, p. 24), we should reflect again on whether the task of justice in dialogic education is really worth it. Without this worth, I think we will be transforming education into an enterprise where we take note of teachers and students as a group that reminds us of that condemnation of races, in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s eloquent phrase, “to one hundred years of solitude [because they] did not have a second opportunity on earth” (1971, p. 399).

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Notes

- 1 This general consideration carries no intention of underestimating the input from other academics who have investigated the conceptions of these thinkers and pedagogues in relation to education in greater analytical/philosophical detail.
- 2 For a detailed critical presentation of the distinction between Bakhtinian Dialogics and Vygotskian Dialectics, one can refer to the following paper: Sullivan, P. (2010). Vygotskian Dialectics and Bakhtinian Dialogics-Consciousness between the Authoritative and the Carnavalesque. *Theory & Psychology*, 20(3), 362–78.
- 3 Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dialogue>.
- 4 Originally, the chapter was published in 1989 in *Dissent* (Rorty, 1999, p. x) under a different title, “Education without Dogma”.
- 5 In the last chapter (“Orwell on Cruelty”) of his text *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1996), Richard Rorty provides a list of examples of these grand narratives – for example, the Cold War conflict between the United States of America and Russia.

- 6 In this brief note, to offer some background concerning Rorty's claim on the contingent nature of language, I discuss Davidson's concept of "truth". The main points that Davidson raises are against the reductionist views of both correspondence theory and coherency theory. Basically, correspondence theory seeks "the explanatory conception of truth [that] assumes truth to consist in a non-causal and atemporal relation of correspondence between the relata 'scheme' and 'content'" (Sandbothe, 2003). On coherence theory, Davidson makes the critical point that "the link between coherence and truth does not come into play until one ceases to understand statements as sentences that actualize a conceptual scheme and begins to see them as expressions of beliefs articulated by a person who takes those beliefs to be true" (Sandbothe, 2003). Davidson's critique on the definite accord of meaning with reality (correspondence theory) and on the causal understanding of meaning in a system of meanings (coherence theory) has paved the way for the understanding that the connection between language and its meanings is non-causal.
- 7 Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/intervene>.

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6 Responding to Wrongdoing*

Helgard Mahrdt

Introduction

The political thinker Hannah Arendt was concerned for both children and the world. In her essay “The Crisis in Education”, she argued that educators have a double responsibility – namely to the children they teach *and* to the world. Teachers introduce the children to the world, “pointing out the details and saying to [them]: this is our world” (Arendt, 1993, p. 189). A child is not “simply a not yet finished living creature” (Arendt, 1993, p. 185), he or she is also “a newcomer in this human world” (Arendt, 1993, p. 185), and as such needs to be gradually introduced into it.

The world is old; because it is made by human beings who are mortal, “it wears out; and because it continuously changes its inhabitants it runs the risk of becoming as mortal as they” (Arendt, 1993, p. 192). To save it from ruin, education must prepare the new and young “for the task of renewing a common world” (Arendt, 1993, p. 196). However, in their encounters with the world, young people will not only experience beauty and friendship, justice, equality, and freedom; they will also be confronted with evil, violence, wars, humanitarian crimes, and all forms of injustice. Despite all of this, we hope that they will take responsibility for the world and set things right. This means they will have to take the initiative and act. This includes the risk that their actions – despite the best of intentions – may turn out to be wrong. Introducing them to Hannah Arendt’s reflections on forgiveness, revenge, reconciliation, and nonreconciliation may help them in their task of taking responsibility for the world.

Belonging to a Community

If we are to understand what Arendt has to say about forgiveness, I first need to introduce the concept of community and to summarize the characteristics of action. In her book *The Human Condition*, Arendt conceptualizes the human-built world in terms of “the three fundamental human activities”: labor, work, and action (1998, p. 7). These activities correspond to “the basic conditions under which life on earth has been given to man” (Arendt,

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1998, p. 7) – namely, life itself, worldliness, and plurality. Labor is an activity driven by the necessities of life and is thus necessarily repetitive, without beginning or end. In Arendt’s own words, “necessity, not freedom, rules the life of society” (2005, p. 149). Work “provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings” (Arendt, 1998, p. 7). Action is “the only activity that goes on directly between men” (Arendt, 1998, p. 7). It is the faculty that “corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world” (Arendt 1998, p. 7). Arendt argues that we always act within an “already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions” (1998, p. 184). This precisely is the reason why “action almost never achieves its purpose” (1998, p. 184).

Actions are unpredictable, boundless, and irreversible. Laws have always been understood as ‘stabilizing forces’; in other words, laws help secure the life of public affairs. “All laws”, Arendt states, “first create a space in which they are valid, and this space is the world in which we can move about in freedom” (2005, p. 190).

According to Arendt, “the people’s support [...] lends power to the institutions of a country” (1970, p. 41). “The sanctions of the laws [...] are directed against those citizens who – without withholding their support – wish to make an exception for themselves”; however, the sanctions “are not their essence” (Arendt 1970, p. 97). The “laws are ‘directives’ rather than ‘imperatives’” and can be “likened to the ‘rules of a game’ [...], and these rules are ‘valid’ rules” (Arendt 1970, p. 97). According to Arendt, “the point of these rules is not that I admit to them voluntarily or recognize theoretically their validity, but that in practice I cannot enter the game unless I conform; my motive for acceptance is my wish to play, and since men exist only in the plural, my wish to play is identical with my wish to live” (1970, p. 97). She states, “Every man is born into a community with preexisting laws which he ‘obeys’, first of all because there is no other way for him to enter the great game of the world” (1970, p. 97).

Obviously, there are people who “wish to change the rules of the game, as the revolutionary does, or to make an exception for [themselves], as the criminal does; but to deny them on principle means no mere ‘disobedience’, but the refusal to enter the human community” (Arendt 1970, p. 97). How existential a guaranteed place in the community is becomes obvious when we look at the experience of “European peoples between the two wars”, people who “no longer felt sure of their elementary rights if these were not protected by a government to which they belonged by birth” (Arendt, 1973, p. 292). When refugees become stateless, they become rightless too; in other words, they lose their legal status and “no longer belong to any community whatsoever” (Arendt, 1973, p. 295). Paradoxically, in such a case, “a criminal offense becomes the best opportunity to regain some kind of human equality, even if it be as a recognized exception to the norm. [...] As a criminal, even a stateless person will not be treated worse than another criminal, that is, he will be treated like everybody else” (Arendt, 1973, p. 286). It may

sound absurd, but “only as an offender against the law can [a stateless person] gain protection from it” (Arendt, 1973, p. 286). As Christian Volk briefly and aptly comments, “here the extent of the legal paradox becomes apparent, because through the theft, the stateless refugee could obtain all those legal rights that a citizen qua citizen was guaranteed, if a crime was committed. In other words, by committing an offense, the stateless refugee again became a member of a legal-political community and received some of his civic rights back” (Volk, 2010, p. 189).

With this calamity of stateless and rightless refugees in mind, we can see that it is crucial “to live in a framework where one is judged by one’s actions and opinions” (Arendt, 1973, 296f.). Arendt’s point is that if a human being loses his place in the community, it seems that he loses “the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow man” (1973, p. 300). When a criminal breaks the law, he puts “himself outside the community constituted by it” (Arendt, 1970, p. 97), and his return to the community requires that he first be punished. To give a recent example, the supporters of President Donald Trump who attacked the US Capitol building on 6 January 2021 thought to overturn his defeat in the 2020 presidential election by disrupting the joint session of Congress as they certified the votes, vandalizing and occupying the building for several hours. They have since been brought before the court and sentenced for their actions: for example, one rioter “who attacked police officers working to hold back the angry pro-Trump mob on Jan. 6 was sentenced [...] to more than five years behind bars, the most so far for anyone sentenced in the insurrection” (as noted by Long, NBC Boston News, 17 December 2021).

The Power to Forgive

For Arendt, one of the chief characteristics of human affairs is their frailty. The outcome of the “human ability to act – to start new unprecedented processes” (Arendt, 1998, p. 231) remains uncertain and unpredictable. “Men”, we read in *The Human Condition*, “have always been capable of destroying whatever was the product of human hands and have become capable today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make – the earth and earthly nature” (Arendt, 1998, p. 232), but they

never have been and never will be able to undo or even to control reliably any of the processes they start through action. [...] And this incapacity to undo what has been done is matched by an almost equally complete incapacity to foretell the consequences of any deed or even to have reliable knowledge of its motives.

(Arendt, 1998, p. 233)

If actions are irreversible, is there, then, a way of “being unbound from the past in order to go on” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 100)? Arendt suggests that the remedy for “the uncertainty of human action, in the sense that we never quite

know what we are doing when we begin to act into the web of interrelationships and mutual dependencies that constitute the field of action”, is “the human capacity to forgive” (2005, 56f.). Surprisingly, Jesus of Nazareth discovered “the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs” (Arendt, 1998, p. 238). In her view, his concept of forgiveness was primarily political because he taught that “the power to forgive [...] must be mobilized by men toward each other before they can hope to be forgiven by God also” (Arendt, 1998, p. 239; Young-Bruhl, 2006, p. 100). However, and this is important, this does not relate to what she calls “the extremity of crime and willed evil” (Arendt, 1998, p. 239). “Crime and willed evil”, Jesus taught, “will be taken care of by God in the Last Judgment, which plays no role whatsoever in life on earth, and the Last Judgment is not characterized by forgiveness but by just retribution” (Arendt, 1998, p. 240). Jesus speaks in Luke 17:1–5 of *skandala*, “offences which are unforgivable, at least on earth” (Arendt, 1998, p. 240). For Arendt, these are those offences which “we can neither punish nor forgive, [and] which, since Kant, we call ‘radical evil’” (1998, p. 241). They are deeds about whose perpetrators “we can indeed only repeat with Jesus: ‘It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea’” (Arendt, 1998, p. 241).

There is a tragic element in all action, and “the tradition never lost sight of this tragic element [...], nor failed to understand, though usually in a non-political context, that forgiving is among the greatest of human virtues” (Arendt, 2005, p. 58). However, Arendt thinks something “was lost by the tradition of political thought, and survived only in the religious tradition” – namely, “the relationship between doing and forgiving as a constitutive element of the intercourse between acting men”. According to Arendt, this was “the specifically political [...] novelty in Jesus’ teachings” (p. 58).

Most discussions of forgiveness focus on the moral domain. However, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt develops the idea that forgiveness is a necessary foundation of human action. “Without being forgiven, being released from the chain and pattern of consequences of what we have done”, she writes, “our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover” (1998, p. 237; see also Tsao, 2010, p. 53).

Forgiving is an action, and actions are free and unpredictable; therefore, forgiveness is not an automatic reaction “but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from the consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven” (Arendt, 1998, p. 241). She thus sets forgiveness in opposition to vengeance, “which acts in the form of re-acting against an original trespassing, whereby far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed” (p. 240). Arendt values Jesus’ discovery highly. In her view,

[T]he great boldness and unique pride of this concept of forgiveness as a basic relationship between humans does not lie in the seeming reversal of the calamity of guilt and error into the possible virtues of magnanimity or solidarity. It is rather that forgiving attempts the seemingly

impossible, to undo what has been done, and that it succeeds in making a new beginning where beginnings seemed to have become no longer possible.

(Arendt, 2005, 57f.)

Finding a remedy to the irreversibility of action in human action itself was the result of a longer process of thought. In 1942, Arendt argued that “it is one of the laws of life in the human community that every victim – but not every conquered enemy – cries for vengeance” (2007, p. 262). In 1946, she admitted in a letter to Karl Jaspers that she did not know how the Germans and the Jews would ever get out of a situation which

for the Germans [means that they] are burdened [...] with thousands or tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people who cannot be adequately punished within the legal system; and [for the] Jews [that they] are burdened with millions of innocents, by reason of which every Jew alive today can see himself as innocence personified.

(Arendt and Jaspers, 1992, p. 54)

In 1958, in her book *The Human Condition*, she suggested that forgiving is “the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences” (Arendt, 1998, p. 241).

However, as I mentioned earlier, forgiving does not include the extremity of crime and willed evil. Is it then possible to find a reasonable attitude toward the fact of “the organized guilt in which the Nazis had involved all inhabitants of the German lands, the inner exiles no less than the stalwart Party members and the vacillating fellow travelers” (Arendt, 1968, 19f.)? According to Arendt, this is difficult because it involves mastering the past, which “perhaps cannot be done with any past, but certainly not with the past of Hitler Germany” (Arendt, 1968, p. 20). Why not? The reason is Auschwitz. “What we learned about Auschwitz [...] in 1943”, she said in a conversation with Günter Gaus,

was the real shock. Before that, we said: Well, one has enemies. [...] But this was different. It was really as if an abyss had opened. [...] *This ought not to have happened*. And I don’t mean just the number of victims. I mean the method, the fabrication of corpses and so on – I don’t need to go into that: [...] something happened there to which we cannot reconcile ourselves, none of us ever can.

(Arendt, 1994c, 13f.)

Roger Berkowitz is quite right to note that

Arendt’s embrace of reconciliation as a response to the wrongs of the world is not absolute. Not every wrong and not every wrongdoer can or

should be reconciled. And some wrongs, while not irreconcilable, are bad enough that they do not merit active reconciliation.

(Berkowitz, 2017, p. 32)

It is true, “aggressive warfare is [...] as old as recorded history” and “war crimes [...] [are] no more unprecedented than the ‘crimes against peace’” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 234). “Both were covered by international law”, but the “crime against humanity perpetrated upon the body of the Jewish people” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 247) was not “a matter of criminal excess in the pursuit of war and victory” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 235) but genocide and as such new and unprecedented.

Forgiving the Person Not the Deed

“Directly or indirectly”, Young-Bruehl remarks, “Arendt’s reflections on forgiveness have had great influence since 1958 when *The Human Condition* appeared” (2006, p. 110). One example is Martin Luther King Jr. who in the 1960s noted, “Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to the relationship” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 111f.). Another example is “the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC), “which, for the first time in history, made forgiveness a guiding principle for a state” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 112). The head of the commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, raised the question in his memoir of “whether repentance should be a necessary precondition for forgiveness. His answer was that [...] unconditional forgiveness [...] is possible, not just on the grounds of unconditional love; it is also possible for a person to forgive [...] because the person doing the forgiving understands that forgiveness offers to release to the forgiver, freeing the victim from the role of being a victim” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 117). Two things are important to keep in mind: *first*, “the TRC was not a court. Its function did not include sentencing or punishment” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 114), and *second*, “the TRC arranged meetings between perpetrators and their victims”, but “forgiveness [...] could not be requested of the victims by the commission; it had to be freely chosen by the individuals who had been wronged” (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 115).

For Arendt, “love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others” (1998, p. 242). “Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason [...] that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical” (p. 242). Love is not concerned “with what the loved person may be, with his qualities and shortcomings no less than with his achievements, failings, and transgressions” (p. 242). In her view, respect is better suited to the worldly appreciation of others than is the passion of love: “what love is in its own, narrowly circumscribed sphere, respect is in the larger domain of human affairs” (p. 243). “Respect, [...] because it concerns only the person”, she argues, “is quite sufficient to prompt forgiving of what a

person did, for the sake of the person” (p. 243). This is precisely the point Arendt wishes to make: when we forgive, we do so because of the person in question – that is, *who* she is. This does not mean that she should not receive punishment for *what* she has done. We find “this shift from the objective *what* somebody did to the subjective *who* of the agent [...] even in our legal system” (Arendt, 2003, p. 111). She goes on, “For if it is true that we indict somebody for what he did, it is equally true that when a murderer is pardoned [...], it is not murder which is forgiven but the killer, his person as it appears in circumstances and intentions” (p. 111).

In Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, Arendt was confronted with a wrongdoer who refused to think about what he “was doing and who also refused in retrospect to think about it, that is, go back and remember what [he] did” (Arendt, 2003, p. 112). Here was someone who failed to constitute himself as somebody. He “stubbornly remain[ed] [a] nobody” who proved “unfit for intercourse with others who, good, bad, or indifferent, are at the very least persons” (p. 112).

To understand Arendt’s argument fully, it may be helpful to consider the distinction she makes between merely being human and being a person. “We might call [people]”, she argues, those “who in the moral collapse of Nazi Germany [...] never doubted that crimes remained crimes even if legalized by the government, [...] moral personalities” (Arendt, 2003, 78f.). However, this is, according to Arendt, “almost a redundancy” because “the quality of being a person, as distinguished from merely being human, [...] is precisely his ‘moral’ quality” (p. 79). It means a person does “not need to feel an obligation” not to participate in crimes since he has a conscience, and his conscience says, “‘This I *can’t* do,’ rather than, ‘This I *ought* not to do’” (p. 78). These persons were “morally the only reliable people” because they did not act according to a moral order but according to self-respect.

After the Eichmann trial, Arendt made the general statement that

the trouble with the Nazi criminals was precisely that they renounced voluntarily all personal qualities, as if nobody were left to be either punished or forgiven. They protested time and again that they had never done anything out of their own initiative, that they had no intentions whatsoever, good or bad, and that they only obeyed orders.

(Arendt, 2003, p. 111)

Consequently, “in rootless evil there is no person left whom one could ever forgive” (Arendt, 2003, p. 95).

The New Crime against Humanity

“Crimes against the Jewish people” have a long history. Given this history, Arendt recognized that it was “almost inevitable” that the Jews suffering under Hitler were “thinking exclusively in terms of their own history”

(Arendt, 1963a, p. 245). Thus, the atrocity of Auschwitz was not thought of as “an unprecedented crime of genocide, but, on the contrary, as the oldest crime they knew and remembered” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 245). Auschwitz “was seen mainly as a *familiar* crime of mass killing, as ‘the most horrible pogrom in Jewish history.’ Auschwitz was the worst of this continuum, but Arendt asserts, it was ‘different not only in degree of seriousness but in essence’” (Nenadic, 2013, p. 46). Arendt repeatedly insisted “that the new facts of the Holocaust demanded *breaking fresh conceptual ground* (...). Philosophy and law needed to ‘[rise] to the challenge of the unprecedented’” (Nenadic, 2013, p. 44). Instead, the Nuremberg Trials applied “the familiar paradigm of ‘war crimes’”, and thereby concealed the “crime of genocide”. The “Nuremberg Trials were cited in Jerusalem as valid precedent” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 233; Nenadic, 2013, p. 44). Old conceptual paradigms “were applied to the new circumstances in a manner that [...] obscured what was distinctive about them” (Nenadic, 2013, p. 44). True, the Jerusalem trial did not apply the ‘war crimes’ framework to genocide; however, by charging “Eichmann under the main legal category of ‘crimes against the Jewish people’, the Jerusalem trial”, Arendt claims, “missed an opportunity to better express the crime and thus to establish a firmer legal precedent for its future prosecution” (Nenadic 2013, 46). In her epilogue to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she argued that “justice of what was done in Jerusalem would have emerged to be seen by all if the judges had dared to address their defendant in something like the following terms”:

You admitted that the crime committed against the Jewish people during the war was the greatest crime in recorded history, and you admitted your role in it. [...] Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that it was nothing more than misfortune that made you a willing instrument in the organization of mass murder; there still remains the fact that you have carried out, and therefore actively supported, a policy of mass murder. [...] And just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations – as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world – we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang.

(Arendt, 1963a, p. 254)

Whereas the Nuremberg Charter defined “‘crimes against humanity’ as ‘inhuman acts’ [...] (*Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit*)”, the Jerusalem trial “centered on the crime against the Jewish people, a crime that could not be explained by any utilitarian purpose” (Arendt, 1963a, p. 252). In other words, the Jerusalem court did not “all into the trap of equating this crime with ordinary war crimes”. Yet, and fall this is Arendt’s critique,

at no point [...] either in the proceedings or in the judgment, did the Jerusalem trial ever mention even the possibility that extermination of whole ethnic groups – the Jews, or the Poles or the Gypsies – might be more than a crime against the Jewish or the Polish or the Gypsy people, that the international order, and mankind in its entirety, might have been grievously hurt and endangered.

(Arendt, 1963a, p. 252)

Arendt's judgment that none of us ever can be reconciled to what happened in Auschwitz is not only consequent but also entirely understandable since we are confronted with *skandala* (offences), which are unforgivable on earth. However, while "reconciliation had had no role in the Nuremberg court, [...] it was perceived as necessary in South Africa" (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 113). The reason Young-Bruehl gives is that

apartheid, "separateness", had not been a state policy for the elimination of nonwhite peoples, a Final Solution; it had been a protototalitarian state policy for depriving all non-white people of citizenship and relocating them from areas designated for whites only.

(Young-Bruehl, 2006, 113f.)

Additionally, she claims that "Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness as a necessary [...] ingredient of political life [...] has become central to political discourse around the world under the broader, more political term reconciliation" (p. 112).

Moreover, Arendt herself stated, "[E]very single person needs to be reconciled to a world into which he was born a stranger and in which, to the extent of his distinct uniqueness, he always remains a stranger" (Arendt, 1994a, p. 308). How, then, does she understand the notion of reconciliation? How does it differ from forgiveness, and why is it necessary to be reconciled to the world? Trying to answer these questions, I hope, will also further explain why Arendt's final judgment of Adolf Eichmann is "a judgment of nonreconciliation".

Reconciliation: "An Act of Political Judgment Affirming Solidarity"

Examining the notion of reconciliation in Hannah Arendt's work is not an easy task because she produced neither a theory of justice nor a theory of forgiving or reconciliation. She avoided coherent theories because, as Jerome Kohn argued, "implicit in the finality of any theory" is a "potential danger to human freedom". He links this statement to justice:

To formulate a coherent theory of justice would seem to be a worthwhile philosophical endeavor, one with Platonic roots but also current today, and at worst a harmless one. Would it not be worthwhile to know

the truth of what we are talking about when we talk about justice? Would not such knowledge instruct us how to deal with injustice when it occurs? But Arendt suggests something quite different. If we knew what justice was [...], then we would no longer have to think about the meaning of justice.

(Young-Bruehl and Kohn, 2001, p. 230)

However, I have argued that the capacity of forgiveness plays a central role as a remedy to the irreversibility of action and that we have reason to expect justice when crimes are brought to court. The difficulty or challenge is that justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation are themes implicit in many of Arendt's writings. Therefore,

a discussion of reconciliation may seem circumstantial, a mere accident. Reconciliation appears sporadically in Arendt's published writing. It does not appear in *On Revolution*. (...) In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the idea is present, but is spoken under the name "comprehension." In *The Human Condition*, reconciliation is mentioned only once, although the discussion of forgiveness in the section on Action is heavily influenced by Arendt's approach to reconciliation. Arendt's book most indebted to the thinking of reconciliation is *The Life of the Mind*, her unfinished final book, which contains important passages on reconciliation, many of which originate in the *Denktagebuch*.

(Berkowitz, 2017, 10f.)

It gets even more complicated since "reconciliation figures prominently in numerous published essays such as 'Understanding and Politics', 'The Gap Between Past and Future', 'The Crisis in Education', 'Truth and Politics', 'On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing', and 'Isak Dinesen 1885–1963'" (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 11). Finally, we should also look at her *Denktagebuch* in which she "energetically returns to the theme of reconciliation over the two decades that she actively engages with [it]" (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 11).

I will ask why reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) is crucial for politics and important for education too, on the condition that education has to prepare the new and young "for the task of renewing a common world" (Arendt, 1993, p. 196). In my attempt to answer this question, I am indebted to Roger Berkowitz who followed in detail "the threat of reconciliation through the *Denktagebuch*" (2017, p. 11).

For Arendt, "at the center of politics lies concern for the world, not for man" (Arendt, 2005, p. 106). The

world and the things of this world [...] are not the expression of human nature [...], but, on the contrary, [...] the result of the fact that human beings produce what they themselves are not – that is, things [...]. It is

within this world of things that human beings act and are themselves conditioned.

(Arendt, 2005, p. 106f)

The world is common to all of us. When we decide to accept “the world with the wrong in it”, we “accept and affirm the reality of people whose acts we consider to be fundamentally wrong” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13). Thus, while Arendt was deeply critical of totalitarian movements and thinking, she announced in the early 1950s,

Those who have turned their back on it are welcome; everyone is welcome who has not become a murderer or a professional spy in the process. We are anxious to establish friendship wherever we can, and this goes for former Fascists or Nazis as well as it goes for former Communists and Bolsheviks.

(Arendt, 1994b, p. 399)

In her opinion, “the fact that one was formerly wrong should carry with it no permanent stigma” (p. 400). The basis for her judgment is “that this century [the twentieth] is full of dangers and perplexities; we ourselves do not always, and never fully, know what we are doing” (p. 399). She adds, “[W]e know that some of the best of us at one time or another have been driven into the totalitarian predicament” (p. 399), perhaps thinking of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who at one time made wrong political decisions. Nevertheless, she reconciled with him, and, as Berkowitz suggests,

to reconcile with Heidegger means to accept that what he did was wrong and yet still affirm that the world is better with him and his wrongdoing in it than without them. [...] thus, while Arendt disagrees with anti-Semites and racists [...], she believes that they and their opinions are part of the common world.

(Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13)

Thus, one may say that reconciliation relates to the human condition of plurality “in a way that forgiveness and revenge [do] not” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13).

Forgiveness and revenge, Arendt writes in the *Denktagebuch*, “spring from Christian solidarity between mankind, that all are equally sinners and all are capable of everything just as their fellow man, even the greatest evil” (DI.1.6., as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13). On the Christian assumption,

forgiveness is perhaps possible insofar as it is only the express recognition that we all are sinners, thus it claims that everyone could have done anything, and in this way it produces an equality – not of rights, but of nature.

(DI.1.4. as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 12)

However, forgiveness based on the assumption that we could have committed similar wrongs “erases the difference between the one who forgives and the wrongdoer; thus, forgiveness erases the distance necessary to judge and makes judgment impossible” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 12).

We think of revenge as the opposite of forgiveness, yet revenge “similarly follows the Christian precept of a natural equality of all, but in the reverse direction” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13). “Revenge presumes we all have the right to do wrong. [It] proceeds from out of a concept that ‘we are all born poisoned’ by our vengeful lusts” (DI.1.5., as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13). Berkowitz adds, “To avenge a wrong is to claim the same passionate right as the wrongdoer” (p. 13). Thus, for Arendt, “Christian solidarity is a ‘negative solidarity which springs out of the idea of original sin’” (DI.1.6; as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 13). Not “Christian forgiveness and vengeance” bring “solidarity to be”, but “when I decide to reconcile with the world as it is, I affirm my love for the world and thus my solidarity with the world and those who live in it” (Berkowitz, 2017, 13f.). At the core of reconciliation is a specific political judgment. “The solidarity of reconciliation”, Arendt argues, “is firstly not the foundation of reconciliation (as the solidarity of being sinful is the foundation of forgiveness), but rather the product [of reconciliation]” (DI.1.6; as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, 13f.).

Solidarity, we read in *On Revolution* is the alternative to pity. “Solidarity, because it partakes of reason, and hence of generality, is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually, not only the multitude of a class or a nation or a people, but eventually all mankind” (Arendt, 1963b, p. 88). Arendt adds, “[C]ompared with the sentiment of pity, it may appear cold and abstract, for it remains to ‘ideas’ – to greatness, or honor, or dignity – rather than to any ‘love’ of men” (p. 89). However, solidarity moves beyond pity since “it comprehends the strong and the rich no less than the weak and the poor” (p. 89). “Solidarity, therefore”, Berkowitz rightly states,

is a conceptual judgment of reconciliation that is open to uniqueness and meaningful differences (of opinion, status, religion, and race), a judgment that appeals to a “common interest” not in majority opinion but in “the grandeur of man,” or “the honor of the human race,” or the dignity of man.

(Berkowitz, 2017, p. 14)

There is another important aspect of reconciliation – namely, it “addresses not the sin of the wrongdoer but the fact of the wrong itself” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 14). “*Reconciliation* has its origin in the coming to terms with [*Sich-abfinden*] what has been sent one as given [*dem Geschickten*]” (DI.1.4; as quoted in Berkowitz 2017, 14). “Arendt distinguishes the ‘mere wrong-doing’ from ‘the reality of being-guilty’” and writes, “What is so difficult to understand is that wrong can have permanence and even continuity. We call this guilt – wrong as continuity of the that-which-cannot-once-again-be-undone” (D III.22.69; as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 15).

“With guilty people, one cannot share a common world unless one punishes them or forgives them” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 15). “Guilt”, Berkowitz adds, “poisons politics”, and the way Arendt finds out of this problem is “by separating guilt from wrong”, with the result “that the wrong does not stick to the wrongdoer himself, and the wrongdoer can be freed from the permanence of guilt” (2017, p. 15).

However, to reestablish solidarity with the wrongdoer, first, the “wrongdoer must show himself ready to immediately correct his wrongdoing”; second, “the wronged person must be ready to no longer insist that a wrong has occurred [...]. This, [Arendt] writes, ‘is the sense of reconciliation, in which, in distinction from forgiveness, always both parties are engaged’” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 15). Reconciliation involves a ‘two-sided approach’, which Arendt turns to again in *The Human Condition* where she discusses forgiveness in the section on Action. Why, then, “does Arendt collapse the distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation that occupied much of her earlier work?” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 18). Berkowitz suggests as a possible answer, namely, “that Arendt [...] integrates forgiveness into her political idea of reconciliation”, a solution that he argues

is possible because reconciliation and the act of forgiveness are, as Arendt wrote already in a 1953 note in the *Denktagebuch*, two sides of a single coin: “Therefore no action is possible without mutual forgiveness (what is called reconciliation in politics)”.

(D VIII.17.303; as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 18)

As I mentioned earlier, “Eichmann could be neither reconciled with nor forgiven” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 31). Arendt “made her own judgment of Eichmann”, the final judgment she offered in the epilogue of her report, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Faced with his wrongs, she judged that “reconciliation would be powerless to remake the shattered human community” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 31). “Reconciliation”, she writes in the *Denktagebuch*, “has a merciless boundary, [...] a boundary that ‘forgiveness and revenge don’t recognize – namely, at that about which one must say: This ought not to have happened’” (D I.1.7.; as quoted in Berkowitz, 2017, p. 31). One cannot reconcile with such acts of ‘radical evil’, nor can one simply pass by. But one can judge, and that is precisely what Arendt does. She “condemns Eichmann to be banished from the Earth” (Berkowitz, 2017, p. 32).

Final Remark

Education’s task is to prepare the new and young for taking responsibility for the world, or what Arendt describes as the renewing of a common world. Human beings have been given the gift of free action, and since they always act in an already existing web of relations in which other human beings also act freely, nobody can know the outcome of deeds. Therefore, people must

be willing to forgive each other. Reconciliation is the more political term for forgiveness. Although we may live in “times full of dangers and perplexities”, human beings must not stop loving the world with all the wrong in it. If we do not wish to give up the freedom of action, we must release others and be released ourselves from the “chain and pattern of consequences” that all action engenders. When we forgive, we always forgive the doer, not the deed. If the deed is criminal, the doer must be punished before returning to the community. However, when deeds are unpunishable, such as these new crimes against humanity – as Arendt learned from the Holocaust – then perhaps “the best that can be achieved is to know precisely what it was, and to endure this knowledge, and then to wait and see what comes of knowing and enduring” (Arendt, 1968, p. 20).

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7 Facets of Justice in Education

A Petroleum Nation Addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda

Ole Andreas Kvamme

Introduction

In this chapter, I study selected instances of environmental and sustainability education as expressions of justice. Education is here conceived broadly and refers to reflections and practices in which society reproduces and transforms itself both within and beyond formal institutions (Kvamme, Kvernbekk, and Strand, 2016, p. 16). I am historically and politically situated in a Norwegian context. Two aspects are thus important. Along with the other Nordic countries, Norway has a long tradition of making considerable contributions to the United Nations (UN) and the establishment of a sustainability agenda, which is currently expressed in *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN, 2015). This agenda is historically connected to vital concerns raised within the UN – on the one hand to eradicate poverty and hunger by focusing on economic development and on the other to take the necessary measures to accomplish this aim without exceeding the earth’s ecological limits. The latter concern requires addressing the ecological and climate crises, with global warming a persistent and increasingly experienced threat to life on earth. This global outlook challenges any narrow, parochial conception of justice and education restricted by the borders of the nation-state.

At the same time, Norway is the 3rd-largest exporter of gas and the 15th-largest exporter of oil globally (Norwegian Petroleum Directorate and Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, 2022). The dilemmas this position entails are crystallized in reports provided by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documenting the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change and presenting assessments of projected climate change, potential impacts, and associated risks. The IPCC Special Report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* (2019) is decisive; it demonstrates the considerable difference between the 1.5°C and 2°C increase in global temperatures in terms of the deterioration of living conditions. Climate researchers report that more than half of the world’s oil reserves must remain in the ground to meet the 1.5°C carbon budget (see, e.g., Welsby et al., 2021). The International Energy Agency (IEA, 2021) has determined that there is no space for new oil fields within the aim of limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C.

The Storting, Norway's parliament, has a substantial majority who support prolonging oil and gas production, including exploring new fields, for as long as possible. This was also the position of the former liberal-conservative government led by Erna Solberg, which was in office from 2013 until elections in September 2021. It was replaced by a new coalition, led by the social democratic Jonas Gahr Støre, who immediately told the *Financial Times* that this Norwegian policy plank would continue (Milne, 2021). Norway is also, due to the wealth accumulated from oil and gas production, an exceptionally affluent country. With a population of 5.2 million, the nation-state administers the Government Pension Fund Global (the 'oil fund'), with a market value of more than €1.2 trillion (Norges Bank, 2022).

In summary, then, Norway's position is distinguished by incredible affluence based on a petroleum economy with ambitions to prolong oil and gas production for the foreseeable future, even as it ambitiously supports the UN's sustainability agenda with both global equity and transformation to a non-carbon world among its major aims. In this chapter, I look into how the complexities, contradictions, and dilemmas that distinguish this position are dealt with in the Norwegian context, with issues of justice and education a primary concern. I cite selected prominent examples as focuses of attention. In the first part of the chapter, I clarify how justice is dealt with methodologically and discuss it as a manifold concern within the sustainability agenda. In that way, I adhere to and align with the main ambition of this book – to restore normativization of education through a powerful notion of justice. My concern here is definitely “to challenge tendencies to narrow down, singularize and limit the spaces of justice in, for and through education”, as the editors express in the introduction, in this chapter followed up, by conceiving the sustainability agenda as a fractured whole, as accounted for in the following sections.

Justice in a Stereoscopic Optic

In a review of article contributions addressing justice within philosophy of education, Marianna Papastephanou (2021) maps the wide variety of conceptions of justice employed, including educational and distributive justice, social justice, democratic justice, relational justice, and what she calls post-modern, multiple justice. These manifold expressions – or *face(t)s* in her preferred formulation – of justice do not bother Papastephanou. Indeed, that very multiplicity is an expression of discursive justice, as it brings in many voices. This is where the normative vein is most visibly exposed in her account of confronting discursive injustices:

Discursive injustices affect, though they do not necessarily produce, various facets of justice along with their synergy and the cracks in the whole that their synergy involves. This whole makes the concept of justice (with no adjectival specifications) intelligible and communication on justice (in such abstraction) possible.

(Papastephanou, 2021, 8)

Papastephanou problematizes the metaphor of ‘perspective’. Her objection is that this concept is constrained by a disconnected, single-focused take on justice. Instead, Papastephanou offers the metaphor of a stereoscopic optic, emphasizing the interconnectedness, tensions, and contradictions between various face(t)s that open a deeper conception of justice. This approach is guided by the notion of a ‘fractured whole’ that avoids connotations of harmony and allows for a space that accommodates the many face(t)s.

In this chapter, I suggest that justice is vital to the sustainable development agenda of the UN when conceived as a fractured whole that includes various facets of justice that establish interconnections and tensions: some in the foreground, others in the background; some focused, others blurred.

Papastephanou’s stereoscopic optic refers to developments in photography and painting in the nineteenth century. Used here in considering specific texts, the metaphorical aspect is foregrounded, and the concomitant notion of a fractured whole is considered a regulative ideal, never to be fully realized.

Papastephanou introduces the stereoscopy metaphor in a review article that tends toward overview and comprehensiveness. In the following, I turn to some specific texts, where the identification of perspectives on justice may appear to be as pertinent as an all-embracing, albeit fractured, stereoscopic optic. Indeed, in two of the three texts, certain perspectives on justice turn out to be particularly prominent. The stereoscopy metaphor may still be methodologically productive, with certain aspects accentuated while others fade into the background or disappear. These texts cannot in themselves express the sustainability agenda as a fractured whole, but they do demonstrate how certain aspects are emphasized and brought into focus while others are left out. I acknowledge how ideology is at work here, expressed in hegemonic imaginaries (Ricoeur, 2008) that uphold current structures and practices.

Justice in the Sustainability Agenda

The UN’s sustainability agenda clearly adopts an ethical, normative approach. In fact, the ethical dimension may be regarded as its primary outlook (Kemp, 2011, 77). The agenda does not merely consider the needs of individual human beings or nation-states but concerns the needs of all human beings in the present and the future and even, though often with reservations, the more-than-human world. In this way, the agenda brings together several facets of justice – intragenerational, intergenerational, and ecological – that may further be expressed as distributive, social, gender, and climate justice. In a similar vein, Dryzek and Pickering (2019) accentuate the significance of justice beyond national borders, justice across generations, and justice for non-humans as fundamental to the politics of the Anthropocene, bringing them all together in the notion of planetary justice. Nightingale, Böhler, and Campbell (2019, p. 8) claim that “narratives of sustainability are tied to issues of justice”, demonstrating how the key concepts of balance, limits, and

diversity all express the tensions, contradictions, and dilemmas involved. They conclude their argument by drawing “attention to the need to continually ask: sustainability of what? And sustainability for whom?” (Nightingale, Böhler, and Campbell, 2019, 9). Particularly from a distributional approach, the notion of limits stands out as significant. The sustainability agenda acknowledges that the natural resources conditioning a good life are limited, as is the production of waste. From this emerges the issue of the fair distribution of privileges and burdens. In addition to the forms of justice noted earlier come notions of regulative justice, which are visible not only in the processes determining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 (Langford, 2016) but also in determining the negotiations following up the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992) that led to the Paris Agreement (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). Institutional justice and regulative justice are particularly promoted in SDG 16 – peace, justice, and strong institutions – which also accentuates the prevention of violence and the significance of participation.

Although the stereoscopic optic adopted here is sensitive to various forms of justice, particular attention is paid toward the ethical and political questions raised by Nightingale, Böhler, and Campbell; namely, the *what* and the *who* in the sustainability agenda. Without supplying a clear definition, justice in what follows is generally aligned with an ideal to accommodate, care for, and respect all who may be influenced by the issue in question.¹

From the outset, UN engagement with sustainable development has been criticized for not being able to accommodate the full range of concerns and fundamentally expressing an oxymoron (see, e.g., Brown, 2015). Agenda 2030 with its 17 SDGs has not silenced those objections. The criticism that the agenda upholds unjust structures supporting the continued exploitation of life on earth has been leveled by both activists and researchers, with the support of the current economic world order expressed in SDG 8 and SDG 17 as frequent targets (Adelman, 2018; Kotzé, 2018). The fundamental contradiction between consensus statements making promises and expressing concerns and the absence of sufficient political follow-up, which characterizes the story of the sustainability agenda, gives the sting to such charges.

Sustainability and Education

In the sustainability agenda, education serves at least three functions. First, good education is considered in SDG 4 a condition for development and a good life (UN, 2015). The formulation of particular targets emphasizes inclusive education, with reference to disability and gender. Second, education is conceived of as a key to reaching all the other goals, as expressed in target 4.7, which refers to UNESCO initiatives like education for sustainable development, global citizenship education, intercultural education, and peace education. Finally and most significantly, the call to *transform our world* (cf. the name of the agenda) demonstrates how Agenda 2030 is upheld by the ambition of transformation and going beyond formal, institutional

settings to involve social imaginaries, societal institutions, and many societal practices. Considering the key role of justice in the sustainability agenda, a central function of education in this regard is addressing various facets of injustice and moving toward sustainability justice, which in this chapter is considered a fractured whole.

Although the discussion of sustainability, justice, and education on a theoretical level is pertinent and necessary, I now bring in selected examples from a Norwegian context, the selection determined by my overall interest. As the introduction indicates, the aim is here to explore the tensions and contradictions inherent in Norway's position on the sustainability agenda. An underlying premise is that although Norway is in some respects a special case, this examination may also demonstrate the more general challenges that characterize the sustainability agenda as a fractured whole. Elsewhere I have, in more detail, studied recontextualizations of the sustainability agenda in Norwegian policy and curriculum documents (Kvamme, 2018) and classroom interactions (Kvamme, 2020).

Sustainability Justice and Education in the Norwegian Context

The texts I focus on here are the objectives clause in the Education Act, a speech made by Erna Solberg, then the prime minister (PM), and the educational resources on the Norwegian Petroleum Museum website.² The objectives clause is a Norwegian education policy text that regulates formal primary and secondary education. The latter two texts exemplify how the sustainability agenda is considered within contexts that focus on Norway's distinct position as a petroleum nation. Both may be conceived of as significant symbolic expressions of Norwegian attempts to accommodate justice and Agenda 2030. The objectives clause does not expose the petroleum nation or the sustainability agenda in the same way, but it demonstrates in its vagueness and distinctness how sustainability justice may still emerge in a judicial and normative text regulating the Norwegian education system (Kvamme, 2018).

Education in Norway is governed by a national curriculum presented as the result of democratic political processes. The objectives clause represents a key policy text that regulates a predominantly public education system that is conceived as part of the broader public-welfare apparatus (Møller and Skedsmo, 2013, 338). The welfare state is central to the Nordic political model; based on the principles of freedom, equality, and solidarity (Strand, 2020), it holds that the state has responsibility for the material and social welfare of the population. The context of a social democratic welfare state has also determined Norwegian petroleum and gas politics, with regulation through taxation and the net profits in the oil fund saved for future Norwegian generations.

The Objectives Clause in Norway's Education Act

Like the other Nordic countries, Norway has a tradition of expressing the overall purpose of school and education in a short statement included in the

Education Act (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008). The current expression, passed by the Storting in 2008 and only 198 words, includes societal, individual, and institutional dimensions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007). The societal dimension emerges in a list of fundamental values on which education should be based, “such as respect for human dignity and nature, and on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity”. The individual dimension addresses the development of the student and explicitly expresses a *Bildung* conception of education. The institutional dimension emphasizes the significance of participating practices and non-discrimination.

None of the expressions in this normative text run contrary to the sustainability agenda, and the fundamental values in particular may be said to precondition various facets of justice that do not come to the surface. For example, intellectual freedom can be regarded as opening up discursive justice, equality, and solidarity, from which social, gender, and disability justice may emerge, supplemented by participatory practices that reflect the institutional dimension. Respect for human dignity stands out as a comprehensive value included in these possible facets of justice.

One formulation in the objectives clause emerges as particularly striking, due to its emphasis on action – students shall learn “to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness”. Other than that, preferred ethical actions are not articulated, which may reflect the openness of the *Bildung* concept (Kvamme, 2012). But in the articulation of environmental action, ecological justice emerges as a concern, which calls attention to the formulation of the fundamental value of respect for nature.

The objectives clause contains references to human rights and “our common international cultural traditions”. However, there are neither explicit expressions of global justice nor concerns for future generations that make climate justice distinct. Such concerns may be connected with the emphasis on environmental action, but they are still positioned somewhere in the background or barely on the surface. The national context is made visible by embedding the fundamental values in “Christian and humanist heritage and traditions” and referring to “the national cultural heritage”. This situatedness makes the scope of the fundamental value of solidarity an open question; is it conceived of solely within or also beyond national borders?

To sum up, studying the objectives clause from the approach of a stereoscopic optic, ecological justice stands out as the most distinct concern, surrounded by several other values, issues, and subjects that comprise a normative vision of what education is about. Several of its formulations may function as preconditions for the surfacing of various facets of justice. An issue is whether the scope of justice articulated is linked with the present nation-state or represents a global outlook that extends into the future. This issue, never explicitly addressed in the objectives clause but decisive to the sustainability agenda, is considered further as I turn to texts within contexts that explicitly express Norway as a petroleum nation.

PM's Address to the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise

In January 2020, Erna Solberg, the prime minister of Norway, gave a speech at the annual conference of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (Solberg, 2020). Solberg was then co-chair, with Ghanaian president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, of the UN secretary-general's SDG Advocates. She thus personified the Norwegian engagement with and responsibility for Agenda 2030 by following up her predecessor Gro Harlem Brundtland's chairing of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1983–1987), which led to the report *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Her international engagement has given Erna Solberg authority and legitimacy with regard to the sustainability agenda – a steady, reliable position from which to speak.

I consider the PM's address at the annual conference of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise as a lesson on justice and education with regard to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. In other words, I employ the structure or imaginary of the state leader as a teacher who determines how the current situation should be conceived and managed. With this analytical approach, ideological aspects of the speech may also become visible – expressed in the facets of justice that are discernible, and those that are not.

The date is January 8, 2020, and Solberg establishes the context of a new year and a new decade: “[This is] the year in which we take stock after five years with Sustainable Development Goals. The year in which the Paris Agreement is put into effect” (Solberg, 2020). That is the central reference in the speech. At the outset, Solberg provides two examples from Norwegian industry to illustrate the changes she says are underway. During the first week of 2020, she visited a new biofuel plant and opened a new offshore field that will produce oil and gas with almost no greenhouse gas emissions. The message is clear: A green transformation is taking place. Now. Right in front of our eyes. The PM turns to English: “Let me formulate this as the British usually do: Wake up and smell the coffee” (Solberg, 2020). This, then, is the first point that Solberg makes in this lesson: The audience should recognize the new reality.

The second concern is introduced almost immediately and addresses the challenge that has been laid out in this chapter: How can Norway support the petroleum sector and still fulfill the SDGs and its commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Solberg's argument involves two elements. First, the Paris Agreement is based on counting emissions where they occur. In other words, countries that produce oil do not have any special obligations as to the Paris Agreement. Still, Norway could have chosen to exit the oil and gas industry, as both environmental nongovernmental organizations and environmentally oriented political parties have advocated. But Solberg makes the point very clear:

Nevertheless, some call for a monitored phasing out of Norwegian petroleum activities, although Norwegian production may easily be

replaced by others. As a result, a massive transfer of Norwegian incomes to other countries will take place, in the best case with minimal climate effect. The majority has realized that this is an extraordinarily bad idea.
(Solberg, 2020)

There have been suggestions from economic researchers that Norway could have used its position as a prominent oil and gas producer to initiate an agreement between such countries to phase out petroleum activities (Fæhn et al., 2013). The PM's conclusion is, however, that it is demanding enough to make the majority of countries fulfill the commitments they have made in the Paris Agreement. A new initiative now, with another distribution of responsibility between nations, might ignite new battles:

I remind you of the period of almost 10 years necessary to reach the Paris Agreement. The world does not have time for more negotiations. We have to act, not continue to negotiate now. Second is the lack of realism in such a suggestion. Among the oil-producing countries, we find Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Venezuela, and the USA. It might have been permissible to believe in Santa Claus in December, but now we are writing "January", and the season for dreaming is definitely over. This is why I believe that we, explicitly and distinctly, must express that Norwegian policy is to support the Paris Agreement as it is formulated. Anything else would be irresponsible. Within this framing, there will still be a demand for oil and gas, even in the future.

(Solberg, 2020)

The lack of realism inherent in challenging the regulations of the Paris Agreement is evaluated as ridiculous, complete with a dismissive reference to Santa Claus in January, and therefore irresponsible. From here the PM proceeds to visit other concerns, but the major issue is always the green transformation of the Norwegian economy. So, what facets of justice emerge in this speech? And how does it deal with the dilemmas and contradictions of the Norwegian position?

First of all, Solberg clearly expresses that Norway is willing to fulfill the commitments of the Paris Agreement and the UN Agenda 2030 with its 17 SDGs. In that respect, she acknowledges the issues of justice, particularly climate justice, expressed in that initiative. However, Solberg does not dwell on such issues, and social and global injustice, climate crisis, species extinction, ecological degradation, and the like are not unpacked or even considered in the speech. In other words, there is little to be learned about such issues and concerns in this lesson by the PM. It is a speech by a prominent SDG ambassador, but in this context, it is first of all a speech by the PM of Norway in defense of national economic interests. It is not about the hazards, risks, and degradations that the earth faces as a consequence of human overconsumption of limited resources. Rather, it highlights new opportunities that the green transformation represents for Norway's private sector.

The central face of justice is brought into focus in Solberg's concern for the nation-state to accommodate fair and equal conditions for business activities and industrial development in the context of the Paris Agreement. In her speech, the PM teaches the audience that the state will safeguard a just arrangement of the nation's economic institutions, which are facing the green transformation. This emphasis on economic arrangements is also decisive when Solberg addresses the international arena. She portrays a world in which the SDGs and the Paris Agreement regulate the activities of competitive nation-states. As long as Norway complies with these regulations, Solberg sees no reason why it should give up the privileges of producing oil and gas.

Suggestions to take advantage of Norway's position to make the rules of the game more just – specifically, making the commitments of oil-producing countries more binding – are dismissed. Here is where issues of injustice surface in the speech, in assessing the suggestion that Norway should not make use of the space offered by the Paris Agreement but transfer those opportunities to other countries. This is evaluated as stupid and – rhetorically – as unfair. It obviously benefits Norway as an oil and gas producer that emissions in the Paris Agreement are counted where the greenhouse gases are emitted, but one should not spend time considering whether this accords with a principle of distributive justice. Quite the contrary – it is procedural justice that Solberg appeals to and defends here when she refers to the outcome of international negotiations between the world's sovereign nation-states.

In these ways, the central message in this lesson on education and justice is to take advantage of the opportunities that the green transformation represents as well as you can, within the framing set by nation-states and international regulations. Do not bother yourself about the non-ideal status of these arrangements and have no bad feelings about being guided by self-interest. In a competitive world, others will benefit from the opportunities on offer if you don't grasp those opportunities first. The threats, risks, and injustices that actually prompted the establishment of the sustainable development agenda are, as we have seen, not addressed. Possible dilemmas and contradictions simply do not appear.

An additional aspect of the Norwegian position that merits mention here – the electrification of offshore oil fields – aims to make Norwegian production greener than other oil-producing countries. As we have seen, Solberg provides an example of this transition in the opening of her speech. The electrification of offshore activities has been debated and is also a discussion point within the environmental movement. Even in Norway, with its substantial supply of green energy from hydroelectric dams and, increasingly, wind energy, electricity is a limited resource. If the nation electrifies its oil fields, more electricity must be produced, and in this reckoning, the environment will always be on the losing end. In other words, the green transformation that the PM refers to takes place at the expense of ecological justice. The central lesson is in any case to open one's eyes – see that the times are changing – and use opportunities to do green business.

In a stereoscopic optic, sustainability justice here becomes a matter of a single, focused concern, a procedural justice that regulates the discourse of green transitions, leaving out other ethical considerations and facets of justice that are seen as unrealistic or – worse – as hampering the green transitions taking place. From an approach guided by distributive justice, however, other aspects could become the focus. One could well conclude that Norway has received – at least – its fair share of riches from the earth’s limited petroleum resources, or that Norway, due to its incredible affluence thanks to oil and gas, is in a particularly advantageous position to wind down its petroleum activities. Such facets of justice are however out of sight and never surface in Solberg’s speech.

The Norwegian Petroleum Museum’s Educational Resources Addressing Sustainability and Climate

The third case is the educational resources on the website of the Norwegian Petroleum Museum (2022). The museum is the primary and prominent official locus for presenting the national oil and gas history and is located in Stavanger, the capital of Norwegian petroleum activities.

The Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, the local Stavanger authorities, and the Norwegian petroleum and gas industry are all represented on the museum board (Norwegian Petroleum Museum, 2022). The museum is mandated to promote lifelong learning for the general public. The prominent position of the Norwegian Petroleum Museum makes it particularly interesting for studies on how the dilemmas and contradictions characterizing Norway’s position are mediated and negotiated in an educational context.

The climate crisis is addressed in one of the museum’s galleries, followed up and reflected in several web assignments mainly designed for secondary school. Here I examine these digital resources, with a sensitivity to the facets of justice that come to the surface and a particular focus on representations of the sustainability agenda.

The digital resources are structured into two parts: one focusing on petroleum history, the other addressing the climate. The historical resources are centered on two events that are not directly relevant to this chapter and are thus not examined.

The second part focuses on the climate, with the title “Climate for Change”³, playing on ‘climate change’ but with an emphasis on transformation. The issues are dealt with in a combination of short written presentations of the issue in focus, mostly one or two paragraphs long, combined with illustrative pictures and one or two videos. The students are encouraged to view the videos and supposedly read the texts and illustrations. Against this background, various written assignments are provided to elaborate on the issues in question.

Five issues are made visible: global warming, the carbon budget, energy and energy history, the UN SDGs, and population growth, climate and the

economy. The first and third issues are presented in a framing that emphasizes the transmission of knowledge, while the second (the carbon budget) is very sketchy and provides little help to students. However, the two last priorities, detailed next, offer a richer account involving student reflections, with a focus on the SDGs and population growth, the economy, and the climate.

The website's introduction to the SDGs, in a text almost quoting the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), states the following:

A sustainable society is a society that is good for everyone who lives not just now, but also for those who are to live in the future. The UN has established 17 sustainable development goals. Moreover, the UN claims that if we are able to accomplish these goals, the world will be a better place for everyone. The UN's SDGs are divided into three parts: social aspects, the economy, and climate and the environment.

(Norwegian Petroleum Museum, 2022)

This presentation is followed by assignments, which are organized into two sections. In the first section, the students are asked, individually, in groups, and in a whole-class discussion to consider the entire agenda, select the three most important goals, and provide good reasons for their choices.

Two links are given in this assignment; they guide the students to resources provided by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). One is a video (NRK, 2019) and the other is an article (NRK, 2020); both establish interconnections between gender, education, and the climate. The decisive argument goes as follows, based on subtitles from the video:

[E]ducated women give birth to fewer and healthier children. Education gives girls power to make decisions over their own life and their own body. Additionally, it will contribute to slow population growth. And as a consequence, fewer will consume the earth's resources.

In the article, the gender issue is framed within the results of Project Drawdown,⁴ which claims that the education of girls is the second most important measure for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, surpassed only by reducing food waste. These measures are both said to be more significant than the transition to plant-based food, the establishment of cooling plants (like refrigerators) without greenhouse gases, the restoration of tropical forests, and wind power on land. These two links stand out as powerful suggestions for what may be regarded as good answers to the assignments, although the students can in principle choose other goals and give different reasons for these choices.

The next group of assignments invites students to deliberate on several issues; the first is why gender equality may reduce climate change, and the second is why combating poverty and hunger is important for mitigating climate change. The third and fourth issues are formulated as claims:

“equality and education for all contribute to combat climate change”, and “it is not possible to accomplish SDGs 1 to 16 without Goal 17 – Partnership for the goals”. The final assignment introduces climate denial as an issue and asks students two questions: “Why may it be difficult to discuss climate and reach agreements? What does a constructive climate debate look like?”

As we see, students are guided into assignments with the ambition of making them familiar with the UN SDGs and to see connections between the various goals. What is conspicuous in this framing concerning sustainability and justice is how the climate challenge is so clearly depicted as an issue of gender and education. A major solution to the climate challenge is to educate girls. Considering that the Norwegian school system provides – indeed, mandates – education for Norwegian girls, focusing on gender justice in the objectives clause as noted earlier, the call here is ostensibly to support the education of girls outside Norway, presumably in developing countries. These places are where too many children are born and where the education of women will consequently have an impact on climate change. If so, the climate problem is dealt with by being exported out of the country and turned into a question of global gender justice and birth control.

This priority aligns well with Norway’s development aid prioritizing the education of girls (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, 2020). The suggested relationship between poverty and hunger and climate change that appears in other assignments is not elaborated in the same manner in the concomitant resources, but it may fit well within the same scheme of development aid. The assignment on Goal 17 concerning the significance of international cooperation does not challenge such a framing, neither does the final assignment on climate denial.

Among the digital resources presented by the museum, the next group of assignments – structured under the heading “Population Growth, Economy, and the Climate” – is the most nuanced. Two videos are shown. The first is a presentation of the graphics of Gapminder,⁵ with commentary by a museum staff member. The second video gives voices to four young people whose lives are at risk due to climate change.

The Gapminder video presents a historical picture of global carbon emissions. The emphasis on population growth expressed in the previous assignment is pursued further and employs the nation-state as a central category. Although China is not on top in carbon emissions per capita, its total emissions outnumber all other nations, given its vast population. The museum staff member notes possible objections to the national framing presented in the graphics: is it fair to count carbon emissions in the countries where commodities are produced, not where they are consumed? Is it fair to count emissions from oil and gas in the countries where they are burned, not where the oil and gas are extracted? In the assignments linked to this presentation, such facets of distributive justice challenging procedural justice surface when the students are asked to discuss the following claim: “it is unethical and problematic to register CO₂ emissions by countries and call on countries to manage their own emissions”.

The video does not provide a larger framing that could lead to a discussion of the premises for a just approach to counting and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions. The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992), which was followed up by the Paris Agreement (UN, 2015), is not mentioned. Furthermore, the video presentation emphasizes graphics and numbers and does not indicate any connection between climate change, human activities, and the pressure put on other species. In other words, an unequivocally anthropocentric focus is maintained, with concerns for ecological justice left out.

The second video is called “Climate Stories”⁶ and gives voice to Fahara Jannat (16) from Bangladesh, Tarur Taake (14) from Kiribati, a Pacific island, Pia Bronken Eidesen (13) from Svalbard, Arctic islands under Norwegian control north of the mainland, and Hazel van Ummersen (13) from the US state of Oregon. Their stories demonstrate the disastrous impacts of climate change in deteriorating living conditions, constituting threats to people’s lives. Both Fahara and Hazel are engaged in social movements and take part in public protests. The video lasts just six minutes but stands out as a rich resource for environmental and sustainability education. The first two assignments with this video provide guidance to help grasp factual knowledge. In the third assignment, students are asked to reflect on the following claim: ‘poor countries are more severely impacted by climate change than rich countries’. Attention is drawn to distributive justice and climate justice, and the stories demonstrate the need for solidarity.

Despite their impact, the rich educational resources constituted by these two videos do not manifest the tensions and contradictions distinguishing the Norwegian situation. In the video addressing carbon emissions, population growth is a major concern. The justification of Norway’s position as an oil and gas producer is a non-issue. In the concomitant assignments, Norwegian emissions are not addressed, whether on a nationwide or per capita level. With regard to the second video, it is the consequences of climate change that are showcased in the assignments, which accentuate concern for poor countries. Aligned with the pattern from the resources connected with the SDGs, this concern may rearticulate the demands on Norway as a provider of development aid.

In a stereoscopic scope, various facets of justice still become visible in the educational resources. The assignments on the SDGs may be said to be oriented toward global justice, presenting an imaginary where the main concern is the lack of education for girls, with a growing population as a consequence. Global justice, then, becomes above all a question of gender and educational justice. Although not explicitly stated, these facets give priority to certain SDGs: Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 4 on good education. The population issue is also surfacing in the video on Gapfinder, where justice is mainly articulated as procedural justice in the mechanisms regulating greenhouse gas emissions. In “Climate Stories” both distributive justice and climate justice are apparent, demonstrating the disastrous consequences of climate change.

A distinct feature signifying these educational resources at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum is how the national context slips away and is not explicitly represented and addressed. The Norwegian Pia portrayed in “Climate Stories” makes an exception, but she lives 900 kilometers north of the Norwegian mainland. Sustainability is generally a concern that seems to apply to the world outside of Norway, the influences on domestic affairs are seldom brought in. And Norwegian petroleum production, obviously dominating exhibitions elsewhere at Norwegian Petroleum Museum, is rarely considered. Consequently, the tensions and contradictions signifying Norway’s position do not surface. This is how a stereoscopic optic on sustainability justice is not made available for the students. In a fundamental way, the resources lack contextual significance and depth.

That impression may be further demonstrated with reference to the most prominent example of political engagement and active citizenship represented in the educational resources. In “Climate Stories”, American Hazel is engaged in *Juliana v. United States* (Nelson and Walker, 2020), an environmental lawsuit filed in 2015 including the youth organization Earth Guardians and climate scientist James E. Hansen, addressing the US government’s responsibility for the emissions of greenhouse gases. The example adds to the richness of “Climate Stories”. In a Norwegian context, a similar case is the lawsuit *People v. Arctic Oil* initiated by a coalition of environmental groups, among them Nature and Youth. In 2016, they challenged the validity of petroleum production licenses issued by the Norwegian government, appealing to Article 112 of the Norwegian Constitution. The article defends the right to an environment that is conducive to health and whose diversity is maintained (Voigt, 2021). The American and Norwegian lawsuits are recent examples of climate law cases involving young people, and both have received considerable publicity. However, in the resources provided by the Norwegian Petroleum Museum, it is only the American lawsuit that is showcased.

The lack of attention for political engagement among Norwegian youths with regard to petroleum production corresponds with another even more conspicuous absence. The exhibition “Climate for Change” opened on 7 May 2019, at a time when the School Strikes for the Climate had been spreading around the world, mobilizing 40,000 Norwegian children and youths in a major protest on 22 March 2019, calling for a full stop of further oil prospecting (Kvamme, 2019). This social and political youth movement did not find its way into the digital educational resources at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum.

Concluding Remarks

I have considered in this chapter three texts from a Norwegian context, conceived as educational texts, with an approach informed by a stereoscopic optic on justice. My interest has been guided by the peculiar position of Norway as a petroleum nation that also actively supports the UN’s sustainable development agenda. The first text, the objectives clause, does not explicitly address either oil and gas production or sustainability. Still, it may

enable various facets of justice to emerge. Most significant is how the expression of fundamental values seems to precondition justice as it may appear in educational practices. The face of the imagined student who learns to act with environmental awareness and supposedly supports ecological justice is striking, but the scope of these values turns out to be a central question. For instance, does the value of solidarity remain within the nation-state, or is it global in scope?

In the PM's address to the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, the dominant facet is regulative justice. The central message to both companies and to the nation's people is to explore and take advantage of the possibilities established by the Paris Agreement and not to worry about the privileges and profit resulting from Norway's position as a petroleum nation, concerns that might appear if other facets of justice were brought in.

In the assignments produced and published by the Norwegian Petroleum Museum, a central focus is on the significance of educating girls in developing countries as an effective measure to combat climate change, thus strengthening birth control and limiting a growing population. Additionally, "Climate Stories" do provide perspectives on distributive justice and climate justice. But the assignments do not address Norway's position as a petroleum nation or the carbon footprints of affluent Norwegians. These gaps may be a good place to pursue reflections on how the dilemmas and contradictions that distinguish Norway's position are dealt with.

The PM's address and the museum assignments focus on certain important facets of justice within the sustainability agenda. The Paris Agreement, with its facets of regulative justice, is vital and important, as the PM emphatically insists, and gender justice combined with educational justice certainly is a priority in Agenda 2030, as the museum assignments make clear. These facets align with Norway's position as a reliable supporter of the UN agenda and an engaged contributor to development aid (Norway in the UN, 2020). And they seem to draw attention away from the inherent tensions, contradictions, and dilemmas distinguishing Norway's position.

In the study of the objectives clause, a central issue turned out to be the scope of the fundamental values listed. Applied to the museum assignments, the value of solidarity emerges within a scope that transcends the national context and is directed toward girls' global access to education, also expressing a concern for poor countries. But the solidarity that appears here is ambiguous. The trajectory from the education of girls to birth control and subsequent reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases is asserted without consideration of the carbon footprints of affluent Norwegians. In that respect, the value of charity, also listed in the objectives clause, seems to be more pertinent, if conceived of as gifts provided to the needy without risking any transformation by the giver.

The explorations and reflections carried out here align with more general concerns raised by the sustainability agenda. In concluding, I briefly note two issues that deserve further reflection. The first is an impasse that distinguishes the sustainability agenda. As William Lafferty (2012) has warned,

virtually all nations have formally subscribed to the goal of sustainable development to be realized through democratic means, but the existing democratic structures privilege the interests of the demarcated jurisdictions of nation-states and do not accommodate the normative notions expressed in that goal. Lafferty calls this situation a ‘democratic impasse’. In the case of Norway, as considered in this chapter, sustainability justice as a fractured whole does not become visible, either because national interest and self-interest are openly privileged or because attention is directed toward facets of justice that do not challenge these interests.

The museum assignments exemplify insights from biopolitical theory on how education and sustainability are framed within a global life-chance divide that premises global inequity on lives and lifestyles (Hellberg and Knutsson, 2016). In this case, several facets of justice obviously are showcased regulating the justice optic, however, leaving Norway as a petroleum nation comfortably undisturbed.

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Notes

- 1 This take is freely inspired by a communicative discourse ethical approach developed within Critical Theory and further refined by Seyla Benhabib (1992).
- 2 Quotations from the objectives clause are made from the official English translation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008). English translations of quotations from the other two sources are provided by the author.
- 3 The exhibition “Climate for Change” opened 7 May 2019 by the Norwegian Minister of Climate and the Environment Ola Elvestuen (Norwegian Petroleum Museum, 2022). The digital resources considered here, are part of this exhibition, last time visited in January 2022.
- 4 Project Drawdown was founded in 2014, and according to its self-presentation, it “is a nonprofit organization that seeks to help the world reach ‘Drawdown’ – the future point in time when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline” (Wilkinson, 2020).
- 5 Gapminder is a digital resource originally developed by Hans Rosling and his family (Gapminder, 2022) that is employed in this case to explore “the connection between population growth, economy and climate” (Norwegian Petroleum Museum, 2022).
- 6 The video, produced by the Norwegian Petroleum Museum, is based on the book *Før øya synker. En klimadokumentar*, by Teresa Grøtan (2018).

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8 Vulnerable Enough for Inclusion?

Unaccompanied Minors' Experiences of Vulnerability and Trauma on Their Way to Norway

Wills Kalisha

Introduction

At the height of the European migration crisis in 2015, debates about how children are adversely affected by war and how dangerous it is to cross the oceans on rubber boats remained a phenomenon heavily debated by policy-makers, researchers, and skeptics alike. In the middle of this “crisis”, in early September of 2015, the picture of the 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi (Smith, 2015) trended online with the hashtag #*Kiyiya Vuran Insanlik* – which is Turkish for “humanity washed ashore”. This picture crystallizes one of the pivotal moments in understanding the European refugee crisis and the corporeal experiences of trauma and vulnerability by those trying to cross the borders to reach Europe. At first sight, it is an image of repressed suffering. However, it owes its fame to being more than just that; the striking contrast between a vulnerable, helpless tiny body and the beach shows the ambivalent violence of the sea that swallows and returns to shore refugees unable to cross it on overcrowded boats. The picture of Aylan Kurdi – whose name in Turkish means *flagbearer* – opened the world to see the cruelty of war, innocence drowned, and what children are exposed to during displacement.

Displacement intensifies, especially when parents¹ face the difficult choice of staying and risk being killed in the war or letting older children travel while remaining with toddlers or traveling together on unsafe boats. Through Aylan’s picture, vulnerability and trauma became conjoined in corporeality as the image went viral around the globe, calling attention to the humanitarian response to the crisis. Before the photograph went viral, numerous reports had already started uncovering the brutal reality of boat refugees. For instance, 71 bodies were found on a track in Australia, and many other stories of bodies washed ashore in Lampedusa and Christmas Island, where media attention was minimal. As I write this chapter, the United Nations reports that more than 4 million children have been displaced and are now refugees across Europe because of the war in Ukraine.² Images of pain, suffering, and destruction in Ukraine are now available for all to have a sense of shared witnessing and an amplified call for humanitarian help. In the time of Aylan and as it is for refugees from non-Western war-torn countries,

reception and admission into host countries was and is a preserve for those classified as refugees (Djampour, 2018; Watters, 2007).

Research shows that getting refugee status is not a protection guarantee (Sözer, 2019). It is equally evident in research that the refugee category has mutated into fragmented subcategories, making the refugee status cease to be “a right to a privilege, a prized status” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2169). To be a refugee or be categorized as one initially meant one had a right to protection in the host nation due to their inherent vulnerability. Recently, the introduction of the vulnerable category has made the terrain murky. It presupposes the existence of the less vulnerable or the invulnerable while reducing its legibility. What remains problematic is that the mutated subcategories are pegged on the notion of vulnerability with no clear definition other than an inherent exposure or “susceptibility to harm” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2164). Furthermore, this empties the term vulnerability of its “negative” connotations and has recently been used to celebrate, embrace, and instill courage in the marginalized (Bettez, 2017).

Vulnerability, which suggests being particularly susceptible to harm, has been elaborated in attempts to develop “identify, assess, measure, compare, monitor and address it” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2164). In the recent past, the European States and their actors have emerged as “self-proclaimed humanitarian actors but just as one among the many existing ‘stakeholders,’ which provide them (the state) with flexibility in their intervention while making them immune from responsibility” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2166). Nevertheless, what does it mean to be a child and experience travel without parents, caregivers, or guardians? In this chapter, I interrogate a specific group of children who have traveled alone from war-ravaged countries to seek asylum – meaning they are seeking international protection – and their claim for refugee status is yet to be determined. The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is solely responsible for determining who a refugee is; after that, one can seek protection. Such processes take time. These teenagers are between 16 and 18 when they arrive in Norway. Some are wounded from wars at home and during flight, wounds that can not receive any form of healing and injustices meted on them that remain as reminders of the journey.

In 2019, there were 33 million children who were registered as international migrants (UNICEF, 2021). Of this, 3.8 million were displaced by conflicts, and 8.2 million were displaced by disasters linked to weather-related events. The brutality experienced in forced displacement is believed to cause immense pressure and persistent trauma to children (Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Eide, 2020b). Recently, many unaccompanied minors have been denied entry into Western countries because immigration officials do not believe their stories (Johnson, 2013).³ The situation for those who are physically disabled is even direr. For example, when the Moria refugee camp on the Island of Lesbos in Greece burned down in September 2020, many European countries took a portion of the unaccompanied children. Still, those forgotten in Greece were “those with medical and mental health conditions, survivors or

those at risk of gender-based violence, and older people” (Watch, 2020). Although significant reports within the European Union (EU) emphasize the mental well-being of all people, including mental help for immigrants, why are children without parents who can be categorized as traumatized or with possible symptoms of trauma or mental disabilities not offered support? To be a child and be identified as severely mentally ill or traumatized before entry into a host country instantly minimizes the chances of acceptance.

Discussion of Methodological Approach

This chapter begins by exploring the humanitarian notion as it is used to respond to migration situations, especially in Norway. This notion is deficient in its application but rich in its political and social description. The journeys of unaccompanied minors are then explored using their own lived experiences. I employ Van Manen’s (2014, 2017) phenomenology of practice, where the example or the lived experience forms the starting point for reflection and description. In this exploration, I borrow two anecdotes, one from the fieldwork I conducted in Norway between 2016 and 2019.⁴ The other anecdote is borrowed from written testimonials by unaccompanied minors about their journeys to Norway (Ahmadian et al., 2021). I question why their vulnerability is often referred to as the reason for humanitarian intervention, yet in practice, it only helps those who are deemed vulnerable enough to receive help. Using Bauman’s (2000, 2001, 2007) understanding of human waste, I explore the vacuum (taken up by smugglers) left by humanitarian organizations when they refuse some unaccompanied minors. Instead, they imprison unaccompanied teenagers, forcing them to work in harsh conditions without the possibility of schooling. I follow their entry to Norway by exploring what it means for them to undergo age assessments and what these mean to them as adolescents. Fundamentally, the chapter combines phenomenology of practice as a methodology in reflecting on the minors’ lived experiences and other philosophies and literature related to the explored topic. I take the reader through a journey of wondering what it means to be a child and to be assigned the symptoms associated with traumatic experiences, both when experienced or not, and finally, what this might mean for them pedagogically.

The Lay of the Land. Vulnerable Unaccompanied Minors in Norway

The Norwegian reception of refugees and asylum seekers is oriented toward humanitarian rights and humanitarianism. Norway has traditionally received unaccompanied young persons with a humanitarian mindset. One can argue that the attitudes toward the reception of unaccompanied children have varied and been ambiguous, especially those from outside Europe. When Jewish unaccompanied minors arrived in the 1930s, they were segregated,⁵ and the government’s argument then was that they could not get rid of them after the war (Eide, 2005). There was a repeat of segregation with young Tibetan⁶

unaccompanied minors in the 1950s. However, assimilation attitudes can be observed when young Hungarian unaccompanied minors arrived in the 1960s (Eide, 2020a; Kalisha, 2020a). The openness to the Hungarian unaccompanied children in the 1960s gave an insinuation of identifying with “freedom fighters” for self-determination like Norwegians did against the Germans in the second world war (Eide, 2005, p. 25). In the subsequent years between the 1980s and the early 2000s, unaccompanied minors were welcomed and given residency permits on humanitarian grounds so long as their parents could not be found in their countries of origin⁷ (St. Meld. nr. 17 (2000–1)). In 2004, the directorate of immigration revoked the humanitarian approach to residency. The assumption was undeserving people claiming to be unaccompanied minors (Kalisha, 2020a) misused it. This ushered in a period of restrictive immigration laws toward unaccompanied minors and other asylum seekers.

Humanitarianism and Vulnerability in Use?

Humanitarianism⁸ has historical linkages to sustaining “capitalism and attempting to fix its failures” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2163). This term usage is attributed to the present wars and refugee crisis (Bauman, 2016), as problems created by Western empires and their ambitious expansionism into other territories persist. Whereas the reasons behind humanitarianism, such as to remedy the crisis, could have offered relief, they have been misused. They are used selectively to further the interests of those with capital power, as I shall show in this chapter. The founding principle of humanitarianism, however, is “to care for others” (Sözer, 2019, p. 2), which from a Norwegian policy practice, drives their engagement with “others” albeit from a distance. This practice can be seen in how the child-friendly policies in Norway have been anchored on a rights-based humanitarian ideology (Garvik and Valenta, 2021), which secures all rights for all children in Norway. Due to the child-friendly policies, it is believed the humanitarian benevolence of Norway was misused. For example, a high number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Norway from 2008 onward increased. At the same time, immigration laws and policies were changed and became more restrictive to hinder child migration.⁹

To understand this, one must see how politics around unaccompanied minors have been since the 1980s. Before this period, Norway received refugees on the quota system from the UNHCR or on recommendation from humanitarian organizations (Eide, 2020a). The ensuing global wars in Iran, Iraq, Sri Lanka, the cold war, Somalia, Congo, and Yugoslavia, complicated this arrangement by allowing asylum seekers to come via boats, buses, and planes to the country. The newcomers, categorically identified as asylum seekers, exemplified the “category of immigrants that most concerns the welfare state, yet it is precisely the type of immigration that welfare state premises can least govern” (Brochmann and Hagelund, 2012, p. 171). The welfare state was not ready for newcomers who were incapable of contributing

through the workforce, which challenged the normalization¹⁰ reforms (Hansen et al., 1996) introduced in this period. In this period, vulnerability was tied to intellectually disabled children who were being integrated into regular schools (Hansen et al., 1996). Normalization and integration of different groups of young people into the unitary schools complicated the understanding of vulnerability. For the Norwegian mentally disabled children, their vulnerability (even though not mentioned explicitly) was linked to their disabilities. In contrast, for the newcomers, their vulnerability was linked to their aloneness, with disregard to their experiences before, during, and after arrival.

One can observe the slow introduction of vulnerability relative to migration. For example, in the 2000–1 policy on *asylum and refugee politics in Norway*, single mothers and unaccompanied children with serious health problems and disabilities are identified as vulnerable (St. Meld. nr.17, 2000–1, p. 40). This linkage of vulnerability to disability and faintly to migration was uncommon at this point, but it gained international traction in the 2010s. Interestingly, the notion of humanitarianism is entrenched in Norwegian engagements with what is called “vulnerable nations” through aid and humanitarian organizations.

In the recent past, forced migration has gained traction as a research field. Researchers employ vulnerability as a shared general experience for all displaced people (de Wal Pastoor, 2016; Nardone and Correa-Velez, 2015; Sözer, 2019, 2020). Vulnerability in this research context is synonymous with disadvantageous refugees, refugees at risk, or refugees with special needs (Sözer, 2019, p. 2). Trauma is also considered part of the migration experience (Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Jensen, 2020; Jensen et al., 2015), but its effects are not considered in policy or law but only when it is a medical emergency.

Additionally, UNHCR introduced, in 2013, a Vulnerability Assessment Framework emphasizing Syrian refugees arriving in Turkey (Sözer, 2019). At the EU legal framework, there is a flurry of categories of asylum seekers considered vulnerable, each with specific identifiable characteristics that should aid in how they are handled (Mouzourakis et al., 2017). Still, within this legal framework and as I have pointed out elsewhere (Kalisha, 2020a), the notion of vulnerability is very ambiguous in its definition, leaving room for either receiving nations or humanitarian organizations to define what they consider vulnerable, especially with unaccompanied children. The ambiguity in defining vulnerability and over-categorizing the “refugee and asylum seekers” opened room globally to market vulnerability in the early 2010s. This concept of vulnerability was “elaborated by attempting to develop tools to identify, assess, measure, compare, monitor and address vulnerability” (Sözer, 2020, p. 2164). As such, vulnerability, as Sözer argued (Sözer, 2019), becomes institutionalized and transformed into programs that can redistribute it. In Turkey and the EU, the redistribution was done through incentives and programs that can alleviate or deal with it. Therefore, national states like Norway, which have been humanitarian actors, became

one in a long chain of emerging and existing stakeholders with flexibility in what kind of interventions they can have, like donating to international humanitarian institutions like the Red Cross to manage the crisis (DC, 2012). In its policy paper *Displaced Children* (DC, 2012), Norway proclaimed that to hinder the immigration of unaccompanied minors, they offer aid and assistance to neighboring countries to their homeland. As such, Norway and other receiving countries in Europe became immune from direct responsibility on those deemed vulnerable asylum seekers as their needs were covered through aid. For those who managed to arrive in the country, their vulnerability must wait until their residency is clarified.

Internationally, from 2010 onward, humanitarian organizations equally became subdivided into categories that could manage the most “at-risk refugees” like women and children, especially unaccompanied minors (Mouzourakis et al., 2017; Sözer, 2020). In Sözer’s argument, this became a humanitarian moralization of vulnerability. That is, selectively dealing with only some categories of the most vulnerable or those within the scope of vulnerability defined by the said humanitarian organization(s). From 2012 to 2015, priority was given to Syrian unaccompanied minors, whereas those from Afghanistan were returned or given temporary permits without considering their individual stories/cases.

To study the manifestations of this kind of morality and its implications on unaccompanied minors’ experiences of trauma within the discourse of vulnerability becomes necessary. As such, this chapter will focus on the journeys that unaccompanied minors undertake and their experiences that are mostly seen to be traumatic. These experiences, as one notices, become injustices meted on them that cannot receive any remedy. What makes the Norwegian case interesting is its appropriation of vulnerability intertwined with other experiences associated with migration, like trauma. Even though vulnerability has been used in Norway since the early 2000s, its application to unaccompanied minors is seldom. Sequentially, the extent of the figure of unaccompanied minors’ vulnerability became an amplified issue after the Syrian refugee crisis, but practically, it had been incubating since doubts emerged on their ages and age assessment were introduced in 2004 (Kalisha, 2020a; Lidén, 2019). As such, focusing on the Norwegian case is significant for several reasons. First, a series of legal changes were orchestrated by the perceived higher numbers of unaccompanied minors coming to Norway between 2004 and 2008.¹¹ The perceived higher numbers in 2008 produced a policy change where unaccompanied children were divided into two groups – those under 15 and those between 15 and 18. The changes were used as an excuse “to offer quality care” that considers their age. However, what is quality care is left undefined and sometimes seen as discriminatory (for a thorough discussion of this, see de Wal Pastoor and Aadnanes, 2013).

Secondly, many unaccompanied minors arriving in Norway have no designation as “refugees” but as asylum seekers. The category asylum seeker limits their rights as children since children have more elaborate rights to education, care, and health. When the distinction is made of those over

15 years of age, especially from 2008, limiting their residency permits until they turn 18 was slowly introduced. In 2008, the Immigration Act was amended, especially the reasonableness principle, which gave room to consider cases that do not meet the threshold for consideration on humanitarian grounds under section 38 of the Act (AID, 2008). In this law, leniency was observed for a child that can prove to have undergone torture or persecution, was forced to be part of a militia, or was smuggled as a sex slave. The reasonability clause was repealed with an amended Immigration Act of 2016. By implication, if one receives a rejection under section 28,¹² the considerations under section 38 (humanitarian grounds), where a thorough assessment of “the child’s best interests are weighed against other interests in particular immigration considerations” (Søvig, 2019, p. 282), were set aside. The changes effectively allowed the forceful return of unaccompanied asylum seekers to their homeland. They also intensified the use of temporary permits until they turned 18 (Garvik and Valenta, 2021). What is important to note here is that the Children’s Rights Convention, especially Article 3 (1), allows host nations to override the child’s interest when other interests are more substantial (Lidén, 2019; Søvig, 2019). This loophole in the CRC gives Norway latitude to decide what immigration issues are weightier and for what reasons one can stay. This is significant in our discussion in this chapter because the child’s experiences of trauma and vulnerability are set aside because of other considerations that the government deems essential.

In what follows, I trace their journeys from their home countries through various routes they take to travel to Norway. This highlights their vulnerability as being useless during flight and upon entry to Norway.

Pre-flight and During-Flight Experiences

As a start here, I invite the reader to a conversation that I observed between three young asylum seekers as they reminisce on the nature of being a minor fleeing war and reaching their destinations:

I am a minor; people look at me and say I look like a child. At least I know that! I look at myself and wonder, am I a child, a minor, or a teenager? What does that even mean? However, I know I am not a child. I am not yet 18 years of age, so I am not an adult, I guess Mohamed looks at the others, whose faces show indignance and disbelief and seem somewhat baffled by what he is saying. He continues ... You know we started the journey out of our country with my parents and siblings when I was 11 years old after the war had broken out and lasted for more than seven years. On the border out of our country, we were forcefully separated from each other by the militia group manning the border, and I was forced to be part of them while they kept my parents and younger siblings in their cells, just in case I ran away. We were forced to fight with them for one year. After a while I thought my parents and siblings had

escaped and were safe. So, one day together with another boy that had been fighting along with me, we planned to escape. Unfortunately, we did not go so far. When we were caught, my friend was killed, and I was thrown into a room where my father and mother lay covered in blood.

At this moment, Mohamed could not hold his tears. After a long pause amidst sobs, Mohamed goes on:

A week later I found myself in my aunt's house, who told me I was rescued by a friendly militia group and delivered to her. For fear that I would be retaken, she organized with smugglers to take me away to Europe. I went through a terrifying journey to Europe. First, on the inner decks of a ship to Iran. To repay the smuggler, I had to work in plantations for two years. I was beaten, given very little food in those two years, and slept less than three hours daily. Then I escaped to find a way to travel to safety – under a truck transporting goods somewhere. I did not know where I was going. I got off the truck near an ocean, swam across because I could see what seemed like an Island on the other side of the ocean and found myself in Greece. I have been rejected in three countries in Europe and here I am. Am I still a child?. Ahmed who was listening; “Why are you here then?” –. The question seems misplaced, but Nasik interjects quickly, “most young people do not think so much like we do. They have no responsibility – they have parents. We must think like adults; and think of things like adults think about. Sometimes we cry, but that is when we are going to sleep then we do not bother anyone. Still, my asylum application is to be handled as a minor, but as I see it – I am almost 18, I wonder whether they are waiting for me to become an adult for them to handle my application or will they consider it now? Do they even know what your real age is?” This question crumbles the animated exchanges as everyone in this room remains quiet and somewhat confused.

A Child, a Minor, and Vulnerability?

Experientially it is unfathomable what Mohamed and his peers have experienced as children. Here, Mohamed is pushed into a discursive corner of defending his claims of who a minor is, and he finds it difficult to support his assumptions except from his own experiences. The experiences are personal, unique, tough, hard to forget, and hard to keep remembering. Who is a minor? Is a minor the same as a child? This is the question that he grapples with. In Mohamed's eyes, the two seem to be distanced by either experience or age, and one wonders where precisely he can be placed when a category (unaccompanied minors) “suitable” for him and his peers does not describe them experientially but developmentally – age. This account reveals that adolescents like Mohamed occupy an in-between position that is neither

child (experientially) nor a minor (by age) yet not an adult. Still, experientially they have been plunged into an adult world and experienced more than what children their age might experience.

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UNCRC as cited in Lidén, 2019). This definition is significant – if we consider children as children. As children, their inviolable rights vis-à-vis their vulnerability have to be given priority. This definition offers countries leeway to decide who shall be termed as a child and asylum seeker. Being acknowledged as a child and asylum seeker opens possibilities for protection. Whereas if one is considered an asylum seeker before being seen as a child, their rights as children are laid aside in favor of immigration laws. This definition as old as it is, claims to apply universally regardless of context and political situations. Mohamed brings to light devastating accounts of what children must endure in the face of wars and protracted refugee situations. Children are used as combatants and forced to do so at the cost of their parents’ lives. Children “provide us with a philosophical and emotional conundrum, how did we come to be as we are and, most importantly, how would we like to become” (Moore, 2004). Is it possible to revisit how we have become as a society where the hope of the future lies in children and in passing on something of value to them? Does it matter that the most heinous acts of war are meted out as children observe and are part of it? Whose future shall they inhabit one would ask?

The child’s figure during war is often described as vulnerable – exposed to inhumane conditions (Sözer, 2019). During migration and war situations, Sözer argues local humanitarian organizations working with refugees and asylum seekers introduce “a hierarchical system” of differentiating vulnerability where some are deemed more vulnerable than others. This categorization stems from “differing and occasionally contradicting ideologies” (p. 4) that ultimately ignores or secludes some from the list of vulnerability. In the recent past as Sözer underscores, humanitarian organizations, academics, and policymakers have refocused biological essentialism on particular categories and groups. For example, whereas women and children were the most vulnerable previously, it is now not just any other child but children in forced labor, abused children, and unaccompanied minors. Whereas this is the case, the category unaccompanied minor is only significant when one is legitimately ascribed to this category by UNHCR or humanitarian organizations. Still, their experiences of vulnerability, exposure to what is beyond their capacity to endure, and the pain of having to be smuggled out of their countries by relatives for fear of being killed remain ignored or unexplored. Mohammed’s case in much Western literature passes as an invisible traumatic case awaiting a moment to reveal itself through post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Craps, 2014). In his own country, Mohamed is oblivious as to who or what caused the war but must endure its repercussions by running away. His way out is by being smuggled.

Vulnerability During Flight

Whereas humanitarian organizations and policymakers keep categorizing whose vulnerability is critical, and worth their time, the “least” vulnerable or those that cannot be classified are left out. Smugglers and criminal organizations take advantage of this vacuum (Dubois-Shaik, 2014). A “large population of refugees is managed by traffickers and smugglers, who sell promises alongside their services but rarely respect the contract” (Wagner-Saffray, 2020, p. 109). In retrospect, refugees and those fleeing their countries are often abandoned midway, each stage prepaid, and are mostly left in the middle of nowhere or in a place of human exploitation to find their own solutions to the next part of the journey. In the anecdote, Mohamed is exploited and subjected to working long hours without pay. His endurance and age notwithstanding, vulnerability is no longer an issue; he must pay the smugglers, live with his pains, and figure out how to get out of the situation. At the core of the EU’s policy commitment is protecting refugees and immigrants, granted in the ratified New York declaration by the United Nations assembly (UNICEF, 2018).

Interestingly, this protection remains on paper but not in reality. The EU funds deter migration into its borders by “negotiating workable solutions” (Wagner-Saffray, 2020, p. 110) in Libya, Turkey, and Hungary. However, the negotiated solutions keep the incoming droves of immigrants, including unaccompanied minors, in prisons and inhumane camps. They are exploited¹³ at this point, and some are sold as enslaved people to work on farms without pay or with minimal wages (Massari, 2021). Creating protection zones on the borders and increased securitization of the Mediterranean (Bigo, 2014) could be potential sites for humanitarian response. Yet the care for the other as a founding principle of humanitarianism is held at bay. As such, undertaking the journey as an unidentifiable refugee or asylum seeker is dangerous. Yet as the case of Mohamed reveals, they are torn between being recruited in conflicts they have nothing to do with or being killed. What sense can we make of this treacherous journey?

Dawit (Ahmadian et al., 2021, p. 57) crudely explains the situation in a Libyan cell:

Imagine a room – It’s small, maybe like this room. Seven square meters or something, but without windows and a fan, in the ceiling. The room is semi-dark, and the brick walls are exposed apart from a guitar and the door. Thirty men live in the room. Some of them are adults; others are young people like me. Everyone has been here for a long time. Others have lived here long enough and can be compared to an island that has turned into empty glass spheres. Some are so sick that they will never get out of here. You are in a Libyan prison and one of the many thousands locked up without a sentence just because you dreamed of a future. An unbreakable wall of bars, concrete and correctional officers stands between you and the safety of Europe you had dreamed of when you fled. And the only thing you can do is wait. So, imagine yourself waiting.¹⁴

Dawit describes waiting for the unknown in prison, without cause, to seek protection from his homeland's ills. Bauman argues that the current society engages its members in their "capacity as consumers" (Bauman, 2001, p. 53). The market economy is unregulated, and its main goal is to satisfy unquenchable desires globally. In essence, the state is no longer legitimately able to regulate what the consumer gets. In principle, the individual has freedom as a consumer to make "risky choices that are likely to produce unpredictable outcomes ... in other words, they have the freedom to be risk takers" (Barmaki, 2009, p. 257). In Bauman's logic, the unabated consumerist society and the imperialist nature of superpowers have created insatiable desires to consume. Those who cannot consume what is sold become flawed consumers – that is, useless to the consumer society. The unaccompanied minor finds themselves engulfed in the battle for controlling certain parts of the world through war. And as flawed consumers who cannot profit from either side of the war, they are spit out and left to anyone who can "consume" them. In the same logic, society desires to create risk takers with unpredictable outcomes. The refugee takes risks by trying their luck with smugglers since the recognizable official channels do not recognize them or ignore them. In the end, the flawed ones – the poor, who cannot pay – are consumed by producing what others can consume on the farms or left to die in prison cells.

In Bauman's language, this vacuum inhabited by smugglers and organized crime is "a parasitic and predatory process, feeding on the potency sucked out of *their* bodies" (emphasis mine, Bauman, 2007, p. 24) of developing nations and their subjects. Following this logic, the age where justice to those who were wronged was paramount has succumbed to the "rights" society, where it is no longer the right of the poor, flawed consumer but the producers of the products to be consumed. This, in a way, elevates humanitarian organizations to celebrity status when they try to "save" those drifting ashore because of overcrowded rubber boats that could not hold them all in the Mediterranean, like Aylan in the introduction of this chapter. Celebrity status sometimes voids the situation from getting out of hand or minimizes the symptoms of the failures of society to recognize the plight of the vulnerable. The refugees and asylum seekers who are unable to move and are confined end up being imprisoned as a tactic to render them suspended and unable to communicate their views or proceed on their journeys. This keeps them estranged for as long as they can. In Bauman's view, imprisoning asylum seekers and refugees is a way of dealing with those deemed unassimilable and difficult to control. Traveling means risking arrest or deportation.

In the previous anecdote, Dawit poignantly points to the wasted lives that refugees have become and whose waiting has turned out to be like looking in an empty glass sphere, where the only image seen is theirs. This image might condemn *itself*, remembering the ill-fated journey(s) to freedom but without the possibility of seeing its end. In the fluid society, as Bauman (2000) calls it, there is a tendency to celebrate those who come out on the other side of being stuck. Unaccompanied minors wait too long in such

prisons, loiter across many countries applying for asylum and protection, and are rejected. As such, they are seen to have a “lack of agency” or have an inability or an unwillingness to endure and “wait out” a “crisis” (Hage, 2009, pp. 97–8). What happens to those, despite all odds, like Mohamed, who swim across oceans and use other means to reach the host nations like Norway?

Arrival in the Host Country – Still Vulnerable?

Upon entry to Norway, unaccompanied minors receive assistance from a multidisciplinary professional staff (educators, social workers, psychologists and physicians, and nurses) while waiting for their official age to be assigned. In the host country, they are immediately confronted by their newness, a new environment, new language, and interpreters intervene in their interviews to speak on their behalf about their experiences. These experiences are often unspeakable. The interview itself is terrifying, and the onset of chronic uncertainty begins. Will they stay or immediately leave? If they stay, for how long? The future is uncertain, the past no one wishes to remember. Some researchers point out that many young people suffer from survivor guilt (Goveas and Coomarasamy, 2018). Why am I the one who survived and not my siblings or parents? Why did they have to die, and I am alive?

Moreover, many teenagers have no credible identity documents (Garvik and Valenta, 2021; Lidén, 2019). This meant especially those I interviewed; their identities had to be confirmed through age assessments. Next, I look at the dilemmas of age assessments while seeking asylum as teenagers.

Age Assessments

Since most unaccompanied minors have no credible identification on arrival, it is not easy to estimate their age. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) concluded in its report to the European member states that “currently no method, which can identify the exact age of an individual is available” (EASO, 2014, p. 6). As such, they highlight, among other considerations, that before age assessment is done medically, documentation of age has to be exhausted first, the best interest of the child should be paramount in identifying their identity since this has implications on what rights they can be afforded. What happens when the age assigned does not correspond to the actual age and becomes what is believed to be the basis for issuing repatriation or stay status?

For the Norwegian case, the process carried out between 2004 and 2017 declared age testing was voluntary.¹⁵ One can observe two things at the point of entry concerning age testing. First, it is claimed to be a voluntary process (in principle) and consensual¹⁶ (in law), and two, it determines the credibility (in practice) of the given testimony. Any of the “volunteers” in this program who refuse or do not show up for either dental or skeletal development checkups taint their credibility, which is summed up in a report to the

directorate of immigration that will determine the asylum case. In 2015, the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) reported that most unaccompanied minors who claimed to be 16 or 17 underwent age assessment. As such, many who underwent this process did not want their cases to start at a point of doubt.

It is worth noting that since 2017, there has been uncertainty in Norway as to whether to continue using skeletal and dental checkups as a method of age assessment after the University of Oslo withdrew from the agreement citing ethical implications (Lidén, 2019). The process itself gives a wide margin of probable age (EASO, 2014). As such, one does not know the exact age of the tested person. The widespread criticism of this practice made many countries abandon it, whereas Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and the United Kingdom (Derluyn and Broekaert, 2008; Djampour, 2018; Watters, 2008) continued using it. As such, the vulnerability of the asylum-seeking unaccompanied minor is exacerbated through the invasive techniques used.

As Adolescents

The assumed difficulty here is related to navigating the critical physiological, emotional, and cognitive changes the teenagers are experiencing at this stage. The complexity of this developmental stage and its demands on developing an adult identity and values passed down could help the individual's well-being. The category adolescent is seen as "humans in the process of becoming rather than as 'beings' in their own right" (Lems et al., 2020, p. 328). Therefore, they stand as adult-in-the-making, occupying an ambivalent role within the Western world. Lems et al. describe the figure of the unaccompanied minor as an embodiment of crisis since it carries within it danger and unpredictability. They are uprooted, unpredictable, and out of control (Djampour, 2018; Hirvonen, 2013; Lems et al., 2020). Such images of unaccompanied minors come at the same time when their values are in question. War and its effects question their ethical values. For instance, how do they navigate such questions; for example, do not kill and love your fellow man? In our first anecdote, Mohamed illustrated how he was recruited to fight with the militia. The extent to which his values were questioned remains unclear, yet his escape helps us see the moral fight he was engaged in.

Derluyn and Broekaert (2008) highlight some difficult questions that these teenagers might be struggling with: How does one challenge the establishment when this has been swept away? What is one's role when parents are injured, dependent, missing, or dead? How does one reconcile the conflicting claims of parents who may be demanding greater loyalty to ethnic identity and the demands of the host country for rapid assimilation? Additionally, unaccompanied minors of this age – teenagers – are ambiguously positioned in society. On one hand both in policy frameworks and general rhetoric as vulnerable, innocent children to whom the local governments and society assume a parental role since their parents are missing.

On the other hand, upon turning 18, the age of majority, they are considered adults and, upon receiving a negative response to their asylum claim, are seen as criminals to be deported (Meloni, 2020). This is very significant for the young asylum seekers I have interviewed. Most of them arrived between the ages of 16 and 17 and are situated in a “transitional phase, very close to the age of majority” (p. 425).

As I have illustrated elsewhere (Kalisha, 2020a, 2020b), the unaccompanied minors are held in reception centers operated by volunteers in places far from where natives live. As such, they are held in these nonplace border zones for an unpredictable period, moving between many reception centers within their unknown period of stay in Norway, some moving up to seven times within two years (Kalisha, 2021).

In the discussions so far, I have shown how vulnerability seems to be taken for granted by humanitarian agencies. Where they do not, a vacuum is created and filled up by smugglers who prey on the children’s vulnerability. This in a way, amounts to modes of injustice committed on the children without anyone taking responsibility and for which no one will take responsibility. In most cases, when these children arrive in Norway, they are seen to suffer from traumatic experiences, and this ends there; no action is taken. Therefore, I briefly turn to the question of trauma before giving one educational implication of their movements in seeking asylum.

Traumatic Symptoms without Care?

Politically, the government acknowledges the prevalence of trauma and chronic ailments among unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. The Norwegian policy paper *Displaced Children* of 2012 states that a greater emphasis shall be placed on mental problems and traumatic experiences prevalent in unaccompanied children (Meld. St. 27 (2011–12), p. 47). Mental health symptoms and their effects are acknowledged as dominant in these teenagers; there is no agency tasked with the responsibility to help in any way except in emergency cases while they wait for asylum.

Research shows that flight from countries plagued by war and famine is a precursor to mental health problems. Many have been exposed to prolonged periods of war, armed conflicts, and violence with subsequent effects of starvation, and drought. Different psychologically oriented studies (Claudio et al., 2017) point to such symptoms as the prevalence of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms and disorders, and exposure to violence (63% of 93; Jensen et al., 2015, p. 106; Eide and Hjern, 2013; Jensen et al., 2013). During flight and exposure to war as a child, subsequent uprooting results in considerable losses like losing a home and parents. Jensen et al., (2015) point out that in 2014, of the unaccompanied minors they interviewed, 68% had experienced loss. They had lost siblings, friends, social networks, familiar environments, schools, belongings, culture, social status, way of living, usual patterns of life, customs and habits, and future perspectives in known environments.

Trauma research on unaccompanied children is relatively new. Very little is written in the context of asylum-seeking because of the unclarified legal status and the time it takes for diagnosis (Jakobsen et al., 2017; Jensen et al., 2015). Researchers' other challenges are language barriers, the believability of interpreters, and the time it takes to finish longitudinal or cross-sectional research. Thus, trauma is approached from a symptomatic view, where symptoms at psychological and clinical levels point to their existence in various forms, such as anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, insomnia, and PTSD. Furthermore, the descriptions of trauma in research are localized to one event and how it affects the "victims". To the West, as Craps (2014) has outlined, trauma is often seen as "an individual phenomenon" (p. 50). Trauma arises from a single, extraordinary catastrophic event (p. 50). Taking this view as is, is problematic. It excludes "economic domination or political oppression or other forms of ongoing oppression" (p. 50). Yet as Mohamed and Dawit describe, the events they encounter are intertwined, from ongoing wars, dangers encountered during flight, and inhuman treatments they have been subjected to on the way to Europe and Norway.

What is significant with the possible traumatic experiences in their moments of vulnerability, as we have described here, is that the events they experience are timeless. In traumatic events, the self undergoes a transformation, where their world, according to Romano, "introduces a gap, a break, the opening of a rip, a gaping hole into which the former world collapses and with it selfhood as the project of potentiality-for-Being" (Romano, 2016, p. 51). On the other hand, Dastur (2000) understands events as "what descends upon us [and] a new world opens up through its happening. The event constitutes the critical moment of temporality – a critical moment which nevertheless allows the continuity of time" (182). Dastur proposes that events open up a new temporal time – a somewhat continuation of time under a new world. Mohamed's world is halted temporarily, and he keeps encountering himself in unique temporalized, traumatic moments, where the world is renewed in worse terms than the previous. In Romano's analysis of the event, especially a traumatic event, the happenings of an event distort the world, creating a relation between the self and the new world, bearing in mind that the old world is distorted and, therefore, only fragmented in the self. The ground on which this new self occupies is unstable, with no chance to know what is in the event for the self, for the event only opens a "reserve for the future" (p. 50). Traumatic events remain haunting temporal events that keep opening up and closing the world to these children without a way out.

Educational Implications?

We are at a point where the picture painted among researchers and policy framers is that unaccompanied children from war-ravaged countries are symptomatic children who need urgent care or follow-up. Researchers in mental health and care professionals tend to focus on mainstream responses

to specific symptoms such as hopelessness, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, and behavioral problems (Watters, 2007). The young unaccompanied teenagers' symptoms are explored statistically without allowing their stories and experiences to be heard. The ease with which cross-sectional designs are employed (Jensen et al., 2015) poses a challenge because it is impossible to determine causality and association between the symptoms assigned. In Jensen's study, they acknowledge this difficulty and the impossibility to relate specific symptoms to PTSD or psychological problems to be trauma-related and get few responses. The remedy to these symptoms assigned creates a desire for interventions to the symptoms. We should remember that unaccompanied teenagers, who are our main focus here, receive interventions, especially medical ones, only on an emergency basis for lacking legal status (Lidén, 2019). The other intervention allowed is education at the discretion of the county governors (Kalisha, 2020a). Eide and Hjern (2013) point out that "schooling can increase the child's confidence by providing daily activities so that every day is structured, transparent and predictable" (p. 2). The idea is to create a framework and structure in their daily lives that will focus on building trust, focusing less on victimization, and creating positive stories that will help in their holistic well-being. It is documented, however, that the purpose for which they are being educated is unclear, the teachers in most cases, are unprepared for what they will encounter (see Djampour, 2018; Kalisha, 2020a; Kalisha and Sævi, 2020). If education is an intervention to engage with trauma and only happens in schools, how can the school "intervene"? Being symptomatic does not necessarily signify that all of them need intervention, nor does it mean that interventions are wrong. What to do?

The language of intervention used here assumes that education can be "gotten" in school and the teacher is the provider. A UNICEF report in 2020 (GEMR, 2019), recommended that teachers are not and should never be leaned on as mental health specialists. Nevertheless, the report concludes that "teachers can be important flag bearers for children suffering from trauma if given the proper training". Equally important, Pastoor laments that "it is important that teachers have adequate knowledge of how the experiences of war, flight and exile may affect refugees' classroom functioning" (de Wal Pastoor, 2016, p. 12). From these two quotes, the focus seems to be on teachers and their capacity to intervene in the lives of the traumatized children and vulnerable children and acknowledging that they are not mental health experts, and the least prepared to meet the challenges these children encounter. What seems urgent is the need for governments to hasten the process of including children in schools to have a normal life (Devine, 2015). But does the school offer the only remedy?

It is precisely this unpreparedness in the case of teachers in the moment of encounter that I see a possibility of reflecting on a broader understanding of education that considers the uniqueness and possibilities of the other being encountered.

Why Do We Want Children?

Mollenhauer (2014) asks a fundamental pedagogical question – why do we want to have or be with children? The answer to this question depends on what we want for and with these children. Mollenhauer suggests that we have something good worth passing on to children. In this answer, Mollenhauer brings to the fore an aspect of education that emphasizes the inter-generational nature of pedagogy. Thus, education is not just about interventions in class or learning subject matter. Still, it is more general, including formal and nonformal encounters- parenting, coaching in sports, music, or simply being with children. What matters most is that adults are “in a pedagogical relationship with children” (Mollenhauer, 2014). At the heart of this educational understanding lies a moral responsibility – how do I exist and act as myself in the moment of encountering this other? What if I knew as a teacher, a caregiver, a health worker, psychologist that every time I meet these young people, it is an exposure to existential choices? The uncertainty of life and the possibility of encountering “trauma” and other events that impact us negatively call us to be aware and try to avoid such occurrences. Yet in schools and other places where adults and young people meet, no one can predict who the other is or what they have experienced.

The unaccompanied minors we have described in this chapter have had a long journey with different encounters where adults were supposed to do something of value to them. Yet, their vulnerability was repeatedly misused for personal gains at the expense of their traumatic experiences. When they arrive in Norway at 16, some are enrolled in high schools because education at this age is not a right but an obligation. In high schools, teachers write reports about these unaccompanied minors, and these reports are evaluated by the immigration department when they make final decisions on their asylum claims (Kalisha and Sævi, 2021). How should teachers encounter such children in the class?

I invite the reader to teacher Mona’s description of her encounter with Adnan, who is a 16-year-old unaccompanied teenager seeking asylum in Norway and assigned to her class.

Mona¹⁷ says,

Adnan is a shy boy when one looks at him, but he is very aggressive toward his peers, sometimes making others uneasy. I noticed that he does not hand in his assignments on time, and sometimes forgets to submit them entirely. On several occasions, I talked to him about his behavior, and he remained quiet. Then I thought of coming up with a rule, a technic we were taught in a seminar that effectively corrects bad behavior. It is called consequence pedagogy. I clarified to the student that if he does several wrong things a certain number of times per week, I have to call for a meeting with the departmental leader to explain why he did what he did, and after that, a consequence follows. However,

Adnan remained adamant and did not do his assignments for the period I had told him and was often absent. In the end, I had to report him to the head of the department and the psychologist. Their final assessment after listening to me was that the school must terminate Adnan's studies. I felt numb. This moment was very challenging for me. I tried to be on the student's side and asked for more time to talk to him so that he could see the implications of what he was doing, but the psychologist and pedagogical leader agreed that he had to be sent out of school since he had broken the rules.

The task of teaching in such a classroom encounter is a dilemma for teacher Mona. It demands her to deliver subject matter and be relationally present in the encounter with children. Nevertheless, sometimes taking responsibility for what matters in the life of a child like Adnan comes as an afterthought. This is because our actions have already made the other suffer, like Adnan being expelled from school. Even though the teacher – Mona – is supposed in our eyes to be responsible or act responsibly, Lévinas (1998) argues that one can never measure up to this responsibility because it is immeasurable. “It is like something that would become increasingly distanced or that would distance itself more and more as one approached, like a distance that is more and more untraversable” (Lévinas cited in Michaelsen, 2015, p. 62). According to Lévinas, the other places responsibility on me, and in this moment, the *I* is encountered without prior notice. As such, I am made hostage by this other. This moment of responsibility unsettles me, yet it is the one that sometimes goes unnoticed, perhaps because I made another choice.

Derrida complicates this moment of responsibility by affirming that even though it is unpleasant, “one always must attempt to traverse the untraversable. In other words, confronted by the other's infinite appeal to justice one cannot remain undecided; one always has to make a decision, which will inevitably prove to be finite” (Michaelsen, 2015, p. 62). In the face of justice for the other, there is always a choice that one must make. Yet what can justice for Adnan be? How could Mona have known that the psychologist and the pedagogical leader would end up expelling Adnan? There is an aporia of deciding who to sacrifice. For example, one can take the student's appeal for one's help seriously or the rules already set. In Derrida (2000), this decision is solely aporetic and difficult, yet must be made. Essentially, it might end up betraying the other – the student one would have been responsible for. To Derrida, this is important. If one has to think calculative about how to be responsible, then it turns out to be irresponsible calculation and betrayal as Mona realizes. As such responsibility has to open itself to “what risks being perverted” that is the chance of “letting the other come” (Michaelsen, 2015, p. 62). This is complicated in the fact that as the one receiving or being called upon by the other, I am a stranger to them. It is precisely because of this strangeness that I could be hostile to the other by choosing not to be responsible. Nevertheless, this is still a choice.

Conclusion

The unaccompanied minors described in this chapter encounter vulnerability as something personal that they might not have a way out of. In their journeys to Europe and Norway, they have encountered adults who have preyed on their vulnerability to the point that inclusion in any society worth the name remains an illusion. What is evident in their journeys is that teachers encountering these young people cannot work with trauma as a symptom but actively work within the pedagogical relation, seeing the other as a human being with possibilities and in the process of becoming. This is not easy because unaccompanied teenagers' justice cannot be achieved through neat pedagogical encounters, nor can it be given to them by any state. However, as adults encountering them, we are brought to the awareness that this child, like Mohamed in our opening anecdote, is experiencing existence. That is, life as it is, unable to decide on what educational programs they can have if they can join a soccer team or play an instrument or make a career choice, or where they will be here the next day – this is their reality. The question, therefore, is, how do I care for something that might need more than I have? Should I care for the trauma as a symptom or from a psychological point of view, where I should identify the source and find out how to remedy the problem? Education is different. It becomes irresponsible if we try to take care of trauma instead of risking this other before me. What matters most is the moment we encounter this other; perhaps what they are experiencing could open up room for me to see this child as a subject on their own terms and not as an object of my investigations.

Notes

- 1 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113942>
- 2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113942>
- 3 The asylum claim begins at a point of doubt when for example age-testing is believed by case officers more than the stories given by claimants See- Johnson, T. A. M. (2013). Reading the Stranger of Asylum Law: Legacies of Communication and Ethics [journal article]. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 21(2), 119–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-013-9237-x>
- 4 The anecdote is from a doctoral study that explored the lived experience of waiting as experienced by unaccompanied minors- see (Kalisha, 2021).
- 5 The Jewish children were hidden from other children at the time for fear of retaliation from German soldiers Eide, K. (2020a). Barn i Norsk Innvandringshistorie. In K. Eide (Ed.), *Barn På Flukt- Psykososialt arbeid med enslige mindreårige flyktninger* (Vol. 2. Utgave, pp. 57–69). Glyndendal (Eide, 2020).
- 6 Tibetan children were only allowed to learn their language and culture in a Tibetan community and schools, awaiting a possible return after four years.
- 7 The humanitarian grounds in this period meant they had an opportunity for permanent residency and family reunification. However, it is noted that there were very few who opted for family reunification.
- 8 Humanitarianism has a myriad of definitions and practices where war is part of it. In this chapter I am interested in the ways in which a notion of humanitarianism has reduced the figure of a refugee into a threat whose vulnerability is not good enough for protection.

- 9 It was argued that this humanitarianism made Norway to be a favorite destination for unaccompanied minors (Kalisha, 2020a). As such immigration law changes of 2008 with subsequent revisions of 2015 restricted this type of immigration.
- 10 Normalization rides on the idea of including all people to benefit equally from the expanding economic growth.
- 11 between the years 2000 and 2008, a total of 5,799 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arrived in Norway, 1374 of which arrived in 2008 (Eide and Broch, 2010, p. 23).
- 12 Under section 28 of the immigration Act, assessments have to be made in order to consider whether an asylum seeker qualifies as a child or an adult. These assessments include age-testing.
- 13 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-italy-children-idUSKCN1101UW>
- 14 This anecdote is borrowed from a Norwegian book “*Narratives of Escape*. See Ahmadian, S., Aspfors-Sveen, I., Næsno, C. B., & Ahmadian, S. (2021). *Fortellinger om flukt*. Universitetsforlaget.
- 15 All unaccompanied minors who say they are 16 or who the case officer doubts their testimony, must “voluntarily” agree to age testing.
- 16 The Personal Data Act of 2000 with revisions made in 2018, collection of sensitive personal information requires legal consent. Consent given under duress or is not regarded as a voluntary consent.
- 17 This example has previously been used in another paper- see Kalisha, W., & Sævi, T. (2021). Educational failure as a potential opening to real teaching – The case of teaching unaccompanied minors in Norway. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 21(1).

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9 Virtues and Rituals

Confucianism and Education for Justice

Baldwin Wong and Liz Jackson

Confucianism is one of the most important enduring traditions of thought in the world. As such, scholars in recent years have considered Confucian perspectives on human rights (Rosemont, 1988; Ames, 2011; M. Sim, 2011b; Angle, 2012), distributive justice (Fan, 2010; Chan, 2014; Tan, 2014b; Kim, 2018), democracy (Tan, 2004; Kim, 2016), and meritocracy (Bell, 2006; Chan, 2014; Bai, 2020). However, Confucianism's significance in relation to education for justice has hardly been considered. This is perplexing because Confucius is often considered the greatest teacher of all time in China (*Zhisheng xianshi* 至聖先師). As Li Chengyang argues, from the “classic Confucian thinkers of over two thousand years ago, it is evident that education is of paramount importance to Confucianism” (2017, p. 41). Confucian scholars throughout history, such as Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) and Wang Yangming (王陽明, 1472–1529), devoted tremendous time and effort to running schools and teaching. Given its influence, Confucianism has undoubtedly shaped views about education and justice not only in China and East Asia but far beyond it over time through the Asian diaspora.

In relation, biased and stereotypical understandings of Confucianism are sometimes provided in international scholarship. Often Confucianism is understood as a moral, but not ethical philosophy, particularly by western scholars who tend to treat the moral and ethical as a binary, at odds with a Confucian view. In addition, negative stereotypes are prevalent despite their contrast with much Confucian scholarship, perhaps used to further distinguish Confucianism from western views. For example, some suggest that Confucianism encourages blind submission to authority and rote memorisation in schooling (e.g., Bloch, 1989; Sim, 2011a; Tan, 2014a; Shun, 2016). Given Confucianism's global legacy, such views hinder global understanding and multicultural recognition of scholars and students within and beyond East Asia who have been influenced by the tradition.

In this chapter, we consider the implications of Confucianism for understanding education for justice from a cross-cultural view. We ask: What are the implications of the Confucian view of justice and education? And how can a Confucian view contribute to current international debates related to education for justice? We begin by discussing the context of Confucius' thought, and his emphasis on the value of harmony, in contrast with the

common western liberal focus on the social contract. Then we discuss the implications of Confucianism's focus on moral development and human flourishing in relation to education for justice. As we show, in many ways Confucianism is similar to virtue ethics in western philosophy, although there are important differences between the two as well. In particular, a focus on rituals has distinctive ramifications in Confucian education for justice. In the last section, we consider what global (and particularly western) scholars and educators can learn from Confucianism.

As stated in the introduction of this volume, the normativity of education can be explored in three dimensions: justice in education, justice for education, and justice through education. In relation, we believe that more appropriate and meaningful recognition of the Confucian view of education for justice can stimulate international readers and particularly those in the western world to reconsider the Confucian tradition in general, and how justice can be achieved through rituals in education, in particular. Thus, Confucianism can complement a western or other global orientation toward justice in education and need not be discarded as relevant to broader conceptualisations of education for justice.

Background

Confucianism has been an influential philosophical doctrine in East Asia for over 2,000 years. Confucius (孔子, 551–479 BCE), who was sometimes called Kongzi or Master Kong in the West, lived in the Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese history (722–481 BCE). This was a time of political turmoil: The central authority had disintegrated, and the kingdom was divided into many dukedoms, among which wars frequently occurred. Confucius was particularly concerned in this context with widespread political disorder. In relation, he sought harmony as vital to ameliorate disorder and offered solutions oriented towards developing and restoring harmony in his society.

At the societal scale, Confucius envisioned that a good government that can maintain harmony is a government led by morally exemplary people (*junzi* 君子).¹ In relation, he noted that human beings (all human beings, as will be discussed later) are capable of developing a variety of commendable virtues, such as humaneness (*ren*), on the path to becoming morally exemplary. In this sense, Confucius' philosophical concern is similar to that of Locke (Kim 2009). Both attempted to show that human beings are not bound to live in a chaotic, war-like state of nature and are morally capable of developing a harmonious political order. Hence, although Confucius is best known for his moral teachings of benevolence and filial piety or devotion, his philosophical concern was fundamentally political. At the same time, Confucius' ideas are intrinsically important to education, as he focused on how humans can develop in such a way as to enable greater social harmony.

As the Confucian view of justice entailed envisioning and cultivating morally exemplary people, many consider Confucianism as a form of virtue ethics

(Ivanhoe, 2013; Jackson, 2021). Indeed, Confucians describe virtues within a teleological view of the flourishing of human nature. Similar to Plato and Aristotle, Confucius believed that social reputation, the accumulation of wealth, and the satisfaction of sensual desires are not necessarily to be eschewed in a flourishing life (Van Norden, 2007: 99–100). However, he did not consider any of these as high orders of good or necessary for human flourishing. Rather, to Confucius, human flourishing involved living harmoniously with the social and natural environment. This is essentially about developing valuable relationships with people around us (*Analects* 4.5, 4.9, 7.12).

To develop meaningful relationships, a person should develop their moral potential and become a virtuous person, i.e., a *junzi*. Moreover, aspiring Confucians should not only aim at the full development of their own virtues. As Confucius stated, “Desiring to take his stand, one who is Good helps others to take their stand; wanting to realize himself, he helps others to realize themselves” (*Analects* 6.30). The moral developments of individuals and society are thus closely related to each other. In brief, if justice implies an ideal vision of what a society should be (Simmons 2010: 7), then a Confucian conception of justice implies all people’s full moral development to achieve the ideal of *junzi*.

While he observed that some people are evil, Confucius was confident that all people could become morally virtuous in the right environment and with the right influences. Here relevant details were provided by his follower, Mencius (孟子, 372–289 BCE). Mencius is famous for his claim, similar to that of Rousseau, of “human nature being good” (性善) (*Mencius* 3A1). The claim is not that all humans are *de facto* good. Rather, it is that humans are born with the potential for virtue (*xing* 性), which can be nurtured or stunted. Given this potential, human beings naturally have moral emotional dispositions that draw their attention to salient normative features of the world. For example, when a child is about to fall into a well, almost everyone naturally has a feeling of alarm and sympathy and wants to rescue the child (*Mencius* 2A6). Mencius calls these innate moral emotions the “sprouts” (duan 端) of virtues, and he offers an analogy between the growth of plants and the development of moral emotions (*Mencius* 6A7). In a healthy environment, nascent sprouts can gradually grow to become fully flowering, mature specimens. Similarly, under proper circumstances, humans can fully realise their moral potential and achieve virtues.² Mencius further outlines how different moral emotions can be developed into different Confucian virtues:

From this it may be seen that one who lacks a mind that feels pity and compassion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels shame and aversion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels modesty and compliance would not be human; and one who lacks a mind that knows right and wrong would not be human.

The mind's feeling of pity and compassion is the sprout of humaneness [*ren* 仁]; the mind's feeling of shame and aversion is the sprout of rightness [*yi* 義]; the mind's feeling of modesty and compliance is the sprout of propriety [*li* 禮]; and the mind's sense of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom [*zhi* 智].

(*Mencius* 2A6)

The basic educability of all human beings has always been a central tenet of Confucianism. Given this belief in universal moral potential, Confucians believe that mass education is essential for achieving an ideal society. This is best represented by Confucius' famous claim that "[i]n education, there are no differences in kind" (*Analects* 15.39). No matter what class one is in and which family one is from, everyone is capable of becoming a *junzi*, so long as they receive a proper education. One of the chief political concerns of Confucians is, therefore, to ensure that a government provides widespread education for all in the society (Brindley, 2021). To Confucians, education is a primary good for all people.

However, although each person is capable of being virtuous, not all are effectively trained to be virtuous. Here the solution is given by another Confucian, Xunzi (荀子, 310–220 BCE). To Xunzi, rituals play a crucial role in transforming character. Despite innate moral emotions, humans have diverse desires. Some desires may tempt people to be immoral and thus to bring society to chaos. Therefore, humans require the moral use of rituals as a system of concrete and detailed instructions, specifying what they should say and do in particular contexts. According to Xunzi, by following rituals, the moral nature of humans can be cultivated gradually, and harmony can be eventually achieved:

From what did ritual arise? I say: Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desire, then they cannot but seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished. The former kings hated such chaos, and so they established rituals...to nurture their desires, and to satisfy their seeking. ... This is how ritual arose.

(*Xunzi* 19.11)

In brief, Confucian education is ritual-centred. This emphasis makes Confucian moral and political philosophy and virtue ethics different from western virtue ethics (Koehn, 2020). Why do rituals have such a function of moral transformation? The Sinologist Herbert Fingarette once said that Confucius was insightful because he recognised the “magical” effect of rituals, in the sense that rituals enable people to realise values effortlessly (1972, pp. 6–7). What is the secret behind this “magic”?

The Importance of Rituals

Rituals have a broad range of meanings. They are artificial rules made by humans, but they are also regarded by participants as sacred, as they are felt to objectively prescribe behaviour (Schwartz, 1985, p. 67). Rituals “cover everything from solemn performance of an elaborate rite to the ‘excuse me’ after a sneeze” (Yearley, 1990, p. 37). Rituals can involve formal ceremonies, such as marriages, funerals, and sacrifices to ancestors. But they also refer to the multifarious social norms that govern people’s interactions, which usually fall under the category of “etiquette”.

The distinction of *yili* (儀禮) and *quli* (曲禮) in Confucianism may be helpful here. *Yili* refers to ceremonial rituals, whereas *quli* refers to minute rituals, like rituals at family meals, greetings between strangers, clothing to wear at funerals, etc. As Fan argues, every culture has ceremonial rituals that constitute important events of that culture. However, Confucianism is one of the few cultures that takes minute rituals, especially the relationship between minute rituals and moral development, very seriously (Fan, 2010: 172). Hence, Confucian education has a distinctive cultural character that gives significant attention to small, concrete patterns of personal behaviours and interactions.

Some readers, at the first glance, may feel strange that rituals are given such weight in a normative theory. More frequently, western cultures emphasise the value of self-determination and the free development of individuals. In this context, they have been indifferent if not unfriendly to the value of traditional rituals. To some western students and scholars who enter Chinese cultural contexts for the first time (for example), rituals seem to represent rigid, monotonous, and coercive rules. For them, rituals bear little connection, or even an inverse connection, to virtues and human flourishing. Some claim in relation that rituals are merely a means for a ruler to impose a social ideology on people. By using formalism and repetitiveness, people are compelled to act in particular ways that facilitate the ruling of authorities (Bloch, 1989). Others may be more sympathetic to rituals but still value them primarily from a pragmatic perspective. That is, rituals can meet the needs of society by being an effective tool that binds individuals together (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Durkheim, 1995), but in this framing of rituals, they barely have moral significance.

Due to such doubts about rituals in western societies, many modern and contemporary Chinese scholars who were deeply influenced by western culture also framed rituals as mere oppression. Some describe such so-called oppression of individuality as “eating the people” (*chiren* 吃人). Even modern neo-Confucian scholars, such as Mou Zongsan and Tu Wei-ming, discount the role of rituals because they believe that this makes it easier to defend Confucian morality (Huang, 2020, p. 227). However, while rituals can indeed be oppressive and facilitate authoritarianism, Confucianism nonetheless specifies an important and distinctive role for rituals in moral transformation (Van Norden, 2007, p. 106).

Like western virtue theorists, Confucians believe humans learn to acquire virtues. But what are the details of this process? To Aristotle, virtues are acquired through habituation (Aristotle, 2004, 1103a). A person becomes just by performing just actions and courageous by performing courageous actions (Jackson, 2021). But can a person perform virtuous actions before they have virtuous character? Here Confucianism has more substantive insights. Although everyone has the potential to be virtuous, one may not precisely know what a virtuous person should do in a particular context before they realise their moral potential. Rituals thus act as a guideline for people to follow and discipline themselves in the process of moral learning.

One may have the innate moral emotions to treat others well, but one may not know the correct way to express these emotions in particular contexts. In this case, the concrete and detailed guidance of rituals can enable them to learn how to express their emotions appropriately. For example, one may naturally have a feeling of grief when one attends the funeral of a friend. However, without rituals, they may use the wrong words or wear the wrong clothes to reflect their grief, and they could unintentionally upset their friend's relatives. When following an all-black dress code, other people are more likely to understand and feel their grief and respect. In brief, rituals provide a way for people to act virtuously in everyday practices of human communication.

Furthermore, rituals do not only tell people how to be virtuous. They also *train* people to be virtuous. As Confucius said, to achieve *ren* (goodness), “restraining yourself and returning to the *li* (rituals) constitute *ren*” (*Analects* 12.1). Rituals provide daily training that continuously transforms the character of people and enables people to work toward the ethical ideal. The road to virtue is difficult and long, requiring day-by-day effort. In the beginning, a person may follow rituals simply because of social pressure. Nevertheless, by exercising rituals, a person turns away from their concern in satisfying their self-interested desires. They gradually learn to act virtuously, as they are on the way toward developing a virtuous character. Over time and with practice, exercising rituals can become akin to reflex. Finally, people who effectively adopt rituals in everyday life can spontaneously act and treat others virtuously. This is the crux of the Confucian theory of education – external acts gradually modify internal virtuous character. Unlike in some western theories of education, developing one's capacities for rational persuasion and deliberation is insufficient for moral cultivation here (e.g., Jackson, 2021). Rather, by performing mannerly conduct steadily, one's mind is gradually shifted (Olberding, 2019, p. 71). Here virtues of persistence, seriousness, devotedness, dedication, commitment, and perseverance are implicitly learned through the practicing of rituals.

Xunzi frequently emphasised “accumulated effort” in this context (*Xunzi* 8.475–500; cf. *Xunzi* 1.70–135, 4.210, 9.545–550). As Xunzi says, “[I]f you accumulate soil, you will form a mountain. If you accumulate water, you will form a sea”. Similarly, “if ordinary men in the street and the common people accumulate goodness and make it whole and complete, they are called sages” (*Xunzi* 8.490–495). Mountains and seas are made up of soil and

water. But the formation of mountains and seas requires someone to put enormous time and effort to accumulate soil and water day after day. Soil and water can become mountains and seas, but only after a long process of accumulation. Similarly, everyone has the potential to become a *junzi*. But to become a *junzi*, significant time and effort are required. Making moral progress, especially in the earlier stages of moral development, requires careful monitoring of one's attitudes and behaviours. Whenever a person performs an action required by rituals, they slightly adjust and reform their disposition towards virtues. A virtuous character is thus built up from the steady accumulation of seemingly minor events.³

Accordingly, the ultimate goal of the Confucian education of rituals is that people internalise the values expressed in the rituals. In the words of Edward Slingerland, the ideal should be *wu-wei* (無為) (2003). This is a state of personal harmony in which actions flow freely from one's spontaneous inclinations. One can then act in a way consistent with the requirement of Confucian ethics without extended deliberation and inner struggle. This ethical ideal can be contrasted with another state, *you-wei* (有為), in which one's moral actions involve too much purposeful or instrumental endeavour (Kim, 2009, p. 398). Although in both states a person acts virtuously, the former state is preferable to Confucians because it is more autonomous and natural. One does not need to consciously force oneself to act virtuously. Instead, one simply acts morally. Confucius achieved this state in his later age. When he was between 15 and 30, he had to force himself to rigorously follow ritual practices. However, "at seventy, [Confucius] could follow [his] heart's desires without overstepping the bounds of propriety" (*Analects* 2.4). Only at an advanced age and with training could he act virtuously with ease, with his dispositions thoroughly harmonised with the dictates of morality.

This insight about the relationship between ritual practice and ethical transformation echoes work in cognitive psychology. This research suggests that human beings have two distinct systems of thought and action. The first is "hot cognition," which is thought and action that is "fast, automatic, and mostly unconscious". The second is "cold cognition", which means thought and action that is "slow, deliberative, effortful, and conscious" (Slingerland, 2014, p. 32; cf. Stalnaker, 2010, p. 415). For example, hot cognition may motivate one to get ice cream because sugar is instinctively appealing. Meanwhile, cold cognition may urge further thought related to reflective consideration of their health and weight. The purpose of practicing rituals is to train "cold" cognition to become "hot". Initially, people's cold cognition tells them to follow ritual practices. Their hot cognition, however, may tempt them to do otherwise. After practice, exercising rituals becomes something that people can do effortlessly and spontaneously. Being virtuous eventually becomes a kind of hot cognition.⁴

Hence, a unique feature of the Confucian view of justice within and beyond education is its emphasis on rituals. Similar to other virtue ethics theories, Confucianism assumes that a flourishing life is constituted by exercising virtues. However, Confucianism offers a distinctive account of ethical

transformation which is based on the daily training of rituals. To train people to be virtuous, one must provide a set of concrete guidelines and let people get used to following them. By practicing repeatedly, people's virtuous character can gradually develop and, eventually, their emotions can lead them to normally act in a right way. It may be simple to offer people reasons to be virtuous, but it takes years to mould virtuous character.

The Confucian Contribution to Western Education for Justice

We do not argue that Confucian education should replace civic or other education for justice in western democratic societies. Nevertheless, we do believe that western education for justice can be benefited by incorporating some insights of the Confucian view. In discussions of justice in western education, liberalism is often a guiding theory. However, there are some important differences and clashes between Confucian insights and liberal ones in relation to justice in education.

First, it is worth recognising the different foundations of Confucianism and liberalism. Liberalism, and particularly political liberalism, aims to justify the legitimacy of the state in a pluralistic society (Rawls, 2005; Larmore, 2020). Political liberals principally believe that the power and resources of a government are publicly owned by all citizens. Therefore, if a government must use its power and resources to enforce laws and policies, it must use them on the ground of public reasons that could be accessible to all reasonable citizens (Wong, 2022). Accordingly, many laws and policies that promote a particular comprehensive doctrine, such as Christianity and Islam, should be avoided, for these laws and policies would be rejected by citizens who do not endorse these comprehensive doctrines.⁵ Hence, according to political liberalism, Confucian education should not be promoted by public power and taxation because it assumes a Confucian conception of flourishing life, and this conception of life would be rejected by taxpayers who believe in other religions or are affiliated with other cultures. Many non-Confucian-heritage citizens would reject the Confucian perfectionist view of justice that all people should be ethically developed to be a *junzi* (Wong, 2019).

However, this does not mean that liberal education has nothing to learn from Confucianism. Since the 1980s, more and more political liberals recognise that the problem of good government cannot be solved merely at the procedural and institutional levels. If all citizens are selfish and evil, then a liberal democracy cannot function effectively. Some level of civic virtues is, therefore, necessary (Macedo, 1990, pp. 138–9; Galston, 1991, p. 217). Christie Hartley and Lori Watson (2014) summarise civic virtues that do not presuppose any comprehensive doctrines but are required in a political liberal society:

- i *Respectfulness*: Citizens are disposed to acknowledge each other as individuals with equal standing. They recognise others have the right to make claims of justice on others and propose laws and policies. Despite disagreements, they do not disparage, degrade, or humiliate others.

- ii *Toleration*: Citizens are disposed to refrain from interfering with an opposed other, even if the citizens believe that they should interfere. So long as others' acts are consistent with principles of justice, citizens should allow others to pursue their life goals.
- iii *Full autonomy*: Citizens are willing to participate in society's public affairs and share in its collective self-determination over time. Citizens may not need to value autonomy as self-government and reflect on their own comprehensive doctrine, but they should participate in political affairs as independent members of a political community.

Besides these virtues, Hartley and Watson mention others, such as attentive listening, patience towards others, and sharing of social space (Hartley and Watson, 2014, p. 428). How can western education teach students to have these civic virtues? The educational methods suggested by political liberals are mainly about the education of knowledge and rational thinking (Jackson, 2019, 2021). For example, Blain Neufeld and Gordon Davis suggest that governments should require schools to incorporate a civic education curriculum (2010, p. 99). In this curriculum, the history of religious conflicts would be taught, so students would understand the value of peace and compromise. Also, students would participate in debates concerning a range of socially and politically divisive issues. Through these debates, students learn to exchange their views with others in terms of public reasons (Levinson, 2014).

However, as we mentioned earlier, knowledge and rational persuasion are insufficient in transforming a person to be virtuous. They are insufficient for exemplary character, and their ultimate relationship to harmonious relations and peace (other goals for justice in society and education from a Confucian view) is questionable. If ethical transformation can be effectively pursued by practicing rituals, would any rituals cultivate a civically virtuous citizen? As previously mentioned, western virtue ethics also encourages habituation of virtues, particularly among young learners (Jackson, 2021). Furthermore, a pedagogy of autonomy wherein students are significantly moulded by teachers and other elders in order to develop dispositions in line with the development of virtuous character and rationality can imply the need for education for character development, emotional self-control, and some degree of obedience, especially when it comes to young learners (Maxwell and Reichenbach, 2007; Jackson, 2021).

More broadly, western societies contain numerous rituals, within and beyond education, which are rarely reflected upon, in relation to socialisation and development of positive relations with others, developing civic virtue, and so on (Jackson, 2021). In this context, it is not as outlandish as it might first appear to consider a more rich and detailed view of rituals in education, as means to not only possibly oppress or impose overt authority but rather to enhance justice in education through engaging students in meaningful and sustained reflection on the nature of civic virtues and their cultivation. To repeat, to recognise the potential of rituals in education does

not mean demanding blind obedience or total submission to authority. Rather, a thoughtful view of the value of rituals in human social and emotional development can enhance civic and moral education and education for justice across cultural contexts. Finally, such an education on the value of civic virtues for justice and the related practicing of rituals can lead to greater moral recognition of the value of so-called comprehensive worldviews like Confucianism, rather than to the disparagement of such views as mutually exclusive with liberalism, given the significance of Confucianism not only in China but throughout the Asian diaspora worldwide.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have elaborated on some significant aspects of a Confucian view of justice in relation to education. Additionally, we sought to make critical comparisons with influential western views. As we discussed here, Confucianism need not be seen as at odds with western education, including that which is influenced by liberal philosophy. Confucian education, with its focus on character development through rituals, is not merely education for rote memorisation or obedience training. Rather, it reflects, like in western virtue ethics, the importance of habituation to moral and ethical development as a learning process. This can be seen as a kind of critical-normative approach to education, as stated in the introduction. Rituals can have a place in learning and education for justice across societies. This perspective thus provides a new direction for critically evaluating existing civic education within and beyond Confucian heritage societies.

Through learning about Confucian views of justice, western and international readers and educators can also develop a more open-minded, positive recognition of Confucian philosophy and its influence on East Asians, also respecting the variety of views found within the tradition, as in western philosophy. Scholars and students coming from Confucian heritage backgrounds who may value ritualised behaviours in education and society are not brain-washed dupes (Sim, 2011a) or excessive lovers of authority. In Confucianism, one learns not just reasons for but also means of development through ritual practice. They develop character traits such as humaneness, perseverance, open-mindedness, patience, seriousness, and commitment. Greater recognition among diverse scholars of the insights of Confucianism can thus enable the future bridging of longstanding cultural divides and dismissals, which is also critical to the enabling of justice through education around the world.

Notes

- 1 The term *junzi* is sometimes translated as “gentleman” (such as in D. C. Lau’s translation), but “morally exemplary person” is a less misleading, more useful contemporary translation.
- 2 In this sense, Mencius is similar to sentimentalist virtue theorists, such as Hume, who also describes the virtues primarily in terms of certain broadly construed emotions (Ivanhoe, 2013, pp. 51–52).

- 3 This does not mean that Confucianism is only concerned with dogmatic education. On the contrary, Confucianism encourages reflective understanding in the process of learning (de Bary, 1983, pp. 21–42; Lai, 2006; Shun, 2016). Rituals can also be adjusted by people after rational reflection (Angle, 2012, p. 96).
- 4 Apart from Slingerland, a similar view that rituals are a form of situationist strategy that is effective in developing virtuous character can be found in Hutton (2006), Sarkissian (2010), Mower (2013), and Wong (2021, pp. 24–25).
- 5 However, it does not mean that *any* promotion of cultures and religions would be rejected by political liberalism. So long as the promotion could be justified by some public reasons, the laws and policies related to this promotion are legitimate (Macedo, 1995).

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10 Higher Education under Consideration

Why Restorative Justice (in Africa) Is Still Relevant?

Yusef Waghid

Introduction

Since the dawn of the new democratic state in 1994, (South) African higher education has been undergoing major conceptual and structural changes. Over the past three decades, higher education in the country has drastically changed from separate education systems for various racial groups, namely, whites, coloureds, Indians, and blacks, to a single coordinated national education system. From 36 public higher education institutions (21 universities and 15 technikons or polytechnics), the higher education sector now comprises 26 public universities with its own categorisations of research-intensive, comprehensive, and technology-driven institutions. Looking back at the multiple reviews of the higher education sector through the agency of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), it seems that between 2004 and 2021, four major reviews along the lines of two distinct processes were conducted. Firstly, the four reviews include *South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy* (2004), *Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes* (2007), *Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy* (2016), and *Review of the Higher Education System Twenty-Five Years* (2021). Secondly, as announced in the CHE's *State of Higher Education in South Africa* (2009), the reviews centred around claims of economic rationality (CHE, 2014).

On the one hand, the reviews set out to show whether the higher education sector achieved its targets and goals concerning economic prosperity and global competitiveness. On the other hand, it addressed claims of transformation in terms of

the performance of higher education for equity and redress, quality, economic and social development, and democracy; and what the key challenges are for the effective and efficient achievement of goals and targets in an overall higher education system that is meant to be characterised by cooperative governance.

Council on Higher Education, 2021

Thus, what seemed to have emerged from the enactment of higher education in the country post-1994 is a tangible drive towards addressing the

transformative requirements of equitable redress and (e)quality, and democratic development concomitantly with a strong impetus on neoliberal ideals of globalisation, competition, and skills development.

In this chapter, I examine these two parallel initiatives and, firstly, argue why such initiatives seem to advance claims of rationality and why the higher education transformation agenda has been retarded considering its tangible bias towards rationality. Secondly, I examine how decolonisation and decoloniality of higher education can restore the education transformation agenda. Thirdly, I argue that restorative justice and *ubuntu* (as acts of decoloniality) can be considered as a rupturing of the economic-rationalist aspirations of the higher education sector, and concomitantly, how it can become more relevant to the transformation agenda of the higher education sector.

Between Economic Rationalism and Transformative Change within the Higher Education Sector

In the beginning, post-apartheid higher education discourse in South Africa was clearly aligned with economic rationalism that seems to have been biased towards a neoliberal export-led growth orientation. The initial strong thrust the higher education policy discourse put on equity and redress became secondary to its attentiveness to economic labour market imperatives and concomitant neoliberal requirements for skilled and innovative knowledge workers and producers. The country's economic-rationalist agenda for higher education policy implementation became evident during the #FeesMustFall student movement that began in 2015 and saw a significant resistance to the levying of university tuition fees upon individuals. It seemed as if higher education had charted out a course of economic rationalism that advances the corporatisation of universities and colleges expected to raise a much greater proportion of their own revenue, enter into business enterprises, acquire and hold investment portfolios, encourage partnerships with business firms, compete with other institutions in the production and marketing of courses to students now seen as customers, and generally engage with the market for higher education. In this regard, the corporatisation or marketisation of higher education worldwide is aptly acknowledged by Simon Marginson (2007, p. 42), who states the following:

The potential for economic markets in higher education rests on the historical and political conditions. ... For the most part education markets in national systems are constructed and managed by governments, which stratify institutions and install relations of competition, prices and economic incentives. ... In this, the neoliberal era in policy and government, the development of the market form, including fully commercial higher education ... has been much advanced. ... But economic markets and commodities in higher education have not been entirely imposed from outside, whether by neoliberal policy or global convergence. They are also grounded in higher education itself.

My interest is in Marginson's claim that neoliberal marketisation/economic rationalism is also an imposition of higher education itself. The higher education landscape in the country itself seems to be steered and regulated through government legislation. Higher education institutions are expected to transform their curriculum, knowledge interests, teaching, and learning programmes to be responsive to the diverse cultures and citizenship aspirations of a democratic society in order to ensure nation-building. Yet, institutions also direct their curriculum and academic programming towards market-driven economic interests such as producing highly skilled and competitive knowledge workers (graduates). Thus, it seems that equitable redress and transformation must be implemented concurrently with higher education institutions' market-driven impetus. And, as acknowledged by the CHE (2021), such a harmonisation is not always adequately attended to. Why is the latter a concern?

Firstly, most universities in the country emphasise the importance of equipping students with graduate attributes associated with producing workers who can function in a competitive global labour market economy. Suppose students are not equipped with skills and capacities such as critical and creative thinking, responsible use of knowledge, collaboration, leadership, social entrepreneurship, problem-solving, and innovation in a diverse and sustainable technological environment. In that case, it is assumed by universities that they would not have acquired enabling graduate attributes to function in a world labour market economy (Stellenbosch University 2021). It seems evident that the neoliberal global interests are foregrounded, and the transformative agenda of the institutions have taken a back seat. Although institutional strategic plans advocate the importance of a decolonised university education, not much seemed to have been done in this respect, and resistance to such unwilling actions manifest in student protests evident in #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements.

Student protests against exorbitant university tuition costs and Anglo-Saxon-dominated university courses that seem to minimise local interests are the primary concerns of the aforementioned movements, respectively. What seems to be at the thrust of student resistance is that the transformation agenda of universities seems to be undermined at the expense of the advancement of neoliberal educational concerns. Secondly, universities, in particular the research-intensive institutions, encourage (and expect) their academics to apply for an individual rating with the National Research Foundation (NRF). And, if these individual ratings are granted, some institutions even offer research incentives for their academics. Of course, as with many such rating initiatives, human bias seems to be quite prevalent, and often credible scholarship seems to be less emphasised for more mediocre forms of academic play. For instance, a scholar not deemed to have a high citation index on Google scholar would seemingly be disadvantaged by reviewers for the NRF. However, not the same urgency is expected from higher education institutions to transform their academic offerings towards cultivating a decolonised higher education system. And often, highly rated scholars are

privity to use their ratings for more lucrative academic positions at universities that laud such achievements. Thirdly, several higher education institutions in the country offer exorbitant remuneration packages to their senior executive staff members in line with market imperatives. At some universities, executives could earn substantially more than professors at the same institution. Yet, it is the professoriate that provides such universities with their intellectual credibility. Paradoxically, these institutions do not always consider remunerating the same executives commensurate with their initiatives to implement higher education transformation, especially in relation to access, equity, redress, equality, and decoloniality. If they were to have done so, universities in the country would have substantively embraced transformation initiatives, which at present does not necessarily seem to be the case. For instance, black women academics still seem to be marginalised regarding employment equity, and their promotion to a senior level at public universities in the country seems to be severely curtailed (Zulu, 2021).

What appears to emanate from this discussion is that higher education institutions have not yet contrived a way to harmonise economic-rationalist imperatives with a transformation of the higher education agenda. And, unless the aforementioned happens, there seems to be no hankering towards the cultivation of higher education transformation within the context of challenges posed by globalised higher education concerns. I will now discuss why higher education in South Africa needs transformation in the context of debates on and about decolonisation and decoloniality.

On the Decolonisation and Decoloniality of Higher Education in (South) Africa

If one considers the escalating unrest at universities throughout the country concerning student fees and historical debt, then it becomes apparent that human rationality is at play: university managers incessantly justifying why students have to settle their accounts and showing a demonstrable reluctance to engage with student debt, students resorting to occupation tactics and setting buildings alight citing an unwillingness to be listened to, and increasing tensions and distrust among students, university managers, and government officials that result in different stakeholders blaming one another for the disruptions at universities. This us-and-them relationship that manifests on account of human argumentation and justification is a typical example of how controversial debates about student fees seem to centre around the uniqueness of the autonomous human self as if context, demeanour, atmosphere, and other non-human entities have nothing to do with such public matters. It does appear as if everything centres around decisions humans make in defence of their positions and arguments. The result is that no compromise has been contrived, and the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protest movements since 2015 have gained much more momentum than was previously thought to be the case. At the time of writing this section, two provinces in the country have seen an increase in violence since the

incarceration of former president Jacob Zuma. At several malls in the provinces of Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal, looting and fighting have been instigated by apparent members of the Zuma-faction in response to his arrest. It is the same President Zuma who once addressed some university students reminding them that his honourable public position never depended on university studies. After the country's highest court imprisoned him for violating the court by failing to appear for his corruption trial, the country witnessed a series of mall invasions and looting, the first of its kind since its transition to a democratic state in 1994. To my mind, this kind of political and societal lawlessness that seems to permeate a minority sector of the South African public might even spill over to increasing violence at many dysfunctional public universities in the country. The rationale seems to be that looting and corruption would be difficult to quell, considering that the South African police force stood by as millions of television viewers witnessed the mayhem that unfolded at several malls, especially in black township communities. Considering the aforementioned, I contend that the country's current socio-political situation and the instability and dysfunctionality that public universities face should be read differently, to what seems to be the case at present.

So, the question is, what does a diffracted reading of the current matters pertaining to student fees and debt and the continued socio-political instability have to offer? The mere fact that public property is being destroyed and relationships among students, university managers, and government have been mostly adversarial, suggests that a new approach to such relations should be considered. Likewise, the unforeseen public violence that occurred in parts of the country, if not quelled, would invariably spill over to universities in the country. Karen Barad (2007) offers an account of diffractive analysis as a way of looking at entities in the world that are intra-actionally related. For instance, to look at educational and political matters intra-actionally means to uncover the entangled relations between practices such as teaching and learning and social action so that such actions are not seen to be mutually exclusive but rather relational in the form of teaching-learning and political-social, respectively. Barad explains diffractive analysis as considering what happens within knowledge and society together-apart. For her, diffraction implies that intra-actional possibilities entangle knowledge and social matters as new imaginings are reconfigured. In a different way, diffractive analysis lays open ruptures, flashes of understanding, the creation of new becomings, and re-imaginings. For instance, if one were to re-read the purposes of a university entangled with concerns of decolonisation and decoloniality of education, firstly, one would be reading those actions as intra-actionally entangled – that is, as non-corporatised-decolonised-action. Secondly, one would reconfigure the purposes of such a university as one of knowing-using-becoming, and, thirdly, one would link such a university's role of situating higher education within-relation-to relevant worldly concerns (Taylor, 2019). Next, I examine these three ideas of reconfiguring the notion of an (African) university.

Towards a Non-corporatised Decolonised University

To begin with, genuine corporate universities are seen as managerial for-profit corporations that are innovative and provide education and training services to for-profit corporate firms, disseminate knowledge and information to their customers, and harvest new knowledge generated by workers as intellectual property (Waks, 2007, p. 101). South African public universities would hardly be categorised as such. Yet, the 26 public and about 136 private higher education institutions, of which 34 are not-for-profit, cannot in their entirety be separated from corporatist goals. Many public universities in the country commodify knowledge programmes, treat their academic staff as knowledge producers and students as consumers, charge exorbitant fees for student registrations, encourage academics to apply for rating individually, rely on performance management indicators to evaluate staff, and brand their academic offerings as intellectually and technologically career-relevant. In addition, students are promised upfront that the qualifications they would acquire comprise career-relevant outcomes with an eye on ensuing employment in a competitive market-driven economy. The latter instances of corporatisation at public universities do not seem to exempt higher education institutions from being seen as providing competitive higher education services that are increasingly sold as commodities. Academics at my institution and several others in the country are often reminded to treat students as valued customers. In some instances, academics seem to be discouraged from critiquing students that would wrongly be seen as an affront to their presence in university classrooms.

What is wrong with such a corporatised view of the university? If a (Southern) African university could cause students, especially from previously disadvantaged communities, to incur high tuition costs and debts, despite financial support from the government for their educational services, such a university cannot legitimately be regarded as a public higher education institution. Students of the public are indiscriminately expected to pay exorbitant fees they simply cannot afford without also incurring huge debts. Yet, they (students) are overburdened with costs that are simply unaffordable, considering that most of the students at South African public universities are from poor socio-economic backgrounds (CHE, 2021). Likewise, a university that discourages its scholars to engage in critique with students cannot lay claim to being a university, as critique in itself is a practice without which a university cannot function legitimately. Jacques Derrida (2004) reminds us that a university of critique provokes students to think anew and come up with unexpected truth claims. Discouraging a university from engaging in critique would deepen the educational dysfunctionality that seems to be present in several South African universities. The point about critique is that it is necessary to decolonise a university because decolonisation implies that one resists the institutional hegemony that seems to exclude educational engagement among university teachers and students. If students cannot be provoked to think differently, their self-understandings would

never be evoked to come to alternative speeches (Waghid, Waghid, and Waghid, 2018). Through critique, the taken-for-granted is ruptured, and new understandings are initiated – that is, students’ potentialities are evoked on the grounds of critique that augurs well for the decolonisation of higher education.

Moreover, I contend that non-corporatisation and decolonisation at public universities in the country should be entangled. If one of the graduate attributes of a university is to become entrepreneurial, then by implication, students are taught to function as for-profit knowledge workers who can provide educational services to valued customers. On the contrary, as elusive as the term might be (Zembylas, 2018), decolonisation seems to be linked to offering resistance to the exercise of politico-economic sovereignty of one dominant nation over another less dominant one (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Together with decolonisation, the notion of decoloniality can be considered as restoring the cultural values, economic aspirations, and knowledge interests of (previously) colonised communities (Mbembe, 2016). By implication, the decolonisation of the public university is an attempt to oppose and undermine the imperialist legacy and devaluation of the cultures and knowledge interests of marginalised communities. In this way, non-corporatisation seems to be synonymous with non-exploitation and recognising the cultural values and knowledge concerns of marginalised communities. And, educating students to become entrepreneurial seems to work against the decolonisation of higher education projects. Instead, integrating decolonial aspirations into a non-corporatised university curriculum seems to be connected to the cultivation of cultural knowledge interests that enhance the concerns of marginalised communities. Considering that the university in (Southern) Africa has been challenged by political authorities through their ministries of education to transform higher education, the move towards decolonisation and decoloniality seems to have been apt in cultivating a more culturally inclusive and economically responsive curriculum. Thus, one finds that the university has been redirected towards transcending its public concern for knowledge from enlightenment ideals to alternative conceptions of knowledge. It is to such a discussion that I now turn.

Towards an African University of Knowing-Using-Becoming

At the time of entering higher education as an academic in the 1990s, the epistemological inquiry at universities in the country has been influenced significantly by a liberal enlightenment project of rational knowledge construction. During my early years in the Faculty of Education at the institution where I currently work, the primary philosophical and intellectual trend that prevailed served to promote confidence in liberal enlightenment conceptions of rationality, knowledge, and truth. The conception of knowledge that manifested in the Faculty’s educational offerings was meant to secure certainty and objectivity, considered as hallmarks of the value judgements of a liberally educated individual. My own bias towards a critical educational

theory was inherently at odds with a rationalised liberal form of education, which later evolved into a pragmatist take on knowledge advocated through a form of problem-based inquiry.

In the early 2000s, an established form of liberal higher education was challenged for its inattentiveness to marginalised and excluded social groups that have been racially and culturally discriminated against. A critical take on knowledge (re)construction undermined epistemological theorising in terms of logic and reason and provided alternative conceptions of knowledge that no longer tolerated male hegemony and oppression. Anything other than a critical take on knowledge was deemed as culturally imperialist, elitist, and exclusivist. This critical turn became the state of epistemology at most universities throughout the country as the new democratic dispensation began to manifest and alternative voices challenged the objectivist aspirations of liberal epistemology. Decoloniality of higher education within the Faculty emerged as a philosophical movement towards undermining the rationalist focus of knowledge that seemed biased towards objectivist inquiry. Such a modernist stance towards the university along the lines of idealised knowledge pursuits seemed to be the order of the day. In no small way, higher education seemed to have been separated from the value judgements of people, thus having become alienated from the realms of ethical and political commitment. This rejection of human values made it difficult for the Faculty to commit itself to democratic action in its planning and management of educational concerns.

Only in the 2000s did higher education open up to a democratic discourse when different staff members began to “interrelate among themselves, to talk together in different voices, addressing the differences that make them outsiders and insiders with respect to each other” (Hernandez, 1997, p. 19). Simply put, attuned to the new democratic ethos that seemed to have emerged in the Faculty in the 2000s, an alternative conception of knowledge emerged that created opportunities for university academics and students to embark on social action through which people’s lives can be liberated and transformed. The possibility for democratic discourse through which people could exchange and share new cultural hybrids with others and individuals and groups could live their differences made it possible for thinking differently about higher education. The newly established democratic discourse in the Faculty accentuated an alternative conception of knowledge in opposition to rationalist ideals.

The alternative conception of knowledge that seemed to have undermined the notion of a liberal epistemology (in the Faculty) considered knowledge as knowledge everywhere. Kwasi Wiredu (2005, p. 16) argues that “knowledge cannot be said to be *intrinsically* African or European or American [even though] ... a discovery may be made by an African or a European, but the resultant knowledge would not *in itself* be African or European”. The Africanisation of such knowledge in the interests of Africa refers to the use of aspects of such knowledge and not the knowledge itself (Wiredu, 2005). So, the very idea of categorising knowledge and designating it to the discovery

of particular people does not in itself make such knowledge the property of the people who made the discovery. The use of knowledge gives it its categorisation (as liberal or critical) and not the knowledge itself. In this sense, knowing and using (of knowledge) are inseparable; that is, the production (discovery or recovery) of knowledge cannot be separated from its use; otherwise, knowledge in itself would be of no use.

Similarly, knowledge-using happens in different spheres of application: universal and particular (local). So, what appears to be universal knowledge can be (re)constructed in the sciences and humanities, in conjunction with local knowledge, to produce knowledge-for-a-particular-use (context). But then again, such a universalist-particularist use of knowledge might also be advanced further, say in the interests of African or European priorities. In this way, knowledge use would be forward-looking in the sense that it might yet have unknown and unpredictable influences on various societies. Consequently, we can speak of knowledge-using-becoming as an alternative conception of knowledge to the acclaimed liberal or communitarian conceptions of epistemology that seem to dominate much of the liberal Anglo-Saxon and perhaps communitarian continental concerns of epistemology. For purposes of convenience, I shall henceforth refer to a university of knowledge-using-becoming as a post-critical university.

What does a post-critical African university represent? Firstly, such a university resists rational discourses that remain subject to audits, assessments, and regulation; privilege ranking and scores; speaking the language of performativity and managerialism; and dishonouring genuine research (Waghid and Davids, 2020, p. 1). Instead, a post-critical university is a contemplative one that functions like a genuine agora or a deliberative space that brings together academic scholarship and civic capacities with engagement and public commitment (Waghid and Davids, 2020, p. 2). Unlike a university that focuses only on rationality (Waghid, 2012) that stunts innovation, creativity, and intellectual engagement, a post-critical university promotes a kind of thinking that is always risky guided by freedom, reflection, provocation, and hostility (Waghid and Davids, 2020, p. 7). This is so because such a university is capable of rendering “reasons that are provocative and discerning; otherwise it would fail to create conditions for acts of risk and rivalry” (Waghid and Davids, 2020, p. 8). Secondly, a post-critical African university aligns itself with new ways of taking responsibility (Derrida, 2004, p. 148). Such a university advances suspicion in relation to its responsibility to embark on what it does not have and what is still to come (Derrida, 2004, p. 155). An African university such as this is not only in perpetual potentiality but also averse to stagnation and apathy – that is, the university remains responsive to the challenges and needs of its society whether because of technological innovation, conflict, wars, hunger, and in the case of South Africa, poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The university of risk holds itself accountable to its epistemological, social, and societal purposes. Thirdly, a post-critical African university is constituted by dissent and political resistance. Such a university acts against despair and societal destruction because dissent offers an opportunity

to look at things as they could be otherwise inspired by acts of provocation and suspicion (Waghid and Davids, 2020, p. 11). Thus, a post-critical African university of contemplation, risk, and dissent seems to be more appropriate to advance the transformation of higher education because contemplative, risky, and dissenting actions are inextricably linked to a transformative agenda guided by reflection, responsibility, and the quest for political resistance. Simply put, such an African university has the potential to rupture higher education and restore just human actions. It is to such a discussion that I now turn.

Towards a Rupturing of Higher Education: The Quest for Restorative Justice and *Ubuntu*

Considering that in both the aforementioned processes of economic rationalism and institutional transformation, the idea of individual freedom features prominently in their justification, it seems apt to examine the priority of individual freedom in the initiation of such social actions. Of course, what academics as individuals do might not always be perceived by some university managers as essential to the pursuit of institutional practices, but what these academics might supposedly not be doing would invariably impact the academic space at the institution. The point is, an individual's freedom might seem to be insignificant within the broader developments of institutional academic advancement. Yet, they do possess a specific freedom that impacts the way many others perceive the institution. For instance, in a department where I work, some individuals' freedom to do minimal work in research seems to undermine the research ethos of the department, although it might not seem to be the case if one considers the overall research productivity of the department. For my analysis of individual freedom, I draw on the seminal thoughts of Axel Honneth (2016), who in turn reconsiders George Hegel's doctrine of ethical life that relates to a third kind of freedom. By now, the concepts of negative and positive freedom made famous by Isaiah Berlin (1990) seem to have impacted understandings of higher education, in particular realising institutional arrangements that reflect determinations of reason.

On the one hand, negative freedom (liberty) in reference to Berlin's thoughts implies that an individual is free insofar as her activities manifest without any outside interference from others (Berlin, 1990). Put differently, individual freedom unfolds "by virtue of being granted a circumscribed space for the unhindered pursuit of his [her] goals" (Honneth, 2016, p. 162). When university professors pursue their academic tasks unconstrained by institutional demands, such individuals enjoy negative liberties. However, we cannot imagine academics being afforded negative liberties, at least at universities in this country, without interference from their institutional management. Academics might be pursuing their research in varying fields of inquiry, but it can be that institutions would determine the thematic rationale for their research. Thus, it seems that negative liberty might not be a

possibility at many institutions of higher learning. On the other hand, the idea of positive liberty refers to the self-determination of rational beings to act upon their reflexive understandings of the world (Berlin, 1990). Such a notion of freedom that relies overwhelmingly on the exercise of individuals' capacities for self-determination seems deficient, considering that universities are social institutions in which the self-understandings of others cannot be ignored. Universities in a democratic society intent on serving the public good cannot just rely on self-determining individuals who function independently from others in the pursuit of their institutionalised practices that require cooperation and interdependence.

Consequently, we are drawn to Axel Honneth's idea of "objective freedom" – a third delineated concept of freedom – "whereby individuals mutually encounter their own self-determined purposes as objectively given in the other's activity" (Honneth, 2016, p. 170). Through objective freedom, individuals do not lose their capacity to exercise self-determination whereby they adopt ends and intentions reasonably directed at the institutions where they work. However, they are also capable of viewing "the satisfaction of those intentions in the corresponding practices as amounting to an unconstrained objective realization of their own individual freedom" (Honneth, 2016, p. 170). In other words, individual university academics realise in the intentions of others an objectivity of their own freedom (Honneth, 2016, p. 169). That is, the individual university academic comes to recognise herself in institutional practices and views the habitualised intentions of those with whom she interacts as preconditions or products of her own reasonably generated intentions (Honneth, 2016, p. 168). In this sense, objective freedom is concerned both with individual interests operative at universities and the common good whereby individuals stand up for one another in a spirit of enhanced communicative freedom among equals – a matter of intersubjective reciprocity (Honneth, 2016, p. 172). The upshot of such a view of objective freedom is that individual freedom means "experience of an absence of constraint and of personal development, resulting from the fact that our own individual but generalizable goals are advanced by the equally general goals of others" (Honneth, 2016, p. 173).

What emanates from the understanding of objective liberty is that the exercise of individual autonomy cannot unfold at universities without recognising the presence of others to inform and buttress the academic project. For instance, if university managers were to exercise their individual autonomy unhinged from the national goals of institutional development, transformative change at universities in the country would seemingly be unlikely. This is so considering the many challenges universities face concerning students' access, notions of equity and equality, and decoloniality of the curriculum. Similarly, we cannot imagine universities would seriously consider the transformation of higher education agendas if individuals were permitted to exercise their own autonomy in self-determined ways disconnected from the decolonisation of higher education ideas. Consequently, I argue for a notion of objective freedom whereby individuals should exercise their autonomy as

equals in communicative action with others that advance institutional priorities. In this way, both the individual and collective freedoms of others in pursuit of advancing institutional goals at universities would hopefully be realised. More specifically, the rupturing of higher education would become more likely with objective freedom than with any other pursuit of freedom. And, through rupturing, communicative intellectual pursuits concomitant with individual aspirations might not be incommensurate with higher education transformation. A university that ruptures its core responsibilities of teaching, learning, research, and community engagement becomes sceptical about its institutional actions. Such a university would look at its institutional practices differently: more contemplatively taking more risks and encouraging dissent. Such a notion of a post-critical African university can lay the foundation for cultivating a genuine democratic (decolonised) society that opposes and subverts the humiliation and indignation of other humans and calls for reconciliation and the enactment of new re-beginnings (Waghid, Waghid, and Waghid, 2018). In this way, restorative justice might have a real chance to manifest in politico-societal action. What restorative justice envisages is the exercise of mutual respect and dignity among all peoples, the eradication of inequality, and the healing of scars together with the prevention of violence and injustice that seemed to have marred African communities.

Towards a Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that a genuine transformation of the university in (South) Africa is impossible when notions of individual freedom are considered along negative and positive lines. Negative freedom would not necessarily result in transformation, as the freedom of individuals cannot be left unhinged. Transformation of the public university requires individuals who can act with transformative aspirations constrained by requirements of equality, access, equity, and decoloniality. Likewise, positive freedom cannot be a way transformation in the public university can manifest because transformative goals are not self-determined goals but institutional ones that require the collective engagement of all concerned. Hence, I have made claims about the cultivation of objective freedom whereby individuals act equally with others as they endeavour to find genuinely collective solutions for problems in the higher education sector. In this way, the possibility that a post-critical African university would enhance the transformation of higher education and the cultivation of decolonised African societies.

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Part III

**The Self and the World of
Today**

Meta-Critical Considerations



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11 Justice and the Conspicuous

Marianna Papastephanou

Introduction

The present chapter continues the meta-critical and conceptual investigation that I started a while ago concerning what counts as justice, what faces of justice remain invisible, and how our perception of them might be enhanced. In previous works (see, e.g., Papastephanou et al., 2020; Papastephanou, 2021a, 2021b), I have argued that neglected, though by no means negligible, faces of justice and their right to visibility invite explorations of different optics of justice, less single-focused than the dominant perspectival optic. I have explored how the meta-critical possibility of supplementing the perspectival approach to justice with the stereoscopic may shed a different light on educational-philosophical research on justice. In the related article (Papastephanou, 2021a), I have shown that educational philosophy tackles issues of justice perspectivally, in ways that reflect the sensibilities of the educational philosopher's background, persuasion, and scholarly preferences. This consolidates separate perspectives on justice that remain disconnected and allow only partial (if any) visibility of other faces of justice. Thereby, the issues of (in)justice that education is expected to address are filtered through the perspectival lens, and many of them remain outside of the educational purview. More visibility of other faces and neglected challenges of justice, I have claimed, may facilitate the educational heightening of critical consciousness. This heightening is also sought by the other contributors to this book and especially those whose chapters constitute the last part of it. Therefore, it is to this meta-critical direction of the book that the present chapter will contribute.

Presupposing the aforementioned meta-critical ground, the chapter directs some self-reflective attention to educational-philosophical discussions of justice as answerable to “the world of today” – a phrase that is also in the title of this book. I acknowledge that situating justice and education in our times is very important. However, I point out this risk: when unqualified and under-theorized, the discursive operation of locating issues of justice and education within the spirit of the times may promote conceptions of justice that echo scholarly hegemonies in the world of today. Locating the relation of justice and education in the “here and now” may help notice conspicuous

injustices but not those injustices that are not (or are no longer) broadly thematized. By “conspicuous injustices” I mean those which are already visible and reprehensible. Their prominence in educational discourses has these two implications: it may simultaneously render other injustices, perhaps equally egregious, invisible, and it may perpetuate a focus on eradicating injustice that may block more affirmative and crisis-independent visions of justice.

The attention to the political operations of the “conspicuous” in education is motivated by the following considerations. When strong normative notions such as justice are investigated or debated in scholarly discourses (educational notwithstanding), issues of self-reflectivity and meta-critique arise, or so they should. Consider relevant questions such as these: Is justice also enacted while it is investigated, debated, and expected in, for, and through education? That is, do we act justly when we filter reality to pick up topics from the world of experience as relevant or irrelevant to justice and education? Are we just, and on what grounds, when we ponder justice in some cases, for some wrongs, and in the name of some wronged? Are we self-reflectively aware that our detecting conspicuous injustices may mirror sensibilities of our times and our localities (e.g., the Western) that allow other injustices to escape the (Western) eye? Are our discourses *sufficiently meta-critical* when they critique current global practices? That is, are our discourses responsive to the (in)justices in the subtle political operations of our very critiques of current realities?

It is difficult to answer such questions. It is no less difficult to theorize what would count as “sufficient meta-critique” since there is always a surplus of injustice in the world that escapes our scope even in spite of our best intentions. Consequently, there also seems to be a deep-laid deficit, an inherent insufficiency, a striking lack of plenitude in our theoretical dealings with justice and injustice. An easy way to sidestep the aforementioned questions and continue our academic ventures undisturbed is to resort to the generality that nobody can thematize and investigate all related issues at once. Some focus is always necessary, even if it is more multiple than single, and a focus on everything simultaneously is indeed unimaginable; in fact, such an absolute sense of inclusiveness of topics is conceptually precluded by the term “focus”. We cannot deal with all injustices; hence, we are justifiably selective. But this truth becomes a truism and an ethico-political alibi when employed to answer the previous questions dismissively. For, these questions have not implied any expectations of such discursive, inclusive absolutism. They are not about awareness of, let alone engagement with, all issues of (in)justice in one go. They pose the problem of our partiality when we get moved and mobilized by certain visible injustices rather than by other, less conspicuous ones. This problem is different from the simplistic one of exploring everything at once, and thus not susceptible to facile solutions.

The present chapter has no ambition to offer a solution to this problem, and it does not rely on any exaltation of problem-solving priorities anyway. It rather aspires meta-critically to connect the problem of focusing on

conspicuous issues of (in)justice with how philosophers, and educators who borrow insights from philosophers, discuss justice and temporality. The chapter problematizes the ethical stage (“stage” here as a theatrical metaphor) and temporal settings where issues of justice crop up. It thus aspires only to illuminate the educational-philosophical need for more self-reflective attention to a so far under-theorized topic, that which concerns how the philosophical and educational-theoretical responsiveness to the spirit of the times may affect our dealing with justice. The recourse to setting issues of justice in the “world of today” and in the more specific temporal determinations of this “today” as “times of disaster”, “critical times”, “viral times”, “age of crises”, “times of uncertainty”, “precarious times”, etc., remains so far unquestioned. And the use of the “world of today” as the ultimate scenery of the justice drama remains quite popular. As the title of the book to which this chapter belongs also indicates, theorists tend to investigate issues of justice, education, and “the world of today”. Although this temporal filter (“of today”) alone does not preclude genealogies of injustices, it does under-emphasize the past, the historical dimension of justice – focused as it is on the contemporary. Moreover, what is typically understood or theorized as the “world of today” comprises ethico-political challenges to which global publics (and academia) have already been sensitized. Such challenges are conspicuous, easily perceptible, and often catchy. For reasons of brevity, they will be henceforth designated as “the conspicuous”. I use this word descriptively rather than evaluatively: that an injustice is visible makes it no less important or pressing. Nor does it being conspicuous entail that this injustice is properly dealt with by academic discourses, educational policies, or global public opinion.

The chapter engages with justice and the conspicuous through the following steps: (1) first, I set the broader ethical stage by critical reference to Naomi Zack’s (2006, 2009, 2021) discussion of philosophy’s inadequate engagement with exceptional times (especially, times of disaster). Then (2) I investigate how disaster evoked by turns of phrase such as “in the era of global crises”, “times of catastrophe”, “pandemic times”, etc., affects “the world of today” and perceptions or responses to injustices. (3) I discuss some political operations of such responses to current realities, and I critique current patterns of theorizing and researching justice through such a *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times) temporal lens. I single out one such pattern of responding to *Zeitdiagnosen* (diagnostics of the times): the theoretical tendency to update discourses of justice and seek a cure for social ills. I associate this pattern (which I have elsewhere discussed as medicalizing politics) with *epikairopoiesis* (the Greek term for “updating”) to indicate the relationship with the notion of *kairos*, and I spell out the risks it entails for how we perceive, or fail to perceive, issues of justice. Finally, (4) while acknowledging the merits of responding to *Zeitdiagnosen*, I show that such due acknowledgement does not relieve us of the task to ask more searching questions in more expanded retentive and protentive temporal directions.

Justice and the World of Today

The world of today and its self-understanding as exceptional temporality of conspicuous, glaring problems are designated through turns of phrase such as “testing times”, “difficult times”, “uncertain times”, “times of crisis”, “times of catastrophe”, “times of disaster”, “times of shipwreck” and, most recently, “pandemic times”. Many philosophers and educators rely on such metaphors to describe new realities and diagnose new problems or challenges. This reliance on diagnoses of the times goes hand in hand with remedial recommendations and suggested solutions in the normative language of critique and ethics. But what has been missing or has remained totally implicit is a meta-critical exploration of whether temporalities of crises compel an alternative ethic, out of the ordinary; if yes, does such an ethic only require the intensification of our general ethical sensibilities, or does it require specific or new virtues, principles and emphases, disruptive of the ethic of normalcy?

In the context of this chapter: do the priorities, fixations, and automatisms of the usual ethical perspectives from which we explore justice in, through, and for education suffice to provide the ethical setting for educational responses to extreme circumstances? The automatisms through which we rush to detect conspicuous injustices may be a sign of entrapment in ethical perspectives that are unsuitable to dealing with the world of today if this “today” is marked by unprecedented ethical demands on the self to think differently and outside of comfort zones. For example, educational philosophers have developed almost automatic reflexes when issues of asylum or rights of migrants come up in academic discourses on educational policies while being totally silent, and thus either tolerant or condoning, of mandating vaccination for Covid-19. They have not worried about whether asylum seekers and migrants can choose truly freely or not to consent to the vaccination that many European governments push as a measure for dealing with pandemic times. Likewise, with educational-philosophical reflexes, they have been too slow concerning recent governmental and European Union questionings of post-war dismissals of compulsory medical acts. Along with most of the world of today, educational philosophers also appear to be too ready to accept the controversialization of the right of people to deny unwanted medical acts on their bodies (Papastephanou, 2021c, 2021d).

The dilemmatic ethical framework of the aforementioned questions is “continuity versus rupture”, “automatism versus critical pause”, and I will return to it shortly. But let me first say a bit more about the broader ethical setting that frames philosophical responses to *Zeitdiagnosen*. The broader ethical stage concerns whether philosophy has specifically responded or not to the special demands that exceptional temporal circumstances¹ make on people to view the world of today differently from how they view it in less extreme or disastrous circumstances. As Naomi Zack puts it, “philosophy has no established role in an ethics for disaster” (2009, p. xxx). It is indeed ironic that “scant attention has been paid in philosophical literature to ethics in

time of disaster” (Foust, 2012, p. 157),² although metaphors of adverse temporalities abound, especially currently in pandemic times. One may object that philosophy has engaged with the so-called lifeboat ethics, which Zack aptly calls the “guinea pigs of philosophers” (2009, p. 33), and which deal precisely with extreme circumstances. But, lifeboat ethics bypass actual situations of the real world. Being based on thought experiments, lifeboat ethics resemble science fiction and posit extreme scenarios for showing argumentative failures of the moral systems of philosophical opponents, rather than for illuminating ethical attitudes toward actual situations and for specifying concrete normative ways out of real, tangible crises. Zack aims to remedy this by investigating an “ethic for disaster” from a virtue-ethical perspective. Concerning the dilemmatic “continuity versus rupture” framework that I indicated earlier, she goes for the continuity option. Her view is “that we must cultivate continuity between our ethics during normal states of affairs and our ethics during those of times of disaster” (Foust, 2012, pp. 161–2). Mathew Foust fully endorses Zack’s ethical approach on this. How Foust modifies Zack’s perspective though, is helpful to what I intend to do here, so I will return to his position shortly.

For Zack (2009, p. 7), integrity and diligence are the virtues best suited to dealing with disasters, pandemics, and times of crises. Unlike reckless bravery and ferocity, which are typically associated with heroic “military or police action and high politics in times of crisis”, integrity and diligence are “necessary for careful epistemology and due process”. She thus contrasts integrity and diligence, which count among the “boring virtues,” with bravery and ferocity, the “dramatic virtues,” as she calls them (Zack, 2009, p. 56, note 7: p. 59, note 8: p. 59, and note 9: p. 60. Note 11: pp. 60–1).³ In Foust’s words, Zack sharpens “the contrast between these pairs of virtues” and emphasizes that, unlike reckless bravery and ferocity, integrity and diligence “are not episodic virtues evident in isolated, glorious feats”. They have an ordinary, real-life quality since “they are daily traits of character, manifest in thousands of details of mundane activities. For prolonged conditions of deprivation and danger, integrity and diligence can provide a constant background support of life and its sustaining moral values” (Foust, 2012, p. 159; Zack, 2009, p. 64). As concerns the topic of this chapter, which is the meta-critical/meta-ethical reflection on how we respond to the ethical challenges of the world of today, where “today” is described as “times exceptional and disastrous”, the following nuance is crucial. For Zack, “while disaster presents an abrupt departure from the character of everyday life, disaster still occurs within everyday life, a fact that should give us pause before we abandon our ordinary moral intuitions when confronted by extraordinary circumstances” (Foust, 2012, p. 159). Why Zack’s position is crucial can be illustrated again with the case of the world (still confronted with the pandemic) abandoning the moral intuition, especially strengthened in the aftermath of World War 2, about medical acts not being forced upon unwilling populations. Diligence is important for the careful epistemology that is needed when examining whether the unvaccinated truly present a

health risk more than the vaccinated.⁴ And integrity is important for weighing such issues beyond one's own positioning.

In other words, in relation to the chapter's topic, ethical continuity (and of what kind) should be an important point of consideration for an educational philosophy that aspires to explore and promote justice in the world of today. As Foust asserts, "[O]ur daily cultivation of the virtues of integrity and diligence should not be all for naught when disaster strikes; in fact, these most dire of situations are the very kind for which we prepare when we cultivate these virtues" (Foust, 2012, p. 159). On his part, Foust modifies Zack's perspective by arguing that not only diligence and integrity but also loyalty should stand out in difficult times. In his view, it is even the case that Zack unwittingly speaks for loyalty. Though Foust agrees with Zack "that diligence and integrity deserve emphasis in an ethics for disaster", he holds "that this is just to say that loyalty deserves emphasis in an ethics for disaster" (Foust, 2012, p. 161).⁵

As I see it, however, what can be argued about diligence, integrity, and loyalty could also be argued about all, or at least most, other virtues. There is no compelling argument why other virtues should be less emphasized in times of crises and why their relevance should not be case-specific. Viewed from an ethical perspective, perhaps what differentiates exceptional times and daily normalcy (if this differentiation is not itself too exaggerated, an issue which is beyond the scope of this chapter yet central to a meta-critical, self-reflective outlook) is precisely that such times heighten and intensify the relevance and importance of all virtues. Since justice, according to Aristotle, is a virtue, justice should also be examined concerning its special relevance to critical times. Consequently, in my view, both Zack and Foust overlook justice⁶ and do not explore its position in an ethic for disaster and crisis. Therefore, as concerns the ethical stage where the drama of responding to the world of today unravels, my position is that justice should also be emphasized in a stereoscopic manner (Papastephanou, 2021a, 2021b) – that is, in its many faces and perspectives whose synergies and tensions should be made to stand out and operate in mutually corrective and re-directive ways. Likewise, all the other virtues, principles, and ethical components that constitute the relevant ethical stage should be approached in a way that allows better visibility of the Many (e.g., of many virtues and of multiple perspectives on them), not just of the One (e.g., of one virtue or a minimal set of virtues, of one principle, one perspective), and better visibility of their interplay. This ethical stage of interconnectivity of the Many should be set beyond dichotomies of "boring versus dramatic" virtues. Furthermore, I would agree with Zack's and Foust's preference for continuity in our ethical engagements, but I would complicate their position by accommodating some rupture too. Next, I explain this more clearly.

As I have shown elsewhere (Papastephanou, 2021e), justice sometimes synergizes with loyalty. There I use the Chagos example. Chagos illustrates a justice claim that is, sadly, not conspicuous and has not secured the mobilization of academic or global publics: the claim of a people continuously

struggling for their right to return to their native land from which they were unjustly expelled by the United Kingdom and the United States in the '70s. Referring to Chagos and the extreme circumstances within which the Chagossians have been struggling for their rights, I have placed loyalty and justice in a somewhat different relationship, not that which favours the One over the Many, but that which reveals their synergy. And I have avoided the modernist tendency of constructing dilemmatic cases of either/ors, in this case of “continuity versus rupture”, or of normativizing and transcendentalizing one notion over all others. Loyalty and perseverance are necessary precisely there where an injustice is not globally conspicuous and the related justice requires the commitment of people who *continue* to promote it even despite circumstances being adverse. In addition, in this chapter, I emphasize that, to be served and promoted, justice in critical times or limit-situations also requires Zack’s “boring” virtues (diligence, equity, etc.) as well as the “dramatic” virtues. Equally, justice requires both, continuity and rupture. Some automatisms of the past, that is, some ethical givens along with continuous commitment to them, are crucial components of the ethical stage where the drama of justice in the world of today should unfold. But also some change of direction should be in order; some problematic practices should be disrupted. Which ethical frameworks and practices merit continuation and which should be revisited is context-specific and deserves a “careful epistemology” debated diligently and objectively.

As an example consider how one-dimensional are current approaches to our pandemic times when they favour either continuity (our returning at all costs to our previous normality, our preserving the standard ethical idioms through which we theorize our “taking our life back”, etc.) or rupture (e.g., seeing the pandemic only as a wake-up call). Concerning our current pandemic, continuity lies beneath what David Black describes as “a perfectly understandable response”, one that focuses on “the immediate practical issue: how to limit infections and the death rate and protect the population, and yet keep the economy functioning”. As Black puts it, for commentators who favour continuity, “this is the urgent and necessary issue, and many people, eager to get back to normal, might say it’s the only issue” (Black, 2021, p. 11). Against this, Black registers the possibility to treat the Covid-19 crisis as a wake-up call (that is, the crisis as propelling rupture of normalcy). Without downplaying the “seriousness of the crisis”, this perspective helps us look beyond the pandemic in order to grasp the need to disrupt and mend our ways, instead of longing for the previous normalcy. I agree, but I would also register yet another response, one that considers a danger less visible though no less immediate than the health danger: that of the pandemic limit-situation leading us to lose some good principles of post-war ethico-politics. Matthew Ratcliffe theorizes the possibility of going adrift, in a limit-situation, as “losing what was habitually taken for granted, with the consequent removal of norms that once guided activity and thought” (2021, p. 2). One such norm that he does not consider is the norm against mass-scale medical acts on unwilling subjects. This norm is a good example of the

limits of “continuity versus rupture” dilemmas. Whereas wake-up calls involve warnings about what has gone wrong (climate crisis, etc.), and are valuable, they overlook that democratic norms and gains that have acquired an automatic and non-controversial character may now be at risk and that bad things can also come from there where you least expect them (Papastephanou, 2021d). These norms and gains should be neither romanticized nor surrendered to totalitarianisms of either side of the “vaccinated-unvaccinated” divide. Some norms should remain operative, while other norms should be dealt with critical pause for thought and, if so required, with dismissal, revision, or redirection. Which of them merit continuity (or not) is a daunting issue that requires *inter alia* diligence, vigilance, integrity, and other intellectual and ethical virtues. Who decides should be open to a truly democratic public dialogue that, instead of focusing only on the conspicuous, also searches for what has so far remained undeservedly invisible and neglected.

Disaster, Justice, and the Conspicuous

Now that I have roughly sketched the broader ethical stage, I turn to how the theorization of justice might be affected when the focus on conspicuous injustices is promoted through the answerability to the world of today that is evident in the association of justice with the epochal (e.g., the current times) and its crises (or even disasters). The very metaphors of extreme circumstances that are used to describe the world of today define from this world-description the terrain to which justice is applicable. By connoting disaster, most metaphors such as pandemic times, times of catastrophe, and times of shipwreck also indicate dangers, threats, pathologies, heroes, villains, emergencies, desired cures, and assumed curability. Returning to Zack, “a disaster is an event (or series of events) that harms or kills a significant number of people or otherwise severely impairs or interrupts their daily lives in civil society” (cf. Foust, 2012, p. 158). This already directs us to the conspicuous because it sensitizes us to glaring injustices that have immediately visible victims. Other, less dramatic injustices (old, new, or ongoing) are forgotten or cast aside. Likewise with injustices that no longer produce high numbers of dead (or have not involved deaths). In my view, that “disasters may be natural or the result of accidental or deliberate human action” (Foust, 2012, p. 158) also affects our perspectives because we tend to perceive more easily the direct implication of human agents in a situation that invites considerations of justice. As Iris Young (2011) showed, it is very difficult to sensitize people to indirect, collective responsibility for injustices that involve impersonal mechanisms of structural inequality rather than clear-cut, deliberate culpability. Therefore, we tend to overlook cases where, even if disaster comes from a natural cause, it no less involves inequalities and diverse capabilities of people to cope with it due to their uneven and unequal positioning. Thus we get the wrong impression that natural disasters (or pandemics of disastrous effects) are supposedly equalizers; Covid-19 as a (supposed)

equalizer is a paramount example of such mistaken views that reproduce the invisibility of how some social injustices truly operate in daily life.

Disasters “include, but are not limited to, fires; floods; storms; earthquakes; chemical spills; leaks of, or infiltration by, toxic substances; terrorist attacks by conventional, nuclear, or biological weapons; epidemics; pandemics; mass failures in electronic communications” (Zack, cf. Foust, 2012, p. 158). From most⁷ of these disasters, some individuals, communities, and localities come out as victims and sufferers and some either as directly implicated wrong-doers or as remotely and indirectly responsible and complicit in the “normalcies” that cumulatively led to the disaster in question. Floods, storms, and toxic material point to failures of our world from modernity onwards to respect nature. These climate-related disasters serve as wake-up calls that appropriately direct our sense of justice to environmental challenges. However, from then on, whether the remedial measures that will be globally decided will not cause other injustices is an issue to be judged in the future and with an eye to the future, and reflects the need for a complex weighing and balancing of continuities and ruptures. Concerning disasters that are indisputably natural, (in)justice is at play, even if indirectly. Nobody is directly responsible for an earthquake, but many are indirectly responsible for its effects if these could have been prevented through better state organization and implementation of building standards.

Disasters “occasion surprise and shock”. They are often unpredictable and always unwanted by those affected by them (Foust, 2012, p. 158). I do not doubt their objective character as events but, to qualify as disasters, such events certainly require to be *perceived* by a large number of people as a dramatic and pressing new reality. Especially when they involve numerous deaths caused by ways that a specific community had forgotten that they exist, or had thought that they exist only in other spatialities, such events are viewed as unprecedented. Therefore, as Zack also notes, disasters cause “rallying”, “public alert”, and “panic reactions”. They further “generate narratives and media representations of the heroism, failures, and losses of those who are affected” (cf. Foust, 2012, p. 158). Hence, apart from being real and objective, crises and catastrophes also require all the mechanisms and distributions of power (inter alia those of a community of officials and experts (Berglund, 2008) that can construct them as visible, thematizable, and operative events. The climate crisis with its already perceived disasters is a case in point. Our ecological perspective on justice, or the administrative-managerial perspective which stresses good organization and distribution of state power so as to deal with any disaster effectively, requires other perspectives too if they are to avoid panic, reactive responses. For, panic responses to climate change disasters may produce other, new kinds of injustices that will remain invisible due to new automatisms and new whole-hearted, uncritical responsiveness to how experts may choose to respond to this challenge of today’s world.

Disaster relates to metaphors that specify the temporal marker “today” as “times of ...” varyingly and intricately. Some such temporal specifications contain the term “disaster” or cognates (e.g., times of disaster, times of

catastrophe, times of shipwreck) or echo its dramatic sense of urgency and emergency (pandemic times, times of crisis, etc.). But even when there is no visible and direct association, disaster is implicitly operative as a possibility threatening stability, sustainability, and security (e.g., times of uncertainty, precarious times). In each case, directly or indirectly, either as actuality or as possibility, disaster affects our *Gerechtigkeitsgefühl* (sense, feeling, of justice). It often directs us toward the conspicuous, urgent and new ethical tangle. It bestows exceptional or unprecedented power on specific, e.g., expert, communities, and entitlements to dictate what is right and wrong, delimit who wrongs or gets wronged, single out cases of injustice, and advance concomitant responses of justice. That is, disaster plays some role in how/which issues of justice are *put down* (in the double sense of this phrasal verb, that is how some issues of justice are registered as such, thus becoming conspicuous and acknowledged, and how other issues are suppressed, downplayed or overlooked). Disaster also affects how we perceive the ethical setting that may be appropriate for responding to disaster's actuality or possibility. Should this setting constitute a historical continuum, or should it be radically rethought and synchronized? Disaster as actuality or possibility affects patterns of theorizing pathologies (injustices or factors that lead to injustices) and exploring cures (among else, cures administered through education). That is, it affects the *politics* of responses to today's world, and this is what I explore next.

The Politics of Responding to the World of Today

There is a current abundance and viral use of slogans/tropes/turns of phrase that describe the world of today as in crisis or threatened by an imminent or possible *catastrophe*.⁸ Regardless of nuances, and despite their being over-used, temporal specifications of global challenges (inter alia of justice) remain unexplored. This confirms that there is, indeed, a tendency to make normative issues unquestioningly dependent on current affairs, justice answerable to the world of today, and education for justice globally synchronized (and thus homogenized) in real time. The implicit assumption of single-focused educational discussions of justice, regardless of the focus being either on distribution or on recognition or on democracy, is that the flow of daily life had previously been smoother, without *differentiating for whom and in what respect*. In this new challenging context what we need to do is to co-ordinate education and its aims across the globe to make it responsive to the injustices that are conspicuous, easily perceivable by us, and well-fitting in our mind-sets. I have illustrated some of the problematic politics of this educational synchronicity elsewhere (Papastephanou, 2016) by contrasting the Chagossians' education in exile and the education that a non-Chagossian receives in the countries that turned the Chagossians into refugees. Hence I will not cover this ground here. What is important for this chapter is that, more generally, many educational discourses uncritically utilize the fashionable slogans that uniformly describe our times as exceptional, subtly direct our scope to what this real or imagined "exceptionality" has rendered

conspicuous (possibly because, above all, it affects “us”) and homogenize educational responses to injustices in and for the world of today.

Largely perceived as exceptional and implicitly contrasted to previous “normalcy”, the current situation constitutes a kind of heterochrony: an altered lived time where the given context changes and presents us with new, crucial challenges. An often subtle and imperceptible updating of justice also occurs thereof, regardless of the intentions of philosophers and educators who explore justice in the light of this perceived heterochrony. Older injustices become forgotten or downplayed; priority is given with obsessive pathos to the new realities. Problems of justice that had previously monopolized the educational or philosophical attention and had once been conspicuous are now cast aside. New unjust conditions must be tackled, so the hegemonic rhetoric goes, if we are to overcome the heterochrony by returning to the previous normality or by surpassing the current state of the world and reach a higher stage of development. What remains intact is the problem-solving rationale which becomes the paradigmatic framework for dealing with the new issues of justice that invite attention. Aligned with it are the academic politics of selecting the fashionable topics and securing visibility and distinction for researchers who study these topics. Also operative are the concomitant politics of public policy, funding, and “leading” universities or research centres. Given the normative and political discursive force (qua distinction) of justice (see Papastephanou, 2021b), many projects engage with vogue justice or kindred normative terms, emphasize their own relevance to today’s world and exalt their significance for dealing effectively with conspicuous problems. Such projects have more chances to stand out and be successful. Their success further encourages scholarly concessions to current standards for applying for funding.

From another perspective, all this also mirrors (more often than not) that, despite declarations, we still inhabit a modernist intellectual universe whose *Zeitgeist* is marked by a reductive thinking that promotes the conspicuous. The study of the conspicuous and the solutions on offer accommodate a special vocabulary. The accompanying idiom contains modernist terms of extolled valorization and outstanding capacity to elate policy- and decision-makers: “novel”, “innovative”, “leading”, “state-of-the-art”, “cutting-edge”, “renewal”, “rethinking”, “prospects for”, “towards a new (read ‘better’) ...”, “overcoming backward ...”, etc. All these exaggerate the projects’ problem-solving capacities, emphasize One solution over Many, and bypass intricate synergies. They dissect complex issues to reduce them to one fashionable facet and boost one’s confidence that therapy and recovery will be achieved if the world follows the prescribed cure. I have elsewhere theorized the dominant research pattern as one that excessively medicalizes responses to the world of today. I have there unpacked some of the risks in seeking a “cure” and pointed out the complex politics of what or who counts as “sick” and what passes for “public health” (Papastephanou, 2021c).

What must be noted here is that the aforementioned considerations also reveal the politics involved in regulating the rhythms of the visibility of

justice and injustice and the temporality of what matters as just or unjust. Thus, the topic which opened the book, the rhythms of justice explored in the first chapter (Inga Bostad's), has a political dimension. The politicization of rhythms (a term which is basically temporal) reveals the political temporality (*kairikotis*) of justice and its faces. By *kairikotis* I mean the phases through which a face of justice (distributive, social, recognitive, environmental, cosmopolitan, etc.) and corresponding claimants of justice emerge from obscurity to a peak of powerful popularity and then down to oblivion. As an example, consider how little is said nowadays in educational-philosophical discourses about the injustices of what Pierre Bourdieu called "the racism of intelligence" and of the tendency to individualize and essentialize educational failure as a sign of lack of talent, and not as an outcome of lack of cultural, social and symbolic capital (see, Papastephanou, 2008). Likewise, previous emphases on those unequal material conditions of students' lives that (re)produced huge injustices and invited radical societal transformation have gradually given way to emphases on nominal, recognitive justice. It is as if, by recognizing the alterity of the Other and avoiding any verbal tension with the Other, all the material and tangible injustices that the Other suffers would dissipate. From one detected pathology that produces injustices and invites certain cures, the world and its spoke-persons move to another pathology and ever-new, exalted solutions and cures. *Kairikotis* is then the socio-political fluctuation of justice (and of claims to some forms of justice) in time. It is the trajectory of an issue/case/face of justice, like a comet or a falling star, which may involve a moment of utmost visibility – namely, the status of the conspicuous.

The temporality (*kairikotis*) of justice in the socio-political public space is affected by discourses on justice. The tendency to associate justice with conspicuous challenges in contemporary societies reveals a modernist anxiety to keep the discourse of justice "up to date" (*epikairon*) and to update issues of justice (*epikairopoiesis*). As a new moment that theory wants to seize, *kairos*⁹ becomes decisive of justice's relevance to contemporary, thorny challenges (*epikairopoiein*) and to how such challenges are currently theorized. Theory then draws from these challenges the very metaphors that it employs for characterizing a whole era: "in times of terror", "in (post-)pandemic times", etc. The conspicuous is not only the clearly visible but in this case also the *epikairon*: in other words, the trendy. The recent mobilization and engagement of philosophy and educational theory with issues of pandemic times is a paramount case in point. The current stance toward the temporality (*kairikotis*) of justice (its "when", its rhythm, the pace of the change that will bring justice about, i.e., piecemeal or radical change) involves two moves: an association of justice with the world of today; and a focus on the world's major problems that, in their conspicuousness, enable easy diagnostics and broad, dramatic and sensational characterizations of the epochal. Justice then becomes a matter of the present and of the world in its current state and its current *Zeitgeist* (involving also academia's "state of mind"). Thus, the focus on the conspicuous reflects a perspective that emphasizes the present

and its crises as the appropriate setting for researching education for justice and for promoting justice in and through education.

Justice and the Conspicuous, Its Risks, and the Need for Interrogation

I have argued that the surrender to the conspicuous (namely, the general, popular tendency to place justice in relation to the world of today and the non-theorized politics that exacerbate the *kairikotis* of justice) is clearly noticeable and visibly growing in the difficult times of the pandemic. The horrific events in Ukraine may mobilize such politics too (Papastephanou, 2022). However, a self-reflective study that would explore, instead of just following and enacting, the operations of this trend is still neglected. This chapter has aimed precisely to address this neglect. While acknowledging the value of educational philosophy's being responsive to current realities – and I am in no way arguing against responsiveness – I claim that much caution, along with a different but complementary outlook, is required.

Discourses of justice which focus on “the world of today” and on what has passed the filter of this world's politics to become a conspicuous issue of justice face some risks. To point out these risks and what may be overlooked by the perspective on the conspicuous, let us consider again the operations of the glaring disasters that have been illustrated by Zack with the examples of floods, pandemics, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, etc. All these disasters qualify as constituting extreme circumstances for those experiencing them. However, extreme circumstances can also be generated by events that, despite their deeply affecting and shocking those who suffer them, escape the confines of the aforementioned exemplarities of disaster that move or mobilize the globe in any lasting sense. Such cases are short-lived in public spaces. The *kairikotis* of these cases in collective memory and in consciousness is too brief, although the issues of justice that accompany them are not resolved or dealt with, and the consequences on those who have suffered them are persistent and ongoing. The older case of the Marshall Islands and the recent warfare in Nagorno Karabakh are cases in point (Papastephanou, 2021a). Cases such as Chagos have not been described as “disasters” by officials and experts, have not attracted global media narrativization, and are ill-fitting in “times of disaster/shipwreck” histrionics of visible losses, global alarm, and alertness. The Chagos case resulted from the political cruelty of strong countries, the powerful global players that turned the Chagossians into refugees, a cruelty for which no UK or US government has faced the consequences of legal justice. And the Chagossians are still struggling in courts for their right of return. This case has not preoccupied either political philosophers or educational philosophers and theorists as a challenge of today's world and, given how the current academia thinks and operates, I personally find it highly unlikely that it ever will.

Like a firework or a comet or a falling star such events interrupt the smooth flow of daily life in sensationally appearing on the news for a day or two only

to be relegated to oblivion. And this, despite the fact that those who suffered them may have ever since been condemned to hardships endured in obscurity. In my view, such events, which, to become visible, require a stereoscopic rather than perspectival justice (Papastephanou, 2021a, 2021b) relate to education thus: justice in and through education should also concern events that compel acknowledgement of the obscured sufferings of less visible others. But also, and perhaps more, justice to them should concern the share of responsibility that pertains to the future citizen. As a prospective voter, the future citizen should be prepared to become a critical evaluator of the country's policies and global intervention in a world that is already interconnected and sufficiently globalized to increase individual responsibility even for things that appear at first glance remote or unrelated to citizenship. For, the extreme circumstances that others, and not just we or the global majority, face should raise extraordinary challenges of justice, different from daily ones. The risk of the standardized interest in the world of today is to downplay, even totally ignore, this heightened sense of justice.

Hence I have argued in previous works (e.g., Papastephanou et al., 2020) that an education for justice to migrants, persons with special needs, the environment, animals, etc., does not compel us to limit our loyalty only to such recipients of justice. New sensibilities which emerge from current diagnoses of the real come at a high ethical cost when they are limited to acknowledging conspicuous injustices. For, they thus overlook the Other outside the frontier, e.g., the Chagossian, the Iraqi, the Syrian, and they do not teach anything about global power relations and their effects. Many Western thinkers tend to reduce conflicts to nationalism because this easily comprehensible notion eases Western conscience by turning the conflict of others into a simply explicable problem of “old-fashioned” “others”, attached to regressive ideologies whose salvation depends on their becoming like us (Papastephanou, 2022). Reduced to nationalist facile causalities, the others' conflicts, and related sufferings of injustice, cause only sympathy and condescension. These conflicts supposedly stem from the others' political backwardness or from their still being in a transitional state, only *en route* to becoming truly Western, and not from any deeper, diachronic, or synchronic international complicities of the so-called advanced countries in which Western shapers of the *Zeitgeist* reside and benefit from such residence. Education remains unprepared to cultivate awareness of how justice to others as citizens of other localities (e.g., Syria, Yemen, Iraq) should challenge the politics of our governments, our own mindsets, and our own perceptions of what explains, say, the current situation in conflict-ridden areas. Correspondingly, educational theory, especially when it writes kindly and blithely about the new world order and global public sphere as a new terrain of promise, fails to consider how future generations as prospective citizens and voters in a democratic body-politic remain largely unprepared for the indirect responsibility that falls on their shoulders concerning not only major natural destruction but also human global political affairs and material, economic issues of justice that have in no way subsided.

Before indicating further critical points and risks that compel interrogation, I want to emphasize that the perspective on the conspicuous has its merits, and I am not suggesting that it should be given up. Addressing the conspicuous and making justice answerable to the world of today may often reflect sensitivity to new realities and responsiveness to new givens. World problems are there to be solved, not to be perpetuated; wronged nature, people, and places invite justice and remedial action. On the one hand, the perspective on the conspicuous concretely relates justice to actual situations and avoids it becoming a vague normativity, a generality. On the other hand, however, it contributes to an emptying of justice, to it becoming a generality. For it takes one face of justice (e.g., the social, the educational) and turns it into a vague, *passé-partout* (Papastephanou et al., 2020) and self-standing notion of justice. The motivation is problem-solving, managing one tension, and moving to the next in a piecemeal manner, with no intention to see a bigger picture of interconnectivity of issues of justice and longer-term, broader change. The hegemonized perspective is put centre stage and capitalizes on: the cultural significance and prominence of justice, i.e., its exalted discursive status in contemporary societies, the co-option of justice rhetoric in the new order, and the prospects of justice vis-à-vis current global realities, in varying tropes of times of disaster, of pandemics, of shipwreck, etc. Thereby, what may represent an important philosophical intervention risks being consumed by the very metaphor (e.g., the viral, the times of shipwreck, of crisis) that it is addressing as the context of injustice.

The chapter has so far revealed these risks: the under-theorized discursive operation of locating issues of justice and education in the “here and now” may make our discourses just answerable to the world of today. It may limit our sight to catching conspicuous injustices – that is, injustices that are already visible and reprehensible. Responsiveness to, and engagement with, the conspicuous also operates politically in “proving” the theorist a “just” person, “progressive”, “ethical”, “activist”, “politically correct”, etc. This then ensures for the theorist social and academic capital: scholars may capitalize on their engagement with vogue issues of injustice since these ensure more academic visibility, more citations, and more downloads. Psychologically, this operates soothingly since it provides to the self a positive moral image as a sensitive, fair and benevolent subject/citizen.

A further and related risk is this: the partial visibility that the focus on the conspicuous entails may operate at the expense of noticing egregious injustices that currently escape the Western eye and of considering more affirmative and crisis-independent visions of justice. In having also noted the merits of the perspective on the conspicuous, I am not arguing that conspicuous world problems should be cast aside to continue harming the world unabated. My meta-critical argument is that a broader scope is also required – one not so single-focused on imminent, perhaps even facile, solutions and on problems that have passed the filter of global academia. The broader scope comprises one’s looking backwards for genealogies that historically explain the pressing issues of “the here and now” and looking forwards for

imagining alternative constructions of our world and our future that are not crisis/pressure-oriented. In virtue of the aforementioned, my meta-critique is two-tiered: on the one hand, (a) the perspective on the currently conspicuous injustices (*epikairothis*) that continuously updates justice (*epikairopoiesis*) obscures less easily perceptible injustices and pathologies that caused them. When the focus on the conspicuous dominates in discourses of justice, what or who counts as wronged depends on whether the wrong in question stands out, in other words, on whether it has been visible enough to sensitize and mobilize, even to panic, global publics. On the other hand, (b) the very emphasis on injustice may obscure the significance of a more affirmative rather than negative-critique-dependent engagement with justice as a project. To recall Alain Badiou (2001), this tendency makes justice an issue of evils that should be eradicated rather than of visions of the good that should be promoted. The possibility of treating justice more affirmatively rather than negatively as a political virtue independent from conspicuous “times of disaster” is overlooked.

Conclusion

This chapter has directed some self-reflective, meta-critical attention to the orizations of “the world of today” – a turn of phrase that is also in the title of this collection of essays. In engaging with justice and the conspicuous, the chapter is a sequel to my previous critical intervention in philosophical and educational-philosophical research on justice and the metaphor of visibility. I hope to have shown in yet another way that neglected, though by no means negligible, faces of justice and their right to visibility invite explorations of a different optics of justice, less single-focused on perspectives that are dominant in today’s world. One way of advancing more visibility of issues and faces of justice is the exploration of how one’s responses to the spirit of the times and one’s perception of injustice might be interconnected.

The claim of the chapter has been that, though situating justice and education in our times cannot be overestimated, it also involves important, potential risks. The surrender to the conspicuous entails that the corresponding, popularized face of justice sometimes appears as answerable to the world of today – that is, as responsive to glaring challenges and to what this world has already thematized as a case/crisis where justice is applicable. This happens at the cost of missing less conspicuous challenges of justice and of seeking evils to be eradicated rather than worth-pursuing visions of a better future. Covering such meta-critical ground, I have argued that the modernist sway of the temporality of the present and of the current over other temporalities relevant to justice impoverishes discussions of justice. When the discursive standpoint is the determination to eradicate evils and casts aside affirmative visions, the prospect for change is reduced to imagining only an imminent future freed from the specific, conspicuous problem that invites justice and plagues the present that a hegemonic “We” experiences as troubling.

Notes

- 1 Such extreme or exceptional circumstances can be theorized through Karl Jaspers' notion of "limit-situations" (Papastephanou, 2021d, 2021e).
- 2 Mathew Foust makes this remark in relation to another issue, loyalty.
- 3 Here is Foust (2012, 159): "Zack contrasts integrity and diligence with reckless bravery and ferocity, citing as illustrative three thousand years' worth of adulation of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*".
- 4 Even if the outcome of such an investigation is that "yes, the unvaccinated present a higher risk of contagion", which is rather unlikely if one considers all the related variables, the issue then becomes how the medical risk could be staved off without the world letting important political principles such as that which blocks medical acts on unwilling minorities go by the board.
- 5 For Foust, nevertheless, more is needed than a mere emphasis on loyalty, diligence and integrity. "Loyalty to loyalty must also be emphasized" (Foust, 2012, p. 161).
- 6 In her book, Zack does not deal with justice other than in its distributive face and only *en passant* (2009, p. 25), when she tests Rawls' veil of ignorance concerning allocation of scarce resources in virtue of a pandemic; interestingly, she does so as early as 2009. As for Foust, in his book, justice is only tangentially mentioned exclusively in relation to loyalty.
- 7 I say "from most" because in the case of pandemics and epidemics, the cause of them is typically treated as natural and thus involves no responsible agents. It is thought otherwise only by groups who suspect "laboratory" origins of the virus. These groups are then characterized by other groups as conspiracy theorists often without scrutiny of whether the claim is supported by any sensible argument or not. Therefore, how disasters of different kinds relate to issues of justice is a very complex matter that itself involves questions of many faces justice (e.g., discursive and epistemic justice) and diligent scrutiny.
- 8 Interestingly, the Greek original meaning of catastrophe evokes a radical and abrupt turn, a sudden and total redirection, and an extreme and exceptional break with previous normalcy. For more on this and on how I associate the term with education, see Papastephanou (2022).
- 9 The notion of *kairos* has valuably been utilized in philosophy of education (see, for instance, Säfström, 2022). But it has not yet been explored concerning how it may relate to justice. I am only indicating this research possibility here since there is no space for deploying this point here and covering such ground.

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12 Explaining Teachers' Experiences of Injustice through Recognition

Teemu Hanhela

Introduction

An increasing number of studies examine the influence of global educational reform trends on teachers' profession. It is argued (e.g., Ball, 2012; Brass and Holloway, 2019; Mills et al., 2019; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; Taubman, 2009, 2012) that many teachers are unaware of the power relations and politics that structure their profession or that they do not have the adequate language and tools to understand the rapidly changing nature of their profession (Brass and Holloway, 2019). Moreover, some teachers may not be ignorant of reform changes; they may just do their work 'without believing' it (Braun and Maguire, 2018). Although some teachers may be critical of these neoliberal policies, they may unintentionally legitimise them through their own speech acts (see Ball, 2012; Macdonald-Vemic and Portelli, 2018). The crucial problem this chapter examines is the way teachers could become more aware of the negative factors influencing their profession.

This chapter approaches the issue by examining the concepts of injustice defined by Meira Levinson (2015) and Doris Santoro (2018) in their recent studies. They both argue interestingly that educators have the obligation to implement justice but that they are compelled to do so under conditions in which no just action is possible because of the reform policies. This paradoxical situation causes experiences of injustice and consequent demoralisation for the teachers: they must act justly, yet they find themselves perpetrating acts that significantly wrong others (Levinson, 2015; Santoro, 2018).

The first part of this chapter critiques Levinson's and Santoro's definitions of injustice, as they obscure who really are the victims of injustice and who produces it. The different definitions of injustice (Honneth, 1997; Moore, 2015; Renault, 2019) developed in this chapter clarify that conceptions of justice and injustice depend on the normative framework of a society's central social institutions, as well as on the social position, disposition, and knowledge of the people who comprise that society. By emphasising this point, this chapter aims to widen Levinson's and Santoro's perspectives.

The chapter's first part also discusses an important point from Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) texts, according to which some teachers remain ignorant or unconscious about the injustice they implement in their work.

This chapter argues that to become more aware of this ignorance, teachers need conceptual clarifications about the distinction between the feelings of injustice and experiences of injustice. Such a distinction, developed in this chapter, shows how individuals face social injustice either through meaningless or meaningful experiences (cf. Dewey et al., 1985), and this chapter further explores the transition between these two states.

To study further this aspect, the second part of the chapter introduces Honneth's (2017, 2019) recent ideas about the two types of 'emancipatory' learning processes that the oppressed, i.e., those who experience injustice, should seize. The first is an individual learning process in which an individual becomes aware of two types of exclusion: *social* and *argumentative* closure. These forms of closure or exclusion can explain why some teachers are ignorant or silenced about experiences of injustice. These types of closure are illuminated by Donald Broady's (1986, 1987) classical example of the four stages that novice teachers go through as they struggle with teaching in schools (cf. Brady, 2020).

The second learning process, the collective learning process, is analysed via Honneth's (1995) idea of struggles for recognition. This idea is compared with Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) examples of teachers' collective attempts to revise unjust policy implementations or re-moralise their demoralised experiences. Honneth's, Levinson's, and Santoro's ideas complete each other's and highlight the distinct problem involved with the idea of struggle for recognition. Although it explains social conflicts with struggles for recognition, Honneth's 'abstract' model leaves open questions about legitimate forms of resistance. This chapter concludes that Honneth's ideas concerning the struggles for recognition are especially problematic for teachers, since they would need schools to implement multidimensional pedagogical aspects (Santoro, 2018; see also Smyth, 2012) and society to restructure educational and other social systems so as to mitigate injustice (Levinson, 2015).

The Conceptualisation of Teachers' Experiences of Injustice

Meira Levinson (2015) and Doris Santoro (2018) have recently introduced specific conceptions of educational injustice, which they use to explore experiences of injustice as experienced by teachers in their profession. Levinson (2015) defines this educational injustice as a moral injury that good, conscientious, and professionally committed teachers experience when being unable to take action that fulfils the demands of justice. These teachers know that they have responsibility for students' lives, yet they realise their role can sometimes restrict them from actually enacting justice. According to Levinson (2015), educators have the obligation to implement justice, but they are compelled to do so under conditions in which no just action is possible. These situations put teachers in a paradoxical situation: they must act justly, yet they find themselves perpetrating acts that significantly wrong others.

In her book *Demoralised: Why Teachers Leave the Profession They Love and How They Can Stay*, Doris Santoro (2018) describes that recent policy recommendations are altogether causing 'demoralisation'¹ for teachers. Demoralisation, which is distinct from burnout or disillusionment, particularly injures teachers' morality when policy implementations put them in situations where they are unable to enact the values they have associated with the teaching profession – values that motivated them to become teachers in the first place. This chapter agrees with Levinson's and Santoro's findings that recent global reform trends (e.g., Brass and Holloway, 2019; Sahlberg, Ravitch, Hargreaves, & Robinson, 2015; global education reform movement (GERM); Taubman, 2012) have had negative effects on teaching and schools; however, this chapter questions these authors' conception of injustice.

Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) both underline that the problem is that not all teachers have become demoralised by these new policy recommendations and that many educators do not recognise the moral wrong they are enacting in their daily work by following them. These teachers' actions inflict moral wrong against others, but because they do not recognise this fact, they also do not feel injured by their actions (also Ball, 2012; Braun and Maguire, 2018; Brass and Holloway, 2019; Macdonald-Vemic and Portelli, 2018; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; Taubman, 2009, 2012). The crucial problem here is to understand which factors influence (the more ignorant) teachers and how these teachers can become more conscious concerning their feelings of injustice.

Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) definitions of injustices are somewhat peculiar. In these definitions, injustice appears as moral hurt experienced when a person is compelled to do harm to others – in this case, to innocent students. This definition seems to switch the focus from the perspective of the victims of injustice to those who unwillingly produce injustice (see Levinson, 2015). This perspective has some similarities with Milgram's (1974; Hollander, 2015) classical psychological test, in which participants struggled to follow immoral orders of the leader of the experiment. Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) definitions differ from more traditional ones (see Renault, 2019; Shklar, 1992), wherein the perspective of those who suffer injustice is always different from that of those who observe it from a distance. This line of thought underlines that those who suffer injustice are more likely to have an adequate understanding than those who merely observe it (Honneth, 2017). Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2019) definitions invoke the critical question of who is really the victim of injustice and who actually produces it. This question seems crucial because perceptions of the world and conceptions of justice and injustice depend on the spectators' social position, their practical disposition, and their knowledge, as Emmanuel Renault (2019) has noted.

Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) both refer to recent the GERM and its implementation of deteriorating conditions² for teachers by undermining their pedagogical, professional, and democratic capabilities. Levinson (2015)

adds that these recent policy recommendations make it increasingly difficult for teachers to recognise and remedy two systemic or structural forms of injustices: *contextual* and *school-based injustices*. Levinson (2015) defines contextual injustices as historical and/or present-day injustices beyond the school, which can result from students' and families' poverty, trauma, lack of health care, and racial and economic segregation, for example. The ongoing school-based injustices result not only from a lack of resources and training and professional support for educators but also from unjust school regulations and policies (Levinson, 2015, 2016). Levinson (2015) emphasises that these two sources of injustices create ethical dilemmas for teachers, which stymie just solutions, as they face injustice whichever way they turn. It seems that following Levinson's and Santoro's definitions of injustice, the new policy implementations hinder teachers' ability to adequately respond to these societal and school-based injustices. In these definitions, the victims of injustice are largely the teachers, students, and schools, whereas governments, by their policy recommendations and regulations, are the ones producing it.

What remains unclear in Santoro's (2018) and Levinson's (2015) definitions of injustice is the exact conception of the experience of injustice and how individuals move from having feelings of injustice to having experiences of injustice. Barrington (Moore 2015) in his well-known study *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, for example, has argued that social rules and their violation are crucial components in moral anger and a sense of injustice. Moore (2015) specifies that injustice is accompanied by anger at the injury one feels when another person violates a social rule. In this case, one can be angry because one feels that another is violating a social rule or because the existing rule is itself wrong and that a different rule ought to be applied. Moore (2015) assumes that without rules governing social reproduction, there can be no such thing as moral outrage or a sense of injustice. Moore (2015) elaborates that the rules of our social life develop through *authority or power*, *the division of labour*, and the *allocation of goods and services*, which form the social imperatives (the rules) of modern societies. Interestingly, Moore (2015); also Honneth, 2019) asserts that the social imperatives of these three main institutions (power, work, and market economy) are transformed into moral imperatives, whereas moral anger and a sense of social injustice develop accordingly with these moral imperatives. Moore's definitions indicate that injustice refers to action that violates an individual's own conceptions of what he or she is, or ought to be, and, at the same time, these expectations are determined by the institutions of modern societies, "the imperatives of social conduct" (Moore, 2015, p. 9).

From Moore's definition, it is possible to challenge Levinson's and Santoro's definitions of injustice – what are the imperatives or 'rules' that conscientious teachers feel violate their sense of justice, and how do these rules relate to the rules of social reproduction? Santoro (2016, 2017) replies to this problem by arguing that conscientious or ethically aware teachers have three main standards concerning their craft: *pedagogical*, *professional*, and *democratic*. Santoro (2017) says that *pedagogical standards* are related to the

questions of curriculum, assessment, the most workable pedagogical practices, and the teacher's responsibilities towards their students' well-being and academic engagement. *Professional standards* concern the teacher's professional position with its related societal power, knowledge, and judgement. Teachers in their professional standards reflect on questions like how should they act and be treated as professionals. *Democratic standards* concern the roles of teachers and public schools in democratic societies. These values may focus on the school as a democratic institution or on the role of teachers as public figures in a democracy (Santoro, 2017). Santoro (2018; also Lortie, 1967) summarises these three dimensions as teachers' craft conscience consisting of two types of moral expectations that demoralised teachers believe are neglected. One is 'client responsibility', which relates to worries about how to fulfil the demands of students, caregivers, and the community. The other is 'craft performance', which concerns reflections about what a good teacher should and should not do. These are, according to Santoro (2018), the 'moral centres' that teachers feel are violated when they are demoralised.

In their studies, Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) seem to vaguely argue that ethically motivated teachers just know what is right according to their sense of educational justice (their pedagogical, professional, and democratic standards) in different cases. What is problematic here is that conceptions of right and justice are contested concepts (see Macdonald-Vemic and Portelli, 2018; Renault, 2019; Stojanov, 2011) from which even conscientious and ethically aware teachers have vehement disagreements and differing levels of awareness. In addition, the professional conscience described by Santoro (2016, 2018) is quite an open concept, giving space for varying interpretations. Levinson's and Santoro's ideas provoke further studies about 'moral imperatives' and the societal mechanisms that reproduce, maintain, and implicitly affect teachers' experiences of injustice.

Furthermore, several definitions of injustice (Bloch, 1986; Fricker, 2007; Haslanger, 2012; Honneth, 1997; Levy and Sidel, 2013; Moore, 2015) conceptualise injustice as experiences in which a subject feels that other individuals, or the structures and institutions of society, are inhibiting people from positively understanding themselves. Here, injustice represents the experiences in which individuals feel that their claim to personal integrity has been disregarded, which constrains their self-development. Thus, injustice is a negative action that restricts an individual's autonomy and self-realisation, which can prevent a person from becoming who they are or potentially could become (Fricker, 2007; Honneth, 1995, 1997; Worsdale, 2018).

According to Levinson (2015), moral injury will never be fully eliminated, nor should it, as it is generated by an appropriately progressive moral engagement. Levinson (2015, p. 10) states that while one egregious form of systemic injustice is eliminated, previously overlooked injustices may become visible. This argument indicates that social injustice and moral injuries are essential elements for moral progress. This chapter agrees with Levinson that moral injury will never be fully eliminated. However, the emphasis and aims of schools must contain strong orientation towards the identification and

reduction of educational injustices in the school system (e.g., Benner, 2021). Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) texts illustrate quite well how a teacher's moral integrity or their professional autonomy and its development are hindered by the external demands of the GERM policy. However, these definitions need further clarification concerning how individuals become aware of their feelings of injustice and what motivates them towards remedying them.

Emmanuel Renault (2019) in his new book *The Experience of Injustice* has further defined the experience of injustice by developing Axel Honneth's (1995, 1997) conceptions of injustice. Renault (2019) defines injustice as a multidimensional phenomenon and identifies two types of injustices: 'lived injustice' and 'experience of injustice'. Lived injustice is the tacitly living through an unjust situation, whereas the experience of injustice is consciousness of the disappointed normative expectations which have caused the feelings of injustice (compare Dewey et al., 1985; passive and meaningful experience; also Thoilliez, 2019). According to Renault (2019), the experience of injustice means the manner in which the feeling of injustice affects the lives of those who endure it and how it generates practical and cognitive dynamics that will demand revisions. Renault (2019) emphasises that the experience of injustice designates the injustice lived in its practical and cognitive dimensions, which can potentially lead to transformative action guided by a feeling. The experience of injustice is not just about encountering injustice; rather, it also involves living through unjust situations (lived injustice) accompanied by an at least inchoate consciousness of injustice (a feeling of injustice; Renault, 2019).

This definition holds that injustice does not necessarily produce either a feeling of injustice or an action in protest. It is possible that the dissatisfaction of normative expectations, however fundamental, never attains the form of a feeling of injustice but instead leads to forms of dissatisfaction and suffering that individuals do not grasp as injustices (see Kauppinen, 2002). In this case, it is a question only about a lived injustice and social suffering, not an experience of injustice. In Santoro's (2018) and Levinson's (2015) cases, teachers who do not perceive injustice as resulting from their actions are just living through injustice without feeling it, but they do suffer tacitly. How could these teachers develop from the state of living through injustices towards actually experiencing them?

Furthering Teachers' Experiences of Injustice via Honneth's Theory

Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) do not clearly explain how teachers can move from feelings of injustice to the experiences of injustice. Axel Honneth's definitions of injustice and social conflicts can help to explain this development. This chapter introduces and extends Honneth's (2017, 2019) recent elaborations of a twofold learning process.³ This elaboration significantly amends the idea of experience of injustice and explains the factors influencing how individuals can become more conscious about these experiences.

The First Type of Learning Process

The first learning process, individual learning process, is defined by Honneth (2017) as a process in which a suffering person needs to learn that any existing norm is amenable to a range of quite different interpretations because it does not itself specify to whom and exactly in what way it must be applied. Honneth (2017) emphasises that oppressed people should understand prevailing practices, not as self-legitimising, and right or wrong from the outset, but that all the social orders need to legitimate themselves in the light of ethical values and ideals that are worth striving for (Honneth, 2013). This means that subjects need to learn to reflectively consider whose interests dominant value interpretations serve. Honneth (2017) describes that persons (or oppressed groups) who experience moral injuries should be able to critique the semblance of naturalness in everyday interpretations of social values, i.e., to de-naturalise hegemonic interpretations of prevailing norms. They should overcome their limited 'first-order' understanding (Honneth, 2013, p. 86; that is, rudimentary habits as well as norms and values confirmed by the everyday life) to jointly explore new, creative and critical interpretations of this first-order understanding. Moving from the first-order understanding to the second means critically reflecting on those beliefs and values which demean autonomy and which are held as given truths in the first-order understanding (Honneth, 2013, 2017; also Gale and Parker, 2015). This first-order understanding can be expressed also with the concepts of habitus, dispositions, and doxa that are orienting and structuring the structures (see more, Mills et al., 2019).

An educational example of these two orders of understanding could be Stephen Ball's (2012) distinction between the first and the second orders of 'effective performativity' in schools. The first-order understanding of this effective performativity emphasises pedagogical activities that have a positive impact on measurable school performance outcomes. These neoliberal policy recommendations, as well as their accountability and measurable performance outcomes, ignore aspects of social or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative values. In a slightly different way, Honneth (2007a) makes the same point by arguing that cognitive perspective can always insidiously replace the recognitive stance in social relations as "forgetfulness of recognition" (p. 52). According to Ball (2012), the second-order understanding means that for many teachers, when accountability overrides moral, ethical, and esthetical values, it inevitably changes their work and the satisfaction they get from it. The accountability measures distort teachers' moral purpose and responsibility for their students, and they may sacrifice their ethical commitments to maintain their profession (Macdonald-Vemic and Portelli, 2018).

In other words, the first-order understanding that teachers should critically learn to reflect is always historically situated, limited, and permeated by hegemonic discourses that determine not only possible solutions to the prevailing problems but the problems themselves (Macdonald-Vemic and

Portelli, 2018; Renault, 2019). Levinson (2015) gives an educational example of this limitation by eliciting how in the United States in the 1950s children with special needs were routinely warehoused in classrooms or institutions that provided little or no educational services, or these children were denied a school place altogether. Such treatment was seen as normal and appropriate then, but now it would be classified as unjust (Levinson, 2015).

The two forms of closures, social and argumentative closures, which Honneth (2019) introduces in his new book, *Annerkennung, Eine europäische Ideengeschichte* [Recognition, a European History of Ideas], extend the first type of emancipatory learning process described earlier. Honneth (2019) introduces two systematic reasons that can limit the criticism of the social orders or the criticism of the first-order understanding.

First, Honneth (2019, p. 228) refers to Max Weber's (1968) idea of 'social closure' (*Soziale schliessung, Exklusion*) or 'exclusion', which defines cultural exclusion whereby individuals or entire groups are prevented from participating in already established recognition relationships, even though these individuals and groups have all the prerequisites for participation.

Honneth (2007b) in his earlier writings defined more specifically this type of cultural exclusion as consisting of strategies in which society's hegemonic group systematically withholds symbolic and linguistic skills from certain groups to articulate their experiences of injustice in order to maintain the status quo.

Honneth (2007b) explains this process further by citing Foucault's discourse analysis and three procedures of exclusion. Honneth (2007b) recites Foucault's three procedures of exclusion naming them as three taboos on certain topics of the conversation, rituals of circumstance, and the privileges of the speaking subject. These three elements of discrimination identified by Foucault (1970) are shared by the oppressed when they feel that "one does not have right to say everything", "that one cannot speak of everything at every opportunity", and that "not just anyone can talk about just anything" (Honneth, 2007b, p. 88). These experiences of exclusion can be illustrated in the school context, for example, by Santoro's (2018) descriptions. Santoro (2018) depicts dissatisfied teachers not being included in decision-making and having no voice in decisions, although their schools aim to teach democratic habits (cf. "one does not have right to say everything"). These teachers' experiences also that they are not involved in the curriculum designing (cf. "that one cannot speak of everything at every opportunity"). Furthermore, Santoro (2018) explains that dissatisfied teachers experience curricular content as highly restricted and determined by national standards and tests, which limit teachers' creativity (Santoro, 2018) (cf. "not just anyone can talk about just anything"). Honneth (2007b) elaborates that these three forms of exclusion are transmitted through the language system by institutions of socialisation (e.g., family and school) and spread by the mass media, with its formalising and depersonalising ways, to control group and class-specific experiences of injustice (Renault, 2019). In addition, law and morality facilitate these two factors by restricting legitimate forms of

resistance and demeaning illegal forms of resistance. Honneth (2007b) concludes that for these three reasons, class-specific deprivations and injuries are largely excluded from public discussion and have made the articulation of injustices increasingly difficult for suffering individuals (see also Furman, 2020). The social closure described earlier represents hindrance to criticise the first-order understanding.

The second type of hindrance to this criticism Honneth (2019) elaborates from Althusser's philosophical tradition from the idea of 'argumentative closure', as Honneth (2019, p. 228) interprets this tradition by emphasising ideological constructions, according to which socio-structural conditions label some predefined characteristics for certain groups as their 'natural' properties. In this case, individuals experience themselves as mutually recognised and respected, but nevertheless, they have unequal possibilities to define themselves in society. Honneth (2019) agrees with Althusser (2014) that the institutions of education, politics, religion, and work maintain 'argumentative closures' (see also Hacking, 1999; Haslanger, 2012).

Argumentative closure can be described as experiences of injustices in which people feel self-alienated, as they change their self-conception through the recognition of others. In this case, a person refuses to be what they are recognised to be. At the same time, social closure can make people experience their social environment as no longer self-evident; it blocks their attempts at recognition and makes the social environment appear as foreign, hostile alienated. These two forms of injustices, social and argumentative closure, are closely related with the concepts of self- and world-alienation (see more Renault, 2019; similarly Fricker, 2007; Haslanger, 2012).

Donald Broady (1987) in his *Den dolda läroplanen* [Hidden Curriculum] introduces an old (from the 1970s) but still marvellous educational example of how novice teachers face these forms of alienation or closure. He (1986, p. 119) contends that when a novice and newly graduated teacher begins teaching, they encounter a 'practical shock', which means their ideals of justice, equality, equity, and professional ethics do not match with the existing school reality. Broady (1986, also Hänsel, 1975) argues that this shock leads to four stages in the development of a new teacher. In the first stage, the idealistic stage, teachers treat themselves as equal with their pupils, treating them as friends (see also Stojanov, 2006). At the same time, these teachers do not clearly outline for students what the consequences are for unacceptable behaviour. Broady (1986) contends that the students then start to abuse these teachers' friendliness by using it for their own aims. The cooperative attitude of these teachers is understood by the children as weakness, and they lose respect for these teachers (Broady, 1986). Broady's idea that a cooperative attitude can lead to children losing respect for their teacher seems a little bit odd or outdated, but being inconsistent with rules, penalties, and rewards is certainly common for novice teachers.

The second developmental stage of teachers is described as a marginal stage, in which student-friendly teachers become marginalised or repressed by students and colleagues. These teachers become outsiders at their school and

learn that the ambitious values they learned at college are inapplicable to school reality. They become further isolated from their colleagues for breaking the prevailing professional ethics, as well as the school's rules and practices. Broady's (1986) arguments relate interestingly with Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018), as he emphasises that the marginal stage is the most painful and critical for teachers. He asserts that if teachers begin to understand in this stage that schools play a role in producing societal contradictions (class distinctions) which further affect the school's socialisation patterns, it can provoke them to resist injustices. It is exactly this marginal stage and these forms of resistance that Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) studies explore.

Broady (1986, p. 118) clarifies that if teachers in their marginal stage do not get any support in their acts of resistance from outside of the school, from other teachers, or from students and parents, their own workplace and its staff will determine their socialisation into work life (also Furman, 2020). This leads to the third stage of teacher professional development: the stage of identification. In this stage, teachers begin to identify with their colleagues and imitate their actions; they want to win their esteem and praise. In this process over adaptation, i.e., the rigid and strict following of the rules, is not unusual. The last stage according to Broady (1986) is the stage of internalisation, which is a process whereby a teacher no longer copies other teachers but becomes 'a real teacher', i.e., similar to all other teachers (also Furman, 2020). In Santoro's (2018) and Levinson's (2015) words, this teacher becomes 'demoralised' and commits unjust acts without realising it.

The Second Type of Learning Process

The second type of learning process that Honneth (2017) develops captures the experiences of injustice and how these experiences influence people to collectively act for and demand improvements. This learning process is a collective learning process and a struggle for recognition, which the oppressed should seize. Honneth (2017) presents the second type of learning process as a collective endeavour, in which a group of people becomes aware that they share the same destiny by becoming aware of being disadvantaged or discriminated against. In this stage, these people become aware that they are systematically denied or have restricted possibilities for self-realisation. Honneth (1995, 1997) claims that the possibilities for self-realisation develop only through the intact development of three types of self-relations, self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three crucial self-relations develop in the positive atmosphere of love (mainly in the family), rights (in the labour market and market economy), and social esteem (in the decision-making processes). Honneth (1997) argues that always when an individual's self-realisation is violated or restricted by hindering the development of self-relations, they face a moral conflict. In this sense, moral conflicts are inevitable and can never be fully mitigated.

Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) have similarly emphasised with Honneth that social injustice is moral violence deeply impacting one's

individuality. Levinson (2015), for example, underlines that experiences of injustice not only damage a person's psyche but also their moral integrity. Similarly, Santoro (2018) argues that demoralisation is related to moral concerns found within teaching and professional ethics rather than within personal dilemmas. According to Santoro (2018), demoralisation is a state in which individuals can no longer access the sources of satisfaction that made their work worthwhile. Demoralisation threatens a teacher's ability to live a worthwhile and good life, as well as receive respectful treatment from their students and communities. Similarly, Honneth (1997) argues that moral injustice is recognition being withheld or denied, which is an action that intentionally disregards essential aspects of subjects' well-being. Teachers are experiencing in Levinson and Santoro's definitions not being recognised their own self-understanding, which constitutes the conditions for moral injury (see also Honneth, 1997).

The second type of learning process introduced here represents collective endeavour where misrecognised teachers should generate a collective sense of dissatisfaction or indignation concerning the disappointment they feel about not having their legitimate expectations met; they need to articulate or transform their experiences as propositional claims (Stojanov, 2010) and reveal prevailing, unequal and distorted social and argumentative closures that maintain misrecognition. The collective outrage should cause the relevant group to renew the established norms with an expansive interpretation, which ought to be suitable to justify their demands for social change (Honneth, 2017).

Levinson and Santoro describe teachers' collective struggles against misrecognition of their profession. Levinson (2015) applies heuristically Hirschman's (1970) classic text *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* to capture the reactions concerning how teachers try to avoid moral injury in intrinsically unjust contexts. The social movements involving teachers usually start from a disturbance in their working conditions. According to Santoro (2018) and Levinson (2015), recent policy recommendations (the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) programme, the Race to the Top initiative, and Common Core State Standards) challenges teachers professional ethics and working conditions. As a result, a relatively large number of teachers in the United States find their working conditions unbearable and have decided to protest policy recommendations rather than bear them (with loyalty) or simply flee from them (exit; also, Renault, 2019).

Levinson (2015) describes that this form of resistance is a public critique, whereby teachers use their professional authority and position to criticise and publicise unjust practices. Teachers work with students and parents to raise their civic voices and fight injustices. Levinson (2015) discusses teachers' campaigns in the United States to collectively resist high-stakes standardised testing as one example of this form of resistance. Using one's voice in this way requires the construction of a normative frame that identifies the situation as unjust, assigns responsibility, and legitimises a struggle against the situation (Renault, 2019). However, the normative frame, which the GERM

trends have implemented, seems ambivalent (also Brass and Holloway, 2019). Levinson (2015) warns that teachers using their voice as a tool for public resistance is risky because teachers are open to significant disciplinary penalties, and their schools are vulnerable to the loss of funding. Levinson concludes that the decision about what to accept and when to raise one's voice to protest is, thus, a morally fraught and ambiguous enterprise (Levinson, 2015).

Santoro (2018) also discusses how teachers can develop strategies for re-moralising their demoralised practices. These strategies contain much more options than just publicly using one's voice. She (2018) differentiates between student-centred action, teacher leadership, activism, voice, and professional community as actions that teachers can take to respond to demoralisation. Santoro (2018) also emphasises that the actions involved in connecting teachers with their professional community, i.e., the cultivation of an authentic professional community, have proven to be the most secure, sustainable, and efficacious form of resistance. Both Levinson (2015) and Santoro (2018) underline that society needs to provide approving normative frameworks for teacher's demands, and in this task, it is necessary to build up a strong collaboration between educators, schools, district leaders, administrators, and families to seek remedies to injustice (also Smyth, 2012; see also Stitzlein and Rector-Aranda, 2016).

These educational examples show how Honneth's idea of struggle for recognition can only limitedly explain teachers' experiences. First, teachers using their voices to struggle for recognition is highly risky, as Levinson notices. Second, teachers' struggles can contain a wide variety of pedagogical actions, as Santoro (2018; also Gale and Mills, 2013) elaborates. These two points indicate the crucial problem in Honneth's arguments, which Jean-Philippe Deranty (2004), for example, has highlighted. Deranty (2004) argues that if subjects and groups build their identity and achieve their autonomy only through struggles for recognition, there is a moral justification for violence. After all, violence is what every struggle analytically entails, concludes Deranty (2004).

This idea is explicitly expressed by Honneth (1995) when he argues that his model of social conflicts is neutral as compared with the usual distinctions made within the sociology of conflicts. According to Honneth (1995), his theory does not contain theoretical pre-commitments in favour of either non-violent or violent resistance. Instead, at the level of description, it is left entirely open whether social groups employ material, symbolic or passive forces to publicly articulate and demand restitution for the disrespect and violation they have experienced (Honneth, 1995).

Honneth's (1995) idea contains the problem that legitimate motivation in riot acts can lead to illegitimate demands and that illegitimate demands could be pursued by more or less legitimate means. In other words, the ends do not always seem to justify the means (Renault, 2019). This critical aspect leaves open questions about the collective learning processes in social conflicts that Honneth (1995, 2017) explains. Perhaps, Honneth's idea could

be defended by arguing that social analyses cannot settle in advance these questions theoretically, but answers must be searched for from the empirical evidence and that social analyses must remain open to different kinds of empirical social conflicts (Zurn, 2015). Another possible response could be that whatever forms the struggle for recognition take, they are legitimate insofar as the struggle does not produce even greater denials of recognition (Renault, 2019). However, these responses seem unsatisfactory or at least too abstract for teachers who are struggling with social inequalities while lacking practical techniques and workable practices.

Conclusion

The principal finding of this chapter is that experiences of injustice, described by Levinson and Santoro, contain multiple aspects to be further explored: The difference between the subject and object of injustice, the feeling and experiences of injustice, and the twofold learning process involved in the experience of injustice. This chapter examined these three points and presented them as critical points in need of further attention.

The first point, the subject-object problem, challenges Levinson's and Santoro's definitions towards more exact conceptualisations of injustice. The definition of injustice cited in the first part of the chapter defines injustice as violations of the social rules and norms, which brings to mind Barrington Moore's (2015) idea that without rules governing social conduct, there would be no such thing as moral outrage or a sense of injustice. In other words, the experiences of injustice are keenly related to the normative framework of the central social institutions of social reproduction (e.g., family, work, and the market). This normative framework, as well as individuals' social position, their practical disposition, and their knowledge about these positions, all strongly influence the conceptualisations of justice and injustice. Levinson's (2015) and Santoro's (2018) ideas provide significant accounts of the values committed teachers' experience as violated, but they also provoke further studies about how the normative framework and the societal mechanisms maintaining this framework reproduce, sustain, and implicitly influence teachers' experiences of injustice.

The second point is that this chapter emphasised Emmanuel Renault's (2019) idea that experiences of injustice are highly relevant. The experience of injustice is not solely a process where individuals sense contradictions within the explicit definitions of justice (cf. Rawls, 1973) but rather injustice is experienced in a relation to something else and in a situation. Following this idea, injustice is experienced as an injury to one's personal integrity as well as awareness that an essential aspect of one's dignity and autonomy has been tarnished. The crucial question is how ignorant teachers (see Levinson, 2015; Santoro, 2018) could raise their awareness of the experience of injustice and not just living through injustice.

The second part of this chapter elaborated on two forms of emancipatory learning processes developed by Honneth. These two learning processes,

amended with the ideas of social and argumentative closure, can explain the societal mechanisms that keep people and teachers ignorant of social injustices. Honneth's elaborations of these types of closures are emphasised as important developmental tasks for teachers.

Honneth's idea of the second emancipatory learning process, the struggle for recognition, is illuminated by Levinson's and Santoro's examples of teachers struggling with their experiences of injustice. Their descriptions show that the teachers' collective struggles for recognition, i.e., teachers using their voices, are not enough. Multidimensional pedagogical aspects (see Santoro, 2018) are required, and society has the responsibility to restructure the educational system, as well as other systems, to mitigate injustice (see Levinson, 2015). These examples indicate that Honneth's (1995; 2017) idea of struggle for recognition has limited feasibility in the context of education.

Notes

- 1 Santoro (2018) explores recent policy recommendations, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program, the Race to the Top initiative, and Common Core State Standards implemented, in the United States. These recommendations make schools and teachers responsible of students' learning results and penalise schools and teachers who show no progress in obtaining better results for their students. Santoro (2018, pp. 39–43) summarises the experiences of demoralisation, which consists of teaching (a) failing to embody the values that have guided their practices for years, (b) being obedient towards mandates that compromise their professional ethics, (c) contributing to students' distress by following such policy recommendations, (d) understanding that policies designed to support students renders teachers as expendable labourers, (e), understanding that profession has changed so that career longevity becomes unsustainable and unrealistic, and (f) experiencing isolation when defending their professional ethics.
- 2 Santoro (2018) shows that during the last 20 years, the global reform trends have hurt the working conditions for teachers by demanding standardization, increasing the focus on core subjects while narrowing the curriculum (see also Nussbaum, 2010), implementing prescribed curriculum and value-added measures (VAM) and creating high-stakes accountability for students and teachers, as well as fast-track or alternative teacher licensing programs. These policy recommendations intensify the work of teachers; they are expected to do more with less. More professional demands are added to teachers' workload without concomitant time provided to incorporate them (Santoro, 2018; also Carnoy, 1999).
- 3 This chapter does not offer a systematic account of Honneth's (1995, 2013) theory of recognition with its three forms of recognition and their institutional embodiments, but cites Honneth as much as is necessary to amend Levinson's and Santoro's definitions of injustice.

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13 The Will to Injustice

An Autoethnography of Learning to Hear Uncomfortable Truths*

Eevi Elisabeth Beck

What In/Justices Am I Willing to Face?

“We’ve braved the belly of the beast.
We’ve learnt that quiet isn’t always peace,
And the norms and notions of what ‘just is’
Isn’t always justice.”

Amanda Gorman 2021, 12

Prologue

Doubt.

First, joy at listening to Amanda Gorman’s poem. But then: Who am I to discuss such matters? Foucault who wrote about “the will to know”; have I not seen in myself the will to hide in the familiar comfort of “what just is?” A will to remain ignorant? Have I not partaken in delivering injustices to other beings human and non-human (“do I really have to go into all that...?”). I have. And these became drops of heart-blood for the core of this chapter. But also courage. Injustices I have received. Support of many kinds. My will to wake up shake up the all-too-comfortable in me, and invite others to join. Will to listen and learn. Determination to keep walking, despite legs shaky at times.

So I write

Privilege as an Injustice

A form of injustice is privilege. This chapter explores how I became more aware of how privilege conditions my life and the structural injustice on which it depends.¹ In recent years, I have gone from the comfortable position that “I’m not a Racist, Classist nor Climate Denier; and I believe in equal access to Higher Education” to accepting responsibility for benefiting from the current divisive relations between people, as well as between people and the Earth. My path to accepting this view has been rife with internal

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resistance and remains uncomfortable, as some of my ‘solutions’ to social ills gradually dissolve. Not through a gentle wash with water but by painful etching from strong acids which eroded and erode comfort, scarring me into feeling the beginner I am; a learner. *What is causing change?* This chapter charts some moments in this perpetual transition.

The main purpose is to understand how I am partaking in a social system that I do not wish for. The pained questions behind this are: How is my work life at the University of Oslo complicit in upholding a system I do not support? How come I continue? (How) can I change that? The approach of the chapter is to examine a process of change. Its structure is a spiral as I have found no way of introducing its purpose without recourse to ideas which were outcomes of the study.

Transcending Comfort: Three Moments of Insight

Transition, transformation, has been both gradual process and sudden revelations. In the following, I present three moments out of many. The running theme is an axis between comfort and discomfort. These are glimpses into a messy process where ‘progress’ is spiralling insight, and detailing the process deepens the argument. Similar experiences that, unrelated to their importance, did not produce a visible effect, nevertheless supported later insight. These include a moment in the late 1980s when listening to an interview of some young Sami adults who were pained to relay how in the 1970s, they had been ashamed of their parents wearing ‘kofta’, their traditional wear, in the village. Another such moment occurred in the 1990s when a friend shared relief that the news of his Jewish background did not shake me. His prior experiences that caused his relief did however shake me, as I learnt that anti-Semitism was alive in Oslo at a time I assumed it was long gone. Both news shocked me and had some effect on my understanding, but not on my actions: I was not sufficiently willing to step out of my comfort zone. Yet they did prepare the soil into which the following seeds fell.

Moment 1: Being in the Know: How (Not) to Get Admitted into the University

I have permission to share this story.

A man of 30-something, well trained in his craft, dreams of becoming a university student. Having moved to Norway, there are transition schemes – unthinkable in his home country, so he is thrilled. Under the national ‘Realkompetanse’ rule, someone aged from 23 years up and with 5 years of work-life experience has a simplified admissions requirement: Only one year of full-time Further Education (videregående, FE) rather than three years. Our friend quits his job on a construction site, enthusiastically invests his savings into private tuition at the FE level, embarks on the exams, and passes all of them. He submits his academic record with the exam results plus proof of five years of work to my university, the University of Oslo. There is some

confusing back and forth with having to prove a detail that the national rules already provide for,² then the university's Admissions Office confirms that he has submitted a correct application. There is a wait. Then, a standard letter arrives, stating admission rejected. Reason: Not qualified. Our friend is devastated: *I have wasted one-and-a-half years of my life! I knew I shouldn't have thought I could become a university student.*

My response is different: "But you **are** qualified, there must be a mistake. Surely the letter must say you can discuss this with them?" No. I ask to see the letter: At the top, a terse line announcing the decision in decontextualised, formal terms. Then, as I remember it, paragraphs of text referring to various generic laws in accordance with which the office has the legal right to make such decisions. At the bottom, a single line, equally devoid of context but which does seem to speak from and to humans: "If you have any questions, you can contact us on this number..." "You could call them?" I suggest. But I submitted my formal application, and they have given their formal response, he responded; I don't have a question.

Yet I press on. With his permission, I call the Admissions Office and discover that the problem is a technicality, but deeply Class related: The letters confirming a total of five years of employment he had enclosed did not state that the work had been full-time. It was for him now to resubmit his application, enclosing papers documenting full-time work. I relayed this to him, but he explained there is no such thing as part time in construction work; he would not contact his ex-employers to ask them to add this, as it makes no sense to specify it. Evidently, the logic by which Admissions operated was not attuned to the realities of the construction sector (whereas in Norway, e.g., office work or teaching would as a matter of course, have been described as full or part time).

Our friend saw no purpose in further arguing his case with the Admissions Office. My Middle Class and educationally privileged background, however, made me not accept the finality of the response despite its formality. With his renewed permission, I made a further call, argued with Admissions about the unreasonableness of going back to a series of employers from years ago for new, nonsensical letters, and was then – only then – told of a simple solution: The applicant could submit evidence of his taxable income for the years in question, which would sufficiently substantiate his claim to have been in full-time employment.

The news left me relieved and enraged. A solution existed! But why did they not inform of this right away (even beforehand)? And why was the formal response void of information which could help make sense of the Reject? The total effect was one of obscuring the problem and its solution, hiding it from anyone who did not have the confidence and 'cultural insider' understanding of when and how to protest.

This is a logic of privilege: The ways of the dominant group have been naturalised, in this case emerging through implicit assumptions about, first, what sectors of the labour market applicants might need to document prior work from; second, what can be taken for granted as culturally 'known' and what

needs to be made explicit and how; and third, how to handle a formal reject (his “I have no questions” vs. my “there is a mistake, I will challenge them”).

The no doubt unintended (from the university’s point of view) hurdle against his admission was a consequence of unexamined assumptions about Class. While on the surface all applicants were met by the same rules, their practical effects depended on what sector of the labour market your previous life had been in and your familiarity with the inner logics of the Norwegian governmental sector generally and Higher Education specifically. Note that this was (still) in operation within a transition scheme for people like our friend.

This was how I discovered the sting of the acid that social class still patrols the gates of the university. I was upset for a long time. To him, however, previous life experience left him unsurprised by the need for a link with an ‘insider’ to get in.³

In this case, I position myself among the privileged, literally a colleague of the problem. The pain was substantial of seeing close up how only some more diversity awareness could have sufficed to prevent this problem. Yet that awareness was not there, and will not be there as long as my institution experiences no need to see this as an opportunity to learn something.

For years, I have vaguely known of access barriers being an issue, and whenever I have been reminded, I have been comfortably indignant about the situation (“someone should fix this”). Yet, standing next to someone about to be rejected for precisely these reasons made me *sense* the devastation wreaked by the injustice of the Classist assumptions and of how small changes could have made this admission process more robust.

1st Ouch! This Hurt.

This acid made my position loosen from pointing my accusatory finger comfortably away from myself, to “we (at my university) should do something about it”. I started some awakening to responsibility... Yet, at the time of writing, I still have not done anything beyond mentioning the example whenever it may find an audience at my university. The educational injustice is the way in which the admissions procedure, while technically ‘fair’, in its details reproduces existing patterns of family Higher Education background strongly influencing degree attainment. Meanwhile, inside Higher Education, I am one of many who are not seeing those who are thus unadmitted:⁴ The issue does not arise in our class(es). Thus we unwittingly support Classism by perpetuating its invisibility.

As for our friend, an inner dynamic of silencing worked something like this:

‘You know you don’t matter, so in face of the obstacle either you give up and lower your social expectations. Or if you were to get in, you are busy learning to navigate substantial amounts of new, often deeply confusing, social codes of which the quirks of the admission process is only one. So why spend your energy reporting it?’

There is no accessible port for feedback back into the system (either its national or local parts) and no evidence visible to the system that one might be needed. Only personal upset exists (such as mine), and the disappointment and broken trust of our friend and other silenced voices.

Moment 2: Crooked Fingers: Opening My Eyes to Earth Justice

An itchy discomfort/*getting unstuck*: In 2019, the actions of Greta Thunberg and the school strikers helped me believe that everyone can and must do something (for a written account, see Thunberg, 2019). Travelling back from a meditation retreat, three days on a train, had me thinking. *They* – the retreat organisers – *should’ve done more*. More to arouse me and others. Yet, Greta Thunberg said, “if you feel disheartened, do something”. If I see that action is needed, *why don’t... I?*

2nd OUCH, it hurts again. (This is also the time when I start noticing my lack of action following the first Moment.)

–Me? But I don’t know how to! – Neither do the kids, but that didn’t stop them. My accusatory finger-pointing at others has three neighbours hooking back at me.

As for a while I had considered leadership to be needed, I should step forward. I laid less a plan than a will to devote resources, trusting that what specifically was to be done would emerge. On the train, I decided to devote Fridays to the future (inspired by school strikers’ ‘Fridays for Future’ global climate strike movement). For six to seven months until the Covid-19 lockdown, I spent each Friday and more taking action and building community: I organised and led slow walking meditations ending in front of the Parliament in Oslo, vividly asking for slowing down consumption; I invited colleagues at my department to get in touch and see what we might do (resulting in young colleagues and myself presenting a conference poster on reducing our travel to conferences); I told my research collaborators that I would only work on environmentally relevant issues (resulting mostly in enthusiastically joining me, as well as a publication on academic travel: Schaffar and Beck (2022)). During the autumn of 2019, a group of employees campaigned with students for our university’s next ten-year Strategic Plan to focus on sustainability, and I had time to be one of the editors who compiled the many inputs and co-wrote our joint alternative proposal.

Such was my journey of getting unstuck from my comforting blaming of others. At this point, I felt mild shame at not having done anything effective earlier, but I was relieved to be taking action, considering myself to be strong. I subtly positioned myself as helping others to wake up.

At the time of writing (March 2022), I now raise sustainability issues in my Academic Development courses, as well as continue contributing to general developments at my university to incorporate sustainability issues, including social justice, in teaching. While this work has come to intertwine

with lessons from Moment 3 below, when engaging for the Earth I continue feeling highly comfortable raising the issue.

Moment 3: Skin Deep in Black Lives Matter. Loss of Innocence about My Position

This section I find the hardest to write. Unprocessed guilt. The weight of centuries of dominance by my ancestry. I consciously muster determination to keep writing, despite words shaky at times.

Any credit for this section is primarily due to conversations over years with friends with intimate knowledge about being racialised and who patiently have kept educating me. If you the reader find a good idea in the following, it may be one that people have been developing since the start of slavery. In terms of tracing my process, due to my early shock, deep disturbance, and doubt, only recently have I started noting down detailed sources. Yet, in terms of published non-fiction, major insights stem from Baldwin (1969a, 1969b), Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983), M. L. King and Washington (1992), DuVernay (2016), Eddo-Lodge (2018), and R. King (2018).

One day in 2020, I am watching images from a US *Black Lives Matter* demo. I sympathise. I am a spectator, my resistance against taking responsibility is skilfully hidden from myself (“the problem is not ‘them,’ the Black and Brown people, but ‘us,’ the Whites⁵ – yet different Whites from me”). This intellectual camouflage works for weeks, months. But then. Another demo. Oslo. My. Home. City. There it is again, that placard with three simple words that I get confused by, insecure from, and my eyes want to avoid: “White Silence = Violence”. For days I ponder this before I surrender to truth: I am the problem. No escape. Not because of my hidden racist thoughts (though I have seen those roar their troll heads in my mind from time to time). Rather, the idea that “racist thought and action is what it is about” has been an effective smokescreen for seeing the deeper truth: Irrespective of whether or not I like it, I benefit from White privilege. My culturally condoned, conveniently structured non-racism has served to hide a painful truth: That having the choice is a mark of privilege. There is no escape.

The ‘problem’ moves from ‘those other Whites’ to ‘us’. **Me.**

3rd OUCH!!

The acid that taught the meaning of ‘institutional’ and ‘structural’ kept stinging. Where could I go from here? Shaken by realising that this had “passed under my radar”, I now wanted to learn. I turned to books; on racism, there would be many. Yet ... while at a distance I accepted protests to racism, I was sure I would switch off if someone got too angry.⁶ How best to make myself listen? I am an experienced meditator and a teacher of mindfulness; any writings about mindfulness and racism would better be able to get under my skin, so to speak. This landed me in the lap of Ruth King, an

experienced diversity awareness coach and meditation teacher. She writes directly to White-skinned people as well as People of Colour (PoC).⁷ And did I learn! “Racism is a heart disease, and it’s curable” (King, 2018, p. 1). First, I let go of any lingering resistance against mentioning skin colour, finally accepting that my stance of “better not mention race” was part of the problem.

Next, I gained new terminology. King (2018) argues that as the group contexts in which we live our lives vary, each person experiences a range of group identities. In one context we are primarily a parent; in another we are the only Brown-skinned student at a seminar; in yet another we are the teacher, etc. As structural inequity exists in multiple dimensions (King, 2018), most people will have varied experiences: Belonging at times to *subordinated* group identities, at other times to *dominant* group identities (a parallel argument in different terms grounds Star and Bowker, 2007). My specific privileges include being White in a White-dominant place; I have a parent who has Norwegian as their mother tongue; I am a full professor with tenure at a Norwegian university. I also suffer subordination in some contexts; primarily as an ageing female. This combination I refer to as my privileged position.⁸

Writers such as King (2018) and Eddo-Lodge (2018) provide clarity on the first task for the skin colour privileged, such as me, who “wants to do something”: Start speaking with other White people about White privilege. Eddo-Lodge’s blog post and book (2018) on how she “No Longer Talks to White People About Race”, makes vivid the burden on PoC when White people are expecting to get educated on racism by them. A new eye-opener for me: the action needed also gets transposed, to ‘us’ and ‘me’. The clarity and strength of her stance helped me see not just racism but all three problems more deeply. And it mattered that those insights build on hundreds of years of utmost suffering. As my interest turned towards my own responsibility, I stopped fearing it quite so much, instead starting acting on it (consistent with Thunberg quoted earlier).

I started pondering the several major crises taking place in parallel, affecting people differentially, and also, animals, plants, and the Earth. I had a need to make sense of them not as disjoint but as interlinked causes-and-consequences. Further, to bring them into dialogue with the positioning of scientific knowledge as such, to see what joint pictures might emerge. My yearning to “think the world together” with injustice initially manifested at a research seminar in 2020: The paper “A Covid Climate as If Black Lives Mattered” juxtaposed the concerted effort in Norway and internationally to contain the Covid-19 pandemic with the lack of effective action on the climate crisis and racism. (The present chapter is its continuation.)

Denting the Culture of No Culture?

The “culture of no culture” is one of Donna Haraway’s (e.g., 1997) characterisations of the dominant discourse of academic (primarily scientific) positionings of knowledges. The culture of no culture refers to a

perspective-without-a-perspective, or ‘objectivity’ if you like; the invisibility of the position of the speaker/observer (Haraway, 1997). Academic writing is rife with mirroring of cultures of no culture, including this sentence itself.

How are educators not least in Higher Education to respect and reform the contested traditions of scholarly inquiry, while making sense of a rapidly changing world and discussing this with our students to listen forth their understanding? This is a non-trivial issue. For example, one of the readers invited this chapter to explicitly link with educational theory, e.g., *Bildung*. While, e.g., Wolfgang Klafki included in his renewal of *Bildung* the notions of self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity (for an application of this in Higher Education, see Beck et al. 2015), he did not to my knowledge discuss the need for the teacher to study the blinkers in her own eyes in order to benefit the Earth and her students. Parker Palmer (2017) however, deconstructs with raw eloquence his own teaching failures in his quest for an honest and sensitive contact with his (in Class terms) less privileged college students. Klafki and Palmer differ widely in their approaches, yet both argue for truly inclusive education and both inspire my deeper thinking-and-acting. Interdisciplinary work such as O’Brien et al. (2013), details the need for a deep revolution of educational thinking to save humanity on a suffering Earth. Thus, the literature arguing for change exists.

The issue is therefore less what to do about the issues than how to arouse and sustain interest in it from more people. The three moments suggest the need to hear silenced voices, including feedback on how the university functions for students from less educationally privileged backgrounds (Moment 1). What would be needed for the university to act? Experimentation with post-Colonial Academic Development following widespread student protests in South Africa emphasises the centrality of this question:

In 2015, South African students disrupted the legacy of colonialism that permeated their experience of higher education in a series of protests that shook universities across the country. (...) This contestation resulted in an agreement that academics and students traditionally excluded from formal institutional structures and processes of curriculum oversight, would be included in a process of curriculum review.

Behari-Leak and Mokou (2019, p. 136)

I choose to consider all living beings and the non-living as deeply connected (Moment 2, and cf. *Nhật Hạnh*, 1998). What questions within our course/subject/discipline become relevant in such a context? How might they be part of disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses and research? Further, what new (non-scientific forms of) knowledge might be needed?

For/from Moment 3, Donna Haraway reminds us that vision is not neutral (e.g., 1992) and metaphors create worlds (1992, 1997). Combining this with injustice being experienced differentially, my (originally more naïve) question for this chapter becomes refined to: “What is it that my Whiteness

in an overwhelmingly (and dominantly) White society and workplace permits me not to see?” What suffering does it allow me not to experience? For example, non-fear of my young adult son being stopped by the police when travelling through the city centre. In late 2020, my son and I were acutely aware of such privilege because we had been taught, reminded, and reminded again by Black Lives Matter demonstrations across several countries. In early 2021, even though we are willing to remember, our life does not remind us much. In effect, we rest in the privilege of semi-forgetting – a further embodiment of the injustice of privilege. Waking up once is not enough.

Discussions of justice in, for, and through, education could risk perpetuating the core problem: Looking away from, rather than at, ourselves as a source of injustice. Such avoidance is endemic. It is also hard to find the terms in which to discuss it without becoming overly individual. Waking up alone is not enough.

The problem exists inside me and outside. In order to not only wake up but stay awake, I need community, yet can change only myself. Changing myself depends on my awareness, the resources I have access to, who can be supportive friends, and who can challenge me. To the extent that the cultures with which I identify support non-responsibility, taking responsibility becomes acts of resistance.

The three moments clarify three interlinked aspects of injustice manifesting through my privilege: First, uneven access to privileges such as academic forms of knowledge and how the inequity is structured to perpetuate itself, invisibly to those on the ‘inside’ (cf. mainly Moment 1/Access). Second, relating theory/insight and practice/action, injustice includes us academically privileged having the choice to focus solely on theory should we so wish (cf. M2/Earth Justice), yet it would often take a small change to expand our horizons and include subject-relevant Earth issues. Third (most visibly with M3/Skin Deep but touched in all three), the injustice of “what just is”, including hesitance to expand my capacity to take responsibility in several dimensions including time (historical/ancestry and future generations), across ingrained cultural boundaries (such as skin colours and levels of familiarity with signifiers of academic status), and across the human/non-human divide (animals, minerals, etc.).

For such work of growing my capacity to listen inwards and outwards, I need other people. Before probing the issue of community, I next explain why I write about myself.

A Note on Autoethnography

Svendby (2021) summarises the ‘what’ of autoethnography thus: “The aim of autoethnography is to use personal experience as a way to elucidate and purposefully comment on cultural practices. (...) [T]he language is deliberately accessible and experimental. Subjective experiences, including my understandings and feelings, are used as data” (p. 637, references omitted). Another dimension is how autoethnography borrows elements from (non-)

fiction which refuses to be only fiction or non-fiction (cf. Amanda Gorman's (2021) (non-)fiction poem quoted earlier, and Ellis' (2004) introduction to autoethnography, written as fictionalised academic teaching).

Mann et al. (2011) add a 'why' dimension: "the creativity of experimental methods is in their ability to configure reality in an original way. Rather than linking causes and effects so as to create predictability, ethnographic experiments generate unprecedented possibilities". (p. 239). That makes sense to me. Yet, at the time of writing, the question of originality ('original', 'unprecedented') looms as a gaping wound (– a parallel to Haraway's critical analysis of Boyle's 'Modest Witness', see below): Original to whom; in what ways? If the present chapter has originality, key parts of that are due to recycling insight from one context into another. The argument can claim no conceptual rest anywhere; it will carry only to the extent that readers deem this chapter worth reading.

For my part, insights from PoC/Black/Brown thinkers are gradually resolving many thorny conceptual issues. As I have transposed (in the sense of music theory) some of their hard-won insights into a White middle-class scholarly context, in what sense can I make claims for 'unprecedented' possibilities? Even if posing as a follow-up question "What parts of this chapter are original and in what ways", the apparent innocence of originality dissolves as the question presses issues of privileged perspective, (in)visibilities stratified by long-established lines of domination. (As this is the topic of this chapter, I have come full circle/full spiral. Conclusion: I have learnt to see something.)

In her book *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan@_Meets_OncoMouse™*, Haraway (1997) tells a story of the ousting of own experience (introspection) from Science following a power struggle within *The Royal Society* in the 17th century. Robert Boyle and his experimental approach won, including the need for some 'modest witness' for presumed detached observation – of male gender and of sufficient social standing. This paradigm has dominated Science ever since. Parcelled in is its culturally specific idea of having no culture (Haraway, 1992, 1997). To me, the main power of autoethnography is to challenge centuries of dominance of Boyle's approach (though not the entire history of Science).

In an autoethnography, I believe that some analytic insight needs to implicitly or explicitly emerge which is considered relevant in some academic research context. Mann et al. might well agree: "Early theorizing about 'situated knowledge' in feminism insisted on the situatedness of the researcher and her modes of knowing. What we seek to draw out here is that reality itself is situated too" (2011, p. 238).

For me, autoethnography is most interesting as a way of pushing at the boundaries of what aspects of researchers' activities are permitted in the public display of how we researchers come to know something. In this, I have been inspired by Laurel Richardson's (1997) analysis of academic culture and power struggles in her academic life. Autoethnography can highlight how such processes of boundary control not only operate within the disciplines but do so by working 'within us' (meaning me while writing, readers

while reading). Down to its core, the academic endeavour is multiple, unsettled, continually contested (for an experimental exploration of this, see Beck 2016).

In this chapter specifically, autoethnography serves me in exploring silences: First, I render myself vulnerable by challenging boundaries which it would be more comfortable not to challenge (“will the reviewers accept this chapter?”; “will i be considered not-a-proper-academic?”).

Second, such internalised boundaries delimit what matters could properly be investigated, such as: Can an investigation of the privileges of an Educational Scientist suffice for a proper Educational Sciences chapter? A third reason is ethical: With the subject matter being injustice and subtle privilege among academics and at the core of the academic endeavour, I do not need to ask colleagues about their failures, insecurities, and their shame; my own suffices.

In short, autoethnography allows me to examine closely one example of what we researchers do, without pointing a finger. Thus I can enact the insight I wish to cultivate.

Injustices of My Privileges

Dichotomisation of justice vs. injustice has a place. Blatant transgressions need to be named and stopped. For this, brave people risk their lives in campaigns for a justice worth the term, such as equality before the law (for some examples, see Ava DuVernay’s (2016) documentary *13th*, or cf. the right to speak your mother tongue with friends in school). Times do exist when I join others in saying about some situation that “this isn’t just, change it!” Yet, the present purpose is different: To see a quiet landscape in which the issue is brought back home to me. I examine subtle ways in which I take notions of ‘justice’ for granted through not examining how I benefit from them. What enables me to take them for granted? Due to my privileges, to challenge myself out of my comfort zone I need more subtle visions of justice than straight dichotomising.

What is just? In her poem performed at the Inauguration Ceremony of US President Biden and Vice-President Harris on 20 January 2021, Amanda Gorman (2021) reminded listeners that whatever ‘justice’ is, it is very much work-in-progress. Eddo-Lodge has a chapter “There Is No Justice, There’s Just Us” and writes, “We’re still in the hard bit” (2018, p. 231). Laws, constitutions, and institutions intended to promote justice have proven inadequate. I have learnt to ask: What gets in the way?

Activists and writers have highlighted as a *structural* problem that injustice is experienced differentially, not least that of privilege (e.g., Baldwin 1969a, 1969b; Eddo-Lodge, 2018; King, 2018). In the present investigation, the question of my will to injustice turned into an exploration of structural inequities⁹ that I silently benefit from, and what made and makes me allow that to continue.

James Baldwin and many others have lived and analysed structures that are deeply ingrained within the workings of injustice, explaining how “what just

is” can (differentially) camouflage as justice. Applying Walter Benjamin’s interest in deeper purposes¹⁰ to James Baldwin, I contend that the deeper purpose of privilege is to articulate the world differentially, in a manner that renders privilege invisible to those who benefit from it. The injustice of privilege is more visible to those at the receiving end, more palpable, has the worse consequences for them. Such distorted visibility is a necessary aspect of injustice – otherwise, it cannot exist – and further, is an *efficient* means of maintaining the status quo (for vivid examples, watch DuVernay, 2016). In the early 1960s, James Baldwin wrote to his beloved nephew (1969a, p. 22):

The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what White people say about you. Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear.

Baldwin made the further point that the (in King’s terminology) dominator and the subordinated are interlinked: As part of the injustice, the dominators’ own problems are forced onto the subordinated. Therefore, real freedom must be for all: “You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until they are free” (Baldwin 1969a, p. 24; also cf. interviews in DuVernay, 2016, towards the end).

Action and Non-action

One injustice from my racism privilege is that when I choose not to speak up, the consequences are felt elsewhere. To the extent that the pain of injustice is experienced primarily by those at the receiving end, Reni Eddo-Lodge (2018) argues powerfully that time and again, it gets left to the recipients to articulate the wrongdoing as such.

The task is arduous. As articulated by Eddo-Lodge (2018), this is its inner logic:

- Articulate your suffering
- Do so strongly enough to have a chance of being noted, yet not in a way that touches the sensitivities of the dominator (e.g., by displaying too strong anger)
- Do be willing to risk retraumatizing yourself in the process
- The other party has the privilege of heeding your words, or not, as they please

Non-acting then, leaving it for others to address, is not a neutral choice – it has consequences. My need to hear more truths although they are uncomfortable stems directly from the eye-opening encounter with the two “White silence = violence” placards. A need to learn what this is about and to gradually uncover some of the workings of racism specifically and domination

generally in my life. I found it painful at first to feel ‘generalised’ in Eddo-Lodge (2018), but against my own resistance, I gradually saw I had much to learn about the dominant culture and the opportunities I have for not acting it provides me. The discomfort then expanded to ethical responsibility and beyond, to broaden and prove intellectually interesting, as well as satisfying to my political heart and my connection-yearning soul. “Learning to hear uncomfortable truths” has been a process of growing beyond discomfort at the immediate level and towards something less known, less comfortable, but deeply more meaningful.

After the recounted insights and more, how well did the effects last? While there are positives, at the time of writing, I acknowledge that my daily awareness of my privileges has started receding.

What happened?

Nothing special: Nested in the comforts of my White middle-class privilege, no-one reminded me and other concerns took over.

...!

When I noticed, I resisted admitting to it. To overcome my unhelpful shame, I write it, am it, then turn to James Baldwin:

White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this – which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never – the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed.
(Baldwin 1969b, p. 36)

What insight, what love! What depth of insight into the divisiveness of separation and its comfortable home among us Whites, and also how it resides in our cultures and we perpetuate it!

Yet. Learning to love myself is not enough. One reason is that since this was written 50-60 years ago, loving ourselves – White, Middle Class people – has become repackaged and served back as the solution to our discomforts. Baldwin’s statement demands much more than the glossy version of comforting White restlessness.

Wills to Change, Capacities to Grow in Community

To deepen my understanding of – befriending – that which draws me towards **un**questioning, I see that regardless of the intentions, my actions have perpetrated injustice. How, though, to change? Most of the contexts in which I live provide scant support for even asking the question, let alone addressing it. Yet, facing the apparently impossible could liberate not only others but me too. This landscape is however unfamiliar to me, its creatures shy, my dominant group identities (those in which I grew up and most of which I continue embodying) poor in relevant insight.

I am learning two ways of changing: First, tracing, making accountable, my journey towards greater insight (including specific experiences, reflections, and readings of literature) might inspire others to make journeys of their own. The other way is to *act* on the insight by helping break the silence among people who in various ways are ‘like me’. This could mean contributing to discussing ways in which we perpetuate the injustice of privilege (as in this chapter), how I respond to ordinary events on the street, or what voices I offer space for in the classrooms of my university.

While self-development has been a necessary step for me to wake up, this is in service of ‘thinking the world together’ (Parker Palmer, 2017, Ch. III, pp. 63–6; referring to teaching in higher education). One outcome is a sense of curiosity: What might a community, a city, a country, a world be like if we (re)constructed it with no domination? How could we, could I, start making a few steps?

Writing as a White, Middle Class academic in a predominantly White, Middle Class environment, I address my peers in asking if not the work we need to do includes *repeatedly and creatively uncovering ways in which we may be benefiting from various strands of privilege, actively looking for ways in which each of us benefits, regardless of whether or not we wish to.*

Eddo-Lodge reminds White people not to burden others with our problems, including that of not understanding racism. Ruth King (2018) provides a set of practical exercises for taking responsibility and reminds us Whites¹¹ to keep talking together about it, welcoming any shame, discomfort that may be touched.

Not-Two, Not-One: Collective Responsibilities/Actions/ Awakenings

A way of approaching troubled times is to work towards collective healing – not in opposition to, but alongside trauma being experienced individually.¹² For the extraordinary, multiple, Earth-and-humans crises that define the times in which we are living; for the extraordinary pace of change needed, extraordinary connections may be needed.

This chapter has pain, insight, and joy in finally taking home responsibility which is mine. Such growth is beautifully un-ended, un-endable. Yet, seeing my pain and joy as purely individual would miss both Baldwin and Palmer’s points above about community. Seeing it as purely collective would miss the insight of Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983) – a book protesting the White middle-class women’s movement, members of which in the 1970s believed they were speaking for all women.

I yearn for discussions: which encompass my privileges and the subordination I have experienced; with the power to combine sitting still with action and combine indigenous ways of knowing with national and international governance. Where a pandemic is not an excuse for business as usual. For this work, I need a more complex mathematics than ‘1’ or ‘2’, identity or separation. Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh speaks of “not exactly different”, and

of “not-one, not-two” but something between, thus facilitating a rich relation between individuality and collectivity as it permits conceptualising them as mutually constitutive.

Example: I heard the monk Palden Gyatso speak in Oslo, Norway, in the late 1990s. Though he did not make a major point of it, the public announcement included that he had been imprisoned for decades and tortured.¹³ Upon his release, he bought from those who had tortured him their instruments of torture. The gentle wisdom with which he spoke of his ordeal astounded me, as did giving money to his torturers when he could have just left. Then to carry those instruments with him as he embarked on life as a free person was incomprehensible: How could anyone be calm after such experiences, so aware of our (his future listeners’) need of evidence, and on top of that, be capable of acting on such insights? In my reading, there was a clarity about ‘I’ simultaneously with a capacity to transcend it: There was an individual I that suffered, and yet I could act from a collective perspective.

Viewing individual and collective as mutually constitutive provides a rich context for discussing responsibility for participating in cultures that sanction privilege, and for developing connectedness with the Earth and other living beings. Such perspectives can become a part of daily life. For example, in my spiritual practice, I have committed to training myself to “not possess anything that should belong to others” (Nhật Hạnh, 1998, p. 21). This exercise and the 14 it is part of intentionally open more questions than they answer.¹⁴ For example, I do not have the need to steal to avoid hunger, nor for other reasons. But as a Norwegian with a secure income, I have an unsustainably affluent lifestyle. What should belong to others – where to draw the line? Questions such as these I regularly discuss with others who are similarly committed. This provides for sharing and growth without the need for reductive answers, as we support each other in (in Rilke’s terms) *living the questions*. Could educationalists form similar groups to discuss our own personal and group privileges and suffering?

A question would be how such ‘dominant group’ processes might nourish self-love without falling into impoverished self-development which supports “what just is”. In other words, can members of various dominant groups, such as myself, nourish transformative love with the power to help set, in Baldwin’s terms, all free? Including dominators and their/our lack of self-love? King (2018) and Eddo-Lodge (2018) are clear:¹⁵ For transformation of dominators (e.g., as White people, men, or highly educated Middle Class), create community in which to study, accept, and grieve our history as dominators. King (2018) depicts how such work includes observing and asking questions about what (in enacting our individual contributions to the group identity as dominators), perhaps unwittingly, we damaged in our own children and students so that they would successfully grow into enacting the dominance? That is, how do we pass on misogyny/racism/overconsumption of the Earth’s resources/etc., to our children, including by quiet conditioning which permits it to continue? King (2018) points out subtle these processes can be such as learning when we were children not to

ask certain kinds of questions. She mentions examples of White people who, even as adults, felt they could not raise racism for discussion in their families of origin even when they themselves felt seriously troubled by how their family spoke of race.

There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you*. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that *you* must accept *them*. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity.

Baldwin (1969a, pp. 22–3); italics in original

Taking Baldwin home, I wonder: When will Norway's young start learning about the Vikings in a way which balances their/our feats with their/our atrocities against other peoples? Or the suffering of Sami and other minorities under harsh dominance camouflaged as equity?

I am learning that my part in supporting change includes: owning up to my privilege as White, middle-class, and a professor from a highly educated family background; that as an educator in Higher Education, to educate myself first; receiving what is offered from helpers along the way; when I perceive injustice to not just react, but act; and last but not least, patience.

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Over the years, people who in some senses were less privileged than me in and outside the institutions of the Academy have helped open my eyes to my partaking in injustice, by offering their silence or by speaking up against me. People who were acting from more privilege than I was have taught me the pain of being at the receiving end and the urgency of change.

In writing this chapter I have benefitted greatly from feedback at seminars, webinars, and a conference; and from discussions within the *Humanities Studies in Pedagogy* research group at the University of Oslo, as well as with other colleagues. Their interest has been transformative. Particularly helpful comments have been provided by Afshan Bibi, Inga Bostad, Luca Tateo, and two reviewers for *Ethics & Education*.

Declaration

There are no competing interests to declare.

Notes

- 1 After writing most of this chapter, I discovered a rapidly growing literature on critical Whiteness research in the USA. Two seminal works are Robin DiAngelo's book and term *White Fragility*, and Jacqueline Battalora's history of Whiteness in US law from the 17th century to the 2010s: DiAngelo, R. 2018. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press. Battalora, J. 2021. *Birth of a White Nation. The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- 2 Foreigners are automatically exempt from exams in the Nynorsk language, but by a quirk of the system, he had to formally apply to the office that issued his exam results for them to state this in the correct way.
- 3 This difference between the two of us is typical of dominant-subordinated group experiences, cf. King (2018) as discussed below.
- 4 There is an extensive literature on such issues; my interest here is to document effects.
- 5 I refer to myself and others with low levels of melanine in our skin as Whites. The intention is to help equalise treatment of people (at my university, I hear terms such as Indian professor, but never White or European professor). I felt initial discomfort at using the term, which I take as evidence of its need.
- 6 Thus I reacted exactly as Eddo-Lodge (2018) depicts, as I discovered six months later when I got her book and learnt how my typical response causes burdens on PoC.
- 7 E.g., Chapter 15, "What White People Can Do with Privilege".
- 8 In this chapter, I am exploring privilege which I have been comfortably ignoring and I want to grab myself unawares. Thus I skip experiences of subordination, though they fed my initial interest in privilege.
- 9 Structural inequities are to me acts (of the body, of the mind, and of institutionalisations) that serve to uphold difference such as the unequal distribution of privilege. There are many facets of structural inequity and a number of terms – including institutionalised racism, classism, sexism, able-ism, and exploitation of the Earth and non-human species.
- 10 Inspired by Walter Benjamin's comment (1999) on the deeper purpose of translation.
- 11 Especially Chapter 15, "What White People Can Do with Privilege".
- 12 For clarity about the body-culture injury from racism and the possibility of healing individually and collectively, see Resmaa Menakem's *Somatic Abolitionism*. For example, blog post for white bodies: <https://www.resmaa.com/somatic-learnings/whiteness-white-allyship-and-respect> (visited 3.3.2022).
- 13 Slotnik, D.E. (2018). Palden Gyatso, 85, Monk Who Suffered 3 Decades of Torment for a Free Tibet, *New York Times* obituary, 9 December 2018, p. 26.
- 14 Schaffar and Beck (2022) briefly discuss some of its conceptual basis.
- 15 The inclusion of other dimensions of domination than racism is mine.

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CODA

Justice, Education and the World of Today: Concluding Remarks

*Inga Bostad, Marianna Papastephanou, and
Torill Strand*

In recent philosophy of education, there have been many pleas to rethink education, along with various concepts that relate to it in important ways. However, as far as it concerns justice and education, which has been the main theme of this book, such rethinking should be preconditioned on avoiding a facile recourse to hegemonies. As Torill Strand has put it lately, “to rethink justice in, for and through education today thus requires a radical move beyond the surfaces of conventional paradigms to reach at a deep-seated and far-reaching understanding of the phenomena of education and justice itself” (Strand, 2022, p. 2). And this move has been attempted, certainly modestly and in awareness of limits, by the contributors to the present book too.

This collection of essays has, from a philosophical perspective, investigated connections of education, justice, and the world of today. It has aspired to offer a new outlook on the link between education and justice and to enrich the related discourse through the exploration of justice in, for, and through education. It has advanced a restored normativity of education through a powerful notion of justice. The plea for restoring a normativity of education through justice reflects the observation that, today, the foundational issue of justice has lost much of its power as a qualifier of appropriate education.¹ For instance, many educational projects and policies adapt the aims and scope of formal and lifelong education to neo-liberal imperatives that dissociate education from justice and divest learning from its normative, critical, and expansive potential (English and Mayo, 2021, p. 14). That is, while the discourse which normativizes education as critical-democratic emphasizes “the principles of social justice, diversity, equality and deliberative democracy”, the neo-liberal discourse highlights instead “the values of the market for the structuring of human relations” (Pais and Costa, 2020, p. 6).

Nevertheless, liabilities burden not only the neo-liberal ideology but also those theories that are at first sight less complicit in promoting discursive² and other injustices. Importantly, one such discursive injustice is the very neglect of exploring the relation of justice and education, a neglect that characterizes contemporary political philosophy. According to Torill Strand, following Axel Honneth, “issues concerning justice and education

are today totally abandoned by philosophy” (Strand, 2022, p. 1). Educational philosophy engages with such issues, but it also has its own share of discursive injustice toward the topic of how education and justice relate to one another. Some current educational-philosophical discourse tends to narrow down, singularize and limit the relation of justice and education to some modish themes. As Nick Peim and Nicholas Stock (2022) have aptly argued, even when posthumanist educational theory targets some injustices in the world, it still tends to treat education *per se* (and the improvement that it promises) as the remedy for all ills, and fails to see it as a biopolitical “hyperobject” of deep-laid complicities in global injustices. Also, instead of investigating the relation of justice and education as such, or, at least, offering richer illustrations of it, many writings tend to concentrate more on some instantiations of this relation such as specific and glaring challenges of inequality or exclusion in classrooms. In awareness of such tendencies, the chapters included in this book have tried to enrich the exploration of the relationship between education and justice beyond themes and paradigms that have become modish and conventional in the world of today.

Thus, many of the ideas of justice and education that have been formulated in this book reflect the concern of the contributors about neglected or missing themes in the relevant book-length literature. Neglected have typically been nuances which differentiate: justice in education (that is, how different issues of in/justice look when occurring in education), justice through education (that is, how education contributes to solving issues of injustice), and justice for education (that is, how the obstacles that education faces in advancing its aims and getting the support, e.g., the funding, that it may need for fulfilling higher expectations should be acknowledged and dealt with).³ In other words, much nuance is often lacking when educational theory fails to demarcate the scope of educational potentialities to intervene in the world of today for the sake of justice. To enrich the educational-philosophical outlook on the relation of justice and education, the book has challenged how this relation is often understood in educational discourses that do not nuance the prepositional (in, through, for) qualification of the relationship between justice and education. Underlying the rationale of this book has been the differentiation of justice in education, justice for education, and justice through education as follows:

- justice in education concerns pedagogical content, access to schooling, and institutional practices;
- justice through education concerns fostering principles, attitudes, virtues, and visions of justice and of a just future society; and
- justice for education concerns societal recognition of educational intervention and simultaneous recognition of the societal limits that educational prospects face in the effort to change, of education’s own accord, a world that is structurally unequal and unjust.

Often missing in the relevant literature is also a tackling of

- the ontology and socio-politics beneath the normativity of an education for justice and a justice for education (the book has attempted this tackling in its first part);
- contextualizations of the justice-education relation through kindred notions and challenges (the book has indicated such contextualization in its second part through *diverse concepts* related to justice in and through education, such as happiness, forgiveness, dialogue; *current issues that invite justice* such as migration and the climate crisis; and *divisions* such as the global and the local, East and West, and North versus South); and
- meta-critical/meta-theoretical issues that advance self-reflection on limits and potentialities of how we, philosophers of education, approach complex situations of justice (in, for, and through education) in the world of today (the book has approached this in its third part).

Therefore, to engage with the aforementioned, the book was divided into three parts that correspondingly focused on the ontological and socio-political grounds underlying the relation between education and justice; contextualized the relation by offering tangible, new examples of it; and examined how, in our tendency to promote and uphold orthodox visions and missions of improvement, we, as philosophers of education, may unwittingly perform symbolic violence. By the latter we mean that we occasionally fall into the trap of onto-epistemic blindness and ethico-political complicities.

The book has set out from standpoints that acknowledge the interconnectivity of many perspectives and persuasions when justice is concerned, hopefully without trying to minimize or “manage” the complexity of the relation of justice and education. The aforementioned points of complexity, which are often cast aside in more single-focused approaches to justice and education, are interconnected, but they are not reducible to one another. The question about what promotes justice in, through, and for education thus invites deeper and further engagements with what counts as just and how to explore, analyze, and theorize justice and education philosophically. We are not claiming then that the work accomplished through this book is, or could ever be, conclusive or complete. Our aim has been to initiate dialogue on such dimensions and intricacies of the relationship of justice and education and to contribute to this dialogue from diverse perspectives.

In short, this collection of essays has critically combined many of the intellectual traditions on the issue of justice that our scientific international community (educators, theorists, and philosophers of education) has inherited. Inevitably, for reasons of length and of discipline relevance (as this is mirrored in the title of the present book which specifies its investigations as philosophical), these intellectual traditions have been drawn from philosophy. Thus, the book has cast aside economic, religious, sociological, and legal insights on justice and education. And because the book has as a sub-text the “world of today” (also in the title) it has not followed a historical

trajectory, nor has it aspired to produce a narrative of how the notion of justice or the relation of justice and education have been theorized from antiquity to the present (as we have explained in our introduction, such ground has already been covered by other books). Also, direct or exclusive engagements with ancient theories of justice have not been searched since ancient philosophical perspectives inform or find a word in edgeways in many current and diverse persuasions.

Thus, instead of aspiring to cover everything of relevance, this book has, among other things, addressed and tackled the need to broaden the scope of philosophical sources that could influence and enrich educational discourses on the theme of justice. More specifically, it is the concept of “educational justice” that has so far acquired prominent status in related international research (for proof of this and a long bibliographical list, see Papastephanou [2021a]). Numerous contemporary studies adopt the term to research and debate topics relevant to political philosophies and theories of education. However, instead of acknowledging the multi-dimensional character of the relation of education and justice, such studies one-sidedly limit the province of educational justice to issues of equal distribution of resources and opportunities through education. By contrast, this book has critically revisited the three historically formed paradigms on justice (the distributive, the cognitive, and the representative) and evoked diverse faces of justice that remain overlooked or undertheorized in related scholarship. It is through this diversification of faces of justice as a backdrop that the book has aimed to deepen our outlook on justice and education by investigating presuppositions of the normativization of education through justice, critical concretizations of the relationship of justice and education, and meta-critical considerations of the relationship of justice, education, and the world of today, as all these are experienced in multiple ways by situated and different people. It has been claimed that “it is precisely in the complex balancing of facts, norms and values that we experience the situatedness of knowledge” (Bostad and Hessen, 2019). This pertinent claim also holds for ethical and political issues of justice. These issues invite scientific, long-lasting standpoints that involve curiosity about facts of injustices (visible or overlooked),⁴ eagerness to know about injustices that occur to others (and not just to us) as well as context-sensitivity and attention to normativity (norms and values) beneath what counts as appropriate knowledge.

The book has engaged with injustices and problems that are not likely to dissipate soon. And it has done so by means of educational philosophy, a field that often produces theories of constant relevance and endurance. That is, the book reflects diverse philosophical outlooks on justice and education that constitute resilient, indeed, inexhaustible, sources for critically and timely contributing to discussions about the current state of the world and the thorny issues that this state presents societies with. The effort has been to build bridges across a plurality of traditions and approaches to justice. Because of the diverse perspectives and sensibilities of its contributors, the book draws from a wide spectrum of related sources with philosophical

leanings that range from Hannah Arendt's discussion of forgiveness to John Rawls' liberal theory of justice, to Axel Honneth's recognitive prism on politics down to Catherine Malabou's normative notion of plasticity and Sarah Ahmed's critique of the received view on happiness. Thus, the book has utilized the rich intellectual context within which many debates over justice and its intricacies are deployed. But it has also utilized the current socio-political context within which issues of justice constantly emerge and compel a rethinking of our educational theories and practices. Therefore, the book has sought the "untimely" (in Nietzsche's [1997] meaning) and timeless, long-lasting qualities of philosophical ventures, while aspiring to the timely and topical intervention in current world affairs and challenges. This is also evident in the organization of the book's material along lines that we have described here and focus on: the persistent theoretical issues (e.g., the normativity of justice and education and the meta-critical self-reflectivity that is necessary if we are to avoid lack of vigilance and alertness concerning risks involved in our own educational-philosophical recommendations) and the timely, topical interventions that constitute critical, educational-philosophical responses to the world of today as well as to its current and often context-specific ethical and political challenges.

The current context of this book has involved the exceptional circumstances of the times that we live in (climate crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the refugee and migration crises, etc.). These circumstances have caused world changes, exacerbated older injustices, and created new challenges of, and responsibilities for, justice, such that invite fresh perspectives on how education may respond. Hence, engagements with justice, education, and the world of today from a philosophical prism are more relevant than ever and go well beyond any specific, even book-length endeavour to address ethics and politics in the world of today. Precisely when philosophical explorations of justice and education aspire to respond to the world of today, they are confronted with the Sisyphean task of catching up with even new manifestations of injustice that problematize consolidated perceptions of what counts as a challenge in today's world and concomitant, already set political priorities and educational directions. On the one hand, educational and philosophical responses to current realities acquire a heightened relevance and topicality. For they combine the merits of a theoretical investigation of time-honoured and persistent challenges that humanity faces concerning justice and education with the merits of context-sensitivity and awareness of the challenges in our times of pandemics and other crises. On the other hand, any such response seems too quickly surpassed by both, the continuously changing reality that requests ever-new responses to injustices and the ongoing debates and fruitful dialogues that are constantly fed by ever-new ethico-political challenges. Indicatively, while this book was still in preparation, another global challenge of injustice has broken out: the war in Ukraine presents educational philosophers with yet another challenge of territorial cosmopolitan justice that discloses partial scholarly priorities and theoretical omissions, complacencies, or unreflective certainties (Papastephanou, 2022).

At the same time, new outlooks offer fresh insights on issues that the book has not addressed: for instance, many (if not all) issues of justice touch, in one way or another, upon conceptions and evaluations of identity; could we rethink the heterogeneity within identity in such a way that unjust attributions of homogeneity to collective affect could be revisited (Drousioti, 2022)? Or, from a more practical perspective, could justice through education be promoted by alternative and innovative ways (such as school strikes) of engaging children’s activism (Biswas and Mattheis, 2022)? Or, other interventions single out injustices such as closing down schools due to “poor performance” by authorities that fail to consider the broader and non-measurable value of a school (Reid, 2021), or yet other new works focus on specific schools (e.g., No-Excuses schools), so far examined concerning whether they advance distributive justice, and study them by broadening the theoretical scope through relational justice (Smith, 2022). These more “applied justice” topics are also neglected in most educational-philosophical discourses and have not been discussed in the present book either.

Despite the acknowledged limits, this book has aimed to heighten the educational and philosophical consciousness of the potentialities of pedagogy to intervene in, and contribute to, the pursuit of justice in the world of today for the sake of a better tomorrow. It has accomplished this by combining a normative, critical, and self-reflective tackling of how justice relates to education. The editors and the authors of this collection of essays have dealt with this aim in their own “here and now”, in their own context, and through their own sensibilities as spatio-temporal beings and situated scholars. One of the risks that such endeavours constantly face when dealing with a topic as protean and intricate as justice is to take current meanings of the ideals of justice for granted or to reduce them to a handful of well-rehearsed issues. Various dilemmas, conflictual values, and norms are concealed or glossed over and operate as inconsistent, vague, and ambiguous grounds for educational theory, research, and policies. We acknowledge that the theoretical affordances of this book should not obscure its limitations. Consequently, we maintain the call critically to examine the normative conceptions beneath and beyond educational theory and research and continuously broaden our field’s purview of ever-new injustices.

Notes

- 1 At the same time, one must be cautious to avoid exaggerating what education can do for justice in the world of today. As became clear in our introduction, and we are emphasizing it here too, “justice for education” means, among other things, that to do justice to education, we must acknowledge the limits of what education can accomplish on its own for justice. In other words, doling out justice in today’s world is no simple matter of advancing a more critical-normative and demanding education. It also requires a complex set of global and societal changes.
- 2 Here we employ the notion of “discursive justice” (which is of Habermasian origin, see, for instance, Bunch, 2014, p. 43) somewhat more broadly. It denotes the kind of justice that concerns *what* our academic discourses (and not only our

public debates) ought to take into consideration, *what* they ought to include. This “what” comprises not only people affected by a discourse and representative voices that should be heard but also issues and ideas that should be considered and debated by scholars and global publics (Papastephanou, 2021b).

- 3 The differentiation of justice in, through, and for education as it stands in this coda was initially formulated by Marianna Papastephanou at a seminar on Educational Justice (Papastephanou’s paper title: “Distinctions of Justice”) in Norway (19 September 2019). It was there explained that justice in education, despite its significance, does not cover the whole ground of how justice may relate to education. For instance, justice in the inclusive classroom is crucial for the migrant student, but it does not automatically secure that students in this classroom are prepared for justice towards others who have not reached our shores or for justice, say, towards nature. In other words, it does not cover the ground of justice through education. The differentiation has then been used by the authors of this coda in common projects. For a recent and somewhat different use of this differentiation by Torill Strand, see Strand (2022).
- 4 On this politicization of curiosity concerning facts of injustice, see Papastephanou (2023).

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