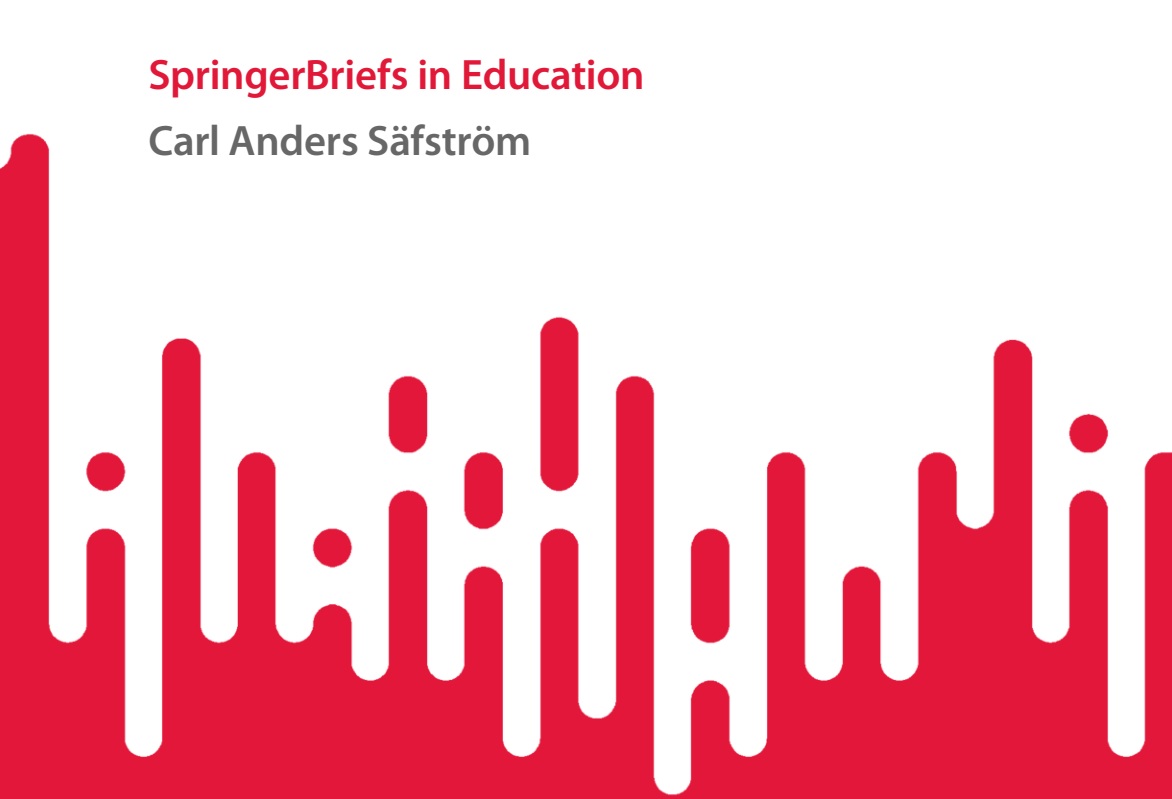


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Carl Anders Säfström



Education for Everyday Life

A Sophistical Practice
of Teaching

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Carl Anders Säfström

Education for Everyday Life

A Sophistical Practice of Teaching



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Education: Education, Politics, and Culture, 4(2) 29-42., and 5. Säfström, C.A. (2022). Please, show me your world. A sophisticated practice of teaching. *Revista de Education*, 395 (January–March 2022) 35–58, and I want to express my gratitude to those journals for publishing my articles and allowing me to revisit my texts and rework them in the form of this book. Also, warm thanks to my colleagues, Alexander, Mathew, Tony, Vasco, and Bianca, who invited me to take part in the conversation on issues close to my heart and which inspired me to write.

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Introduction

The word education is tricky in English, not the least because it tends to signify an Anglo-American understanding of what education is, as a given starting point for defining the field in its totality, and as distinct from continental traditions of educational thought (Biesta, 2011). The word education is also tricky because it seems to conceal more than it explains. When Gert Biesta and I were to publish the *Manifesto for Education* (Biesta & Säfström, 2011), which we wrote in English, it became clear that all translations of the Manifesto into different languages, first into Finnish, but also Swedish, Spanish, German, and more, that the English word education created discussions and difficulties for translation (which also tended to confirm the idea of a manifesto as action). In Finnish, Swedish, and many more languages, there tends to be a cluster of terms specifying what can only be dealt with contextually in English. A PhD student, in a course of mine at Maynooth University, recently wrote a paper on how education would translate into Gaelic, exposing words' cultural and historical embeddedness. Education, in this case, inevitably carries with it the history of colonialism and imperialism inscribed into the use of the word education in Ireland. That we tend to talk and write in English decontextualised carries its challenges and risks ending up in what Cassin (2014a) in her *Dictionary of Untranslatables* calls 'Globish' (p. ix): That is, a language not any more rooted in historical life but surfing on the face of an increasingly global world, and 'increasingly associated with financial "outcomes" and "deliverables"' (p. ix). In her dictionary, Cassin traces untranslatables through history and the layers of shifting meaning, showing the complexity and world inscribed in words, having a real impact in practical life. Education, though, does not have a place in the dictionary, which I think it should have had. What I do in this book concerning the word education is to search for another historical route, another line of thought, another starting point for education, then relying on a Platonian and Aristotelian philosophical domination of educational thought and practice, which seems to be the most common understanding inscribed in the English use of the word. In this book, I explore an alternative starting point for education because such philosophy founded on Plato's and Aristotle's domination of education tends to block that which is educational about education. The argument developed throughout operates beyond common

distinctions emerging from the absolute divide between theory and practice, which tends to follow from Plato's absolute distinction between world and thought, and Aristotle's subsequent conceptualisation of thought, making science into first philosophy. By taking its starting point from the sophists, rather than the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, the book successively develops a sophistical practice throughout the chapters. It is not, though, the Sophists themselves as historical artefacts that are of primary interest, but the educational practice they gave birth to, and as a name on 'an intellectual movement which was to have immeasurable effects on the history of mankind' (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 286).

Motivation and Scholarly Project

Since I can remember, in my professional life, education and educational research have been an issue. And not in the sense other disciplines are, but fundamentally concerning its own identity. Education as a research discipline is somehow always in need of defending itself, in one way or another, and in a way, other disciplines seldom are. What is interesting, though, and which often makes it problematic to respond to such critique in any straightforward way, is that it too often already misunderstands what education as a scholarly tradition of thought is about. The critique is often more about strengthening one's position concerning the desires of the discipline to which one belongs, if so psychology, sociology, or philosophy, than a fruitful or relevant critique. In my writings over the years, I have set the task to clarify, to understand the scholarly tradition of educational thought. Early on, I studied the psychology of education, which served as the theoretical ideology for constructing the compulsory school system in Sweden and was central to the construction of the Swedish democratic welfare state. The interest was to figure out how state-financed research preferred research based on psychology of education, even if dealing with social and political issues. That is, how come the result of such research was understood as reasonable solutions for issues put forward by a democratic state? What I understood from my enquiries was that there tended to be a common thread in the way social democracy understood itself and the type of research that was valued, that democracy itself, as it was practised, was based on a worldview consistent with educational psychology. Therefore, democracy has since been and still is a central resurrecting theme in my writings, also in this book. That is, how to think democracy in education differently than internal to a particular social democratic project and accompanied psychological worldview? In what way is democracy and a scholarly tradition of educational thought related, if at all? Also, if so, is it possible to ask new questions about rebuilding a vision for a social, radical democratic welfare state? If those are broader questions framing my more extensive project, this book more specifically tries to shift the conditions for asking educational questions, which, as we shall see, also directly impact how democracy is practised.

Traditions of Educational Thought

Firmly based on a tradition of pragmatism and critical theory, I was not interested in making the psychological establishment of an inner self more effective through educational psychology, democratic or not, and instead saw such reach as the construction of a particular idea of the self, consistent with the powers defining it. Therefore, understanding how those powers operate in education, schooling, and teaching led me to studies in the fields of theory of science (controversy studies), social epistemology, discourse analysis, curriculum theory, history of education, and continental traditions of didactics. Within each subfield, the tensions between education as an object of study and its theoretical backing seemed to multiply. Educational research was no longer firmly based in psychology but in other disciplines as well, but what they tended to have in common, with some exceptions, was the objectification of education. What I understood from my enquiries within those fields was that educational research seemed to be concerned with educational systems, procedures, and contents defined as such from the view of other traditions of thought than rooted in educational thought and then applied to what was considered educational issues, thereby adding to the issue of power through instrumentalising education in different but specific ways. Also, critical theory in education, particularly through the influx of sociology, was mainly understood regarding reproduction. That power was understood as a reproductive force making schooling, education, and teaching mainly about control and the making of the same over time. For me, this was a trap, a road's end, and simply a misunderstanding of the forces of education. I am not saying that the sociology of education has nothing to contribute, it indeed has, but that its fixation on reproduction is problematic in that it tends to close off educational theory from its defining characteristics; that educational thought necessarily is about change and never only about that which prevent change from taking place. Also, as was clear from my early studies of the critical sociology of education in the Nordic, British and North American contexts, such research tended to critique education as integral to capitalist society by claiming that education reproduced capitalist society, which it had already claimed at the outset it would do: education reproduces capitalist society because it has to be understood as the primary force of a capitalist society reproducing itself. Versions of this circular argument were then pushed out in empirical research defining an empirical reality, but as such, only contributing to the silencing of forces of change implicit in education and teaching, cementing a somewhat claustrophobic worldview in education as critical research. In my view, it also tended to rip off the forces of democratisation from education and teaching, which would require a far more open worldview and theoretical ideology than based on the reproduction of the same while delivering the same disguised as critique. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's postmodern sociology also opened up another starting point in education, in which the grand narratives were no longer an absolute condition for critique. Bauman's sociology, when brought into education, enabling to take sides with the excluded ones without reproducing such position, as well as, or rather because of, theorising ambiguity and practice. He also

made change and ethics possible as the theoretical space for education. Alternatively, as we shall see, it made it possible to reconnect to the first educationalists in intellectual history, the Sophists, for whom the practice of ethics and politics was the proper understanding of *Paideia*. His sociology, therefore, opened a profound understanding of changing relations across differences in a social, political, and ethical context, all central themes for educational thought. This book will fully develop education along themes concerning social, ethical, and political issues.

So, I am not arguing that sociological thinkers, or psychological for that matter, per definition, have nothing to contribute to educational thought, but that when they do so, they tend to be dealing with themes and issues that already are central to the tradition of educational thought as such. A perfect example that continues to inspire is Jacques Rancière, also present in this book, a philosopher and theorist who has discussed education from within educational thought rather than only applying philosophy to educational problems and issues to be given direction and purpose for education to follow. Therefore, such theorising, as exemplified by Rancière, does not contribute to objectifying education and silencing its force but, at times, to further insights into educational issues and themes. Sometimes this contribution to the conversation is not intended directly but a consequence of the arguments itself, as when Richard Rorty (1980) in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* makes a perfect case for the tradition of educational thought as something other than philosophy proper but refrain from naming it education since he thinks education sounds too weak. This stain in his argument has stayed with me and is discussed in several chapters in slightly different ways to unfold the complexities of such a statement and bring it home to where it belongs. Furthermore, it belongs to the tradition of educational thought established by the sophists, which Rorty claims to adhere to, ironically, without following through on its consequences. The sophists were teachers, not philosophers.

I have for long, longer than I have realised until now, been thinking and writing from within a sophist tradition of educational thought and from within a special connection between them and my old pragmatist heroes as well as with both Judith Butler and Jacques Rancière, the two thinkers that to my mind revitalise critical theory. All of them, and that includes to a certain extent Bauman but Rorty seems to be following the sophist path in one way or another in that they all profoundly deal with how to be in the world in ways that move in concert with a plurality of others in the here and now, in the everydayness of life, without imploding into an overarching and idealised whole from where meaning and power will flow. Educational discourse engages itself with the necessary plurality which follows from acknowledging that we live our lives with others we cannot know in whole and concern itself with a liveable life for all in such a mixture of expanding relations across differences. The tension implied by the unity/plurality conundrum speaks to, as will be explored throughout the book, the absolute difference between two ontologies or principles: an *Aristocratic* and a *Democratic principle* in education. Both have profoundly different consequences for education, schooling, and teaching implied in theory and practice. Those principles are in the book construed from readings into educational thought generally, but particularly Werner Jaeger's volumes on *Paideia* and his

study of the sophists' invention of intellectual culture in ancient Greece and education and teaching to perform it. The introduction by the sophists of education and teaching as conditional for intellectual culture, firmly rooted in *practice*, resonating with politics and ethics and the everydayness of living among and with others in a democratic city-state funded on equality. They gave birth to the radical and revolutionary insight that culture is not static and inherited but taught, in principle, to anyone, and therefore possible to change. The power of such insight is evident up to this day when so much of education and teaching is believed to be about the full development of some inner potential of students rather than to be linking different experiences of the world to make room for more people, more worlds, on the scene: A central theme for this book then is to establish ways of expanding the publicness of the public as intrinsic to education and teaching in a sophist tradition of thought. What also follows from lifting the sophists is the clarification of the patterns of domination over educational thought inherited from philosophy and employed by other disciplines. The book aims to absolve a sophist discourse of education and release it from the patterns of domination, firmly implanted as a science(s) of education. The French philologist and philosopher Barbara Cassin, and the single heroine of this book, in her readings of the sophists and the formulation and identification of a 'sophistical practice', makes clear the performativity of education and teaching and from such viewpoint sides with all those whom a scientification of educational thought have excluded over time; 'women, child, animal and slave' (Cassin 2014b, p. 6). She brings into light the powerful position of education and teaching beyond the violence produced by the scientification of a human/non-human absolute divide. Instead, with Cassin's readings in mind, in my words, it becomes possible to firmly establish teaching as *an intervention by verifying equality* into established inequalities, which is what a sophistical practice of teaching performs, and this book intends to do as well.

Werner Jaeger opens up for another reading of the sophists than through Plato, confirmed in a more contemporary context by Richard Rorty, what Barbara Cassin then develops further. What this book performs is to bring out the educational point in relation to contemporary issues facing education, and in doing so exemplifying a sophistical practice at work. The chapters, therefore, work in themselves as examples of strategies to be employed following this path, to practice equality through interventions into actual inequalities and violence in schooling and society.

The outstanding achievement of the humanist, Werner Jaeger's seminal work on *Paideia* is that it shows, without doubt, that educational thought is what makes a western democratic culture possible to exist at all. The idea that culture or a way of life is not inherited by blood, position, or inner capabilities, but *taught*, in principle, to anyone, is what makes the rise of democracy possible, what makes politics possible. That is, democracy and education are coming into the world not to confirm plurality but as an expression and consequence of the insights of a plural world in which equality is conditional. Therefore, in education, pluralism and equality is not a normative positioning, theory, or philosophy. It is not even a particular politics or interpretation of nature. It is instead the reality of education within the world as such, in which the practical need of knowing how to act in such a world, together

with others whom one may not know, is the most pressing issue at the heart of education as well as democracy.

The chapters

The *first* chapter addresses education beyond individualism, elitism, and instrumentalism and instead understand education as central to a democratic way of life. It discusses the role of education in the making of democratic forms of life in the University, in the school as well as in other contexts outside institutions. An argument is developed for the importance of defending the free time of the University and school against a time of production as a defining characteristic of the University and school. The chapter intends to show how the time of production undermines the possibility of education, which, therefore, also tends to negate pluralist democracy and instead enforce instrumental schooling, generating, and feeding inequality and anti-democracy.

The *second* chapter introduces teaching as a strategy to actively teach against the aggressions and violence of instrumental schooling of inequality. The chapter introduces a kind of first defence against the foundational aggressions and violence implicit in a neoliberal worldview, with its time of production as explored in the previous chapter. This chapter mainly studies the problem of inequality in education and its transfer from being a problem for the political to be understood as a pathology of the individual and as a failure of that individual to live up to the institution's expectations. Secondly, rather than treating failure as a pathology of the individual, the chapter explores failure as discursively formed as an *anomaly* within educational thought itself. It is an *anomaly* since it is performatively produced by a particular understanding of education's role in reproducing a population segment's power in any given state or nation. This chapter calls this reproductive understanding of education for Platonian/Aristotelian education since such education relies on an ontology of inequality, which will be thoroughly explored throughout the book, and which this chapter opens for. Thirdly, an argument is made for embracing *school failure* as a refusal to accept institutionalised inequality as a necessity, conditioning relations between people, and instead, understand failure as pointing to the equality of all speaking beings and as conditional for education and a democratic way of life.

The *third* chapter aims at reading the tradition of sophist educational thought from within itself while still holding on to the insights from the previous chapters. This chapter, therefore, explores a Sophist tradition of educational thought, which is concerned with the world and not a sphere of ideas distinct from the world and suggests some preliminary distinctions following from such tradition today. The distinctions, or rather grammar, are between; upbringing, schooling, and education; Aristocratic versus the Democratic principle of education; aristocratic versus democratic conception of nature; and culture as static versus culture as *praxis*. The chapter expands on educational discourse as conditional for democracy and a liveable life for anyone. The contrast between the *Aristocratic* principle and the *Democratic*

principle in education and teaching is made clear by revisiting the discussion from the previous chapter on violence and nonviolence to show how an Aristocratic principle feeds violence in education, symbol as systemically. The chapter establishes education and teaching as an ethical-political potentiality of a new beginning within the present order of things and as the very *practice* of change of this order and therefore composes what makes *paideia*, or democratic culture in the mixture possible in the first place.

The *fourth* chapter clarifies the different temporalities in teaching that an *Aristocratic* versus a *Democratic* principle implies. It does so to clarify the very different ways in which time, as well as the relation between student and teacher, takes shape and form within education. This chapter explores two radically different archetypes of teaching: Socratic teaching and Sophist teaching. Here the distinctly different ways in which power and the organisation of the social sphere take place within each are explored. Socratic teaching is shown to rely on a notion of time as reproduction, which involves reproducing the power structure of a particular social order of inequality. By contrast, Sophist teaching relies on time to instantiate change and equality in the present. The chapter concludes by pinpointing that what is at stake in teaching is the possibility of a liveable life for all (Sophist) rather than only for some (Socratic) and the verification of equality rather than the fixation of the point of power from which some are deemed as ignorant while others as informed. In a concrete way, the chapter clearly shows what teaching as democratisation implies.

In the *fifth* chapter, all the themes from previous chapters are integrated within a sophist discourse of education, and teaching emerges as a sophistical practice. The chapter takes inspiration from Cassin's readings of the sophists, Rorty's critique of Platonian philosophy, and Rancière's understanding of teaching as linking different worlds. By so doing, the chapter develops in detail what makes teaching a democratisation process, concretely based on a sophistical practice within which improvisation is paramount. A critique of the Platonian/Aristotelian line of thought within education shows how Platonian/Aristotelian thought establishes a foundational and rigid pattern of domination over and in education by philosophy and other disciplines. Platonian/Aristotelian educational theory is shown to link man and state through the perfection of both, establishing an original social scene of inequality to be reproduced over time. The chapter makes problematic the originality of such a social scene at the heart of educational theory and replaces the image with the social as the mixture of interaction with people in the everydayness of liveable life. The insight that we live with other people that are different from us and that we, therefore, need education and teaching to find out how to move with and among others, explored in previous chapters, are developed, and in terms of teaching as a sophistical practice performing democratisation as lived reality.

The *sixth* chapter gives a slightly different take on the argument developed. It situates the argument as consistent with critique, mainly as such critique developed by Judith Butler and Jacques Rancière, and from such point of view, lifts some of the themes that emerged throughout the chapters—particularly emphasising and situating teaching as a sophistical practice, as such practice has been developed, based on Barbara Cassin's reading of the Sophists. The conclusion intends to

identify the central issues not only discussed in this book but also points to continuous explorations to be performed to break the production of inequality and to verify equality in schooling and society.

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Chapter 1

The Free Time of Education



Abstract This chapter address education beyond individualism, elitism, and instrumentalism and instead understand education as central to a democratic way of life. It discuss the role of education in making democratic ways of life in the University, the school, and other contexts outside institutions. The chapter show how a time of production undermines the possibility of education and therefore tends to negate pluralist democracy.

An argument is developed for the importance of defending the free time of the University and school against a time of production as a defining characteristic of the University and school in order to strengthen the inherently democratic form of education.

Keywords Free time · Time of production · Pluralist democracy · Education · Radical change

1.1 Introduction

Some of the themes that will be discussed throughout the book is introduced in the following chapter, as the tension between plurality and singularity, of education and democracy and the problems with reproduction in education, and the possibility of teaching as something other than confirming a privilege already had by a few. Those themes are in this chapter situated in a discussion on the function and role of the University since the University essentially are an institution for higher *education*. The University historically has had a particular scholarly role in inventing new ways of understanding and explaining the world from within different traditions of thought, theories, and methodologies, within the frame of education. This chapter understands the University as a particular place for pursuing knowledge within specific traditions of thought, and the role of scholars and researchers, to be to reading

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those traditions into existing conditions and therefore reformulate not only how we are to understand the present or past differently but also to understand those traditions themselves differently (McIntyre, 1977). That is, the University is here understood as a particular educational space and place for what Richard Rorty (1982) has called “the conversation of mankind” (pp. 389). That is, its’ role and our responsibility as scholars within the University is to guarantee the continuation of such a conversation, and to critique, sometimes at high costs, any attempt to restrict or halt such a conversation. In our times, when the increased pressure on the University to contribute to the knowledge economy more effectively, to rapidly respond to the shifting demands of capitalism in liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), and to do so both, by the way students are educated as well as how research is conducted, means that it is even more important to keep a scholarly conversation and critique alive. The neoliberal trend enclosing universities elevating science as the first philosophy at the expense of the humanities and pushing for social sciences to be evidence-based, i.e., science-based (Biesta, 2010). As this chapter will show, the problems following are based on the ignorance of education as necessary for intellectual culture in which democratisation is not only a normative stand but a way of responding to an essentially plural world of a multiplicity of forms of living together (Arendt, 1959), forms having nothing to do with the rationality of science as such (von Wright, 1989). That is, the University is not only for the job market or the invention of things, but concerning education, a democratic form of living, a community in which the newness of the world is reinvented in the ongoing inquiry (Dewey, 1966) and conversation (Rorty, 1980) between equals (the commune). Regardless of academic position, it is always the argument, the conversation, the inquiry, that carries its weight, which academics and scholars tap into to embody as an expression of their thinking and acting over time.

What is mainly at stake in this chapter, then, is the tension between the desires of the state to control the outcome of education and research through fixed outcomes, goals, and aims and, as such, to make the University into a space and place to produce things rather than proper education and rather than performing scholarly work. This chapter will show that such aspirations, instead of supporting incitements for invention, instead contribute with a fixation on what is already given and, as such, rather hinders universities from concerning new beginnings than being a place where those beginnings can emerge. As this chapter will show, production time is also a time of reproduction. The latter will be discussed and critiqued throughout the book since reproduction tends to block the possibility of educational change altogether and, therefore, instead works as anti-education than education proper.

In this chapter, I will be exploring a particular form of responsibility we do share as scholars of education, that is, to stand up for the genuinely *public* space in which ideas can be born and new visions put into practice, as well as a space in which new and old truths can be spoken, again, where the conversation of humankind can take place, if so nowhere else in society. Such conversation requires another time than society at large. It moves at another pace than the rapid tempo in the modern world. That is, *the time of the University* is a spatial-temporal place and space for knowledge, insights, and commitments, as something other than business as usual in our

modern societies of today, but with the capacity to fundamentally be contributing to a dignified life of the many and not only the few.

Moreover, as such, the University and the school as sharing the educational role of being places for new beginnings, new possibilities, are central to democracy. I do not only mean in the obvious way that we in those institutions can learn about democratic procedures and obligations, responsibilities and freedoms but fundamentally, that the very time of University and school are in themselves expressions of the very *practice* of a democratic way of life (Dewey, 1966). Alternatively, maybe more precise, where claims of truth are regularly inquired and cast into doubt, and in which truth, rather than being fixed, is to be understood as a specific and temporary resting place for some specific utilitarian ends, which in themselves deserves to be investigated and shared by those they concerns. This chapter asks particularly: are those the ends produced good for us as we live our lives in concert with other people? Are they speaking to the common good, or are they only for some at the expense of others? Do those ends produced and reproduced allow us to continue the conversation of humankind in which plurality is always a condition, or are they closing down such a conversation to divide and annihilate the common good for self-interest and private good instead?

1.2 The Time of the University and Scholé (σχολή)

The University, in other words, is not yet another name for the smooth-running product-producing machinery regulated only by a market we would like to think that the world of business is made up of (but seldom are). A University is instead a place where time needs to be interpreted differently, beyond the organisation and temporalisation of work, production and managing of the workforce, effectiveness and speed, and instrumentalism and output. The output of zero, in the University is still output. The University also holds conversations with no output other than being held, and the value of the conversation is not the output but that there are people who still know how to speak, how to continue the conversation. Furthermore, the importance of those conversations is that they allow us to connect to deeper layers in our culture, which are sedimented into each historical time, to clarify the *practice* of history. It helps us to live and be present in the world here and now, not only to explain our world.

Therefore, the University is a place and space initially best understood through *Scolé*, the ancient Greek notion of a space of free time, free of the bounded time of work and production defining the life of *homo faber*, the working human. *Scholé* is instead a place for free time, that is, free from the obstacles of ordinary life and have another function beyond producing work and things. *Scholé* says Masschelein and Simons (2015) make the world public or shared, and it makes a world for us to live in together with other people. The University and the school can be understood as a particular form of gathering, a gathering, says Masschelein and Simons, that frees time from obligations of living in the social division of labour. It is a form of

gathering that makes time free to study and exercise where the world can be put on the table and examined. Where the world is present by being distant, and which therefore lets us explore the conditions for this world, thus also making it possible to both sustain and to change the world: ‘With the coming into existence of the school form, we see the democratisation of free time which at once is [...] the “site” of the symbolic visibility of equality’ (Masschelein & Simons, 2015, p. 86).

The University, as *Scholé* (σχολή), as Masschelein and Simons say, then, cannot be reduced to a time of production since it exceeds such time, by the embodiment of free time, which in the same form of the school, the University visualise equality. The importance of the University then, and which distinguish the University from other institutions in society, is to be found in the democratisation of free time through the figure of education. In that sense, the University is an expression of a culture or a form of education in which the issue of democratisation is always present within its very making of time as free. The University, as such, educate a democratic public. It makes what is private into public concern in and through education (Biesta, 2017).

The following will then understand the University as a place and space where free time is possible in a world that seems to be losing its sense of such time. At least, that is what I will be examining in this chapter, that is, so to speak, what is on the table.

What mainly seems to be at stake today concerns whether the University in society is contributing to an expanding economy and how effective the University is in producing and reproducing things. That is, universities are expected to increase the position of the state and nation in the global competition in a global market. The University is increasingly expected to be useful in a direct way, to produce measurable outcomes, and as those outcomes are defined from an economic point of view, defined by capitalism. The problem, though, is that if the University is reduced to such expectations, it denies universities to be a place for a critical conversation over the conditions for our lives in the society in which we live. Risks putting an end to the conversation of humankind, risks damaging the needed space of free time for democratisation to take place, to have a place for the visibility of equality. That is, the control implied by a time of production sets off the tension between controlling the outcomes of the workings of the University and the irony that if one indeed succeeds in manifesting such control in total, it only seems to lead to a reproduction of what already is the case. The control itself tends to kill off the openness and unpredictability that characterise all genuine change and newness (Bauman, 1999a, 1999b). It, therefore, blocks that which tends to be a condition for the production of new knowledge and the conditions for democratising free time. To be absolutely clear on this point: The emphasis on control through increased bureaucratisation of the working of the University reformulates the University from being an embodiment of democratic free time to a time of production/reproduction instead, but in so doing, making it increasingly difficult to produce the newness of the world, and instead tends to produce/reproduce what is already the case. The University stops being a place and space for new beginnings and becomes a place and space for specific utilitarian ends defined as such from outside the University itself.

The emerging new University or the changing demands put on Universities due to European Union regulations and other supra-national initiatives (Lynch, 2006) was discussed at a panel during the ECER 2017 conference in Copenhagen. The question of increased control of the University was at stake in the discussion. Some in the panel argued that such control should not automatically be objected to without specification of the terms of such control. Moreover, that may be the case if such a statement meant that the terms of the control mechanisms put into place needed to be investigated to unfold the motivation and reasons for such control, at its consequences for the democratisation of free time and the visibility of equality. The irony of the situation, though, was that if the University indeed put into practice all those micro-managing systems suggested to the panel, the University seems to be at high risk of losing that which makes it unique already before it can investigate the conditions of the control systems put into place (see also Lynch, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

It seems as if the University in our time is under pressure to be turning its back to the conversation of humankind altogether, which risks its historical role, not only in the life of a particular country or nation but in the history of humanity as such. The University is on the verge of losing its long-standing tradition of being a place and space in the Latin-speaking world in mediaeval times for *Studium generale*, and from twelfth century *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, to the *research-based University* in our times. What is at risk is the reduction of all types of research within the research-based University to be motivated by and understood through instrumentality only. To be reducing scholarly work to instrumental rationality of a particular form of research fulfilling utilitarian ends to fulfil its function in society. The figure of free time of the University, on the other hand, takes on many scholarly forms within a differentiation and plurality of traditions of thought, theories and methodologies within the University and understands instrumental rationality to be one of those rather than the founder of all type of research. Evidence-based research, in other words, has many different meanings but is often reduced to one of those by being reliant on instrumental rationality (Bernstein, 1983; von Wright, 1988). This phenomenon is mainly the case for educational research today (Biesta, 2010; Carusi, 2022).

Put in other words, by the urge to control in full the very essence of the University, by the influx of new public management practices and other alien ideas (Broucker & de Wit, 2015), to be controlling free time, which indeed make University into a unique place, a place for inventing the world anew, and into a space in which truths can be spoken, and in which urgent problems of great importance can be examined and at times be solved, are at high risk of vanishing (Masschelein & Simons, 2015). Interestingly, demands on usefulness seem to be understood narrowly, as only defined by economy as self-explanatory, reducing the plurality of valued outcomes as defined through one worldview alone (Biesta, 2010). It narrows and restricts the plurality foundational for education. Furthermore, despite all expectations put on universities today to increase a nation's competitiveness and be more efficient in knowledge production, the possibility of living up to such expectations is vanishing. Intellectual culture which by necessity is plural is as such vanishing, and therefore

a condition for democratic culture as well, but also, and that is the great irony, vanishing is also the condition for new knowledge to emerge. What instead seems to follow is the reproduction of the same condition that has produced the problems the new knowledge is to solve in the first place (Kofoed & Burø, 2022).

Such a worldview creates the very circularity it desperately is trying to break out from by instrumentalising the very function of the University in social and political life. Its result is an implosion of and stagnation of the *practice* of education, which is reduced to production/reproduction rather than being a space and place for new beginnings, change, and emancipation.

With the erasure of *Scholé*, with the introduction of the time of production within the University instead of free time, it becomes less and less likely for the University to be just that for which it exists. It becomes increasingly more challenging to be contributing to the formation of a democratic *public* in terms of the democratisation of free time as a consequence of the narrow and short-sighted expectations put on the University. Consequently, the University becomes something other than University, and the great irony is that, as such, the University becomes far less able to contribute to the world of economy and business. That is, a time of production severely reduces the ability for innovation since expanding the controlling bureaucracy and administration of free time also narrows the possibility for new beginnings. The University risks losing its very meaning on all fronts.

The University here works as an example, but the same type of analysis can be made to bear on the place and role of schools in most of the different economies of today, since they both are first and foremost institutions of education and both under similar trends of reduction. The reduction of schools into schooling, into sites of production rather than of free time, tends to produce students as objects of production, but not prepare for a world for us to live in together with others who are different from me (Säfström, 2003; Säfström & Månsson, 2015, 2021). As Gert Biesta (2018) says, reducing education to the creation of things is a category mistake since ‘- the educated person is not a thing, but a human with a different outlook.’

1.3 Education and the Conditions of Democracy

Since the above analysis of the pressure for increasing productivity by speeding up time rather than slowing down time to examine the world thoroughly can be bad news in itself, at least for schools and Universities, it is still something more fundamental at stake. What seems to be at stake with the reduction of education to the production of things is the possibility of the University contributing to plurality and democracy. Education is not primarily an activity that teaches or exercises democracy, but education is instead the very condition for democracy (Jaeger, 1939/1965).

In order to explore further the consequences of the different modes of the University as a time of production and as free time, the following will return briefly to the time of the birth of democracy in ancient Greece. The following chapters will, in different ways, make precise what here is more hinted at than fully developed.

This chapter is opening the conversation, to be made specific in the following chapters. What is discussed in this chapter is the possibility of change through education and conditions for change, what change implies. It is not changing in general, but change within education that is explored, and which will successively be specified in the following chapters, in specific terms, exploring the intrinsic connection between plurality, change, democracy (equality) and education, and some of the forces hindering education to take place as a *practice* informed by equality.

We would not be able to even think of democracy if education was not discovered as a performativity of change in everyday life by the early sophists in Greece in 500 BCE (Jaeger, 1939/1965). The consequence of such discovery and its impact on the present is unmeasurable. It signals the very birth of western culture as such and the birth of politics as well. It opened the understanding of the world from a human viewpoint and opened the possibility of a plurality of viewpoints. The invention of *Scholé* is the democratic form, which made clear the link between free time, change and plurality, and equality, the latter motivating a democratic organisation of life in the city-state. Therefore, education, change, plurality, and equality were expressed as the proper understanding of *paideia*; for the sophists, it was culture taking shape as culture (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 286). Education, then, is coming into history as fundamentally an exercise of, a practice of, free time in the democratic organisation of life.

Introducing the time of production/reproduction into schools and universities rather than free time means that education is reduced to an instrument for desires outside of its sphere of intelligibility. Therefore a time of production empty education of its motivation, its source for change and emancipation in a democratic plural society. The University becomes something other than education, and rather than being a place and space for plurality in all its forms, it contributes to reducing such plurality and, therefore, the objectification of all involved, as such the University, instead of being democratisation of free time, risks being reduced to contributing to the reproduction of power as unfree time (which always is a force of reduction of many to one) and inequality in society, rather than questioning such inequality.

Before 500 BC, education could only be considered a means for reproducing an aristocracy (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 287). Education before the sophist was entirely for preparing a particular class to take exclusive responsibility for society and culture, leaving the rest in the dark (which tended to be women, children and enslaved people). It was believed that only a specific class (and gender) could take full responsibility for the course and destiny of history and uphold society's stability over time (Jaeger, 1939/1965, 1943/1986, 1944/1986).

Teaching, as a consequence, could only be understood as a limited process through which the abilities and talents of the aristocratic child, representing the social and cultural sphere as such, were to be educated. Moreover, since the aristocratic child was believed to be carrying the future of the society, education and teaching could only be thought of as a process confirming such a future, in all instances mirroring the already established aristocratic way of life (Säfström, 2018a, 2018b). Education here is about reproduction, not change and tends to be understood as a procedure for securing the conditions for the continuation of aristocratic

life as superior to other forms of life shared by the elites in society over generations. Education here is the reproduction of the same social power relations over time rather than the unfolding of new beginnings in which equality can strive.

The problem following is not only the limiting of those to be educated, since education here is for an elite, regardless of how this elite takes form (through superior abilities, talents or intelligence or simply by exclusion), or if such an elite is exercising a perceived birthright of power. It is also the case that only a part of the population is considered responsible for establishing the social sphere, therefore excluding the rest per definition. What is established as an archaic pattern is reproduction through schooling, in which reproduction signifies the performativity of power exercised by an aristocracy, by an elite. The point, then, is that the power of reproduction, inscribed into schooling as a pattern, strives to replace the equality and plurality of education proper, to replace its democratic form, and instead making education all about serving society, regardless of how this society takes shape and form. In an era of neoliberalism it means that the University, increasingly are to reproduce the conditions for the economy to grow, and to exercise its restricted freedom to produce what society needs to compete on a global market.

The time of production, in other words, tends to rely on education as reproduction. It produces hierarchy and inequality, and therefore precariousness by identifying those who matter and those who do not matter as a waste product of establishing the foundation of the social sphere, establishing what is considered 'real' (Butler, 2015). It also produces a large part of the population not being responsible for the society in which they live, causing problems and forcing the order of the *polis* to protect itself with increased violence.

Moreover, in a time of production and reproduction in education, there can be no real sense of plurality, of different worldviews since repetition of the same aristocratic 'gene' confirmed by teaching confirms a worldview based on inequality inherited and passed on over generations and thereby blocks all possible variations of how to make sense of the world. Here I will call this reproduction of inequality ontological since it tends to produce an educational reality as natural and self-evident while serving specific utilitarian ends of reproducing hierarchical and unequal power. An ontology of inequality will successively be deconstructed throughout the chapters to revitalise the equality of educational relations and their emancipatory potential.

In making education accessible for *anyone*, in theory, and practice, the early sophists gave birth to the very first democratic educational practice known to history (Jaeger, 1939/1965). Their insistence that all people living in society could potentially share responsibility for that society was intended to release education from the rule of aristocratic dominance over education. Instead, it was introduced as an alternative way of understanding education beyond only being perceived in terms of production/reproduction as confirmation of the privilege of an aristocracy.

The early sophists established an alternative to such a privilege reproduced and promoted an understanding of education as in reach for *anyone*, which today can be understood regardless of class, gender, age, sexuality, or ethnicity. Thanks to the early sophists, education can now be perceived as for all in society, not only a

segment of society. The idea of all is essential here since such an understanding of education tends to be central for the University also to work as University, that is, to be able to do its work of democratisation of free time and to consequently open for the possibility of new beginnings, not only producing and reproducing an elite thought the production of things (objects as well as students).

Lifting education as the possibility of radical change and newness beyond the time of production and reproduction, then, means that not only are plurality set free and the very possibility of democracy, and therefore the ethical sediment of education in establishing relations across difference, but also the possibility to unfold the world anew. Education as free time is, in other words, the very beginning of democracy itself as well as that which allows for new beginnings to take place. Education as free time then is not caught in the endless loop of producing/reproducing itself but understood as space and place for change and new beginnings, unfolding different forms of living and making new knowledge and innovation possible in the first place. That is, understanding education as a democratisation of free time makes it possible to understand the University as a context in which the lived and shared experiences of the many are essential not only for a just and fair society but for the continuation of the conversation of humankind as such.

To reduce education by introducing time of production in schools and universities is, therefore, to put democracy itself at risk because it tends to objectify human relations and turn persons into instruments for each other's desires following a capitalist logic of production/reproduction rather than an ethical relation to another person. The free time of the University relies on the unfolding of shared responsibility for a diverse public life in a fair and just society and the knowledge and innovations that accompany such motivation and intent. The time of production/reproduction in the University tends to feed into a capitalist logic of producing things rather than establishing forms of living together in an expanding public life and innovations for making such public life possible.

To defend free time, the time of the University and the time of education in schools then are fundamental to securing that place and space in which democratic publics and counter-publics can form themselves in opposition to authoritarian forms of living. These authoritarian forms damage a decent and respectful society (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002; Suissa, 2016).

1.4 The Danger at Play in Instrumentalising Education

To reduce education to an instrument for the management of things seems to be particularly dangerous in a time when extreme right-wing populism, as well as outspoken fascist movements, is on the rise all over Europe as well as north and south America. Therefore, this book can be read as a resistance to such forces as well as pointing out some strategies for moving beyond the violations of plural, democratic life of equality caused by fascist as well as neoliberal incitements (Giroux, 2018).

When free time is squeezed out of education, it can only be thought of as an instrument for the production/reproduction of *the status quo*, and as such, it tends only to be confirming the arrogance of the elite in reproducing themselves through, among other things, controlling free time. A particularly successful strategy of the aristocracy seems to have been reformulating the understanding of free, incorporating it into a language of business and economic power, expressed as a free market into educational discourse. That is, without an understanding of the importance of free time as *scholé*, as a visualisation of equality, education will only be understood as just another instrument for the propagation of a particular relation of power in which the elites reinstall their superior positions in society according to a fixed idea of natural inequality. To reinvent and reintroduce the free time of *scholé*, of the University and school, which in its very form resisting education being reduced to the production of things and the subsequent reproduction of inequality as a fixed reality, is to perform plurality and equality necessary for democracy to work.

The notion of *scholé* can guarantee that the University, as well as the school, is not only reduced to one more institution and, as such, primarily bounded by the historical and political situation of power in which it finds itself. The school and University are instead to be understood as “the visible and material refusal of natural destiny” (Masschelein & Simons, 2015, p. 86) and, therefore, as an instantiation of democratic forms of life across differences by among other things keeping the conversation of mankind open and moving along. Without *scholé*, free time allowing the world to be understood and adequately examined beyond the time of production of things and reproduction of inequality, there is an acute risk of weakening democratic culture needed for liberal democracies to work.

It is necessary, therefore, to both defend and expand school and University as particular forms of gatherings of free time performing democratisation and, as such, being able to reach beyond their institutional limitations. Furthermore, it also contributes to liveable life for all in society beyond the constraints of institutions, but certainly not without them (Suisa, 2016; Säfström, 2018b).

1.5 What Are our Responsibilities in a Time of Production?

While just and fair institutions are necessary for a stable democracy to work and essential to struggle for, institutions cannot guarantee a democratic way of life. They can not guarantee a democratic way of life because institutions embody inequality, says Rancière (1991), while human relations are not, at least not necessarily so.

People of flesh and blood can choose to do what a rational person owns herself, not institutions. A rational person can verify another person as a speaking being and not immediately reduce the other to a category within a social structure of inequality upheld by endless comparisons and competitions, ultimately only confirming the inequality of an elitist society and reproducing an aristocracy already distinguished.

In other words, people can ignore the inequality of institutionalised life in the *polis* and instead verify the other as an equal intelligence beyond such structured inequality. Because, says Rancière (1991), a rational person is a person who has realised that if he or she can speak the truth, the other can as well.

Such verification of the other as speaking his or her truth is at the beginning of emancipation and turns the noises of the many into meaningful discourse. It turns the noise of ‘the wrong people’ (Säfström, 2014) into words that express valuable meaning. It makes people matter. Emancipation begins when speech from the excluded can be heard, impacting the moving scene in which we all live.

Such speech becomes politically significant when those whose only function in our liberal democracies is to vote responsibly, but otherwise only to be appearing as *the populace*, speak as if they had the right to, and also in circumstances that deprive them of that right (Ruitenberg, 2008; Butler, 2015). The time of the University, as well as the time of the school, is, therefore, the time for speaking truth to power and listening carefully to hearing those voices that are deemed noise in the everyday discourse (Todd, 2003). To verify such speech as meaningful is to expand the publicness of the public and to verify counter publics forming themselves across differences (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002; Suissa, 2016).

What education fundamentally does in the context of school and University, then, is to verify the other as speaking their truth rather than explaining the world for her or him in order for emancipation and change to take place (Rancière, 1991). That is, teaching is forming the context in which a multiplicity of voices that cannot be heard clearly in the usual case are amplified beyond the common sense of the ordinary discourse and are valued in their speaking truth.

Teaching in the context of free time reconfigures that which makes sense. It breaks into the normality of reproductive discourse and makes new meaning possible. As such, it transforms the publicness of the public in ways that verify a pluralist democracy at work rather than feeding an elitist and capitalist society of winners and losers to be produced while reproduced as such (Säfström & Månsson, 2004).

1.6 Why Is the Time of Production in Schools and Universities So Harmful?

A problem with understanding school and University as an expression of a time of production of things and reproduction of inequality is not only that it becomes increasingly difficult to understand what education *is* or could be beyond confirmation of and reproduction of privileges already established but also that the very idea of education itself seems to vanish into yet another technical problem of learning, or sociology of the function of educational systems within society, basically reducing the understanding of education to one or another form of instrumentalism. Since there is an intrinsic relation between education and democracy and the time of the University as shown above, or in general terms between education and the time of

democracy, education takes form within the University as verification of democracy and equality. As such, the University can continue making public that which is otherwise private concerns, that is, linking private interests and transforming them into public concerns for the benefit of society and the individual both (Biesta, 2017; Masschelein & Simons, 2013).

The problem with instrumentalism in human affairs shows itself clearly if we consider its extreme forms, in which the plurality of people every day is reduced to a singularity, to a social unity of a whole in which the value of each one is related to a higher utilitarian end from which the meaning of a single life is derived. Such instrumentalism produces the people to reach a higher end, formulated through the anticipated highest value of the social, the ultimate morality, reducing every individual life's value to a measurement of fulfilling the final single meaning of the state, which is representing the highest value. The end of the line and the most extreme instrumentalism in human affairs in politics is, therefore, fascism. The single life is worthless as anything other than a means for realising the fascist highest value (Arnstad, 2016; Poulantzas, 1979; Traverso, 2019).

In education, we use books, computers, and blackboards. We use instruction and teaching, even our voice and presence to do education to achieve something, as tools if you want. Instrumentalism in human affairs, therefore, is not only to emphasise the use of tools to be effective in achieving something we want to be achieved. What is meant by instrumentalism in human affairs, and the consequence of introducing instrumentalism as the central theoretical ideology of education is the reduction of a lived life to a measurement of how effective such life is as a tool, as an object, in achieving something outside the value of living life itself. The consequence of such instrumentalism tends to be reducing the value of living life for some while accentuating such value for others, and to measure such life concerning some utilitarian ends which already are formed based on an ontology of inequality.

Education informed by political instrumentalism (political in that it works to fulfil certain desired utilitarian ends) is to be guaranteed a steady production of value through aggressive competition, in which the winners and losers confirm ontological inequality. As such, it excludes the possibility of educating following the values of a democratic way of life (Dewey 1916/Dewey, 1966).

Instrumentalism, therefore, suits the neoliberal political project. It is its' very understanding of education. Political instrumentalism gives education meaning within the neoliberal political project and reduces education to a system of schooling inequality. Schooling here becomes a particular form of production/reproduction and distribution of (encyclopaedic) knowledge as a measurable and quantifiable value across the social spectrum and pairing such value with values circulating in the capitalist economy.

The very meaning of the student in such a system of schooling is to be understood with his or her quantifiable accumulation of knowledge through talent, skills, and abilities, as such being coded as the currency of the school market. Schooling embodies the drive to quantifiable, measurable knowledge accumulated by students with (perceived natural) abilities and skills, which are all categories within a

particular economy of schooling, defining itself within a such economy as more or less valuable with its effectiveness and productivity.

The profound problem with the time of production, then, is that it creates self-referencing frameworks, which can be understood as a property of such frames. Self-referencing frameworks make the change and newness impossible and reduce education to effective processes of adjustment to what is already given rather than breaking out from it. In addition, it creates claustrophobic realities as well. There is no breathing possible. The educational impulse of radical change suffocated (Säfström, 2018c)—and with it, a democratic way of life.

1.7 Automation of Behaviour

In consequence, this means that education as a possibility to verify the pluralism of the social world, its inherent pluralism as Dewey (1916) among others would have it, is conclusively erased, and to be schooled appropriately would mean a successive adaptation to a framework of automation of behaviour within a hegemonic order, distributing talent, abilities, and skills over the social spectrum and matching those with what is required by the current capitalist economy. In other words, schooling becomes training to be employable as the life-long learner within continuously expanding authoritarian capitalism controlled by corporations, according to Berardi (2017), here quoting Deleuze on the subject:

As corporations replace the factory, continuous training tends to replace the school and continuous control to replace the examination. Which is the surest way of delivering the school over to the corporation. In the disciplinary societies, one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control, one is never finished with anything.¹

It means, among other things, that if a society is increasingly repressive, intolerant, and anti-democratic, schooling in such society would not be able to be anything else than making adjustments to such forces more effective. Besides, in cases when the goals of education are to promote a more democratic society, if such goals are to be reached through instrumental education, they are turned in effect into its opposite.

That is because instrumentalism has nothing to do with human value at all. It has nothing to do with the relationality of the social, and it is excess. Human relations cannot be reduced to tools of effectiveness without stopping being human altogether. Educational thought, or the time of the university, the democratisation of free time, is, in other words, about freedom for the other and signals a presence able to embrace a sense of freedom for the individual as well as the community in which the individual lives (Biesta & Säfström, 2011).

¹ Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control", October 59 (Winter 1992), 3–7, quoted in Berardi *Futurability*, 104–5.

Fascism, as well as extreme forms of nationalism, in all its versions, are, on the other hand, about a certain pessimism towards the possibility of such a presence and replaces freedom with an idea of a moral law that conglomerates all individuals and generations in a single nostalgic tradition and purpose of a people as one and undivided. Neoliberalism adds to such oneness rather than challenging it by replacing a democratic way of life with the unity of the market within authoritarian capitalism. The consequences of those tendencies will be discussed in detail in the following chapters to resist anti-democratic and anti-educational forces and point out another path beyond such pressure on liveable life.

1.8 Conclusion

University is a time for education, not for producing things and reproducing inequality. To transform Universities and schools into places for the production of things is counterproductive since schools and universities are not primarily dealing with the production of things but with thought, truth, and the newness of the world. Therefore, Universities and schools in a time of production will be not only inefficient and inadequate businesses since they would need to spend all their energy in diminishing and controlling thought, truth, and the free time of democratisation of equality, but also destructive for the possibility of transforming private interest into public concerns. More importantly then, and as have been shown above, to introduce the time of production and reproduction in schools and University instead of free time is to put democracy itself at risk, and that in a time when destructive forces of aggression towards the plurality of social life are on the rise all over the world. In this chapter, I argued that as scholars of education, as scholars of the possibility of radical change and newness of the world, of plural democracy, it is our responsibility to speak truth to power and to stand up for education for anyone. Education proper is not about the reproduction of privilege but about the verification of equality, as thoroughly examined in this book, and as such, education is an instantiation of radical change and newness to unfold, of new beginnings. To defend the time of the University and school as a particular form of gathering made intelligible through free time is, therefore, a struggle worth taking because it is about the very existence of freedom and democracy. Finally and in general terms, education turns us toward the world we share with others, it makes us not only at home in this world at precisely this moment in time, but it also makes a change of the world possible across differences: Education makes a genuinely pluralistic democracy possible.

In the following chapters, I will specify what such a proposition implies with different themes and put it into different social, political and historical contexts, always keeping in mind that plurality and equality, and the time of University, teaching and education is far more critical issues than concerning schooling alone. Education is the prime force of a democratic way of life, in which an expanding publicness is not considered a threat but its aim and purpose. Education needs to be set free. In the next chapter, I will be taking an activist stance, to show, to give an

example of a strategy of teaching which not only tries to reproduce the conditions handed down by the institutional desires of a particular order of the *polis* only reproducing inequality but which takes on an active non-violent defence of plurality and democracy by setting education into motion. Such strategy is not only developed to defend oneself passively and all involved from the implicit aggressions and violence of a neoliberal worldview, but which, in the spirit of education proper, performs teaching as an active strategy of non-violence. The following chapter will develop a strategy for equality and plurality within education, transforming schooling from being about the production of things and inequality of social life to instead unfold a profoundly liveable life for all people in that society, expansion of equality as the very publicness of the public: For education to be a concern for more people than the ones already included. The strategy of resistance developed is a strategy from the margins eating itself into the middle and widening the space for more people to be seen and heard on the scene on which we all live. It is a strategy that intends to make precarious life appear beyond its precariousness, to make it possible for the excluded to take place among those who matter already. An active non-violent teaching humility is a strategy for teaching liveable life.

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Chapter 2

School Failure, Violence and Democratic Possibilities in Education



Abstract In this chapter, I discuss what makes it possible for the political problem of inequality to be understood as a pathology of the individual and as a failure of that individual to live up to the institution's expectations. Secondly, rather than treating failure as a pathology of the individual, I understand failure as discursively formed as an *anomaly* within educational thought itself. It is an *anomaly* since it is performatively produced by a particular understanding of education's role in reproducing a population segment's power in any given state or nation. In this chapter I call this understanding Platonian/Aristotelian education since such education relies on an ontology of inequality, which will be thoroughly explored in the following chapters. Thirdly, I embrace school failure as a refusal to accept institutionalised inequality as a necessity, conditioning relations between people, and instead, understand failure as pointing to the equality of all speaking beings and as conditional for education and a democratic way of life.

Keywords School failure · Violence · ADHD · Counter discourse · Democratic possibilities · Sophist education

2.1 Introduction

The school in the middle of the community, and as forming public life according to democratic concerns, as visualised by John Dewey and others, have never really materialised on a larger scale (Dewey 1916/Dewey, 1966). Instead, the harsh reality of the school's history, as Masschelein and Simons (2013) say, can be understood as a history of *taming* the implicit democratisation of the very form of the school. While the first chapter identifies the democratic form in the very ancient Greek formulation of *Scholé* as the embodiment and materialisation of free time, free from work, free to study what is put on the table, and as essentially a question of equality, this chapter will make problematic the very form of *domination* inscribed in education. The forces taming the school are not only coming from the outside but from the inside and are inscribed within the very understanding of education. In a way,

this book attempts to call out and deconstruct the violence inscribed in education and which follows from the figures of domination. I will successively throughout the chapters identify this strand of domination and violence in educational thought and practice as a consequence of Platonian/Aristotelian philosophy dominating and defining education as schooling “man” to establish a perfect state (Jaeger, 1939/1965, Chaps. 3 and 5 of this book).

The pattern of domination and inequality inscribed in educational thought shows itself when the main aim of education is to link man and state in terms of socialisation and qualification, as Biesta (2017) has called two, out of three aims of education systems.¹ When such aims of education are paired with the understanding of socialisation as the linking of past and future in reproducing inequality, we end up in a particular tradition of educational thought (Säfström, 2019). A tradition of educational thought which, as Jaeger’s (Jaeger, 1939/1965, 1943/1986, 1944/1986) works on *Paideia* show, has its foundation in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. In the following chapters I will extensively explore the influence of such a philosophy on educational thought and practice, for the current purpose though it is enough to point out that a foundational problem with Platonian/Aristotelian philosophy in education is that it is formed as elitist education reproducing inequality as conditional for social stability over time (Jaeger, 1939/1965). Such foundational inequality, is something of an ontological reality taking form in and through education, and is as such, at its core, anti-democratic. It holds that only a specific class of people within themselves carry the seeds of culture and therefore are the righteous ones to guarantee the stability of social order and form society’s destiny, leaving the rest in a permanent state of precariousness. In other words, what such an understanding of education does, to be exact, is that it naturalises inequality rather than politicising it. By transforming culture, how we live with and among others, into nature, into ontological reality, itself led by inevitable rationality, one is motivating that a specific class of people are aimed at ruling all others on the basis of how reality itself takes shape. The point here is that what is established is education, or rather schooling, as a foundational pattern of inequality. To be schooled according to this pattern is to be divided into those who have and those who do not have ability and talent to succeed in school, and the further suggestion that such division into able and non-able people are a consequence of reality itself. Schooling is seen as an adjustment to and confirmation of what is considered already to be the case: There is a ‘natural law’ distinguishing between people who have the abilities and those who don’t, and schooling is to confirm such absolute natural inequality. Rather than inequality being such an expression of education, it is an expression of a particular and political line of thought imposed on education, with its roots in Platonian and Aristotelian philosophy (Jaeger, 1939/1965). This Platonian/Aristotelian line of thought, shows itself through history and is today often a taken for granted idea of what education and schooling is all about, that education *is* inequality, that schooling is to perform inequality and that teaching is to confirm inequality in the classroom.

¹The third aim of education is for Biesta, subjectification.

What is central in this chapter, and in line with the aim of the book to be identifying another starting-point for education than in confirming inequality, is that while Platonian/Aristotelian educational thought tends to naturalise the order of the social in terms of an ontology of inequality, the Sophists instead understand the foundation for the social order as equality based on the politics and ethics of living the everyday life with others (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300). The sophists were teachers in 500 and 400 BCE who introduced educational practice into the history of humankind as a way of living together with others in a democratic city-state. Here it is not so much the single Sophist teacher in himself that is of interest, or them as historical figures, but as a name of ‘an intellectual movement which was to have immeasurable effects on the history of mankind’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 286). Education and teaching within this movement is not to confirm the inequality of the aristocratic class, the elite but was to transcend ‘Aristocratic education [which] had been based on the inheritance of *arete*’ through noble blood’ (p. 287). The aim of the sophist movement, to which this book belongs and voices, ‘was to transcend the aristocratic principle of privileged education, which made it impossible for anyone to acquire *arete*’ unless he already possessed it by inherence from his divine ancestors’ (p. 287).

Sophist education is an expression of the art of producing intellectual culture based on *equality*, which they found in nature as well as the political formation of the city-state: they were democrats (Jaeger, 1939/1965). As an alternative movement of educational thought, Sophist education is concerned with practical life, about ways of living when life is fallible and when people’s behaviours are far from ideal versions of themselves. Sophist education asks how to move in concert with others every day to embody the virtues of living well together in a surrounding on which we depend and in which no one is perfect, or can be perfect. Furthermore, for them, relations between people and their environment, as well as for singular minds, are conditioned by the particular historical and political time in which one lives (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 293). For the Sophists, the resulting *Paideia*, that is, culture/education/practical life, is an ethical and political endeavour, not a realisation of and reproduction of a naturalised order of inequality stabilising social and political life over time, which it was for Plato (see Bloom, 1991; Jaeger, 1944/1986). While those themes will be developed in full throughout the chapters; this chapter discusses some of today’s consequences of the Aristocratic principle naturalising inequality in and through education by taking school failure as an example of the tension between naturalisation and politicisation of social orders of inequality. The tension between naturalisation and politicisation is also between Platonian/Aristotelian on the one hand and the Sophist movement of education on the other. Furthermore, school failure against such a backdrop crystallises as something radically different from what it is mainly understood as, which points to the mobilisation of the democratic potentiality of education instead.

2.2 School Failure

School failure is today increasingly pathologised rather than understood as systemic and political. For example: In Sweden, the dominant party on the Right, in the runup to the election in September 2022, suggested testing all children for ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) in schools to deal with the increased failure of children to complete schooling in poor neighbourhoods. The testing, though, was only to occur in specific neighbourhoods, so-called LUA-suburbs, described in media and elsewhere by politicians informally as ‘utanförskapsområden’ (in English, translated literally as ‘areas of exclusion’).² Testing for ADHD in all children in those areas of precarious populations (Butler, 2015), which primarily are composed of immigrant families and, to a lesser extent, working-class white people, are said to be necessary to stop the increased gang violence which has escalated over recent years and keeps taking young lives in repeated shootings (Salihu, 2021).

Regardless if one thinks ADHD is an appropriate diagnosis or not, the idea that testing and medication would solve social and political problems of organised crime and gang violence is more than anything else, pointing to a drastically increased precariousness of large segments of the population in Swedish society. Instead of being a result of unjust politics and increasing inequality in Swedish society, precariousness is understood as a medical and pathological problem that can be diagnosed by school tests and solved by putting children on medication.

The political problem of inequality and its consequences is medicalised, neutralised, individualised, pathologised and confirmed by testing in schooling rather than contextualised, politicised and treated as a political problem for democracy and education proper to challenge, if not overcome altogether. In other words, what is made into a medical problem is the rising inequality in Swedish society (Chancel et al., 2022) showing itself in, among other things, increased school failure and violence (Säfström, 2020). School failure is also a consequence of the ongoing destruction of a public school to a market-based school system, successively emptying the public schools of resources and increasingly segregating students according to social class (Säfström, 2020; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2018).

What has made such suggestions possible, except a radical inequality among other things, is the testing and assessment culture followed by a neoliberal school policy taking hold all over Europe (Hogan & Thompson, 2021) and not the least in Sweden (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2018).

As an example, Benn (2012) reports from England that the assessment culture and the fixation with league tables and rankings in line with a neoliberal worldview are showing themselves in the microcosmos of a school class, ‘creating an

²The suggestion and objection to it, and the language used, can be found in the following news outlets: <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/x8GL0p/moderaterna-foreslar-adhd-test-i-utanforskap-somraden>, <https://www.svd.se/a/wO7awd/adhd-forslag-far-tummen-upp-av-elisabeth-vantesson>, <https://www.dn.se/sverige/m-adhd-testa-barn-i-utsatta-omraden-for-att-stoppa-gangen/>.

unofficial, inflexible ranking within each class or year group' (Benn 2012 p. 186). The point is that such ranking practices are not to be understood as an isolated event but as a concrete expression of the very function of a neoliberal school, which also means that teaching itself change character. It must adapt to an assessment regime and its instructions and adopt the superior value of success and failure characteristics of such school policies.

In such discourse, for the child to fail is to be placed on the margins of the social, to be sorted according to a systemic and effective realisation of inequality. To fail, then, is not only to 'fail' fulfilling particular institutionalised expectations expressed through teaching instructions and curricula but, in addition, to fail is to be subordinated in an absolute manner to the ones succeeding. That is since teaching instructions and curricula in the neoliberal school in themselves are expressions of a foundational belief that the social sphere by necessity is hierarchically and unequally organised, and for which education is given the task of differentiating children accordingly, the child once filling its 'spot' in the social order has fulfilled its true destiny. To fail, so to speak, is to take place already anticipated by the social order of inequality, and the one failing is effectively subordinated to the one succeeding also anticipated by the order itself. The point, though, is not simply that one happens to be better on the task than the other but that the ability to succeed and, therefore, the ability to act as a fully functional part of one's society is already considered a property of certain people rather than others, and for Plato and Aristoteles, a property of the 'aristocrat', the elite.

For the political Right in Sweden, to suggest testing for ADHD in neighbourhoods for precarious populations was motivated by a belief that gang violence can be reduced if children with ADHD in those areas are tested and medicated early on. There is, though, no evidence that ADHD is more frequent in those areas or that there is a clear link between violence and ADHD.³ However, even so, what is taken for granted seems to be that violence could be explained by a medical diagnosis rather than as a consequence of being poor and precarious on the margins of society. To be testing only certain people for ADHD in particularly precarious parts of the population, as was suggested by the Right and far right in Sweden, is possible if people in those areas also are reduced to functions of violence alone and therefore legitimately be targets of special treatment (Säfström, 2011), receiving what Rancière (Rancière, 2007a, 2007b) calls 'the round-table treatment', that is, where someone is reduced to a target of interventions by the state:

The immigrant is, first and foremost, a worker who has lost his name, a worker who is no longer perceptible as such. Instead of the worker proletarian who is the object of an acknowledged wrong and the subject who vents his grievance in struggle and disputation, *the immigrant appears as at once the perpetrator of an inexpiable wrong and the cause of the problem calling for the round-table treatment.* (p. 105)

³The interest organisation for psychologists (Psykologiförbundet) says that the suggestion of a direct connection between ADHD and criminality is 'severely reductionist and simplified' <https://www.psykologforbundet.se/aktuella-fragor/forbundet-tycker/forbundet-tycker2/psykologforbundet-kritiskt-mot-moderaternas-forslag-om-adhd-test-i-utanforslagsomraden/>.

The imposed inability to act out of one's freedom, and rather being an object of specific measures introduced by the state, is further hammered out by pathologising the fundamental inequality experienced by living in 'areas of exclusion', through increased testing in schools. Schooling, when confirming the inequality of failure/success as an expression of absolute reality, dehumanises parts of the population by the exclusion of the ability to act out of their freedom, while confirming some others as both having the ability to act out of their freedom, and to rightfully exercise this ability. An ontological reality of inequality seems to be confirmed in the process, but it also seems that those poorer areas of exclusion are rightfully excluded in relation to the areas that matter. Schooling confirms the anticipated reason for increased violence through the tests, which motivate 'round-table treatment' in which people become objectified and targets of special treatment initiated by state institutions. There is a problem localised and excluded from concerning the rest of the population and which is to be given special treatment. Those suburbs exclusively for the poor, with immigrants and working-class white people, can be named and pointed out as targets of interventions, because they are already empty of (positive) meaning, as already indicated by their name 'areas of exclusion'. They do not matter concerning the valuable, respectful areas included in the city. The predominantly white middle-class areas are areas where violence always seems to come from the outside and never from within since they, by definition, are areas in which people who succeed in schooling and society at large live. With Butler (2015), one can say that the geography of inequality put on display as a consequence of the politics of exclusion is the consequence of a fundamental distinction between who is considered to belong to the people and who only to be bodies of the mere population (Butler, 2015; Säfström, 2020). It is a distinction on display between persons reduced to bodies that occupy a territory and those considered valuable people, here the exclusionary Swedish people, on which (nationalist) democracy can rest. It creates a geography of (racist) inequality in the city, and as such, it also puts on display the active production of what Bauman (2000, p. 119-120) called 'non-places', that is, places emptied of (positive) meaning, and meaningless concerning those valuable areas which matter, and in which those who matter themselves live. The 'areas of exclusion' may be empty of meaning from the point of the majority society but are not empty of people.

2.3 Precariousness and Violence in Education, and Non-violent Response

Violence, then, is not only a mechanism for success/failure (inclusion/exclusion) but an essential feature of that which is included in schooling broadly understood, and as a defining and confirming specific characteristics of the social bond, as well as pointing out a particular location where this violence takes place. Schooling is helpful for the political Right in Sweden since it defines success and failure, or

differently put, it establishes success because of the failure it produces as natural and objectively true. Such an objectified violent act is an *anomaly* in schooling since education cannot be about excluding the other. There can be no failure in education since education does not include people in order to exclude them. Education is about emancipation and changes to living well with others who are not the same as me, as the Sophists understood education to be about (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300). The imposed failure, the increased testing for ADHD, and the localisation of violence to mainly concern precarious populations is a violent act. It is violent in including immigrant families and white working-class people in general into the problem of violence and through schooling/testing confirming inequality as an inevitable truth demanding ‘round table treatment’ of all people in those areas where testing is to take place. And to do so rather than politicising the fundamental inequality producing the violence in the first case. So there is a shift when we look closer at school failure as a reason for increased youth violence; for one thing, it is no longer self-evidently a medical problem. What we therefore rather need to do is to consider the foundation of state violence of segregation and class politics and the role schooling plays instead. I am not trying to explain away youth violence in precarious areas of the city as such, which is often understood as organised gang and drug-related. However, my point is to explore the foundational violence of classing people as already outside the productive part of society and reducing schooling to confirm such inequality rather than to boosting the equality of the school form and the emancipatory possibilities of education.

What is clear though is that where there is systemic violence, there is also resistance to violence (Butler, 2020a, 2020b). Though resistance to violence is often understood in terms of passivity, says Butler (Butler, 2020a), as, for example, the non-violent resistance to the colonial violence of the British empire was resisted by the passive non-violence of Gandhi. Violence is often understood as active, while one’s defence to and response to violence are to be passive. It seems as if a student or a teacher is to resist the violence inflicted by schooling, producing failure/exclusion/inequality in a total sense, only passively responding to such violence. To teach in such a context seems to suggest that there is nothing to *do* about the same pattern producing the violence in the first place beyond passively reacting to its expressions. It seems as if it is to accept the inequality of absolute schooling and, consequently, to teach to confirm inequality more effectively. Alternatively, the dedicated teacher supports specific gifted individuals to climb the social ladder regardless of their background while unable to do anything about the ladder itself. Teaching then remains a form of *symbolic* violence through the continuous categorisations of success and failure, experienced *subjectively* as such by the student: *I am* a success, or *I am* a failure, *I am* included, or *I am* excluded. As such, it is subjectively experienced violence and a consequence of *structural* and *systemic* violence (Žižek, 2008). Teaching as *symbolic* violence is identifying and purifying certain people as having already natural abilities and talents to be reproduced while excluding others considered not to have those abilities and talents, in a total sense. As such, it teaches the social mechanism of inclusion/exclusion, production of winners and losers,

successes, and failures, and as such confirming a supposedly ontological reality of inequality taken shape as schooling and society.

Non-violence, on the other hand, says Butler (2020a), is not so much an ‘absolute principle, but the name of an ongoing struggle’ (p. 23) in which we also take responsibility for our anger and aggression. It is not so much a moral position as a ‘social and political practice undertaken in concert, culminating in the form of resistance to systemic forms of destruction’ (p. 21), and therefore ‘non-violence can and must be aggressively pursued’ (p.21). Aggression is not the same as violence (Hahn, 2001), and there is no absolute and clear line, but a non-violent approach within itself ‘negotiates fundamental ethical and political ambiguities’ (Butler, 2020a p. 23), while the very nature of systemic violence is that it does not. Butler argues that for active non-violence to make sense, a second suggestion must be considered: the issue of equality, a ‘commitment to equality’ (Butler, 2020a, p. 29). A schooling system is a form of naturalised power that legitimises systemic violence and aims ultimately to protect that system from change, to stay the same regardless of its unjust and unequal impact on living and liveable life (Butler, 2015; Säfström, 2018a, 2018b).

To teach beyond the reproduction of symbolic and systemic violence, a teacher needs to practice ‘self-doubt’. That is, he or she needs to be open for the other to show him or herself rather than imposing himself on the other. For the teacher to open that relational and ethical space defining teaching as such, the ‘I’ cannot ‘possess itself too firmly’ because, says Butler, ‘If I possess myself too firmly or too rigidly, I cannot be in an ethical relation’ (Butler, 2015 p. 110). Teaching is not to fixate on the superior or subordinated I, neither of oneself nor the other. Teaching rather implies a ‘particular mode of being dispossessed [and which therefore] makes ethical relationality possible’ (p. 110). Teaching is a certain relationality in which an active non-violent response to the other is inevitable due to an ethical relationality at the heart of teaching. Teaching is the practice of active non-violence in verifying equality beyond naturalised and institutionalised inequality.

2.4 Teaching as Active Non-violence beyond Success and Failure

Teaching beyond confirming structural and symbolic violence is not passive. Teaching as a commitment to the freedom of the other is always active (Biesta and Säfström 2011). To be committed to the freedom of the student is to be committed to and to encourage the ability of the student to act out of his or her freedom, her equality beyond being a success or a failure and a passive recipient of knowledge. For the student to assume equality with anyone else, the teacher verifies equality and, in his or her teaching, strives to verify equality in all its concrete expressions. Equality is the first assumption, a starting point, which is continuously verified in the very act of teaching as a *saying*, not necessarily in the *said* (Säfström, 2003).

The saying and the said imply that knowledge is not equal between the teacher and the student, but it is not where equality resides. Equality is the approach towards the other, in the saying, not the said, and functions as an active non-violent break with the violent inequality inscribed in schooling and society at large. How is equality verified? It can only be verified within the practice of teaching itself, equality is a practice, not an idea.

Teaching is a concrete response to the other's call and responsibility for the freedom of the other. The call from the other in education, from the student, takes the form of -yes, you can teach me! Without this call, teaching is symbolically violent (Todd, 2003; Levinas, 1969; Säfström, 2003). In responding to the openness for being taught, the call takes the teacher beyond the symbolic and structural violence inscribed in schooling, as such schooling is an expression of an ontological inequality. The result of teaching, if the result is the right word, shows itself in the ethical affirmation of the other as other and in the verification of equality. In other words, there is for teaching to take place an inherent humility within the act of teaching that is exercised and performed. The teacher needs, so to speak, to be taking a step back to let the student take a step forward.

To teach is to be interested in the freedom of the other, inscribed in the performativity of teaching as an anticipation of the freedom of the other and not an expectation of results. The humility inscribed in teaching is necessary for teaching to take place at all and not only be reduced to instructions, directives and decrees, even if proper teaching includes instructions. The humility of teaching shows itself through the question: With what right do I teach? (Säfström, 2003).

To continuously ask oneself, as a teacher, of the right to teach, and not as a question of laws and regulation, but as an existential right, open the teacher to vulnerability beyond the structural and symbolic violence inscribed in the instructions and decrees required of schooling. The right to teach shows itself in practice, in the act of teaching itself (and not before the act) in an ethical response to other people, as those who identify themselves as students, that is as willing to study (Masschelein & Simons, 2013). That is also why Rancière, in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Rancière, 1991), talks about the task of a teacher to arouse the will to study and to direct attention to what is studied as teaching in the spirit of equality beyond confirmation of inequality (Rytzler, 2017). Teaching is a potentiality of a non-violent, ethical, active practice of humility, in which the other is invited in his or her self-activity as an equal intelligence (Rancière, 1991). Butler (Butler, 2020a, 2020b) says:

Non-violence is less of a failure of action than a psychical assertion of the claims of life, a living assertion, a claim that is made by speech, gesture, and action through networks, encampments, and assemblies; all of these seek to recast the living as worthy of value, as potentially grievable, precisely under conditions in which they are either erased from view or cast into irreversible forms of precarity (p. 24).

Teaching as non-violence seeks to perform the double act of actively claiming a liveable life for all while balancing the line between symbolic violence/non-violence. The problem, though, is that schooling already, by definition, understands certain people as able to act, while others are considered as lacking such ability and,

therefore, necessarily confirms failures as it establishes successful and perfect citizens. Returning to the initial example, it will mean that testing for ADHD among precarious populations, and only there, is as such an instrument in reproducing the desires inscribed in a particular image of a society of inequality, a social order which already understands itself as divided by those who have a birthright, based on their natural abilities and talents to *dominate* by representing a specific class of people, and those who are to be dominated by such natural superiority.

The instrumentalisation of schooling is based on an ontology of inequality, or rather; schooling as instrumentalisation is what performs reproduction of inequality. Such schooling is naturalising all expressions of inequality. As in the example, it seems natural and self-evident to connect school failure with ADHD and as the prime cause of gang violence to be treated with medicine rather than addressing the fundamental racist inequality inscribed in such suggestions. In pathologising the grievance and struggle of the immigrant proletarian to whom an inexpiable wrong is done due to the absolute inequality of the Swedish society, the immigrant is turned into the perpetrator of this wrong (Säfström, 2011). The failure to not adjust to the given inequality of Swedish society by dropping out of school can therefore also be understood as a refusal to be placed inferior to the superior white majority society, a resistance to a foundational ontological and geographical inequality.

That implies that the problem to be solved (violence) by the political Right, is rather produced by the suggested solutions (the testing and what it implies) and, as such, constantly confirms a reality simultaneously produced and denied as a consequence of absolute inequality. The ADHD rhetoric in this case deflects the attention from ontological inequality to individual pathology instead, it naturalises what is political and ethical to its core.

2.5 To Throw Failure Back to its Contingency

School failure, in other words, is another name for the reproduction of inequality. Failure adds a negative value to the functional division of labour in society and signals instead of such division an ontological inequality. Failure is always valued laden understood as such from the viewpoint of success, from the viewpoint of fulfilling what the institution, what schooling expects of a person to rightfully be part of 'the people', to be part of those who succeed, who matter. Failure is an expression of and a consequence of symbolic and structural violence inscribed by the reproduction of inequality. As Butler (Butler, 2020a, 2020b) argues, such violence is always resisted. It generates resistance. Therefore, failure beyond the pathologising discourse can also be understood as an active choice and political to its core. It can be understood as a counter-discourse of resistance.

As a counter-discourse of resistance, to 'fail' from the viewpoint of resistance, is to fail to accept being placed in an unjust, racist ontological inequality of schooling and to understand failure as an active choice rather than a passive consequence of ADHD, or any other medical state of mind. It is, in this case, an active choice of not

fulfilling the expectations of inequality as inscribed in schooling. Failure is, in such cases, an active non-violent resistance to the figures of domination inscribed in schooling. Schooling differentiates winners and losers between those who matter and those who do not matter to the same degree. Failure as an active choice and as a counter-discourse of resistance, makes problematic the foundational pattern of the real of schooling as an expression of inequality, as if inequality is natural and given.

In this case, failure as resistance is instead a choice on the behalf of the one resisting, described by Rancière as informed by ‘ignorance’ a refusal ‘to fall into the land of inequality’ and instead verify equality as a practice for living *with* other people, to verify the equality of all speaking beings (Rancière, 1991, p. 90). Social institutions cannot embrace equality since equality for Rancière is not a structure. Instead, it is an attitude toward another person, and as such, it is aesthetic and not structural. Institutions are structures of inequality, and even though there are better or worse structures better or worse institutions they are still expressions of inequality, if so to different degree.

What makes an institution better or worse is its capacity for change and the degree to which it is possible to question the foundational inequality on which it rests. Schooling is the institutionalisation of inequality. It is what it performs. It is an active ongoing inequality performativity whose function is to differentiate according to a pre-set order of inequality and hierarchy of social value. Despite this fact, and since people are not institutions, anyone can choose to verify equality rather than inequality within the institution’s confine in the encounter with the other (Todd, 2023). One does not need to identify oneself with inequality, there is always a possibility to direct one’s attention to the equality of the other person instead, and as teachers, there is a call to do so. If inequality is a violent consequence of politics of domination rather than an expression of something real and natural, there is always an active non-violent resistance in the present and a choice and responsibility to verify equality instead.

Only people can be equal, not institutions, says Rancière (2010, p. 14). Therefore verifying equality is a choice expressed in actual relations between people, and as such, relationality breaks into the differentiating inequalities of the institution by verifying equality. Such verification is an act, and it is a move, a performativity inscribed in teaching, and such performativity requires movement and change, not reproduction. It requires *energia*, or energies at work, not *erga* or finished works. Teaching requires the performativity of education and not the reproduction of schooling.

2.6 Conclusion

To counter such discourse of the naturalisation of racist inequality and its consequences, this chapter suggests a counter-discourse based on Sophist educational practice instead. The performativity, the *energia* of education and teaching de-essentialises the ontology of inequality and unfolds the many possibilities in the

present to make new links, to move differently in every day of living a life *with* and among other people across differences. The performativity of non-violent active response to ontological inequality re-politicises what has been de-politicised and medicalised. In relation to the gang violence said to be dealt with through tests in schools then, ADHD is a distraction [sic!] from the inexplicable wrong done to the immigrant proletarian, the violence of absolute inequality producing more violence. It is an 'inexplicable wrong' positioning the proletarian immigrant as perpetrator and victim.

In the example given, school failure, rather than being an evident sign of a medical condition, and treated as such, is with the sophists in mind, rather to be considered a consequence of a particular social and political organisation of society. As this chapter has problematised, social organisation tends to be fixed in schooling as confirming a necessary inequality, in which not only are social values to be differentiated between those who succeed and those who fail but in which some people are considered to lack the very ability to act out of one's freedom. Furthermore, schooling is to continuously confirm such inability to act by, among other things, testing for ADHD, for inequality to be naturalised rather than politicised continuously. Moreover, regardless if ADHD is a correct medical diagnosis or not, in the example given in this chapter, ADHD as explanation for violent inequality is also an inequality in geography, in which the discourse of 'areas of exclusion' constantly identifies parts of the city where school failure and violence, to a large extent, is to take place. It gives school failure a 'natural home', and each time someone drops out, this ontological reality is confirmed and relieves the successful schools and areas. As a response to such structural as well as symbolic violence, this chapter explored education and teaching as a non-violent act of humility and resistance, which open the possibility of a choice for the student and the teacher. It is a choice in which one can exercise one's freedom of not living in the land of inequality but fail to do so for the democratic possibility of verifying equality across differences in practice instead. Rather than carrying the weight of the one succeeding, failure points to a democratic possibility of assuming equality in social relations beyond success and failure. Education and teaching concern how to live well with others across differences in a pluralist democracy and are not fixated on failure and success but a practice of verifying equality.

Teaching cannot be about promoting the violence of exclusion and reproduction of powers already at hand for a few but is always directed to the freedom of the other. In the intellectual movement of sophist education, educational practice is implicitly bound with plurality and democracy, with a profound practice of equality and change. The next chapter will expand on this insight by making some distinctions and clarifications as bridges towards a sophistical education practice while adopting such a practice in the undertaking. What is mainly at stake in the following chapter is *aristocratic* versus *democratic* education, whose different aims, impact and consequences will be explored concerning themes running through this book, such as the possibility of plurality, change, equality and the role and function of violence in education.

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Chapter 3

Aristocratic Versus Democratic Principle of Education



Abstract This chapter explores a sophist tradition of educational thought concerned with the world and not a sphere of ideas distinct from the world and suggests some central distinctions and concepts following from such tradition today. Equality is highlighted in the chapter as a central concern for democracy and education and is discussed further through Jacques Rancière. The distinctions established will also clarify what is at stake if we consider educational thought conditional for democracy and a liveable life for anyone. The chapter concludes by suggesting that education is the ethical-political potentiality of a new beginning within the present order of things, and therefore the very *practice* of change of this order, and therefore what makes *paideia* possible in the first place.

Keywords Aristocratic principle · Democratic principle · Practice · Teaching · Democracy

3.1 Introduction

The first chapter discussed the time of production and made such time into a problem for its reduction and hindering of universities and schools from continuously unfolding the world's newness. A time of production, when transferred into a context of education, was shown to become a source of reproduction of *statues qua*. The free time of University and education as such was also shown not only to be a condition for University and school generally to function well as such but also to ultimately be linked to the possibilities of equality and democracy to emerge. The second chapter focused on a specific strategy of educational performativity, of teaching as a non-violent active resistance to forces of domination, and as such as

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an acting out, based on free time, against the destruction and aggressions implied by a time of production within a neoliberal worldview. The chapter developed an active practice, a strategy of non-violent ‘opting pout’ from the ‘land of inequality’ to counteract the violence and aggressions inscribed in neoliberal schooling.

In this chapter, such a tradition of thought that emerges from the sophist teachers will be further explored and made specific concerning education.

The following chapter reads Sophist education into certain ethical-political situations or events forming educational discourse today, intending to clarify some of the conditions for those events while showing a sophistical practice at work. Such practice moves us beyond education as informed by Platonian philosophy and instead explores a sophist education and teaching as necessary for education proper.

This chapter explores four distinctions to arrive at a preliminary definition of education within what I will call a Sophist tradition of educational thought read through Werner Jaeger’s volumes on *Paideia* (I, Jaeger, 1939/1965, and II, Jaeger, 1943/1986) among others, and to suggest some central distinctions and concepts for such tradition today. Such exploration is also inspired by the pragmatists and especially Richard Rorty (1980) and John Dewey (1966), the latter for whom Jaeger’s reading of the Sophists exposes ‘the fact that the stream of European philosophical thought arose as a theory of educational procedure’ (p. 331).

I understand tradition in the way McIntyre (1977) talks about tradition (Bernstein, 1983, p. 77, McIntyre, 1977, p. 461), as multiple narrations over time, necessarily running into contradictions by being retold over and over again in different circumstances and relation to different issues, and therefore in need of being constantly rethought, and put into use to be meaningful. The idea is not to find the correct account of a Sophist tradition of educational thought but to explore what can be done in the world under its spell.

In a way, this chapter strives to rethink education, which often ends up in a sharp divide between experience on the one hand and theory on the other, sometimes expressed as the distinction between theory and practice or between thought and action. The following will instead suggest that education is precisely the critique of such distinctions and emanates from somewhere else than in, for philosophy, a foundational separation between the world and thought (Rorty, 1980).

As such, education is not utopian thinking. It is an exploration of the distinction of the world and thought, the path beyond such distinction and the cluster of anomalies and issues it has given rise to in the course of the history of education. Educational thought is to take the attitude of what Rorty (1980) calls an edifying philosopher: ‘Edifying philosophers want to keep space open for the sense of wonder which poets can sometimes cause—wonder that there is something new under the sun, something which was *not* an accurate representation of what was already there, something which (at least for the moment) cannot be explained and can barely be described’ (Rorty, 1980, p. 370). Or, as will be explored in depth in the following, taking an educational point of view, since I do not think, as Rorty does, that ‘education sounds a bit too flat’ (p. 360), but rather as that which makes an edifying philosophy makes sense. That is, it is educational thought introduced by the Sophists that Rorty describes but does not fully own up to.

This chapter explores educational discourse emanating from the Sophists and, as far as possible, as unaffected by Platonic style theory ‘of the absolute difference between the eternal and the spatial-temporal’ (Rorty, 1980, p. 307). An edifying philosopher says Rorty ‘would like simply to offer another set of terms, without saying that these terms are the new-found accurate representations of essences (e.g. of the essences of “philosophy” itself)’ (p. 370). That is why it is appropriate to return to the Sophists’ introduction of educational theory since it is pre-Plato’s division of the world and thought and does not aim to represent essences. Alternatively, in Rorty’s own words: ‘We shall, in short, be where the Sophists were before Plato brought his principle to bear and invented “philosophical thinking”...’ (Rorty, 1980, p. 157). Instead, the following will make problematic how such an idea of a separate space of ideas from the world, and understood as eternal, when applied to certain political realities of today, will have some severe consequences for the very possibility of education and democracy to take place at all.

Therefore the line of thought developed does not accept Plato as the final word on the Sophists: ‘We must not depend on Plato’s account of them: for the point at which he constantly takes issue with them is not their knowledge, but their claim to teach *areté*, their connexion with life and conduct’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 294). It cannot be stressed enough; their idea that *areté* can be *taught* makes Plato constantly criticise the Sophists, not their knowledge or importance for the invention of intellectual culture. For as a fact, ‘They [the Sophists] were inventors of intellectual culture and of the art of education which aims at producing it’ (p. 293). Therefore it is not acceptable, as some have claimed, that the importance of the Sophist for educational thought should be judged on the basis that Sophists teachers were paid to teach (which is a critique, or rather a complaint, Plato has, see Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 297), while we at the same time overlooking the basic fact that the universe of Plato is anti-democratic and therefore anti-educational to its core and that his ideal State is as Arendt says ‘inhuman’ (2005, p. 37). In his Republic, everyone has his place already according to a strict hierarchy, motivated by access to the infinite space of ideas; it is, in that sense, an Aristocracy (See Bloom, 1991). Plato’s philosopher, says Arendt (2005), ‘establishes himself, basis his whole existence on that singularity which he experienced when he endured the *pathos* of *thaumadzein*. And by this, he destroys the plurality of the human condition within himself’ (p. 37). He destroys the possibility of difference and pluralism, a condition for democracy and education. Also interesting, if not decisive, is that the Sophists were not from the elite. They were not of noble heritage as Plato himself but of more modest origin (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 297). They would need to get paid to do what they did to be able to teach.

What is essential, though, is that the Sophists made education possible as change for *anyone*, in principle, in that *areté* could be taught and not be inherited by blood (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 287–288), as well as made *equality* central for the political world as well as nature: ‘Euripides describes equality, the foundation of democracy, as the law, manifest a hundredfold in nature...’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 324). The Sophists regarded equality as the foundational concept for the democratic organisation of life in the city-state (p. 321–322). It would be hard to call Plato a democrat, regardless of his impact on western thought in other matters and his sense of humour

(Rorty, 1980, p. 369, n15), which made his suggested *Republic* more ambiguous in meaning than what often is claimed. Since this chapter is about education, equality and democracy as a response to the plurality of the human condition, as Arendt (1959) says, in line with the Sophists, the choice of which tradition to start in when thinking about those concepts is not a hard one. The Sophists are not only the ‘Greek philosophers and educational theorists, starting from the educational experience of democracy’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 288) but those who made the such experience possible in the first place.

Educational thought is the foci of exploration, which will be imagined new, or again, through taking the pre-Platonic point of the Sophists and by way of four distinctions and a preliminary definition making sense of such tradition of *educational* thought today. The following chapters will expand further on a sophist discourse of education. That also means that this chapter, as all chapters in this book, can be understood as an example of such tradition at work.

As foundational for the Sophists, equality is discussed as a central concept for educational thought and expanded on with the help of Jacques Rancière (1991), also concerning an understanding of teaching. The distinctions employed make clear what is at stake if we consider educational thought as the Sophists did, as conditional for democracy (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 286; p. 322–324). In addition, the Sophists’ interest in everyday life and basically concerning the worldliness of the world here and now will in the following be read through Judith Butler’s (Butler, 2015) distinction between mere life and a liveable life (Butler, 2015; Säfström, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The discussion on equality and teaching will be qualified by also exploring Butler’s (Butler, 2020a, 2020b) argument on the equality of grievability and nonviolence, as such conceptions tend to promise an extension of equality beyond only concerning humans (Säfström & Östman, 2020) and the integration of the ethical with the political, which for the Sophists was a true sign of *paideia* (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300).

3.2 Upbringing, Schooling and Education

The first distinction is between upbringing, schooling, and education, and will be discussed shortly, each in turn. The suggestion is that we do not consider upbringing as primarily or exclusively an educational concept but rather as fundamentally designating the relationship between a parent and a child. That is, upbringing is what parents do to their children and gets its meaning through love at its whole meaning. Upbringing tends to be given meaning through parental love or the lack of it. A person who has been loved being brought up and knows this tends to be able to make multiple new social relations and extend them (Butler, 2019a, 2019b). Moreover, the other way around, if a person has not experienced parental love by whoever fulfils the role of parent, such a person tends to have difficulties with social relations and to sustain them (Farley, 2014).

Much more can be said about the importance of love for social relations, but here it is suggested that education is not in this way defined through love, but instead, through a commitment to the other, that is, through an ethical-political rather than psychological contextualisation of social relations (Säfström, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). To be educated, love is not necessary for the same way as it is for upbringing. For example, one does not need to love the student, but one needs to be committed to him or her to establish a relationship that is based on an interest in the freedom of him and her to be concerned with education (Biesta & Säfström, 2011; Biesta & Säfström, 2018).

The term schooling, as here understood (Säfström, 2011b), points to the interests and desires of an institution to incorporate an individual into the social order in which that order defines the place and role of the individual. For Ian Hunter (1994), this order of the school, or here schooling, is a construct built on a multiplicity of discursive constructs over time, of layers of bureaucratic governance and subject-forming pastoral care techniques. Schooling is to *socialise* the individual, incorporate her or him into a web of meaning, to inhabit specific values, norms and conducts of behaviour appropriate for the social sphere in question, for the person to be able to both be a member of that social context as well as realising oneself within that particular web of meaning. It makes the individual life meaningful and establishes the society as such (Durkheim, 1956). In addition to socialisation, as Biesta (2006) has pointed out, schooling also qualifies the individual to take one's place in the division of labour in the social sphere of work and leisure. Even though, as Biesta (2006, 2010) has claimed, one needs to understand socialisation and qualification as part of a tension within education itself, pointing towards different aims and spheres of education. As not possible to separate from a third aim and sphere, that of subjectification, I would still, for reasons of my exploration, temporarily exclude socialisation and qualification from education to get to the heart of educational thought. It is necessary to do so to clarify that educational thought is not already being associated with different disciplines and areas of thought which understand education basically as an object to which theory of one sort or another is applied when we turn to the Sophists (see also, Säfström & Saeverot, 2017).

Educational thought, or rather discourse, is the context in which objects and relations between objects and subjects take shape and form. That is, education is directed to and embraces the world. Still, subjectification is central to education also in the ways I want to discuss it here. Subjectification is meant, according to Biesta (2006, 2010), how a subject can say no, to distinguish him or herself as someone rather than being reduced to something. Subjectification is the process in which the subject avoids objectification concerning 'the desires and directions of others' (Biesta, 2017, p. 28). Schooling, as understood here, is a systematic institutionalisation of a particular state's desires to give directions to others, to mould the individual following a particular police order, as Rancière (1999, 2007a, 2007b) says, to be schooled as an individual of a particular type and shape. Instead, the individual takes his or her place in the world as a subject. In Rancière's (Rancière, 1991) discursive universe, being able to withdraw one's intelligence from 'the land of inequality' (p. 90) is to dis-identify (p. 98) with an order of the society in which

inequality is reproduced through schooling (Säfström, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c), and instead claim one's equal intelligence with everyone else (Rancière, 1991, p. 133). For Biesta (2017), subjectification demands emancipation. For Rancière: 'One need only learn how to be equal [...] in an unequal society' (p. 133) to be emancipated.

In order to reconnect to Jaeger's (1939/1965, 1943/1986) readings of the educational discourse of the Sophist, the following will with them understand education as expressions of specific ways to move within the world here and now and to embrace their insight that *areté* could be taught to anyone, and their opposition to teaching as the reproduction of an imagined essence of the elite according to Rorty (1980). The latter is a marker of Platonian educational thought and the birth of philosophy. As such, the Sophists are making culture common rather than exclusive, changeable rather than fixed, and therefore establishing education as an ethical/political discourse concerned with and operating in the world.

The Sophists (500 BCE) distinguished themselves from an aristocratic understanding of education in which the embodiment of culture, *areté*, could only be inherited by blood, and which therefore made education into a gesture for confirmation of what was already considered to be there, inside the aristocratic child, to be brought out and perfected by teaching, and through such perfection perfecting the city-state itself (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 286–287; Säfström, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). The sophists claimed three things against the Aristocratic principle: 1. *Areté*, how one embodies culture, cannot be a birthright of an elite. It is not exclusive but common; 2. *Areté* is achieved through education and teaching from the outside and is about the world to be taught; and 3. *Areté* is for *anyone*.

In other words, for *paideia* to exist as a particular social sphere, as culture, it needed to be *taught*, and anyone can be taught anything and embody *areté* as how one lives one's life. Furthermore, again, it is this Plato objects to. For him, *areté* cannot be taught. It comes with the blood. As such, Sophist education opens thinking up to the possibility of democracy since if anyone could be the bearer of culture by being taught; there were no exclusive ways of motivating the power of an elite to rule all others than power itself.

Democracy, says Rancière (1999), emerged as the shocking insight that power has no other justification than power itself (p. 16). According to the Sophists, there is no justification for an elite to rule all others based on a given since *areté* was not considered a birthright but taught, in principle, to anyone. As such, democracy comes into the world as a scandal meaning that anyone can partake in the continuation and change of culture and society, not only an elite reproducing themselves through institutionalised procedures such as schooling.

Such insight makes it possible to understand *change* since if there is no foundation for reproducing a particular group of people as superior and continuously realising their eternal destiny over time; then destiny is open to be directed by the will of people here and now. The sophists do not only open to democracy but to the possibility of politics, engaged with the world here and now (Jaeger, 1939/1965, 1943/1986, 1944/1986).

3.3 Aristocratic Versus the Democratic Principle of Education

The second distinction follows from the above: between an *Aristocratic principle* in education versus a *Democratic principle* in education or between reproduction and change. While an Aristocratic principle in education, as was explored above, focuses on the reproduction of an elite, the Democratic principle in education focuses on education for anyone and, therefore, on the potentiality of change. Such change is open-ended, ‘edifying’, and educational in that it does not strive to confirm essences but to live the present in which the potentiality of the future is to be invented anew (see also Dewey, 1939).

Nevertheless, another aspect also deepens the distinction between the two principles. While the Aristocratic principle is about the elusive space of ideas, the Democratic principle in education is about the world. As such, the distinction tends to be between philosophy on the one hand and education on the other. The allegory of the cave illustrates this distinction perfectly well and will below be read from within educational discourse rather than as a confirmation of the importance of philosophy.

A truth only the philosopher can see: In Plato’s allegory of the cave (Bloom’s, 1991 translation of the *Republic*), the humans are prisoners whose false lives are projected as shadows on the wall, and when one prisoner is led out to the light, he can see the clear air of ideas in which truth itself shines. The deluded prisoner of the cave is led out by him or her, who is not named. The one that leads by hand, the pedagogue, and the enslaved person, as Tony Carusi (2019) has pointed out, is a non-figure in the allegory, someone who serves a function but which he or herself carries no meaning. He is the unnamed one who releases one prisoner in paragraph 515c, and who is ‘someone [who] were to tell him that before he saw silly nothings, while now because he is somewhat nearer to what *is* and more turned towards beings, he sees more correctly’ in paragraph 515d of Plato’s *Republic* (see Bloom, 1991, p. 194). He who is not named leads the prisoner out in the world where the philosopher is blinded by the truth of his importance, deluded to be more than the world in the elusive space of ideas. The split between education as embodied practice in the world and philosophy as ownership over the space of ideas is made clear in this foundational allegory for the importance of philosophy and the subsequent unimportance of the practice of the pedagogue, the enslaved person.

The Aristocratic principle, as exemplified by Socrates, who tells the allegory, works to establish an exercise through which power is regained through deliberation, in which the clarification of ideas is the goal. Ideas already clear for Socrates, the philosopher who, as a character in Plato’s writings at least in part, is channelled through Plato’s political project (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p 17–27; ‘The Socratic problem’). As such, Socrates’ teaching is caught in the reproduction of something given rather than being open for the new to form itself in the present order of things. That is, even if one could argue that according to Socrates, everyone could reach the realm of clear ideas, Socrates would be the one to judge when that would be the case, from a position of superiority and power of being there already, therefore

always pointing out, in comparison, the other as ignorant (Todd, 2003, p. 28–30) and reproducing a Master – student relationship as one based on the reproduction of inequality. To be taught by Socrates is to be reminded of one’s ignorance until one is ready to take on the same position as Socrates. It is a process of stultification and sameness. Equality itself becomes a reproduction of sameness rather than an expression of a particular relation with the other, as other, within a plurality of humankind. Plato’s Socrates is not, what I can understand, an edifying philosopher in the meaning given by Rorty above is not in the practice of education, but is a philosopher in the exercise of realising and reproducing the infinite space of ideas, made clear through his method. A method in which the power of the same is reinforced, reproduced by excluding the Other (Todd, 2003, p. 30; also Levinas, 1969, p. 43).

The Democratic principle in education, as it was for the Sophists, is about the world and, therefore, about living in an ethical-political presence, not reproducing the elusive space of ideas: The Sophists, says Jaeger, ‘came into existence in response to a practical need, not a theoretical and philosophical one’ (p. 295): and, that they ‘did not understand philosophy divorced from life’ (p. 296), and therefore saw ‘ethics and politics taken together [as] one of the essential qualities of true *paideia*’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300).

For the Sophists, to educate was to be concerned about the world living in the world as such and not predominantly about the space of ideas as separate from the world. This difference comes down to different ways the Sophists, on the one hand, and the aristocrats, on the other, understood nature and how the law of social organisation was represented in nature.

3.4 Aristocratic Nature Versus Democratic Nature

The third distinction explores the distinction between aristocratic nature and democratic nature, the contrast between the principle of equality, which the Sophists emphasised as fundamental to nature itself, while the aristocratic perceptions of nature emphasised hierarchy and the rule (and therefore the right) of the strongest. Jaeger says, discussing the discovery of culture and nature as part of a human point of view, that; ‘they are, in fact, an aristocratic and a democratic conception of nature’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 324). While a democratic conception of nature emphasised expressions of equality found in, among other things, geometric forms, the aristocratic conception of nature aimed at showing ‘that nature is never ruled by mechanical *isonomia* [the political organisation of equality] but by the law of the stronger’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 324). For aristocrats, as Callicles, ‘the [democratic] law of [equality in] nature is directly opposed to the justice of men’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 325). The aristocratic view of nature followed the idea that ‘law [of equality] is an artificial bond, a convention agreed on by the organised weaklings to repress their natural masters, the strong, and make them do their will’ (p. 325). The strong, the aristocrats’ birthright of embodying *areté*, were to be protected from the democrats and were motivated by nature as the competition for and survival of the strongest.

Therefore, the law of equality for the aristocrats was artificial, while a valid law of nature reflected natural inequality and, the right of the strongest. The strong was already strong. The Aristocratic principle is a principle of reproducing an elite through schooling and is not concerning education for anyone other than what is reproduced as sameness. The Aristocratic principle is therefore also fixed and can be understood as a *fixion* in Lacan's sense, as a 'fiction one chooses to fix' (Cassin, 2016, p. 38), while the Democratic principle in education is a principle of *praxis*, a principle of engagement with change and the worldliness of the world, its fallibility.

3.5 Culture as Static Versus Culture as Praxis

The fourth distinction which follows from the above is between culture as static and culture as *praxis* and is leaning on Baumanns, (Bauman, 1999a) exploration of culture as *praxis* (which goes beyond Aristoteles understanding of *praxis*). The Aristocratic principle in education feeds an understanding of culture as fixed, natural, unchangeable, and only to be repeated over time, and is as such today at the heart of the New Right. That is the idea that culture as essentially unchangeable and eternal is at the centre of the New Right and are finding its inspiration in the French nationalist thinker in the late 1800s, Maurice Barrés:

Barrés theorised that the culture and the integrity of a nation were "eternal" and that any change to it, whether brought about by foreign influence or progressive politics, would bring about its demise. Any cultural change, be it to the arts, to the role of women, or racial assumptions, was seen to erode the spirit of the nation and its way of life (Orellana & Michelsen, 2019, p. 5).

We are basically in a situation today in which an Aristocratic principle gives meaning to public life, to the extent that such public life is an expression of nationalism, through the rise of nationalist parties all over Europe and other parts of the world (BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006>). The *fixion* of culture as unchangeable and eternal, for which nationalism is one expression, gives a specific direction to how schooling can operate in reproducing such *fixion*, in which the order of the society is already given and only repeated over time. Culture, as eternal, seems to make the change, emancipation and pluralist democracy itself into a threat to the very existence of a particular nation, and something that needs to be controlled, managed, and dealt with also through schooling, making nationalism a fundamental value for its curriculum: love your nation.

Schooling is the process of institutionalising certain hegemonies or *police orders*. That is, institutions, such as, for example, the school, the church, the military, and the police, are also specific practices which organise social life in particular ways and follow certain encultured perceptions of what social life is. The point is that what is channelled through those institutionalising bodies is a certain *fixion* of

culture, and increasingly today, culture is understood as eternal and represented by a particular nation, or rather by certain people within that nation, at the expense of others.

3.6 The Violence of the Aristocratic Principle

Even if nationalism cannot be reduced to include all variations of school policy all over Europe or the complexities of the conduct of schooling, the very idea of an Aristocratic principle of schooling seems to be present in the desires of a nation to identify itself as exclusive, based on a particular police order taking form through history, and to identify this order as based on a particular authentic self (which motivates its latent or explicit racism as well). If there is an authentic self, there is also an unauthentic self, the latter not being what one should be, understood as lacking in fundamental ways, and needing special treatment (Rancière, 2007a, 2007b, p. 105). Those who do not matter (Butler, 2015), lack matter, do not appear on the stage, are absent from the dominant web of meaning, being meaningless, and as such, do not fill their space and place within the nation, and risk, therefore, be treated as waste (Bauman, 2004).

Schooling, then, as an expression of nationalism, is to extract an authentic self, which is considered to already be there inside the child, representing the eternal order of national culture, simply in need of being brought out and perfected by teaching, which means to be perfecting the nation as well (Säfström, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). According to Fredrickson (Fredrickson, 2003), this mix of cultural exceptionalism and nationalism is what gives meaning to the latest stage of racism, cultural racism, in which ‘racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another based on differences that it believes are *hereditary an unalterable*’ (p.170; *my emphasis*). Change is impossible in other ways than for the individual to incorporate him or herself into the already given cultural order, which stays intact as such, at least in principle (Säfström, 2011a).

Since the order of society is an order we imagine (Castoriadis, 1987), materialised in institutions, and fixated by order of the *polis*, the police order (Rancière, 1999, p. 29), it is a particular *fixion* of the social, backed up by what is considered to be legitim power granted by the particular figuration of the State in question (Rancière, 1999; Rancière, 2007a, 2007b). However, as Culler (1987) has reminded us, the meaning of all actual orders is constantly deconstructed. That is, there is always a slippage, something not possible to be fixed, but deferred and dispersed, and every order is therefore temporary, can never be total, and is therefore in a mode of constant self-deconstruction (Culler, 1987, p. 98).

Violence is a necessary social bonding strategy in specific historical political contexts to keep up the image of a particular order as natural, sound and eternal (Žižek, 2008; Feldman, 1991). To hinder such self-deconstruction of the eternity of a (temporary) order, violence becomes a necessary condition of such order. Violence is essential for social bonding since, as Judith Butler explains, ‘certain social bonds are consolidated through violence, and those tend to be group bonds, including

nationalism and racism’ (interview with Judith Butler, 2020b, in *The New Yorker*). Such violent consolidation of social bonds is also necessary for capitalist society. Berardi (2017) says that ‘violence is no longer a marginal tool for social repression, but a normal mode of production, a special cycle of capital accumulation’ (p. 143). Violence, then, takes the form of a strategy for social bonding within the context of nationalism, racism and capitalism.

Violence, as understood in this context and as discussed in chapter two as well, is an aspect of the Aristocratic principle as such, overseeing and repressing the subjectivity of the other and the value of the other, and manifests him or her as an object of the desires of a nation to be reproducing itself in the light of its image of cultural authenticity; such violence seeks to purify its’ eternal essence of the individual expressed through the nation from which it is granted meaning (which is always a particular interpretation of culture).

Violence in line with, even if not identical with, the Aristocratic principle of schooling, then becomes an act of purification firmly uniting the purified, at the same time as it makes the ones not fitting such purification, into waste, disposable, not worthy of being granted the respect of life, treated as half-life. That is, violence, by the Aristocratic principle of schooling, becomes an overriding mechanism for regulating inclusion and exclusion of the social as well as an essential feature of that which is included, of the social bond, of the social as such. A prime example of how those mechanisms work in and through schooling, which will be expanded on in the following chapter, is the phenomenon of bullying, which seems to be part of any actual schooling in any society or nation at any time in the history of schooling. Moreover, schooling in such a context is to be understood as the primary process of purification of the authentic self of the nation, a strive for the final perfection: the end of time, of realising the fulfilment of history as such.

3.7 Educating the Democratic Principle

Education, in contrast, is given meaning through the Democratic principle, in which change and emancipation through *practice* is a potentiality of the present, not the past or the future. However, education is an instantiation of change in social orders (Säfström, 2003, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) and is therefore not reliant on violence for social bonding (which is not excluding acknowledging the metaphysical violence of existence). The aim of education is not in purifying essences, which are to be reproduced over time as a multiplication of a single authentic self at the heart of a particular nation, brought out and successively purified by an Aristocratic principle of schooling. The aim of the Democratic principle in education is, instead, to multiply social relations (the prime force of *Eros*, Butler, 2019a, 2019b) with those whom you may not know and to establish ways of sustaining those relations; which require, according to Berardi (2017) ‘to perceive the other as a sensible extension of one’s sensibility’ (p. 55). According to him, perceiving the other in such a way is also what we cannot do in an aristocratic order of the present since the ethical

catastrophe of our time' (p. 55) is precisely an inability to extension of sensibilities. The tragedy of our time, as understood in this context, is an inability to perceive education as the very form in which a sensible extension of sensibilities is made possible.

Education as *praxis*, or here specified as *practice* through the Sophists, is essentially historical in that it relies on differences of time and not on reproduction of the same over time. Change is a potentiality of the present here and now that it instantiates itself within the forces of schooling and breaks away from reproductive processes. As such, education takes place if and only if a (radical) change is a potentiality of the situation in which education is claimed to take place. The Sophists' introduction of change as educational discourse into intellectual history is radical since it is not relying on the repetition of a pre-given order of power, justified through fixation of inequality as natural and equality as cultural, but in acknowledging that the power of the elite has no other justification than power itself, and in the assumption that the law of democracy is *equality*, reflected from the human viewpoint in nature as well.

That democracy has no other justification than power itself is also the reason, says Rancière (2006), for why the elites hate democracy, and why, I say, that they likewise hate education since education takes place through the instantiation of radical change in the present, upsetting the privileges of reproduction from which the elite gain and sustain their position. Culture as *praxis* is immanent in educational thought as practice. The Aristocratic principle is not concerned about education at all, instead being about the reproduction of an elite through schooling and therefore blocks change and emancipation. Education without the instantiation of the potentiality of change is not education.

3.8 Education in the Sophist Tradition of Thought

Education in the Sophist tradition of educational discourse understands education as embodying the Democratic principle and what follows from such a principle: an interest in the worldliness of the world here and now through change and emancipation for the other. As such, education is distinct from aristocratic understandings of schooling and what follows from such a principle: an interest in the space of ideas informing reproduction and *fixion* of culture as static to secure an inevitable inequality. Once this is made clear, it is also clear that education, in the tradition of the Sophists, concerns itself primarily with the worldliness of the world and not the sphere of ideas of the philosopher as those ideas are applied to the world, separated from *praxis* and only ever, if at all, informing practice. Instead, education is a practice, in which equality is verified, and is as such that which makes democracy democratic.

Once this step is taken, that is, once we accept the absolute difference between schooling as a force of reproduction of power (Hunter, 1994) and the school, we can return to thinking about the school from within educational discourse and as taking form through the Democratic principle. In other words, a central concept for

educational discourse is *equality* since equality cuts right through the Aristocratic principle of reproduction and manifests the possibility of change and emancipation of democracy. For Masschelein and Simons (2015), equality is embodied in the very form of the school in which free time can operate, as was explored in chapter one. What is added here is that teaching, within a tradition of educational thought inspired by the Sophists, now means verifying equality in all instances of the teaching event and verifying that *areté* can be taught to anyone.

The following section explores equality, central to understanding education and democracy, through Jacques Rancière's reading of equality and Judith Butler's arguments for a liveable life, not just life, through her discussion on the grievability of all living: To clarify further how teaching operates, or performs, within a revitalised Sophist tradition of educational thought today.

3.9 Teaching Equality and the Grievability of all Living

The point in teaching within an ethical-political sphere of *Paideia*, in intellectual culture, is in verifying equality of intelligence (Säfström, 2020a; Rancière, 1991) because it changes how we treat and can treat the others for whom we are responsible as teachers (Todd, 2003; Säfström, 2003). Rancière (1991) says: 'Intelligence is not a power of understanding based on comparing knowledge with its object. It is the power to make oneself understood through another's verification' (p. 72). In assuming equality, in verifying equality a hierarchical relation between teacher and students, manifested through the order of schooling, is interrupted, and the teacher can no longer explain the world to the student as if the student did not live in the world already. Rather, the act of teaching connects different sensibilities of living in the world here and now, allowing new subjectivities to take shape and form, to appear anew in the present order of things; it is to be teaching equality, rather than reproducing already taken for granted objectified identities among other objects.

Teaching, as verification of equality, is not primarily about how to make sense of the world from a privileged centre but about a particular way of moving within the world to precisely realise one's equal capacity to speak together with others who, as Bauman (1999b) says, 'have the right to go on—differently' (p. 202). It does not mean that the teacher can no longer teach, rather the opposite, that is, teaching as verification of equality touches a common experience for teachers; it is in the saying teaching takes place, not in the said (Säfström, 2003). As a particular type of performativity, Sophist teaching will be developed further in the following chapter.

With Berardi (2017), to understand teaching as verification of equality is to acknowledge the ethical sensibilities as shared capacities of sense, to realise the sensing of the current order of things as an extension of one's capacity. Such partaking of the shared sensing of the order of things, which at the same time are uniquely your own and divided in between us, is the sensible ordering of the worldliness of the world in which we live, what Rancière (2007b) calls *le partage du sensible*. A

school is a form of equality which operate or at least has the potentiality to operate, as a particular *le partage du sensible* of plural democracy.

Equality within teaching, in line with Rancière (1991), does not mean equality in which everyone has to score the same on a test for equality to be confirmed. That is, equality is not a price given by someone to someone else, permitted or granted or something to be reached at the end of a long struggle. Equality, for Rancière, is not measurable in terms of either quantity or distance but is essentially about each and everyone's ability and capacity to live a life here and now, to speak and live together with others, to share meaning with those others, and through enacting this capacity equality show itself in practice, as a division of the social as one organic whole (May, 2008). Equality signifies at least two (Cassin, 2016). By acknowledging what Arendt (1959) calls the plurality of the human condition, equality, as the instantiation of at least two, divides that which presents itself as One, it divides the collective incorporation of *Ochlos*, the rallying of the pack: 'The two of division is the path followed by a One that is no longer that of collective incorporation but rather that of the equality of One to any other One' (Rancière, 1999, p. 32). In other words, and with a slightly different emphasis, *anyone* living is capable of an equally liveable life over difference (Butler, 2015, p. 69; Säfström, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), a life understood as valuable to live and therefore grievable if lost (Butler, 2020a, 2020b, p. 58). For Butler, for a life to be grievable, it has to have value. Grievability signifies the value of life. If there is a difference in socially valuable lives, that will show how lives are grieved in the social sphere when lost.

Equality, for Rancière, is not received from or granted by the State through a particular social and political organisation but is always claimed despite such organisation (Rancière, 2007a, p. 32–33) and, as such, always breaks into the political and social order of inequality. The claiming though is in the form of verification of equality, the claiming a consequence, an interpretation of an opinion enacted: *equality is practised* (Rancière, 1991, p. 137). Rancière is not talking about equality/inequality as reduced to particular institutional structures, but as the very way in which certain formations of speaking and allowing certain people to rule others, and the possibility of breaking through of such speech, by speaking *as if* one matter, even in cases when one is deprived of that right, or maybe particularly in those cases (Rancière, 1999, p. 58, p. 90; Ruitenberg, 2008).

The inequality Rancière talks about is inequality of appearance, of being denied a place on the scene of the social, and as included in and defined by a sure web of meaning as really there, as fully present, and as someone that matters, who makes meaning and not just noise. Rancière insists on active equality (May, 2008) as something we do, claim, act and perform based on an assumption that we all are equally capable of making sense. He insists that rationality is the insight that if I can make sense, the other can (Rancière, 1991, p. 57–58). That is, to assume equality is rational, to be contrasted with the irrational standpoint that only some are capable of making sense (telling the truth) while others do not, which instead is an expression of an unfounded power than a meaningful statement.

The insistence on the assumption of equality is making democratic politics possible but also makes education possible since, as the Sophists established, education

is the expression of and activating the Democratic principle in action. With Rancière, it can be said that such a principle is enacted through the verification of equality and, therefore, the verification of the possibility of education. It is an active gesture since ‘education is like liberty: it isn’t given; it’s taken’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 107).

Judith Butler (Butler, 2020a, 2020b), takes equality into another realm, including all life, not only human life but at least in principle animals and nature as well (Säfström & Östman, 2020). She does so by insistence on the presumption of grievability of all life (Butler, 2020b, p. 40). Butler argues that what has become increasingly apparent during the aids epidemic was not that all life matters to the same degree but that those affected by aids and the deaths of loved ones, partners, brothers, sisters, children and parents, were not to the same degree grieved as others who died of other causes. To publicly grieve them was somewhat considered wrong and unethical as if their lives did not matter, that they had themselves to blame, and were putting others in danger rather than being victims of the disease (Butler, 2020b). The aids epidemic as well as the sadistic killings of black men by the police (Butler, 2020a) in the USA, is a brutal example of the fact that society is founded on a fundamental inequality of valued life (Butler, 2015; Säfström, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

The pandemic of Covid-19 raging worldwide showed that choices made daily in intensive care units in hospitals, as well as political calculations, are precisely concerned with the issue of judging whose life is considered more valuable than others. If there is a shortage of ventilators, who will get them and who will be without, basically left to die? At what age are one disposable? Whose life would be considered ethical, rational or essential for the social and political order to save and whose life can be wasted? Privilege is not complete scale protection against the virus, and the privileged of the world cannot totally avoid the threats of falling ill, but certainly, its effects hit people quite differently and unequally (see *Financial Times*, <https://www.ft.com/content/5e6330de-1e95-4343-8424-184d19dc34b9>, *Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/09/america-inequality-laid-bare-coronavirus>). The pandemic created a situation in which the calculations of acceptable deaths based on differentiations in the value of life for some rather than others suddenly become exposed and made transparent. The pandemic shows worldwide, without any possible dubiety, that individual lives matter and others’ life does not matter to the same degree, regardless of how rational, scientific, philosophically or politically justifiable the calculations are claimed to be.

The difference between the incalculable value of life and those whose life is subject to the calculation is displayed: ‘To be subject to calculation is already to have entered the grey zone of the ungrievable’ (Butler, 2020b, p. 107). Furthermore, ‘[t]hose whose grievability is not assumed to suffer inequality—unequal value’ (p. 108).

Nevertheless, what if your life is not considered worth living if your life does not register as life? If you are, as Rancière (1999) says, included as excluded, at the margins of the social organisation of those speaking, as half-life making noise but not taking place? In discussing power, Foucault and Fanon, Butler says: ‘power is already operating through schemas of racism that persistently distinguish not only between lives that are more and less valuable, more and less grievable but also

between lives that register more or less empathetically as lives' (Butler, 2020b, p. 112).

That is, in order to break with such foundational inequality, the very distinction between grievable and ungrievable lives, that Butler points out, has to be questioned to its core by infusing life with the assumption of the equality of all lives, that equality is the first assumption in all encounters with the other, as Rancière says. Again, while Rancière assumes equal intelligence, Butler extends the assumption of equality through the presumption of grievability to all living. Both understand, however, in slightly different ways, such an act as an extension of democracy. That is for both, as for the Sophists, equality is the human viewpoint in nature and for political organisation, for democratic culture as such (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 324). Butler (2020b) makes the same assumption as the Sophists did, that the ethical and political is the true nature of culture, of *paideia*, and that equality is signalling how democracy operates within such culture: 'One reason the egalitarian approach to the value of life is important is that it draws from ideals of radical democracy at the same time that it enters into ethical considerations about how best to practice nonviolence' (p. 61). She continues, 'The institutional life of violence will not be brought down by prohibition, but only by a counter-institutional ethos and practice' (p. 61). Such ethos and practice, this chapter suggests, is the very practice of education.

The consequence of education, in which ethics and politics come together as the true expression of *paideia*, and in which the ethical emanates from the equality of grievability, I suggest with Butler (2020b) that '[t]he presumption of equal grievability would be not only a conviction or attitude with which another person greets you but a principle that organises the social organisation of health, food, shelter, employment, sexual life and civil life' (p. 59). Such principles profoundly alter how we approach life as we know it and therefore have political consequences. It establishes nonviolence as a principle for social bonding, as connected to how radical democracy operates. It establishes the verification of equality as an operational counter-institutional strategy of change and emancipation. Moreover, finally, it is precisely here that we find the tradition of Sophist's education today, as the very *practice* of a nonviolent democracy, among other things, in the teaching of, which means the verification of, equality of grievability of all life.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, Sophist education is central to the possibility of, as Jaeger said, even thinking democracy. The birth of educational discourse is pre-Plato and, as such, not reliant on the split between the eternity of ideas and the spatial-temporal world. The Democratic principle, introduced by the Sophists, makes education educational and focuses on equality in the world and nature here and now. Such equality here and now and in the world is taking a concrete form within teaching as the verification of equality in all instances of its existence. Democracy, as the political expression of equality, through Rancière, is not reduceable to ways in which institutions work,

and neither is it reducible to a way of life only. Democracy is instead, as this chapter has shown, the very possibility of a liveable life, to claim one's equality with everyone else's, one's equal 'grievability' as Butler says. That is, democracy is the ability, possibility and right to question the inequality of the order of power on which its institutions are based and divide that which presents itself as One to purify the universe. The exercise of democracy is to throw back any attempt of closure, to question any *fixion* of this as that as eternal, back to its contingency, its ambiguity, to figure out its meaning anew. Such throwing back demands that we sense the sensibilities of others as extensions of our own, that we multiply and extend social relations as well as what makes such extensions possible, and it demands education as an expression of the Democratic principle. In practice, Sophist style education today means to object to aristocratic ways of marginalising education through schooling and to embrace the force of living as a shared capacity to speak, to claim and to verify equality over difference, for anyone to take place on the scene, to appear. Education is the ethical-political potentiality of a new beginning within the present order of things and, therefore, the very *practice* of change of this order. Education is to imagine or unfold new ways of living, of speaking and being that allow us to hear what was before noise, to see what was before out of sight, to be presented to new subjects taking form on the scene on which we all live.

While this chapter discusses the sophist tradition by clarifying two radically different principles operating in the field of educational discourse, an Aristocratic versus a Democratic principle, the next chapter are discussing teaching against such background. Mainly focusing on the different temporalities those principles give rise to within Socratic versus Sophist teaching. The issue of time is central since what is at play in the tensions between (aristocratic) reproduction and (democratic) change is the possibility of difference and plurality. The tension between reproduction and change is all too often understood as a necessary *aporia* and a productive tension within the discursive field of education. The problem, though, is that reproduction in education is not possible to be formulated outside its aristocratic implications in that it brings with it specific conditions for how the real is organised as inequality, organising relations of inequality between the teacher and the student through that reality, as well as determining the role and function of content in schools. Instead of being aporetic, reproduction is always and everywhere anti-education. The following chapter clarifies what it means to teach within a sophist educational discourse, to perform the sophistical practice of democratisation in tension with such anti-education mistaken for being education proper and often taken as an ideal teaching model.

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Chapter 4

Socratic *Versus* Sophist Teaching



Abstract In order to make clear the very different ways in which time, as well as the relation between student and teacher, takes shape and form within education, this chapter explores two archetypes of teaching: Socratic teaching and sophist teaching. The chapter analyse the distinctly different ways in which power and the social sphere's organisation occur within each. Socratic teaching is shown to rely on a notion of time as reproduction, which involves reproducing the power structure of social order of inequality. By contrast, Sophist teaching relies on time to instantiate change and equality in the present. The chapter concludes by pinpointing that which is at stake in teaching is the possibility of a liveable life for all (Sophists) rather than only for some (Socratic)

Keywords Archetypes · Socratic teaching · Sophist teaching · Equality · Liveable life

4.1 Introduction

The distinction and tension discussed in the previous chapter between the reproduction of inequality fed by an Aristocratic principle in education, reducing education to a form of schooling on the one hand and the Democratic principle of education in which the possibility of change for anyone by necessity emphasise equality, points to an anomaly, or *aporia* in educational discourse. Such *aporia* tends to incorporate the tension as a foundational ideology for a theory of education by accepting that the motivation and intent of an Aristocratic principle are to be understood as education proper. The reproduction of an original social order of inequality is considered educational, rather than only reproducing an aristocracy as the centre of a naturalised hierarchy of power. Therefore, to move beyond such *aporia*, the chapter

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lifted the sophist teachers, for which the practice of equality is the foundation for education and that which informs ways of living with other people in the directedness of every day, in an actual city-state of a multiplicity of different people. Here, there is no natural foundation of power, but power is instead a result of the political process in the city-state, in which anyone, in principle, can partake, not just the elite. Education, therefore, is not reproducing *areté* as a property of a particular class of people but teaching *areté* to anyone, in principle. *Paideia* is not fixed but takes shape within teaching as such.

In this chapter are two archetypes for different understandings of what teaching is being contrasted, and precisely two archetypes for an understanding time within teaching. The first archetype is built on Socrates' teaching, and the second is on Sophists' teaching. What will be explored in the first part of the chapter specifically is how those archetypes logically imply two quite different understandings of time, as well as a difference in the way in which the student is to emerge within such time. The first part of the chapter shows how the teaching of Socrates implies a certain logic of time as reproduction over time, which tends to make the student measured against the (Master) teacher, which leads to, a) that the goal of teaching is basically to make the student the same as the (Master) teacher, and as such, b) reducing equality needed for democracy to sameness, while Sophist teaching relies on a logic in which teaching opens up for the possibility of difference and plurality, which make equality over difference possible, as a democracy of teaching.

The second part of the chapter expands on the critique of the archetype of teaching as reproduction by attaching such archetype to Rancière's (Rancière, 1991) critique of a pedagogical society, in which pedagogy and teaching are integral to the reproduction of inequality and a prime example of what is wrong with modernity. The expansion of critique is done to show how teaching as reproduction implies certain understandings of not only time but also society as necessarily organised around inequality. By referring to Judith Butler (2015), it is possible to show that what is denied in a society built on inequality is the possibility for the precarious populations to appear, that certain people are deemed as not existing as full members of the societies in which they live.

The Sophist archetype of teaching response to inequality is explored in a third section. In developing this archetype, the attempt of Biesta and Säfström (2011) in 'A Manifesto for Education' to take time out of the equation is briefly but pointily discussed. Such a move will be explored further by relating the discussion to the Sophist archetype of teaching and suggesting that the way forward is to acknowledge the ambiguity of time within teaching, both as an expression of the very procedures of teaching as well as what signifies the relationship between teacher and student. Here I will mainly explore the critique of the logic of One, which was discussed in previous chapters, and which both Rancière and Butler refer to, as well as through Barbara Cassin (2016), to return to the Greek pagan understanding of the other as at least two, both human and god.

In conclusion, time to teach is related to the possibility of ambiguity, that is, to the presence of the figure of *Ambi* that allows for the logic of at least two, for difference, in a history of time. The chapter concludes that such a figure places teaching

as the instantiation of change, and in that sense, both outside time and in time to teach, in changing the present order of things rather than reproducing such order.

4.2 Two Archetypes: Socratic Teaching and Sophist Teaching

In the following, two archetypes for different understandings of what teaching is being contrasted, and precisely two archetypes for understanding time within teaching. With archetype is meant a particular form which contains socio-psychic realities as well as particular ways of organising practical life. The term is borrowed from Jungian (Bishop, 2011) psychoanalysis since the archaic types of teaching explored in this chapter can be understood as being formed as primitive mental images early on in Greek culture that is present in the collective unconsciousness of today (Hughes, 1986). The idea of the unconscious *per se* is not discussed but is understood as a term that refers to layers within language itself (Wittgenstein, 1953/2001, Rorty, 1980). The archaic forms are, in that sense, particular ways of talking about and being within teaching and education, which imply certain given relations of power, perceptions of time and its function, and assumptions of the very reality in which one makes sense of one's doings. The archaic form gives meaning to how teachers and students interact for an event called teaching. It sets the parameters for how a student, as well as a teacher him or herself, are to emerge as such on the scene.

Initially, the chapter explores and develops the archaic form of Socratic teaching and the second form of Sophist teaching. The second form contrasts with the first to make them as straightforward as possible. That also means that for those forms to exist, they do not need to be in their pure form, as developed, but instead, the forms and the characteristics they imply can be used to make sense of education and teaching in concrete situations in which such activities are to take place. As such, they work as ideal types for teaching.

The point from which those forms are read is not from philosophy but from the point of education, read from within the tradition of the Sophists rather than from Socrates (and Plato). That is, the chapter follows Rorty in spirit, in what he called 'edifying philosophy,' which has been discussed in previous chapters as well, but not, in not wanting to name his approach education; 'education sounds a bit too flat' (Rorty, 1980, p. 360) since regardless of how it sounds for Rorty, it is educational thought that he describes and argues for. That he does not want to name edifying philosophy education is ironically adding to the point of this book that education belongs to its mode of thinking, which tends to largely be ignored by philosophers, even if not by philosophy. What is crucial for the standpoint this book takes, and why it deserves to be repeated, is the distinction Rorty makes between philosophy on the one hand and edifying philosophy (educational thought) on the other, since such distinction also gives meaning to two entirely different aims of education. To expand a bit on this, an edifying philosopher says Rorty (1989) 'would like simply to offer another set of terms, without saying that these terms are the new-found

accurate representations of essences (e.g. of the essences of ‘philosophy’ itself’ (p. 370). That is, with ‘Plato’s’ invention of philosophical thinking’ (Rorty, 1980, p. 157), two things follow according to Rorty, firstly what is established in intellectual life is ‘the absolute difference between the eternal and the spatio-temporal’ (p. 307), meaning that the role of the philosopher was to reach and inhabit the eternal space of ideas, the essences of philosophy itself, from which power to rule others flow, and secondly that the spatial-temporal world is inferior to the eternal space of ideas as well as people populating such world are deemed inferior. In his *Republic*, such an absolute split allows Plato to claim everyone’s fixed place in a natural hierarchy and absolute difference between the ‘philosopher-king’ ruler and the ones ruled (Bloom, 1991). What is also crucial for the argument in this chapter is that Plato’s philosopher king wipes out the possibility of human plurality within himself, says Arendt (2005, p. 37), while he establishes the plurality of the spatial-temporal world as inferior and incomplete. I will call the ambition to erase the necessary pluralism of the spatial-temporal world an Aristocratic principle. In many ways, Plato can be understood as writing against the Aristocracy of his time. He argues for a *Republic*. However, in that argument, he tends to establish an absolute distinction of inequality, which is a foundational function of an Aristocratic principle in education at work.

If power flows from access to eternal ideas and only certain people can reach this realm of power under certain circumstances, education, and teaching, according to an Aristocratic principle, is basically about the reproduction of the powers of such people. Teaching then needs to be directed to finding out who those people are. According to an Aristocratic principle, teaching confirms a privilege already taken for granted. Teaching then is not only directed to finding out who is worthy, but also that this worth is already considered being a capacity within certain people, who are considered to have the desired constitution, as being already someone particular in the society in which one lives. That is, according to an Aristocratic principle, teaching is a process to differentiate between abilities and talents, which are *not* considered to be a consequence of teaching, but which are there already, and teaching is the process in which those abilities and talents are confirmed. Education here is understood as the reproduction of what is already given, either by blood or natural gifts. From such understanding follows that time within education is to be understood as being based on the reproduction of a particular privilege, as those privileges are what make up culture as such, make up what is considered real and, therefore, what is to guide the social organisation, privileges only possible to be embodied by certain people. It is an idea of time as the reproduction of the same over time, and the Aristocratic principle in education is to guide the establishment of the same over time. There is no change possible which does not include the re-establishment of the same elite.

Socrates, the philosopher and teacher who is a character in Plato’s writings at least in part, is channelled through Plato’s political project, which Jaeger (1943/1986) discusses in a section called ‘The Socratic problem’ (p. 17–27), is caught in a reproduction of something given rather than to be open for the new to be forming itself in the present order of things. That is, even if one could argue that

according to Socrates, everyone could reach the realm of eternal ideas, Socrates would be the one to judge when that would be the case, from a position of superiority and power of being there already, therefore always pointing out, in comparison, the other as ignorant (Todd, 2003, p. 28–30) and reproducing a Master – student relationship as one based on the reproduction of inequality. To be taught by Socrates is to be reminded of one's ignorance until one is ready to take on the same position as Socrates. It is a process of stultification and sameness. Equality itself becomes the reproduction of sameness rather than an expression of a relationship with the other, as other, within a plurality of humankind. Plato's Socrates is not an edifying philosopher in the meaning given by Rorty above is not in the practice of education, but is a philosopher either in the exercise of realising and reproducing the eternal space of ideas, made clear through his method or a teacher who fixates ignorance while confirming the position of the Master. Socratic teaching aligns with a process through which the power of the same is reinforced and reproduced by excluding the Other (Todd, 2003, p. 30; Levinas, 1969, p. 43).

The idea of time within the archaic model of Socratic teaching excludes the other since his teaching is a reproduction of self-same at the heart of teaching following an Aristocratic principle. An Aristocratic principle transforms human plurality within the spatial-temporal world into a mono-culture of Masters and ignorant ones. The teaching of Socrates implies a certain logic of time as reproduction over time, which tends to make the student measured against the (Master) teacher, which leads to, a) that the goal of teaching is basically to make the student the same as the (Master) teacher, and as such, b) reducing equality needed for democracy to sameness, while Sophist teaching relies on a logic in which teaching opens up for the possibility of difference and plurality, which make equality over difference possible, as a democracy of teaching.

When the Sophists claim that *areté* can be *taught*, that how one embodies culture is not inherited by blood, but can and also should, be taught to anyone, they are radically opposed to Plato's ideas of the role of the philosopher as well as the order of the Aristocratic social sphere as such. The Sophists, as democrats, argue instead that it is not a natural hierarchy determined ultimately by an eternal sphere of ideas that is to motivate the social organisation, but instead, they started with the equality they found in nature and between men (Jaeger, 1939/1965 p. 324). Engaging in this context is also that one of the great Sophists, Euripides (480–406 BC), in his many plays, pictured this alternative democratic social order of equality by not only giving voice to men of lower standing but also picturing women as actors in their own lives. The Sophists did not understand 'philosophy divorced from life' (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 296); instead, they started in and stayed within the spatial-temporal order of the world, in which they found equality as the most decisive condition for natural as well as social life.

For the Sophists, equality was not reduced to confirmation of power already possessed by the Master, but rather that which organises the relation between citizens in the democratic city-state (pp. 323–324). For the Sophists, anyone could be taught anything, meaning that teaching was not to be confirming an essence already considered to be a property of certain people but the process in which anyone is brought

into the knowledge of the world in which he or she lives already. Education and teaching for the Sophists ‘came into existence in response to a practical need, not a theoretical and philosophical one’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 295). There is no separate space of eternal ideas to be clarified, and consequently, no group of people with a divine right to represent those ideas, and as such, naturally given position in society to rule all others. Instead, what needs to be taught for the Sophists is the very worldliness of the world, that we live here and now in a spatial-temporal world in which the ideas are embodied within the life one *de facto* live. The Sophists ‘did not understand philosophy divorced from life’ (p. 296), for them to be living here and now meant that education, basically was an ethical-political conceptualisation of lived, enacted, *paideia* (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300): Education as the *practice* of (democratic) culture.

Since teaching, for the Sophists, is not to confirm essence but to educate how to move within an ethical-political contextualisation of the lived presence, it is also the case that it is possible to teach anyone anything. That it is possible to teach anyone anything means that time is not given, as the reproduction of the same, but open-ended, time in education is a direction towards an ambiguous future and not a repetition of the same over time. Teaching within a Sophist tradition of education means that anyone can be taught and that abilities and talents are not given before one is involved in the teaching process. That is, abilities and talents are not considered natural but contextual constructs related to the world in which one lives. The Sophist teacher then is not aiming at purifying essences but to extend social relations across the plurality of the human condition in the actual spatial-temporal world in which one lives and to explore ways to secure social relations: That is, to extend social relations with those whom you may not know, or cannot know in full (Levinas, 1994; Todd, 2003). It aims at expanding the publicness of the public, not restricting it to the already privileged ones. The archaic form of Sophist teaching then necessarily involves conceptions of equality and change directing social relations and expansion of the public, not selection and restriction, and allows for a time as a relation and direction across difference rather than a reproduction of the same over time. Sophist teaching goes beyond establishing the absolute hierarchy of the ignorant and the Master as a condition for teaching, which does not exclude a teacher’s authority in a teaching situation. The Sophist teacher is still a teacher, meaning that authority in education is not given beforehand, but verified in the act of teaching itself (Säfström, 2003).

4.3 The Critique of the Socratic Archetype of Teaching as Reproduction

In this second part of the chapter, the critique of the archetype of teaching as a reproduction will be expanded on by attaching such archetype to Jacques Rancière’s (Rancière, 1991) critique of a pedagogical society, in which pedagogy and teaching

are integral to the reproduction of inequality, and a prime example of what is wrong with modernity. For Rancière, a pedagogical society is a society in which experts and those in power explain to the people why society, by necessity, needs to be founded on inequality. Such structure of explanation is also to be found within schooling, maybe in its purest form, in which the teacher explains the world for the student as if the student did not live in the world already. As if the student, to enter into the world's knowledge, must confess to being ignorant and continuously be reminded of his or her ignorance in the process of explanation. However, also, says Rancière, the message, in this case, is also such that you are continuously reminded that you cannot reach knowledge without knowledge being handed to you by a teacher, the latter which is also the one to decide when you reach such knowledge of the world that matters.

This structure of explanation continuously pushes people into a position of stultification, says Rancière (1991), since the only thing that stands fast is the inability to think for yourself, and fixates the position of the explicator, who becomes a Master who inhabits an absolute point of power from which all other things can be judged, legitimised and reproduced. Such structure operates through schooling as well as other institutions through society, says Rancière (1991), and points to how modern society is not only built on but continuously practices inequality rather than equality.

Such inequality has, among other things, mainly through the neoliberal flooding of the psycho-social world (Berardi, 2017), rapidly increased social inequality in the liberal democracies affected (OECD, 2015). Judith Butler (2015) shows how the rapid increase of precariousness of large part of populations in Western democracies is not accidental but directly related to not only how the neoliberal economy works but also to institutions responsible for the security and the stability of the social sphere. In an analysis of security policy, or instead, what she called 'the rationale for militarisation' (pp. 16–18), Butler shows how such rationale is reliant on a distinction between the people on the one hand and the population on the other, between those whose bodies populate a territory and those who are also recognised as political subjects 'the people' of a particular nation worthy of defending. That is, what is established is an absolute distinction between those who are to appear on the scene and are understood as valuable for society as a whole and those who are ignored as more or less worthless, between those whose voices matter and those who cannot be heard, between those who inhabit the scene, and those who are not there, not existing as full members of the society in which they live. It distinguishes between mere living and a liveable life (Butler, 2006, 2015).

A prime example of the institutionalisation of inequality is how bullying continuously takes place in schooling, not as an arbitrary consequence of schooling, but instead as its very way of functioning, bullying as a sharp divider of what matters in schooling and what who does not. Interestingly enough, when discovered, bullying is often accompanied by surprise and has not been seen, even though the victim of bullying repeatedly has been trying to be heard, to take place among those who matter (Friendsrapporten, 2017). Bullying is such an example of how inequality is practised as an unavoidable reality deciding who and what can take place on the scene,

who can and cannot be seen and heard, and functions as a reproduction process of specific established power structures over time. Such reality structures the very (im-)possibility of appearing as an actor in one's own life.

Butler (2020) describes something similar when it comes to racism. Some people do not register as fully alive, not really as lives, no longer part of the people, but precarious populations. Precariousness, then, for Butler, is not only a socio-economical position but an existential threat to liveable life as such. People placed in precariousness due to a produced reality of inequality are not only passively silenced on the scene but actively excluded from the scene altogether, from liveable life, from being a fully grievable life in the first place (p. 28). The violence afflicted on black lives in the US is an appalling example of how inequality is not only a matter of civil rights and duties but fundamentally about who and what can appear as a life that matters, as a life that is equally grievable beyond calculations of the value of that life (Butler, 2020, p. 107). To have been entering the sphere of calculation is to have already been entering a foundational inequality of lives that matters more or less, says Butler (2020 p., 107).

Inequality is, therefore, not only a socio-economic reality but a defining characteristic of this very reality in the first place. The Aristocratic principle is, as such, not only a principle for certain relations of inequality and reproduction of power within and through institutions or institutionalising processes such as schooling but is instead established as the very reality as such. Education and teaching in this reality are aiming at the purification of (some) essences rather than at extensions of social relations across differences. If time is not the repetition of self-same over time, but signifying a possible change through shifting relations between self and other across difference, then the Aristocratic principle infuses no time in given realities, only reproducing the only reality of inequality.

The following section explores the logic of One, challenged by the logic of at least two, to implode the Aristocratic principle from within and to do some ground-work for education and teaching beyond the reproduction of inequality, which will be developed further detailed in chapter five.

4.4 The Sophist Archetype of Teaching as an Adversarial Response to Inequality

This section starts with a short reflection on the *Manifesto for Education* (Biesta & Säfström, 2011) since one of the reasons for developing the Manifesto was to respond to Rancière's critique of a pedagogical society by taking time out of education. That is, since Rancière (1991) seemed to equalise pedagogy with modernity (at least according to the introduction to the mentioned book), the Manifesto was to show that such correlations were not grounded in educational thought *per se*, but rather in a misplaced understanding of pedagogy.

The Manifesto neither aimed at understanding pedagogy in terms of always better (as the inherent call of modernity tended to be) nor at reproducing inequality through specific exploratory exercises. In taking time out, it aimed to understand education as an expression of the very *practice* of democratic culture and, as such, as an expression of the interest in the freedom of the other rather than oneself (Biesta & Säfström, 2011). What was taken out was a particular understanding of time in education as internally linked to progress, to the always better of modern society, and particularly time as the reproduction of the Aristocratic principle within such an idea of progress. The Manifesto argued for the inherent historicity of education as other than the repetition of self-same, it moved beyond the trap of the Aristocratic principle and what in this chapter has been called Socratic teaching.

What is so valuable about how the Sophists introduced the educational practice in contrast to Socratic teaching is that such practice was firmly grounded on equality, in principle, grounded in a democratic idea that radically opposes the Aristocratic principle of inequality. The Sophists understood that culture could and should be *taught*, that how one embodies the culture and carries society as an expression of *areté* could be taught, in principle, to anyone. Also implying that the responsibility for the democratic order of such a city-state, in principle, were shared beyond an exclusive elite (the latter permanently in need of repressive violence to protect one's privileges and keep social order).

Education was about how to move in the world of others in teaching anyone *areté*. Teaching for the Sophists is rather about moving into the spatial-temporal world in which one lives already, a world populated by a multiplicity of others. It requires another logic than if the world was already there, determined, embodied only by a particular class of people, and repeated over time. According to Barbara Cassin (2016), such a Greek world understands time as not a reproduction of the self-same over time but as essentially an open and ambiguous present. That is, time here goes beyond what Cassin (regarding Lacan) calls the 'fixion of culture' (Cassin, 2016, p. 38) and open for change and relations across differences as significant for culture, for the presence of *paideia*.

Sophist education opens for difference as a cultural context and how the 'I' takes form, which can never be in an ethical relation equalised to itself. Ethics is not possible as reproduction and verification of self-same. To make ethics possible, and as referred to in previous chapters, then 'I' cannot possess itself too firmly since, as Butler (2015) says: 'If I possess myself too firmly or too rigidly, I cannot be in an ethical relation' (Butler, 2015, p. 110) because there need to be a 'very specific mode of being dispossessed that makes ethical relationality possible' (p. 110).

The Sophist's education is the very practice of democratic culture of change and equality across differences, of being with the other as at least two, 'both human and god' (Cassin, 2016, p. 10) and is therefore ethical. For the Sophist, the ethical response was not located within an application of certain eternal ethical principles outside the spatial-temporal world in which one lives but located within judgements rooted in experiences of the world as such. Again, the Sophists did not understand philosophy divorced from life and consequently understood educational thought as concerning how to live one's life well with and among others and teaching as the

procedure of embodying *areté*, that is, to embody the virtue of living well with and among others.

A Democratic principle in education, then, as influenced by the Sophists, not only emphasise equality, but equality across difference, a difference that extends to the idea of a person as well, and concerns how to live well with the other, as other in and through *paideia*, the ethical and political space created. The logic of at least two opens for another understanding of time in education than as a reproduction of self-same. It establishes a foundational ambiguity at the heart of educational thought and is populating the world with more people than an image of a male aristocrat living an authentic life. The latter, if we follow Rancière (1999) as well as Butler (Butler, 2019a, 2019b), is born out of a logic that within itself destroys, what with Arendt (1959) can be called the irreducible plurality of humankind.

Such logic, Rancière describes as the logic of *Ochlos*, as the creator of totality, in which the suppression of the other is finite and total, *Ochlos* becomes ‘the hate-driven rallying around the passion of the excluding One’ (Rancière, 2007a, 2007b, p. 31). For Butler (Butler, 2019a, 2019b) such logic is what makes Hobbes picture the world as essentially coming into being through a grown man, without a mother, as if never being a child, but fully grown man ready to be contractually and rationally attached to the society in which he lives. Such society and the world make *Ochlos* into a masculine world of One, according to Butler (Butler, 2019a, 2019b). The Aristocratic principle then can also be understood as a principle of patriarchy. It is patriarchy dependent on time as the reproduction of an eternal power position, and as such ends time, ends the possibility of ambiguity and change. The Aristocratic principle strives to end history as such (Rorty, 1980).

To teach in time, which demands ambiguity and change, refuting the Aristocratic principle as a defining characteristic of education is essential. That a reproduction of power is not what makes educational practice significant but rather what hinders such practice; another way of expressing this state of affairs is to say that what we need to do is to put time back into education but then understand the backdrop of change and equality across differences, and as beyond the reproduction of the patriarchy of One. Barbara Cassin’s readings of the classical Greeks, in which she pointed out that the other in the pagan understanding of a person is both human and god, gives reason for interaction and relations in the spatial-temporal world, not as the application of values but as the realisation of lived values within the very practice of the relation, and here in the relation of teaching. If we understand students as both humans and gods, we can, with the poets, as both Cassin (2016) and Rorty (1980) do in another context, understand students and teachers alike as the creators of the newness of the world, a world in which one lives already. The poetry of teaching will be further developed in chapter five by pointing out the centrality of improvisation in teaching, as central for the sophists (see also Säfström & Rytzler, 2023).

Teaching then is directed towards the emerging newness of everyone in their godly human appearance on the scene we share with others, rather than understanding teaching as the reproduction of set identities in likewise set structural conditions of Aristocratic power reproducing a self-defined elite.

4.5 Time to Teach and the Possibility of Ambiguity

Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi (2017, p. 55) says, as have been lifted in previous chapter, that ‘the ethical catastrophe of our times’ is the inability to understand others’ sensibilities as extensions of our own. It is precisely here that a Sophist tradition of education, as has been explored above, make so much sense, because if we live in a world of others with whom we interact across difference, then the very role of education is to expand the understanding of our sensibilities as extensions of others. In other words, the role of education is to expand the publicness of the public, not to restrict and to divide into mere life on the one hand and liveable life on the other, not to separate the people from the population, not to select between those who matter and those without voice or presence. That latter is the work of the brute power of reproduction when dominating education, turning it into schooling alone.

Education in the Sophist tradition of thought today, when introduced, is for anyone and aims at expanding the publicness of the public, expanding what Butler calls popular sovereignty. As such, education is necessary for democracy to exist as democratic. Teaching the other as both human and god introduce an essential ambiguity into the heart of an educational relationship. That is the figure of *Ambi* allows for at least two, for difference, for a history of time. *Ambi* signals not one or the other, but both simultaneously, and therefore plants essential undecidability at the heart of the relation between people, which forces us to reflect and think in the present, opening up such a presence for the mystery of the other, the radical unknowability of the other, rather than pinning someone to his or her place in the hierarchies of inequality.

To teach can be understood as an instantiation of change in the present order of things. It is an intervention into powers of reproduction of the self-same and lets us negotiate how to go on with others who have the right, as Bauman says, ‘to go on –differently’ (Bauman, 2000, p. 202).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified two archaic modes of teaching, called Socratic teaching versus Sophist teaching. They have been developed out of the different logic underpinning those modes of teaching, rather than as historical artefacts. That means that the complaints about the Sophists, that they charged money to teach (Plato), or the critique that they taught anyone (Plato again) who had money, is a somewhat deserved critique when we consider the Sophists as historical artefacts. Greek society at the time, in general, enslaved people, excluded women, and paedophilia with particularly young boys was an accepted practice among the elite, to mention some of the complicated factors that enter into a historical analysis of Greek society (Bloch, 2001). What is emphasised in this chapter, not simply being a history of the sophists, is that what the Sophists opened up for despite their severe shortcomings in other matters was the possibility of even thinking of democracy (Jaeger, 1939/1965).

It is, in other words, because Euripides (480–406 BC) is a democrat for which equality is the founding practice and a Sophist in his teaching, that his public pedagogy gives voice to both men of lower standing as well as women. Euripides' play 'Helen' (first performance 412 BC) is an excellent example of the latter, in which Helen not only save her own life through her virtue and intelligence but also the life of her husband (Euripides, 2008). Even so, my concern has been exploring the very different logic underpinning Socratic teaching and Sophist teaching as ahistorical when it comes to organising social relations. Historical ways, particularly the Sophist understanding of education, make time possible like something other than the reproduction of self-same. What also has become clear is how teaching, in general, can be understood as not reducible to one or another technique of teaching, but that different modes of teaching are embedded in the very way we understand and organise the real as such, which also implies that there is nothing else in the world which does not also belong to the world. For the Sophist there is no separate space (of ideas), which could be called the meaning of the world, that is not already within the (educational) practices that comprise what we do in the world. That something so intimately educational, such as explaining something to someone, can be understood as the very way in which the reproduction of inequality within the social sphere takes shape and form.

Furthermore, contrasting those archaistic modes also clarifies that when we shift from one to the other, much more than education is at stake. What is at stake, still, is the possibility of a liveable life for all rather than only for some. Education and teaching are the very *practice* of democracy and that which makes democracy democratic. The possibility of time in teaching is that which expands the publicness of the public.

While the first chapter contrasted what was called productive time with free time and showed how the introduction of productive time into university and schooling dramatically shifts the very possibility for those to contribute to the newness of the world, democracy and change, and therefore to the plurality and equality central for education proper, this chapter explored time as different ways of teaching. Those methods of teaching, archaic in their construction, operate in concrete ways within contemporary and competing understandings of education and contribute to radically different ways in which teacher and student are positioned and, therefore, how the social organisation is performed. The second chapter specified a teaching strategy, a certain ethical and political performativity directed against the aggression and violence produced by an Aristocratic principle in education implicit to neoliberal world views, and in defence of teaching as democratisation beyond such violence. The next chapter will pick up all the threads from the previous chapters and read them into a *sophistical practice*, and in that sense developing a coherent context for understanding education and teaching as belonging to the everydayness of liveable life rather than as a politico-scientific instrument for perfecting man and state based on naturalised inequality.

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Chapter 5

A Sophistical Practice of Teaching



Abstract This chapter explores how education and teaching are or can be a sophistical practice. It takes inspiration from Cassin's reading of the Sophist, Rorty's critique of Platonian philosophy, and Rancière's understanding of teaching as linking different worlds. The chapter explores in detail what makes teaching a democratisation process based on a sophistic discursive practice.

Keywords Sophistical practice · Teaching · Improvisation · Kairos · Poesis · Techne · Democratisation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a sophistical practice is formulated as that which both are limiting the aspirations of philosophy as well as other disciplines concerning educational discourse, as well as establishing another image than an original social scene fixating inequality to be reproduced over time as education proper. Such specification has been prepared for by discussing teaching and school in terms of free time, as directed towards the freedom of the other, and as a certain performativity of non-violent resistance when such freedom is under threats, and as a necessity for a liveable life among a plurality of others in the everyday.

In this chapter, teaching is explored as a sophistical practice through a close reading of particularly Cassin's (2014a, 2014b, 2016), Jaeger's (1939/1965, 1943/1986), Rorty (1980, 1982, 1990), and Rancière (1991, 2007a, 2007b) work, among others.

The chapter is mainly an exploration guided by three questions; firstly, how come Sophist, educational thought, so crucial for the very birth of western democratic culture as we know it, is dominated by philosophy and other disciplines? Secondly, what consequences, or effects, does such domination have for the

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possibility of a Sophist educational tradition of thought and practice today? Thirdly, how can teaching as a sophistical practice be reclaimed as a practice (discipline) of democratisation and democratic culture from which it emanates? Those questions serve as directions to the exploration rather than a demand for a definitive answer. They are, as such, part of a larger project of reclaiming educational thought and practice, to which I am contributing (Todd, 2009, Biesta and Säfström 2011, Biesta, 2014, Masschelein & Simons, 2013, Säfström & Saeverot, 2017, Hodgson et al., 2018, Yosef-Hassidim & Baldacchino, 2021, Hoveid & Hoveid, 2019).¹

The first section explores the making of the Sophists as the enemy per preference for philosophy and the constitution of a theory of education through a Platonian/Aristotelian domination of educational practice. Such a theory of education is shown to establish the relationship between man and state, give meaning to the idea of schooling, and define teaching as the reproduction of an original social scene. The second section breaks away from a Platonian/Aristotelian education theory and makes its foundations problematic in science-based education.² In a third section education is discussed as certain performativity of pedagogy, as pedagogy and education are understood as a sophistical practice. In the fourth section, teaching is explored as a sophistical practice of democratisation, and some aspects that follow for teaching are developed in detail. Particularly the poetic moment in teaching is examined through the Greek concept of *Kairos*. Here the precise moment of democratisation in teaching is made clear, as well as the exact point at which a Platonian/Aristotelian education turns violent and the nature of such violence. A fifth concluding section summarises a sophistical practice of education and teaching as contributing to a liveable life in democratic culture beyond the *stasis* of Platonian/Aristotelian education (and state).

5.2 The Making of the Sophists and the Subjugation of Educational Thought and Practice

The Sophists are primarily treated in intellectual history, if at all, as orators for the sake of oration without any real attachments to Truth (with capital T) and, therefore, as excluded from philosophical thought altogether (Cassin, 2014b). Traditionally, philosophy is construed as the extreme opposite of what the Sophists taught, and sophism is the very negation of everything that philosophy aspires to be.

¹Many more could be mentioned, but here only some of those I have been in direct conversation with on issues central to this chapter.

²With ‘science-based education’, I will primarily mean educational thought founded on ‘science as first philosophy’ and formal logic as founded by Aristotle, and today as expressed through positivistic or quasi-positivistic desires. The so-called ‘evidence-based’ movement in educational research exemplifies such educational thought (see Biesta, 2006). As the chapter develops in detail, I will also mean any attempts to ground educational thought on ‘ontology’, to argue for (absolute) Truth in educational endeavours as science-based.

From this also follows that since the Sophists introduced educational thought into intellectual history and as guidance for life in the city-state, philosophy, to establish itself as the founders of Truth for its own sake, needs to be controlling the teachings of the Sophists. It needs to be securing Truth by denouncing the Sophists and, by so doing, leaving educational thought in a precarious situation. As will be explored in the following, what is created is a pattern in which educational thought always needs to be paired with other disciplines, controlling the ‘half-truths’ of educational thought. The domination of philosophy over education signifies the straightforward colonialisation of educational thought, motivating, among other things, the need to tame education.

A similar point is made by Masschelein and Simons (2013) in their studies of schools/education; the Greek *Scholé*, as they explain, is a form of equality implicitly public and democratic, therefore: ‘The taming of the school[...]implies the re-appropriation or re-privatisation of public time, public space and ‘common good’ made possible by the school’, and they suggest that the history of school could be read as ‘a history of taming; a series of strategies and tactics to dispel, restrain, constrain, neutralise or control the school’ (p. 51).

While Masschelein and Simons (2013) develop an argument and analysis in which they specify different ways the school and the teacher are getting tamed through politicisation, pedagogisation and naturalisation, the following will contrast focus on the theoretical ideology,³ in which the taming is made possible. The primary interest in this chapter is in teaching, not the teacher, education, or school. What is explored is the very discourse practices⁴ establishing this as that, discourse as a reality lived as embodied discourse (Cherryholmes, 1988). Therefore, and in line with such an approach, the taming of educational thought and action is not so much a taming of form as it is a history of domination of educational thought and practice.

According to Jaeger (1939/1965), the subsequent domination over educational thought and practice was prepared for by Plato in his aversion towards the Sophists. With their acceptance of a limited truth within the finitude of living and the experiences of practical life as the bases for thinking and acting, the Sophists challenge Plato’s aspirations of establishing philosophical thought as the essence of Truth and as unlimited in its claims. The Sophists challenged philosophy by showing the limits of philosophy: ‘The doctrine of the sophists is indeed an operator that serves to circumscribe and define the scope of philosophy’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 30).

What follows from Plato’s visions is not a society possibly changing as an effect of how people interact or perform culture, as it did for the Sophists. Instead, how one is to take place in culture is, in Plato’s universe, fixed in which *the original*

³I understand theoretical ideology as developed by Brante (1980) and others as that foundation that cannot be proven but which, in their conceptual apparatus, needs to be taken for granted for a particular theoretical structure and object of knowledge to carry any meaning.

⁴Practices, like discourse, says Cherryholmes (1988), ‘are constituted by connected and overlapping sets of rules that organise and give them coherence’(p. 4). Moreover, rules, he says, are what we value as such.

scene of the social, as presented in the *Republic* by Plato, is already set, and reproduced over time; ‘the farmer is a farmer and the potter a potter’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 123, Bloom, 1991, p. 98, # 421a, in *the Republic*). As such, *areté*, the embodied and performed culture and its values, is for Plato fixed and cannot be taught but only inherited, while the Sophist claims the radically opposite, that *areté* is first and foremost *taught* in different ways of performing culture (Jaeger, 1939/1965). Also, as Rorty (1980) says, Plato ‘invented philosophical thinking’ (p. 157), and in that invention distanced himself from the educational thought and practice of the Sophists’ who understood education strictly to be about how to move well among others within every day of social life.⁵ It means that within a Platonian style philosophy, there is a strand of anti-sophist and anti-education sediments inscribed as defining characteristics of a tradition of philosophy. Such anti-sophist and anti-educational sediments continue to undermine educational thought through Aristotelian systematisations of a Platonian philosophy and universe (See Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 22–24, and p. 80–81, Cassin, 2014b).

While the Sophists ‘must take account of the diversity of opinions, the mediocrity of peoples’ actual behaviour, and finitude in its lived reality’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 117), Aristotle instead, and in line with Plato’s invention of philosophical thinking, did not need to be concerned with the mediocracy of people’s actual behaviour or diversity of opinion. The very aim of an Aristotelian first philosophy of science was instead to control and master the ambiguity of the Sophist’s spatial-temporal world’s everydayness to perfect dysfunctional human behaviours, thereby perfecting the state (see Jaeger, 1943/1986, and below).

The Platonian/Aristotelian universe was to dominate the Sophists’ practice-oriented world in establishing theoretical science ‘to be the true, the “highest” kind of culture and replace or *dominate* the current educational discipline’ (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 318; *my emphasis*).

A Platonian/Aristotelian Theory (Science) links the *absolute* (Truth) to the *hierarchy* (the Highest), as well as to *the colonisation* of everyday life as expressed through the domination over education. Ironically establishes a foundational anomaly in which philosophy/theory is to dominate education/discipline from within a renewed understanding of education: ‘...Plato and Aristotle were the first to work out the full educational importance of pure science’ (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 318). That is, *pure science*⁶ was to dominate educational thought and practice rather than the educational discipline of ordinary life (*areté*); this ‘...new subject [science] which demanded so much time and energy for purely intellectual studies divorced [educational thought and practice] from the interests of ordinary life’ (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p.318).

⁵ Plato, says Rorty, (1980), and as we also saw in previous chapters, introduced the split between eternal ideas and the spatial-temporal world, while the Sophists denied such distinction and stayed within the spatial-temporal world as such, or what I call ‘the everydayness of life’.

⁶ Regarding *pure science*, see also von Wright (1989), who distinguishes between two forms of rationality within science, very much in line with the distinction made in this book between Platonian/Aristotelian and Sophist educational thought.

The operation in which educational thought is subsumed by philosophy and science is complete with the Platonian/Aristotle domination of the educational thought of the Sophists. From this point of domination, they argue that the Sophists' emphasis on ordinary life and *paideia* as eminently political and ethical is at the risk of what they saw as producing a 'half-truth'. Since the Sophists were not concerned with Truth for its own sake, with theory and formal logic, the Sophists:

[w]as in danger of teaching half-truths—unless [morality and issues of the state in praxis] it could be grounded on genuine and thorough political thought, searching for the Truth for its own sake. From this point of view, Plato and Aristotle later attacked the whole system of sophistic culture and shook it to its foundation (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 293).

These anti-sophist and anti-educational stands are brought to their final close, in which the Sophists' becomes *the* enemy of philosophy by the Aristotelian dehumanisation of the Sophists (Cassin, 2014b, p. 32–34): 'excluding all those who do not fall under his [Aristoteles] demonstration from humanity, from the outset, "for such a man, as such, is like a plant, from the outset"' (Cassin, 2014b, p. 35).

The dehumanisation of the Sophists is based on an Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, in which 'to speak is to say something that has meaning, and that this meaning is the same for oneself and for another' (Cassin, 2014b, p. 34), which, among other things leads to that in denying the principle of noncontradiction one has already been forced to accept it 'at the very moment he denies it' (p. 34) by confirming its' meaning negatively.

Aristotle makes this argument as foundational as ontology, says Cassin, and as a condition essential for defining what humanity is and who belongs to humanity. This move says Cassin is, first and foremost, 'a war machine against *homonymy*' (p. 35), in which a word can have identical spelling and pronunciation while maintaining different meanings. However, says Cassin, 'by making an entire dimension of speech philosophically and ethically inaudible, one has confused otherness with nothingness' (Cassin, 2014b, p. 36). I will return to the Sophist's views on *homonymy* below when discussing how such thinking in which homonymy is not a problem relates to how the Sophists understood politics of equality and consensus. The latter, in which plurality remains and is not erased by a consensus, is necessary for the foundation of the (democratic) city.

My point is that the construction of what can be called Platonian/Aristotelian education excludes, per definition, education as *practice*, as performing culture and as inherently bound to the everydayness of lives lived by a plurality of people interacting with each other in concrete environments. As filtered through a Platonian/Aristotelian style philosophy, education is implanted with an understanding of theory and formal logic, internally linking Truth with hierarchy and education as inferior to philosophy and the Sophist as a plant outside humanity. In short, Platonian/Aristotelian style education implies the Theory of the 'One' unlimited Truth and social hierarchy dependent on such Truth, while Sophist education implies disciplined practice to live well with a multiplicity of others in the democratic city-state.

5.2.1 *The Perfect Man and the Perfect State*

In returning to what I above called the original scene of the social Plato's *Republic*, one can now see how such a foundational scene in the *Republic* is fixed in more than one way and, in the fixation, establishes social reality as foundationally hierarchical. Such reality is mirrored in a scientific, educational Theory and fixated on absolute Truth distancing education from everyday life from its worldliness. Instead of being thought of as belonging to the everydayness of life, the theory now imposes and dominates such worldliness from the outset. Educational theory hereafter aspires to control the messiness and multiplicity of opinions more effectively by replacing social life's ambiguous and changing everydayness with a foundational structure supposedly stabilising and ordering social life in the *polis*.

Plato's book *the Republic* says Jaeger (Jaeger, 1943/1986) is 'primarily a book about the making of human character' (p. 259) and, as such, is vital in establishing education as *purification* of human character, of the essence of man, with how the perfect state is to be produced. The *Republic* is forming an authentic self in the image of a perfect state or nation:

The perfect man can be shaped only within the perfect state; and vice versa. That is the ground for the universal correspondence between man and state's inner structure, for the resemblance between both patterns. To construct such a state, we must discover how to make such men. (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 259).

The resemblance of patterns establishes *the inner structure of man and state* as psycho-social patterns giving rise to the original social scene. Such a scene needs to be static; 'the system needs to be static' (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 237) since its function is to secure the stability of the city-state itself. In consequence, Platonian/Aristotelian education aims at establishing this psycho-social pattern of the original scene as the theory of education, dominating the worldliness of sophist education, and guiding the perfection of man and state, and '[a]ny departure from its standards is degeneration and decay' (p. 237). Therefore, such a pattern is also immanently patriarchal *stasis* and leads to severe problems for the possibility of equality and change up to this day in the form of far-right nationalism, but also in modern liberal democracies as such (see Orellana & Michelsen, 2019, Säfström, 2019, Butler, 2015).

5.2.2 *The Idea of Schooling*

The ideal schooling in a Platonian/Aristotelian theory of education is a system of processes, institutional expectations and desires representing as well as creating the perfect man and the perfect state through purifying the psycho-social structure in which the connection exists already: 'the one essential thing is that education should not be changed' (Jaeger, 1943/1986, p. 237), since it is to guarantee the stability of the city-state over time. As such, establishing schooling as a pattern through which man and state are forever linked through what can be called 'the original myth of

schooling’ (See Säfström, 2011a, 2011b, p. 94–95, O’Toole et al., 2021, Hunter, 1994) and which serves as an absolute point of departure from which everything that goes on in the actual school can be determined and judged. As such defines the reality of schooling and society through mirroring each other as fundamentally hierarchically structured.

According to such a pattern, any grading system in schooling can be regarded as fair in that it can be claimed that it reflects the hierarchical inequality of the real, an inequality to be perfected through the teaching procedure. Furthermore, when inequality is distributed over the social spectrum, everyone has a determined place in the social hierarchy according to their ‘character’ (or abilities and talents, or intelligence, or class), stabilising society in its natural hierarchy, making the city-state (or any state or nation) harmonious and prosperous.⁷ In modern education, the hierarchically ordered reality of schooling works in naturalising inequality, motivating and justifying that some are included already, and others are included as excluded through schooling (Rancière, 1999, p.38, Rancière, 2007a, 2007b, p. 23).

5.3 Breaking the Crust of Convention of Platonian/Aristotelian Scientific Education

In pre-Christian, pagan Greece, the gods could take human forms, meaning that any stranger always had to be approached with care; he or she could be a god; ‘he or she may be divine’ (Cassin, 2016, p. 10). In other words, the other needed to be approached with a foundational ambiguity in mind, not as one or the other, but as the prefix *Ambi-* suggests, both god (among gods) and human (among other humans) at the same time, which already makes the law of noncontradiction problematic and complex. Since it would imply that ‘one and the same’ carry two radically different meanings, both have entirely different consequences for establishing the consensus needed for the city-state to appear.

Either ‘same’ is understood as self-same as in identity in which consensus represents this self-same in the same way, in which everyone reaches the same meaning at the same time; ‘same’ here instead becomes One, it unifies the city and the soul of those who is counted as belonging to the whole of the city. Which is Plato’s position in which the whole, ‘the city/soul functions like the body’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 123), and in which the parts ‘conspire to become whole’ (p. 123). The strive to become whole also means that no part can claim autonomy but is always defined from the whole (body). Or, it is here that the Sophists deviate since Plato’s whole ‘Unlike the sophist [Plato’s] whole [do not allow for] open competition among the singularities that constitute it’ (p. 123). There is no plurality or democratic politics possible.

⁷ See Säfström, (2020) where the distributive paradigm of education and schooling is identified and deconstructed.

In contrast to Platonian consensus, a sophistical consensus is possible without everyone thinking the same thing at the same time: ‘sophistical consensus does not even require that everyone think the same thing (*homonoia*) but only that everyone speak (*homologia*) and lend their ear (*homophonia*)’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 33). A sophistical interpretation of *homonoia* then ‘takes as its model not the unity of an organism but the composition of a mixture’ (p. 124). It is ‘a case of interpreting the “same” not as a “one” but as a “with”’ (p. 124). Being with already implies a division of One and a relation between parts which allows for singularity as such, without being reduced to a ‘hierarchical subordination’ under a ‘whole’ (p. 130).

What is essential in a sophistical practice, then, is not a Theory of education representing a whole, but the discipline *in* speaking well and listening carefully to others, without imagining the words of others as already being within one’s world of meaning, but as an expression of another move, another practice in the mixture. The original scene of the society for the Sophists (or to follow Cassin; sophistic) then is not hierarchised and differentiated from a fixed point of One (whole-body) but implies a relation of at least two (being with) in the mixture instead and is so far inherently plural. That is the original scene in sophistic, it is already plural and established as *practice*, as open and on the move, populated by multiple singularities who are ambiguously negotiating their own as well as others’ divine humanity, to go on together (the mixture) but not necessarily in the same way. *Isonomia*, equality required for the political organisation of democracy then, is here understood in terms of plurality (in difference) rather than self-same and as performativity within a particular discourse practice rather than as reflecting a particular *stasis*.

Cassin, (2014a, 2014b) exemplifies a sophistical consensus with Hanna Arendt’s insistence on an irreducible plural condition of humanity since an Arendtian political theory ‘defines the specificity of the political by the “with”, which is characteristic of an irreducible plural condition’ (p. 133). The Arendtian sophistic also shows in how Arendt understands the city, not as with Heidegger as ‘tragically, ecstatic of itself’, but in the ‘extraordinary and entirely everyday circumstance of “living together” (*suzên*), through the “sharing of words and deeds”’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 133, Arendt, 1993 p. 157).

Sophistic destabilises any political project that is Platonian and Aristotelian and is not inherently and extensively plural and democratic. So, ‘who is afraid of the sophists?’ as Cassin (Cassin, 2014a, 2014b, p. 25) asks, and why? The making of ‘the Sophist’ into an enemy of philosophy, in which the philosopher writes off the Sophist, not only from the domain of philosophy but ‘even from humanity itself’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 30). Such a move can now be understood against the backdrop of how sophistic limits philosophy’s claims to Truth and by moving on beyond any fixation of this as that as eternal and an end in itself.

A sophistical practice destabilises not only the *fixion*⁸ of the original social scene from the point of education but is questioning the originality of the original social scene, its secured position as founder of the city-state’s reality, and as

⁸ ‘Fixion’, in Lacan’s meaning ‘a fiction that one chooses to fix’ (Cassin, 2016, p. 38).

fundamentally and necessary hierarchically organised. A sophistical practice of education is questioning that ‘the whole *intellectual and spiritual world* revealed by education, into which any individual, according to his nationality or social position, is born’ (Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 303; *emphasis in original*) is so fixed as Jaeger seems to be saying in the quote. A sophistical practice denies that one is born into something so fixed as an original structure representing the intellectual and spiritual world and to which one, per definition, is supposed to be destined by faith and to return through education and teaching (see also Arendt, 1958 on this point). Education as a sophistical practice is instead formulated beyond the idea of the fixed as eternal, the fixation, the *fixion* of the original social scene as representing the soul and state of eternity.

The beginning of the sophistical breakup with philosophy is, according to Cassin (Cassin, 2014a, 2014b), mainly to be found in the attitude of Gorgias (483-375 BC). Since he ‘always asks one question too many, he always derives one consequence too many’ (p. 30). Something is exciting in this ‘too many’ because it signifies from within philosophy the very limits of philosophy. The ‘too many’ signals a foundational ambiguity. At the same time, one can only apprehend the limit outside philosophy.

Rorty’s (Rorty, 1980) version of sophistics speaks directly to the ‘too many’ of Gorgias in the form of Rorty’s ‘edifying philosopher’. Such a philosopher is to keep inventing new languages, and the edifying consists mainly of; ‘“the poetic activity” of thinking up [...] new aims, new words, or new disciplines’ from which to ‘reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of our new inventions’ (p. 360). What Rorty calls an edifying philosophy is a philosophy for which there is nothing more to the world than the world as such: ‘there is [not] something out there in addition to the world called “the truth of the world”’ (Rorty, 1982, p. xxvi). A sophistical truth, in line with Rorty (1982), is instead a truth with a small ‘t’ and plural and, as such a compliment, we pay to certain moves within the everydayness of living life well with others within the spatial-temporal world.

The ‘word and deeds’ is always in and of the world itself: When we say, –please, give me your word! We ask someone to commit to what we ask for ethically, but in so doing, we also ask for the world of the word to be present, the world of the other. We are not asking for a concept, a distancing from that world, making the relation dependent on a third point from which the relation is to be judged and which, as such, displaces the directedness of our different words and worlds.

Assuming a third point of (the Platonian/Aristotelian) Theory is to assume a superior power, what Rorty (1990), concerning Putnam, calls ‘the view from God’s eye’ (p. 3). Such a godlike view implies that a relationship can no longer be direct but is filtered through this third point, outside of the relationship and from which the relation is to be given meaning and understood. A Platonian/Aristotelian education, based on the absolute (Truth), hierarchy (highest Truth), and science (First philosophy), dominating education leads education and teaching into an utterly difficult position of reproducing an extra-real reality of schooling, in which the reproduction of inequality already makes up the very foundational reality of that situation.

For a sophistical practice, this third point from which power and judgement flow is only a repetition of fixation, of a *fixion*, from which a wordless truth in a mental representation of a concept supposedly fills the world with meaning. For a sophistical practice, discourse is not about meaning *per se*, but rather that which ‘induce a change of state’ and:

He [the Sophist] knows and teaches *how to move*, not, according to the bivalency of the principle of noncontradiction, from error to Truth or from ignorance to wisdom, but, according to the inherent plurality of comparison, from lesser to better state (Cassin, 2014b, p. 33; *my emphasis*).

There is only the plural richness of a spatial, temporal realm, in which speech is spoken through the practices practised, meaning that what we call the real are dependent on the discourse practices we engage in within the emerging ethical, political sphere (which is what *paideia* is for the sophists, see Jaeger, 1939/1965, p. 300). Therefore, what is needed for social stability in the city-state, is not a Theory of education and teaching but rather the discipline of pedagogy (as in practice). From which to teach how to be moving well with and among others and speak and listen carefully to others and oneself, to participate (being with) in the mixture of the democratic city-state. It is a pedagogy of performativity in which a multiplicity of ‘words and deeds’ are possible beyond the limiting effects of society as one whole body to which all have to comply. Therefore, the aim of a disciplined pedagogy is always:

To perform the social function which Dewey called “breaking the crust of convention”, preventing man from deluding himself with the notion that he knows himself, or anything else, except under optional descriptions (Rorty, 1980, p. 379).

5.4 The Inherent Plurality of Comparisons and the Discipline of Pedagogy

This section explicitly explores teaching as a sophistical practice of continuously moving from lesser to better states ‘through comparisons or precisely through ‘the inherent plurality of comparisons’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 33). Such starting point needs some work since it seems to imply ‘the new language of learning’ (Biesta, 2006, p. 15) infiltrating education, in which comparisons and their result are being sequenced within league tables and assessment regimes, and which, with Rancière (1991), always comes down to be comparing intelligence in order to be ahead to always wanting to dominate the other (p. 80–82). It is ‘an activity of the perverted will, possessed by inequality’s passion’, and he continues, ‘[i]n linking one person or group to another, by comparison, individuals continually reproduce this irrationality, this stultification that institutions codify and explicators solidify in their brains’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 82).

As the new language of learning, such language and activity seem to imply and encourage understanding teaching as an act of ‘explicators’ using a particular form

of rhetoric. A particular type of speech which ‘revolt against the poetic condition of the speaking being. It speaks in order to silence. *You will speak no longer, you will think no longer, you will do this*: that is its program’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 85; *emphasis in original*). That is, teaching within the new language of learning is ultimately fitting an educational world in which teaching is being trapped by the violence and domination implicit in the strive for always better through comparisons and domination over the everydayness of lived reality: It is teaching being trapped ultimately by the desires of modernity and capitalism to produce productive rather than responsible citizens (See Säfström, 2020). Teaching is trapped by ‘productive time’ rather than ‘free time’.

Instead, from the point of sophistical practice, comparisons are not understood through a hierarchical vision in which inequality passion is reproduced but rather through a mixture in which equality verification is an aim for a disciplined pedagogy. To be comparing is therefore not understood at the backdrop of winning and losing, getting ahead of and defeating the other, but as an integral part of translating from one to the other and back in the mixture: ‘In the act of speaking, man does not transmit his knowledge, he makes poetry, translates and invites others to do the same’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 65).

To make comparisons is if you will an act of poetry rather than a tool in a war. Therefore, it is not about knowledge as such, since knowledge comes down to control and signifies an end (to what was before uncertain), but also, if applied to persons, extend this control to be controlling others as well (Foucault, 1980). We do not need to know the student to interact with him or recognise him or her, or they/them, as a person. In a sophistical practice, we need to recognise and respond to the other in education and teaching, ‘not as students or as learned men, but as people; in the way you respond to someone speaking to you and not to someone examining you: under the sign of equality’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 11).⁹

Speaking and recognising the other under the sign of equality and as capable of speaking demands to be listening carefully as well, not in order to conceptualise the words of him or her, but in order to hear the world spoken by those words in order to embark on a process of mutual translations: ‘All words, written or spoken, are translation that only takes on meaning in the counter-translation, in the invention of the possible causes of the sound heard or of the written trace’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 64).

This process of mutual translation is ultimately a process of comparing words, comparing different worlds. In comparing different worlds of different *speech*, translation is not the translation point by point,¹⁰ but here instead, the poetic activity is comparing worlds without the need to fix such comparisons through a common fixed point or conceptual net from which to be claiming a consensus of meaning. Instead, what the act of mutual translation comes down to, following Rancière, but also what was central for the sophists (Cassin, 2014b, p. 92), is the need for

⁹ Seeing a person beyond the category does not mean that the teacher does not recognise a student because he or she is already positioned as such. It means instead acknowledging a person’s singularity and possible autonomy beyond the generalised category of being a student.

¹⁰ See Bernstein (1983) on incommensurability.

improvisation, understood as ‘our intelligence’s leading virtue: the poetic virtue’, and Rancière continuous, ‘[t]he impossibility of our *saying* the truth, even when we *feel* it, makes us speak as poets, makes us tell the story of our mind’s adventures and verify that other adventurers understand them, makes us communicate our feelings and see them shared by other feeling beings’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 64).

In other words, a sophistical practice in education and teaching compares not to defeat the other or examine her or him but to be able to connect different worlds in the mixture of fellow adventurers. A mixture in which being with the other comes down to the mutual translation of a plurality of words and deeds, and as that which is necessary to move ahead, together with but differently. Such teaching needs to remain in the plural world of others to discover how to move in a plural world in which everyone has the right to go on differently. For a sophistical practice of education and teaching, being *with* is precisely why a democratic city-state is possible instead of based on domination and violence from the point of ‘One’, anticipated by a Platonian/Aristotelian Theory of education. A sophistical practice is instead a disciplined pedagogy in the practice of democratisation.

5.5 Teaching as a Practice in Democratisation

If being with speaks to a different original scene of the social than one of *stasis*, it is because a sophistical practice is performative (Cassin, 2014b, p. 200–202), but also because being with does not exclude being *for* the other and not only *before* the other, do not exclude ethics (See Säfström & Månsson, 2004; Levinas, 1994).

Ethics, in this sense, needs no (First philosophy) theory of judging interactions and relations from above the everydayness of living but is a particular practice (discipline) in living well with and among others. Such practice includes speaking and listening, to speak one’s world and listening to other’s worlds to connect and engage in mutual translations of those worlds. In translating words, the world’s worldliness is expanding, and such ethically infused expansion is here understood as democratisation in action. In other words, the publicness of the public extends through teaching in comparing and connecting different worlds in an expanding mixture, as such a mixture embodies the city-state’s social and political organisation.

If I can make sense, the other can (cf. Rancière, 1991, p. 57–58). Teaching connects different sensibilities as a shared capacity to sense (Berardi, 2017), to make sense beyond a consensus of One, acknowledging that sensing is always unique and shared (Rancière, 2007; *le partage du sensible*). As such, teaching verifies sensing as a capacity among a plurality of speaking beings, not to melt their speech and worlds into one whole but to highlight the sensible ordering of the real as inherently plural and to understand our capacity in sensing as shared with others.

Therefore, *to speak, to listen, to translate, to compare, to link* are all pedagogical manoeuvres within a sophistical practice of teaching which does not examine the other to engage with him or her, does not engage from a distance to control him or her through knowledge. Teaching is *being* (as a verb) engaged *in* speaking,

listening, comparing, linking, and being *with* (as fully as one can understand being with other people).

5.5.1 *The Poetic Act of Teaching*

The poetic act of teaching is not only an intellectual virtue, as Rancière says, but as such, it also requires improvisation. The poetic activity of improvisations initiates an excess and a ‘too much’ into the expected ordering of natural inequality, and inequality is mistaken for the actual state of man in the social and natural world. Against such (patriarchal) *stasis*, the poetic act of teaching constantly asks one question too many and draws one consequence too many. *Poësis* in teaching introduces the possibility to ‘dis-identify’ (Rancière, 1991, p. 98) with the set order of inequality. It *instantiates* the possibility of change by destabilising the given and limits the range of claims of inequality as a necessary condition for education to be authentic.

Improvisation for the sophists means allowing oneself to speak about everything ‘by allowing himself to be led by opportunity’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 92), which leads to the emergence of the *Kairos*, the almost untranslatable Greek word. Papastephanou (2014), though, translates *Kairos* with ‘lived time’ (p. 719), which she contrasts with *Chronos*’s ‘measurable time’. She does not see them as binary but instead intends to make room for a lived time as necessarily implied in measurable time, mainly when situated in the everyday practices of those events to be managed and organised by *Chronos*. Here I will discuss some aspects of *Kairos* to situate improvisation as the poetic activity *per preference* within teaching, to emphasise the moment of new beginnings implied by the Greek word *Kairos*.

First, *Kairos* is ‘the moment of the opening of possibilities’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 93), recognisable in teaching as the moment in which one addresses the student as a person beyond his or her identity as a student of a particular order, and as such, secondly; ‘both opening and cutting’ (p. 93) into the order in which the student is identified as already belonging to a particular place in the hierarchical order of inequality.

Thirdly, the moment of opening and cutting is also a moment in which its purpose is revealed as belonging to that moment, ‘*Kairos* is autotelic. It contains its purpose within itself. It is the moment in which *poësis* and *technê* [...], at the height of their inventiveness, approach *praxis*, approach a divine interiorisation of purpose’ (p. 94). It is the moment in teaching in which a person speaks in a way he or she has never spoken before, neither repeating what was already said nor responding to the institution’s desires, but within the moment, brings something into existence that did not exist before. It is a moment that unfolds from within the act of teaching. *Technê* in teaching is the art of hearing and verifying someone as speaking (in its most total sense) and guiding the unfolding of the newness of the event. *Kairos*, in short, can so far be understood as *poros*, ‘the ‘passage’ (p. 94) through which the *technê* of teaching and the *poësis* of the moment(s) in teaching enters into

education: Teaching becomes *praxis*, a democratisation process of the events that unfolds.

Kairos is perfectly adapted to the moment in which *poësis* and *technê* appear; since *Kairos*, says Cassin, is a singularity: ‘with *Kairos*, one is engulfed in a particular case, and there is nothing apart from the case, all invention is singular because it is perfectly adopted’ (2014, p. 94).

In teaching as an instance of *Kairos*, the teacher is fully present in the poetic activity of improvisation in the singularity of a case in which someone enters the scene. The teacher recognises and verifies that someone is speaking their world, their truth, as it unfolds through the moment’s purpose. Such purpose is approaching *praxis*, ‘the divine interiorisation of purpose’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 94) to which the educative moment belongs. The significance of the moment as a series of unfoldings is also why the effects of teaching are unique in their *poësis* and singularity and not possible to generalise, while *technê* in teaching is the art of keeping the process moving by *listening*, *speaking*, *comparing* and *linking* different worlds.

The moment of *Kairos* in teaching is also when Platonian/Aristotelian education becomes violent in suppressing the singularity of the moment and all involved by demanding generalisation through scientific education (it is Aristotle ‘who demands generality’, Cassin, 2014b, p. 94). Platonian/Aristotelian education then works against the poetic act in teaching, in the exact moment when the singularity of the one speaking is generalised and conceptualised, in order to return through theory (science, scientific, scientism) to *dominate* the speech of all involved. Such education and teaching dominate through how a speaking person becomes a thing (concept) in schooling, through setting up a *telos* outside the singularity of the moment and to which all have to adapt, ‘and all we have to do is to follow the predetermined route’ (Cassin, 2014b, p. 94). Such *telos* closes down and restrict the poetic activity in education, to control *poësis* and *technê*, or rather when the latter is made into science controlling teaching and linking it to a predetermined route to a given goal. Whereas with the poetic act in teaching, in improvisation, the spur of the moment takes on the art of opening and cutting for a new beginning to appear; ‘with *ex tempore* [as an effect in *Kairos*] we have the autotelic opening of the beginning’ (p. 94).

Teaching, the poetic activity in improvising, opens a plurality of possibilities at the exact moment in which multiple beginnings and purposes continuously unfold. To compare those beginnings and link them is expanding who can be seen and heard and introducing multiple ways to move *with* others in the world. Teaching then, as a sophistical practice, is not the activity of securing the *stasis* of an original scene of the social, but rather speaks to a different social scene in which democratisation is located precisely in the unfolding of new beginnings, as those take place in the moments of improvisations in a concrete classroom.

5.6 Conclusion, a Sophistical Practice in Liveable Life

In conclusion, beyond the philosophy defined as such through domination of Sophist educational thought, a sophistical education and teaching practice contribute to a liveable life in a democratic culture. It brings into the light the possibility of multiplicity, of pluralism, which is not imploding in the image of consensus (–ontology) and as represented by a whole social body, nor demands of all to enter into the same thought at the same time. A sophistical practice nor demands of someone to step into the line of *telos* in which the steps taken are defined already from an absolute position of power. A sophistical practice is instead a practice of democratisation beyond the *stasis* of an original social scene composed of hierarchy and patriarchy and shows a possible route beyond the damaging effects of *stasis*. A sophistical practice limits the effects of an unlimited philosophy and profoundly questions Platonian/Aristotelian Theory as a foundation for education, as such education reproduces a monoculture of ‘One’. A monoculture in which everyone has his or her place already carved out in the social body. Instead, the concerns of a sophistical practice are how to move among and with others to live well with a multiplicity of others in the mixture of a democratic city-state.

The *poësis* of improvisation, central to teaching, opens for each moment’s autocratic purposes, linking education with *praxis* and democratisation. Sophistical education, then, understand teaching being an art (*technê*) in which *speaking*, *listening*, *translating*, *comparing*, and *linking* are the main techniques used to guide the unfolding of the newness of each moment (*poësis*). In such teaching, the teacher recognises and verifies when someone speaks beyond the desires of an institution and in a way he or she has never spoken before. A sophistical practice teaches from within the finitude of our lived reality and verifies a multiplicity of possible ways to move forward *with* others in the everydayness of our shared lives. The sophist teacher says: – please, show me your world through your spoken words! Such teaching, informed by multiple ways of being in the world, links new beginnings to expanding liveable lives in our democratic societies.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion



Abstract This chapter is summarising some of the themes that cut across the individual chapters under the following subheadings: equality/inequality; education is not schooling; public education; the practice of writing education against anti-education; educational time; essences and authentic/unauthentic self; reproduction; democratic principle and teaching; and, a final word.

Keywords Education · Equality · Sophistical practice · Teaching · Democratisation

In this book, I have been discussing teaching by examining its role within public education to critique its function in today's educational policies and theories and establish an alternative way of understanding teaching and education. Mainly I explored education and teaching as a Sophist tradition of practice beyond the domination of Platonian and Aristotelian educational thought. In doing so, I intended to be restoring the original radicality of teaching and education while providing new ways of understanding and dealing with some acute problems facing us, such as rapidly increasing social inequality, aggressive and violent capitalism, and a general decline of plural democracy in the wake of right-wing populism washing over us, and a revival of nationalism and fascism in consequence. This book is written against increasing intolerance and violence against who and what differs from one's worldview. Like the Sophists, Judith Butler and Jacques Rancière, I consider equality foundational for relations between people in the *demos* and, as such, what makes democracy and education possible. A sophistical tradition of educational thought and practice is dealing with the world in which we live together with others, accepting the plurality, mediocracy and fallibility of every day of life, rather than imposing the ideal of a perfect world through schooling, which always comes down to exclusion and violence for those deemed imperfect. The book is written in the Sophist movement, based on the assumption that teaching and being taught is possible for anyone, that teaching is the word we use for the ability to open the world in which any student lives already. Meaning that teaching in this book is a particular practice for figuring out how we can go on differently in living well together with others here and now, in an imperfect world in which everyone embodies their lives to the best

of one's circumstances. Education is about teaching *in* the world as a plurality of lived practice while remembering our earthliness and spirituality as conditional for our lives. To remember the truth of living, as Jacques Rancière (1991) says, by remembering ourselves in the act, rather than simply operating within the systemic forgetfulness imposed on us from forces outside our control, if so-called capitalism, consumerism or nationalism. We cannot lie to ourselves, says Rancière, only forget. Therefore, education and teaching remind us that we live with and among other people on earth on whom we depend. That is, a condition for our shared lives here and now is what Hannah Arendt (1959) called out: the irreducible plurality of humankind and the remarkable ways in which we live in concert with other people in everyday life. Education belongs to this everyday life and fundamentally concerns how to live responsibly in the present. Education is, as the Sophists showed, an ethical-political undertaking in establishing ways to move together in concert in the mixture of interacting people in every day of life: We are not living *in* the world, we are living *the* world. It passes through us and leaves its' marks as we engage with others and our surroundings. Our world's worldliness makes us present here and now, and we can be present in different ways or all the way missing from the stage. Education and teaching, as I have understood it in this book, is not only to remind us of ourselves, our truth in the act, as Rancière said but also to imagine new ways of living *with* and among other people across differences. Furthermore, therefore education and teaching, as understood in this book, expand the possibility for more people to appear on the stage, for more people than the ones already claiming the stage as theirs.

This book mainly explored education and teaching through what Barbara Cassin (2014a, 2014b) has called 'Sophistical practise', which I initially took to mean, also referring to Richard Rorty (1980), the continuous refusal of splitting the world into eternal ideas on the one hand and the spatial-temporal world on the other. Instead, I did emphasise that the meaning of the word is not to be found anywhere else than in the world itself or, better, in the practices through which we engage with others, ourselves and our environment. Throughout the book, I made clear that education and teaching are not, and cannot be, about the reproduction of some at the expense of others but are, if at all to be considered as valuable, about expanding social relations with those we may not know or cannot know in full. Education and teaching explore ways to sustain those relations to benefit a liveable life.

In the following, I will highlight some themes throughout the book concerning teaching as a sophistical practice. Those themes have been thoroughly explored, investigated and discussed in the individual chapters as they emerge from different but specific social/ethical/political as well as theoretical situations of concrete historical circumstances. What particularly has been highlighted is a historical political and ethical situation marked by the influx of new public management with its production time into the very core of universities and education and by the marketisation and creative destruction of public education, with its celebration of hyper-individualism and aggression and violence. It is a historical period marked by the spread of authoritarian capitalism in the wake of neoliberalism and the anti-education forces at war on democracy. Moreover, schooling is increasingly marked

by the cultural figuration of domination and colonisation at the core of Platonian/Aristotelian education, the Aristocratic principle informing schooling.

Furthermore, finally, responding to such a historical moment, this book is reconnecting to the sophist education for anyone, elevating the resistance of a Democratic principle and the sophistical practice it performs in the name of equality and a liveable life for all. The humanist drive at the core of this book is not excluding the non-human but profoundly aims at making the inhuman in Platonian/Aristotelian education visible and deconstructed. In the following, I will be summarising some of the themes that cut across the individual chapters under the following subheadings: equality/inequality; education is not schooling; public education; the practice of writing education against anti-education; educational time; essences and authentic/unauthentic self; reproduction; Democratic principle and teaching; and, a final word.

6.1 Equality/Inequality

Equality for the sophists was an expression of nature and social relations in the city-state. This very understanding in which equality is foundational and teaching a way of practising equality is what the sophists established as education, a practice that makes practice. Also, by starting with equality, inequality is made visible. To assume equality makes it possible to address inequality in ways that do not reproduce it. Therefore, teaching as a sophistical practice assumes equality and strives to verify equality in the face of the inequality of schooling. Such teaching has an interest in the emancipation and freedom of the other. Sophistical practice, in other words, operates as a shield towards institutionalised desires of reproducing social inequality through schooling and taking place in actual relations between people. Education is an internal condition for the very existence of democracy. The performativity of equality is what defines education as well as democracy. Education is not the same as democracy, but that which makes democracy both thinkable and possible. Teaching performs democratisation.

6.2 Education Is Not Schooling

The problem with education not being able to be understood otherwise than as schooling, as the reproduction of inequality, are rather than voicing an absolute truth, the consequence of a specific philosophical lineage of thinking within education. A lineage is emerging through and defined by the figure of domination over the everyday inscribed by Plato/Socrates/Aristotle as education proper. It is a lineage which constructs education as the performativity of the *anomalies* it claims arises within or as a consequence of education: as the theory-practice divide, the paradox of teaching unfreedom for freedom to occur, the distinction between human and

non-human, nature and civilisation, and the distinction between eternity and the spatial, temporal world. Therefore, to move beyond this lineage of understanding education as domination, i.e., schooling, giving rise to the anomalies mentioned, this book follows a movement of education established by the Sophists. Education is a practice of equality in the pluralism of every day of living an imperfect life with actual people, women, men and children (and animals and plants), which was the reality for the sophists. Education emphasises the ever-present possibility of verification of equality in this reality. That is, teaching as a sophistical practice are performativity, not only assuming equality but also performing equality, among other things, by searching for the moments, events, and situation in which equality verification breaks through the inequality of institutionalised expectations. Teaching is the very performativity of equality, and teachers' and students' teaching and studying is the expression of particular ways in which the plurality of the world and how to move in such a world are taught and practised on the assumption of equality. Education proper starts with teachers teaching, not philosophers philosophising.

6.3 Public Education

Democracy is organising societies in such a way as to expand equality in the public sphere. Teaching as a sophistical practice is linking different worlds across the pluralism of differently lived lives without the implosion of those lives into sameness. It envisages a society in which pluralism, practice and imperfectness of people interacting every day is the only foundation needed and which understands equality and inequality as political, not natural, nor ontological. The political here is an expression of the will to form one or another way of living in the society, based on the insight of a plurality of worldviews and difference of forms of living, and therefore education is to establish ways of dealing with this plurality so we can go on together if so differently. When necessary, teaching as sophistical practice reinstates democracy by throwing absolute inequality back to its contingency. To let people speak, to hear worlds in the new words spoken. The publicness of such teaching can be understood as an expression of this ongoing unfolding and multiplications of worlds being linked in education.

Public education is not only important in terms of its institutionalisation of a system funded by taxes, democratically controlled, and for all, but also as signalling the continuous making of the social as such, in which we can make our lives together with others that are not the same as me. Therefore, if the social is thought of as already fixed in an original social organisation of the real, as in Platonian/Aristotelian education, either to be reproduced or to come, then such education is, by definition, something else than public education. Public education is instead the performance, the energy and the move in which the idea of one final organisation of the real always can be cast back onto its contingency, ambiguity and plurality. Instead, public education signals new beginnings, allowing us to interact in new ways together. If so, in different ways, it is, therefore, inherently a democratisation process.

Democracy itself is not a perfect idea to be repeated as an original (democratic) social structure to be reproduced or implemented in the near or distant future. Democracy is, instead, at once a social/political organisation which allows itself to be questioned and therefore continually re-emerging, as well as, in education, a certain way for people to be appearing in order for them to be subjects in their own lives. Teaching in public education verifies equality in every moment of its existence, and when it forsakes to do so, it is no longer teaching but instruction alone in schooling for inequality. Therefore, equality in public education and teaching is not an abstract idea. It is at once a concrete practice of verification of equality and the quality of such practice, linking worlds, constantly unfolding the plurality of any public anew. Teaching as a sophistical practice expands who and what can be seen, who and what can be heard. It recognises and verifies someone as speaking their world and expanding our world daily.

6.4 The Practice of Writing Education against Anti-Education

Writing in education, education as writing is a form of teaching, not about truth (in itself). It is not philosophy but a practice of exploring how to live well with and among others across differences, in language, in *logos*, in a discursive reality of here and now and concerns how to extend *logos* as verification of equality in an imperfect plural world. Writing as a sophistical practice of teaching today is a search for ways, in education and language, an educational language, of moving beyond the obstacles imposed on us by a neoliberal world order promoting an ontological inequality which has not only caused increased suffering and harm on living life but also while so doing increased the power of the elite, or as here called 'the aristocracy'. The aristocracy of the world, the rich and powerful, are subsequently cementing precariousness for ever more extensive parts of populations all over the globe, as well as for the globe itself. Schooling risks contributing to such a situation rather than breaking with its damaging effects since schooling is founded on an ontology of inequality. I have suggested that such an ontological inequality of schooling, rather than simply being an effect of unequal distribution of capital and power, has its foundation in the image of an original social order. Such order is established in the joint effort of Platonian and Aristotelian philosophy to *dominate* education and its implicit equality.

Moreover, to establish inequality as stability in the social organisation of life in the city-state through schooling. There is, therefore, something profoundly problematic with Platonian/Aristotelian philosophy dominating educational practice since its motivation and intent for education are founded on the figure of *domination* alone. Their program was to dominate education, establish education as domination, establish philosophy as unlimited in its aspirations and informing politics (Plato), and elevate science as the first philosophy (Aristoteles), structuring *paideia*.

Platonian and Aristotelian philosophy establishes a particular *polis* by linking man and state through education as perfection and as that which would guarantee the establishment and continuation of a specific understanding of *paideia*, established on an absolute distinction between human and non-human. Within such educational thought, in its very foundation, there is already an attitude of inequality and colonisation from the point of power, which in concrete ways exclude the sophist teachers and people in general as they are deemed not human. Not only introducing an idea of education as an act of absolute demarcation between human/non-human but also establish education as the prime force of this separation of man and nature (the latter including women and children and enslaved people for Aristotle) and the hierarchisation of valued lives accordingly. Education as schooling was to draw the demarcating line, to perfect the human as he is given the task to perfect the society as an expression of himself. The perfect state is funded by schooling the perfect man. Man's desires are the desires of the state, and the desires of the state are the desires of man as one organism. Platonian/Aristotelian thought linked education as a temporality necessarily expressing this fundamental task of perfecting man by reproducing the original social order and catapulting such order into the future in which the perfect man and society would continuously arise, always as already formed in the idea of its original shape. Therefore, to write against such patriarchal anti-education, the position to write from is necessary to be siding with women, children, animals, and enslaved people to reconfigure, to write over or beyond the ontology of inequality expressed in the figure of schooling, and as such discourse are organising ethical and political life. Writing as teaching is to perform writing as a form of democratisation.

6.5 Schooling Time, Essences, Authentic/Un-Authentic Self

There is also a problem of time in schooling, of schooling time, that needs to be addressed. Platonian/Aristotelian educational thought understands education or rather schooling only as meaningful in the practice of linking (aristocratic) man to the state through ideas of perfection and as linking past and future through the reproduction of those perfected already (by being aristocrats), making educational change and emancipation into a problem to the foundational reproduction of power it envisages as schooling proper. Education becomes reduced to schooling as the reproduction of an authentic (aristocratic) self, understood as such from a centre of power, which subsequently also define the unauthentic self, to be excluded in the process of purification of essences on which the perfect man and state will rise. The schooling figure established in this lineage of philosophical thought on education establishes the self as essence in an idealised space excluding people as imperfectible. The self as (aristocratic) essence, as the core of culture and civilisation, takes the form in modernity as a self in need to be perfected through modern science influencing schooling, much in line with a Platonian/Aristotelian worldview, progressing society into a future through manufacturing self-realisation as the

realisation of a modern state. By being based on the idea of an essence, formed through the images of an aristocratic man, the sciences of the self, the so-called ‘psy-sciences’ (Rose, 1996) informing education are tools for perfecting the individual as it perfects the state. The unauthentic self, which, by definition, cannot be perfect, is the target for diverse (corrective) programs which, regardless of its explicit intentions of inclusion, only confirm the foundational inequality on which such life is excluded already. Confirms individual lives as imperfectible, as not mattering to the same degree as those already understood and counted as representing the essence of the people on which the state raises as One organism. The state her used in its general expression as equalising a particular order of the *polis* understood as such through the successful realisation of an ontological inequality: The state as a social/political organism exercising its power through institutions, reproducing schooling itself as the authentication mechanism of *a* (national) self, and as such reinventing a given position from which the inequality of the social/political reality can flow—establishing a vantage point from which otherness is defined as such. A sophistical teaching practice does not operate on such distinctions. There is no ‘self’ that, by definition, is not already ‘authentic’, already living a life worth living. There are, though, people deprived of their liveable lives, reduced to mere living, and included as such, in Rancière’s words, ‘included as excluded’. In response to such a form of exclusion, a sophistical practice of teaching addresses inequality by assuming equality, thereby hearing and valuing those whose voices made noise, confirming a liveable life for all instead. To assume a liveable life for all is not utopian thinking. It is a regulative idea for practice. How sophistical teaching is practised, it performs democratisation.

6.6 Reproduction

Therefore, *reproduction* in this book has nothing to do with preserving that valuables for culture to pass on to further generations but is a precise word for the claustrophobic practice of reinventing an aristocracy and elite through education reduced to the schooling of an authentic self, as such self is already determined by an ontology of inequality. Furthermore, as such, the ‘authentic’ self is the very expression of the desires of the state, a nation, and the desires of capitalism, and formed through a political will of a definitive class of people to dominate all others inscribed in the very ontology of schooling. Reproduction expresses aristocratic colonialism with an ontology of inequality dominating and suppressing liveable life of equality. Reproduction executes the domination of an Aristocratic principle which works by identifying what counts as authenticity in particular historical/political circumstances and by repeatedly identifying what and who is considered as unauthentic life, which consequently can be, and in many cases, are treated as waste.

The Aristocratic principle in schooling the authentic citizen fits well with a neo-liberal ideology of the market since the market is a logic through which the sorting and differentiation of people into authentic and unauthentic citizens are effectively

made to maximise profit. The logic of the market, as the schooling market, functions as diversification of the population grounded in how well people are to function as consumers (of knowledge and other things), and valued as such based on a foundational ontology of inequality, the idea that certain people already have the abilities, and skills necessary to succeed in capitalist society inside themselves just to be brought out and confirmed in and through privatised and socially diversified schooling. Neoliberal schooling is anti-education in all its expressions and serves as a perfect tool for reproducing the dominance of the elite. A sophistical practice of teaching is, therefore, by necessity, anti-reproduction. It does not concern itself with the reproduction of people as of more or less value but with the question of how to live well with other people every day and, therefore, with the equality of value of life. It concerns moving with others who are equal but not the same as me. A sophistical practice is teaching in the present in the presence of my own and others' liveable lives. It is itself a practice that constantly tries to figure out anew how to live well *with* others in concrete surroundings of a classroom, a community, a city, a country, and a world. Sophistical teaching practice is about emancipation and change, or better, the unfolding of the present to show itself and its inhabitants in all plurality and link new words, languages, and worlds. It is a practice of democratisation and not reproducing the same hierarchical order fixated by an ontology of inequality. A sophistical teaching practice makes problematic the fixation on reproduction inherent to Platonian/Aristotelian educational thought and the violence it gives birth to.

6.7 The Democratic Principle and Teaching

Education is not and cannot be reduceable to the violence of inequality implicit in the successive ordering of the state, as discussed above. Education is not the reproduction of an original social structure, as such structures are foundational for the relation of the state and education in Platonian/Aristotelian schooling. Education, therefore, cannot be owned by the state. It cannot be owned by the powers reproducing themselves. Education is not and cannot be owned by the foundational ontological inequality since education is not the same as schooling. Education is owned by, or better, concerns actual people and therefore belongs to us, who, in the plurality of living our imperfect lives every day, are trying to get along with our lives in a mixture of people doing the same. Sophist education concerns a liveable life with and among other people in the here and now and under the conditions and specificities the 'here and now' sets for us.

Moreover, this strive of living *with*, in consequence, expands the publicness of the public, with new people appearing as speaking beings to be heard. Expands meaningful speech, adding languages, words, and worlds, unfolding a living plurality. In other words, the Democratic principle in education and teaching is not primarily to be understood in terms of *Chronos*, as the organisation of life according to a certain rhythm of power dominated by a production time. However, the Democratic

principle as such principle relies on *Kairos*, as the opening of possibilities and new beginnings in the present, through the verification of equality. The *poêsis* of teaching is found in its necessary improvisational character, opening and cutting into the reproduction of ontological inequality to open new possibilities to unfold. Teaching is not about confirming inequality. It is not the management of and differentiation of students' abilities, talents, or intelligence or whatever has been used over time to claim inequality as natural and ontological and to replicate the original social order. Teaching is rather than reproducing an original social order to be understood as concrete ways of problematising the originality of such orders. Education and teaching in actual schools, according to a Democratic principle, is not schooling, the latter which exclusively responds to what is considered a natural inequality by setting into motion practices of division and exclusion.

Moreover, by so doing, only naturalising talents, abilities and intelligence rather than contextualise them, and from such a viewpoint, perform the division of labour in society, fixating inequality as the true expression of social and political life and as that which guarantees stability over time. Teaching, according to the Democratic principle, instead operates not only on the visibility of appearances as such but also by verification of the equality of sensibilities, on the verification of sensibilities as both uniquely one's own as others share them. It is teaching as practising a double move of dividing *Ochlos*, dividing the Oneness implicit in Platonian/Aristotelian schooling. It is a practice of dividing and sharing rather than dividing and excluding. Teaching as sophistical practice, then, deals with how to live in a situation in which the common good does not equal reduction into sameness but in which the verification of equality requires a singularity from which relations of togetherness make sense as democratic. Such teaching is fundamentally about how to live *with* others, regardless of the desires of institutions to divide and exclude, and in which this '*with*' already implies equality across differences rather than implosion into sameness. A sophistical practice performs democratisation as the performativity of teaching within Paideia's ethical and political sphere, as it establishes such a sphere. It unfolds mere living into being a liveable life.

6.8 A Final Word

This book have been exploring how to understand the role and function of education and teaching in radical democracy, particularly as free time beyond a time of production. Further, how to understand education as an intellectual tradition of practice that makes practice, and therefore, also to raise the central educational issue concerning the practice of living well together in ways that allow us to take on the challenges of today without reinstating the conditions that gave rise to those challenges in the first place. Education, when it does its work, unfolds the realities of a plural world here and now, making democratic politics possible as a response to present conditions for living well with others and under the conditions set for us by the world. It lets us face what needs to be done for a liveable life for all here and now to

take form. Finally, this book has been an attempt to break with the vicious circle of reproduction of the original social scene of inequality inscribed into education and schooling by Platonian/Aristotelian domination of educational discourse. To be absolutely clear on this point, it does not deny that there are good things in our culture we want to pass on to our children. It instead aims at making such passing on possible through the verification of equality.

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