

Education and the Love for the World: articulating a post-critical educational philosophy

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Abstract: Sharing with critical pedagogy the belief that there is no necessity in the given order of things, and that we can always begin anew with the world, the post-critical educational philosophy articulated here seeks to overcome the internal contradictions of this paradigm by positing an affirmative, educational approach to educational philosophy. This understands education not as political action, as in critical pedagogy, working in the name of emancipation, but rather, following Rancière, assumes an equality of intelligences as a starting point from which the world can be set free for the new generation. This entails a pedagogy founded on an attitude of unconditional love both of the world and of the new generation, in the Arendtian sense. In this article we formulate a set of principles that articulate what such an affirmative attitude consists of: striving for pedagogical hermeneutics (rather than defending a hermeneutical pedagogy); adhering to a principled normativity (rather than to a procedural one); taking education to be for education's sake (rather than for extrinsic goals such as global citizenship); and starting from a passionate devotion to what is good in the 'here and now' (rather than by a hatred of the world in expectation of a utopia that is never to come).

Keywords: Post-critical; critical pedagogy; love; hope; affirmation; world; equality; pedagogical hermeneutics; principled normativity; new generation; unspeakable education.

Recibido / Received: 10/12/2016

Aceptado / Accepted: 29/08/2017

1. Introduction

The need to articulate a post-critical educational philosophy is identified in what we see as a critical, indeed relativist, impasse in critical pedagogy and educational research, and the longer standing internal contradictions of the critical paradigm. In real terms, the former is a more urgent problem. Recent political events – the results of the UK referendum and the US Presidential election to name but two – have arguably highlighted that we lack the means to respond to, to make sense of, our current conditions. The «Brexit» vote, for example, saw liberals castigated for seeing those who voted to leave as uneducated, lacking the knowledge that they have, and therefore needing to be educated. The idea that it was a protest vote got short shrift. And all that divided us came to the fore. In a more general sense, in recent years, solutions to socio-political crises have been sought in educational solutions: from the introduction of citizenship education to the more recent PREVENT agenda against radicalisation in the UK.

For years, critical pedagogy (in some form) has been the dominant Western mode of educational thought and practice, and critical theory an orthodoxy in social and educational research. Not only, as Latour has argued, has such a form of critique «run out of steam» (Latour, 2004) but also, today, knowledge produced on the basis of such critique is devalued by a growing anti-intellectualism, directed not least in the direction of educational philosophy and theory¹.

We share with critical pedagogues the belief that there is no necessity in any given order of things, and that we always can begin anew with the world. Nevertheless – in line with Arendt (1968) – we don't agree with the assumption that education is simply political action, i.e. that it essentially serves some political aims (regardless of whether these are employability, the knowledge economy, or democracy, equality, and freedom). We do argue that critical pedagogy, as traditionally conceived, might actually work against the possibility of educational transformation. We articulate what we term a post-critical educational philosophy with reference to a number of distinct principles, relating to pedagogy, normativity, and love for the world (cf. Arendt, 1968).

We want to reject any form of functionalist view of education, which treats it as a means to external aims. Instead, this post-critical educational philosophy stems from the conviction that education has its own intrinsic value. This value is forgotten and lost if we think of education in functionalist terms (i.e. as a means to something else). We propose to see education as an inevitable gift of the existing generation to the newcomers – to use this beautiful expression from Arendt (1968) – a gift that simply is good in itself, and that doesn't require any further justification. In other words, for post-critical educational philosophy, education is for the sake of education.

Although we share some of the basic convictions of the critical pedagogy tradition, we argue that it works against the possibility of transformation, both due to its own dialectics and, in its current form, due to assumptions about the very

¹ The shift we advocate towards post-criticality, even though it entails a stress on love, does not entail anti-intellectualism itself. We merely want to indicate that the dominance of a critical approach has provoked such an anti-intellectualist attitude in some. What post-criticality calls for is an affirmative use of intelligence.

possibility of our speaking and acting together. The influence of critical theory and poststructuralist thought on educational theory has drawn our attention to the, now accepted, idea that individual traits, social and cultural backgrounds, the many language games we play, etc. structure, even determine, what we can say, think, and do. Thus, the explicit acknowledgement of one's positionality has become a standard part of the theoretical discussion, even a focus of research in itself. That acknowledgement of positionality, often seen in educational research in a concern with voice and social justice, has become orthodox has been discussed elsewhere (Hodgson, 2009; Hodgson and Standish, 2009). Our concern here is not to show how this fails to achieve the emancipation and empowerment it seeks, but rather to acknowledge the simultaneously utopian and potentially cynical tendencies of such forms of research, derived from critical pedagogy. On this basis, we seek to articulate a different attitude, which we term post-critical educational philosophy, and what is at stake in doing so.

2. From critical to post-critical educational philosophy

In what follows we set out what is entailed in a shift from critical pedagogy to a post-critical philosophy and pedagogy. This shift does not imply a direct rejection of critique. This would, from a logical perspective, seem impossible, as it would always be an expression of negation (i.e. self-negation), and thus the highest fulfilment of critical reason criticizing even itself (cf. Adorno, 1973). Furthermore, apart from this logical problem, to abandon critique today seems to be a rather irresponsible call. Arguably, the possibility of taking a critical approach towards the world, realized since the Enlightenment, is now more urgent than ever. Nowadays, every single domain of our life is under the pressure of an instrumental rationality to an extent that seemed unthinkable before. Education is persistently and increasingly structured as a productive, accountable, and managerial enterprise (cf. Apple, 2005; Ball, 2006; Biesta, 2010). The shift from critical to post-critical pedagogy, therefore, by no means entails abandoning critique. A post-critical stance is not anti-critical. Critical rationality is vital for recognizing and opposing the dangers of biopolitical, neoliberal, and data-based arrangements to and of which we are currently subject. But agreement on the danger of the phenomenon does not entail that we retain existing critical theoretical tools with which to respond to it. But increasingly we look on in bemusement as another (previously, for some) unthinkable event takes place; we respond with incredulity rather than by rethinking the very means by which we approach and respond to these conditions.

Our present conditions require that certain problems generated by/inherent to the critical paradigm are no longer ignored. An awareness of these problems is actually as old as Hegel's well-known argument that every negation preserves what it tried to abolish (Hegel, 2010, pp. 81-82). For example, as Ellsworth (1989), Gur-Ze'ev (1998), and others [e.g. Maddock (1999); Masschelein (2004)] have argued, emancipation and empowerment within the critical view can themselves become instruments of power, exercised over the oppressed in order to discipline, and not to liberate. This happens because, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, education itself can play the role of a mere instrument with which to achieve the desired political

change. The very structure of the critical paradigm deals with the criticized status quo as its point of reference, as the «objective truth» that is the point of departure for any attempt at its overcoming. Although, some of the most distinguished critical pedagogues (cf. Freire, 1985) are aware of this danger and make an attempt to resolve the tension between the transformative and subversive power of education and the subordination of education to political aims (cf. Lewis, 2012; Vlieghe, 2016), what is seen to be at stake on such a view is our freedom, vibrant, strong democracy, equality and equity – but not education in itself. In other words, what counts is a future state, and the present is to be overcome by means of education.

Unfortunately, the overcoming of the present belongs to the domain of the criticized status quo and is separated from this imaginary future: the ideal status quo, the vision of reality being dreamed about, does not affect the present struggle. *Hic et nunc* we are placed in a different reality than the one we want to achieve, and the process of getting there (i.e. education) is not ruled by that dream, but by the criticized present. Therefore, as Rancière (1991, 2003) argues, these political goals are deferred *ad infinitum*. Thus, the oppressed must acknowledge their enslavement, and subordinate themselves to the relentless critique of the world they live in. In this way, the oppression disclosed by the critical pedagogue is doubled by the oppression of the disclosure itself. The oppressed are not liberated *hic et nunc*, but forced to accept the critical mode as the right way to see things.

In other words, what the critical paradigm assumes is that the world is full of evil, and that it is our eternal task to reveal this evil, and never to stop, never to hesitate, never to be naïve enough to think that we have finally arrived at the world we have always dreamed about. This can just never happen. There will always be power relations, there will always be inequality, oppression, and injustice. If critique is an endless task, then the desired future is just a fairy tale, and the only reality we will ever face is the one we need to negate. There is only critique and the criticized status quo – nothing else is possible.

This effects the very structure of a critical pedagogy that aims at empowering/emancipating students. In order to be empowered/emancipated, students need to discover their own enslavement. However, this requires their subordination to a knowing subject, a master of critique, who reveals to them their own oppression (or who leads them to become aware of this oppression, or provides the conditions for this disclosure to happen, etc.). Therefore, the oppression is doubled and the negated status quo is preserved.

Thus, on the basis that the world is assumed to be evil, the stance of this master of critique is driven by a certain hate for the existing form of the world, and simultaneously by love for an imaginary world that will never come. However, this mixture of hate for the persistent present and love for the impossible future, as driven by a never-ending critique, has as its final outcome a cynicism towards the world.

This critical stance, then, implies a particular pedagogy. As Rancière puts this:

Never will the student catch up with the master, nor the people with its enlightened elite; but the hope of getting there makes them advance along the good road [...] (Rancière, 1991, p. 120).

[...] to equalize inequality progressively, that is to say, to unequalize equality indefinitely (Rancière, 1991, p. 131).

Having set out a general concern with the limitations of the critical apparatus for education, we now turn to reconsider pedagogy and, in doing so, begin to further articulate a post-critical educational philosophy.

3. From hermeneutic pedagogy to pedagogical hermeneutics

As indicated, critical pedagogy maintains a particular inequality. In its current form, critical pedagogy posits that in order to think and act together we must educate *for* equality and mutual understanding. But as we have seen, such a view forms part of the utopian ideal. Our attempt to formulate the principles of a post-critical educational philosophy can be read as a declaration that we can act and speak – that understanding and community are possible. We think it is vital to take and defend this standpoint, as today, many different critical perspectives, although concerned with voice and social justice, entail a form of scepticism. Genuine understanding of others, and real recognition of otherness, is not just deemed impossible, but an irresponsible, unethical desire. It has become accepted that to claim to fully know the other is to do «violence» to him/her. Therefore, it seems, we cannot fully reach out to the other; commonality is an idle dream. And, even if we think we succeed in going beyond the boundaries that set us apart from each other, critical theorists will immediately rebuff such a claim by reminding us of the inescapable frameworks that shape our individual worldviews; we are irremediably biased by our gender, our social class, our mother-tongue, our western logocentric mind-set, and so on. On such a view, to deny insurmountable differences is seen as a lack of respect and to commit a form of violence. It is to disregard the uniqueness of the other and to ask her to fit in with the contingent categories through which we happen to understand ourselves. As a result, many contemporary educators see it as their critical task to raise awareness of our naiveté, and as their ethical responsibility to combat the arrogance of those who erroneously believe that they can grasp and fully respect the other.

This position has its roots, of course, in the initial impetus of critical pedagogy (cf. Freire, 1993): to displace the teacher as the one with the unique, superior comprehension of children and students; one which they – the uneducated – could not have of themselves. It is this position that gives the educator the right to take (sometimes far-reaching) decisions on behalf of the other (cf. Gadamer, 1975, p. 354). Following the profound influence of critical theory, post-structuralist, social constructivist, post-colonial, and post-modern thought, we now see that this «gatekeeper» position of the educator patronizes the other, denies his/her agency, and presumptuously imposes the educator's/oppressor's own categories of understanding upon him/her. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that all those who are charged with educational responsibilities respect his/her otherness and realize that we cannot take for granted that we understand the other. The educator should also become aware that very often our attempts to liberate the oppressed other in the end amount to pure arrogance: we erroneously believe that we can

transcend the borders set by different categories by which we understand ourselves. Conversely, the sole task of the educator has become a negative one: to overcome the misunderstanding and violence that accompany the traditional pedagogical attitude. Thus, pedagogy should always be conscious of these risks: pedagogy should be hermeneutical pedagogy (Mollenhauer, 1986). However, we argue that this reduces what we can do as educators, and further, that this risks fostering a downright cynical attitude: instead of making a difference through education, we become indifferent. As Sloterdijk (1987, p. XXXII) puts it: «[...] everything is problematic, everything is also somehow a matter of indifference».

To put this another way: hermeneutic pedagogy starts from the assumption that we can only act and speak if we first have the certainty that we fully understand and really respect the other. Before we can speak we must first have a common ground, e.g. we must first agree on basic beliefs about what the world is like, on the definition of the words we use, on ideas regarding what constitutes a valid argument, etc. (even if the majority of these assumptions remain implicit) (cf. Biesta, 2012). If it turns out that there is no such commonality, as much current public debate suggests, the only thing left to do is withdraw to a solipsistic, relativist, and cynical position. This can perhaps be illustrated with reference to the current political debates in the UK and US mentioned in the introduction. On this view, hermeneutics constitutes an unsolvable problem: we will never find the common ground – today expressed, for example, as mutual respect, cohesion, tolerance, intercultural understanding – from which we could begin. But if we take a different attitude, we can see the possibility of speaking and acting together as a challenge. This is an approach that defines commonality as something that still needs to be brought about, as a task, and, more precisely, as an educational task *par excellence*.

In questioning the assumptions behind the accepted mode of critical pedagogy, however, we risk slipping back in to the dialectic we wish to avoid. Instead, we take an affirmative, post-critical, rather than critical, stance. To articulate an alternative to the hermeneutic pedagogy discussed above, we discern two opposing points of departure, as set out by Rancière (1991), the first in line with hermeneutic pedagogy, the second an alternative: either (1) we start from the idea that there is an inequality in intelligence between educator and educand, and so – out of the best of intentions – we educate in the hope to bridge the gap and to elevate the other to a higher level (our level); or (2) we start from the idea that there is no gap to bridge, and that real education only begins when we assume an equality of intelligence. This is not an equality that could ever be proven, i.e. tested. That isn't the point. Empirical evidence would contradict the very idea. Rather, starting from the assumption of the possibility of speaking, thinking, acting together, by going against the grain, we open the possibility to bring about something new and unexpected, i.e. we take the leap, see what happens, and verify in practice the principle we start from (Rancière, 1991, p. 7).

On this latter view, commonality shouldn't be regarded as a starting point (which is impossible for epistemological reasons or undesirable for ethical reasons), but rather as a result of a particular educational apparatus. Understanding is thus about making something (unlikely) happen, creating something new. Again, what we propose is a shift in basic attitudes: rather than starting from the practical premise

that we cannot and should not find commonality (hermeneutical pedagogy), we regard commonality as something that exactly needs the work of the educator. Close to what Rancière says in regard to an equality of intelligence: it is about making something come true by affirming it in practice. Hermeneutics, then, isn't a (unsolvable) problem, but rather something educators need to create. So, post-critical educational philosophy entails a shift from hermeneutic pedagogy to *pedagogical hermeneutics* – a space of thought, a way of speaking, an attitude that enables the existing and the new generation to meet, talk with each other, and act together and in doing so to (re)establish a relation with the world². Put simply, following Rancière, we cannot address issues of inequality by assuming inequality. Instead we must disrupt the current order.

To put this another way, as Alain Badiou (2001, p. 26) states in his criticism of the «ethics of difference»: «differences hold no interest for thought». Difference is just a condition of life, and so we can draw attention to differences that divide us *ad infinitum*. There is nothing special about it: «no light is shed on any concrete situation by the notion of «recognition of the other» (Badiou, 2001, p. 27). The real challenge for philosophy and, we would add, for education «lies on the side of the Same» (Badiou, 2001, p. 27): «The Same, in effect, is not what is (i.e. the infinite multiplicity of differences), but what *comes to be*», i.e. is created in common (Badiou, 2001, p. 27) (italics in original). Difference is the rule; the possibility of bringing about commonality, in spite of these differences, is the exception. It is something that is not naturally given, but something that demands effort and that breaks, so to speak, with the given (seemingly natural) order of things. It is about bringing in to the world the unforeseen. This, according to Arendt (1968), is what education is literally all about.

4. From Procedural to Principled Normativity³

Evidently, all this could imply stepping back towards the traditional model previously mentioned: that of an educator or researcher who, on the basis of his/her superior knowledge of what is and what ought to be, decrees what ought to be done. This could be called a *procedural normativity*. That is, to take an attitude to research,

² Of course, critical pedagogues might be sympathetic to this call for a pedagogical hermeneutics. We argue, however, that acceptance of a critical attitude actually leads to a pedagogy that sets forth the impossibility of reaching equality and the undesirability of claiming true/final mutual understanding.

³ The shift we advocate here is not necessarily meant *against* what critical pedagogues stand for. Many might agree with what we call for here. Instead, the qualified normativity we argue for is to be understood against the background of the present condition in which procedural normativity has lost its credibility (partly as a result of the rise of critical paradigms) and in which relativism seems to be the only alternative. The critical approach, in our view, doesn't offer the means necessary to overcome this state of affairs. In fact, as we have shown, the critical attitude essentially implies a demand never to stop criticizing, and this is as paralyzing as relativism is. The only way out of this deadlock is to defend a form of normativity that leaves behind a judgmental starting point. Our standpoint is, therefore, that there are principles to defend, that there is good in the world to care for, and that education is essentially oriented towards such good things, rather than towards an infinite search for the not-yet acknowledged source of oppression and inequality, the hidden evil, and forms of self-deception we are prone to.

including in philosophy of education, that proceeds on the basis of a normativity that guides the approach, practice, and outcomes. Educational reality is put to the test of existing, firmly held, theory and philosophy [to paraphrase Masschelein (2010)]. But this normativity, we argue, is constrained by a relativism. «Normalizing», «universalizing», and «totalizing» have now become pejorative terms. The reasons for this have perhaps become disjoined, however, from the philosophy and theory of the mid – to late 20th century that brought their force to bear on then–dominant theoretical and methodological frameworks of the 19th and early 20th century. The desire to avoid these traits (i.e. to commit the forms of violence against alterity and diversity), in research has arguably contributed to a relativism. In order for a post-critical educational philosophy to gain purchase and to move beyond a relativist impasse, we wish to defend particular principles. This amounts not to defining ways of acting in the name of x educational or political outcome, or to reinforcing the truth of a particular theory (Masschelein, 2010). Instead, norms here refer to a basic attitude to pedagogy and to research. A post-critical educational philosophy *only* adheres to a *principled normativity*. Our «norms» are attitudes on the basis of which educators can give shape to their own lives. They constitute an *ethos*, as Michel Foucault (2005) would call it in his later work. Such norms are not simply positions we hold but rather are borne out in action; they are in this sense «touchstones» [cf. Foucault's (2001) account of Socratic of *parrhesia*].

Virtue, Foucault says, is the result of a practical endeavor to take an attitude towards life that is not one of judgment, but that is critical nonetheless. It is the result of exercising (*askesis*) and leads to the formulation of maxims that support and guide us when we act (as educators). It consists of «an open and an orientated preparation [*paraskeue*] of the individual for the events of life» (Foucault, 2005, p. 320). It concerns the formulation of principles (*logoi*) that are not merely propositions one knows to be true, but that need to be embodied: «We must have it ready to hand, that is to say we must have it, so to speak, almost in our sinews» (Foucault, 2005, p. 325). Principles, in this sense, are not theoretical insights, the truth of which certify a right course of action, but practical dispositions that aid us in responding to a situation from a fully immanent perspective. Whereas *procedural normativity* casts critical judgment on the situation on the basis of certified knowledge, a *principled normativity* entails giving up this desire for judgment and certainty. Instead, what is called for is an affirmation of the situation, but at the same time responding to it in a *virtuous* way (cf. Vlieghe, 2014).

5. Love for the world

But how does this start? It may all sound as utopian, idealistic, and indeed, judgmental as the paradigm we wish to move away from. Can we imagine an attitude towards the world that isn't driven by hate or suspicion, or by a tense mixture of hate for the world's present form and love for an imaginary, perfect, but unreachable, future? Is there a way for our actions to stem from our love for what we cherish in the world as it is? Could we try not to defer our love for the world but affirm it by recognition of what is worth passing on?

This articulation of a post-critical educational philosophy sees education as autotelic, that is, not in terms of any instrumental function or means to an end beyond itself. Education as such is good, and hence it should be performed for its own sake. This educational attitude is driven by love for the world, and not aimed at revealing its oppressive forms. In the current context, education is *for* democracy, *for* social justice, *for* citizenship, *for* employability, *for* wellbeing, and so on. Always still to come, but – crucially – underpinned by a political pedagogy that denies that it can come, owing to the structures of power that maintain relative oppression, and its achievement being marked by a total emancipation and overthrowing of those relations. But to take an *educational* view of education, and to denounce accounts concerned with extrinsic, political, or developmental ends, does not imply that we see the practices of teaching and research as apolitical. Rather, according to this affirmative attitude, the political move *vis à vis* existing theory is made in the shift to the focus on education for education's sake. On this view, then, extrinsic political ends, no matter how well meaning, become subject to question.

The way in which we relate to the world as educators seems to be completely different from that of politics. Education originates in our love for the world, in the acknowledgement that there are some good things in the world that are worth preserving. Naturally, their preservation is not just simple indoctrination or transmission (that would come down to destroying these things – to turning them into meaningless, empty shells used purely as an instrument of power). In order to preserve them we need to enable the next generation to take up these things, to rejuvenate them, to make them alive once again. As such, educational love is always double: love for the world goes hand in hand with love for the new generation. We must pass on what is good, but in such a way that newcomers can truly start anew with it. In other words, love is not mere attachment to what exists, but also a sincere attitude of generosity towards the next generation: we invite them to care for and to be interested in what we hold dear, but at the same time we leave it up to them to relate to it, possibly in ways that are unforeseeable. This – on the other hand – is the only way in which these good things can be renewed and «stay alive» for the next generation.

In other words, the relation towards the world engendered by the post-critical stance is not about debunking the evil of the world, but about care and attention to the good inherent to that world (cf. Latour, 2004). This has to be performed while being aware of all possible dangers and wrongs of that world. Hence – let us stress this clearly – this is not to deny the existence of evil, oppression, injustice, and inequality. On the contrary, it is to suggest that we have to take responsibility for the good in the world precisely because of the critical awareness that we have about its inherent wrongs – wrongs that are threatening the existence of goods we care for. A love for the world is understood here in Arendt's terms (Arendt, 1968). Often this is open to the criticism that this is unworkable in practice. We do not deny that it is difficult but, it is in line with the idea of a principled normativity that we wish to defend it.

Love could be simply the passionate attachment to a subject matter or a discipline, as displayed by teachers in their day-to-day doings. In line with Arendt (1968), who argues that teachers should be first and foremost experts in a subject

(rather than in the art of teaching), it makes sense to regard teaching in terms of professing to an audience of students why a particular thing – maths, history, car-mechanics, cooking, etc. – is interesting and worth caring for. Teaching is, then, essentially drawing attention to something one is in love with and sharing this passion. In so doing, the world is set free: the object of love is passed on in such a manner that it can be taken up in new and unexpected ways. It may be helpful though to illustrate what love for the world means with reference to a more familiar practical example of the way in which educational-political solutions are often sought for social problems.

The concerns of critical pedagogy are evident in the critical literature on current conceptions and forms of citizenship education and the related discourses of citizenship that these serve to educate for. Take, for example, Osler and Starkey's highly influential human rights-based approach to citizenship education (see e.g. 2006). In a review of the literature, they take the widespread introduction of forms of citizenship education, and the policies of the UN and OECD, as indicative of an international consensus on the need for citizenship education and the relationship between such provision and the maintenance of democracy. As we have indicated above, the need to educate for citizenship and political participation is premised on an assumption of inequality and, further, on the assumption that inequality is structured around particular identities, whose associated groups of communities must be shown how they are subordinated and the terms on which inclusion is afforded them.

Within educational philosophical literature, and governmentality studies more broadly, the governmentalizing, depoliticizing, and individualizing implications of current conceptions of citizenship are well-documented (see e.g. Delanty, 2003; Biesta, 2009; Hodgson, 2016). This points to the need not for a reconceptualization of citizenship education, but for an acknowledgement that the very notion of citizenship is, and always will be, a restrictive, state-oriented one. While the critical concern with social justice and inclusion leads to calls for, for example, political literacy and democratic skills in order to enhance participation, the ways in which contemporary discourses and practices of citizenship operate mitigate against recognizing what is common. Rather, they mobilize us on the grounds of common fears: economic uncertainty, immigration, and other established platforms of mainstream party political campaigning. The recent UK referendum on EU membership gives us a clear example of this.

Thus, in articulating a post-critical educational philosophy – as a distinctively educational philosophy and a response to the critical impasse – we don't simply rethink the notion of citizenship education for a «post-truth» politics, for example. As a notion that takes the nation-state, and its laws and borders, as a point of reference, any «rethinking» in terms of citizenship further shores up the category and delimits the political and the democratic to its state or governmental form. It remains the taken-for-granted category according to which political participation, and one's inclusion in or exclusion from it, is understood. Instead of seeking to articulate what forms of (citizenship) education are required to overcome the present, we focus instead on what takes place in the present, on what we do have in common. This entails practicing education on the basis of what is of value to pass on, but not

circumscribed by our anxieties for an uncertain future that lead us to maximize individual competitive advantage or see the achievement of commonality as an educational problem. It is not only a matter of pedagogy but also of an attitude to research itself.

6. Unspeakable education

It seems that education these days has become itself a threatened good that calls for our response. Our intrinsic educational experiences simply cannot be expressed within discourses that currently play a hegemonic role. Being increasingly appropriated by the «conservative modernisation» – the name afforded to the hegemonic bundle of neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and new managerialism by Apple (2005) – education (for its own sake) is increasingly suppressed, unspeakable, silenced. For example, study (Lewis, 2013), practicing by repetition (Vlieghe, 2013), the public dimensions of the school (Masschelein and Simons, 2013), seem to be things that we simultaneously experience, and are deprived of. As such, it could be said that we already have at our disposal what we search for – we do not have to wait for the bright future to come. What is at stake here is to attend to and defend these unspeakable *educational* aspects of education; to offer affirmative accounts that articulate what we do outwith the dominant discourses of e.g. learning, excellence, research, parenting, and so on.

Education today is *for* league tables, benchmarks, return rates, and educational surplus value. But arguably, none of these things are educational; they are something externally imposed and they substitute education (Zamojski, 2014). But we hold that it is no longer necessary to put all our effort into unmasking this process. And we have no grounds to believe that debunking reality – giving further proof of the wrongs inherent to the world – will make people change their actions, and therefore, will change the world itself.

What is at stake here, therefore, is a break with the dialectical tradition and its requirement to negate the present in order to achieve the desired future. Instead, a post-critical approach means purely affirmative beginning, an attempt to create a space of thought that enables educational practitioners to make education happen (Zamojski, 2015). This means (re)establishing our relation to our words in order to open a possibility to act in a way that would allow this. This entails not overcoming or negating but acknowledging and articulating – indeed defending – the educational dimensions of our experience. As such, the event of education is subversive to the political order (the *police order* as Rancière (1999) calls it). This is not the reason for education to happen, however. The one and only reason for continuing our attempts at establishing the event of education once again is that education is simply something good. It is our gift for the next generation, which stems from love for the world and for the newcomers to it, as Arendt has put this (1968).

One of the central claims underlying the principles set out in this article is that the position of the critical pedagogue is driven by hate towards the world. Not of fellow citizens or students, of course. But of the institutions of power that structure society and its inequalities and those that maintain them. This is manifested, we argue, in the position taken by the pedagogue in relation to the student/other/educandus;

as needing to lift the veil on the conditions of oppression in which they exist. What is passed on, then, is this sense of the need to expose society as constituted by (hidden) malevolent forces. Emancipation consists in being given access to this knowledge, to taking on one's own appropriate hatred – suspicion, cynicism, distrust, a focus on that which we do not share.

We risk being accused of the same action: of lifting the veil on what is really going on in critical pedagogical theory and practice. But, the post-critical educational philosophy we defend here – founded on a principled normativity, pedagogical hermeneutics, and an affirmative attitude expressed in terms of love for the world – shares the basic premise of critical pedagogy: that education has the potential to transform. However, the work of critical pedagogy, as we have stated, and as Latour (2004) has indicated, is largely done. Hence, the issue here is not critical pedagogy as such, but rather critical pedagogy and critical theory more broadly as unable to provide an educational – hopeful – response to the conditions in which we find ourselves. A post-critical educational philosophy, then, is not a-critical; it does not deny power relations, or the existence of malevolent intentions and actions in the world. It does not deny that torture and persecution are happening, or that all manner of everyday injustices are done by us all. But it acts on the basis of affirmation that – in spite of this – there are things we wish to maintain and protect; that there is something of value to pass on.

7. References

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