

LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

LEONARD J. WAKS (SERIES EDITOR)

Leaders in Philosophy of Education

**Intellectual Self-Portraits
(Second Series)**

Leonard J. Waks (Ed.)

Foreword by Jane Roland Martin



SensePublishers

Leaders in Philosophy of Education

LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Volume 6

Series Editor: Leonard J. Waks, *Temple University, Philadelphia, USA*

Scope:

The aim of the *Leaders in Educational Studies* Series is to document the rise of scholarship and university teaching in educational studies in the years after 1960. This half-century has been a period of astonishing growth and accomplishment. The volumes in the series document this development of educational studies as seen through the eyes of its leading practitioners.

A few words about the build up to this period are in order. Before the mid-twentieth century school teaching, especially at the primary level, was as much a trade as a profession. Schoolteachers were trained primarily in normal schools or teachers colleges, only rarely in universities. But in the 1940s American normal schools were converted into teachers colleges, and in the 1960s these were converted into state universities. At the same time school teaching was being transformed into an all-graduate profession in both the United Kingdom and Canada. For the first time, school teachers required a proper university education.

Something had to be done, then, about what was widely regarded as the deplorable state of educational scholarship. James Conant, in his final years as president at Harvard in the early 1950s, envisioned a new kind of university-based school of education, drawing scholars from mainstream academic disciplines such as history, sociology psychology and philosophy, to teach prospective teachers, conduct educational research, and train future educational scholars. One of the first two professors hired to fulfil this vision was Israel Scheffler, a young philosopher of science and language who had earned a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. Scheffler joined Harvard's education faculty in 1952. The other was Bernard Bailyn, who joined the Harvard faculty in 1953 after earning his Ph.D. there, and who re-energized the study of American educational history with the publication of *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (University of North Carolina Press, 1960). The series has been exceptionally fortunate that Scheffler provided a foreword to the volume on philosophy of education, and that Bernard Bailyn provided a foreword for the volume on the history of American education. It is equally fortunate that subsequent volumes have also contained forewords by similarly eminent scholars, including James Banks of the University of Washington, who has been a creative force in social education for decades and the prime mover in the field of multi-cultural education.

The *Leaders in Educational Studies* Series continues to document the growing and changing literature in educational studies. Studies conducted within the established academic disciplines of history, philosophy, and sociology comprised the dominant trend throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s educational studies diversified considerably, in terms of both new sub-disciplines within these established disciplines and new interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary fields.

Curriculum studies, both in general and in the particular school subject matter fields, drew extensively from work in philosophy, history and sociology of education. Work in these disciplines, and also in anthropology and cultural studies among others, also stimulated new perspectives on race, class and gender.

This volume, like previous volumes in the series, brings together personal essays by established leaders in a major field of educational studies. Subsequent volumes in the series will continue to document other established and emerging disciplines, sub-disciplines and inter-disciplines in educational scholarship.

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Foreword by Jane Roland Martin

Edited by

Leonard J. Waks

Temple University, Philadelphia, USA



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JANE ROLAND MARTIN

FOREWORD

In his Foreword to the first *Leaders in Philosophy of Education* Israel Scheffler told us that he joined the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1952 under a Rockefeller grant designed to introduce new perspectives to the field of Education. It is my pleasure to report that 62 years later, new perspectives are still being introduced into the Philosophy of Education.

Jurgen Habermas, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Paulo Freire, Louisa May Alcott, Luce Irigaray: this is a bare sampling of the people scarcely mentioned in the first *Leaders* whose ideas have had a profound influence on the philosophers of education included in the Second Series. The presence in the pages to follow of scholars from Europe, Australia, and New Zealand is another sign of the continued reinvigoration of our field, and a third indication is that eight out of the eighteen contributors to this volume are women.

One new to our profession will not know what a sea change the near gender parity of authorship represents. At the first meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society I ever attended – this was 1960 and analytic papers were still not allowed on the official program – I, a graduate student, was one of only two women there. In the first *Leaders* volume Patricia White wrote that in Britain in the early 1960s she knew of no women working analytically in the philosophy of education until she happened upon my article in the 1961 B. Othanel Smith and Robert Ennis collection *Language and Concepts of Education*. That book was the exception. Scan the Table of Contents of the other landmark collections of analytic work in our field – Scheffler’s 1958 anthology *Philosophy and Education*, its second edition published in 1966, and R. S. Peters’ 1967 *The Concepts of Education* – and you will see that the works contained therein are all written by men. Having firsthand knowledge of the historical record, I was duly impressed that as many as six out of twenty-four of the essays in the first *Leaders* were by women and rejoice that in this volume close to one-half of them are.

A newcomer may not realize either that in a matter of decades English language philosophy of education has twice been transformed. Although the analytic philosophy that Scheffler, Peters, Smith and Ennis introduced into our discipline and that I as a student enthusiastically embraced met strong resistance from the philosophy of education “establishment,” analytic approaches soon came to dominate our field. These memoirs testify, however, that the one intellectual revolution quickly gave way to what is perhaps most aptly described as methodological pluralism. I roundly applaud this development and admire the deep commitment to philosophical modes of thinking that shines through every essay in this volume. The new pluralism does, however, present a number of challenges.

In his Introduction, Editor Leonard Waks refers to “the philosophy of education conversation.” Each of these leaders has clearly engaged in conversation with philosophers past and present. To what extent they have met the challenge of talking to, listening to, and learning from one other across the very different philosophical approaches or methodologies is a question for readers to judge.

In view of the near parity of male and female authors in this volume it might be thought that where the philosophy of education is concerned, issues of gender will from now on take care of themselves. Pluralistic conversation is, however, facilitated when the various parties are acquainted with one another’s theoretical perspectives, and here there is a notable gender disparity. Whereas just about all the leaders in this Second Series seem to have been influenced by continental philosophy and most of the women appear to have been deeply affected by feminist theory and scholarship: very few of the men seem even to be acquainted with the feminist literature. I hasten to add that this gender imbalance is more than matched in these autobiographical accounts by the paucity of references to philosophical perspectives rooted in continents other than Europe and North America.

If the first challenge of the new pluralism is to talk across different methodologies, a second one is to resist the centrifugal forces inherent in pluralism and find shared concerns on which the very different approaches can be brought to bear. When a multitude of approaches co-exist within a single discipline, it is all too easy for each one to lay claim to its own small patch of land rather than seek out common ground to cultivate. Again I leave it an open question whether these leaders are talking with one another about issues of concern to all.

Yet a third challenge is to keep the conversation focused on significant educational questions and here, past philosophical conversations about education can be helpful. I trust that in 2014 it scarcely needs saying that the membership of the “official” old philosophy of education conversational circle was not nearly as representative as it could and should have been. Nonetheless, many – perhaps most – of the educational issues that Plato, Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey and the rest took up are as pressing today as they ever were and could easily supply the new pluralism with material for common cause for years to come.

Of course there is nothing sacred about the ideas of the distant or even the recent past. On the contrary, one good reason for reclaiming and joining in conversations about education in which the “old-timers” in our discipline participated is that the ideas of yore need to be scrutinized, analyzed, and revised, over and over again. Another reason is that a discipline that treats the cultural wealth it has so far produced as a living presence does not have to reinvent the wheel. And last but not least, when the history of educational thought is passed down to each new generation of philosophers of education as a living legacy rather than a dead relic, newcomers to our field can take pride in the knowledge that they have entered a discipline with a distinguished past.

As for the present, I thank Leonard Waks for this second series of *Leaders in Philosophy of Education*. These memoirs give me great delight. They testify that

FOREWORD

the field I entered so many decades ago, and fell madly in love with, continues to thrive.

Jane Roland Martin
Professor of Philosophy Emerita
University of Massachusetts, Boston
April 2014

LEONARD J. WAKS

INTRODUCTION: LEADERS IN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AFTER 1980

This volume of the *Leaders in Educational Studies* series presents the self-portraits of 18 philosophers of education influential after 1980. They are selected from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Norway. While I make no claim that these individuals are *the* leaders, taken as a group they represent the vibrant state of the field today.

The first volume of *Leaders in Philosophy of Education* (Waks, 2008) presented autobiographical essays by 24 philosophers of education writing in English who entered the field in the 1960s and 1970s. The authors were all situated in North America or the United Kingdom. At that time the field was dominated by analytical philosophy. Richard S. Peters, a leading British philosopher, spent a year with Israel Scheffler at Harvard in 1960 prior to taking up his professorship at University of London's Institute of Education, and the two scholars forged a vision of the field which soon became dominant. Their students took up philosophy of education posts and saw themselves as working on a common intellectual project. They formed graduate programs and created new scholarly journals for the field. Warm collegial relationships and personal friendships were forged across the Atlantic.

Those working in Australia and New Zealand were excluded from that volume, as I lacked sufficient awareness of developments there, though had I been more in tune with them James Marshall would surely have been included.¹ Michael Peters and Denis Phillips, both originating 'down under,' had taken up positions in the United States (Peters had first moved to Glasgow) and were influential figures at the time of publication. Leading philosophers of education working on the European continent who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s were also excluded, because, again, I lacked sufficient awareness of European work and because on the whole European philosophers of education were not influential in the English language conversation in the field at that time.

Those entering the field in the 1980s – and included in this volume – have faced a very different situation. First, scholars from Australia and New Zealand have been more effectively linked to the Anglo-American conversation, which has also clearly expanded to include scholars working on the European continent. Second, European philosophy – and especially the post-modernist trend represented by Derrida, Levinas and Foucault – is now as potent an intellectual source in that

discussion as Anglo-American philosophy. Third, those entering the field after 1980 entered a discussion profoundly shaped by the 1968 student revolts, the women's movement and new generations of feminist thought, the Vietnam War, and economic globalization, among other events. Philosophy of education has taken an exacting critical stance toward educational projects of the neo-liberal state, and perhaps partly in response, the institutional support for philosophy of education as a field of study has suffered. The course in philosophy of education has been all but eliminated from undergraduate teacher preparation programs, and in many cases senior professors in the field have not been replaced upon retirement. Paradoxically, a considerable number of very talented young people have entered the field, although many have obtained university positions in posts not explicitly labeled 'philosophy of education.'

I begin by situating the contributors to this volume, and where relevant, indicating how they came to join the in the conversation of philosophy of education. Then I will tease out some of the main themes in the works of the contributors, and suggest a way for the field to move forward from here.

THE PATH TO PHILOSOPHY

Each contributor has his or her own path of entry to the professional conversation in philosophy of education. This is a relatively esoteric field; even philosophy majors are unlikely to encounter it in their university studies as it is, for the most part, stuck away in schools or departments of education; even the links tentatively formed after 1960 with department of philosophy have frayed in recent years. How did the authors in this volume find their way to this field of study?

Many speak of the tortuous, contingent, serendipitous path that led them to this field. Most started as unusually bookish and inquisitive children who fell in love with philosophy at first sight. Boler writes, "I have always believed I was born a philosopher and it has been a primary identification in the world, even beyond more materialist ones including gender, race and class." Burbules' questions about how to be a good person led first to the study of religion, and then existential philosophy. Curren was attracted from a young age to libraries and bookstores; reading "set his mind on fire." Diller had a "lifelong penchant for philosophical speculation;" Hansen, a recurring but "unanticipated feeling of wonder" that led to a study of "philosophy as the art of living." Howe became "infected with philosophy" early on, while Laird "fell in love with wisdom" while attending a broad church-related secondary school imbued with existential theology. Lovlie took joy in reading as "the door to freedom" leading to "a journey of wonderment." Roberts loved to read and ponder existential questions from childhood. Stengel felt a "calling" to philosophy and to challenging limiting expectations. Todd took deep pleasure in reading as "feeling her way into situations and allowing them to speak to her."

This love of reading and learning led many toward the study of either education or philosophy in their baccalaureate years. Boler, Curren and Howe majored in philosophy as undergrads. Smeyers, Masschelein, and Roberts majored in

educational studies programs with strong philosophical components. Biesta became a teacher, earned a teaching certificate, and enrolled in university with a major in Pedagogics that had a strong philosophical component. Smith studied classics and philosophy, became an uncertified teacher, and like Biesta took a certificate course and then undertook formal work in educational studies. Some took disciplinary detours: Burbules, Diller, and Stengel came to philosophy by way of religious studies; Hansen came to philosophy of education from history, Todd from art history, Laird from architecture, Kerr and Griffiths from Physics.

Eventually, the Anglo-American contributors found their way to the conversation of philosophy of education. Boler was introduced to philosophy of education by Deanne Bogdan, who directed her to the journal *Educational Theory* and to PES, where she met such fellow grad students as Cris Mayo and Natasha Levinson as well as more senior scholars including Nick Burbules, Jim Garrison (first series of *Leaders in Philosophy of Education*), and Lynda Stone. Burbules in turn studied at Stanford under Denis Phillips (first series of *Leaders in Philosophy of Education*) and Arturo Pacheco (who had been my student during my Stanford years). Curren, who had been a teacher and enthusiastic reader of the education literature, earned a doctorate in philosophy and obtained a joint appointment in philosophy and education at Rochester; he soon enjoyed lively conversations with Emily Robertson and Thomas Green (first *Leaders*) at nearby Syracuse University. Diller worked in religious education, and encountered Israel Scheffler and Jane Roland Martin (first *Leaders*) when she went to Harvard for graduate studies. Griffiths became a teacher, took evening courses in philosophy at the University of Bristol, and then a Masters with Gordon Reddiford, who had studied at the University of London's Institute of Education with Richard Peters and Paul Hirst (first *Leaders*). Hansen did a Masters in teaching, and then a doctorate in philosophy of education with Philip Jackson and Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (first *Leaders*). Kerr was a doctoral student of Jonas Soltis (first *Leaders*), who like Jane Martin and Harvey Siegel (first *Leaders*) had earned his doctorate at Harvard with Israel Scheffler. Laird studied philosophy of education at Cornell with Bob Gowin, but was led into the contemporary conversation by Ann Diller and Jane Roland Martin. Roberts studied education at the University of Auckland under Colin Lankshear, James Marshall, and Michael Peters (first *Leaders*), and was introduced to both the Anglo-American and European traditions in philosophy and philosophy of education even as an undergraduate. Smith studied Anglo-American philosophy at Oxford, and analytical philosophy of education during his teacher training course at the University of London's Institute of Education, before doing his doctorate under Robert Deardon, who had studied under Richard Peters and Paul Hirst. Stengel learned European philosophy during her graduate work in Religious Studies at Catholic University, and Anglo-American philosophy and philosophy of education at University of Pittsburgh, where she studied under David Engle, who like Kerr had studied with Jonas Soltis at Teachers College. Howe did a bachelors and masters in philosophy, and a joint philosophy and education doctorate with a thesis on the logic of evaluation; he connected himself more closely to the

professional conversation in philosophy of education through active participation in the Philosophy of Education Society.

THE EXPANDED CONVERSATION

The European and Anglo-American traditions in educational philosophy and theory have been quite distinct. Although drawing on a common trunk of classical texts – from Plato and Aristotle through Locke, Rousseau and Kant, they had earlier divided (with many exceptions) into Continental vs. English Empiricist schools by the eighteenth century and branched out even more during the twentieth century. Contemporary Europeans have drawn heavily upon German phenomenology from Husserl to Heidegger, the German Frankfurt School of critical theory, and French existentialism. Americans have grounded their work in pragmatism, and after 1960, in the British analytical philosophy school shaped by Richard Peters, Paul Hirst and Israel Scheffler. As Paul Smeyers notes in his chapter, the Europeans have largely regarded analytic philosophy as trivial, while the Americans and British have largely rejected twentieth century European philosophy as unphilosophical – and incoherent – rubbish. So how did this chasm get crossed after 1980? How has philosophy of education in English been able to draw from both traditions?

First, some Europeans with prior training in European philosophy were attracted to the Anglo-American approach, came to the United States or United Kingdom as visiting scholars, and remained active in the Anglo-American conversation. Biesta studied pedagogics at the University of Leiden, where he took an additional one year program in philosophy, not least because he was inspired by the work of Ben Spiecker, a figure very much at home in Anglo-American philosophy of education – he had, for example, presented at PESGB and contributed to the *festschrift* for Israel Scheffler. Biesta earned a masters and doctors degree in pedagogics at Leiden, writing theses on John Dewey under the direction of Siebren Miedema, who urged him to link with English language scholars. In addition he studied philosophy in Rotterdam, also earning a masters. Biesta then spent time as a visiting scholar in the United States studying Dewey and Mead, re-located to the United Kingdom, and finally returned to Europe in 2012. Although Biesta consciously remained at the margins of British philosophy of education when working in the U. K., he has been an influential figure in the United States, serving on the board of the John Dewey Society and as president of the Philosophy of Education Society (the first president not based in North America).

Lovlie was educated in the German critical tradition, but “became an Anglophile.” He contributed to the Norwegian critique of positivism, which connected him to the work of Karl Popper, an Austrian philosopher teaching in London, whose work had become central to Anglo-American philosophy of science. Lovlie’ teacher Hans Skjeivheim, the “spiritual father of Norwegian philosophy of education,” engaged him in a critique of American experimental psychology – an off-shoot of positivism – that in Skjeivheim’s work extended as well to Dewey. Lovlie later went to Cambridge as a visiting scholar, where he met

Paul Hirst (first *Leaders*) and Terry McLaughlin, two leaders in English philosophy of education.

Smeyers did his bachelor's degree in pedagogics, a field grounded in European philosophy, but then chose to write his master's thesis on Richard Peters and his doctoral thesis on Wittgenstein. He attended University of London's Institute of Education as a visiting scholar, and has subsequently been active in the American Philosophy of Education Society, PESGB, and the International Network of Philosophers of Education (INPE), and on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Theory*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, and *Ethics and Education*. Smeyers has also been active in study groups spanning North America, the U.K., and the European continent, and has brought other Europeans – including Jan Messchelein – into the broader conversation.

How has the European tradition in philosophy, and especially the post-modern trend, entered the conversation. One might think that the Europeans simply brought it with them as they joined the international discussion, but that would not be accurate. In some cases, the ground was laid by Anglo-American contributors' earliest engagements with philosophy. Burbules notes his early interest in existentialism and his encounters under Art Pacheco's influence with the Frankfurt school; Diller, Laird and Stengel mention introductions to existential theology in religious studies; Hansen his engagement with Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus in college. Beyond that, two bridging figures – James Marshall and Paul Smeyers – have been particularly influential. It was Marshall, Roberts' teacher at Auckland, who got Biesta interested in Derrida, and connected to Smeyers through mutual interests in Wittgenstein and post-modern ideas. Smeyers in turn was central to the growing interest in post-modern philosophy in the U.K., maintaining a study group with Nigel Blake, Paul Standish and Richard Smith that led to many publications including the *Blackwell Handbook in Philosophy of Education* (Blake et al., 2003) – a reference volume that put a Anglo-European frame around the field. Editor-in-Chief positions at both of the journals explicitly founded to give voice to the Anglo-American analytic philosophy program – *The Journal of Philosophy of Education* and *Studies in Philosophy and Education* – both were taken up by philosophers of education influenced by European post-modern ideas: Smith and Biesta.

The feminist movement in philosophy of education – with its focus on difference, otherness and relatedness – themes explored by Derrida and Levinas – has also been an important factor in the spread of post-modern thinking in the field. Derrida's diagnosis of binary thinking and his strategy of inverting binaries, for example, have been important moves in 'third generation' feminist thought. Feminist philosophy study groups in both North America and the United Kingdom have been significant sites for the spread of such ideas. Jane Roland Martin and Ann Diller, both students of Israel Scheffler, were influential in the PHEADRA study group in the United States; Griffiths in a feminist reading group in philosophy in England. All three had been trained in analytic philosophy, but the feminist philosophers they met also drew upon phenomenology and existentialism

and post-modernist/ post-structuralist philosophy. It was in such groups that Laird and Griffiths – and other feminist philosophers of education – first encountered Foucault, Derrida and Levinas as well as Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler, feminist philosophers influenced by them.

CURRENT THEMES

The contributors to this volume have emphasized some themes in their work. Here I indicate a few of these. Readers will probably discover others.

1. The desire for a more personal diction, a language and tone for philosophy writing that more adequately captures the unique, personal intent of individual philosophers and speaks to the more intimate, personal dimension of their readers.

Several contributors note their attraction to philosophy as resulting from personal questions arising in childhood or adolescence. Burbules turned to philosophy to learn how he could become a better person, Curren to gain insight into the racial injustice sustained by his own family, Hansen to sustain his sense of wonder and offer a guide to the art of living.

Many found sustenance in literature and existential philosophy, but not always in the philosophical diction of professional philosophers of education. Kerr came to philosophy from physics, and found the transition easy because she could do analytic philosophy the same way she had done math and physics – operating as an arbitrary point in space rather than a unique person. Kerr withdrew from philosophy writing when she could no longer find herself – her own distinct voice – in it and had no way of assisting her graduate students express their distinct selves in their graduate student writing. Some of our contributors found their voices through new post-modern philosophical dictions and the risks they encouraged, or by incorporating literary sources directly into their work. Kerr, for her part, developed a form of subjective pedagogy – starting with each student's self and its pre-professional philosophy problems and concerns, and then blending in philosophical texts – generously read – as sources of personal solutions.

2. A re-positioning or de-positioning with respect to analytic philosophy of education.

Biesta, though drawing on American pragmatism, chose to remain marginal to British philosophy even after relocating to England. Burbules, though trained by analytic philosopher Denis Phillips, rejected the style of analytic philosophy discussion – the “shoot out at the O. K. corral” approach; he has sought to understand dialogical approaches to discussion and their limits, drawing on Habermas, Gadamer, and other European sources. Curren, who was drawn to the study of education through Kozol's *Death at an Early Age* and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, had from the start distaste for philosophical abstractions typical of analytic philosophy; like Burbules, Diller and Howe, he has favored educational

scholarship firmly situated in practical realities. Although trained in analytic philosophy, Griffiths never quite ‘fit the mold.’ Kerr, whose first books were models of analytic philosophy, withdrew from philosophy writing when she found she could not bring herself as a unique person into her work. Laird’s doctoral study of co-education was blocked when her advisor insisted that ‘co-education’ was not a “concept” and hence could not be subjected to conceptual analysis. Smith was trained in analytic philosophy of education but rejected it because in his words, (i) the leading practitioners were not clear about what a ‘concept’ was, their analyses were, in his view, linguistic legislation in disguise; (ii) they saw their modest or inconsequential conclusions as a ‘plus,’ and (iii) because work in analytic philosophy of education was ‘pedestrian.’

3. The attraction of ‘deconstruction’ as a new method or anti-method, a way of reading, a conscious attempt to tease out and confront binaries hiding implicit comparative value judgments, and intervening to invert them.

No fewer than 8 of the seventeen contributors – Biesta, Laird, Lovlie, Masschelein, Roberts, Smeyers, Smith, and Stengel cite Derrida as a significant influence, while Griffiths speaks more generally of French post-modernist influences. Biesta speaks of Derrida as affirming not just what is excluded (i.e., the de-valued component of the binary), but also of what lies outside the currently conceptualizable –what Derrida calls “the incalculable.” Derrida’s attempt to make room for the arrival of what cannot currently be expressed is, Biesta says, a “thoroughly educational gesture.” Lovlie finds reading Derrida a “relief from the relentless rationality” of other philosophical texts (he mentions Habermas, but might well include analytic philosophy). He appreciates Derrida’s deconstructive way of making “forms of life tremble and dissolve from within,” like “organisms and their own autoimmunity.” Like Biesta, he sees this move as opening the way for experiences without origins or finalities – openings for the new and unprecedented (connecting his concerns with those of Hannah Arendt). Masschelein, on the other hand, finds Derrida’s notion that we are all captured by language, especially when coupled with Foucault’s idea that we are all disciplined by omnipotent power structures implicit in the language of power/knowledge, a path toward nihilistic impotence; he seeks construction of new ‘languages’ and new possibilities of expression and understanding.

4. A recognition prompted by Levinas of the opacity and ultimate unknowability of other persons, combined with recognition of the claims each one makes upon me.

Seven of our contributors – all of those mentioning Derrida as an influence except Laird – also mention Levinas.

Biesta mentions Levinas and Arendt as influencing his “ethico-political turn,” which had already been waiting in the wings in his earlier writings; although he doesn’t expand upon this here, his recent work on ‘pragmatic readings of pragmatism’ suggests that his early focus on Dewey and Mead had already

prepared him for his more radical embrace of the primacy of the practical. In particular, Levinas helped him to understand uniqueness as irreplaceability, because the claims made upon me ‘single me out’ and so in taking up responsibility for them I can realize my unique singularity. Masschelein came to Levinas, on the way to Buber and later Ranciere, in exploring emancipatory pedagogy. For Todd, Levinas was useful in facing the sense of mystery in encounters with works of art and with other people. He helped her with her struggle to “put into words things for which I never had a language.”

4. A rejection of the initiation metaphor central to Richard Peters’ conception of education, and a new interest in radical beginnings – and hence in the philosophy and educational writings of Hannah Arendt.

Biesta makes this rejection clearest in his essay “Education, Not Initiation” (1996), but the theme also echoes through his book *Beyond Learning*, where he sets out a critique of humanism as placing limits on human nature. The Peters – Hirst “forms of knowledge” curriculum, positing seven distinct (and at least relatively fixed) logical structures within which thinking is confined, certainly appears to limit humanity’s possibilities. As Biesta explains in his contribution to this volume, Arendt helped him “think of education in terms of how newcomers come ‘into the world.’” He adds,

Education as ‘coming into the world’ not only gives educators a responsibility for the new beginnings, but also for the plural or ‘worldly’ quality of the world, as it is only ‘under the condition of plurality’ (Arendt) that everyone has a possibility to bring their beginnings into the world.

The contrast between the Peters-Hirst program, with its already fixed forms of knowledge and thinking, and its view of education as initiation into the long-standing cognitive activities and practices that embody them, on the one hand, and Arendt’s concern with the emergent, with new possibilities in individuals and new beginnings in practice, could not be starker. If education is about how ‘newcomers’ with emergent possibilities come into an open world, then as Biesta had already argued, it can have nothing much to do with initiation. I’ll have more to say about this contrast in the Afterword to this volume.

Masschelein sees Arendt, along with Foucault, as guides in dropping the ‘critical judgmental attitude’ of conventional philosophy, an attitude that seeks to check and limit others and tell them how to think. Instead, these philosophers saw their works as “experiments” – ways to think and live in the world “otherwise.” This phrase places the emphasis on stepping beyond the given and coming into unique new possibilities of existence – living otherwise.

For Todd, Arendt holds a special place because she acknowledges the “miracle of birth” – that is, of coming into existence as an actor within the polis, a birth that can only be realized in relation to others. Individuality as relatedness is taken up again in the next theme.

5. A critique of ontological individualism, and recognition of the connected or distributed nature of human selves, knowledge, thinking and understanding.

The idea Todd associates with Arendt that individuals are constituted by their relations, has been prominent in feminist accounts of teaching and scholarship. As mentioned earlier, study and writing groups have also been characteristic of feminist intellectual practice, as noted by Diller, Laird and Griffiths. And these study groups provide concrete, public and political reference points for the relations that shape the individualities of these participants. But these recognitions of relatedness are not restricted to feminism. Lovlie's essay brings out the notion of mind as distributed intelligence in Dewey, while Masschelein also highlights co-production of knowledge and understanding through dialogue – “the need for others for thoughts to come – one cannot think by oneself.” For Masschelein the general term for such co-productive relations is ‘friendship,’ and in his writing practice he has turned to collaborative authorship as an “articulation of friendship,” a notion that echoes formulations in the works of both Dewey and Ivan Illich. Perhaps the most radical expression of this view has recently been expressed by Stephen Downes, in his “connectivist” theory of learning, according to which only networked groups can think or know; individuals can only do so in a derivative sense, *via* their participation in networks.

6. An ever-deepening recognition of chance, contingency, complexity, and with it, a deeper critique of educational schemes based on tight means-ends reasoning – not merely because they are reductive or harmful, but because they are ‘pure fantasy.’

All contributors to this volume, and perhaps all educational scholars trained in the humanities disciplines, reject – perhaps even detest – the imposition of technocratic norms in education: specific learning objectives, high stakes standardized tests, evaluation and award of merit pay to teachers based on test scores. This rejection was already marked in the analytic philosophy period; Petrie, Strike, Waks and others established themselves in the field by making trenchant arguments for the irrationality of such approaches, but framed the flaws as primarily philosophical or logical. The current group of leaders extends these earlier critiques. They locate these technocratic moves as components of the neo-liberal project – of rendering knowledge and teaching as commodities within capitalist markets, and introducing market mechanisms in education to achieve market efficiencies in learning. Teachers and schools are, in this logic, set in competition to one another and to alternative means including new information technologies, in supplying knowledge(s) to student consumers as market goods. Researchers are, in turn, viewed as competing to supply new knowledge(s) to markets where they may be converted into “intellectual property,” capitals that can be patented and copyrighted, bought and sold. The neo-liberal approach eliminates the ‘social’ – the idea that education serves society by coordinating common learning so that we can get along as civic friends, cooperate despite our many differences, and contribute to a common pool of social goods including non-rival

knowledge shared and used by all, common public goods that should be provided by socially – through efforts of the state and civil society outside of market mechanisms.

Our contributors, on the whole, reject the neo-liberal project in education. But, with a growing appreciation of contingency, chance, and complexity in human affairs, many have come to regard the dream of controlling learning by adjusting techniques to obtain highly specific learning objectives as insane, based on delusions of grandeur that rival those of petty dictators. Bill Doll, who first placed the notion of complexity into the heart of educational studies, pointed Biesta toward a deeper study of complexity. Todd adds that “one of the rough threads of life has to do with chance and serendipity.” Smith speaks of the “particular irony (of) relishing (Martha Nussbaum’s) emphasis on the inevitability of chance in human life while the educationists around me spoke insistently of school effectiveness and education as a totally reliable technology.”

Readers will find additional themes, and perhaps question my interpretations. I invite further commentary on the upshot of these essays. In an Afterword I suggest a path forward for our field.

A NOTE ON SELECTION

In selecting the contributors to the current volume I was greatly assisted by a number of colleagues and friends – in senior, mid-career, and junior positions in North America, the United Kingdom, Europe and Australasia. I asked for lists my correspondents considered the most influential voices, and then considered for selection only those mentioned on at least two lists. I excluded those who had entered the field after the mid-1990s (making an exception for Sharon Todd, who was ‘nominated’ by many colleagues, and who has certainly been an influential voice in the field). Most of the contributors were born in the 1950s – making them a decade younger (or more) than those featured in the first series of *Leaders*.

The volume would be more balanced had it included contributions by Eammon Callen, Harry Brighouse, and Paul Standish. Callen, however, declined to participate due to health concerns; Brighouse and Standish initially expressed interest but did not submit essays – perhaps they may be included in a later series. The contingent of younger philosophers of education – those who were born in the 1960s and 1970s, and entered the field in the 1990s and early 2000s, includes many talented scholars – I mention Rene Arcilla, Eduardo Duarte, Judith Suizza, Suzanne Rice, Kathleen Knight Abowitz, Michael Hand, Claudia Ruitenberg, Andrea English, Brian Warnick, David Waddington, Michele Moses and Dianne Geruluk merely to provide a flavor for this generation, as there are many others making significant contributions. This generation displays a great abundance of talent and energy. But it will also require a lot of savvy and considerable luck for them to restore philosophy of education to a prominent institutional position in schools of education and teacher education programs, and to make its impact

felt in public deliberations about the future direction of educational policy and practice.

NOTES

- ¹ Bruce Haynes included a brief self-portrait by Marshall in his special issue celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australia, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(7), 774-776.

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GERT BIESTA

FROM EXPERIMENTALISM TO EXISTENTIALISM

Writing in the Margins of Philosophy of Education

EARLY YEARS: 1957-1990

I was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1957, twelve years after the end of the Second World War, and grew up in a city centre that was still largely empty as a result of the May 1940 bombings. My daily walk to school thus took me along many building sites and the sound of pile drivers was constantly in the background for many years to come. I cannot deny that I had an early fascination for education. As a child one of the first jobs I imagined I wanted to have, was that of an architect in order then to become a teacher of architects. While my (Montessori) kindergarten and (regular) primary school were rather easy and uneventful, secondary school turned out to be more challenging, so I only just managed to get through. As economics was one of the very few subjects in which I had done well, I decided to study it at university. I soon found out, however, that it was not really 'my' subject, so after a year I switched to theology. This was a much more enjoyable experience, but a rather serious car accident two years into my studies put an abrupt end to it. This put me in a position where I had to reconsider my options, and I decided to look for work rather than continuing at university. I found a job in a hospital and took courses to become a radiographer.

After I had obtained my diploma I had the good fortune of being asked to contribute to the teaching of radiographers. For the next 10 years I taught physics to student radiographers. In the first years I did this alongside my job as a radiographer, but after having completed a two year part-time teacher certification programme, I was eager to deepen my knowledge of education, so I decided to return to university, now to study education. Whereas in most English speaking countries the study of education tends to happen in the context of teacher education, in the Netherlands education – in Dutch: *pedagogiek* – exists as an academic discipline in its own right and it was this discipline that I focused on for the next four years at the University of Leiden. My initial plan was to specialise in curriculum and instruction, but I became increasingly interested in the theoretical and historical aspects of education, and thus decided to focus on this area instead.

It was here that I became interested in philosophy, first and foremost through the work of Ben Spiecker, Professor at the Free University Amsterdam, who had written a number of exciting essays on Wittgenstein and education. In the second

year of my studies I followed an additional one year programme in philosophy. This covered the philosophical ‘basics,’ and I particularly enjoyed logic, epistemology, philosophy of science, and Greek philosophy, including a superb course on Aristotle. The third year in Leiden was devoted again to pedagogiek, although I was able to make connections with my developing interest in philosophy. Through courses from Vygotskij-specialist René van der Veer I became interested in Piaget’s genetic epistemology, while Rien van IJzendoorn, stimulated my interest in the philosophy of educational and social research. Courses from Siebren Miedema not only fuelled my interest in critical theory (Habermas), critical pedagogy (both the German and the North American variety), and the theory and philosophy of educational and social research, but also brought me into contact with the work of John Dewey. Dewey’s work had been largely absent from the educational conversation in the Netherlands since the early 1950s and had only received sporadic attention from Dutch philosophers. I eventually decided to write a Master’s thesis on Dewey under Siebren’s supervision.

I further pursued my interest in philosophy through a newly established programme in the philosophy of the social sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam, which I started in my final year as a pedagogiek student, and finished successfully three years later. My studies not only allowed me to deepen my understanding of logic, epistemology and the philosophy of science, but also brought me into contact with analytic philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, postmodern and post-structural philosophy (particularly the work of Foucault), and – just emerging at the time – the neo-pragmatism of Richard Rorty. Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Rorty, 1979) formed the framework for the thesis I wrote, which focused on paradigmatic pluralism in educational research in the Netherlands. Whilst still studying philosophy, I was fortunate to receive a four year studentship to conduct PhD research on Dewey, focusing on his views about the relationship between knowledge and action and the implications for educational and social research. I conducted my PhD research at Leiden University under the supervision of Siebren Miedema and Rien van IJzendoorn. I worked closely with Siebren, particularly on the study of Dewey, and many of my early publications were co-authored with him, including a joint book (Miedema & Biesta, 1989). I obtained my PhD in 1992 (Biesta, 1992), but again was lucky in having been selected for a lectureship in education at the University of Groningen before I had finished my PhD. I thus started my academic career there in the summer of 1990, teaching courses in pedagogiek and in the philosophy of educational and social research.

An important aspect of the early years of my career was the fact that I did not develop my intellectual and academic identity within philosophy or philosophy of education, but within pedagogiek. That is why up to the present day I prefer to refer to myself as an educationalist (or in Dutch: a pedagoog) with a particular interest and expertise in philosophy, and not as a philosopher and only hesitantly as a philosopher of education – my hesitation having to do with the fact that ‘philosopher of education’ remains a rather imperfect translation of my identity as a pedagoog and my commitment to pedagogiek. The question of the differences

between pedagogiek and philosophy of education has continued to intrigue me, and became even more of an issue when I moved from the Netherlands to the UK (in 1999) and was faced in very concrete ways with the differences between the Continental and the Anglo-American ‘construction’ of the field – something I have explored since in a number of publications (for example, Biesta 2011a). This is why I have always felt to be working more in the margins of Anglo-American philosophy of education – and perhaps even more so with regard to the British variety than the one in North America – rather than at its centre.

The context in which I was a student of pedagogiek and philosophy was one of a rapid and radical transformation of the field of Dutch educational research and scholarship. If there was a ‘Positivismusstreit’ in educational research in the 1980s in the Netherlands – and I think there was – it was between two fundamentally different conceptions of empirical research, one that made a case for quantitative-explanatory research as the only properly scientific mode of research and one that tried to make a case for qualitative-interpretative research. The fact that quantitative-explanatory research – in the Dutch context often referred to as ‘empirical-analytical’ research – ‘won,’ is particularly significant when compared to developments in the English-speaking world. There the debate between ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ approaches was mainly about attempts from the side of qualitative approaches to overcome the hegemony of quantitative research so as to make a case for methodological pluralism. In the Netherlands, in contrast, there had actually been a long and flourishing tradition of interpretative research, particularly the phenomenology of the Utrecht School where, in the areas of education and developmental psychology, M.J. Langeveld was for a long time the leading figure. In the Netherlands the debate thus went in the opposite direction, that is, of quantitative-explanatory research trying to replace qualitative-interpretative research. The ‘Streit’ that was going on in the Netherlands was not only a battle about the ‘right’ or ‘proper’ form of empirical research, but was also directed against non-empirical forms of inquiry. It was as a result of this that theoretical and philosophical traditions became increasingly marginalised. Over time this led to what, in hindsight and from a distance, I would characterise as an academic mono-culture that, unlike what I was going to experience in the UK, left little room for other forms of empirical research and for non-empirical modes of inquiry and scholarship.

The transformation of educational research in the Netherlands also brought with it a strong push towards internationalisation. This definitely had an impact on my own formation as a researcher since I was encouraged early on to make connections with researchers and scholars in other countries and, given my interest in Dewey, particularly in North America. In 1988, the first year of my PhD, I attended the AERA conference in New Orleans and visited the Centre for Dewey Studies in Carbondale, then under the directorship of Jo-Ann Boydston, who was extremely helpful in the early stages of my PhD research. Since Dewey’s collected works had not yet all been published, and since this was well before the age of the internet, my visits to Carbondale, and also to archives at Teachers College Columbia University and the University of Chicago, provided me with access to

unique materials for my PhD. They also formed the beginning of my networks in North America, a process in which the John Dewey Society was particularly important.

THE NETHERLANDS: 1990-1999

The years in Groningen were stimulating and enjoyable, not only because there was a group of supportive colleagues who were willing to put trust in a relatively inexperienced lecturer, but also because in my teaching I could focus on ‘my’ subject, that of pedagogiek. This allowed me to deepen my understanding of Continental educational theory (and here I would particularly highlight the work of Dutch educationalists such as M.J. Langeveld, Nic. Perquin, Ben Spiecker and Jan Dirk Imelman, and of German theorists such as Klaus Mollenhauer and Klaus Schaller), and also of the forerunners of North American critical pedagogy, particularly the ‘social reconstructionism’ of authors such as George Counts. My main task during the first two years in Groningen was the completion of my PhD. Part of the work I did was a more or less straightforward reconstruction of Dewey’s views on the relationship between knowledge and action. Yet I did not want to present Dewey’s ideas as ‘just another philosophical position’ that either could be adopted or rejected. There was much in Dewey that I considered to be important for the discussion about the status of social and educational research – a discussion that, at the time, was still strongly influenced by the work of Karl Popper. Yet what troubled me about Dewey was the metaphysical framework that seemed to come with his ideas, a framework that was clearly rooted in secular naturalism and ultimately went back to Darwinism (something which Dewey explicitly acknowledged in his autobiographical essay *From Absolutism to Experimentalism*; Dewey, 1984[1930]).

My concerns partly had to do with Darwinism itself, which I saw as a rather limited and ultimately limiting understanding of the human condition, and partly with the scientism it seemed to bring in through the backdoor, something which Max Horkheimer in his book *Eclipse of Reason* indeed had identified as the main problem of Deweyan pragmatism (Horkheimer, 1947). I eventually found a way to resolve these issues through a paper Dewey had written relatively late in his career – called *Experience, Knowledge and Value: A Rejoinder* (Dewey, 1991[1939]) – which was a response to essays written about his work published in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, edited by Paul A. Schilpp. This paper helped me to identify the problem that had motivated Dewey’s intellectual and political ‘project,’ and thus allowed me to provide a pragmatic reading of Dewey’s work, that is, to see it as an attempt to address a problem rather than as the articulation of a philosophical position (see also Biesta, 2009a). I could show that Dewey’s philosophy was actually motivated by a critique of scientism – that is, a critique of the idea that science is the only valid kind of knowledge – and a critique of a cognitive worldview in which it is assumed that knowledge is the only ‘real’ way in which we are connected to the world. That is why, in my reconstruction of Dewey’s work, I made the case that ‘crisis in culture’ to which he was responding

had to be understood as a crisis in rationality, and that his ultimate project was aimed at restoring rationality to all domains of human experience rather than to confine it to the domain of cognition or, even worse, to the domain of scientific knowledge.

What was particularly interesting about Dewey's work was that he was able to criticise the hegemony of scientific rationality without having to reject the technological and practical 'fruits' of what goes on under the name of 'science.' Dewey thus opened up a third way between a wholesale rejection of science on the one hand and a wholesale acceptance of science on the other. This became an important theme in my own thinking as it allowed for a much more precise critique of the hegemony of the scientific worldview and scientific rationality, and also a much more mature engagement with the possibilities and limitations of what goes on under the name of 'science.' This line of thought was further reinforced through my reading of Bruno Latour's *Science in Action* (Latour, 1987), an author whose work has continued to play an important role in my work on knowledge and the curriculum (for example Biesta & Miedema, 1990; Biesta, 2002, 2012a), well before a rather watered-down version of his ideas became fashionable as 'actor-network theory.' While over the years I have become increasingly critical of key-aspects of Dewey's work – particularly his views on democracy, which I have characterised as social more than as political (see Biesta, 2007a, 2010a), and the totalising tendencies in his conception of communication (see Biesta, 2010b) – I find Dewey's wider project still very valuable for an effective critique of contemporary forms of scientism (for example, Biesta, 2009b, 2011b).

During my work on the PhD I had increasingly become interested in the educational dimensions of pragmatism, particularly with regard to the theory of communication in Dewey's work, and this topic became a central interest in the years following my PhD. In the first paper I wrote on the topic (Biesta, 1994) I explored the relationships between critical theory (Habermas) and pragmatism (Dewey, Mead) around the idea of 'practical intersubjectivity.' Inspiration for this partly came from my own readings of Dewey, partly from the work of Hans Joas on Mead (see Joas, 1985), and also from Jan Masschelein's PhD thesis on Habermas, communication and education (Masschelein, 1987). I presented a first version at AERA in 1993. It was here that I met Jim Garrison – a meeting that formed the start of many important conversations about Dewey and pragmatism in the years to come. The paper was accepted for publication in *Educational Theory*, my first journal article in English. Jim Garrison subsequently invited me to contribute to a book he was editing on the new scholarship on Dewey, and in my contribution I further pursued my interests in the implications of Dewey's understanding of communication for education (Biesta, 1995a).

In 1993 I had moved from Groningen to the University of Leiden to take up a lectureship in the department where I had studied pedagogiek and done my PhD. Fairly soon after I had started the opportunity arose to apply for a senior lectureship in pedagogiek at the University of Utrecht. As this would allow me to focus more strongly on pedagogiek and work more closely with Jan Dirk Imelman in the theory of education and Brita Rang in the history of education, I decided to

apply. My application was successful so I moved to Utrecht in the spring of 1995 (unfortunately Imelman took early retirement soon after I had arrived, and Rang left for a Professorship in Frankfurt). In the autumn of 1994 I had submitted an application for a Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship with the National Academy of Education USA – encouraged and endorsed by Jim Garrison and Ben Spiecker – and early in 1995 I learned that I had been selected. For the next two academic years I was therefore able to spend a considerable amount of time on research. In hindsight I would say that these years were truly formative for the development of my academic ‘habitus.’ The project I had submitted extended my explorations of pragmatism to the work of George Herbert Mead. I spent part of the time in the Netherlands but also at Virginia Tech with Jim Garrison. I also was able to study the George Herbert Mead papers at the University of Chicago. Here I discovered an unpublished set of lecture notes of a course Mead had given on the philosophy of education. I eventually managed to publish the lectures in English and in German translation, co-edited with Daniel Tröhler (Mead, 2008a, 2008b). The Spencer project led to the publication of a number of articles on Mead (Biesta, 1998, 1999) – who I actually found a stronger theorist than Dewey. 1994 was also the first year that I attended the annual conference of the Philosophy of Education Society USA, and I have returned almost every year up to the present day.

Perhaps the most significant event during my time as a Spencer postdoc was the invitation I received from Jim Marshall in New Zealand to contribute a chapter on Derrida in a collection he was editing. At the time I had only heard of Derrida, but had never had had a chance to read his work properly. I told Jim that although I had no special knowledge of Derrida I would be very happy to take on the challenge. Jim took the risk and this set me off on a sustained period of reading. The encounter with Derrida’s work had a profound impact on my thinking. Whereas up that point I had hoped that pragmatism could provide an ‘answer’ to the postmodern critique of the modern ‘philosophy of consciousness’ (Habermas) by replacing a consciousness-centred philosophy with a communication-centred philosophy, Derrida helped me to realise that the point was not to find a new and better starting-point or foundation for philosophy, but rather to question the very possibility of articulating and identifying such a foundation. Derrida also showed me, however, that the way out of this predicament was not to become anti-foundational – the route taken by Rorty and other anti-foundational (neo)pragmatists – as such a rejection of foundations would end up with the same problem, namely that it also had to rely on some fixed and secure place from which foundations could be rejected. What I found in Derrida was the suggestion that as soon as we go near a foundation – either to accept it or reject it or to use it as a criterion to identify performative contradictions – we find a strange oscillation between the foundation and its rejection; an oscillation that cannot be stopped. It is this oscillation that Derrida referred to as ‘deconstruction,’ thus highlighting that deconstruction isn’t a method and cannot be transformed into one (Derrida, 1991, p. 273), but that it is something that occurs or, as he put it, “cannot manage to occur ... wherever there is something rather than nothing” (Derrida & Ewald, 2001, p. 67).

The work of Derrida not only helped me to put pragmatism in perspective but also made it possible to articulate more clearly some of the problems I always had had with metaphysical readings of pragmatism that would just end up as another form of foundationalism. I thus started to argue that we needed a more radical understanding of intersubjectivity (Biesta, 1999) and eventually came to the conclusion that the only possible pragmatism would thus be a deconstructive pragmatism, one that acknowledges that communication is always ‘in deconstruction’ (Biesta, 2010b). The encounter with Derrida also allowed me to create an opening in the discussion about critique – both in philosophy and in education – showing both the problem with dogmatic forms of critique that relied on a (fixed) criterion or a (fixed) truth about the human being, and with transcendental forms of critique that relied on a similar foundational gesture by highlighting the occurrence of performative contradictions, that is, contradictions between utterances and their conditions of possibility. With Derrida I could show that the latter form of critique – quite prominent in the educational literature on critical thinking – relied on the assumption that it is possible to identify conditions of possibility, whereas Derrida would argue that such a gesture would at the same time reveal conditions of impossibility and can therefore not achieve what it intends (and pretends) to achieve (see Biesta & Stams, 2001). The shift from critique to deconstruction was particularly significant in light of my interest in North American critical pedagogy. I had been following the important work of its main proponents – Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren – for a good number of years, and was now able to raise some more precise concerns about the question as to what it actually means to be critical in and ‘for’ education (see Biesta, 1998).

Derrida’s work also helped me to see that the point of deconstruction was not negative or destructive, but thoroughly affirmative, not just of what is excluded but more importantly from what is excluded from a particular ‘system’ or ‘order’ and yet makes such a ‘system’ or ‘order’ possible. That meant that deconstruction is not just affirmative of what is known to be excluded, but also of what lies outside of what is (currently) conceptualisable – something to which Derrida in some of his writings referred to as the ‘incalculable.’ I slowly began to see that to prepare for the arrival of the incalculable could be seen as a thoroughly educational gesture (Biesta, 2001) and also began to connect Derrida’s suggestion that the affirmative ‘nature’ of deconstruction means that deconstruction is (driven by) justice with educational concerns and themes (Biesta, 2003).

The final way in which the encounter with Derrida was important for my further trajectory had to do with the fact that Derrida did not position deconstruction in epistemological terms but rather put ethico-political considerations at the (de)centre of his writings. This helped me to articulate more clearly what I had always thought that the postmodern turn was after (see Biesta, 1995b), namely that it did not want to replace epistemological objectivism with epistemological relativism – a misreading of postmodern thought that goes on until the present day – but rather wanted to call for a shift from an epistemological worldview where knowledge of the world is the first and final ‘thing,’ towards an ethico-political ‘attitude’ that puts ethical and political concerns at the centre of our being-in-the-

world and sees knowledge always in relation to and derivative of it, rather than that it founds ethics and politics on some deeper knowledge about the world and/or the human being. Derrida thus helped me to achieve (or perhaps I should say: complete) an ethico-political ‘turn’ that, in a sense, had always already been waiting in the wings of my writings. With regard to this ‘turn’ two other philosophers became increasingly important and influential, one being Hannah Arendt and the other – who I had already encountered early on in my career but whose thought needed time to ‘arrive’ – being Emmanuel Levinas.

Looking back, the seven years after finishing my PhD in 1992 allowed me to explore a number of different themes and issues and engage with a number of different theorists and philosophers, so as to eventually arrive at a position where I felt that I was beginning to find my own voice and my own trajectory. The next period of about seven years – culminating in the publication in 2006 of my first monograph, *Beyond Learning* (Biesta, 2006; to date published in Swedish, Danish and Portuguese) – allowed me to pursue a number of these lines more confidently. Whereas in the 1990s my interest had been more strongly philosophical, educational themes, issues and concerns began to become more central in my reading, writing and research. Two further important events happened during this period. One was meeting Bill Doll who introduced me to complexity theory and provided generous enthusiasm for my work during a period where I was still searching for its direction. Through Bill I met Denise Egéa-Kuehne. Our shared interest in Derrida led to the publication of the first book length study on his work and education, simply titled *Derrida & Education* (Biesta & Egéa-Kuehne, 2001). The other was the invitation from Jim Garrison to take over as editor-in-chief of *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. I started to work on this behind the scenes in 1999 and became the journal’s next editor in 2001.

Although my job in Utrecht provided me with interesting opportunities and interesting colleagues – including Bas Levering who, at the time was one of the few people in the country who continued to work within a much broader tradition of educational research and scholarship with clear connections back to the Utrecht School – I increasingly felt the need for a different, more plural intellectual context. Having briefly considered a move to North America, I was lucky to find a job in England. In the autumn of 1999 I thus took up a senior lectureship at the University of Exeter.

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND: 1999-2012

My job in Exeter was designated as a senior lectureship in post-16 education, and thus had a clear focus on vocational and adult education. My teaching was partly connected to teacher education in those fields and partly involved working with teachers on masters and doctoral programmes. Unlike in the Netherlands, where universities are hierarchically structured and much time is spent making sure that everything has its ‘proper’ place – which creates difficulties for those individuals or areas of research that do not fit in such a system – what I encountered in Exeter was a much more open and much more horizontal academic culture where there

was far less eagerness to tell others what they should do or be. This not only created a much greater degree of intellectual freedom but also made my own academic identity less fixed, which allowed me to pursue both theoretical-philosophical and empirical lines of work. I had the good fortune to work with Martin Bloomer, who eventually became Professor of Post-16 Education, and Rob Lawy, who had just started in Exeter as a postdoc. With Rob I began to develop my work on citizenship and democracy, resulting in a number of empirical studies on young people's citizenship (see, for example, Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009; Lawy et al., 2010) and more theoretical work on education, democracy and citizenship (for example Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). The work on theory and policy of citizenship education and civic learning eventually ended up in a short book, published in 2011 (Biesta, 2011c – to date translated into Danish and Japanese).

Martin was key in developing my research interests in vocational education and adult education and generously involved me in a research proposal on learning and the life-course. The project was originally conceived as one on learning and identity; I suggested adding the theme of 'agency,' as I was interested in what people can do with their learning, rather than just who they become. Martin very sadly died in 2002, just after he had completed and submitted the proposal for what was to become the Learning Lives project (Biesta et al., 2011), still the first large-scale longitudinal study into learning, identity and agency in the life-course. At the time of his death, Martin was also co-directing a large scale study into the Further Education sector, called Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education (see James & Biesta, 2007). I was asked to replace Martin on the project team. This not only meant that for the next 6 years I was strongly involved in major empirical projects working closely with a range of interesting and highly committed colleagues. It also brought me in touch with the overarching national research programme within which both projects were funded, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP). All this work taught me a lot about the joys and the complexities of large-scale collaborative research, and provided a unique opportunity to connect with many educational researchers in the UK. Given my own predilections for theory and philosophy, these projects also convinced me of the need for the closer communication between empirical and theoretical work, rather than to think that theoretical – and perhaps even more so: philosophical – work should be conducted from the sideline, only referring to itself. My experiences not only showed me that such connections were possible, but also that they were necessary for the healthy development of the field of educational research.

In 2002 the University of Exeter promoted me to Professor of Educational Theory and soon afterwards I became Director of Research of the School of Education – a position that provided me with valuable insights in the running of higher education institutions and the more political dimension of higher education policy in the UK. Under the leadership of vice-chancellor Steve Smith Exeter developed a clear sense of direction, and it was enjoyable and instructive to experience the transformation of the university at a close distance. Although

administration, empirical research and research management took a significant amount of my time, I was able to continue my theoretical and philosophical work as well. *Derrida & Education* (Biesta & Egéa-Kuehne, 2001) appeared in 2001 and *Pragmatism and Educational Research*, co-authored with Nick Burbules, in 2003 (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). For the development of my more theoretical work I benefitted tremendously from a visiting professorship at Örebro University, Sweden (from 2001 until 2008) followed by a similar post at Mälardalen University, Sweden (from 2006 until 2013). The focus of the work was on education and democratic citizenship and the many courses for doctoral students I taught there allowed me to explore key aspects of the discussion in detail with great students and great colleagues, particularly Tomas Englund and Carsten Ljunggren. The collaboration with Carl Anders Säfström had already started in the 1990s, and his move to Mälardalen University made it possible to establish an institutional basis for our collaboration. I had met Tomas and Carl Anders in the early 1990s when Siebren Miedema and I organised a small conference on pragmatism in Europe. Lars Løvlie, from Oslo University, was one of the other participants and he has been an ongoing source of support and inspiration throughout my career. Also significant were my yearly visits to the annual conference of the USA Philosophy of Education Society and the American Educational Research Association, particularly to participate in activities of the Philosophical Studies SIG, of which I became programme chair and, after that, chair, and the John Dewey Society (of which I was a board member).

Publication-wise, I was particularly pleased with the appearance of *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Biesta, 2006), which I consider to be my first ‘real’ single-authored book. Theoretically the book took up a theme I had already been working on in the 1990s, namely the postmodern critique of humanism, often referred to as the issue of the ‘death of the subject’ (see Biesta, 1998). While in popular readings of postmodernism the theme of the death of the subject is often seen as a critique of the very idea of human subjectivity, the point I tried to convey in the book was that the critique was actually aimed at philosophical humanism, that is, at the idea that it is possible and desirable to identify the essence of the human being and use this knowledge as the foundation for a range of theoretical and practical ‘projects,’ including education and politics. In the book I not only showed the ways in which humanism had influenced modern educational thought and practice, but also argued how it had put limits on what education could achieve by basing education on a ‘template’ about what the human being is and thus of what the child should become.

In *Beyond Learning* I developed an alternative set of educational concepts that did not focus on the nature or essence of human beings but rather on their existence. More specifically I focused on the question how ‘newcomers’ might come ‘into presence.’ With the help of Hannah Arendt I suggested that coming into presence is ultimately a public and hence a political process in the literal sense of the word political, that is, as ‘occurring in the polis,’ in the presence of others who are not like us. That is why I eventually suggested that we should think of education in terms of how newcomers come ‘into the world.’ Education as ‘coming

into the world' not only gives educators a responsibility for the new beginnings, but also for the plural or 'worldly' quality of the world, as it is only 'under the condition of plurality' (Arendt) that everyone has a possibility to bring their beginnings into the world.

The other concept I put forward was that of 'uniqueness.' Taking inspiration from the work of Emmanuel Levinas and his translator Alphonso Lingis, I developed a distinction between uniqueness-as-difference – which is about our identity or essence, that is, about how I differ from others – and uniqueness-as-irreplaceability. The latter approach – which can be characterised as existential rather than essential – moves from the question as to what makes me unique to the question when my uniqueness matters, that is, the question when it matters that I am I and no one else. Such situations, so I suggested with the help of Lingis's idea of the community of those who have nothing in common (Lingis, 1994), are situations where an appeal is made to me, where I am being addressed by another human being, and where I cannot be replaced because the appeal is made to me – not just to anyone. These are situations where I am literally 'singled out' by a question, by a request, by an appeal. It is then still up to me whether I respond or not, that is, whether I take up the responsibility that is waiting for me, so to speak, and thus 'realise' my unique singularity, my singular existence in that particular moment.

My hope with thinking about education in existential terms was to make it possible again (that is, after the death of the subject), to make a distinction between education as socialisation and education orientated towards freedom, a dimension to which in later publications – particularly my 2010 book *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (Biesta, 2010c) – I started to refer to as 'subjectification.' In a sense *Beyond Learning* became a 'turning point' in my career, not only because it brought together much of the work I had been doing in previous years but also because it set the agenda for much that was to follow, particularly an increasing focus on educational questions and issues and an ambition to engage with such questions in an educational way, that is, through the development of educational forms of theory and theorising.

In the next period of about seven years I thus turned increasingly to what I saw as key educational questions and issues, particularly questions concerning education, freedom and emancipation. Here – but only here (see Biesta, 2013a) – I found the work of Jacques Rancière helpful, as it made it possible to (re)turn to the question of emancipation in a way that was significantly different from how it had been engaged with in critical theory and critical pedagogy (see Biesta, 2010d). Together with Charles Bingham I published a book on Rancière's work (Bingham & Biesta, 2010) in which the question of emancipation was a central theme. Questions concerning the nexus of education, freedom and emancipation also were central in a short text I wrote with Carl Anders Säfström, which we published under the title *A Manifesto for Education* (Biesta & Säfström, 2011a). The Manifesto attracted a lot of attention in many countries, not only from academics but also from students and teacher. The first translation was actually published by a Norwegian teacher union (Biesta & Säfström, 2011b).

The other line that emerged during these years focused on educational policy and practice, particularly in order to show the extent to which and the ways in which educational issues were increasingly being sidelined, either by replacing an educational language with a language of learning – which was one of my reasons for arguing that in order to bring educational questions back into view we needed to go ‘beyond learning’ (see also Biesta, 2004, 2013b) – or by pushing education into a logic of production, that is, of predictable connections between educational ‘inputs’ and outputs.’ One paper I published in relation to these tendencies focused on the shift from professional-democratic responsibility to technical-managerial accountability in education (Biesta, 2004). Another paper focused on the calls to turn education into an evidence-based profession (Biesta, 2007b – to date my most cited paper – and also Biesta, 2010e). The fact that both papers attracted quite a lot of attention, gave me an indication that the topics were important and that some of my reflections were seen as relevant and helpful. This gave me the motivation to focus more explicitly and more ‘positively’ (rather than just critically) on questions of good education, that is, questions about what education should be like and aim for. I brought a number of the papers I wrote on this together in *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (Biesta, 2010). In the book I continued with some of the main themes from *Beyond Learning*, but I put them in a wider perspective – partly by connecting them to developments in educational policy (accountability; evidence) and partly by taking a broader view on the functions and purposes of education, through a distinction between three domains of educational purpose: qualification, socialisation and subjectification (Biesta, 2010, chapter 1). While the distinction itself was simple, it proved to be a useful heuristic device for making discussions about what education is for more precise and concrete – which was also recognised by the fact that the book was rather quickly translated into a number of languages (to date into Swedish, Danish and Dutch).

The stronger focus on educational theory and policy was also supported by my move, in 2007, to the University of Stirling in Scotland. In the Teaching and Learning Research Programme projects I had worked closely and productively with two professors from Stirling, John Field and Richard Edwards, and when a position opened up in Stirling I decided to try my luck. I had five wonderful years in Stirling. Together with Julie Allan and other colleagues from the Institute of Education we tried to further the case for theory in education through the establishment of the Laboratory for Educational Theory. This was an exciting adventure albeit not without difficulties, partly because we were doing something new for which there was little (research) expertise available. We nonetheless managed to stir the discussion about theory a little, both nationally and internationally, through seminars and symposia, a number of international conferences and a doctoral summer school. We also managed to give the question of theory some prominence in ongoing discussions in the UK about research capacity building (Biesta, Allan, & Edwards, 2011) and brought together a group of international scholars in an edited volume on the theory question in education and the education question in theory (Biesta, Allen, & Edwards, 2014). Another fruitful collaboration in Stirling was with Mark Priestley and focused on

curriculum research and theory, a field that particularly in England had led a marginal status since the introduction of the National Curriculum in the 1990s. The work with Mark resulted, amongst other things, in an edited collection on the new curriculum, analysing curriculum trends in Scotland against the background of wider international developments (Priestley & Biesta, 2013).

Three significant other events during my time in Scotland were the publication of a short edited book on complexity and education (Osberg & Biesta, 2010), on which I worked with Deborah Osberg, with whom I had already published a number of papers on the topic. Unlike much literature on complexity and education we particularly tried to highlight the political dimensions, potential and implications of thinking education through complexity. Through the efforts of Maria de Bie of the University of Ghent and Danny Wildemeersch at the University of Leuven I was, in 2011, awarded the International Interuniversity Francqui Professorship by the Francqui Foundation in Belgium. This allowed me to spend about half a year at the University of Ghent in the spring of 2011 to work with colleagues from Ghent and Leuven on questions concerning education, social work, democracy and citizenship. This was another project that proved the importance of connecting theoretical and empirical work and really helped to push my own thinking on the topics forward, and probably did the same with many of the people involved in the activities around the chair (see Biesta, De Bie, & Wildemeersch, 2013). The greatest recognition I received from my peers was my election as president of the USA Philosophy of Education Society for 2011-2012 – the first president of the society from outside of North America. One of the prerogatives of the president is to invite the speaker for the Kneller Lecture (a lecture at the society's annual conference sponsored by an endowment from George F. Kneller). I was extremely grateful that John D. Caputo accepted my invitation, not only because of his standing as a philosopher but also because his scholarship has had a significant impact on my own work. Caputo also provided inspiration for the title and some of the content of the book in which I brought together much of my most recent work on education, namely *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Biesta, 2013c – with a translation in Danish on its way).

LUXEMBOURG: 2013 AND BEYOND

At the time of writing, my latest job move is still in its initial stages. After working for nearly 14 years in the UK I felt a need to (re)turn to the Continent, partly because over the years I had come to realise how strongly my work and my academic identity has been shaped by Continental philosophy and educational theory, and partly out of curiosity for a very different institutional, intellectual and linguistic environment. I was lucky to be selected for the post of Professor of Educational Theory and Policy at the University of Luxembourg (a tri-lingual university), which will allow me to concentrate on two areas that, over the years, have indeed become central in my work. What Luxembourg will bring lies in the future, but there are still a number of issues I wish to pursue, not only because they are important for me but also because I sense that they can be important for the

direction in which educational research and practice seem to be moving internationally.

I see myself not only getting further away from the discourse of learning, but also turning increasingly towards teaching. An essay I recently published – Giving teaching back to education (Biesta, 2012b) – provides an indication of work that still needs to be done here. The distinction I operate within the essay – between ‘learning from’ and ‘being taught by’ – not only has important practical implications for how we think about teaching and how we might do it, but also has a wider theoretical potential as it provides two very different ways of thinking about the way we are in the world with others: one where we see others as resources for our own growth and development and one where others are addressing us and where this address (literally) ‘opens up’ opportunities for a very different way of being human. The distinction between ‘learning from’ and ‘being taught by’ is therefore not just a micro-matter for how teachers and students might conduct themselves in the classroom, but hints at much wider ethical, political, existential and educational themes and issues. My more recent collaborations with Herner Sæverot from the University of Bergen and with colleagues from NLA University College in Bergen are particularly important in the exploration of the existential dimensions of these challenges.

There are two further aspects of the ‘turn’ towards teaching that require further work. One has to do with the educational significance of the experience of resistance – the resistance of the material world and the resistance of the social world – and suggests a need to return to the rather old educational theme of the education of the will, that is, the question how the will can come to a ‘worldly’ form (Biesta, 2012c; see also Meirieu, 2007). The other concerns the need for the development of an informed critique of constructivism and the articulation of a viable alternative, so that we can understand what it means to know no longer just in terms of (our own) constructions but also, and perhaps first of all, in terms of reception, that is, as something that is given to us. This is a line with many theoretical, philosophical and political challenges, but nonetheless important in order to challenge what seems to have become a new ‘dogma’ of contemporary education. A further theme has to do with developing a critical understanding of the transformation of the field of educational research and scholarship, also in order to be able to interrupt the ongoing rise of an Anglo-American definition of educational research and scholarship – one that is increasingly marginalising other, what we might call ‘indigenous’ forms of theory and research in education. And if I can find the time, I would also like to explore in more depth the educational significance of the idea of ‘metamorphosis,’ particularly to challenge the dominance of linear modes of thinking and doing that seem to suggest that we just need to start earlier and earlier with our educational ‘interventions’ – a way of thinking that puts an enormous amount of unwarranted pressure on (young) children and their teachers.

What might emerge from all this (and in a sense is already emerging from it) is a conception of education that is thoroughly ‘world-centred’ – an education for ‘earthlings’ (Lingis, 1994, p. 117), we might say – which is focused on the

possibilities for ‘newcomers’ to exist in the world with others who are not like them. Questions about subjectivity, freedom, emancipation, and democracy are likely to play an important role in this wider ambition, as will be the question of the education of teachers in a world that seems to want to take all that matters educationally out of education in order to turn it into the risk-free production of pre-specified identities and learning outcomes.

Finally: the title of this chapter is an attempt to capture my intellectual and scholarly trajectory. This trajectory started with pragmatism, and I have indicated the ways in which I am still indebted to pragmatism. But the encounter with philosophers such as Derrida, Arendt, and Levinas and with educational thinkers such as Langeveld, Mollenhauer, and Meirieu, has convinced me that the most important challenge for education today lies in the question how we can be ‘at home in the world,’ as Arendt so beautifully has put it. This, as I have come to realise, is ultimately not a matter of theory or philosophy but a matter of existence, so that there is the ongoing challenge not to let theory and philosophy get in the way of life, not to let it get in the way of what matters and what should matter most in our existence as ‘earthlings.’

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