Chains of dependency: On the disenchantment and the illusion of being free at last[1]

Paul Smeyers, Ghent University and K.U. Leuven, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Time, space, causality, communicating and acting together set limits on our freedom. Starting from the position of Wittgenstein, who advocates neither a position of pure subjectivity nor of pure objectivity, and taking into account what is implied by initiation into the symbolic order of language and culture, it is argued that the limitations on our freedom are not to be deplored. The problems of conservatism, relativism and scepticism—which confront us often in the context of education and child-rearing—are inadequately dealt with if attention is primarily focused on ways to resist or act differently. Following Cavell and his insistence that we should not try to escape from the existential conditions we find ourselves in and look for false certainties, the relevance of embracing a particular stance is elaborated. A commitment to giving substance to an ideal of 'the good life' is neither an injustice towards the other nor an ignorance of her freedom. On the contrary, here responsibility is accepted and at the same time it is acknowledged that we always have only the particular points of departure that we contingently start from. Coming to terms with this kind of dependency constitutes living out the scepticism that is implied by our being human: the logic of this is given along with our human condition.

1. Dependency: The material world

In the *ordinary* sense of the word we do not seem to have much trouble with being dependent. We do not only find it to a considerable extent unavoidable, but it creates moreover a situation we would not want to be otherwise, something that in a sense eases the possible burdens to overcome when we want to do particular things. Imagine the following case. To discuss a project a colleague and I have decided to meet on a particular date at a place that is convenient for both of us. In my own case this implies taking a train to get there, but before that I have to get to the station. I trust that my car will be on the same spot as where I left it before, that it will function and that there is enough petrol in it — all of these conditions, and there are many more, require that a number of things did not happen, such as that the car was not stolen, deliberately put out of order, or used by my spouse or children leaving only just enough petrol to the nearest petrol station. Having arrived at the train station I cannot but rely on things such as that my money will be accepted to buy a ticket, or that the cash machine will work or the credit card payment is accepted, that the trains will run according to schedule and that all those involved in the transport system are not only willing to work on that day, but perform in such a way that my fellow passengers and I arrive safely at our destination. In the ordinary sense of the word these dependencies on things and on people do not worry us a lot, at least not in the sense that we would prefer that things were different. Being on the train I do not have to pay attention to speed limits, traffic lights, taking the right turn or worry about finding a parking spot and so on and so

forth. The causality which exists at the level of the material world is hardly something I could do without. Evidently, things may go wrong, and I may worry about that, but this is not so much that I regret being dependent on all kinds of things, but that, for some or other reason, 'something' is not working the way it should, in other words, that I cannot depend on it.[2]

Causality, and of course to a lesser extent the way things are done, gives me a grip on reality, and thus makes it possible for me to do what I want to do.[3] We rely on how things are and trust, at least in the general sense of the word, that people will do what they are supposed to do in a particular job. Though there are cases in which this basic reliance and trust is shaken, it generally makes no sense to replace it by having no faith, i.e. by suspicion and distrust. If the laws of causality were not what they are, we could not be free; and if trust completely disappeared in human interactions, not only acting together but even communication would completely break down. Being free presupposes this kind of dependency which we could not do without. Of course, I did not have to arrange a meeting with my colleague: in that kind of matter at least one is free, so to say. The meeting could also have been arranged at a different time and place, but not, until further notice, in a different galaxy, nor through travelling in time four hundreds years ago or five centuries from now. Time, space, causality, communicating and acting together set limits on our freedom, or — more correctly — make it possible.[4] Our dependency is however also clear if we shift our focus to what is involved in the concepts we use in arguing along these lines. I will therefore continue first with this epistemological dimension of the question

2. Dependency: Communication and justification

Ludwig Wittgenstein discussed in his *Philosophical Investigations* as well as in *On Certainty* what is involved in our acting, speaking and doing. The concept of the 'form of life' indicates what he considers to be the bedrock of our 'language-games'. These unjustified and unjustifiable patterns of human activities can be seen as the complicated network of rules which constitute language and social life. The 'form of life' is 'given': it is 'language-and-the-world' and thus we cannot place ourselves outside of it. Examples of this 'bedrock' are for instance Moore's well known sentences 'I am a human being', or 'There are physical objects', to which Wittgenstein refers in sections 4 and 35 of *On Certainty* (1969, henceforth *C*). Similarly, sentences saying that one has two hands, and that all human beings have parents (*C,* §§ 157 & 240). The 'certainty' of the 'form of life' is not carried by knowledge but is *a priori* for that knowledge. These 'propositions' are unmoving foundations (*C,* § 403); exempt from doubt (*C,* § 341); they stand fast (*C,* §§ 151 & 235); and are absolutely solid (*C,* § 151). They 'ground' all my activities and thus are wrongly expressed by the words 'I know' (Cf. *C,* § 414). Our acting is embedded in a matrix of certainty that precedes our knowledge (the matrix of knowing-and-doubting and knowing-and-'making a mistake'). These ordinary certainties are the roads on which we walk without hesitation. They are not the only possible ones, and not perhaps the correct ones (for instance those which have worked in experience). But they are the roads on which we are, and we have no reasons for leaving them: "I have no grounds for not trusting them. And I trust them" (*C,* § 600). For this reason the 'form of life' cannot be taken as a basic ground or ultimate foundation for absolute objectivity or truth. What we call objective and true is determined by this 'boundary': "If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false" (*C,* § 205).

In discussing the paradigmatic notion of the language-game Wittgenstein writes: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this

may sound) in judgements" (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953, – henceforth *PI* – *PI,* I § 242). Only within a 'language-game' will we be able to justify a certain inference, a certain behaviour; within a 'language-game' we can speak of justification and lack of justification, of evidence and proof, of mistakes and groundless opinions, of good and bad reasoning, of correct and incorrect measurements: "What counts as an adequate test of a statement belongs to logic. It belongs to the description of the language-game" (*C*, § 82). And moreover, if we try to doubt everything, Wittgenstein argues, we would not get as far as doubting anything: "The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty" (*C*, § 115). Thus, within a system of thinking and acting there occur, up to a point, investigations and criticisms of the reasons and justifications that are employed in that system. We bring this inquiry to an end when we come upon something that we regard as a satisfactory reason, and that we do so shows itself in our actions. The end, Wittgenstein says, "is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (*C,* § 204). It is by our actions that we fix a boundary of the 'language-game'. This is the 'certainty' we are initiated into, and he insists upon the importance of the way the initiation proceeds, and on its relevance to establishing meaning: "always ask yourself: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word ('good' for instance)? From what sort of examples? in what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings" (*PI,* I § 77).[5]

Let me draw attention to the fact that Wittgenstein's 'theory' of meaning advocates neither a position of pure subjectivity nor one of pure objectivity. From the beginning, what one could call an element of risk is present in the way communication is conceived. Though every situation is in some sense new, the different meanings of a concept are linked with each other through family-resemblances. In order to be understood, any particular use may not be radically different from previous ones. However, the consistency of meaning Wittgenstein argues for is free of essentialism. It is within the *normal* context that the meaning of a concept is determined. Other people *and* I proceed in this way. There is no absolute point of reference, either internal nor external, neither for them nor for me. The community of language speakers forms the warrant for the consistency of meaning. Analogously the meaning of an action can be decided from the 'third person perspective'. And in turn 'intention' finds its proper place in the context of action. What is crucial, as has been indicated already, is the social determination of meaning and understanding. The meaning of a concept is not the result of what I intend, but is determined and carried by the community to which I belong. To understand a concept means to be able to paraphrase it and to act accordingly. In both the 'third person perspective' is predominant. Language is first of all the language of others. It determines the way that I can speak, the alternative being unintelligible.

It may be interesting to pause for a moment and draw attention to the particular idea of philosophy that is adopted by Wittgenstein. Philosophical problems arise when 'meaning as use' is ignored — for at the basis of philosophical problems is a false understanding of language: "The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work" (*PI*, I § 132); elsewhere he says, "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!" (*PI,* I § 107). We are confronted with philosophical problems "when language *goes on holiday*", when it does not fulfil any more the function that it has in everyday life. Thus philosophy is, for Wittgenstein, therapy: for when we see how language actually works, philosophical problems disappear and philosophical questions come to an end.[6] In determining what philosophy can and should do, Wittgenstein draws out the consequences of his position concerning language. And there, as was argued above, though not

ignoring the importance of the subject, dependency towards others is abundantly clear. I will now move to the ethical level. But it may already be clear that from these epistemological considerations that have been developed, no radical separation between both levels (the ethical and the epistemological) will be argued for. Though they can be distinguished (which may be useful for various reasons) they are inherently interwoven.[7]

3. Dependency: Social practices and justification

What has been argued for in terms of dependency, focusing on the material world and on language and meaning, is no less true if our attention is directed more specifically to what we do. The problems of scepticism and relativism have given occasion to many philosophical debates and various positions, not least in the area of philosophy of education, highlighting issues in either child-rearing or formal schooling. Though lip-service is often paid to the unavoidability of taking a stance in dealing with a problem (for theoretical or practical, i.e., empirical, reasons), it looks as if many authors long for a 'view from nowhere'. To be more precise, they either presuppose contra-factually that understanding can be reached (invoking the 'ideal speech situation' condition or in the mode of its later development, i.e., quasi-transcendental arguments) or seem to give up altogether the possibility of justifying what we do. Though not in all cases, yet quite often, there is also a rather strange concept of the subject at work, which is seen either as part of a metaphysical system (where it is conceived as passive)[8] or as solitary in a very strict sense. The constitution of the subject has been the focus of many theoretical stances, and, to be sure, there is no general agreement about how this should be conceived. Yet it may be interesting to develop briefly a position which deals with this and that embraces to a large extent presuppositions about language that can be seen as consistent with the Wittgensteinian insights about language that were outlined earlier. Though the focus of interest there lies mainly elsewhere, it brings interestingly to the forefront the often neglected aspect of desire, another element of the problem of dependency.

3.1. The subject of desire

Children's lives are to a large extent led according to rules fixed by adults. Perhaps this situation is not to be deplored — they are, after all, not yet adults, not yet held responsible in the full-blown sense. Yet it remains hard to deny that their freedom is limited. People, including children, desire particular things, and what comes in the way of fulfilling these is experienced as restraint. In the relationships between teachers and parents, and teachers and children, *desire* works in different ways. There is first what they want for themselves and from each other, but there is also what they want the other to desire. And last but not least there are cases where it is not clear what exactly one wants from the other, where this can only generally be indicated as recognition of one's own desires. The position of the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan[9] sheds light on how others are necessarily always there, and on how their expectations are for the subject at the same time both unavoidable and liberating, that is, they enable her desire to find a pathway for expression. Lacan's subject is not the subject of the *cogito*, that is, the subject that consciously assures itself of itself in its representations. It is split, separating itself from itself in the very act of self-representation and disappearing into the gap between the *cogito's* enunciation and its statement: in Lacan's words, the subject thinks where she is not, therefore she is where she does not think. Lacan radicalizes Freud's epistemological and psychoanalytical position, interpreting it not so much as a matter of surging energy or according to a hydraulic metaphor of the instincts, but in terms of particular representations that will recur and recur. He looks at the turning points of the

discourse not from a purely linguistic point, but as the effect of a 'meaning which escapes its own signification'. The order of language replaces the subject's lack of being, from which the desire for the missing object arises. There are always other desires and other objects which present themselves as able to fill up the lack of being. The formation of the subject (of the one who says 'I') is explicated by Lacan through what he calls the mirror phase. The helpless infant, not yet objectively in control of her movements, jubilantly perceives in the mirror the mastery of her bodily unity, which objectively she still lacks. She becomes aware, through seeing her image, of her own body as a totality, as a total form or *Gestalt*. The subject's identification with her own body as other than herself structures herself as a rival to herself and the separateness and the rivalry generate aggression. This structure remains present throughout human life and characterizes all human interactions.[10]

The separateness already indicated in the mirror stage is moreover affirmed when the child enters the symbolic, the social order of language and culture. Before the subject can act as a self, it is projected and absorbed in the universal order of language and culture. The child has to settle herself in this order. The symbolic order does not consist only of a system of different meanings (differences), but also of a complex network of discourse, conversations of the Other. The term *discourse* refers to what is said, to the conversation, to its content, to what is regarded as important. Because of that network, the subject is not only subjected to the formal system of signifiers, but also to the way in which these are organized in the discourses of others, in other words subjected to a historically determined meaning. The child is absorbed as a part of a network of tales (discourse) told by others about him, some of them even before he was born: 'It is a boy. Doesn't he take after his father?' This network consists of a number of prohibitions and commandments, desires, anticipations, obligations and value judgments to which the child has to accommodate herself. These discourses are contradictory and do not give a coherent image of herself. As a consequence the subject can never satisfy their demands.[11]

From the moment of initiation into the symbolic order the subject can never reach any more what she desires in the end. That is what keeps the desire going. But it is also the symbolic law of the language and culture that makes it possible for the child to withdraw herself from the suffocating omnipotence of the Other. There is always the desire of the Other, who recognizes or does not recognize her desire, who approves or rejects, allows or punishes. To develop in a meaningful way the desire needs the recognition of the Other. Thus the desire of a human being becomes the desire of the Other—"*le désir de l'homme, est le désir de l'autre*" (Lacan, 1966, p. 693).[12] It may be clear that dependency towards the other(s) in this position is certainly not something that could be regretted or even done without, as it is intimately linked to the constitution of the subject. And one certainly does not have to convert oneself and become a Freudian or Lacanian to see the point that is argued for here. Quite the opposite: when it is taken into account it adds to the more general suspicion towards positions which attempt to deal with the subject as solitary or 'free at last' in a particular sense.

3.2. Initiation and the postmodern critique

In my view embracing the 'view from nowhere' as well as 'giving up justifying what I do' (distinguished earlier) are developments exemplifying an unwillingness to live the 'scepticism' which characterizes human existence.[13] But before attempting to give a more detailed characterization and invoking the necessary dependency on others which dealing with this in my opinion demands, I want to develop another example. We are all familiar with exams and various

forms of evaluation. And often we have asked ourselves whether failing someone causes an injustice. We have scrutinized the standards we are supposed to apply or were doubtful about our own. And we are all aware that exams are necessarily (for instance socially and historically) embedded: another university, another lecturer, another period in time may give rise to another verdict. Yet, "What to do in this particular case?" haunts us. Applying what was argued for in section 2 may help us to understand why in epistemological terms the justification of a particular grade or mark may come to an end. And yet, that cannot possibly be the end for us, or so it seems. An ethical stance is invoked that goes beyond the 'grammar' of the concept of justification. At the same time we realize that there is no way out that can satisfy the infinite demands that are put before us. We do not want to fall into the trap of Nietzschean nihilism,[14] leaning on one or other kind of authority to justify our decision—because we know that we are playing a part in that authority as well. Neither do we want to embrace relativism and do as we like, positioning ourselves beyond any kind of justification, since precisely that is what we so desperately want to avoid because of its arbitrariness. Moreover, we realize that someone's graduation also means that her entitlement to be a practitioner in a particular area comes with a lot of responsibilities and we believe that the required knowledge and understanding of that area is among the other things that students are taught and we are the ones who are charged with teaching this. It does not seem to help to say "Of course, you have to act", or "Whatever you do you will invoke one or other value or principle": we seem to be left on our own burdened with this vast responsibility which we cannot avoid, which overwhelms and in some sense paralyses us. How shall we proceed? And, is this the correct way to identify the problem? Cavell, as I understand him, would have serious reservations. Before turning to him, I will briefly discuss whether and in what sense a so-called postmodernist stance may be of some help here. Evidently, I have to be very careful. Not only is the use of these insights sometimes rather confusing or even confused, and moreover not very truthful to what authors such as Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault and others had in mind, but there is of course more than one reading. I will therefore try to state only what is generally held to be more or less uncontroversial, bearing in mind my main point of interest, i.e. in what sense does it help us to understand our dependency or 'being free'. But first, why is the postmodernist position relevant here?

To think of education as an initiation into practices has been part of many 'traditional' views of education—and it surely follows as well from the Wittgensteinian stance. In the Enlightenment tradition, for instance, the learner is initiated into forms of thought and understanding that are part of a critical cultural heritage. These forms are public but beyond a child's understanding; therefore, she must be gradually and skilfully initiated into the knowledge, sentiments, and valued activities and practices of civilized life. But this formulation has long been under pressure for its so-called conservative tendency because of the broadly unquestioning stance it encourages toward the particular content into which the learner or novice is initiated. Though such a modernist conception of education may also seek to promote practices that cultivate the critical potential of youth, and their capacity to question traditional practices or explore new ones, even here initiation is regarded as too much of a stabilizing factor for our predominant ways of living together. For example, the unexamined assumptions behind practices may reinforce existing disparities, such as the unequal distribution of wealth and power.

An interesting example of so-called postmodernist criticism concerning the idea of initiation can for instance be developed from the position of Michel Foucault, whose analysis of power focuses on how it works and how it produces the subject—conceived at the same time as an instrument and as an effect. The result is particular technologies of the self and particular discourses. He observes a change of sovereign power—of which seizure and possession are characteristic and

which is visible—into disciplinary power, a kind of pastoral power which expresses itself into a particular way in which space and time are controlled and there is a specific way of surveillance that goes with it. Here power is to a large extent invisible. Knowledge of the individual marks power over the general population through the process of normalization.[15] Though Foucault is certainly not arguing that 'power' can or should be avoided (indeed we will always be in a power constellation and in this sense have to live our dependency) the (hidden) message is nevertheless in my opinion one of *resisting a particular configuration in order to move on to one that is more satisfactory*—indeed, what would otherwise be the point of investing so much energy and time in order to become clear about the power constellations one finds oneself in. It goes without saying that there is neither a particular directive concerning the way one should take, nor a justification thereof. It could therefore be argued that the analysis remains radically historical and materialistic and thus descriptive (in the sense of avoiding normative implications). However, in as far as looking for more satisfactory power constellations is built into this stance, the matter of justification cannot simply be avoided, *pace* whatever Foucault and the Foucauldian literature is trying to convince us of. If this stance is unable to identify the characteristics which are held to be more satisfactory, it leaves open the question of justification or paralyses us, stopping us from giving direction to our activities.[16] This highlights, as will be argued further, a particular concept of 'justification' that haunts the debate over what is satisfactory both in terms of power constellations as well as, more properly, concerning what it is that a theoretical stance is able to offer. Moreover, the concept of power seems to carry the suggestion that something is 'done' to the individual and that it is for her to mobilize some energy to withstand this and thus achieve greater freedom in some sense. I will now turn to a second example of a possible postmodern criticism of the idea of initiation.

In the footsteps of Foucault, Giorgio Agamben (2007) identifies by '*dispositif*' everything that in one way or another has the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control and assure the gestures, behaviours, opinions and discourses of living beings. The *dispositifs* that characterize our existence nowadays (such as the mobile phone, the television, the computer, the car) are seen by him not only as objects of consumption: they transform our personality. He furthermore uses the powerful concept of the 'state of exception': the resulting zone is a space devoid of law, a zone of anomie in which all legal determinations, and above all the very distinction between public and private, are deactivated. In the zone of 'indistinction' the sovereign is capable of defining which life is worthy of continuing and which life warrants death without reference to juridical norms. 'Bare life' reveals the nature of sovereignty, which lies less in killing (as in the Foucauldian model of sovereign force) as including life through its exclusion. All life becomes sacred; at the same time all politics becomes the exception. The state is sustained by an excessive display of force enacted upon bare life. For Agamben biopolitics is not so much a modern phenomenon; rather it is located in the most ancient form of the sovereign's decision. *Zoe* - life common to all creatures - is not included into biopower so much as it is paradoxically included in politics - *bios,* i.e. the political life - through its exclusion. The 'camp' is the model that is used to make clear what the state of exception refers to: a place where the state of exception permanently holds the norms of the polis in suspension. It exposes life to the sovereign's decisions, reduces it to pure survival, strips the subject of his or her subjectivity. The state of emergency is brought about by the declaration of war. Here the law collapses in a state of indeterminacy. The normal order is *de facto* suspended and whether or not 'atrocities' are committed depends not on law, but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign.[17]

In a recent article in *Educational Theory,* Tyson Lewis (2006) uses Agamben's stance to analyse education in the inner city schools. Thereby he focuses on children's survival strategy as a consequence of zero-tolerance laws—the way the sovereign power's force takes shape. Originally implemented to eliminate weapons and narcotics from schools in the 'war against drugs', these policies became the blanket response to an array of school violations. Thus a 'police-state-like' atmosphere is created. Foucauldian technologies of disciplinarity such as interrogation are implemented not to train, normalize, or rehabilitate so much as to punish students through police action and 'shock and awe tactics'. He gives several examples of cases where, in the name of security, education as the normative practice of schooling was suspended, in which students were subjected directly to force that in its implementation exceeded due cause. These unnecessary measures of zero tolerance blur the line between safety and anomie, and public and private spaces. High-intensity police action comes to organize social relations and acts as a proxy for safety in schools. Rather than micro-relations of power there is the use of force over and against bodies: safety and terror become indistinguishable: "Educational life becomes interchangeable with bare life (a life devoid of pedagogical supplement), and the student is reduced to nothing more than a body that must be policed" (Lewis, 2006, p. 169). The 'No Child Left Behind' law and documents such as 'A Nation at Risk' create a state of educational emergency, Lewis argues. Thus poor inner-city schools are not so much prisons as they are internal colonies of a global system. Lewis sides with interpretations which argue that the moral, social and legal subordination of children to family and various authority systems without rights of appeal mark the historical record, and provide the social conditions for the oppression of children and adolescents. Children lack the rights of full citizens and are thus exposed to the sovereign's ban - as bearers of bare life - in a much more immediate way than adults are. In dealing with the alternatives that elude the perpetual repetition of the sovereign's ban, Lewis refers to hedonistic consumerism, normalization, the state of indistinction (all, for various reasons, to be avoided), and finally to the utopian turn, where the link between life and political existence is re-conceptualized, where the generative possibilities of life are given a chance. It is not about including children fully into the realm of citizen rights, because this would, he argues, be a capitulation to the power of the sovereign, rather than disrupting its logic—bare life as an active protagonist against sovereign force. But yet again it seems that *we are left with an analysis that prompts us to act, thus to resist, without saying more than "Act differently!"*, which could hardly satisfy what we need in terms of doing something right, not to mention to justify more explicitly the rationale behind what we do. And again we are confronted with an image of something that is done to the subject that makes her in a deplorable sense dependent. There is also a logical point one should come to terms with: in as far as every analysis uses a particular language in describing a particular discourse, and in as far this is unavoidably value-laden, one is ducking the issue that is at stake. Can the horizon of significance and meaning indeed radically be bracketed without invoking the problems positivism and relativism confront us with? And if not, should becoming clear about the element of value-ladenness—even minimally through the distinctions that are made either semantically or in terms of meaning—not be seriously taken up? Evidently, this is not to deny that it is possible to apply Foucault's framework or Agamben's stance to areas such as schooling and child rearing. Here normalization may clearly be observed. But one may wonder whether it is 'normalization' or the 'state of exception' that is at stake here or rather 'rules' in the sense that Peter Winch (1958) develops this concept—to understand each other, to act, to be part of a conversation, of the intersubjective, i.e., the symbolic order—which constitute one as a subject, rules that are taught and learned to make sense of life.[18]

3.3. On blind alleys and avoiding taking a stance

This pushes us to the limits of what may be gathered from an analysis in terms of 'power' as the exclusive explanatory concept or framework to understand schooling. It is indeed not difficult to apply Agamben's concepts of the 'state of exception' to particular educational examples. What remains the problem, however, is the absoluteness of these claims and the sheer fact that they do not take into account the consequences of the unavoidability of a particular stance when acting. Is everything that happens in a school 'camp like'? Is it typical for the dominant discourse? How can we at the same time be embedded in a particular framework and disrupt its logic and to what extent or in which direction? And does all of this or can it be applied to the area of child rearing as well?[19] If we do not want to live in a context of 'survival of the fittest', we need rules and laws. But for this to make sense we need a context where distinctions of worth have already been made, which implies that the possible intervention of the State needs to be confined to particular areas, regulated through procedures of democratic decision-making which include warrants for the rights of minorities. Evidently, the result of this will bear the mark of a particular historical period and all that goes with it in terms of norms, circumstances and problems one has to cope with. Though this will invite the label of 'exclusion/inclusion' it is difficult to see how this could be otherwise.[20] It goes without saying that Foucault and Agamben (as well as Derrida and Lyotard and others) have put their finger on a number of highly relevant issues; furthermore, they have provided us with many interesting analyses. Their contribution to philosophy and the inspiration they have given to many studies in philosophy of education goes without saying and can hardly be overstated. Yet I wonder whether the way they conceive of the subject enables us to see at the same time its uniqueness *and* its embeddedness in the intersubjective order. There is no 'I' without 'the other(s)' that I can think of: both imply each other. The way to deal with the subject should therefore leave the path of yearning for absolute freedom and being wholly independent, and at the same time it should give up picturing the other as the one who necessarily threatens my existence and emancipation, constantly looking for opportunities to exploit me, *pace* the abundant empirical evidence of the contrary.

4. Dependency: Taking the other(s)-and-I seriously

For Stanley Cavell, Wittgenstein's investigation into how the subject is part of the intersubjective level, shows the value of our freedom, of our autonomy, not as the exercise of an arbitrary choice, but as the result of the way in which nature as well as artistic products and moral responsibilities are taken seriously and are even seen as necessary. Understandably Wittgenstein mocks those who are seduced by the promise to be able to control the cultural domain and who think they are able to represent our thoughts and concepts as necessary. Focusing on what is at stake here Cavell draws the attention to writing, which is for him a matter of surrendering to certain readings, where words are seen as 'what is given to us' and philosophy is the result of a 'play' of reading and writing on the basis of one's own authority. Or, he argues, we are able to rethink a thought that comes our way, to possess it and to judge it, or we have to let it go, it does not belong to us. This kind of philosophy either expresses one's own life or is futile. Thus he quotes Emerson: "The simplest words, – we do not know what they mean except when we love and aspire". To understand their meaning we have to be in a certain mood (of the heart). We find ourselves and in the answer to the way we see ourselves we find a place to begin. We have to live this antagonism: it comes down to hope and despair (Emerson's *odious facts*). Thus he quotes Wittgenstein approvingly: "It is in language that an expectation and its fulfilment make contact" (*PI,* I § 445). Cavell refers to the consolations of the word; to *this* meaning for the other; as a song; as sharing

in the case of food and drink, a matter of having in some sense the 'same' experience. Here, to write becomes a means to fight the struggle with oneself (with one's own language), and poetry a means to make a bridge. In the words of Cavell:

> ... what we are is written all over us, or branded; but here especially the other way round, that our language contains our character, that we brand the world, as for example with the concept of Fate; and then listen again to such an idea as that one's character is one's fate.
>
> Now it says openly that language is our fate. It means hence that not exactly prediction, but diction, is what puts us in bonds, that with each word we utter we emit stipulations, agreements we do no know and do not want to know we have entered, agreements we were always in, that were in effect before our participation in them. Our relation to our language—to the fact that we are subject to expression and comprehension, victims of meaning—is accordingly a key to our sense of our distance from our lives, of our sense of the alien, of ourselves as alien to ourselves, thus alienated. (Cavell, 1988, pp. 39-40)

The core of the conception of language in Wittgenstein's later work is that any attempt to say something is always partial, that it is always one-sided. No way of speaking, no doctrine whatsoever can control cultural practices and thus liberate us from the restlessness and incertitudes of human existence, of the search for meaning in our life. He points to the fact that what we do can never be completely transparent, that it is always characterized to some extent by arbitrariness. Thus it becomes clear that in what we say we bear witness to what we long for, but also to what we are not certain of, how we try to express ourselves, try to be coherent. Cavell argues that we should not try to escape from the existential conditions we find ourselves in in order to look for false certainties, but urges us to be born continuously and thus to be mortal. Language itself can help us here. In his *In Quest of the Ordinary. Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (1988) he maintains that, among other things, words in philosophy may create a distance. They allow us to start over and over again and thus generate an alliance with others who are also focused on this. Words may help us escape, but at the same time they create a home.

Philosophy must learn to give itself peace, which means breaking itself off from asking the wrong questions. It has to surrender, to entrust itself with 'how things are' in the realm of the ordinary. This 'ordinary' does not refer to 'the everyday', but it insists on giving up the disappointment with criteria. Shedding the demand for something more is the therapy Wittgenstein speaks of. An example of this may be the demand for authenticity that leads to looking for 'the real self', but which turns out to be a *fata morgana* that so many chase in vain. Another is the sense of disappointment with the human in the form of a disappointment with the language it is given: "Perspicuous representation is accordingly the end of a philosophical problem that has *this* form of beginning" (Cavell in Gilbson and Huemer, 2004, p. 23). And what is said for philosophy holds as well for the philosopher in each and everyone of us. It leads Cavell to conclude that the way of following the *Investigations*

> … requires a willingness to recognize in oneself the moments of strangeness, sickness, disappointment, self-destructiveness, perversity, suffocation, torment, lostness that are articulated in the language of the *Investigations*, and to recognize in its philosophizing that its pleasures (they will have to reach to instances of the ecstatic) will lie in the specific forms and moments of self-recovery it proposes – of familiarity (hence uncanniness, since the

> words of recovery were already familiar; too familiar), of soundness, of finitude, of the usefulness of friction, of acknowledgement, of peace. (*ibid.*, p. 27)

What touches us is the other, with whom I am joined in an intersubjective manner, who expresses herself by what evocation is capable of. The one who says “I” is joined in what we are touched by only thanks to the other. What we are touched by cannot be *said* anymore, but only shown. “From the root of speech, in each utterance of revelation and confrontation, two paths spring: that of the responsibilities of implication; and that of the rights of desire … In acknowledging a mode of speech in or through which, by acknowledging my desire in confronting you, I declare my standing with you and single you out, demanding a response in kind from you, and a response now, so making myself vulnerable to your rebuke, thus staking our future …” (Cavell, 2005, 194-195)

Martin Gustafson argues that Cavell takes Wittgenstein to be saying “that the traditional attempt to justify our practices from an external standpoint is misguided, since such detachment involves losing sight of those conceptual and perceptual capacities in terms of which a practice is understood by its engaged practices” (Gustafson, 2005, p. 356). Comparing the practice of a community where everyone has perfect pitch with a community where a particular tone is compared with the reference tone generated by a tuning fork, he argues that the first one is not irrationally free-floating whereas the other rest securely on rational procedures of justification, but what is going on is better characterized by saying that in these practices justification comes to an end at different places. He favourably quotes Cavell (from *Must We Mean What We* Say) who argues that when we learn and teach words in certain contexts and then are expected and expect others to be able to project them into further contexts, nothing ensures that this projection will take place just as nothing ensures that we will make and understand the same projections. That on the whole we do is, according to Cavell, “a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, sense of humor and of significance and of fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls ‘form of life’” (Cavell quoted in Gustafson, 2005, p. 361). Gustafson stresses Cavell’s point that “he who lacks perfect pitch is unable to situate perceptions of the relevant sort within the logical space of reasons (rather than within the space of causes)” (Gustafson, 2005, p. 363). In a similar sense Stephen Mulhall argues that to present your position in a moral debate is to present it by defining your sense of its relation to other positions, to place yourself in a particular space of moral options, and so to place yourself in relation to those who would plot that space differently or would have you place yourself differently in it. As the logic of moral argument offers no impersonal background on to which one’s responsibility can be sloughed off, not only for the choices one makes but for the range of choices one regards as available, taking responsibility he says “is yours alone to do”. And he continues: “What it does provide, however, is the possibility of accounting for one’s choices, by engaging in modes of explanation and defence which not only make reasoned agreement on that choice a real possibility, but also ensure that a sense of mutual respect, of mutual moral intelligibility, might survive eventual disagreement over the rectitude of a given choice” (Mulhall, 2000, p. 272).

5. Accepting and departing from dependency in child rearing and education

According to Cavell the therapy philosophy offers is in some cases about the need to live with scepticism and to withstand our longing to resolve it. It is characterized by an existential attraction, yet it should be respected, even if it seems to go nowhere. Scepticism prompts us to say something noble about the human species. The 'ordinary' should not disappoint us, but give us peace so that we can give up our craving for criteria, for the general, for idle, metaphysical talk. He claims that without the hope of agreement, argument would be pointless, but that it does not follow that without agreement about a conclusion concerning what ought to be done, argument is pointless. He seems to accept that we cannot but use criteria, but that these are always used, uttered from a particular place and within a particular context. And it is this we have to come to terms with. In some sense this means that one always embraces a particular stance. Evidently, there is always the other, the otherness in oneself, the ethical point of view that has to be given a place. But one should not deny that one starts from somewhere, nor that one is going, at least for the time being, in a particular direction. This should be qualified in two important ways.

In *Who is my neighbour? Skepticism and the claims of alterity* Paul Standish, dealing with the notion of 'home', argues that "In the end it is not attachment to this unique place that is the heart of the matter: what is more important is the combination of attachment with a readiness for departure—before, as it were, it fossilizes, or perhaps comes to be romanticized or to parody itself, before, that is, it succumbs to nostalgia, the pain of home" (Standish, 2006, p. 5). And recalling Cavell's discussion of Wittgenstein's remark that "One human being can be a complete enigma to another", he notes that the idea of 'fully understanding others' hides the extent to which human beings are enigmas to themselves. He stresses that the assumption that a culture can be transparent to its members is as unwarranted as the belief that another culture can be completely opaque. So firstly, though the starting point may not only be unavoidable but even cherished to some extent, it should be qualified too by a readiness for departure. There is a second element I think we need in order to qualify our educational efforts. Naoko Saito reminds us of the Cavellian theme that for Emerson moral constraint is not given by the universal moral law of an 'ought', but by the other as a friend who reminds us of the state of our conformity. Thanks to the friend we are drawn beyond ourselves. She reiterates Cavell's point that the role of friendship in moral perfectionism is both recognition and negation (Saito, 2006, p. 5). Thus the moral task of a friend is not the full grasp of the other, but remembrance of the other in the realm of the yet-to-be known. For Cavell the self is always attained, as well as to be attained. For this we always need, Saito argues, initiation into and departure from the language community (*ibid*., p. 7). And she continues: "Cavellian otherness (via Emerson and Thoreau) centres on the idea of equality with a gap and distance, and encounter in mediation. This is necessary to understand Cavell's remark: 'we are alone, and we are never alone'. You can never own the other, but still you owe responsibility to the other – responsibility neither in deficit nor with the sense of guilt. This starts to destabilize the myth of the relationship of mutuality and reciprocity" (*ibid*., p. 8). Here the presence of the other is seen as a mirror, not the mere representation of the outside world in correspondence, but as what clouds the breath of my life. The other - the actual other as well as the other in myself - confronts the self and thus she is turned back upon her own self; thus the other is not simply the friend but becomes the teacher, the possibility of self-transcendence.

Central to Cavell is one's connection with the Other: "I have to acknowledge humanity in the other, and the basis of it seems to lie in me" (Cavell, 1979, p. 433). Hedging one's own humanity and in turn not acknowledging humanity in the Other actually places a limit on one's humanity, described by Cavell as "the passage into inhumanity … [of which] … its signal is horror" (*ibid*., p. 434). In other words, while acknowledging others as human beings worthy of respect, one

should simultaneously acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. This is what Cavell has in mind when he surmises "that another may be owed acknowledgement simply on the ground of his humanity, acknowledgement as a human being, for which nothing will do but my revealing myself to him [her] as a human being, unrestrictedly, as his or her sheer other, his or her fellow, his or her *semblable.* – Surely this is, if anything, nothing more than half the moralists who ever wrote have said, that others count, in our moral calculations, simply as persons; or that we have duties to others of a universal kind, duties to them apart from any particular stations we occupy. – I think not. Duties are dischargeable. The surmise of which I speak is of an acknowledgement that is not dischargeable; it is something I will, or will not, see, and live with" (*ibid*., p. 434-435).

Could it be argued that Foucauldian normalization is therefore not just unavoidable but to some extent desirable? But should it then not be characterized as well by the combination of attachment with a readiness for departure, as well as by invoking the other who mirrors, destabilizes, and confronts the self—upon which she is turned back to her own self? If this can be taken to be paradigmatic for education, postmodern criticism may engender instead of a paralysis an obligation to be for the other what she is for me. This necessitates filling in the good life, though in a way which is no longer based on solid metaphysical foundations, fossilized one could say. Yet at the same time such a commitment is not haunted by the eternal quest of avoiding insurmountable injustice to the other. It accepts responsibility, realizing that there is only 'this' to start from. Does this solve the question into just which kind of practices one *should* be initiated? Not quite, but it seems that a number of issues can be given a place, such as whether the social practices that should be endorsed by educators should have something in mind (a just society, justice for all, the values of democracy, cosmopolitanism) and that social practices are in a constant flow—grand projects to instil particular values can still have a justifiable appeal. It seems fruitful to distinguish between the social and the cultural, and between the context of the family, the group to which one belongs (with aspects such as sub-culture, religion, region/country) and the level of world-citizenship. A more balanced way to think of practices on the one hand and for instance the individualism, competitiveness, secularization which characterize society nowadays on the other, is not necessarily impossible. Neither is it impossible for something worthwhile to come forward that is consistent with justice for all; correlatively this may set some limitations on social practices that focus (too much) on the private concerns of individuals.

We cannot do without the concept of initiation into practices. But there is a different way to think about 'practice' that consists in emphasizing first how they are learned — for instance through imitation, initiation, instruction and so forth; and secondly how they are enacted (See Smeyers and Burbules, 2006). In both cases one's *relation* to the practices in which one is engaged becomes crucial—that is, how one is brought into them, and how one contributes to them. Here practice is viewed in relation to human actors and not simply seen in intrinsic terms. Central here is the interrelation between the nature of the activity and how people think about and act within the practice. Of special importance is the relation that a practice encourages or discourages (through different ways of learning or enacting it), i.e. how it is intertwined with our *self* and sense of *identity*, on the one hand, and our *relations* and ways of *interacting* with other people, on the other hand. Here the way we identify with particular practices, and to what extent, is at stake. Practices transform the self, but at the same time there may be subversions of a practice that give opportunities to the self. Practices have reasons behind them, even if these are not always made

explicit, but these are reasons that also can be re-examined and questioned - this may also bring forward unintended dimensions.

If one were to perform one's duty to others as human beings, should we (others and I) engage in social practices with something, say, morally just in mind – that is, a just society, justice for all, values of democracy, cosmopolitanism, and so on? Of course, as educators we are responsible for effecting changes in the lives of our students, so we teach them to be civil. But this does not mean that we ought to censure students' actions so that we can know in advance that students have achieved civility or what consequences they may be faced with if they don't practise civility such as, for example, being repudiated by others. Teaching our students civility, following Cavell, makes us "open to complete surprise at what we have done" (Cavell, 1979, p. 325). In other words, educators and students can be initiated into practices concerned with what is morally good for society, but with the possibility that what is perceived as good for society is always in the making, continuously subjected to modifications and adaptations. Similarly, to initiate children into social practices aimed at teaching them values (such as honesty, respect, courtesy, love, care, and so on), is still a defensible idea. Cavell, following Wittgenstein, argues that in 'learning language' children do not merely learn the names of things but what a name is; not merely what the form of expression is for expressing a wish, but what expressing a wish is; not merely what the word 'father' is, but what 'a father is': "In learning language, you do not merely learn the pronunciation of sounds, and their grammatical orders, but the 'forms of life' which make those sounds the words they are, do what they do – e.g., name, call, point, express a wish or affection, indicate a choice or an aversion, etc." (*ibid*., pp. 177-178). Thus, when we teach children 'honesty', 'love' and 'care' we initiate them into relevant forms of life, i.e. we show them what we say and do, and accept what they say and do as what we say and do. Putting it differently, educators tell themselves and others (children) how they must go about things though they do not predict in the sense of manipulate this or that performance.

Owing justice to oneself and to others helps us to distinguish fruitfully between the social and cultural practices (with reference to the family and group) to which we belong. Cavell's remark "we are alone, and we are never alone" (Cavell, 1992, p. 80) is a clear expression of the fact that one does belong to a particular group - we are alone with others, that is, - and by virtue of being human one bears an internal relation to all other human beings—especially those who might not belong to the same group as one does oneself. This internal relation with my fellow citizens does not ignore my answerability / responsibility for what happens to them, despite not belonging to the same group as them. As a member of a particular cultural group in society I cannot just impose my views (whether religious or political) on others for that in itself would deny that there are others in different positions (with different cultural orientations) than mine. Doing so would be doing an injustice to others. But being answerable / responsible for what happens to them means that their views are acknowledged, although I might not be in agreement with them. Showing responsibility to the other also implies that one can think about practices in a more balanced way, especially considering the individualism, competitiveness and secularisation which characterise society today. In demonstrating one's responsibility towards others, one immediately acknowledges one's capacity for intimacy with others – thus limiting one's idiosyncratic privacy. It is for this reason that Cavell (*ibid*., p. 463) claims that "human beings do not naturally desire isolation and incomprehension, but union or reunion, call it community". Our private actions may lead to a betterment of our communal actions. I might privately contemplate doing something about improving security in my neighbourhood, but doing so autonomously without also penetrating the thoughts of other community members may not necessarily contribute towards a

desired action. If my privacy remains restricted to me with the intention of not exercising my responsibility to others, my practices would remain unshared and separated from the people whom I happen to live with. So my privacy opens a door through which someone else taps into my thoughts which might be of benefit to society. But if my privacy is constituted of narcissism, the possibility that others might gain something valuable for society might be stunted. If I were to think about social practices in a balanced way, I should acknowledge the private efforts of individuals, yet simultaneously not avoid considering the possibility that their private actions can be of good public use.

What can thus be argued is that our social practices should in some ways transcend the private concerns of individuals. Our private actions should create conditions for something worthwhile to emerge which is consistent with justice for all persons. What follows from this is that one's private actions should be justified with reasons to other individuals with whom I engage in public (worldly) relations. In other words my actions do not only provide precepts of individual conduct, but also possibilities for public (universal) justice. After all, what can be so pernicious about personally condemning genocide, ethnic cleansing, enslavement and rape with the possibility of ensuring others' public protection of crimes against humanity? This is very much along the lines of the characterization of practical judgement that is offered by Richard Smith. He starts from the Aristotelian position where the importance of *experience* in practical judgement is connected with a rejection of the idea that ethics is based in theory. "Experience on its own is", Smith argues, "however, no panacea because unless we are helped, and sometimes even directly shown, how to interpret what we see and to formulate the right response to it, we import ways of understanding and coping that are inappropriate to the new context" (Smith, 2006, p. 167). But this is not about confirming the fantasy that empiricism is the basis of any worthwhile knowledge, but "… it is *reflection on experience* that is crucial [which] follows, however, from the 'situatedness' of the *aesthesis* in practical judgement: we learn to distinguish the relevant features of situations, perceiving those which are and those which are not similar to previous ones. The proper use of experience also involves noticing the propensity of the present and the future to be unlike the past, and a preparedness to be open to the uniqueness of events" (*ibid*., 2006, p. 167).[21] Clearly, though in some sense this position does not determine what should be done in a particular case, it nevertheless does not embrace advice that is so open-ended that it comes down to 'just resist', 'act differently', that radicalises otherness or the subject, nor undermines any reference to the bedrock of our acting.

6. Redirecting our attention: Starting from somewhere

Dependency upon the material world is not to be deplored. Neither is our embeddedness in social practices and all that goes with it. To put this more precisely, it does not make sense to regret this or silence it—either for metaphysical reasons or by invoking the radical separateness of the subject from others and thus of the arbitrariness of what we do. This characterizes Wittgenstein's thought and those who have made explicit what is involved there. Living the 'scepticism' of the human condition should have consequences for what we focus on in philosophy and philosophy of education. The way to proceed is according to Cavell to start from reflections on how language operates. He takes into account at the same time the danger of nihilism (implicit in looking for foundations) which looms at the horizon and the yearning for a crystalline purity that obfuscates that logic is *of* and thus not *off* the world—of which the famous story told by Lewis Carroll about Achilles and the tortoise reminds us; and recall, there was a touch of sadness in Achilles' tone.[22]

In other words: what we really are, i.e., 'all too human', should be taken into account in all areas, procedures of logical entailment included.[23] For Cavell, attempts to bracket the subject's embeddedness in the intersubjective and to highlight a particular kind of autonomy are as untenable as those to reduce its input by over-emphasising the demands of the other. Thus a particular problem in philosophy is dealt with, which means it is 'dissolved'. Now attention can be redirected towards for instance opposing the real violence that is done towards the other, where her rights are abused. In accepting that the other is the one who I need, it becomes clear that I have to act and start somewhere —instead of indulging myself in my own narcissism (philosophical and otherwise), chasing the meaning of idle concepts such as 'the best interests of the child' (in the debate for instance concerning government intervention in child rearing). But at the same time it will also become clear that many of the things which I try to do may not lead to the results I and we long for. It is nevertheless a fair price for at least doing something, trying to make things better, as well as an antidote against the complacency of the dissatisfaction with everything one finds oneself in. Moreover, it is a remedy for being cured of the incessant demands of performativity, for the ongoing creation of needs by a greedy economy, and the means-end reasoning of a particular, though dominant, kind of manipulative psychology. All are 'like an engine idling', sooner or later to be brought back to their true proportions and importance by the unavoidable meltdown. What is lost, however, is not to be regretted: castles of air, houses of cards. Cavell's position reminds us that there are many roads to Rome, but also that there are many other places we may want to go to; that sometimes we think that a journey deserves our efforts, but in many cases we do not know, or even cannot possibly know, either now or in the future. The subject cannot be 'free at last': that is precisely why it diminishes our being human if we are reluctant to enter into dialogue, with the other as well as with ourselves. It is difficult not to see the relevance of this for education.[24]

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Endnotes

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[2] In this sense the constant efforts of the sciences have to be understood as well as their characterization by philosophers of science: "explanation involves revealing the mechanisms at work in the world" (Cf. Salmon, 1989) be it in a deterministic or an indeterministic model.

[3] For a discussion of causality and its intricacies particularly in relation to education and educational research see the various contributions in Smeyers and Depaepe, 2003, 2007, and 2008; also Bridges *et al.,* 2008.

[4] In other words, one can focus on the meaning of 'to be dependent on' as well in the sense of something we deplore and want to get rid off if possible at all thus to be more autonomous (for instance when one is condemned to a wheelchair), as well as in the sense of what one trusts and relies on (for instance that the tiers of the wheelchair will not go flat). I am particularly interested in the latter, i.e. how we cannot but 'rely and trust'. This is also relevant for the way we interact with others and thus my focus is not so much on the psychological dimension (and correlatively on the phenomenological or experience issue that goes with it), but on the conceptual level—though evidently, I accept (see further where learning the meaning of a word is referred to) that these dimensions cannot radically be separated.

[5] Winch draws our attention to the fact that Wittgenstein's notion of agreement as a condition of being able to communicate does not presuppose that an agreement should be reached about *everything* if communication is to be possible at all. What seems to be important is to try to understand the position of the other party, including the difficulties that go with it. Winch writes: "There is no ground whatsoever *a priori* for expecting the emergence of some position free of difficulties which everyone would be able to accept. But that does not mean at all that there is no difference between someone who accepts and lives by a position with clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, of where it may lead him, of what the alternatives are, and someone who does not understand these things" (Winch, 1987, p. 189). This is closely linked to the meaning of 'following a rule'. One cannot indicate all the cases which possibly belong to the area of application of a certain rule by (the phrasing of) the rule itself. 'To follow a rule' means to be able to go on in a certain way. As Malcolm puts it: "We go on all agreeing, following rules and applying words in new cases - without guidance. Other than the past training, there is no explanation. It is an aspect of the form of life of human beings. It is our nature. To try to explain it is like trying to explain why dogs bark" (Malcolm, 1986, p. 181). It is important to recall that this 'going on' is quite evidently socially sanctioned.

[6] To elaborate further: the aim is to teach someone to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense (cf. *PI*, I, § 464), as the 'repressed nonsense' is made explicit. And the task of philosophy consists in "assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (*PI*, I, § 127). Philosophy can offer only a certain kind of understanding of non-philosophical propositions; and an understanding that certain kinds of propositions are not legitimate. Its questions will be resolved and this will put philosophical worries to an end. Not the subject, nor the result, but the *nature* of the philosophical questions and their solutions constitute their character. "The difficulty here is, in not trying to justify what admits of no justification", Wittgenstein writes (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 101); elsewhere he says: "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."" (PI, I, § 217). In his aversion to 'justification', in his dealing with the question why there cannot be a further justification, the philosopher realises the Wittgensteinian concept of philosophy. Confronted with the question why this is the answer, one can only say that this is how we act: "What people accept as a justification - is shown by how they think and live" (PI, I, §3 25). Thus the aim of philosophy can be said to be "To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (PI, I, § 309). Cf. also, Smeyers *et al.,* 2007.

[7] In this I follow Putnam, who argued that the fact/value dichotomy is central to understand (the criticism of) positivism. He writes: "Everyone of you has heard someone ask, 'Is that supposed to be a fact or a value judgment'? The presupposition of this 'stumper' is that if it's a 'value judgment' it can't possibly be a [statement of] 'fact', and a further presupposition of this is that value judgments are subjective. (Putnam, 2006, p. 1). Here it is held that scientific analysis can often help us to resolve disagreement about means, but in cases of disagreement about the morality of the taking of interest there is no room for argument. He suggests thinking of the logical positivists' fact/value dichotomy (and of the 'emotivist' account of ethical language that goes with it) as the top of a three-legged stool:

> (1) the postulation of theory-free 'facts', supporting the positivists' dichotomy between fact and theory (or 'experience' and 'convention');
> (2) the denial that fact (science) and evaluation are entangled;
> (3) the claim that science proceeds by a syntactically describable method (called 'induction').
> (Putnam, 2006, p. 8)

These legs are now in ruins, he argues, because of the way in which so-called 'factual' and so-called 'evaluative' predicates are mutually 'entangled': factual judgments depend on *epistemic* values (such as coherence and simplicity) and values presuppose that one is able to understand an evaluative point of view (referring to Iris Murdoch, he repeats that it is always possible to *improve one's understanding* of such a concept). Thus he reiterates Cavell's point that it is characteristic of moral arguments that the rationality of the antagonists is not dependent on an agreement emerging between them, that there consequently is such a thing as a *rational disagreement* about a conclusion.

[8] Developing this point would require another paper. It suffices for the argument that I am developing here to focus the attention on the second element, i.e. that the subject is in one or other sense on its own, how in other words dependency has to be thought of in that case or alternatively how it is free.

[9] For a more elaborate general introduction to Lacan see Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986.

[10] In dealing with the Oedipus complex Lacan emphasizes the function of the lack of the object and lack in general. The end of the original unity of mother and child is precisely what leads to the subject's possibility of becoming a subject of desire. Without the Law, which deals with relations with others, the mother can autonomously, in a sense arbitrarily, deal with the child's wants. In the unmediated realm the other is not bound by any law and the child is a possible toy of her changing answers. The presence of a third person, one could say (literally or figuratively) the father, breaks this fusion-like unity open. He is also the one she desires. In this sense the child cannot be everything for her mother and she is not only there for her. The relationship between mother and child is mediated by a third who represents the symbolic law of the culture.

[11] The unconscious images, the discourses of the Other that cannot inscribe themselves in the subject, that cannot be accommodated by the subject, stay active in the mind and come to the surface in all kinds of symptoms unavoidable for the subject. They cannot be accommodated, indeed are at war, with the already

existing images in the subject. The subject, the 'I' who speaks of herself, is not the same as the 'I' that is spoken of: the meaning surpasses her. The subject (the one who says 'I') is not master of herself, but subject of the symbolic order: "*Je est un autre* [*I is another*]" (Lacan, 1966, p. 118). The subject arises in relation to desire that is unknown to her. The Other is the real witness and guarantor of the subject's existence, as it is she who can recognize the subject. In the perception of the subject the Other is not affected by the same lack, and can be identified with the mother's original role in relation to the infant. The Other is where the subject is born, not only as a biological entity, but as a subject with a human existence.

[12] Unlike Freud's version in the chain of conscious reasons, the Lacanian 'unconscious' will not provide the answer we cannot find on a conscious level that leaves no gaps. The unconscious reminds the subject that reasons will never really do, it marks the ineliminable impossibility of understanding human desire in a definitive way. The truth of the unconscious, that human desire is not limited to what is good for herself, is something that the subject does not want to know. Because the Other is (necessarily) deceiving her, the psychoanalyst's function is not to answer the subject's appeals and demands, but instead to act so that the answer comes back to the subject from the analyst as a question: What do you want from me? What the subject lacks or has lost is not present in the Other.

[13] See further section 4 and 5.

[14] Cf. Blake *et al.,* 2000.

[15] For Foucault, the blueprint of the panopticon is the crystallized incarnation of the underlying set of power relations that define modern Western civilization. The metaphor that is used identifies a ring of inwardly facing cell blocks surrounding a tower; from this place guards can monitor the activities in each cell. As a consequence of the constant threat of surveillance, the prisoners ultimately become self-regulating and internalize the norms. With the expansion of disciplinary mechanisms throughout society including schools, clinics etc., Western civilization became a generally punitive society concerned with regulating a homogenized public through training the body on a micro level, through examinations, and through hierarchical surveillance. Thus power became subtle and functions quietly in a permanent economy.

[16] It goes without saying that the Foucauldian position has been applied successfully to many areas of social research, such as in gay and lesbian studies, multicultural and feminist research, and last but not least through identifying in governmentality studies the changes that have taken place in schooling. One is left, however, with a prevailing feeling of disappointment: if one takes the result of these analyses as a starting point for change, the framework implies the need to back off. It should not go unnoticed that many authors have transgressed this self-imposed boundary and have come up with interesting alternatives, but that they have remained reluctant to offer justificatory reasons.

[17] Thus Agamben questions the underlying metaphor of Foucault's work emphasizing the centrality of the camp over the now peripheral model of the panopticon. The camp is neither, to use Althusser's vocabulary, a repressive nor an ideological state apparatus. The violence of the camp is not the violence sanctioned within and by the law, rather sovereign violence that exists in the hazy realm of indistinction between law and nature, violence and right, and is frequently justified by the rhetoric of war. The sovereign is removed from state restrictions and thus the rupture of the state always already adheres to the very centre of the state itself. As the state includes its own exclusion, Althusser's depiction of the state is, according to Agamben, incomplete. State apparatuses or disciplinary mechanisms are supplemented by something beneath, that exists only as a disavowed external aberration and that has now become the rule of law itself.

[18] For a further development Cf. Smeyers, 2006.

[19] Burbules comes to a similar conclusion: "But it is harder to see how this [the postmodernist] perspective sustains a general account of education, one that can address the learning of children, that allows for the mastery of basic literacy and thinking skills, that provides a basis of cultural understandings sufficient to posing the kinds of deeply problematizing questions called for by a postmodern sensibility. One needs to know a great deal about one's own culture and traditions, as well as those of others, in order for a theory of difference to have resonance, for example. In short, it is doubtful whether the capacity for a postmodern

approach to things can be developed, educationally, in a consistently postmodern manner. Once again, then, we find ourselves 'living with ambivalence'" (Burbules, 2008).

[20] For a similar critique of some of the possible implications of the stance of Derrida and Lyotard, see Blake *et al.*, 1998, pp. 69-73.

[21] Practical judgement is not only a matter of learning skills and acquiring competencies but is also and more significantly bound up with the kind of person one is. Smith claims that "It is not so much that practical judgement *requires* certain qualities, even 'virtues', to be in place before it can develop on the basis of them, as that it partly consists of those qualities. These qualities have a cognitive element but they, and so practical judgement itself, have a strongly affective side" (*ibid.,* pp. 167-168). In practical judgement knowledge and feeling must draw on each other. He focuses on the place of flexibility in practical judgement and makes it clear that here is a limit to the extent that we can specify clear and unambiguous rules, procedures or universal algorithms. "Our judgements have to be adapted to the particularities of the situation rather than relying on general rules or principles exclusively. But there is no basis here for the fantasy that *phronesis* consists in arbitrary and ungrounded action, perhaps under the sway of gut-feeling. Principles and criteria play their part, but they are revisable" (*ibid*., p. 170).

[22] Cf. Winch, 1958, pp 55-57.

[23] Incidentally, there is a parallel that can be drawn between what is argued here and the position Nick Burbules and Kathleen Abowitz (2008) develop concerning a situated philosophy of education which they characterize as: looking at the conditions of its own practice (the academic and non-academic settings in which the work is done); asking questions about the who, when, where and how of what is officially designated as philosophy of education; examining the educational and reproductive processes by which new participants into the practice are trained, initiated, and socialized; and, finally, examining the effects of the practice of philosophy of education. This implies an inversion of the typical relation seen between philosophy and philosophy of education, namely, rather than regarding philosophy of education as an applied subdiscipline it asks how it can illuminate the significant educational dimensions underlying all major philosophical problems; it changes the dynamic of philosophy of education and the concerns of educational research, policy, and practice thus avoiding marginalisation of the field; it inverts the usual order of things, i.e. applying philosophical tools to educational problems, by beginning with concrete and richly detailed case studies and examples and drawing philosophical insights from the analysis of those particulars; it accepts that one is always subject to a particular practice. This they claim should be seen as an argument for a more engaged, collaborative, and interdisciplinary understanding of what it means to do philosophy of education nowadays.

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