An Arendtian Perspective on Inclusive Education

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Introduction

By confronting an underlying premise in inclusive education, the present paper provides the basis for a new vocabulary for discussing inclusiveness in education. Many positions within inclusive education seem to assume that political and instrumental starting points are required for educational thinking and practice. These approaches present the notion that education exists to solve what is wrong with the world and that school serves as an instrument of social change or to maintain the status quo. Accepting an instrumental approach to education has also produced many initiatives for inclusive educational thinking, policy and practice that accept the political and practical implications of a dominating and over-arching neo-liberal discourse on education in which the task of education is to provide new members for the workforce.

This paper shifts the emphasis from instrumentalising ethical, political and social justice arguments for inclusion to educational arguments for inclusiveness. In the first section of the paper, which is based on the emerging reimagining of the school vocabulary inspired by Arendt, I argue that considering the act of schooling as a form of suspension of productive time enables us to move towards an educational argumentation and conceptualisation of inclusiveness. Adopting this approach reinvigorates our endeavours to assist both children and fellow teachers to think and behave more inclusively in an educational climate in which everything seems to be packaged and sold as manuals to teachers worldwide (Slee 2011; Biesta 2010, 2013).

Focusing on inclusiveness rather than inclusive education or inclusion does not seek to denigrate earlier efforts but highlights that those endeavours are confronted by general education and schooling issues. These educational issues, which are global in scope, involve the increasing politicisation, standardisation and instrumentalisation of educational theory and practice (Masschelein and Simons 2013, Biesta 2013). A belief that we can standardise and ‘manualise’ our educational endeavours seems to have taken hold of the consciousness of our local and global political structures, an attitude that actually undermines attempts to create inclusive educational spaces (Slee 2011). Teachers struggle against the standardisation of work and practices that forces them to push pupils to improve test results without regard for children’s personal and social situations.

Focusing on inclusiveness is thus a call for putting education first. Education does not exist to remedy what is wrong with the world however unjust or exclusive it might be, but shelters the
young from the hustle and bustle of the ‘adult’ world to enable them to eventually enter that larger and common world (Arendt 2006; Korsgaard 2014). This is not achieved by modelling the school on the workplace or marketplace but by providing children with opportunities to practice thinking and judging as well as the art of being with and bearing with others.

Arendt’s ideas enable us to escape an instrumental understanding of education and to determine what occurs in a school that does not exist to accommodate political and ideological ambitions. In the second section of the paper, I present the concept of enlarged thought and explore how we might conceptualise inclusiveness within the activity of schooling. Enlarged thought is the ability to incorporate the perspectives of present and absent others into thoughts and judgments about the world. The argument that enlarged thought is the intended practice and the aim of education enables inclusiveness to become embedded in the practices as well as the purpose of schooling activities. These practices, which unfortunately for the income of the author of this paper cannot be packaged and ‘manualised’, enable us to conceptualise and speak about inclusive educational practices without succumbing to the lure of instrumental and standardising measures.

The vocabulary of inclusive education: Crisis as opportunity

The recent work of prominent scholars within the field (e.g., Allan 2014; Slee 2011; Thomas 2013) indicates that the inclusive education movement is currently undergoing a process of re-examination. I believe this re-examination or crisis is at least partly caused by a collapsed construction of what a school is at policy, practical and theoretical levels and in part by the increased political focus on and use of the terms inclusion and inclusive education, much to the detriment of the precision of the concepts and suggested practices emanating from research communities.

Gary Thomas (2013), in his ‘review of thinking and research about inclusive education policy’, points to the fact that there appears to be an opening at the moment for a re-think about inclusive education. What he proposes is that inclusive education should be placed at the heart of education; where it belongs (Thomas 2013). He suggests that what this means is that issues of social justice, equality and social capital should form the basis of the school and play a much larger role in the vocabulary of (inclusive) education.
While it is of course hard to oppose this project, it also has an all too familiar ring to it. It is in line with prominent thinking about education where education becomes the facilitator so to speak of varying theoretical and political projects. Education and the school appear to be considered the empty canvas upon which we can imprint and impose the various depictions of reality that appeal to societies or political and theoretical movements. In other words, schools are held to exist to solve political, social, economic or logistical problems. Problems we find increasingly difficult to solve in the present. However, this view is flawed at two distinct levels. First, issues of social justice and equality are more likely to be resolved by logistical and social economic policies than by education (Anyon 2014); second, structuring schools and education to address political demands produces outcomes that are not desirable to proponents of inclusive education.

Although it is not his primary concern, Roger Slee presents a strong case for a renewed focus on the relationship between politics and education in his 2011 book *The Irregular School*. He documents the extent to which projects of inclusion and inclusive education have increasingly become aligned with neo-liberal policies and the implementation of standardised measures and tests. Similar conclusions have been drawn from research indicating that inclusion serves to promote standardisation and politicisation in the Scandinavian context (Kristensen 2012; Korsgaard 2015). Thus while I agree with Gary Thomas that we should re-think the issue of inclusive education, I argue that a different route might be more productive.

In her recent work, Julie Allan (2014; Harwood and Allan 2014) has increasingly focused on the aesthetic dimensions of education and pedagogy thinking about education. This approach implies a more continental approach to educational theory that accords primacy to education as opposed to the Anglo-American tradition that holds that the disciplinary rules and traditions of accompanying disciplines define thinking and research in education rather than a specifically educational approach to thinking and research (McCulloch 2002; Oelkers 1994). To engage with an education that is truly liberated from instrumentalism, we must not conceive of education as a sub disciplinary ‘add-on’ to sociological, psychological or political studies; further – as I discuss below – education must not be the instrument we employ to resolve political, cultural and societal problems.

In the following, I present the educational thinking of Hannah Arendt and a more recent elaboration of some of her ideas that provide a basis for a reimagining of an inclusive school. In this approach, school is first and foremost educational rather than political or instrumental, but still has as a founding condition each child’s right to enter into and be a part of the world, a condition that has
been the aim of the inclusive education movement from its outset (Slee 2011; Allan and Slee 2008). Education has always had the potential ability to overturn societal structures and erode social differences and inequalities (Masschelein and Simons 2013). However, ‘we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look’ (Arendt 2006, 189). Trying to control how, when and who is included and emancipated risks not only instrumentalisation but also risks robbing the individuals we wish to free of opportunities to act and live in unpredictable ways. Schools must thus maintain a non-instrumental axiology so that we do not determine how children will live in the world in advance. The possibility of overturning societal structures cannot be pre-ordered by the adult generation but exists only in the presence of an axiology that allows for the unforeseen and the unknown, which requires that we abstain from strict political and ideological control of what takes place in the school.

At first glance, an instrumental way of engaging with education does not appear prominent in the framework of inclusive education; however, it lurks in the shadows of many inclusive education perspectives because the view that education serves the purpose of resolving world problems is at the root of inclusive education.

Requiring school to fix what is wrong with the world erodes the fundamental structure and purpose of school and education and forces children to accept a responsibility and fate regarding which they have no say. In this light, inclusion as an ethical and political agenda aimed at social reform is anti-educational and diminishes education into little more than an instrument of social change or maintaining the status quo. The following sections present a perspective with a revised vocabulary that refers to inclusiveness in educational processes rather than to inclusion or inclusive education.

The sphere of education

In many ways, Arendt can be considered the penultimate anti-instrumentalist. Her approach to the political as well as education is to identify what gives the process meaning, not to achieve some ultimate goal but to make human co-existence possible at all (Korsgaard 2014; Topolski 2015). In Understanding and Politics, Arendt (1994) claims that a recurring question for humankind is the question of what ‘makes it bearable for us to live with other people, strangers forever, in the same world and makes it possible for them to bear with us’ (322). This possibility is based on the ‘gift’ of understanding (Arendt 1994, Hansen 2004). To understand and be able to live with what is strange to us is an inescapable existential and educational challenge. In Arendtian terms, school is the space
between the child’s home, which is safe, protected and most importantly not strange to them, and the public and social life to which the child is a stranger. The objects, events and people who inhabit the ‘outside’ world are not only alien to the child, the child is also a stranger to the inhabitants of that world. Learning about the world – which for Arendt is the quintessential purpose of the school and education – thus also entails coming to know and trying to understand that which and those who are strange to us. The concept of suspension elucidates what is meant by referring to the school as an intermediary place. Before I turn to this central concept, however, I must first present the philosophical foundation that Arendt articulated in her seminal and controversial essays The Crisis in Education and Reflections on Little Rock.

In these two essays, Arendt articulated the educational relation between the child as a stranger and the world (as what is strange) as a generational relation in which the old world meets the new. ‘It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers’ hands their own chance at the new’ (Arendt 2006, 174). Thus, the heart of Arendt’s educational thinking resides in the paradox that education serves the purpose of preparing children for the world but must do this in a way and a place that is in a sense separate from the world, that is, in a state of suspension.

The basis for suspension is the realisation that imposing our norms and values upon children as if they are beyond discussion strikes from their hands the possibility of creating something new. However, education simultaneously entails a responsibility to the world in the sense that the educational relation must be such that the (be)coming generation does not eject the older generation from the world by recreating it beyond recognition. The world must be protected from ‘the onslaught of the new’ (Arendt 2006, 182). Consequently, the essential question is how we wish to live together and how we wish to bear with each other. Do we as an adult generation wish to bear with our children in such a way that we can determine completely the way in which we will live together in our shared world, or do we wish to preserve for our children the possibility of creating some other way (Arendt 2006); a way that we had perhaps not foreseen, and therefore could not plan for.

Arendt develops this notion based on the concept of natality and her untraditional use of the word conservation. At the outset of The Crisis in Education, Arendt (2006) claims that natality is the essence of education and later on states that conservatism must be of the essence to education. In
this way, Arendt identifies the tension between the child and the world as well as the dual meaning of the use of conservation or conservatism. Arendt’s concept of natality is central to her (political) thinking and expresses the idea that human freedom is rooted in the fact that we are born as someone with the unique ability to bring something unforeseen and unexpected into the world. Indeed our very birth into the world as an individual with this ability is such an event. Because natality is the essence of education, the purpose of education is to protect and conserve this ability.

Arendt’s educational conservatism thus does not align itself with conservatism in a political sense; in fact Arendt is adamant that the political and the educational must be kept distinct to ensure that this conservation is possible. To protect and conserve natality and plurality, to ensure that we do not ‘strike from the newcomers’ hands their own chance at the new’, we must keep political considerations and pressures separate from education.

The separation of the educational and the political is highly controversial (Biesta 2013; Korsgaard 2014; Schutz 1999, 2002; Schutz and Sandy 2015; Topolski 2008). Regardless of our interpretation of the nature of the separation, we must consider education as something that is not a part of the world in any strict sense in order to adhere to Arendt’s position. ‘[S]chool is by no means the world and must not pretend to be; it is rather the institution that we interpose between the private domain of the home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all.’ (Arendt 2006, 185). This interposed institution between the private and the world has the function of suspending certain ways of being present in the world, and through this protect children from being held accountable for their immediate reactions and judgments of the world. In their description of the architecture of such a school Masschelein and Simons (2010) describe how the space and time of the school allows a suspension of what they term productive time. This means that it is not the world and it’s events as such that are suspended, but the productive and determined uses and understandings of them that is suspended, thus allowing teachers and students to re-present and engage them in novel ways. To engage with the world as freely and as objectively as possible to fully understand the object under consideration (Korsgaard 2014; Masschelein and Simons 2013) we must suspend both the productive and final ends of the object as well as our familial, personal and social obligations.

Of course, scholars have debated the extent to which education should be more practice-oriented. The progressive educational movement, which exemplifies this line of thought, has contributed much that is of value. However, for Arendt, ‘the function of the school is to teach children what the
world is like and not to instruct them in the art of living’ (Arendt 2006, 192). Identifying ‘what the
world is like’ has been the topic of extensive debate over the years. However, discussion of this
issue has tended to focus on Arendt’s importance for democratic and critical education (e.g., Biesta
2010, 2013; Gordon 2001; Schutz 1999, 2002; Schutz and Sandy 2015), which conflicts with
Arendt’s separation between the educational and the political. Recently, however, some researchers
have suggested that this entails that we should examine Arendt’s thoughts on thinking and judgment
in attempting to describe an ‘Arendtian school’ (Harwood 2010; Korsgaard 2014; Topolski 2008,
2015). Being taught about the world rather than how to live in the world requires that we practice
thinking and judgment, which in turn requires that we create a space that enables us to practice
these abilities in a safe and suspended environment that does not expose children to the bright light
of the public prematurely.

The suspension of productive time

Suspending productive time refers to a particular way of engaging with and in the activity of
schooling. It involves setting aside an instrumental and teleological way of being in the world and is
closely linked to the original meaning of the scholastic (Masschelein and Simons 2013). It provides
a way to describe how we can engage with the world to come to terms with it, to gain
understanding, to think about it and form judgments rather than to change it or bend it to our will. I
invoke the concept of suspension to describe how education stands – or rather can stand – at a
distance from the world, which makes it possible to be together to appreciate and examine the
objects of the world in a communal reconsideration of the world.

Following Arendt, Jan Masschelein (2012) contemplates the when and how of education by
invoking the original meaning of the word Scholé, which means ‘free time’ or time that is free from
the constraints of ordinary living. It also means delay, study, discussion and – perhaps most
importantly – school building (Masschelein 2012). The view that education or schooling might be
understood in terms of the construction of a particular framework within which schooling, study,
exercise and thought take place has gained ground in the philosophy of education (e.g., Biesta,
Masschelein, Ranciére and others), and provides perhaps the most optimal starting point for re-
thinking inclusive education.

A suspension of destined and defined time occurs when the productive life that focuses primarily on
the outcomes and aims of a process is set aside, and the sole purpose is coming to terms with and
understanding the knowledge and subject matter presented. We study the objects of the world freed from their outcomes and ends. ‘Suspension here could be regarded more generally as an event of de-familiarisation, de-socialisation, de-appropriation or de-privatisation; it sets something free’ (Masschelein 2012, 531). What it sets free are the items of the world, to be placed anew under our gaze. Suspension also frees the students and educators from ‘the necessities and obligations of professions and imperatives of knowledge’ (Masschelein 2012, 531). Setting an object free does not rob it of its context or make it free from but sets it free to. Free to be re-engaged and re-interpreted by the pupils and teacher who collectively engage with it. ‘Things are “put on the table”, transforming them into common things, things that are at everyone’s disposal for free use. What has been suspended is their “economy”, the reasons and objectives that define them during work or social, regular time’ (Masschelein 2012, 531).

The object of study might be a work of art, a mathematical equation, or the romantic period in German literature. The teacher presents something that is unknown to the children and assists them in the process of understanding its meaning. Thus, in its essence, the communal event of scholé involves a familiar form of reflection and manner of thinking and judging, that has always been a part of the activity of schooling.

**School building and practising thinking**

I propose that considering the activity of schooling as a collective event in which we practice thinking and judging in close relation to the objects of the world is an activity that promotes inclusiveness, particularly when viewed in relation to Arendt’s articulation of the ability of enlarged thought. It is not a political or ideological project but simply a natural aspect of doing schooling or school building. In this sense, the activity of schooling is a specific manner of being present, a certain posture, and a mode of practicing thinking and judging that structures education to enable students to present their views and perspectives on a particular subject in a safe environment in which it does not matter what their social, cultural and physiological conditions might be. Although the discussion of whom and how many we can include remains to be explored, adopting this approach makes it possible to discuss inclusion in novel ways. Prior to these discussions, however, we must further explore what is meant by enlarged thought.

Arendt’s original and controversial reading of Kant’s *The Critique of Judgment*, which led her to emphasise enlarged thought as the means of achieving a more refined method for connecting
thinking and politics (Beiner 1994; Topolski 2015), centres on Kant’s notion of disinterestedness. As I indicate below, this concept does not involve a lack of interest or a view from nowhere (Nagel 1986) but the ability to suspend one’s own interest to focus instead on understanding, judging and the impending task of bearing with strangers in a communal political setting.

**The art of enlarged thought**

Kant viewed judgment as primarily an aesthetic faculty and did not consider *The Critique of Judgment* to be a political work. However, Arendt interpreted the third critique as a political work because she regarded Kant’s notion of aesthetic judgment as a potential starting point for re-framing or re-capturing the concept of political judgment in the wake of the horrors of the Second World War (Topolski, 2015). The two primary components of Kant’s theory that Arendt addressed are disinterestedness and enlarged thought.

Prior to presenting the argument that these two aspects serve as the central points of convergence between Arendt’s political thinking and Kant’s work *The Critique of Judgment*, a summary of Kant’s third critique is - I suspect - in order. In his first critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant perceives judgment as connected to an obscure field of human perception buried deep in the human soul. ‘This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty’ (Kant 1998, B180-B181). This function of the soul serves to subsume appearances under the concepts of reason.

In his third critique, Kant introduces reflective judgment, which performs a function that is the opposite of the subsuming judgment because it moves inductively from the particular to the general. Thus one aspect of the faculty of judging does not determine what is given but is problematic because it opens objects to our reflective reasoning (Kant 1987). Pronouncing judgment on the objects of our aesthetic perceptions had widely been considered to be a subjective undertaking that was unrelated to reasoning, but Kant sought to determine a way to provide validity, if not objectivity, to these judgments. His search led him to identify two types of judgment – aesthetic judgments and teleological judgments, hence the separation of the critique into two parts.

Aesthetic judgment, which is related to our tastes, judges the beautiful and the sublime. In contrast, teleological judgment, which pertains to what is natural, judges organisms that are teleologically structured and serve a purpose (Kant 1987). Although judging the beautiful remains primarily a
subjective matter, in § 30-40 Kant forcefully argues for a validity that transcends the subjective; a primary component of his argument is the concept or specific state of mind he terms disinterestedness.

Kant argues that although aesthetic judgment is subjective, it is able to claim universal validity. His argument is approximately as follows: aesthetic judgment is private but claims universal validity. It has no concept, yet makes claims about an object. The subjective conditions for reaching aesthetic judgments are the same in everyone because they rest on the possibility of cognition per se; we can be certain of this because our aesthetic judgments are communicable, and this communicability incorporates a universal form. The aesthetic judgment employs the concept that is present in the perception of the object in a reflective rather than determinate manner. The concept is thus not employed purposefully or in accordance with a principle but reflectively. What validates these internal and reflective judgments is what Kant coins the sensus communis (common sense). This concept merges the private sensory pleasure with the general communicability of the experience of beauty. General communicability and the sensus communis thus serve as measures of an aesthetic judgment’s validity.

To determine whether our judgments are valid, we must follow certain steps. We cannot presuppose simply from our shared cognitive conditions that we sense particular objects with the same pleasure or find the same things to be beautiful, but we are able to presume that others ought to find the same objects beautiful based on the communicability of the sensation (Kant 1987). Here communicability does not require the actual presence of everyone else but the ability to represent the views of other people in our reflection.

This is not to be understood in the sense of having empathy, but as a way of thinking or state of mind in which one thinks from the standpoint of everyone else. In her lectures on Kant, Arendt focuses on the representation of everyone else to the mind in judging and notes the absence of self-interest that is required for enlarged thought. Quoting Kant she states, “'Enlarged thought’ is the result of first ‘abstracting from the limitations which contingently attach to our own judgments,’” of disregarding its “subjective private conditions …, by which so many are limited,” that is, disregarding what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting.’ (Arendt 1992, 43). In his reflections on the French revolution, Kant provides a striking example of the role of judgment by considering the moral position of the spectator.
The mode of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself publicly in this game of great revolutions, and manifests such a universal yet disinterested sympathy for the players on one side against those on the other, even at the risk that this partiality could become disadvantageous for them if discovered. Owing to its universality, this mode of thinking demonstrates a character of the human race at large and all at once; owing to its disinterestedness, a moral character of humanity, at least in its predisposition.

Kant 1963,143-144

In addition to the explicit claim that both political and aesthetic judgment are reserved for the spectator, providing him with the most important role in any historical event, Kant also identifies universality and disinterestedness as the two central qualities of judgment. The spectator must assume a disinterested stance and seek to universalise his judgment through enlarged thought.

In Kant’s and Arendt’s view, disinterestedness does not refer to a lack of interest or attention but to the absence of self-interest based on the intentions or purposes of an individual or community. What is suspended here is in a sense precisely what is suspended also in education. We suspend any desires to recreate or change the world to make it possible to come to terms with and learn about the world. The pupil assumes the role of spectator and seeks the optimal way to judge what is presented by the teacher, which requires suspending familial, social and personal inclinations and interests so that the object might be judged as objectively as possible and other views and perspectives regarding the object might be included.

Arendt essentially describes the thinking process that enables humans to consider their circumstances. ‘It is the quiet of the Now in the time-pressed, time-tossed existence of man; it is somehow, to change the metaphor, the quiet in the centre of the storm which, though totally unlike the storm, still belongs to it’ (Arendt 1981, 209). By adopting this stance, human beings assume the disinterestedness presupposed by enlarged thought that serves as the foundation for valid judgment for both Kant and Arendt.

**Bearing and thinking with strangers**

Invoking the concept of enlarged thought in education in general and inclusive education in particular might seem strange. Firstly what value might it possibly have to adopt such a naive and abstract perspective towards the complex and challenging daily life of teachers, and secondly, Kant and Arendt both claim that enlarged thought cannot be taught but is an inherent faculty shared by all
human beings (Arendt 1992, 74). If this faculty is shared and possessed by everyone, why bother with it in the first place? If it cannot be taught, what place does it have in education? The answer to the second question is simple. Although the faculty might be inherent and shared by all, this does not entail that we all make use of it, as the experiences of bullying and exclusion found in both the classroom and the adult world amply demonstrate. Secondly that the ability to think and judge is inherent and thus cannot be taught does not imply that we cannot practice it. Nor does the fact that we can never predict what the outcomes of it might be (Arendt 1992) mean that we should refuse to engage it.

Teaching and the role of the teacher becomes as Arendt emphasises to teach children about the world, and not how to live in it (Arendt 2006). The teacher represents the world to the child by placing various objects before them. This stands in stark contrast to the omnipresent learning theories that tell us to focus on learning outcomes and individual performance, and we must sever the illusive cord between teaching and expected outcomes. Teaching is representation, not facilitation of learning outcomes. We simply cannot predict what the student is to think about and learn from our teaching. But we can encourage them to practice, study and to engage subject matter and objects in collaboration with their peers, to think and to judge. In this sense thinking and judging cannot be taught, but only practiced.

With regard to the difficulty of relating philosophical and abstract concepts to educational practice, it should be noted that these concepts do not translate directly to the classroom, are not evidence-based, and they certainly do not claim to be ‘what works’. However, these philosophical concepts reflect concepts and ideas that are of central concern to educational practice. A central concern for teachers is determining how to assist children in improving their understanding and thinking and enable them to think in more enlarged ways about the world, a task, I believe, teachers are already engaged in every day. They thus seek to assist children to better live with that which is strange to them: the other, the objects, and (to return to the lyrical and abstract) the world to which they are still strangers.

To avoid the objections described above, terms such as tolerance or empathy might have been used. However, these terms imply that something must be tolerated despite its differences, or that some emotion that is otherwise inaccessible to us must be shared. Use of these terms further implies that differences are tolerated rather than valued and that we must experience the same feelings to be included or act collectively if the goal of inclusion is to have any meaning in the educational setting.
However, the issue is not merely tolerance or familiarity but bearing with strangers. Bearing with that which is different and with individuals with whom we do not choose to live but are brought together with and must live among nonetheless. Precisely this situation exists in the educational setting. We do not choose our classmates, and we do not need to love them nor even become friends. They do not belong to the private sphere of love and shared interest but to the sphere in which we engage in a joint endeavour to learn about the world. This joint endeavour does not seek to align our views but allows our various perspectives blossom in the activity of schooling.

The concept of enlarged thought orients us in a different direction and towards a different, and perhaps more difficult and more abstract vocabulary than the vocabulary of tolerance, empathy and other traditional inclusive concepts. These concepts might appear strange and abstract only because they are new to us and we have yet to discover their full meaning and potential for educational thinking and practice. They thus are incomplete and do not claim to fix what is wrong with education, let alone the world.

However, these concepts do orient researchers and teachers towards a stance in which they and their students attempt to suspend personal interest and ambition, engage the objects of the world, and accord their fellows equal value when reflecting on their beauty and value. The individual bears with their differences and allows for these differences without necessarily wanting to overcome them (Arendt 1994; Hansen 2004). Although the educational sphere confronts this inevitable challenge, it is also the sphere that is the most prepared to engage it, if we can escape the politicised vocabulary that has long determined how we address education and inclusiveness. Engaging education from an educational perspective and freeing it from a politicised vocabulary opens up new horizons from which to discuss and practice inclusiveness. Invoking Arendt’s dual responsibility to protect the natality of the child and plurality – a community in which to become visible – elucidates the relationships between schooling and the ability to incorporate others in studying and thinking about the common world.

Practicing the art of judging the objects of the world in close companionship with our fellows in an educational sphere of unproductive time might promote the use of this faculty in our children and ourselves. Although we cannot teach and determine how our children will judge what is right or wrong or what is beautiful or ugly, we can provide them with objects that require judging and create situations in which they are forced to reflect on the merits of an event or an object. Not to succeed on a test or to overcome social differences and inequalities, but to practice the art of including the
others’ perspectives in our thinking and our ability to bear with those things and individuals who are strange to us. By practicing the art of enlarged thought, we can seek to enable our children to widen the scope of the differences they can live with and among.

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1 This view is of course not isolated to inclusive education, but is present in many sociological and Marxist positions (in educational literature epitomised by Freire). In inclusive education it functions as both a critical point with regards to reactionary processes and as a normative ideal for education.

2 As highlighted by the recent conference Reimagine the School Research in Teacher Education and the Concept of Teaching at Södertörn University.

3 The views presented here are similar to thoughts expressed in Valerie Harwood’s (2010) work on imagination. However, the present paper emphasises enlarged thought and affinities with Kant, in which imagination plays a different role than the one suggested by Harwood. For Kant, imagination is a prerequisite for perception as well as thinking and judging. Further, I defend the separation between educational and political issues that Harwood (following Schutz and others) cautions against. Although further discussion of Harwood’s ideas would undoubtedly be productive, it is outside the scope of the present paper.

4 I refer here to her presentation at the 2014 ECER-conference entitled Psychopathology at School: Children’s Behaviour and Mental Disorder.

5 It is precisely this issue that Gert Biesta (2013) addresses in his recent book The Beautiful Risk of Education, in which he discusses ‘giving teaching back to education’.

6 Sevket Benhur Oral (2014) presents an enlightening exploration of how we might re-enchant the objects of the world in the paper ‘Liberating facts: Harman’s Objects and Wilber’s Holons’.

7 For example, many special needs teachers hold the view that they do actually engage in schooling even if their activities take place outside of the regular school system.

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**Literature**


