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## Comments on «Child» or «Curriculum»? On the genesis of a basic problem of «modern» education

■ Patricia and John White

«Il n'y a pas de solution parce  
qu'il n'y a pas de problème»  
Marcel Duchamp

The title of Professor Oelkers's paper speaks of a «problem». What is this problem? A key idea in the paper is that there are two opposing views of education which evoke uncompromising commitment from their adherents. These are the child-centred approach, traceable from Rousseau through to Piaget, and the transmission of culture approach, found from Herbart down to Diane Ravitch. Most of the paper seems to have to do with historical elucidation of this polarity. The «genesis» in the title appears to refer to this.

### Polarity or problem?

But if the topic of the paper is the genesis of a polarity, where does the «problem» come in? Why is a polarity a problem? Is Oelkers suggesting that there is a practical problem here, in that the uncompromisingness of the two approaches gets in the way of sensible educational policy-making? He does not say this, so this is only speculation. The difficulty for the reader, here and, as we shall show, elsewhere, is that Oelkers's gnomic remarks at crucial points in his argument leave us rudderless, without guidance. This is especially true of the title, and of the mystifying final paragraph, from which the account of the two approaches just given comes.

At least it seems reasonably clear that the bulk of the paper is intended to shed historical light on the genesis of the polarity, so let us attend to that. Oelkers spends most of his article looking at episodes in the history of American education where this polarisation is found, especially in the dispute between Hutchins and Dewey. He also traces the child-

centred strand back from Dewey to Nicholas Murray Butler.

### America or Europe?

Oelkers clearly sees his more general remarks about «two fundamental paradigms of education» as applying to European writings as well as to American. This is evident in the remark about the two traditions from Rousseau and from Herbart, mentioned above. At the same time, he explicitly states that European child-centred thinking has been *different* from American in that the latter has been grounded in notions of democracy and the public. Certainly much of Oelkers's discussion of American developments highlights issues to do with democracy. But this raises the obvious question: what light, given this difference, does the American story throw on the European? Again, the author leaves his readers in bewilderment. How are they to understand the scope of the paper? The title, and much of the material towards the end of it, lead them to expect it to be dealing with something more general than the American story. But in the last three paragraphs, where Oelkers broadens out beyond the US scene, how the latter relates to the European situation is left opaque. No doubt there is an interesting account that could be given here, but Oelkers does not provide it.

Oelkers emphasises the entrenched positions that people adopt at both ends of the child-centred and the curriculum-centred polarity. He suggests, but does not explicitly say, that this is the case west and east of the Atlantic – despite the difference in interpretation just mentioned. This raises an interesting question. How far do these entrenched positions really exist? To judge from contemporary British experience, what one tends to find is passionate commitment in some quarters to the idea that the traditional curriculum is under threat, that schools

should be focusing on «hard knowledge» and not watering it down or putting emotional development and the promotion of self-esteem in place of teaching «the disciplines». Although there are some differences among those who take this stance, it is a reasonably distinctive one. So the more conservative curriculum-centred position is not hard to identify. But there is no relatively discrete child-centred position opposed to it. What one finds is a *range* of anti-traditionalist views, including – to take just two – those pressing for a defensible set of general aims (eg. to do with democracy or personal well-being) before deciding what curricular vehicles can best meet them, as well as those which find their starting-point in the child's nature rather than in socially imposed aims. The second of these voices is, in our view, much more muted in early twenty-first century Britain than the first. The main opposition to the traditionalist position does not come, therefore, from ideas with a Rousseauist or Piagetian pedigree.

### Actual or manufactured polarity?

This casts doubt on whether Oelkers's claim of a strict dichotomy fits the facts, at least in Britain. Here the evidence is of something more subtle – not the existence of the two entrenched positions, but the existence of one, which *creates the impression* of the other. In other words, as part of their intellectual armoury, the traditionalists tend to lump together all who oppose them under the same heading. However much or however little one deviates from the curriculum status quo, one is labelled «child-centred». In conservative eyes, all their critics are ready poised to bring back the «idioties» of the 60s.

In the wings there is an interesting project waiting to be conducted about whether this kind of projection is merely a British phenomenon or whether it is found elsewhere. It would also be worthwhile finding out how such a projection has arisen in the first place. Is there any evidence, for instance, of concerted action? Is there a history to be written of its use as a deliberate strategy?<sup>1</sup>

### The American background

But Oelker's own project is about the genesis of an alleged actual conflict of ideas, not of an imagined one. His search for the genesis takes him into the history of American educational thought. If we bracket off our problems about his «problem», and concentrate wholly now on the American argument, how valuable a contribution is it to scholarship in this field? We are not experts in this area, so it is up to others to judge. Much of the Hutchins-Dewey material is well-known, even to outsiders like ourselves. We did not know Nicholas Murray Butler, whom Oelkers implies has been unduly neglected and whose ideas are prominent in this paper. Does what Oelkers writes about these, especially as it looks as if they may predate Dewey's, break new ground? We cannot say; but we did feel that it would have been helpful to provide more context here. How do Butler's and Dewey's ideas fit into a wider picture of progressive thinking in turn of the century America? Were they pioneers? Or followers of a trend already under way?

Finally, it is not always easy to grasp the thread of the paper because particular passages sometimes seem to be ill-connected, logically, with those around them. This comes out especially in the section on Butler's and Wallas's views on public opinion. The factual material on this is not joined up to the main argument. It might not take much to do so. Perhaps the thought is that pupils need to be able to critically assess public opinion, not to be driven by it, if they are to become democratic citizens. Here, as in some other places, a potentially interesting idea remains, for lack of clarity and coherent connection to the whole argument, beyond the reader's grasp.

In sum, then, it is impossible to assess the overall thesis because it is hard to determine its precise character and scope. The paper bristles with suggestive comments, but in the absence of careful supporting and surrounding argument, these can do no more than tantalise.

1 In the British case, might it go back at least to the concerted «Black Paper» defences of a traditional curriculum in the late 1960s and 1970s?

# Ontology, Epistemology, Cosmology: A Rhizomatic Reading of History of Education in the USA

• Bernadette Baker

«Progressive education cannot place its trust in a child-centered school»  
George Counts, 1932, p. 10

## Introduction

Oelker's analysis of «the opposites of «child» or «curriculum»» where the child group equals progressives and the curriculum group equals conservatives posits that hidden behind the dualism «are two fundamental paradigms of education that cannot be reduced, but also cannot be avoided. The one paradigm starts from the premise that the child's nature develops and that the development must be supported; the other sees education as cultural authority that is demanding and does not make it unimportant what materials are used for learning.» I will elucidate here unique ways in which to substantiate the former position: that such a binary cannot be reduced. I will suggest further that quite possibly it cannot even be formed, offering as a counterpoint how various histories of education in the United States make any analysis in terms of generalized fundamental binaries and continuity of problematics risky if not inoperable.

In doing so, I present what Deleuze and Guattari (1986/2003) describe as a rhizomatic reading, one in which principles of *connection and heterogeneity*, *multiplicity*, and *asignifying rupture* implicitly operate through the analysis in deliberately uneven and subtle ways. While it is impossible if not antithetical to condense the interdisciplinary work that constitutes Deleuzian and Guattarian philosophy, especially if that effort is misunderstood as plotting points and fixing orders in advance, some sense of their textual play can be introduced. Deleuze and Guattari argue against Freudian psychoanalytics and structural linguistics. They pit the image of an erratic rhizome against «arborescent thought» which is a style of analysis that draws everything back to the root and trunk of a single tree. They elaborate four principles of a rhizomatic reading. First, *principles of connection and heterogeneity* refer to how «any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.» Connectivity is not oppositional to heterogeneity. Rather, they are interdependent: «A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social

struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages» (p. 7). I will suggest here that Oelker's analysis attempts to establish linguistic universals (child/curriculum and American), which has the effect of fixing an order where perhaps none exists or conversely where many others exist. Second, the *principle of multiplicity* refers to a substantive (a shift from the word *multiple* to *multiplicity* is crucial here): «Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject ... A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature» (p. 8). The determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions of the history of education in the USA that I put in connectivity with each other below thus shifts «the» history of education into a multiplicity that changes rather than resolves what is seen as American. Last, the *principle of asignifying rupture* is formulated «against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on a new line» (p. 9). Oelker's analysis comes closest to this in suggesting ways in which fault lines reappear in different garb across the twentieth century. However, the reterritorial rather than deterritorial line of flight is the focus of his analysis. As such, both the leakiness and reversibility of perceived structures is absented from the commentary: «Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in a rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of good and bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that reterritory everything ... Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed» (p. 9f.). The rhizomatic reading below, then, will indicate how the renewal of categories of progressive and conservative in ed-

educational debates in the US does not simply place them in line with left/right or child/curriculum dualisms, respectively. Rather, such categories can be understood in the mode of asignifying ruptures, not just for what they have been thought to encamp but for what leaks. That is, if the Marxist scholar George Counts can describe child-centered education as conservative by 1932, then both lines of segmentarity (strata, territory, organizations) and lines of deterritorialization (lines of flight) need to be considered in an analysis of an educational field and its shifting plateaus.

### Scrambling the Genealogical Tree: Transversing History of Education in the USA

«Western» cosmologies from the late-1700s are marked by the presumption, difficulty, and leakiness of a subject/environment scission (Baker 2005; Luhmann 1985/1995). The scission upholds the possibility for sciences of governance and welfare, including the educational field's concern with an interior/exterior problematic that sustains the turn to experimental methods in the late nineteenth century (Baker 2001). In Ariès (1961/1962), Heidegger (1962, 1977), and Foucault (1966/1994), the attempted separation of Man from universal systems of correspondence constitutes in part the modern. «Cosmologies of personhood» become possible, morality becomes grounded in/as the subject's «worldview,» and the subject becomes honored with a discreteness never before enjoyed and a porousness both required and feared.

Philosophically, Oelkers analysis falls within the debates still emanating around such cosmological shifts. It plays within a still-perturbating Kantian ambiguity, broadly put «do categories generate perceptions and experiences or do perceptions and experiences generate categories?» At least since Kant's troubling of distinctions between subject and object, the line between ontology and epistemology has been contested. In Oelkers' analysis the perturbation is governed: the developing child (ontology) and curriculum-as-cultural-authority (epistemology) structure the historiography and frame the claim to fundamentality, continuity, camp-formation, and the inadequacy of attempted resolutions across the twentieth century.

In *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (1986/2004) Kliebard contests the existence of a progressive education movement, pointing to the inappropriateness of labeling an array of contradictory efforts as a discrete entity. From 1893 to 1958 he identifies humanism, developmentalism, social efficiency, scientific management, social meliorism, social reconstructionism, home-project method, experiential education, and life adjustment as the key reform movements, arguing they represented the efforts of those in often-oppositional interest groups. This led Kliebard to suggest: «It was not just the word progressive that I thought was in-

appropriate but the implication that something deserving a single name existed and that something could be identified and defined if only we tried» (p. xi).

In *Black Curriculum Orientations: a Preliminary Inquiry* William Watkins (1994) argues that there has been the American curriculum and there has been the Black curriculum. Watkins' periodization is from slavery to the 1990s. His analysis is not dedicated toward finding Kliebardian categories in Black scholarship or with divisions between child and curriculum or scientific versus classical approaches. He blurs onto-epistemological lines by labeling reform movements in relation to a Black/American binary, naming tempero-spatially overlapping approaches: functionalism, accommodationism, liberal education orientation, Black Nationalist orientations (including Pan-Africanists, culturalists, and separatists), Afrocentrism, and reconstructionism. What constitutes child, curriculum, or progressive in relation to such movements thus hinges on the specificity of the racial philosophy. Where Kliebard's historiography is framed implicitly around a sociology of interest groups and within a struggle-submission framework, Watkins rewrites history of education overtly around race and the racialization of ideology.

In *Common, Delinquent, and Special* John Richardson (1999) argues that the formation of public schooling in the United States is indebted to the prior institutional sequencing that shaped what «the public» meant. He documents as a pattern across states first, the building of asylums in the 1820s, followed by Schools for the Deaf and the Blind, followed by reform schools (for juvenile delinquents) and then the enactment of compulsory public school laws once the public had been «purified» of the delinquent and the special. Compulsory attendance laws, beginning in 1852 in Massachusetts and in place in all existing states by 1918, were more about exclusion than inclusion, about defining the conditions of exemption (bad behavior and disability) even moreso than with compelling attendance. It was only once teachers were forced to encounter children who were compelled to attend that reform movements, curriculum theory, ability tracking, and special education initiatives proliferated.

Last, in *Understanding Curriculum* Pinar et al (1995) argue that from the *Yale Report* of 1828 to the mid-1990s the major fulcrum has been a shift from scientific management and curriculum-as-institutional-text to the Reconceptualization of the 1970s – curriculum-as-political-text. This shift has troubled how one understands curriculum. Understanding curriculum, child, or any noun as «text» relocates the focus from a consideration of agentive subjects to *subjectivities* that are not presumed internal, psychological, fixed, or separate from a piece of paper on which a course of study might be written. This is not simplistically a substitution of culture for nature or a move from instruction to

construction in the explanation, but the opening of a curriculum studies field to discourse networks – analyses that move beyond what Niklas Luhmann (1985/1995) calls «tribal genealogies of the masters.» Field-events are not under this view necessarily reducible to writings in the field. Even if such writings are the singular focus, wider politics of text shift the inscription: in the US, child-centered for Dewey (1902), Rice (1893), and Hall (1901) might have meant progressive; for George Counts (1932) it meant conservative; for Pickens (1968) it meant eugenicist, and for Cannella (1997) it meant injustice.

The goal of this rhizomatic presentation of counterpoints is this: histories of American or European education are not simply prior to their forms. The above indicates how those forms can take shape differently through contemporaneous, shifting, and dispersed epistemes, segmentarity, and lines of flight that make any claim to fundamentals across time difficult to secure. How far back you want to go (the differential periodization of «America's» messy beginnings, whether to start with «European» colonization of «Africa,» whether to start with Alexander the Great – Columbus' inspiration, whether to start with reservations, slavery, war?), how you want to understand references to democracy at the turn of the twentieth century (as political philosophy, as eugenic philosophy, as insecure nationalism?), where you place Johann Herbart (as one of John Dewey's inspirations or as the beginning of a Diane Ravitch line?), what progress is progress toward in different periods (toward racial cleansing, disability sterilization, the right to vote?) destabilizes the permanency of categories of child and curriculum, ontology and epistemology, of progressive and conservative.

It is not that no swings have been allowed or that a declaration of deeply held convictions is required in advance but rather a matter of how swings, strategies, and convictions become recognizable in the «first» place. Thus, if an appeal to the uniquely American is to be claimed via a special inscription of democracy amid a child/curriculum binary that emerges at the turn of the twentieth cen-

tury, then paradoxically that special inscription of democracy might be more productively understood in rhizomatic mode – not as a unique American orientation toward the gaining of assent but as the continuous organization of dissent, including dissent around what constitutes a fundamental binary, a continuity, a change, and a democratic society.

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# Comments on Jürgen Oelkers' «Child» or «Curriculum»

■ Barry M. Franklin/Carla C. Johnson

Professor Oelkers is certainly correct in identifying the conflict between the child and the curriculum as a central motif of twentieth century American educational theory and practice. We have recently used this very conflict as an interpretive framework for writing what we have called a social history of the American school curriculum since 1950 (Franklin/Johnson, forthcoming). On one side of this dispute, as we see it, have been those individuals and groups that have defended the traditional academic disciplines as the principal organizing element of the school program. And pitted against them have been other individuals and groups that have called for its modification and even replacement by any of a number of other organizing elements that they deemed more functional in the day-to-day lives of children. Some of these opponents argued for the integration of the traditional academic disciplines into broader units comprising a number of what were once separate fields of study. Others favored a curriculum that was not composed of academic subjects but rather of instructional units derived from the personal problems of youth, social problems in the larger society, key experiences in the lives of young people, and virtually anything else that was thought to be appealing and interesting to children.

We call our narrative a social history because it is in the fashion of that discipline, at least as it has developed in the US, a history from the «bottom-up» (Sterns 1993, p. 242). In this regard, our account represents something of a departure from what has become a more or less prevailing methodology among those who write curriculum history in the US. Most contemporary accounts of the development of the American curriculum fall into the realm of intellectual history and tell the story of what prominent and not so prominent thinkers have advocated that the schools should teach (Franklin 1986; Kliebard 2004; Ravitch 2000). Oelkers' essay represents a good example of that tradition. We, on the other hand, have focused our story on schools and classrooms and how recommendations for what should be taught have played themselves out in actual practice.

In our essay, we pick up this conflict between the child and the curriculum during the 1950s. Our starting point is the movement for life adjustment education, which represents an effort following the end of World War II to make childhood needs the organizing element for the course of study. We continue with a consideration of the discipline-cente-

red reforms of the 1960s that sought to reverse this trend by returning the academic disciplines to the central role they once played in organizing the curriculum and then follow that battle for the next forty or so years.

We clearly do not have space in this short commentary to develop our entire argument. What we will do, however, is jump to the immediate present and suggest to you how this conflict has played itself out in contemporary school practice in the US. It is our view that this dispute has been resolved, albeit not in the way that we might like it to be settled, but settled nonetheless. What has brought about its cessation has been the arrival on the American scene somewhere after 1983 and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983) of an accountability regime. During those years virtually every American state put in place explicit content standards to define what the schools should teach. And in 2001, the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the central education initiative of George W. Bush, has instituted such mechanisms as mandatory student testing and penalties for low performance to ensure that such teaching actually takes place (US Department of Education 2005).

Looking at the fifty or so year period that our essay explores, it is immediately evident, we think, that the debate over the curriculum has changed. The conflict between the child and the curriculum that was so prominent during the 1950s and 1960s has virtually disappeared from current discussions of educational reform. Somewhere between the publication of *A Nation at Risk* and the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the issue of what the school should teach, at least among educators, politicians, and ordinary citizens, has taken something of a back seat to a concern with outcomes and accountability. In some ways, the controversy surrounding *A Nation at Risk* represents the last serious debate that we in America have had about the content and organization of the curriculum. With the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the important questions are not about curriculum content but about standards.

Writing in 1992, the political theorist Francis Fukuyama described what he saw as the triumph of liberal democracy over competing ideologies of governing as constituting the «end of history» (1992, p. xi). By this he meant that liberal democracy had defeated its rivals and had become the final stage in the evolution of our thinking about government. In a sense, it may be that we have reached a point in time that we may describe as the end of curricu-

lum. It is not the case that no one talks about curriculum content as the recent debate over intelligent design within the biological sciences makes clear. Rather, it seems that the almost taken-for-granted acceptance of standards defined in terms of separate subjects as the starting point for curriculum development has given discipline-centered reform, at least for the moment something of a victory. In saying this, however, it is important to note that the disciplines themselves at least within the schools have been transformed over time. What passes for academic disciplines in today's schools are largely collections of factual knowledge and basic skills that mimic the traditional disciplines of knowledge but lack their complexity, richness, and nuance.

How this all will turn out is difficult to say. The extent of popular and professional dissatisfaction with *No Child Left Behind*, the resistance of state and local educational authorities in fulfilling its mandates, and the backtracking of the Federal government in enforcing it may offer an opening for reasserting the important and contentious issues of how the curriculum should be organized and what the schools should teach. Yet for the moment, it ap-

pears that the conflict that Oelkers so ably describes is, at least in the US, a debate that has ceased to exist.

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## What's in a Word? Response to Professor Oelkers on «Contradiction»

■ Lynda Stone

In the US English-speaking context, someone is told something new. Depending on the new content, the person responds, «interesting». Interesting gossip, interesting everyday fact, interesting historical and philosophical question. Within each particular discursive context and experiential situation, the word «interesting» conveys varying meaning. There is something in a word.

I am honored to respond to Professor Oelkers' very «interesting» paper. As the title indicates, the task set by the editor concerns a different word, indeed a family set of terms organized around «contradiction». His question is this: Is there really a contradiction between the child and the curriculum (c and c) in schooling, teaching, and learning either in theory and/or practice and is its identification as a problem based in culture?<sup>1</sup>

In answer I turn to the relationship based in two domains of interest to me—and I hope to Oelkers and readers. These are rhetoric and history and my agreements and disagreements with Oelkers over their usage answers the title question. To my mind they are related to culture but it is not directly addressed.

#### Introduction

Oelkers' essay considers historically the modern dichotomy of the child or the curriculum, the two opposing foci of what have been named progressive and traditional education. Beginning from classical roots, one «sees education as cultural authority ... [by emphasizing, LS] materials for learning ... [subject matters, curriculum, LS];» it is traditional. The other is progressive that «starts from the premise that the child's nature develops, ... development that must be supported ... [by emphasizing the individual, LS]». The dualism, in Dewey's term, has received much attention from educational theorists and it surely has been strongly implicated in educational practice. Oelkers' overall contribution to discussion of this «unresolved problem,» in which camps typically «[demand] declaration of belief,» is to locate it in views of democracy and to remind, for me, of the centrality of Dewey (see Phillips 1998). With his specific analyses I am in agreement and I learned new sources and ideas from significant figures.

Oelkers and I part company, however, on a key issue. This arises in his concluding statement. He writes, «unfortunately, the situation does not allow for swing positions .... Dewey's hope in 1938 that the practical consequences would decide is not a



great help, *for it is the rhetoric, and not the practice, that is of prime importance for the problem*» (emphasis, LS). As indicated above, in this response I take up our differences over rhetoric and its history—and thus our visions of history—to assert the opposite. At the close, I offer a contemporary theoretical relationship of c and c in a US context that I believe comes out of and says something about practice. My new term for the relationship is «embedded;» it encapsulates my answer to the question «What’s in a word?»

**Oelkers’s Analyses**

Oelkers brings together key players over the c and c division across the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his assessment, primarily from the American context, included are Butler, Young, Cooley, Tufts and most important, Hutchins and Dewey and their long-standing debate. Oelkers’ premise is that in spite of attempts to bring the two poles together somehow, «the new education was a stance *against* the old school ... [indicating a strict rhetorical dualism, LS]». Referring specifically to the relationship of democracy and education, as Oelkers insightfully offers, Dewey and Hutchins agreed with Butler that education for «intelligent citizenship» was central in a democracy, but they differed significantly in what constitutes one, what defines this citizenship, and how to achieve both. An important additional contribution is Oelkers’ situating moments of relevant educational thought primarily in ethics. Significantly I see this contrasting with the overwhelmingly contemporary emphasis in schooling on knowledge formation.

**A Family of Terms**

Every text, and this includes philosophies and histories, entail a rhetoric (see Stone 1997). The rhetorical structure of histories, including intellectual histories, is traditionally narrative or expressive; related are elements of culture, language, and intellectual connections. Rhetoric manifests a general «picture» from the text established through linguistic form and content. Specific content concerns words that are used. Related too, I believe, is

rhetorical change including meanings in context that change over time. They are historicized.

In his essay, Oelkers recognizes the role of rhetorical structure in his own use of a set of terms and in presentation of «arguments». From him, rhetorical structure supports the general thesis of «or» or contradiction relative to the two education traditions. As indicated, from the outset, «new education» is set up against «the old school» with the use of words such as «against/aimed against,» «break,» «but,» «compare,» «conflict,» «critical attitude toward,» «contrast,» even «prove ... on the basis of consequences.» Proof is substantiated through citation of a series of textually-based statements. By the judgment, authority for the thesis leads to his judgment regarding the «dualistic» or «oppositional» relationship and the primary importance he assigns to rhetoric itself. It is significant that in his position, the term «contradiction» is not used. One notes too that Oelkers’ form is relatively straightforward, allowing for the argument and substantiation to carry itself; biographical footnotes add authority.

In contrast, my own rhetorical structure is divided into sections and the point of this section set out through the device (see bottom of this page).

The strategy is to quickly peruse this family of words describing relationships, primarily of two parts. A quick first conclusion is that many terms are related—and there surely are others than those included here. Each term carries its own historic and contemporary usage and much understanding of texts depends on specifics. More thoughtfully is to consider the contexts out of which Oelkers and I write, our cultural differences, and especially our historical and cultural differences from writers of the past. Now a central task of interpretation becomes quite complex. One way of working through this complexity occurs in consideration of our two different historical tasks.

**Historicization and No Child Left Behind**

Oelkers and I differ in our approach to history; the basis for our difference is how we take «historicism.» I think neither of us requires resolution of these philosophical distinctions.

	A Family of Relationships Two Camps with Historical Attempts at «Contradiction Resolution»	
Differentiation	Maintenance of Status Quo	Integration
Or Contradiction Dualism Opposition Dissensus Plurality	Two Poles Compromise New Philosophy Interaction, Continuity Pendulum Swings Embeddedness	And Synthesis Monism Complement Consensus Unity

To begin, his position is what I will term «weak hermeneutical historicist,» first because it is largely implicit. Two statements are significant, one from the article's beginning that the c and c opposition «continues and is fundamental right up into today's discussions;» the other near the conclusion that names «lines of thinking ... [up] to today». Other indicators continue the rhetorical analysis just presented that writers of old had their own specific contexts. Oelkers is a narrative, intellectual historian who, ironically, writes about difference within time but not across time. He knows implicitly that history is written from the present (with continuity from the past), and makes only textualist claims. Focusing on the past, he utilizes the historical records available to make no claims about educational practice.

My own position is explicit and strongly historicist and I will make some claims about practice since I assert writing from the present. Reference for what I take to be historicism is ably stated by literary theorist Paul Hamilton and worth quoting at length: «Historicism is concerned to situate any statement—philosophical, historical, aesthetic or whatever—in its historical context. Second, it typically doubles back on itself to explore the extent to which any historical enterprise inevitably reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written ... It is suspicious of the stories the past tells on itself; ... it is suspicious of its own partisanship» (Hamilton 2003, p. 3).

The strong historicist recognizes and keeps separate different interpretative communities (see p. 186) and always asks a question of change, indeed in a Foucauldian idiom as «breaks and ruptures» (see also Hacking 2003). Uniqueness and skepticism are key. My question is thus to learn from Oelkers about past interpretations of «contradiction» but to look for their separation from today. To separate enables one to look differently at present educational practice. I note influences from Dewey on my position. A first is his significant statement that «new times require new philosophy» (Dewey 1920). A second is Dewey's own recognition that dualisms relate to human action. In a relatively recent account of the issue of this response, American philosopher of education, Denis C. Phillips writes, «for Dewey, our thoughts and the dualisms that we set up, really matter, and their worth can be judged by the quality of the behavior to which they lead» (Phillips 1998, p. 414). Finally Nel Noddings, to whom Oelkers refers, writes about the present moment in «pendulum swings» between traditional and progressive schools and the forms of caring typically within them (Noddings 2005, p. xivf.). I want to say a bit more about this moment before concluding.

Noddings reminds me that other formulations of the relationship between traditional and progressive schools are possible, besides those adversarial or «interactionist» (Dewey 1938). My own historicist position asks that I look carefully to see what is oc-

curing in the US in the present *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). This is federal legislation requiring standardized accountability principally through student testing. Here, as a final point, is my thesis on empirical/practical presence: A viable dualism of c and c no longer seems active. Rather almost any child activity in classrooms is merely in service of the curriculum: the relationship is embedded and also I believe invidious. Proof of the harm being done to students, teachers, families, schools, communities and the nation are beyond this response but one thing seems clear. A rise in test scores still means little in terms of quality educational and social life.

## Conclusion

As its title attests, Oelkers' very interesting paper raises a basic problem for modern education, the historically dualistic presence of two spirits of schooling, traditional and progressive. My response focuses on Oelkers' own «writing» of history and I learned much from interpreting his rhetorical and historicist stances. In concert and in partial answer to the editor, neither of us uses the word «contradiction»—and this may have historicist reasons too. Neither of us sees our historical and philosophical stances as needing to resolve an opposition; in theory neither of us for instance posits a new Hegelian/Marxist synthesis. In theory also, from our differing rhetorical stances and visions of history, our writings indicate that we disagree implicitly over whether there is a dualism of rhetoric/philosophy and empirical activity/practice understood both historically and in the present. We also do on what history does: my position is that «histories of the present» do and can relate to everyday action and all history can be viewed with attention to educational practice as long as skepticism, differences and discontinuity are strongly considered. In conclusion, that a changing conception of the relationship of the child and/or the curriculum in schooling continues seems virtually inevitable. The conversation continues.

1 Thanks to Daniel Tröhler for the invitation and the provocative question.

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# «Overcoming Contradictions?» a response to Jürgen Oelkers

■ Wendy Kohli

In getting at the dilemma of the child and the curriculum, Jürgen Oelkers offers us a historical analysis of what he calls «a basic problem of «modern» education.» He has constructed that modern problem to be the opposition between two paradigms: construction and instruction. Construction is co-terminus with child-centered pedagogy and the privileging of child development. Instruction is affiliated with the commitment to subject matter and the cultural authority particular subjects have to shape the curriculum.

Oelkers employs history to analyze the intellectual developments that allowed for the emergence of child-centered pedagogy. As he sees it, the formative factors are the kindergarten movement and the creation of the field of child psychology. Dewey's progressive education *is made possible* by these developments since kindergarten created the «active child» necessary for Dewey's pedagogy and child psychology validated the benefits of the active, «self-organizing child whose ... education must be intelligently directed».

To address the questions Oelkers poses, I will (re-)turn to Dewey to see how he grapples with the dichotomy that vexes Oelkers. Oelkers correctly cites Dewey's appeal to avoid either/ors in his 1938 book *Experience and Education*. In fairness to Dewey, however, it would have been useful for Oelkers to explore more systematically the structure/content of that book to show that Dewey was working (however un-satisfactorily) to address the dualism. In fact, the meta-point of that book was to show the flaws in both progressive and traditional education that resulted from a dichotomous understanding of education and the educative experience.

Just as Oelkers insists that this dualism still informs modern educational policy and practice today, Dewey's earlier text, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902/1990), addressed the contradiction as it was expressed in the contemporary educational and political debates of his time. Dewey noted the emergence of «sects» or «schools of opinion,» with «each select[ing] that set of conditions that appeals to it» (p. 182). As a result, «we get the case of the child vs. the curriculum» (p. 183). Dewey sees this persistent opposition informing «all other divisions of pedagogic opinion» (ibid.).

Revealing his training in Hegelian dialectics, Dewey asserts that these apparently opposing conditions «are necessarily related to each other in the educative process, since this is precisely one of interaction and adjustment» (p. 188). He expands on

this when he suggests we solve the conflict by reframing or reinterpreting our concepts: «Abandon the notion of subject-matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child's experience; cease thinking of the child's experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital; and we realize that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process» (p. 189).

Dewey goes on to reinforce his theory of interaction and reconstruction when he says, «Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies» (ibid.).

Yet, even with this defense of Dewey's dialectical attempt to overcome dualisms, I understand Oelkers' complaint against him. The *rhetorical power* of this dichotomy (child / curriculum) is not subverted by Dewey's appeal to interaction and reconstruction, or through practice. What theoretical move might help subvert the effective rhetorical power of this dichotomy?

A turn to post-structuralism may offer a different approach to the problem. As Michael Peters points out, «Deleuze's Nietzschean critique of the Hegelian dialectic is one of the major keys to understanding French poststructuralism and serves as a basis and starting point for an alternative radical theorizing» (Peters 1996, p. 14). Although much of the poststructuralist critique of the dialectic focuses on «the philosophy of the subject» (p. 21), we can see its relevance for discourse as well. Peters reminds us that Lyotard and those building on his thought, deconstruct Hegel's commitment to a dialectical process that «assumes that the end of communication is consensus» (p. 37). For these poststructuralist critics, «consensus is not the goal of communication, but rather its death. Discourse can be kept alive once it is seen that disagreement, paralogy, is its end. Disagreement as the end of communication allows a transversing of the Hegelian dialectic that succeeds in escaping its recuperative moment» (p. 37). It seems to me that Dewey's commitment to such a «recuperative moment» through educational practice actually reinforces or reinscribes the dualisms he is trying to overcome.

Poststructuralist thought is necessary for disrupting the taken-for-granted assumptions of modernity and of modern educational theory. For example, Dewey's embeddedness in a liberal-humanist project – animated by faith in «progress» – and his uncri-

tical acceptance and privileging of the «active child» as a unitary, rational, autonomous «self» are prime candidates for decentering. Accompanying this decentering is the disruption of the Cartesian legacy of dualisms, dichotomies.

By noting the multiple and contradictory understandings of «the active child», and also how power circulates in and through discourse, we can re-conceptualize the educational «problematic» Oelkers (re)presents through «the child and the curriculum.» I think of Valerie Walkerdine's groundbreaking work where she offered us a fresh perspective on Dewey's construction of progressive education and child-centered pedagogy (1990). She maintains that no longer are these innocent, unproblematic, «libe-

rating» discourses. By taking gender and power into account, Walkerdine helps us see the contradictions and complexities inherent in both «the child» and «the curriculum» and, perhaps the problems with how the dilemma is constructed from the start.

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## Progressive Chimeras

■ James G. Ladwig

Jürgen Oelkers historical commentary on the question of the «child or curriculum» provides an interesting opening to consider what he has named as one of the fundamental tensions in «modern» understandings of education. On the one hand, not surprisingly, there are many points of shared experience between the debates Oelkers describes and those that can occasionally be heard here in Australia. On the other hand, the power and characterization attributed to the ostensible «two fundamental paradigms of education» Oelkers discusses, from this point of view, seems more of an exported American over-simplification than a description of educational theories, common understanding or current educational practices. While it is possible to find individual Australian educational commentators who might also want to make such a tidy differentiation, and there are some politicians who likewise are wont to frame things in clear dichotomies, that would be about the end of the easy connections. In what follows I will try to explain how it is that looking for a clear distinction between «the child and the curriculum» seems rather chimerical from this point of view. In the process I will outline several reasons such a distinction does not hold much water in Australia and hopefully in the process raise some questions that might be of use for others to question the utility of the analysis in their own contexts.

In his seminal historical analysis of the history of American curriculum, Herbert Kliebard (1986) pointed out three fundamentally important points about the work of John Dewey. First, it is clearly mistaken to take Dewey as representing either side of any of the then current educational and philosophical debates upon which he built his own theories. Dewey repeatedly and continually synthesized opposing arguments into new forms and drew

them into new concepts. Second, it is really crucial to draw a very strong distinction between Dewey's work and *progressive education's* use of Dewey's work and / or his name. And third, very little of what Dewey theorized was ever «implemented» without augmentation in any school in the US (even the *Dewey School*). These points can serve as point of departure for my concerns below.

Consider this last point first. If I were to observe the pedagogical and curricular practices in just about any Australian classroom and school, I would undoubtedly see some gesture toward pedagogy which intends to promote the active learning of students. As one who studies pedagogical reform empirically, if asked I could actually provide an estimate of the degree to which this is true, give specific definitions and instrumentation. I could simultaneously point out that this aspect of Australian school life is but one amongst many, including what many would consider theoretical opposites. Classrooms and schools are not places of educational purity. Each classroom is an amalgamation of many different sets of ideas about children and curriculum, and it really would be very rare to find one that was identifiably associated with either side of Oelkers' dichotomy.

The question here is how to make sense of the daily realities of classrooms, given the dichotomy that is said to be fundamental to modern education. From one historical view, under the assumption that there was a time when things were different, the historical question might be, «from where did this little portion of active learning' come?» If this were one's interest, the answer would assuredly be much more complicated than saying active learning can be found in Australian schools because progressive education had an impact. There are many historical sources of this little bit of pedagogical practice, some of which have little to nothing to do with any planned or intended progressivism.

Even if we narrow the view and attempted to explain the reality only in terms of the intentional psychology of the teacher, the search for a source of active learning practices would be equally complicated as Australian teachers have a plethora of theoretical framings for understanding how and why they do what they do (although many teachers would not want to be known to have a theory). Further, even if we wanted to assign particular practices with a known curriculum reform which itself might be seen as reflecting one side of the «child-curriculum» dichotomy, we would still not find easy resolution to our search, as the logic of curriculum implementation almost always results in at least as much local re-contextualising as it does implementing. So it is that from a quintessentially Australian concern for the practical, Oelkers analysis seems better on paper than it does when applied to real classrooms.

If it isn't useful for describing daily experiences in schools, though, the next question would be (following Kliebard's second point) doesn't the child-curriculum analysis hold as a way of characterising larger paradigms of thought in educational debates in Australia? That is, separate from the question of how to understand Dewey's (or any individual's) role in the development of the overall paradigm Oelkers identifies, does the general characterisation of this paradigm carry validity more broadly? Here too, however, Australia's history of educational thought is decidedly blurry.

As a conglomeration of, *inter alia*, colonial administration, various and several religious appeals, industrial unionism, and multicultural politics, just to name a few points of reference, scholars who have attempted to portray larger paradigms of educational thought in Australia are, in my experience, almost immediately beset with the exceptions. While there may have been historical moments of seeming acceptance of grand historical narratives about Australian education, none of those historical moments have been within my life as a scholar. Even as the high tide of progressivism was washing over the US and the UK in the 1960s and 1970s, there were equally vocal direct criticisms of that progressivism from both a more radical left and a decidedly unchanging right. All of these voices are alive and well in the current debates on Australian education and Dewey's name is often used as a point of criticism from all sides.

Part of the ubiquity of references to progressivism in Australia relates to its status as something of a convenient fiction. Very few of the references to Dewey, for example, make any clear reference to something he actually wrote or said at all. For example, there have been recent public references to Dewey from Australian politicians who clearly had pulled their «knowledge» from a US-based conservative website that cites *Democracy and Education* as number five on a list of the *Ten Most Harmful Books of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. No doubt simi-

larly uninformed positions abound around the world. What these odd references do for scholars, however, is highlight an asymmetry in a binary view. From the perspective of those who construct «progressivism» or «Dewey» as a negative, there might seem to be a unified child-centred progressive paradigm; but, from the perspective of anyone who examines what has actually been said or advocated or practiced, that unity appears clearly as the chimerical construction of convenient polemics.

And, in response to Kliebard's first point, what can we say of the role of Dewey's work and ideas? Here I would simply point out that while Oelkers begins with an acknowledgement that Dewey did not see any valid conflict between the child and curriculum, Oelkers goes on to simply construct that conflict with a number of easy sleights of hand. On the one hand, where Hutchins is presented as emblematic of opposition to child-centred curriculum, it is forgotten that the debate between Hutchins and Dewey was primarily about universities and the structure of faculties, departments of curriculum at the tertiary level. Moving the application of Dewey's work in infants and primary schools to his forays into debating university level study without delving in the substantial shifts in Dewey's own position is more than a little too generalised. In his later works with Tufts in the revised 1932 edition of their *Ethics*, it is very clear that Dewey and Tufts held substantially differing ethical principles to be called upon when discussing public schools as opposed to the functions of universities (see especially part III). More substantively, what is perhaps the interesting important point of Hutchins' argument – that there is a need to recognise and build upon disciplinary knowledge and to use that knowledge is a pivotal common ground – is actually not disputed by Dewey. While Dewey had serious, and in my view warranted, concerns about how Hutchins thought this to be feasible and applicable, the idea of disciplined knowledge structures serving as the building blocks of a common democratic dialogue isn't in itself contrary to Dewey's «pedagogic creed.» The failure to realise this lies with those who, like Hutchins, continue to look for easy solutions.

Taking all these points together, I should note that there have been several school and tertiary reform initiatives in Australia that have attempted to embrace and bring together both sides of the split Oelkers analyses. From the amalgamations in the tertiary sector in the late 1980s, to attempts to construct a national curriculum framework for the school sector, to models of pedagogical reform, and even to a current debate about the role of phonics in early literacy, no one side of the debates surrounding these reforms would actually fit easily into either side of the «child-curriculum» split. There are several reasons for this, not least of which is that the debates in Australia tend to find analytical frameworks that are homologous to the institutional politics at hand. It is all too easy, for example,

to see the current phonics debate in Australian politics to be symptomatic of party politics that are split between the national and state level governments – especially since the curriculum of the largest state openly synthesises both sides of the ostensible literacy debate. Perhaps this is similar to other national contexts, just as it was in the United States in which I grew up.

What this means for scholars attempting to understand these debates is that it is crucial we heed warnings about taking the terms of debates at face value. While such warnings are relatively easy to find, perhaps it is appropriate here to quote Dewey and Tufts directly. In their 1932 discussion of conflict (in the revised *Ethics*), Dewey and Tufts begin by noting how readily possible it is to see many conflicts as aspects of an underlying tension between «the social» and «the individual» and go on to point out that naming conflict in such simple terms results in naming «*false statements of the nature of the problems at issue*». «What do exist,» Dewey and Tufts continued, «are conflicts between *some* individuals and *some* arrangements in social life» (Dewey/Tufts 1932, p. 358). The reason for pointing to this particular discussion of Dewey and Tufts is

more direct than may yet be evident. While naming dichotomies was surely an analytical technique put to great advantage by Dewey, it is his next moves that are important. In this case, while pointing to a need to analyse conflicts in historical and social specificity, Dewey and Tufts also drew a strong limit on just what a general theory of the relationship between the individual and the social could offer. In their words: «*No general theory about the individual and the social can settle conflicts or even point out the way in which they should be resolved*» (ibid., p. 359). So too, I would suggest about any general theory of the place of the ostensible «child – curriculum» conflict in education. If there is a debate being held in these terms, it is probably not only about whatever the terms denote. And if we are to assist in finding some fruitful resolution to these debates, I would suggest a more pragmatic approach might be warranted.

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# Die «Lehrerpersönlichkeit».

Nachgereichte Diskussionsbeiträge

**(Red.) Die in der letzten Nummer der *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Historiographie* geführte Diskussion über die Vorstellung und das Desiderat von Lehrkräften als unterscheidbare «Persönlichkeiten» hat gezeigt, wie die diskutierte These spezifisch der deutschen Tradition entspringt, die es schwer hat, semantisch Anschluss zu finden.**

**Andererseits ist das Phänomen gleichwohl international. Im Folgenden veröffentlichen wir einen italienischen Kommentar zur These von Sylvia Bürkler, Moritz Rosenmund und Christoph Schmid, sodann eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Kommentar von Charles Magnin sowie seine Replik auf diese Kritik.**

## The problem of teachers' personality: a few brief considerations

■ Romina Nesti

The subject and the questions raised by Sylvia Bürkler, Moritz Rosenmund and Christoph Schmid are extremely important and interesting and have urged on us the importance of the problem of teachers' personality and the debate which, by now for many years even in Italy has been centred on teachers. The question of teachers' personality has not been either analysed or dealt with so deeply in terms of theoretical research as in Germany and in Switzerland.

Historically, with regard to the training of teachers, more attention has been paid to the knowledge (on a specific subject) which the person who is going to be a teacher must have and which he can impart in class. More consideration was given to the problem of teachers' personality, in terms of attitudes and codes of behaviour morally acceptable, such as the embodiment of (dominant) values etc., for those who were to teach at the elementary school, and who had, in order to be efficient educationalists, to live up to high moral standards. Such a training – which can be defined as «moral» – was not so essential a requirement or was taken for granted in high school teachers.

Today (as witnessed by the institution of SSIS courses: an Italian acronym for *Specializing schools in secondary teaching* and the establishment of a degree in primary education sciences), emphasis is being laid not only on knowledge, but also on the ability to impart it, on the educational competence and on the ability to form good educational (and communicative) relationships with the students, since we take as the starting-point for our discussion that school is not only to convey the knowledge of subject matters, but it is also to form the

person as a whole, thinking of him / her as a good citizen-to-be.

Stress is laid, more in theory than in practice, on the fact that teachers should not embody bad models, i.e. on no occasions should they convey their political or religious beliefs, or present models considered morally or socially wrong. As regards this problem the discussion has not been centred on «personality», but rather on «professional attitude» and «correct behaviour». Teachers' ability to be well-balanced, self-possessed and in control of their emotions and their feelings is given almost for granted.

Unfortunately in Italy the difficult task which is being carried out by teachers and their ability to greatly affect man's formation is often underestimated; the complexity of all possible situations a teacher has to tackle in doing his / her job does not receive worthy recognition, (s)he is often «left alone» and not much supported.

To attach more attention to the personality of the teaching staff could be interesting also with a view to evaluating the efficiency, within the educational relationship, of the «power of effect», that is to say the effect of the teacher's personality on the educational process, which is not to be denied, and conditions the learning process and the development of the student's personality both in a positive sense (as when in presence of teachers who succeed in motivating the students, who understand them, and so on, promoting their growth in doing so) and in a negative sense (authoritarian teachers, who take their own frustrations, their own problems to class, or who are incapable of forming good relationships with their students, who show their dislikes of some of them, snub them or even show a preference for some of them).

In raising the question of the personality of teachers a few considerations are worth a mention, and we shall try to sum them up in a few short points. The first question we ask ourselves is the following: is it possible to affect the personality of teachers during the training process of those persons? There is no denying that handbooks, texts or courses instructing them in the way they should be in order to do a good job are not enough, and it is exactly here that the teaching profession calls into play personality. Such a question is posed with regard to the complexity itself of the term «personality» and to a whole range of different meanings it includes. Personality (or rather we should consider the meaning this term has acquired in Italy and how it is differently evaluated in other countries) involves a complex range of components, often impossible to control and at times beyond our comprehension; since it is a very long process involving the whole human being and embracing all that is typical of being a man, how is it possible to control that all and make an attempt to determine it in order to have a good teacher? And, above all, is it possible actually?

Moreover, regarding this point, both the meaning of the term «teacher» is to be called into question and the role it plays in the students' formative process (meaning *Bildung* by this). Mention has already been made of self-control and the ability to establish communication, but has that all anything to do with personality? We are faced, if ever, with a few professional abilities to cultivate and to develop what some persons already have as a part of their own personality, making them particularly fit for educational activities. This remark raises one more debate on how to choose those who are, or are not, fit for the teaching profession (a necessary discussion so as not to go back to the idea of teaching as an almost religious «mission», which has been typical of the image of the teacher in Italy, often not corresponding to the reasons why many teachers had gone into teaching), a debate on who is

to «judge» those who are going to be teachers. Such a debate is not only a matter for discussion at a pedagogical level, but above all at a political and institutional level, which are beyond our sphere of competence.

One more question to highlight and never to overlook, concerns the educational relationship, which involves, in order for it to be effective, more personalities, one of which still in the process of being formed, that of the teacher and that of the student, which, at times harshly clash. What role is the teacher – whose personality has already been formed – to play within this kind of relationship? How will he react to his students' conduct? We are once again being faced with the question of the characteristics and the competence a teacher should have: the awareness of his acting (or not acting), of his reacting, being self-possessed, the acquaintance with his students' world and with whatever the educational process involves.

As can now be seen, the question of the teacher's personality (or rather of the teacher's abilities and characteristics, to better define the meaning of this construct) is therefore important and still open and rich in stimuli both on the part of teachers' training, (but it is so for all those who are going to perform educational tasks), and on the teacher's part if they want to be «good» teachers. It is also true that this question poses many problems, some of which are difficult to solve (for instance the above-mentioned problem of the selective criteria and the choice of those who are going to teach, how should teachers be selected? Who should select them? Is it possible to give a fair appreciation of the personality we are selecting?). From all these considerations, brief and not exhaustive as they are, there emerges the importance and the need for training teachers ever more actively involving also pedagogic research at a theoretical level. Such research makes the discussion and the international debate on this issue of extreme consequence.

## Und es gibt sie doch, die «Persönlichkeit» in der Genfer Pädagogik.

Eine Replik zum Beitrag von Charles Magnin.

■ Richard Kohler

Im letzten Heft der *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Historiographie* wurde die Frage aufgeworfen, ob und wie sich das im deutschsprachigen Raum verbreitete Konstrukt der «Lehrerpersönlichkeit» in anderen pädagogischen Traditionen findet. Laut diesem Konstrukt verkörpert der Lehrer die gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Weltdeutungen, Werte und

Einstellungen, die er vertritt, unterrichtet und vorlebt. Indem er die religiösen, intellektuellen, sozialen und moralischen Normen in seinem Denken und Verhalten zu einer Ganzheit integriert, wird er zu einer faszinierenden Autorität und damit zu einem wirkungsmächtigen Vorbild für seine Schüler. Dieses Ideal der «Persönlichkeit» entstammt der Vorstellung der Beziehung des Gläubigen zum Göttlichen in der protestantischen Theologie (Baader



2005, S. 187ff.) und beinhaltet die Annäherung an die göttliche Vollkommenheit, das heisst die Überwindung der menschlichen «Laster» wie Egoismus, Gier, Ignoranz oder Unselbstständigkeit. Während die abgedruckten Beiträge aus England, Finnland, den USA und selbst aus Japan und dem katholischen Argentinien zumindest Elemente dieses Lehrerideals bestätigten, postulierte Charles Magnin für Genf eine Sonderrolle. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Ländern oder Landesteilen der Schweiz habe die Idee der Persönlichkeit des Lehrers in der französischsprachigen Schweiz kaum eine Rolle gespielt, denn «the course of history has been quite different in the case of Geneva in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from that described by my colleagues» (Magnin 2005, S. 118). Dass ausgerechnet das «Rom des Protestantismus» von dieser Vorstellung unberührt geblieben sein soll, fällt jedoch schwer zu glauben.

Sicherlich dürfen die Unterschiede zwischen der von Luther geprägten Pädagogik in Deutschland und den deutsch- und französischsprachigen Regionen der Schweiz nicht negiert werden. Indem sich der deutsche Protestantismus stark auf die Innerlichkeit konzentrierte, konnte beispielsweise ein Begriff der Bildung als mythische Parallele zur Erziehung entstehen, der im Französischen fehlt. Dagegen betonte der Zwinglianismus und vor allem der Calvinismus stärker die soziale und politische Dimension der Erziehung. Aber in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts entwickelte sich mit der Säkularisierung des Transzendenzglaubens «eine persönlichkeitsbestimmte Kultur» (Sennett 1977, S. 262), die auch die Genfer Pädagogik des 20. Jahrhunderts prägte. Magnin (2005, S. 119) übersieht dieses religiöse Relikt, denn er setzt die Modellfunktion der «Lehrerpersönlichkeit» mit dem didaktischen Lernen am Modell (Imitation und Repetition) gleich. Damit fallen die Bereiche der Motivation und des moralischen Lernens, in denen man sich die grösste Wirkung der «Persönlichkeit» erhoffte, aus dem Rahmen seiner Überlegungen.

Laut Magnin vollzog sich in den ersten beiden Dekaden des 20. Jahrhunderts in Genf ein grundlegender Wechsel vom idealen Lehrer als Modell («to an ideal teacher identified with the practice of a pedagogy anchored in a new understanding of the way the child learns, of its so called «development» (ebd.). Dank Claparède, Ferrière und Piaget habe sich mit der *école active* eine wissenschaftlich fundierte Pädagogik durchgesetzt, bei der das Lernen nicht vom Lehrer initiiert und gesteuert werde, sondern von den spontanen Interessen und Bedürfnissen des Kindes ausgehe. Die Rolle des Lehrers sei nun «defined as the «awakener» of the individual's potential [...] rather than as an authoritative or authoritarian figure» (ebd., S. 121, S. 120). Meiner Meinung nach stellt die Vorstellung des «Erweckers» in keiner Weise die Idee der Lehrerpersönlichkeit in Frage, sondern ist im Gegenteil ein Ausdruck davon. Diese Konzeption der Schule und der kindlichen Entwicklung ist eine genuin protestanti-

sche Theorie, wie ich am Beispiel von Piaget zeigen möchte. Zuerst werde ich Piagets Theologie darstellen, um anschliessend seine Persönlichkeitstheorie und in einem dritten Teil die Konsequenzen für die Pädagogik aufzuzeigen. Schliesslich werfe ich einen kurzen Blick auf den historischen Kontext. Wenn Magnin glaubt, dass politische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Faktoren in Genf relevanter gewesen seien als religiöse Motive (ebd., S. 119), dann handelt es sich hier um eine Form der Geschichtsvergessenheit, die in Genf eine spezifische Ursache hat.

Léon Brunschvicg beschrieb die Geschichte des Denkens als eine Entwicklung des zunehmenden Selbstverständnisses des Menschen, verbunden mit der Ablösung des Realismus und Transzendenzglaubens durch den Konstruktivismus und Immanentismus. In dem Masse, wie sich das Denken vom Egozentrismus befreie, werde das menschliche Subjekt universal und nähere sich sein Geist der religiösen Wahrheit an. Dieser Theorie des immanenten Gottesbegriffs als Endpunkt der Entwicklung schloss sich Piaget an: «L'acte de foi substiste, mais il devient rationnel, il invoque un Dieu qui fait de plus en plus corps avec le monde lui-même, c'est-à-dire avec la raison et ses cadres, intérieurement à l'expérience» (Piaget 1921, S. 410). Ab Beginn der 20er-Jahre bildete die Immanenztheorie den Kern der vielfältigen Fragestellungen, mit denen sich Piaget beschäftigte. Nicht nur die Kulturgeschichte, auch das kindliche Denken entwickle sich von der Transzendenz zur Immanenz, von der primitiven Magie zur zivilisierten Reflexivität, vom Egozentrismus zur Objektivität und von der Heteronomie zur Autonomie. Indem sich das Denken im Verlaufe der Entwicklung selbst zu hinterfragen lerne, überwinde es die kindlichen und dogmatischen Vorstellungen des väterlichen Gottes und müsse ihn in sich suchen. «Ce n'est qu'en se repliant sur elle-même et en scrutant les conditions de sa propre activité que la pensée trouve Dieu», denn «Dieu est pensée. Il n'est pas un être mais la condition de l'existence, et la condition de l'existence c'est la pensée» (Piaget 1928, S. 30f., S. 34). Das heisst aber nicht, dass der Immanentismus eine Religion des Ichs wäre. Piaget identifizierte Gott mit den universalen Normen, die sowohl der Vernunft (Prinzipien des Nichtwiderspruchs und der Reversibilität) wie der Moral (Prinzipien der Gerechtigkeit und der Gegenseitigkeit) zu Grunde liegen. «Aucune perception, aucune notion, aucun jugement ne sont possibles en chacun de nous sans que ne soit impliqué dans ces actes un Idéal suprême, norme à la fois intellectuelle et morale qui éclaire notre pensée comme notre conscience!» (Piaget 1929, S. 151f.). Die Basis von Piagets Kognitionspsychologie ist also theologischer Natur.

Diese Normen bilden gegenüber dem Ich eine innerpsychische Transzendenz, denn sonst wäre Religion überflüssig. Aufgrund dieser Unterscheidung ist eine innere Kommunion des Ich mit dem Absoluten des Denkens und das Gebet als Unterwerfung des Ichs unter das Absolute möglich. «Qui ne sent la

joie d'une telle communion entre l'humain et le divin, et la beauté de l'ascension qui, du sentiment d'accord et d'équilibre, résultat habituel de cette communion, conduit à la plénitude du sentiment de présence?» (Piaget 1930, S. 48). Wenn dieses Gefühl nicht bloße Illusion sein soll, muss es verschiedene Instanzen oder Realitäten innerhalb und ausserhalb des Organismus geben. «Der Mensch ist in der Tat zwiespältig. In jedem Augenblick und in allen Bereichen seiner mentalen Entwicklung, ob es sich nun um den Verstand oder um die Moral handelt, ist er hin- und hergerissen zwischen zwei gleich starken Tendenzen» (Piaget 1931/1999, S. 106). Die eine Tendenz meint den kindlichen Realismus, der die Welt auf sein Ich reduziert, die zweite Tendenz entspricht dem Bewusstsein der Relativität des eigenen Standpunkts. Es gibt daher einen stetigen Kampf zwischen dem Egozentrismus und der Objektivität, zwischen dem Ich und der Persönlichkeit. Das Ich ist von den anderen «Ich» nicht nur verschieden, sondern entgegengesetzt, und als «source d'anarchie intellectuelle et morale» (Piaget 1930, S. 48) wehrt es sich gegen die Sozialisation. Dagegen ist eine Persönlichkeit der Garant für Ordnung, weil sie das Ich diszipliniert und den sozialen Regeln unterworfen hat. In dieser Unterwerfung ist die Idee der Bekehrung enthalten, denn die Bildung der Persönlichkeit «exige une conversion du moi et condamne ainsi son égocentrisme» (Piaget 1933, S. 86). Der Egozentrismus «est le point de départ le plus normal qui soit, à condition de parvenir à le dépasser» (Piaget 1932, S. 67). Jeder muss also, entsprechend der christlichen Tradition, einen lebenslangen Kampf gegen sich selbst führen, wobei der Egoismus nie ganz überwunden werden kann. Ständig wird die Vernunft von «der Gesetzlosigkeit der Egozentrik» (Piaget 1949/1975, S. 36f.) unterwandert und droht der Phantasie und Subjektivität, den Instinkten und Gefühlen zu unterliegen. Diese Vorstellung behält Piaget auch später bei: «The more powerful it is, the more hateful the self is [...], whereas a strong personality is that which can discipline itself. Personality [...] is the submission of the self to an ideal which embodies it but which surpasses and dominates it» (Piaget 1955/1972, S. 311).

Die Entwicklungslogik der Vernunft war für Piaget durch die Normen vorgegeben und führt im intellektuellen Bereich zur Wahrheit, im sozialen Bereich zur Gerechtigkeit und im affektiven Bereich zur Liebe. Diese Werte begründen den Glauben, weil sie als «inneres Absolutes» (Piaget 1930, S. 41) erlebt werden können. «Alors la conscience fait cette expérience *sui generis* de l'accord avec la Pensée qui est l'expérience mystique suprême» (Piaget 1928, S. 39). Die menschliche Persönlichkeit hängt vom Erlebnis Gottes ab und äussert sich in der Erkenntnis der Logik, des Guten, des Idealen und der Pflicht. «La volonté divine se confond ainsi avec l'obligation morale, la raison divine avec l'obligation intellectuelle et l'amour divin avec la valeur infinie qui donne son prix à l'existence» (Piaget 1930, S.

48). Die Annäherung des Menschen an das Göttliche verstand Piaget als einen reflexiven Prozess der Vervollkommnung und der Reinigung (Piaget 1928, S. 33, S. 38). Damit revolutionierte und dynamisierte er die *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Während Kant die jungfräuliche, noch unbeschmutzte Vernunft vor der Erfahrung zu bestimmen versuchte, beschrieb Piaget die Entwicklung der Vernunft von ihrer solipsistischen «Erbsünde» bis zur reinen Wissenschaftlichkeit. Die Entwicklung der Intelligenz auf der ontogenetischen wie auf der geschichtlichen Ebene ist zugleich eine Entfaltung des Göttlichen, was exakt Hegels Programm in der *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) entsprach. Die genetische Psychologie, die eine vorbestimmte Entwicklung mit einem idealen Ziel verbindet, passt gut zur Prädestinationslehre des Calvinismus, denn das Kind wird «als Herr seines Schicksals» (Piaget 1932/1973, S. 107) geboren. Das Individuum muss sich von seinem primitiven, asozialen Zustand mittels dreier Revolutionen zur formal reflektierenden und moralisch handelnden Persönlichkeit entwickeln.

In der Pädagogik stützte sich Piaget weitgehend auf die Theorien seines Mentors Pierre Bovet. Der Direktor des *Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1912–1944) und des *Bureau International d'Education* (1925–1929) sah im Respekt die Voraussetzung der Moralbildung. Die Achtung ist eine Mischung aus Liebe und Furcht und entsteht aufgrund des Prestiges des Erziehers. «Le mystère du devoir, c'est en définitive le mystère du prestige des personnalités» (Bovet 1913, S. 121f.). Aufgrund der Persönlichkeit des Erziehers werden seine Anweisungen und Verbote als verpflichtende Regeln anerkannt, deren Summe das Pflichtbewusstsein ausmacht. Piaget knüpfte das Prestige an die Regelkonformität: «Wer [...] «Achtung» sagt, meint [...] Bewunderung für eine Persönlichkeit, gerade insofern als diese sich den Regeln unterordnet» (Piaget 1932/1973, S. 105). Respekt könne bei einem gleichgestellten Kameraden wie auch bei einer Autoritätsperson als spontane Reaktion entstehen. «Das moralische Pflichtbewusstsein ist ein Phänomen *sui generis*, das eine Beziehung zwischen mindestens zwei Individuen voraussetzt: das eine, das den Befehl, ein Gebot erteilt, und das andere, das dieses Gebot akzeptiert, Respekt gegenüber demjenigen zeigt, der das Gebot erteilt» (Piaget 1928/1986, S. 106). Die Beziehung ist also der magische Kanal, in dem die Moral übertragen wird. Weil das Pflichtbewusstsein keine andere Quelle hat als die Weisungen, und weil ihre Geltung an die Bewunderung gebunden ist, stellt die Persönlichkeit den entscheidenden psychologischen Faktor in der Moralbildung dar. Die vierte Empfehlung des BIE, das Piaget seit 1929 leitete, betonte auch, «que, dans l'œuvre éducative, c'est la personnalité du maître qui constitue le facteur décisif, et que, par conséquent, le problème de la formation professionnelle des futurs instituteurs revêt une importance capitale; Que, dans cette formation, il convient de tenir le plus grand compte non

seulement des connaissances générales et des connaissances proprement pédagogiques, mais encore et surtout de la valeur morale» (BIE Recommandation N° 4, 1935). Weil für Piaget jede Moral religiös begründet war (Piaget 1928, S. 12), konnte er Bovet zustimmen, dass «nos écoles ne peuvent remplir leur fonction que si ceux qui y enseignent sont des hommes de foi» (Bovet, zit. in: Roller 1978, S. 22). Zum Lehrerberuf ist man vorherbestimmt, denn es sind «la vocation personnelle de l'éducateur, le talent pédagogique et les qualités plus ou moins innée d'autorité, de contact, etc., qui font un bon maître» (Piaget 1973, S. 5). Und nur eine kleine Elite sei dazu geeignet, im Sinne der *école active* zu unterrichten (Piaget 1939, S. 5). Man könnte einwenden, dass es nur wenige Stellen gibt, an denen Piaget die Rolle der Persönlichkeit in der Erziehung explizit thematisierte. Er bezog sich jedoch immer wieder zustimmend auf Bovet, ohne dessen Begriff des Prestiges zu hinterfragen (Piaget 1954/1995, S. 97; Piaget 1966/1977, S. 91), und er veränderte weder seine grundlegende Ansicht zur Persönlichkeit (Piaget 1960/1976, S. 192) noch zum Immanentismus (Piaget/Bringuier 1977/2004, S. 87).

Piagets ehemaliger Lehrer Arnold Reymond befürchtete, dass die Immanenztheorie eine Spaltung des theologischen und philosophischen Denkens in der Romandie bewirken könnte, die sich doch gerade auszeichne durch die Einheit «de tout ce qui touche à la vie morale, religieuse et civique, et de tout ce qui a trait à l'éducation» (Reymond 1931, S. 376f.). Dies war jedoch überhaupt nicht das Ziel Piagets, der seit seinen ersten Schriften an der theoretischen Versöhnung von Glauben und Wissen arbeitete (Piaget 1917). Deshalb kritisierte er Kants Grenzziehung zwischen Welterkenntnis und Gotteserfahrung (Piaget 1930, S. 21) und versuchte, die autonome Moral, den Immanenzglauben, die objektive Logik und das Engagement für die Demokratie in der Persönlichkeit zu vereinen, die sich dank der freien Kooperation zwischen den Gleichaltrigen in der *école active* entwickle. Die unauf löbliche Verbindung von Protestantismus, «experimenteller» Wissenschaft, sozialdemokratischer Gesinnung und *éducation nouvelle* gehörte zu den Selbstverständlichkeiten am IJJR. Dieses «Apriori» lässt sich beispielsweise auch bei den Rezeptionen beobachten: etwa die Entsexualisierung und Ausblendung der atheistischen Aspekte der Psychoanalyse (Vidal 1989) oder die Nichtbeachtung des Darwinismus bei Dewey (Tröhler 2005, S. 76).

Allerdings änderte Piaget die öffentliche Rhetorik, nachdem er die Leitung des BIE und des IJJR übernommen hatte. Aufgrund politischer Stellungnahmen Bovets wurden 1928 und 1932 die Subventionen des IJJR in Frage gestellt und es kam zum Bruch mit der Lehrgewerkschaft, die sich von den Ideen der *éducation nouvelle* abwandte. Um weitere Angriffe der aufkommenden reaktionären Parteien zu verhindern, wollte Piaget nicht nur das BIE (Piaget 1934/1999, S. 148), sondern auch das IJJR

auf eine strikt wissenschaftliche Position verpflichten, was zu einem heftigen Streit mit Bovet führte (Vidal 1997, S. 94ff.). Piaget setzte sich durch und vermied fortan politisches und religiöses Vokabular, weshalb der Eindruck entstehen kann, die Genfer Institute hätten sich nur an rein wissenschaftlichen Standards orientiert. Der protestantische Unterbau in Piagets Theorie verschwand deshalb aber nicht. Nicht die angebliche Unterschiebung einer religiösen Dimension in der Genfer Pädagogik ist «a harmful mystification and seriously limited, if not false, understanding of Switzerland's intra-national dynamics in the field of education» (Magnin 2005, S. 121), sondern deren Verkennung und Unterschlagung.

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### Response of Charles Magnin to Richard Kohler

In Richard Kohler's response, I contest the fundamentally religious, i.e. protestant basis, which is assigned to the personality of the prototype of the Genevan primary-school teacher. I do not deny, of course, that the latter is vested with a socially constructed identity, but I affirm that the Genevan school teacher's core values grew progressively to be of an essentially lay and technical, not to say scientific nature. I will not discuss here the weight my contradictor gives to protestantism in Piaget's work. I find quite interesting in itself the presentation of the «piagetian» ideas developed by Kohler to invalidate my points, but in my view these arguments do not achieve their objective for several reasons.

First of all, one should look closely at the «reception» given to Piaget's ideas. Indeed, one should not consider, without a thorough examination of the question, that these ideas had been fully assimilated nor that a majority of Genevan school teachers had been initiated into Piaget's ideas on education or pedagogy during the 1930s. A certain amount of time had to go by before some of the lofty knowledge constructed by Piaget started to become the Vulgate of the simple school teacher. This could have begun to be the case soon after World War II, but definitely not before, except in some very narrow circles of teachers, like, for example, the most recently trained ones. And the demonstration can be made that it was the most scientific part of his work – and not his religious thought – which was best integrated into the school teacher's knowledge, for example, Piaget's work on the stages of child development.

Kohler's response illustrates our different approaches to the study of the identity and convictions of the Genevan school teacher in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We are not referring to the same type of «sources», as historians would say, because we are

not looking at the same thing: I do not stop with the vision of Piaget alone and I do not assume that his vision represents that of the Genevan primary-school teacher. Kohler refers to a seminal scientific work, taken too automatically as emblematic of the ideas of the Genevan primary-school teaching force, whereas my argument is constructed from the analysis of historical texts put forward by politicians and by professional teachers or their representatives, and not from the views or vision of a singular and exceptional scientific intelligence. Flights of lyricism on the future of mankind are of course not absent in the teachers' texts, but they do not constitute, in my view, the daily crux of their professional identity.

Kohler's retort allows me to re-emphasize a methodological point expressed briefly in my article. What appears crucial to me for understanding how we speak about the ideas and conceptions that teachers had about their profession, their role and status, is the choice of historical documents which form the basis of our analyses. And that sends us back to the images and practices we have of the history of education. We know that these methods, fortunately, are multiple, but that should not prevent us from reflecting on what is at stake, on what is said and not said – can be said and cannot be said – through that diversity of approaches we use, led by our intuition, intelligence, knowledge, idiosyncrasies and choices of documents. One last point, I hope all will agree that I am far from cultivating a «*Sonderfall Genf*», that the key stake for me is our writing(s) of the history of education and their consequences, which I think we can demonstrate they do indeed have, for example, in the use of a term such as the school teacher's «vocation», with its obvious religious connotation.