

Time for Values: Responding Educationally to the Call from the Past

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Abstract This paper rethinks the fostering task of the teacher in a time when it, paradoxically, has tended to become marginalized and privatized despite its public urgency. Following post-holocaust thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman, the position explored here is radical in the sense that it takes ‘the crisis of traditions’ and the erosion of a common moral ground or value basis seriously, and it is conservative in the sense that it insists on responding educationally to the call from the past by returning to (a) the moral character of our existence and (b) our own embeddedness in the incompleteness of living traditions. The argument is that there is a difference between educating for common values—which entails a belief in pre-existing commonalities—and making values common in and through education. The latter, we argue, entails an aspiration for continuously creating new commonalities and for cultivating the ability to act and judge as a thinking moral agent in specific, lived and worldly cases. In this sense, the fostering task of the teacher is to create commonality of what is not (yet) common, turning the liberal democratic values of the past into contested objects of study.

Keywords Values education · Tradition · Postmodern ethics · Cultural heritage · Fostering · Commonality · Liberal democratic values

*... Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
... The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

The Second Coming, W.B. Yeats

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Introduction: The Call from the Past

In his famous radio speech from 1966, ‘Education After Auschwitz’, Theodor Adorno makes the call that the ‘premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again’ (1997, p. 97). This call has made a mark in European education which main ambition after World War II, it could be argued, has been to promote a society of enlightened, democratic citizens, preventing the resurfacing of the authoritarian thinking of the 1930s and 1940s. ‘Auschwitz, never again!’ ‘Never again must we be as deceived and manipulated; never again must we blindly trust authorities and commit such evil!’

With Adorno’s speech in memory, fostering¹ liberal democratic values such as freedom, equality, tolerance and generosity in schools is often seen an antidote for fundamentalist and totalitarian thinking, as well as a way of safeguarding the existence of a common moral ground in Western democracies marked by cultural and social pluralism. In educational research, this task has been most thoroughly addressed within the field of ‘values education’, traditionally an overarching concept for research that concerns the fostering aspect of education, such as moral education, ethics education, civic education and citizenship education (Thornberg and Oğuz 2016). The diverse field of values education can, broadly speaking, be said to address two different but interrelated educational purposes: (a) the formation of children and young people into responsible and thinking moral agents and (b) the implementation of a common value basis in pluralist societies. (Taylor 1994, 2000; Thornberg 2008; Thornberg and Oğuz 2016). In Europe where an interest in populist, racist and fascist movements—not least among young people—is increasing all over the continent, the fostering task of the teacher seems more present and urgent than ever.

Since World War II, many post-holocaust thinkers have tried to make sense of the fundamental failure of the moral values of Western humanism to protect Europe from totalitarianism and genocide (e.g. Arendt, Bauman, Adorno, Habermas, Derrida; see also Borradori 2003). According to one such thinker, Arendt (1962), the inability to provide ordinary people with the tools for moral critique and evaluation ‘in dark times’ was due to the very structure of modernity and of the universal normative claims inherent within the humanistic tradition itself (see also McLachlan 2006). Since the unthinkable (Auschwitz) could not be prevented by Western humanism, Arendt argues, the values of the past can no longer unthinkingly guide our judgements in political and ethical life, nor constitute a common moral ground for liberal democratic societies.²

Following Arendt (1962), however, what is left of the humanistic ideal in the moral ruins after World War II is each our capacity to think, judge and act in relation to specific, complex and lived ‘worldly’ problems. This responsibility is not an easy task to take on, and the ‘crisis of traditions’ in Western democracies, as we will show below, seems to have

¹ We have chosen to use the term fostering in this paper despite the fact that upbringing might perhaps be more common in Anglo-American educational contexts. The main reason for using fostering is that in the Swedish curriculum, the term fostering has both private and public connotations, whereas the term upbringing mainly connotes the private sphere of the home.

² In her writings, Arendt continues to argue that politics should remain distinct from moral evaluation and she even goes so far as to suggest that political action and moral judgement may be deeply hostile to one another (Arendt 2003). Yet, while some have accepted Arendt as not being a thinker on morality, others have argued that Arendt’s critique was directed to a specific sense of morality as *mores*, that is, as the self-evident moral standards of a given society, and that this critique does not prevent us from understanding her theory of political action as inspired by a deep moral concern for the conditions of human life (see, for example, Kateb 1983; MacLachlan 2006). Even if Arendt herself never explicitly dealt with moral theory, it is the later position that we explore in this paper by turning to Zygmunt Bauman and Jacques Derrida.

left educational researchers with two alternatives when it comes to fostering values in schools: *to restore* the authority of 'lost tradition' (a conservative positions), or to *radically brake* with or *forget* the traditions of the past in order to build something new for the future (radical and liberal positions).

Seeking to find a third position that is *both conservative and radical*, the main purpose of this paper is to rethink the fostering task of the teacher in light of the pressing situation facing Europe today. The position explored is radical in the sense that it takes 'the crisis of traditions' and the erosion of a common moral value basis seriously. It is conservative in the sense that it insists on responding educationally to the call from the past, that is, by acknowledging our inevitable embeddedness in fragmented and living traditions. Following post-holocaust thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman and Hannah Arendt, our main argument is that the fostering task of the teacher is to (a) begin in the already moral character of our existence and to (b) create commonality of what is not (yet) common by turning the values of the past into contested objects of study, that is, into matters of common concern, interest and care (Masschelein and Simons 2013). In this sense, we argue, there is a world of difference between *educating for common values* and *making values common* in and through education. While the first entails a belief in pre-existing commonalities and a following of universal moral standards beyond the fragmented reality of worldly concerns, the latter involves an aspiration for continuously creating new commonalities and for cultivating the ability to act and judge as thinking moral agents in specific, lived and complex cases.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part resets the scene of values education, focusing specifically on how to rethink moral judgement and tradition 'after Auschwitz'. The second part traces what we see as some significant losses in educational research on values education, taking Sweden as a case study. The third part shifts the focus from *what has been lost* in educational research on values education, to *what can be retrieved* from 'the crisis of traditions', suggesting a three-pronged educational response to the losses and crises articulated in part one and two. This response involves (a) studying traditions between the past and the future (time-space); (b) choosing from a fragmented past (judgement); and (c) remaining in translation (movement). By way of conclusion, we sum up our argument, returning to the main contributions of the paper.

Fostering in Fragmented Times

In order to rethink the fostering task of the teacher in postmodern times, we first need to reset the scene for values education.

The Question of Morality

The post-holocaust thinker that perhaps more than any other has tried to make sense of the fundamental failure of the traditions of the West to protect Europe from totalitarianism and genocide is Zygmunt Bauman. In his pioneering work, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), he discusses the 'logics' that made Auschwitz possible, arguing that it was the extinction of *moral ambivalence* inherent in the modern project that led to the acts of evil in the camps. Bauman takes his point of departure in what he calls the 'originary' status of morality, suggesting that ever since 'the fall of man' (mythologically speaking), human existence has been a moral existence and the choices one makes are therefore always

choices ‘of good and evil’ (Bauman 1993, 1995). The *forgetfulness* of this moral character of our existence, and of the always already moral and therefore ambivalent character of moral choice, is, thus, according to Bauman, an essential characteristic of modernity.

When it comes to modern institutions such as schools, Bauman (1995) argues, this forgetfulness is most explicitly shown in the reduction in morality to the following (or not following) of the moral standards of a given society, as well as of the moral experts that were to teach these standards. In striving to eliminate moral ambivalence on beforehand in this way, and this is important to our argument here, moral choices have become reduced to rule abidance, that is, to the following of social conventions and abstract ethical rules. Hence, and as a consequence, the possibility of making meaningful moral choices and judgements in concrete and lived cases has become thwarted (*ibid.*). According to Arendt (2003), this is exactly what happened in Nazi Germany where ‘morality collapsed into a mere set of *mores*—manners, customs, conventions to be changed at will’ (p. 54)—and since universal moral claims too easily led to thoughtlessness and world alienation, Arendt argues, they actually undermined rather than reinforced moral responsibility and agency (Arendt 2003; McLachlan 2006).

In Bauman’s view, however, the ‘crisis of morality’ in Western democracies does not mean that we have to abandon the idea of moral responsibility and judgement altogether (1995). In fact, he argues, ‘[t]he ethical paradox of the postmodern condition is that it restores to agents the fullness of moral choice and responsibility while simultaneously depriving them of the universal guidance that modern self-confidence once promised’ (Bauman 1992, p. xxii). In this sense, it is only by letting go of the trust in a universal ethical code or in abstract moral principles that we can cultivate our moral intuitions or impulses and become morally responsible (*ibid.*). According to this way of reasoning, a choice according to the rulebook is not a moral choice because it risks nothing and holds no ambivalence. Moral existence, by contrast, contains the insight that morality is always about making use of one’s freedom as an author or an actor in a *choice* between ‘good and evil’ and, thus, that moral responsibility ‘comes together with the loneliness of moral choice’ (Bauman 1992, p. xxii).

To argue for the groundlessness of morality, then, is not an argument for relativism since, as Bauman points out, ‘the demise of universal absolutes does not mean “everything goes”’ (1995, p. 6). Instead, a postmodern ethics focusing on moral judgement and action reorients us *from* relying on the *certainty* of abstract ethical codes *to* seeking out *engaged and embodied responses* to specific, complex and lived problems. In this sense, ‘post-modern ethics turns out to be far more demanding than modern morality’ (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, p. 70).

From ‘Not Yet’ to ‘Already’

What, then, does an acknowledgment of moral ambivalence mean for values education? If morality is about making use of one’s freedom to think and judge in situations where no general moral rule of conduct or behaviour can relieve us from the uncertainty of moral choice, children already come to school as moral beings. Hence, the fostering task of the teacher is not to *make* children moral (as if they lack morality, which some values education models today seem to suggest) but to cultivate their freedom to make moral judgements *given* their ‘originary’ morality and to help them handle the unavoidable loneliness that comes with this freedom. Another way of saying this is that children do not become moral beings because they attend school; they attend school because they are moral beings capable of moral cultivation (Månsson 2008).

Following Bauman, then, the purpose of the fostering task of the teacher, ‘after Auschwitz’, is not to *form* children and young people into predefined moral agents, but to *cultivate their freedom* to think and make moral judgements in relation to specific, complex and lived problems. In contrast to the well-known ideal of the autonomous liberal subject that has guided education for centuries,³ and which aspires ‘to empower the student to control her destiny and to create her future, not submit to it’ (Siegel 1998, p. 57), the ‘model’ suggested here would be a *decentred* moral subject that, while still able to act and make moral choices, is no longer the origin of its own actions but operates in a mode of response (Ruitenbergh 2015). It is a subject who, drawing on Derrida, is constantly ‘gathering itself together to answer to the other’ (Derrida and Nancy 1991, p. 100). In this sense, what characterizes the moral subjectivity that we advocate here is not autonomy and self-sufficiency in the liberal sense, but a subjectivity in constant movement between freedom and cultivation, emancipation and dependency, between creating a future and submitting to a (fragmented) past.

The Question of Tradition

Since there is no singular, universal tradition from which we can derive moral guidance (Bauman 1995), the question of how to foster a common value basis in pluralist societies also needs to be addressed differently within the field of values education. One way to respond to the ‘crisis of traditions’ in Western democracies would be to simply ignore our fragmented past and look straight towards the future. Following Arendt (1962), however, since children are born into an already existing world—it was literally there before they were born—and since their potential for renewal of the world can never be foreseen from the present, education will by necessity be aimed at the past. In this sense, we argue, there is something essentially uneducational in beginning in the present and looking straight towards the future when fostering values in schools. As the German educationalist Klaus Mollenhauer (2014) reminds us, fostering (German *Erziehung*) is first and foremost about passing on and renewing a valued cultural heritage, that is, of handing over to children and young people what is seen as important by us as adults and as a culture. Against this background, values education is always about fostering the next generation into specific traditions and into particular cultural heritage.

Returning to tradition and cultural heritage in our postmodern times, however, is not a simple task. Time and again, the concepts of tradition and cultural heritage are used ideologically in the political debate on education, as when, for example, the (assumed) stability of tradition and its potential for safeguarding a common moral ground in diversely populated societies is seen as the opposite of conflict and change. In many European countries, we can see a renewed interest in defining a national cultural heritage or a ‘national value basis’, not at least among right wing, populist and fascist movements. In the following, therefore, we will direct attention to the *content dimension* of the fostering task of education in order to see what can be retrieved from a fragmented past after ‘the crisis of traditions’ in Western democracies.

³ The problem with this ideal, we argue, is that it primarily aims to foster autonomy and self-sufficiency, and, by doing so, tends to reinforce the kind of forgetfulness of ‘the crisis of traditions’ and moral agency that we criticize in this paper, as well as the often messy and fragmented realities of worldly concerns.

Beyond Nostalgia and Optimism

Following Arendt (1962), since finding a balance between the *preservation* of what is valuable in a culture ('this is valuable to us, the old generation') and the freedom of every new generation to *renew* what has been passed on to them ('it is up to you, the new generation, to form and enliven the world anew') lies at the heart of education, values education always takes place on a threshold—whether between the private and the public world, between the old and the new generation, or between the needs of the future and the claims of the past (see also Ruitenbergh 2015; Masschelein and Simons 2013). Hence, in order to rethink the fostering task of the teacher we first need to frame this threshold in a way that responds to our postmodern times.

Within the field of education, there has, broadly speaking, been two possible ways of understanding the threshold between past and future: a traditional/conservative and a critical/radical (see, for example, Gordon 2001; Ruitenbergh 2015). Theorist and educationalists on the more *conservative* end of the educational spectrum tend to draw on a nostalgic vision of a 'lost but grand past' (e.g. R. S. Peters, Allan Bloom and Edward Wynne, Michael Oakshott). Significance of this position is that it views tradition and cultural heritage rather uncritically, that is, as something relatively stable and worth restoring. The task of education, according to the conservatives, is to *transfer* the dominant morals and values of society from the old generation to the coming generation—this while saying very little about the importance of also providing children and young people with the opportunity to begin something new (Ruitenbergh 2015). According to the conservative view, then, fostering liberal democratic values in schools is primarily about *bridging the gap* between the present society and the coming society by *restoring from the past* the traditions that have been lost, turning the threshold of education into a seamless transition (Gordon 2001).

Theorist and educators at the *critical/radical* end of the educational spectrum often tend to take the opposite stance, arguing that education comes to function as an instrument for reproduction and domination when it one-sidedly supports the knowledge and values of dominant groups in society (e.g. Paulo Freire, Michael Apple, Stephen McLaren and Henry Giroux). In this sense, turning to tradition will benefit some and bring disadvantage to others, depending on the historical context. According to these critics, the proper task of education is about *creating a gap* between the past and the future by pausing the influence of the past, optimistically *rebuilding for the future* a society in which the next generation can be emancipated from past injustices and from the hegemony of the present society. Emphasis lies more on rebuilding (for the future) than on restoring (from the past) and more on transformation than on preservation. In this view, then, the threshold of schools and education is primarily framed as a *brake* or as a *rupture* with history and with the repressive domination of past traditions (Gordon 2001).

A Third Position

While sympathetic to thinkers and educators on the more radical end, we would like to propose a diffident approach. Following Arendt's 'radical conservatism' (1962), we argue that the fostering task of the teacher is neither to strengthen nor to brake the next generations' ties with the past and the tradition, but to let children and young people *remain at the threshold* between past and future by critically engaging in those values that previous generations have cherished and found valuable to pass on. Against this background, every

tradition can in itself be seen as an historically extended and socially embodied argument about what ‘goods’ are to be perceived as valuable and worth passing on through generations (MacIntyre 1985). Hence, the *living on* of traditions through the process of *traditio*—the transmission to others what first has been received—has its own rules of identity, conflict and change (Paperzak 2012).

In relation to values education, this means that what counts as the ‘goods’ that constitute a tradition need to be *continuously argued for, discussed and challenged* in what can be described as a conversation between generations (MacIntyre 1985). In this sense, we argue, the fostering task of the teacher is about presenting values of the past as contested objects of study, that is, as ‘things’ worth studying, to take interest in, and, hence, as ‘common goods’ to affirm, reject or renew. The aim of this critical engagement or ‘experience in thinking’, to use an Arendtian expression (Arendt 1962, p. 14), is not to teach children and young people to rely on predefined commonalities or the moral principles of the past, but to help them to create commonality of what is not (yet) common by turning values such as freedom, equality, tolerance and generosity into contested objects of study, that is, into matters of common concern (Masschelein and Simons 2013).

Before developing this third position further in relation to the fostering task of the teacher, let us first look at how educational research has responded to the above-mentioned ‘crisis of traditions’ and ‘crisis of morality’ after World War II by zooming in on the case of Sweden.

Values Education ‘After Auschwitz’ and the Case of Sweden

Sweden is interesting as a ‘case study’ when rethinking the fostering task of the teacher in postmodern times since it has been singled out—both in academic literature and in popular culture⁴—as a society that today is one of the most modern and secular countries in the world (e.g. Sigurdson 2000; Berggren and Trädgård 2015; World Values Survey 1995). With welfare, consensus, progress and instrumental rationality as core ideals, Sweden is a country where, Ola Sigurdson puts it, ‘politics is not about drawing up goals for political action, but about establishing *the most rational way* to achieve the goals that “everyone” has agreed upon’ (Sigurdson 2000, p. 241, our translation, emphasis added). What becomes characteristic of Swedish educational research on values education after World War II, in light of this emphasis on a technological–rational consensus, as we will show below, is that it is *not* about fostering the next generation into a specific cultural heritage: it is about finding *the most rational way* for bringing the next generation into the future. In this sense, research on values education in Sweden can be said to operate in a specific ‘time/form logic’ that prioritizes the future to the past and method (‘how’) to content (‘what’).

Morality and Tradition in Swedish Values Education Research

In the curriculum of 1994, the term ‘common values basis’ (Sw. *värdegrund*) is introduced and the year is usually seen as the starting point for a renewed focus on the fostering task of

⁴ We are thinking here, for example, of the Italian-Swedish director Erik Gandini’s film ‘The Swedish Theory of Love’ (2015) (where Zygmunt Bauman is featuring) and Michael Booth’s entertaining book ‘The Almost Nearly Perfect People: the Truth About the Nordic Miracle’ (2014) that both portray Sweden as the most modern country in the world—‘a raw model and a symbol of the highest achievements of human progress’ (Gandini 2015).

schools. The main debate during the 1990s can be summarized as a debate between *which values* that were to be included in the curriculum, and *whose politics* that was to dominate. That is, which values were to count as ‘inalienable’ in Swedish schools and whose politics (left—communitarian or right—liberal) did these values correlate with (Colnerud 2004)? This debate resulted in a discussion about whether there was anything at all that could be called ‘common’ in the ‘common values basis’ or whether it was simply up to the new generation to invent such commonality (e.g. Orlenius 2001).

If the beginning of the 1990s was characterized by what we in the introduction called ‘the implementation of a (pre-existing) common values basis’, the coming decades in Swedish schools have focused on the second aspect, that is, on ‘the formation of children and young people into responsible and thinking moral agents’. Hence, since the 1990s, values education research in Sweden can be divided into (a) an *ethical/moral* group, drawing on private, intra-individual and existential values as well as an ethics of care (Noddings), and (b) a *political/democratic* group drawing on public, interactive values related to dialogic community building and citizenship formation (Dewey and Habermas).

Looking more closely at these groups, the ethical approach is focusing mainly on the relationship between the teacher and the individual student, seeking to formulate a *professional language and ethical codex for teachers*’ based on empirical classroom situations (Colnerud 2004, 2006a, b; Colnerud and Thornberg 2003; Colnerud and Granström 2015; Grönlien Zetterqvist et al. 2009; Thornberg 2006, 2008). Inspiration is taken from educational philosophy (e.g. Noddings’s ethics of care) and social psychology (e.g. Thornberg and Granström), and it aspires to focus on the moral and social problems that arise in classrooms related to teacher–student and student–student relationships, such as different kinds of bullying and discrimination (Colnerud 2004). This position puts its emphasis on the formation of children and the young by drawing mainly on what they call ‘private and intra-individual values’ (Colnerud 2004), that is, on an ethics of care (e.g. Noddings) and on creating stable and safe social psychological environment for pupils in school.⁵ The main aim of this kind of research is the ethical professionalization of teachers’ work, drawing specifically on theoretical ethical models (i.e. rule ethics, virtue ethics and consequential ethics). The focus is on offering teachers a *professional method* with which they, together with their students, can navigate the crisis of traditions in a pluralistic society with reduced ambivalence (Colnerud 2004; Orlenius and Bigsten 2008; Fjällström 2004).

The second group is political in its approach *focusing mainly on democracy and communication* as means through which to foster public values and democratic citizens. They find their primary inspiration in Jürgen Habermas’s procedural idea of democracy and discursively founded ethics (e.g. Englund 2000, 2006a, b, c). The ‘deliberative dialogue model’ was in the beginning of the 2000s promoted by the Swedish National Agency for Education as a way of enhancing individual responsibility and, it could be argued, to foster rationality and moral judgement. Its main ambition is to enhance informed rational debate in the classroom and its core idea is that democracy is an open-ended learning process where all students can agree upon what they need to understand in order to make reasonable judgments (Bergdahl 2010). This means that only those arguments that count as well founded in reason can be publicly justified. This is what Habermas himself calls the force of the better argument (1976/1997). Translated into classroom practice, the model of deliberative dialogue and argumentation has gradually become the most established *way or ‘method’* through which the fostering task in Swedish schools is to be carried out. It is seen

⁵ This is done primarily through the concept ‘values pedagogy’—a term that is meant to address the concrete work that is done in schools and classrooms.

both as a way to prepare students for future citizenship and for enhancing the students' own responsibility for contributing to a well-founded common values basis through rational consensus.

Forgetting the Past and the Moral Character of Existence

As a way of answering what we above have pointed out as the two main foci of values education—(a) the formation of children and young people into responsible moral agents and (b) the implementation of common values in pluralist societies—both research positions above begin in the crisis of traditions and they both seek to take the pluralistic conditions of our time seriously. The ethical position (Colnerud et al.) has made teachers' everyday work in the classroom its main issue of concern, seeking to offer them a professional ethics or an ethical codex that can reduce teachers' ambivalence and prevent difficult moral situations from happening. This kind of risk management is probably (and unfortunately) much needed in many schools, but the problem in relying too heavily on an ethical codex, as we have seen with Bauman, is that it risks institutionalizing away moral ambivalence, replacing the cultivation of teachers' and students' moral judgement with *professional judgement*, that is, an ethical codex for teachers and classroom rules for students.

The political position (Englund et al.), on the other hand, emphasizes teachers' responsibility for creating respectful and tolerant dialogue-friendly classrooms and in its openness to dialogue, the deliberative model invites certain ambivalence into the formative task of education. In our view, however, the deliberative model tends to replace moral judgement with *rational judgement* in its overemphasis on cultivating students' argumentative capabilities. In a time when so-called alternative facts are spreading across the globe, rational judgement and rational argumentation are more important than ever. Following Bauman, however, a rational consensus established in the classroom cannot relieve us from the uncertainty and loneliness of moral choice and action that is needed outside the classroom, that is, in the embodiment of moral action in lived and concrete cases. Even if discursive ethics in the short run might decrease moral agony by offering the comfort of consensus, it also decreases the possibility so much needed today of cultivating personal moral judgement in relation to complex, lived and 'worldly' problems. Or, as Dahlberg and Moss (2005) put it, '[m]oving into postmodernity offers the possibility to re-personalise ethics and assume the responsibility which comes from facing and making choices, rather than following universal codes or laws' (p. 70).

In addition, and by returning to Mollenhauer's idea that fostering is always about the simultaneous preservation and renewal of cultural heritage, both positions above operate within a specific relationship to time. In our view, they risk becoming one-sidedly *focused on renewal for the future* and, in doing so, they both seem to have forgotten the simultaneous *preservation of the content* that the teacher is responsible for 'passing on' to the next generation. In taking for granted the content to be fostered, the deliberative model seems to rely heavily on the modern illusion that the liberal democratic values and the cultural heritage that is to be deliberated about are still intact. For example, the procedure itself already relies on tolerance and openness as core and necessary values for the rational conversation it seeks to create. The ethical position, on the other hand, is focused on inventing an ethics for teachers and codes of conduct for students, as if there is no cultural heritage to take into consideration and to pass on.

Thus, from the World War II and onwards, Swedish educational research and practice has been building for the future without acknowledging the cultural heritage that needs to

be passed on, ignoring the fact that this heritage always and necessarily orients education towards the past, that is, to tradition. What the above loss of content and moral judgement indicate, we argue, is a loss of tradition and the originary morality of the subject (Bauman) suggesting that the fostering task of the teacher has no anchor points in the past from which it can, in the present, educationally prepare the pupils for the future. In this sense, we argue, there is something essentially uneducational in the above-mentioned Swedish values education research. The question we wish to turn to now, given the above case study, is how teachers can retrieve a content when fostering values in schools that both acknowledges the work that has been put down by previous generations and our embeddedness in the necessary incompleteness of living traditions (MacIntyre 1985).

Fostering in Crises—Educational Responses

In suggesting a way forward, we build on the distinction between *educating for common values*—which entails a belief in pre-existing commonalities or rules of conduct that can be directly implemented into schools, forming pupils into morally responsible citizens—and *making values common in and through education*. The latter entails, we argue, a continuous aspiration for *creating commonalities* in a time when people have little in common (the crisis of tradition) and for *cultivating educational judgement* in a time when teacher authority cannot be taken for granted (the legitimation crisis) (Bergdahl and Langmann 2017). In this last part of the paper, then, we shift the focus from what has been lost in educational research on values education, to what can be retrieved, suggesting a three-pronged educational response to the crises and losses articulated above. This response involves (a) studying traditions between the past and the future (time–space); (b) choosing from a fragmented past (judgement); and (c) remaining in translation (movement).

Studying Traditions Between the Past and the Future (space–time)

The fostering task of the teacher, following Mollenhauer (2014), is first and foremost about passing on a *past*, in the *present*—through teaching—into the *future* ‘in which the past continues its life, thanks to its renewal’ (Paperzak 2012, p. 59). After the crisis of tradition in Western democracies, however, the passing on of values in education confronts both teachers and students to a ‘gap in time’ since tradition no longer (if it ever could) can provide them with any self-evident content of these values. This gap or threshold, which Arendt (1962) describes as a ‘thought event’, represents the necessity of finding anew an *educational time–space* which allows children and young people to *both* take on *and* renew the world in which they have been born. This calls upon the teacher to create an educational experience in the classroom where, to use the words of Masschelein and Simons (2013), nothing is shared from the beginning but where everything has the possibility to be shared. The conditions for such a common experiences lies not in the grandness of method or in a specific didactic, but, rather, in the small everyday gestures of the teacher. As Masschelein and Simons put it:

[S]omeone who puts, for instance, a book on the table accompanied by even a minimal sentence such as ‘this is interesting’, becomes a teacher ... Placing the book on the table disconnects it from its usage in society – it becomes a ‘school book’ or common matter that becomes free for study and exercise. And being confronted by

something that is of free use at once transforms others into students: they can renew its use through study and exercise, they can make new use of it (2010, p. 675).

In this sense, we argue, the fostering task of education, ‘after Auschwitz’, operates *in the creative gap* between past and future, between what is and what can be, the actual and the possible. Thus, teaching values in school by turning to tradition(s) can never be about introducing the coming generation into a neat set of already common values which content is unambiguously defined. Rather, the wager here is that fostering is about presenting the values of the past as *contested objects of study*, that is, as ‘common goods’ to rediscover, renew and possibly reject *through study and exercise*. Values education, in this sense, becomes the name of a shared educational temporality between the past and the future that opens ‘an unbreakable combination of repetition and renewal, loyalty and dissidence’ (Paperzak 2012, p. 60).⁶

The aim of this critical ‘experience in thinking’ (Arendt 1962, p. 14), however, is *not* to teach children how they should live their lives as moral beings, *nor* to educate them ‘in the art of living’ (ibid. p. 195). By contrast—and this is radically different from what is suggested in the values education research above—the fostering task of teachers is about ‘teaching children what the world is like’ by studying its traditions and its pasts (ibid. p. 195). Values education, then, in our sense, offers a unique time–space in the classroom where teachers and pupils, through study and exercise, can rediscover (from the past) and renew (for the future) those values that previous generations have cherished by taking an interest in and by critically engaging in them.

Choosing from a Fragmented Past (judgement)

How, then, do we turn values such as freedom, equality, tolerance and generosity into objects of study and matters of common concern? Since thinking and judging always needs an object—a place or a topos where thinking can unfold (Løvlie 2012)—teachers and educators need to give children and young people something concrete to study from the past. Or put differently, teachers have to put something ‘worldly’ between them and the students when fostering the coming generation; otherwise, the students will have nothing to relate to, take interest in, and, hence, to *make common* through study and exercise (Masschelein and Simons 2013). In other words, there needs to be something specific from the past that summons children and young people to a thinking-and-judging-in-response (Paperzak 2012).

Following Arendt (1962) the past most powerfully lives on in recollection, in the stories we tell and the examples we give. However, after the breakdown of tradition—‘which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is’ (Arendt 1962, p. 5)—how do teachers choose from the past what is a ‘valued heritage’ to pass on? Which stories should they tell about freedom, equality, generosity and tolerance, and which examples should they give?

One way of responding to these questions is to use Arendt’s distinction between two different ways of relating to the past: as a *continuity* handed down from generation to generation across centuries, or as a *fragmentation* that nevertheless can be retrieved and collected to give ‘some assurance in confronting specific questions’ in our present situation

⁶ In order to remain in this educational time–space, the teacher needs to continuously negotiate between two contradictory but interrelated educational tasks—the love of what the past and present society cherishes and finds valuable (preservation) and the love of children and young people as a new generation (renewal) (Arendt 1962; Masschelein and Simons 2013).

(Arendt 1962, p. 15). For Arendt, therefore, the past is not a history of continuous progress (conservative approaches to education), nor a history of constant domination (radical approaches to education), but a series of innovations and experimentations in themselves ‘full of breaks and fissures and the kind of reinventions’ that the coming generation can make (Gordon 2001, p. 49). Hence, it is in assuming responsibility for the world, as a representative for it in a movement between continuity and fragmentation, that *the authority of the teacher* is given its right position (Arendt 1962).

For Arendt, ‘[t]he problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition’ (1962, p. 195). Suggesting that the world is ‘not structured by authority’ and yet ‘cannot forgo it’ indicates, for Arendt (1962), that there is no self-evident qualification or rule that a teacher can rely on when choosing from the past which valued heritage to pass on. Authority, however, for Arendt, has a very specific meaning being the form that the teacher’s *responsibility for the world* takes on in schools (ibid.). Hence, authority is distinct from both qualifications and rule abidance and if qualification consists in knowing what the world is like and instructing others in it (Arendt 1962), authority rests with assuming responsibility for the world and deciding, in teaching, what to ‘put on the table’, how to put it there and why. Choosing from fragmented traditions, then, is about *letting responsibility for the world take the form of authority*—creating continuity in a time when continuity is lost.

‘Thinking without remembering’, however, ‘yields only stammering’ (Paperzak 2012, p. 62). If the teacher’s own relation to the past has not been driven by an active and critical appropriation of ‘lost treasures’, he or she has not much to offer in teaching. To pass on a particular cultural heritage as a teacher is, thus, to constantly *make educational judgements* about which stories and examples about freedom, equality, tolerance and generosity that should be received and renewed from a ‘fragmented past’ (Arendt 1962, p. 94). In this context, the responsibility of the teacher is not to reproduce one specific cultural heritage nor to turn up empty handed, but to respond: ‘Here I am’ and ‘This is interesting’, thereby allowing the values of the past to be transformed into a teaching matter and the pupils into a concerned public (Masschelein and Simons 2013). Educational judgement, in other words, is about deciding—in teaching—*not* how a good life should be lived, but which stories and values of the past that are important *to study* today and why.

Remaining in Translation (movement)

As a way of studying the tradition by choosing from a fragmented past, the notion of translation becomes helpful, particularly if one wants to move beyond the ideal of the autonomous liberal subject in values education and, instead, recognize the essentially relational and fragmented character of human existence. If one takes the heritage of Western humanistic traditions as simply transmitted, that is, as a passing on of ‘what has always been ours’ (Gregoriou 2004, p. 260), one fails to recognize that every tradition already is marked by heterogeneity and multiplicity as well as by what it leaves out and forgets (e.g. the non-West) (Ruitenbergh 2015; see also Enslin and Horsthemke 2014; Peters 2015). For example, each presentation of a particular heritage in the classroom—be it a key text in Western literature, a central mathematical formula or a liberal democratic value such as equality, justice or freedom—is also effected by what it overlooks and ignores (Ruitenbergh 2015). Or put differently, since the heritage of Western traditions no longer neatly can be distinguishable from other traditions, it is always contestable and open to

change. Hence, ‘no construction of a heritage is unproblematically singular, a tidy package that can be passed on intact to a next generation’ (Ruitenbergh 2015, p. 74).

In addition, teachers need to be aware of both having a responsibility to retrieve and to pass on a valued heritage to a new generation *and* of having received an inheritance themselves. In this sense, all teachers are always already heirs of a specific cultural heritage even before explicitly assuming (or rejecting) the responsibility for its passing on (Ruitenbergh 2015). As Derrida puts it: ‘That we *are* heirs does not mean that we *have* or that we *receive* this or that, some inheritance that enriches us one day with this or that, but that the *being* of what we are *is* first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not’ (Derrida 1994, p. 54).

The task of ‘passing on’ a cultural heritage in values education, therefore, happens not in the form of simple transmission but of *constant translation*. ‘What is proper to culture’, Derrida writes, ‘is not to be identical to itself’ (1992, p. 9). In other words, what is ‘proper’ to a cultural heritage is to be always already in the process of being inherited, and, therefore, of being translated to the next generation (Ruitenbergh 2015; Bergdahl 2009). In translation—of literary texts as well as of culture and values—no translation is ever an exact copy of that which is being translated. In this sense, inheritance ‘is never a given, it is always a task’ (Derrida 1994, p. 67), and the task of both teachers and students is, first, to acknowledge the cultural heritage that is given to them, and, second, to study and interrogate this heritage but also to let themselves be studied and interrogated by it (Ruitenbergh 2015).

In this way, *making values common in and through education* turns teachers and students into critical translators of traditions but also into *subjects in translation*. Denise Egéa-Kuehne, echoing Derrida, describes this process of being in constant motion between a fidelity to what has been passed on to us (preservation) and the betrayal that every new translation represents (renewal) in the following way:

Since our heritage comes before us, it comes to us; it is received by us without our being given a chance to choose it. We are born to it, like we are born to our language which is part of it. What is left to us is the power to reaffirm it, that is to accept it, and to confirm it. Yet, not without a critical step ... Consequently and paradoxically, one can be faithful to one’s heritage only in as much as one accepts to be unfaithful to it, to analyze it, to critique it, to interpret it, relentlessly (Egéa-Kuehne 2003, p. 273).

Turning values such as freedom, equality, tolerance and generosity into contested objects of study and matters of common concern, then, is a task that always deals with a heterogeneous and fragmented heritage and therefore always calls for translation. Studying the tradition in this critical and *transformative sense* includes preparing the coming generation for becoming critical translators themselves, while acknowledging their own embeddedness in tradition, being ‘careful not to destroy the “rich and strange”, “the coral” and the “pearls” [of the past], which can probably be saved only as fragments’ (Arendt 1977, p. 212).

A third dimension, then, of what it might mean to make values common and to cultivate educational judgement in fragmented times is about *remaining in translation* as a continuous *movement* between the past and the future, between continuity and change—making the transgression between these positions possible at all. Hence, as a movement of continuous translation within the triadic relationship between the teacher, the pupil and the content being taught, the fostering task of the teacher is always of an indirect character: it is conducted via the content being studied, that is, through the stories and examples of the values of the past that have been presented as objects of study. Given the inevitable risk of

manipulation, and, at the same time, the simultaneous and urgent need for cultivating our freedom to make moral judgements—given also the call to respond educationally to the past—we argue that *the direct task* of the teacher is about choosing from the fragmented past what to ‘put on the table’ as an object of study, how to put it there and why. Cultivating the pupils’ freedom to think and make moral judgements, on the other hand, is always of an *indirect character* due to the necessity of safeguarding against manipulation and indoctrination. In other words, in the midst of the crises of tradition and authority in Western societies, the fostering task of the teacher is to take *direct responsibility* for the world in passing on a ‘valued heritage’, whereas the constant translation involved in this ‘passing on’ calls for indirect formation—and transformation—of both the teacher (the translator), the pupil and the content being translated.

Conclusion: Time for Values

Given the urgency of Adorno’s call it is, we argue, time for values. This despite the fact that there is, ‘after Auschwitz’, neither any self-evident understanding of which specific content to pass on, nor any given authority to rely on when doing so.

Since our heritage comes before us, it also comes to us (Eg ea-Kuehne 2003). In this sense, there is no escape from tradition when fostering values in schools, nor from the unavoidable ambivalence and loneliness that comes with moral responsibility and moral choice after the breakdown of tradition in Western democracies. The shift from *educating for common values* to *making values common* in and through education that we have been arguing for, then, entails an aspiration for continuously creating new communalities *amidst* tradition, by offering children and young people something concrete to study from the past. Or put differently, *something* from the world needs to summon the coming generation to a thinking-and-judging-in-response to ‘the old’ and *someone* needs to prepare them to continuously translate ‘the old’ into ‘the new’ in concrete and lived cases. In this sense, we are advocating a ‘living on’ of the fostering task of education by issuing a reminder of its lost dimensions, that is, of the already moral character of our existence and of our inevitable embeddedness *in* living traditions.

Issuing a call to make values common in a time of its crisis might seem paradoxical, perhaps even improper. However, in search of a position beyond both progressivist utopianism and conservative nostalgia, we have proposed three educational responses to what it might mean to continually ‘make values common’ in a time of crises. We propose (a) that by *studying tradition on the threshold between preservation and renewal*, the fostering task of education can operate in the creative gap between past and future, between what is and what can be, the actual and the possible; (b) that by choosing from a fragmented past the teacher needs to constantly *make educational judgments and decisions* about which stories and examples that are worthy of being received and renewed; and (c) that the concept of *translation* can help us to move beyond the autonomous liberal subject when cultivating moral judgement, acknowledging both our embeddedness in tradition and the essentially relational and fragmented character of human existence. This is how, we argue, the valued ‘pearls’ of the past can become true gifts to inherit, and how the fostering work done by the present generation of teachers and pupils can live on into the new.

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