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A New Rootedness? Education in the Technological Age

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Abstract This paper explores the challenges facing educators in a time when modern technology, and especially modern social technology, has an increasingly powerful hold on our lives. The educational challenge does not primarily concern questions concerning the use of technology in the classroom, or as part of the learning environment, but a changeover in the whole social environment that marks our time. Taking guidance from Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey and Nietzsche, the essay explores what we want the education of children to achieve, and how, if at all, this can be achieved in an age of modern social technology. The central argument is that the most basic educational goal of human flourishing cannot be achieved today as long as the main criteria of "best practice" in the classroom foreground pupil enjoyment rather than endurance of suffering. The paradox is that any call for the latter is now largely heard in a way cultivated by the culture of the former: namely, poorly and vulgarly, associated only with bullying authoritarianism, rather than the devoted care of teachers who want to awaken their pupils to self-responsibility.

Keywords Education · Social Technology · Dewey · Heidegger · Wittgenstein · Nietzsche

Introduction

There is little doubt that European societies have undergone a profound transformation in the last two-hundred years: from the self-sufficient farm economies of pre-industrial times, through a period of intense industrialisation and urbanisation, and now the globalisation of tele-technology and trans-national capitalism. In the course of these developments

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educational regimes have undergone related changes: from the rote schools, through the progressive movement, and into our own performance focussed approaches in mass education. How should we think through questions concerning *the goal of education in our time*? This essay considers contributions to this issue from four thinkers who I regard as most alive to the changes taking place in our time: Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey and Nietzsche. Two interrelated themes are highlighted. The first, concerns the *goal* of education; the second concerns the characterisation of our *time*. The essay answers the first question in terms of human *flourishing in a place*; and the second in terms of *the ubiquity of modern social technology*. These answers speak to a distinctive and new social condition: the integration of powerfully de-localising, dis-placing technological devices into traditionally localised forms of life, rooted in a place. The challenge for educators in this tensional situation is how, if at all, the basic goal of education might still be attained: of whether a new rootedness might be cultivated, even in the technological age.

Anticipating developments that are still underway, Martin Heidegger invited his audience at a memorial address delivered in his hometown of Meskirch in 1955 to "dwell upon that which concerns us, each one of us, *here*, on this patch of home ground, and *now*, in the present hour of history" (Heidegger 1959, p. 47). Heidegger thinks that the "now" of our present hour of history is marked precisely by a distinctive loss of rootedness, the accelerating deracination of our lives from any "patch of home ground", an uprooting from any definite "here" by new forms of social technology. In this essay I will try to introduce the problem this new social condition raises with respect to the education of children in our time. Going beyond any atavistic nostalgia for the old nativism—where education prepared children for life as a "native" of a hometown or country, rooted in the *milieu* of a regional or national community—I will argue that we are not seeing a transition from rootedness to rootlessness, but *a transition within a general space of nativisation*, and the emergence of what I will call (taking a word from digital-marketing professionals) "digital natives" The implications of this transition for the education of children today are introduced and briefly considered.

The Technological Age

"What really is happening in our age?" asks Heidegger. He articulates the change he sees underway in terms of what he calls "a revolution in leading concepts" (Heidegger 1959, p. 50). The idea here is of a revolution in the most basic concepts through which and in terms of which we understand the world and the significance of our lives; the concepts which are fundamental to the pre-theoretical "understanding of Being" that has come down to us. It is a changeover from a conceptual formation that he regards as "traditional" to one that he calls "technological".

This revolution "developed in the seventeenth century first and only in Europe"; but today, Heidegger suggests, it has grown worldwide and now "rules the whole earth" (Heidegger 1959, p. 50). And this revolution, the most fundamental revolution inside what we perhaps too casually call "the industrial revolution", is not over. Even now something newly new is just "beginning":

> What we know now as the technology of film and television, of transportation and especially air transportation, of news reporting, and as medical and nutritional technology, is presumably only a crude start. No one can foresee the radical changes to come. But technological advance will move faster and faster and can never be

> stopped. In all areas of his existence, man will be encircled ever more tightly by the forces of technology. (Heidegger 1959, p. 51)

Heidegger's view of the history of (globalising) Europe is that it is characterised from its inception in classical Greek antiquity by the growth of a world-understanding which encourages and sustains a distinctively *objective* and *scientific* interest in everything that is, with the disclosed world understood increasingly as "the natural world" and ourselves as "natural creatures". Hand-in-hand with this world-historical development is the growing prevalence of a "technological" mode of revealing everything that is. The point here is not simply that science delivers technological advances and new technological devices, but that scientific practice, and our thinking more generally, gets caught up in a world-understanding which takes measurability, calculability and orderability (under orders, at our disposal) as criteria for the "objectively real". This prevailing pre-reflective and pre-theoretical orientation drives us towards ways of revealing reality that Heidegger calls technological. And, in this prevailing set-up, the world-understanding that belonged to "the old rootedness"—to ways of living that had flourished on some "patch of home ground"—"is being lost" (Heidegger 1959, p. 55).

The language of roots and soil—and a corresponding anxiety regarding up-rootedness and deracination in the technological age—dominates Heidegger's reflections. He quotes the poet Johann Peter Hebel approvingly: "We are plants" (Heidegger 1959, p. 47). I will try to graft a Derridean variant onto this fertile metaphor towards the end of the essay, but we should be prepared already to guard against Heidegger's pathos-filled investments in it. What Heidegger picks up on in the movement of history into our time is the way the globalising technological age transforms the conditions in which the "plant" human being had creatively flourished hitherto. The problem is that Heidegger's conception of the new condition is freighted by his nativist (and insistently anti-Judaic) investments, figuring it as homeless, rootless and worldless (he suggests, for example, that "movies…give the illusion of a world that is no world" (Heidegger 1959, p. 48)). "Home", for Heidegger, is always a "native home", a "hometown" in a "homeland", a people and a land, settled in a place, a "patch of home ground" where alone the plants that we are can flourish.

Flourishing, I want to say with Heidegger, does presuppose some kind of *milieu* which provides what Derrida calls a certain "racinating function" (Derrida 1976, p. 101). Heidegger's affirmations of the flowering made possible in the old rootedness are certainly continuous with his problematic investments. However, what we need to take our leave from is less the idea of (let's call it) "nativisation" as such, but the disastrous temptation to represent that in exclusively "blood and soil" terms. Against Heidegger, I will want to affirm *another* nativisation—the being-at-home of a more cosmopolitan plant—that belongs, as Nietzsche stressed, to a human being who has achieved "independence of any *definite* milieu" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 153). I will describe this in terms of the new rootedness of "digital natives", and the problem of education in an age in which the old rootedness is being lost concerns, especially, them.

How should we respond to the call to *think* on this topic? What if thinking too is, today, increasingly caught up in the vortex of the technological revolution in basic concepts? Heidegger thinks it is. Corresponding to his distinction between traditional and technological relations to the world and nature, Heidegger distinguishes between "meditative" and "calculative" thinking (Heidegger 1959, p. 47). While the former "dwells on what lies close, and meditates on what lies closest", the latter is bent on endlessly constructing "far-reaching plans" with "definite results", "computing" ever more efficient "solutions",

"organization" and "automation" in a domain of "given" possibilities and conditions (Heidegger 1959, p. 46).

One fruitful line of engagement with Heidegger's ideas here would be to underline the extent to which public policy in education today is increasingly dominated by this kind of calculative thinking. Such planning and organising in education belongs deep inside the more general "revolution in leading concepts" underway, and it seems to me undeniable that the spiralling efforts to "manage" schools ever more efficiently leads only to its further bureaucratisation and to endless administration. However, there is a risk that an inquiry of that kind, fascinating though it would doubtless be, might recoil towards a pious "critique" of education management as such. In fact, that kind of one-sidedeness is exactly what Heidegger urges us to avoid. Fully compatible with an approach which seeks to think a mode of nativisation *with(in)* technology, Heidegger does not recommend that we denounce or resist or reject technological and calculative thinking. Indeed, he insists that it "remains *indispensable*" (Heidegger 1959, p. 46). Equally, he insists too that "the arrangements, devices, and machinery of technology are to a greater or lesser extent *indispensable*…We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to ever greater advances" (Heidegger 1959, p. 55). So there is no nostalgic hope or suggestion from Heidegger simply to return to the old world, still less a retreat into an exclusively meditative mode in the face of the new ("worldless") one. Nevertheless, Heidegger is concerned, and I think rightly concerned, that the hegemonic character of calculative thinking and planning in our time prevents us from thinking clearly about the *goal* of all this planning in education: the cultivation of young plants.

Schools may ban the use of mobile devices but they are far from free of technological thinking. Educators in the technological age are swamped by endless "new initiatives" for school governance in which we lurch from one "school plan" to another, one "attainment target" to another, one "assessment method" to another, one "performance indicator" to another, and so on and on. I think there is no doubt that this frenzy of planning has a singular "definite result" in view today too: namely, and precisely, "definite results". Results conceived in terms of measurable test scores and exam results come to figure as *the* fundamental "goal" and measure of "success" of a school's work. In this school system many schools lag behind those assessed as "outstanding" on this measure of "results". Is this what Heidegger had in view when he said, in a lecture for science teachers that he delivered in the vocational school of the State Academy for the Continuing Education of Teachers in 1962: "the whole school system…lags behind with regard to the goal of its work in this age" (Heidegger 1998, p. 130)? Was Heidegger concerned that the school system was altogether failing in its goal of delivering outstanding results across the piece?

No, "the goal of its work in this age" has its stress on the new conditions of our time. As he goes on to say: "It can be doubted whether the talk about the professional training school, about general education, about education as a whole, still meets the circumstances that are formed by the technological age" (Heidegger 1998, p. 130). And the goal of its work? Holding on to the poetic metaphor, I want to suggest that the goal of its work is and remains what it has always been: to cultivate the young plant "human being" so that it can flourish in its environment. Today we have the special question of how to cultivate such a plant in an altogether different environment from the traditional one, an environment in which the old rootedness is being lost, an environment which might even seem no longer an environment, no longer a soil in which to take root. I want now to turn to this question.

The Progressive Legacy

Heidegger stresses how far developments in the school system lag behind in taking into account the mutation in our time that concerns him. However, changes in the school system were (as he indicates) certainly happening and, indeed, a transition from "traditional" to "modern" and "progressive" educational systems was well underway when he was writing. Those changes were, in my view, profoundly caught up in the more general cultural mutation in Europe's industrial modernity that Heidegger attends to. This mutation is not only associated with ideas of scientific and technological "progress", but also and equally with a political transformation that Nietzsche summarised ("without implying any praise or blame") as "the *democratic* movement in Europe" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 153). As John Dewey saw, this general cultural situation gives the developments in education reform of this time a somewhat complex aspect, marked simultaneously by two contextual tensional situations: the first relating to the general cultural transition from traditional to scientific and democratic cultural ideals; the second relating to the transition from traditional to modern and progressive educational ideas (see Childs 1966, p. 61).

Traditional education for children in Europe (including, as Nietzsche put it, "the lands where Europe's influence predominates" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 106)) can be broadly characterised in terms of a "rote school" or "three-Rs" system. Dewey's basic claim is that the tensional situation concerning the transition from this traditional school system towards a more "modern" and "progressive" one must be seen in the light of a larger social situation arising from European scientific and political modernity. School reform programmes nest within a wider tensional situation in which ideas from experimental science and increasingly democratic aspirations were transforming life quite generally. Educational reforms underway in the course of the industrial revolution thus belong inside a transition from the cultural reproduction of "the lore and wisdom" (Dewey 1938, p. 35) of the old "self-sufficient farm economy" (Childs 1966, p. 61), towards a more scientific and technical approach in a new industrial and increasingly urban life in parliamentary democracies.

Dewey's commentary on the reform process represents the school situation as embedded within the larger social situation of European modernity. And he clearly saw that the programme of the rote school was "bound to disintegrate" under the impact of the changing social situation (see Child 1966, p. 61). It is in this context that modern and progressive movements in education emerged.

Dewey's sense of the historical specificity of the progressive movement in education gives his own reflections on educational reform a richness often lacking in merely theoretical discourses. Dewey is rightly regarded as a progressive reformer in educational thinking. However, it is less frequently acknowledged that he refused to take sides in the debate between "traditional" and "progressive" educational theories as these were being practically developed. For Dewey, the merits of the latter lie in the way in which they foreground (in theory) the role of education in fostering the expression and cultivation of *individuality*. In the context of a newly democratic society, where each one counts one (and hence where, for example, history teaching might aspire to be "history for all"), Dewey does not reject that ambition. However, as we shall see, he regards a central plank of the progressive programme that was developing as fundamentally inimical to achieving anything but a poor and vulgar variant of that democratic goal—or even to see it as democratic progress in name only.

Dewey's principle objection to the progressive philosophy he saw developing, and the basis of his further doubts about it, is that it is essentially reactive. Its theory is constructed,

that is to say, in simple negating opposition to traditional theory, rather than through the development of a positive basic idea of its own. “Departure from the old solves no problems”, says Dewey, and while he welcomes the new stress on student “personal experience”, he is especially critical of the progressive aversion to a teacher’s “control” and “authority” in the classroom, and its correlative emphasis on wanting to make school work *enjoyable* for children: “an experience may be immediately enjoyable and yet promote the formation of a slack and careless attitude” (Dewey 1938, p. 8). Progressives in practice were, for Dewey, risking throwing the baby out with the bathwater in their drive for their supposedly democratic reforms.

For Dewey, by contrast, the fault of the traditional approach was not that the authority of the teacher was inappropriate or undeserved, or that children’s experiences in the classroom were not enjoyable, but that it had become radically unsuited to what I am calling the most basic educational goal: of forming human beings capable of flourishing *here and now*. While it was (more or less) suited to preparing children for (a pretty demanding and difficult) life in the old self-sufficient farm economy, the rote school is no way to prepare them for life in the new (and in newly new ways demanding and difficult) industrial society and a democratic age. Totally “foreign to the situations of life outside the school” the traditional approach provided no “impetus to learn”, and resulted only in “ennui and boredom” (Dewey 1938, p. 9).

Boring, unpleasant, and painful tasks are obviously *not* the thing. Nor is it a matter of making education disagreeable—but for Dewey “enjoyment” and “agreeableness” are not what matter either. What matters in an educational programme is how far it enables or (conversely) closes down the possibilities of a child’s later life in society. What sort of adult human being does it cultivate? Does it allow them to go forward *on their own* in new situations, or does it have the effect of narrowing “the field of further experience” (Dewey 1938, p. 8)? The education should be humane, Dewey had no doubt about that. However, it should not be bent on indulging the children’s “internal” conditions either. The over-indulged child, Dewy insists, will become an adult quite unlike his parents, who had received a completely different kind of education themselves. The over-indulged child will be competent only to “do what he feels like doing” and to avoid all situations “which require effort and perseverance in overcoming obstacles” (Dewy 1938, p. 14), Dewey is particularly critical of short-sighted parents and progressive teachers who were then “acting upon the idea of subordinating objective conditions to internal ones, subordinating *everything* in the school, that is, to the immediate inclinations and feeling of the young” (Dewey 1938, p. 16). Dewey would have recognised Wittgenstein’s concern when he (Wittgenstein) later observed that this progressive tendency was becoming increasingly matter of course in our time:

> I think the way people are educated nowadays tends to diminish their capacity for suffering. At present a school is reckoned good “if the children have a good time”. And that used not to be the criterion. Parents moreover want their children to grow up like themselves (only more so), but nevertheless subject them to an education *quite* different from their own.—Endurance of suffering isn’t rated highly because there is supposed not to be any suffering—really it’s out of date. (Wittgenstein 1980, p. 71)

Neither Dewey nor Wittgenstein is advocating corporal punishment, bullying, or punitive teaching regimes. On the other hand, they look on with dismay at progressive opposition to a certain kind of “endurance of suffering” that, in their view, should belong *internally* to education as an experientially demanding process.

History for All

It is perhaps a mark of how far the change in educational fashion has entered our thinking that we (and I include myself here) hardly know what to make of the idea that developing capacities for the “endurance of suffering” should be thought internal to “best practice” in schools. That sounds, to our ears, positively sadistic.

To underline that point, and to see at the same time the acuity of Wittgenstein’s sense of the changing educational culture, I want to quote some conclusions from a 2011 Ofsted survey report, entitled “History for All” (Ofsted, 2011). The Ofsted report’s aim was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of history teaching in primary and secondary schools in England. There is nothing outrageous in it, I simply want to foreground a dimension of its assessment that has become, I think, matter of course for us: the emphasis on children having enjoyable experiences in the classroom.

Here is a shredded citation of a sixty-seven page document, beginning with the second paragraph of the Executive Summary of history teaching overall:

> History was generally taught well and the subject was well led. Most pupils enjoyed [their] lessons.

And the first of the “Key Findings”:

> In the schools visited history was generally a popular and successful subject, which many pupils enjoyed.

The third point on teaching in Primary Schools:

> Pupils’ attitudes to history were good or better in the schools visited. They enjoyed their lessons, regarded history as fun.

In the fourth bullet point on the report of Key Stage 3 teaching rated “good”, we are told:

> Students enjoyed the subject

In the third point on teaching in Primary Schools thought excellent, the report says:

> [The] outstanding teaching and learning in history…helps to explain…why many pupils enjoy history.

The Report cites a school visit to a Secondary School highlighting:

> Students enjoyed the lessons and the many opportunities they had to take part in historical drama, debates and discussions.

With regard to the training of Secondary School history teachers, the Report emphasises that one of the four most crucial factors in lessons that were considered “effective” was that

> the students’ attitudes were excellent, firmly rooted in the students’ confidence in the teacher and their experience of enjoyable and worthwhile history.

On curriculum design the Report says that it should be “based on capturing pupils’ imaginations” and quotes her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills warning that:

> focusing too much on the three core subjects can have negative effects on the curriculum in terms of breadth, balance and pupils’ enjoyment.

Secondary Schools were encouraged to arrange for their students to attend regular sessions at their local university. This would

> develop their thinking in history through activities that were focused but also enjoyable.

Well that's enough of that. All this just to get *a sense of what* ***most*** *makes sense to us* about teaching and learning today. Obviously that's not all that makes sense to us: as we have seen, it is clearly not the only criterion that matters, but it is nevertheless a key consideration in our assessments of teaching that it can only be excellent when it is an enjoyable experience for the children.

Wittgenstein as Teacher

Wittgenstein contrasted the kind of education had by parents who wanted something entirely different for their children. Of course, the *world* of the parents and children had changed too. And it is fascinating, I think, that when Wittgenstein reflected on the mutation in the world that belongs to our time, his thoughts not only run close to Heidegger's considerations about technology, but turn in conclusion to the education and schooling of children. Here is a recollected conversation between Wittgenstein and the American philosopher O.K. Bouwsma from 1949 (just a year after his out-of-date remark):

> He began remarking about the changes in our way of life since the days of his parents in Vienna. "They would scarcely recognize this as the same world." It is the machines of course which are so obvious. But he had in mind certain changes in the kind of human beings we are, *incidental* to all these changes in our surroundings. There was a time in which our lives were furnished rather simply, a house, a place, tools so many, a beast, and a circle of people. In this simplicity and this stability one grew attached to a limited environment. This gave life a certain quality—roots. Now not only are people transient, but neighbourhoods do not remain the same. We live in surroundings to which we are not sentimentally attached. Most of what we use and own can be replaced by something just as good. He had once heard John Dewey talk about the kind of human being he wished by education to produce. "But I was a human being which was fitted to the old environment." How could he make such a human being in an altogether different environment? (Bouwsma 1986, p. 39)

The fact that Wittgenstein heard a talk by Dewey at all is amazing. Bouwsma does not ask him further about the event, but Dewey's diary for 1942 records him looking forward to going to "the Science Association meeting in Cambridge" in August that year (Martin 2002, p. 229). Unfortunately, there is no such association of that name which met in Cambridge at that time. However, Wittgenstein's biographer, Ray Monk, suggests that Dewey may have been referring to the Association for the Advancement of Science, which did meet there (personal communication). This seems very likely. For not only did that Association hold its meetings in Cambridge, they held them at Trinity, Wittgenstein's own college. He must have seen a notice of it. But, surprising co-incidence apart, the fact that Wittgenstein decided to attend the talk, and took a serious interest in what Dewey had to say, is really not so surprising at all. From 1920 to 1926 Wittgenstein had himself been a primary school teacher at three mountain village primary schools in Austria (in

Trattenbach, Puchberg and Otterthal), and questions of teaching and learning—conceived in terms of the inheritance of a culture and, especially, of a language—never left him. A word or two on this will prove helpful.

Significantly, Wittgenstein's time as a teacher coincided with the emergence of a developing school reform movement in the new Austrian republic:

> The school reformers, most of whom were socialists (Social Democrats), viewed the changes in orientation as politically necessary to free the future farming and working classes of the new republic from authoritarian attitudes towards learning and to fit them to participate as citizens of a democracy, actively weighing issues and deciding for themselves. (Bartley 1986, p. 80)

Wittgenstein was certainly not a signed-up supporter of every aspect of progressive education. But his own style, for the most part, fitted well (or well enough to stand assessment) with the aims of the Austrian school reform movement, in particular its emphasis on active learning. With the children he taught he put together skeletons of animals for use in elementary zoology; constructed models of steam-engines; made pulleys, and other mechanical instruments. And it wasn't all practical. He taught maths to a far higher level than required, insisting that "one could never begin algebra early enough" (Bartley 1986, p. 100). Famously, he also made and published a dictionary which was largely comprised of words entered by his pupils into word-books of their own. Wittgenstein's ambitions as a teacher were definitely aimed at their flourishing: the (earthy) phrase he apparently used again and again when explaining his educational goals was "to get the peasantry out of the muck" (Bartley 1986, p. 85).

Unfortunately, his efforts at the cultivation of the young flowers he was teaching, to help them rise above the mucky ground, didn't go down well with the adult peasantry at that time, for whom education was little more than a diversion from the considerable demands of ground dwelling. The farming heart of Austrian life outside Vienna had little need for what Dewey called "the chief social instrumentality for forming a type of human beings"—especially not a type of human beings that could actually "mount from the depth of his home ground up into the ether" (Heidegger 1959, p. 47). They had no interest to (as Wittgenstein is understood to have aimed) "awaken them to the life of the spirit, to the activity of thinking for themselves" (Bartley 1986, p. 101).

In making the dictionary Wittgenstein explicitly says that he was attempting to "awaken" an "orthographic conscience" in *each* of his pupils (Wittgenstein 1993, p. 19). Teaching spelling should not, Wittgenstein stressed in his preface to the dictionary, be interested in "average spelling" results: "It is not *the class* that should learn to spell but each *individual* student," and this requires that the individual student develops a strong sense of responsibility for their own spelling (Wittgenstein 1993, p. 15). The educational task is to cultivate such "awakening" in students. Indeed, the task here belongs to a teaching practice which aimed, quite generally, to cultivate *intense self-responsibility* in each individual student: "He should feel that he is the only author of his work and he alone should be responsible for it" (Wittgenstein 1993, p. 15). In Wittgenstein's view, as he maintained throughout his work in philosophy, becoming someone with *something to say*, and who can *explain* what they mean, is inseparable from the handing down to them the *use* of words in a language, so that there is a deep connection between "the concept of teaching and the concept of meaning" (Wittgenstein 1967, §412). And "teaching" here is not simply instruction but *training*: "any explanation has its foundation in training", he stressed, adding parenthetically "(Educators ought to remember this.)" (Wittgenstein 1967, §419). Who we become, the kind of human being we can be, is thus a profoundly

intergenerational affair, a “handing down” in tradition, and has its foundation in a training regime through which one acquires new possibilities of being and acting. When Wittgenstein spoke of children being “trained” he was using this word, he said, “in a way strictly analogous to the way in which we speak of an animal being trained” (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 77).

Wittgenstein was remembered as a demanding teacher by his pupils, on occasion cuffing them too (something he felt terrible about later in his life), and generally expecting complete honesty from them. This doesn’t help my case for seeing the interest in “endurance of suffering” as independent of attitudes verging on the sadistic. I will come back to this, but we should bear in mind too that Wittgenstein’s pupils also remember him showing “affection and tenderness” towards them (Bartley 1986, p. 89).

What kind of human being do we wish by education to produce? It is obviously some kind of social instrumentality. But I think that we should distinguish a social instrumentality in education which conceives it merely as an instrument in the service of the reproduction of a given social order, and the idea of a social instrumentality in education which finds in it the means to preserve the chance for every student “with a mind to do so” (Wittgenstein), “the impetus to learn” (Dewey), so that each may, “in his own manner and within his own limits”, “mount from the depth of his home ground up into the ether…into the open realm of the spirit” (Heidegger). The latter idea, conceived in terms of an awakening to self-responsibility, is, I believe, *fundamental* to the educational conception championed by Dewey and Wittgenstein, and is nicely framed by Heidegger as follows:

> The handing down in tradition is not a mere passing on, it is the preservation of what is original, it is the safeguarding of the new possibilities of the already spoken language…It [the language itself] lays claim to the human being to say the world anew from the language that is preserved. (Heidegger 1998, p. 142)

Wittgenstein’s (perhaps Tolstoy-inspired) hope that he could go into the countryside to educate the peasant youth failed, but it failed mainly because the adult peasantry did not want their children freed for thinking, and “they eventually ran him out of town” (Bartley 1986, p. 85). Nevertheless, the simplicity and stability of life in a self-sufficient farming economy was coming to an end in the age of technology. What is to be done in an age when the old rootedness is being lost? The education of former times formed human beings who were fitted for the old environment, and who could flourish *there*. Dewey and Wittgenstein clearly regarded the progressive recoil from traditional education as utterly inadequate to the goal of a schools work. It is simply not fit for anything but forming adults capable of doing only what they feel like doing: “the promotion of a slack and careless attitude”. This is a *very* attenuated and hollowed out kind of “individual”—someone who basically only does what he or she is inclined to do. So this is the question: can we make self-responsible human beings “capable of effort and perseverance in overcoming obstacles”—in an altogether different environment?

A New Nativisation

Heidegger had accepted that there was no question of abandoning technology, and he correctly foresaw that our lives would be increasingly caught up with newly new delocalising devises and social technologies. Nevertheless, despite his disastrous political investments, he remained open to the thought of creating a *new* “home ground” *with*

technology, one that "might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly disappearing autochthony in a changed form" (Heidegger 1959, p. 55).

Suspending Heidegger's political investments, perhaps we can construe the transition effected by the industrial revolution in a somewhat different way than he did: not as a transition from rootedness to rootlessness but as *a transition within a general space of nativisation*. The "home ground" is not best conceived as the "native soil" in which the creative work of spirit is rooted. Instead, we should think of the creative work as citing and reciting other such works which it represents as the stabilising and nourishing "soil" in which it is rooted—and as "other such works", their status is exactly the same too. *Texts bind themselves to texts*; they hold tight to them, attach themselves to them, adhere and circulate in them, sustain them as surviving still, and they do so within, as it were, a soilless—let's say virtual—space. In a passage which can be read as a commentary on Heidegger's representation of his rootedness in his "home soil", Derrida summarises this unheard of (and, within the classical genealogical schema of "a work with its roots in a soil" that Heidegger far too uncritically inherits, "forbidden") conception of racination in *Of Grammatology*:

> If a text always gives itself a certain representation of its own roots, those roots live only by that representation, by never touching the soil, so to speak. Which undoubtedly destroys their *radical essence*, but not the necessity of their *racinating function*. To say that *one always interweaves roots endlessly*, bending them to send down roots among the roots, to pass through the same points again, to redouble old adherences, to circulate among their differences, to coil around themselves or to be enveloped one in the other, to say that a text is never anything but a *system* of *roots*, *is* undoubtedly to contradict at once the concept of system and the pattern of the root. But…this [apparent] contradiction takes on the meaning of a contradiction, and receives its "illogicality," only through being thought within a finite configuration—the history of metaphysics—and caught within a root system which does not end there and which as yet has no name. (Derrida 1976, pp. 101–102)

And today we already see the emergence of new forms of nativisation: the being-(at-home)-there with(in) social technology that belongs to what I am calling digital natives. Increasingly, such natives no longer represent their roots as touching the soil of a *definite* milieu. As Heidegger anticipated, the newly new social technologies have powers of tele-mediatic delocalisation and virtualisation far beyond the old (generally national) forms. However, this does not mean that we have to regard the "works" of digital natives as fundamentally homeless, rootless and worldless, as Heidegger seems to have thought. Indeed, more than ever, we can think of the new condition as a liberation from dangerous fantasies of a pure "autochthonic" existence (Heidegger 1959, p. 48), and not from nativisation as such, not from every "racinating function".

The internet is also showing potential for the formation of free groupings, self-curated and roughly carved out spaces of what Wittgenstein had already called the globally "scattered" friends gathered by his writing (Wittgenstein 1980, p. 6). In this (virtualised and indefinite) way of *being-there* and *being-with* perhaps, once more, a few "exalted spirits who can fly off on their own" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 165) can emerge—but no longer in the form of, for example, new regional or national figures, but what Nietzsche conceived as a new "nomadic type of man" to come: individuals freed from dependence on a "*definite* milieu" and who would possess as a result the character of what are already called "cosmopolitan plants", plants that can grow almost anywhere: individuals with "a maximum of the art and power of adaptation" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 154).

But there is a further attribute of this new type of creative "native"—a type Nietzsche baptised as the "good Europeans"—that returns us rapidly to the theme of education for children. Nietzsche characterises the new "type of man" in terms of individuals for whom the call to *self-responsibility* is no longer "received almost as an offence" (Nietzsche 1973, 105); those who can best resist the temptation to immediately "shift off" responsibility on to someone else (Nietzsche 1973, p. 33), and who, moreover, are capable of "extending" their responsibility *furthest* (Nietzsche 1973, p. 124). Such people, these new European cosmopolitan plants, would thus "turn out [to be of a type] stronger and richer than has perhaps ever happened before" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 124). It is profoundly significant, I believe, that Nietzsche rests the success of this new development—the appearance of self-responsible individuals with this "tremendous multiplicity practice, art and mask" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 154)—on *one* principal factor: "the unprejudiced nature of his schooling" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 154). I will conclude with a brief consideration of this idea.

Poor and Vulgar Democrats

How to grow the plant "human being" in the technological age? Perhaps we now have the outlines, at least, of an answer. In this essay we have come to see a surprisingly consistent line of argument from Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Dewey and Nietzsche: the old school system was fitted to the world of a self-sufficient farm economy that has been worn away by globalising forces of tele-techno-mediatization and delocalisation. But the "progressive" backlash against that school system risks the worst. By switching like a solenoid in negating opposition to the old system, the progressives have introduced a new "fashion" for "enjoyable" schooling that threatens only slackness and irresponsibility. And in *the anonymity of masks that social technologies make available to digital natives today* isn't this exactly what we see *too often* (but not always and everywhere) in today's Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, Tumblr, Instagram, and so on. Even as it opens a space for a new nativisation, thus far it seems to cultivate best a waste-land of self-indulgent, vulgar, masked and de-responsibilised souls. I do not exclude myself. (Anxieties around this theme are central to a rising number of texts, perhaps most on point and recent being Turkle 2015.)

More and more we do not count a school good if children don't have a good time. Calculative thinking in education today takes this as *given*, and is perhaps overwhelmed by the difficulty of achieving that at the same time as achieving the calculable results that, in its own accounting, actually *count*. Does Nietzsche's reference to "unprejudiced schooling" direct thinking in a different direction? Derrida's discussion of Nietzsche's lectures "On the Future of our Educational Institutions" (1872) will bear more detailed attention than I can give it here. However, it is interesting to note that Derrida highlights Nietzsche placing special emphasis in those lectures on something Wittgenstein stressed too: "instruction by which the teacher must accustom his pupils to severe self-discipline in the language", and contrasting this with teaching which proceeds "as if one had no obligation to the present or the future of this language" (cited in Derrida 1985, p. 21). Derrida also cites Nietzsche stressing that teaching intended to be enjoyable, agreeable and attuned to the "inclinations and feelings of the young" is *not* the thing: "*Bildung* begins with obedience [*Gehorsamkeit*], subordination [*Unterordnung*], discipline [*Zucht*] and subjection [*Dienstbarkeit*] (cited in Derrida 1985, p. 28)

We are not used to hearing this sort of idea anymore, except perhaps from militaristic thugs and Nazis. And this is what really interests Derrida. Reading this controversial Nietzschean text Derrida stresses that "it would be naive and crude" to read a Hitlerian or Nazi resonance in it simply on the grounds of its appeal to the need for discipline and a "*grosse Führer*" in teaching (Derrida 1985, p. 28). But he (Derrida) notes too that "one may wonder why the only teaching institution or the only beginning of a teaching institution that ever succeeded in taking as its model the teaching of Nietzsche on teaching will have been a Nazi one" (Derrida 1985, p. 24). The point, however, is not to find a way of repudiating everything that might seem "scandalous to any contemporary anti-Nazi democrat" (Derrida 1985, p. 24). Indeed, Derrida totally refuses to "neutralize or defuse either what might be troublesome in it for democratic pedagogy or 'leftist' politics" (Derrida 1985, p. 23). Derrida does not want to make us (European democrats) comfortable here, admitting that even if Nazism "far from being the regeneration called for by these lectures of 1872, were only a symptom of the accelerated decomposition of European culture and society as diagnosed, it still remains to be explained how reactive degeneration could exploit the same language, the same words, the same utterances, the same rallying cries as the active forces to which it stands opposed" (Derrida 1985, p. 29).

I will come back to this shortly, but it is important first to see how Nietzsche's affirmation of an education that cultivates self-discipline through obedience to a "*Führer*" belongs intimately to his revolt against what he (Nietzsche) clearly conceives of as a distinctively *prejudiced* education. Derrida summarises as follows:

> When the lectures appear to recommend linguistic discipline as a counter to the kind of "academic freedom" that leaves students and teachers free to their own thoughts or programs, it is not in order to set constraint over against freedom. Behind "academic freedom" one can discern the silhouette of a constraint which is all the more ferocious and implacable because it conceals and disguises itself in the form of *laissez-faire*. Through the said "academic freedom," it is the state that controls everything… The lectures can thus be read as a modern critique of the cultural machinery of state and of the educational system that was, even in yesterday's industrial society, a fundamental part of the state apparatus. If today such an apparatus is on its way to being in part replaced by the media and in part associated with them, this only makes Nietzsche's critique of journalism—which he never dissociates from the educational apparatus—all the more striking. (Derrida 1985, pp. 33–34)

The "*un*prejudiced schooling" of the new "good European" will have, first of all, disentangled itself from deformations of a narrowly *nationalist milieu* and world-horizon fostered by the nation-state's control of the school system. However, that state machine for enculturation has for some time now lost the power to "control everything" in the formation of its citizens' world-horizon. As Heidegger also stresses, newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio have, at least "in part", replaced it in that function, and no doubt do so more and more today. There is, however, something even more striking happening today: that "old media" is itself increasingly facing a challenge (if not extinction) by "new media" outlets, and the seemingly endless proliferation of opinion and comment beyond professional journalism. Perhaps there is a real kind of *laissez-faire* developing here, but not one which typically serves self-responsible freedom: on the contrary, it seems more and more only to cultivate freedom *from* responsibility, offering confirmations and echo-chambers for any prejudice one finds agreeable, any "truth" one "likes".

I don't think Nietzsche conceived "unprejudiced schooling" as a formative enculturation in a (someone's) alternative "truth", a leftist or socialist one for example. Indeed, he explicitly rejects the idea that it is a matter of "*knowing* correctly" at all. His emphasis, like Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's and Dewey's, is rather on an intergenerational handing down, particularly with regard to language itself, "in which the pupil must learn to *act* correctly" (cited in Derrida 1985, p. 22), learning thereby a form of self-discipline, or self-mastery. Once more this would *en-able* "gifted youth" (Nietzsche), those children "with a mind to do so" (Wittgenstein), with the *being-able* required to "mount from the depth of his home ground up into the ether, into the open realm of the spirit" (Heidegger).

This call for a *Bildung* that begins with obedience, subordination, discipline and subjection may be intended to cultivate "severe self-discipline" in a person's *use of language*. However, as I have indicated, as an educational policy proposal it runs up against the understandable anxiety that, as Derrida notes, it *uses the very same language, the very same words* as a call that would want, above all, to cultivate a passive and dependent type of citizen—what Nietzsche will later call "weak-willed and highly employable workers who *need* a master", or "a type prepared for slavery in the subtlest sense" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 154). It is perhaps in view of this unsettling ambiguity of his own call that "Nietzsche expressly said that he would not want to see the text [of the lectures on "The Future…"] published, even after his death. What is more, he interrupted the course of this discourse along the way" (Derrida 1985, p. 24).

Nietzsche did not *repudiate* his thoughts on education but came to see them as an "exhortation", above all, to *himself*: "they call *me* to a duty and a task that are distinctly incumbent upon me" (cited in Derrida 1985, p. 25).

Conclusion

How to educate oneself on the subject of the education of children? Are there "new possibilities" of inheriting the task of "handing down the already spoken language" that was so strenuously preserved in former times but which today—precisely because of the way the task of handing down is being handed down today—leaves the field wide open to its being used so "poorly and vulgarly" (cited in Derrida 1985, p. 21)? What we mean by "handing down" is at stake. Let's not take for granted that we know what "*Bildung*" demands of us, or that the call for obedience, subordination, discipline and subjection can only be thought symptomatically, that is to say, "poorly and vulgarly", out of the mouth of a Nazi.

But we have to face the problem. The "home-ground" of the digital native is a radically transformed one. The covert "controlling machinery" of horizon-formation that had been the preserve of the state is increasingly being "replaced by the media", and today especially by "social media". This leaves today's digital natives more vulnerable than ever. But it does not make them fated or slated to "rootlessness". On the contrary, in the language that has been handed down to us, it announces the possibility of a new nativisation with(in) technology belonging to "a new nomadic kind of man". This condition, precisely because of the "multiplicity of masks" it makes available, threatens profoundly to *de-constrain* us: it is the perfect *milieu* for a kind of human being who indulges only in "doing what they feel like doing" and who simply avoids all situations "which require effort and perseverance in overcoming obstacles." Can education in the technological age prepare young people to develop the "maximum of the art and power of adaptation" that social

technology makes possible, or will it simply be the prep-school for ground-dwellers hiding behind more or less anonymous and increasingly vulgar masks?

It seems abundantly clear that the task of rethinking education in the age of tele-techno-mediatization and world-wide delocalisation *has hardly begun*. But we know already that the thinking that has come down to us from the philosophers who champion self-responsibility above all stands for the "opposite" of what Nietzsche calls "the apostles of 'modern ideas'" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 154) seem *most* to have cleaved to. For those apostles, as Nietzsche stresses, "*suffering* itself they take for something that has to be *abolished*" (Nietzsche 1973, p. 54). Nietzsche too affirms that we are plants, and that the task of cultivation of young plants has, in one crucial respect, not changed at all despite the loss of the old rootedness: "We, who are the opposite of [these apostles of 'modern ideas'], and have opened our eyes and our conscience to the question where and how the plant 'man' has hitherto grown up most vigorously, we think that this has always happened under the opposite conditions" (i.e. conditions opposite to those in which suffering is abolished) (Nietzsche 1973, p. 54). Uncomfortable, untimely meditations. How shall we respond today? As poor and vulgar democrats and dogmatic leftists who would prefer to impose their supposedly unprejudiced "truth" on those with limited defences? As right-wing fantasists of a pure autochthonic existence in a homeland? Or, for every teacher to find in the desire for a history for all still to come, a call to self-responsibility, "a duty and a task that are distinctly incumbent upon me [as a teacher]", to "awaken [my pupils] to the life of the spirit, to the activity of thinking for themselves."

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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