An Educational Cave Story (On Animals That Go to 'School')

Jan Masschelein

"…the eye was not always intended for contemplation…"

M. Foucault

Today, both at the level of educational discourses and of actual educational policies, it is all about 'learning'. As a 'learning-intensive society', we have to look for ways to maximize the learning gains and investigate how we can do that efficiently and effectively (cf., e.g., Miller et al. 2008). Meanwhile, there are many voices that critically address this focus on learning. They question not only the implied capitalization and instrumentalization of learning but also the relevance of the very notion of learning itself for the theory and practice of education. Indeed, they reemphasize the notion of education itself, either by focusing on the aspect of 'teaching' or by revaluating the notion of 'study' (Biesta 2013; Blacker 2013; Lewis 2013; Simons and Masschelein 2008). While very sympathetic to these critical voices, this essay rests on the conviction that in order to resist the learning discourses and policies and to reclaim the notion of education, it is worthwhile also to reconsider our understanding of 'school', thereby not reducing it immediately to a normalizing and/or functional institution. Instead we can approach it rather as a particular chronotope or time-space of an *animal educabile*: bringing people and world into each other's company in a particular way while performing specific operations (suspension, profanation, attention formation, see further) and actually enabling education to happen. In other words: to reconsider 'school' implies trying to give the notion a different flavor. We began this attempt in *In Defence of the School. A Public Issue* (Masschelein and Simons 2013), and here the aim is to further this endeavor by

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offering an *educational cave story* that refers to the event of 'school' and the emergence of the pedagogue, a story that is distinguished from the famous and still very powerful *philosophical cave fable*. I am aware that we should not lose ourselves in oversimplified binary oppositions, such as between a 'philosophical' and an 'educational' view. Not only can each be understood in very different ways, but also the relation between them is intricate and complex (e.g., Kohan 2014; Larrosa 2011). My aim here, however, is not to engage in a 'proper' argumentative discourse or analysis, but rather to assume in some sense what Tyson Lewis has called the 'fabulous character' of educational thought,[1] its "precarious location between … truth and fiction", which it has to acknowledge if it is "to testify to the difficulties of education as practice without surefire answers" and to "reopen us to the experience of education" as one of indeterminate potentiality (Lewis 2012, pp. 340–341). Therefore, I hope the reader will not mistake what follows for a statement of 'philosophical truth' or a claim to a true history (e.g., of the school, the pedagogue) – even if I will relate to some philosophical arguments or historical 'facts' – nor for simply a fictitious story. It is fiction, for sure, but not falsity. It is not lying, as Rousseau states (and Lewis reminds us). It is fiction also in the sense that Jacques Rancière understands it: using common linguistic powers "in order to make objects visible and available to thinking" (Rancière 2000, p. 116). With this fable or story, combining narrative and image, then, I hope to contribute to an *educational* thinking of 'school' (and 'pedagogue'). It is an exercise in educational thought to resist the actual learning discourses and policies, not by criticizing them but by trying to populate our educational imagination with a different cave story. One that might help us to approach and conceive of education and school, both theoretically and practically, in a slightly different way.

The Philosophical Cave Story

Philosophy and education, including 'philosophy of education', have at least one clear connection to caves. Indeed, to the present day, Plato's famous cave story is recalled and discussed time and again in various philosophy and education texts and courses.[2] Plato's story offers a particular fabric of enlightenment, education, and liberation, including the image of 'conversion' as a (re)turn to the (sun)light. It continues to haunt not only our philosophical but also our educational imagination.

[1] I deliberately don't use 'philosophy of education' or 'educational philosophy'. Both seem to imply that 'philosophy' is the central issue. Although I am very much 'into' philosophy, I want to emphasize education as the central issue. In German and Dutch, there exists also the notion of *Pädagogik* or *pedagogiek* which can be said to be 'general' (*allgemein*) or 'philosophical', general and philosophical being describing adjectives of *Pädagogik* or *pedagogiek* as (being the) substantive. I suggest to translate these notions as educational or pedagogical thought (not theory).

[2] In an 'Excursus on the cave', Hans Blumenberg (1993) recalls various other connections to the cave as metaphor or 'real' place, from Cicero to Montaigne, Bacon, Descartes, Jean Paul, and Nietzsche.

Notwithstanding the sometimes radical critiques that have been addressed at Plato's claims, the powerful imagery of education as liberation from the darkness of the cave to discover, individually and with others, the freedom that may come if we travel into the light remains very attractive both to philosophers and/as educators (Burch 2011). This imagery includes the 'duty to return' to the cave precisely to liberate those captivated by the shadows. I propose to call Plato's fable[3] the *philosophical* story of the cave, which affirms the role of philosophy and, especially, the necessity of the presence of the philosopher as master educator, without whom it would be impossible to get out of the cave. This liberating role of the philosopher is something that (s)he takes up as a heroic duty. As Heidegger (1933/2001) famously said in his commentary on Plato's story: the philosopher who returns exposes him/herself to (the risk of) death.

In Plato's fable, the cave is valued negatively. He is not thinking about historic or prehistoric cave dwellers. The cave is not a refuge, but a prison. The word 'cave' is in fact the summary of a concrete condition of limitation and insufficiency, the indication of a 'fallen', inauthentic, joyless, insufficient, unsatisfactory life.[4] For Plato, this condition is the normal or common one; the people in the cave are no 'atopoi', but are all people (Blumenberg 1993, p. 37). It is no 'natural' or unchangeable condition, however, but an effect of negative influences (decline or oppression or oblivion). It is precisely the ascending and converting movement, the movement of 'paideia', that is the true 'nature' of humans. This movement brings them to contemplation – a capacity that seems to be human's 'natural' capacity[5] and true destination. Humans are creatures whose destination it is to be philosophers. Hence, Hannah Arendt called the allegory of the cave a "kind of concentrated biography of the *philosopher*" (Arendt 2005, p. 29).

From the story it is clear that ascending out of the cave requires an external force to break the chains and initiate the conversion. Everything refers to above and outside, and the philosopher's descent into the cave is itself also forced and has the heroic objective of liberating the others. Fundamentally, the story offers a scene of impotence, of a lack and of necessary transcendence: humans' legs and necks chained in darkness, "frozen, chained before a screen, without any possibility of doing anything or communicating with one another" (ibid., p. 31). They can only see

[3] As Barberà (2010, p. 105) states: "the well-known image of the cave, εἰκών, reveals an astonishing and intriguing variety of interpretations of this image: 'allegory', 'myth', 'fable', 'parable', 'simile' and 'comparison', to cite but a few". Since he emphasizes especially the element of creation of the 'image' besides the 'narrative', the notion of fable seems adequate. I will use both fable and story without going now into a discussion about their difference.

[4] For a more positive and rich analysis of the meaning of the cave in ancient Greece, see, e.g., Bachelard (1948).

[5] Compare: "Of this very thing, then", I said, "there might be an art, an art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul, not an art of producing vision in it, but on the assumption that it possesses vision but does not rightly direct it and does not look where it should, an art of bringing this about". Plato, Republic Book 7, 518d. Plato in 12 Volumes, Vols. 5 & 6 translated by Paul Shorey. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1969. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Apage%3D518. Accessed 25 July 2017.

what is before them, unable to relate to each other, trapped in mere appearances. They are beings who, as philosophers or at the hand of the philosopher, have to (be) turn(ed) around and ascend to the light. The conversion is, then, a return to the world, out of which humans had fallen into the darkness of a disastrous condition. This philosophical cave story, told within the context of a search for the ideal, just state, is basically a story about the conversion of the soul as an enlightenment that maintains the transcendental sovereignty of Being and, in particular, that declares and affirms philosophy and the philosopher as what and who is needed to lead the human being from the darkness to the (sun)light (and back). One commentator wrote that Plato's story is an allegory, which, according to him, is one of the ways in which philosophy detaches itself from mythology (Verhoeven 1983). It implies, as we mentioned before, that Plato is not writing about another world, but rather elaborates a different way to look at this world that we all are living in (even if his way includes making a distinction between the world of the cave and the world of ideas).

In Stanley Cavell's inspiring reading of Plato's story, the cave "represent[s] primarily a familiar place from which to locate the full beginning of what we understand philosophy to aspire to be … A perception of [the moral life] as moving from a sense and state of imprisonment to the liberation of oneself by the transforming effect of what can be called philosophy" (Cavell 2005, p. 317). He writes about "guiding [the self] to a path of enlightenment" (ibid., p. 321). Although philosophy "does not speak first" (ibid., p. 324) but rather responds, this response is "the gesture of descending", marking "the violence of mature judgment in assessing the life of others. … We are, after all, telling them that they do not know what they are saying" (ibid., p. 326). Cavell is adhering to the "idea of philosophical progress not as from false to true assertions, or from opinions to proven conclusions (say theses), or from doubt to certainty, but rather from darkness of confusion to enlightened understanding, or say from illusion to clarity, or from being at an intellectual loss to finding my feet with myself" (ibid., p. 328). I do not intend to go into a discussion with Cavell, whose reading of the story is much richer and varied than I can render here,[6] but let me just point to the fact that Cavell seems to continue, at least to an important extent, the omnipresent philosophical story that assimilates the cave with an image of imprisonment, despair, ignorance, darkness, confusion, illusion, and intellectual loss. Cavell himself refers also to "the torment, the sickness, the strangeness, the exile, the

[6] I am not able and do not intend to deal here with the mass of interpretations and readings of Plato's story (such as the recent wonderful one by Latour interpreting it as the staging of a tragicomedy; see Latour 2016). Let me just refer to the study by Bartlett (2011), which offers a very 'sophisticated' rereading of Plato's corpus, relying on Badiou, including the cave fable, and makes the strong claim that Plato's work is just about education and more specifically about 'education by Truth'. However, like many 'philosophers', he is forgetting or neglecting the relation between 'education' and 'school' and building his interpretation on the difference between opinion and truth (and between the philosopher concerned for Truth and the sophist concerned only with interests and profits). The cave story I will propose here suggests rather that education is not primarily about 'truth' and/or 'opinion' and that the sophists are not relevant for educational thinking because of their concern for 'interest', but maybe because they acknowledged first of all the human being as 'animal educabile', as an erring being without destination (and orientation). See Jaeger (1973/1933).

disappointment, the boredom, the restlessness" (ibid., p. 329) as a condition from which we don't have to escape, but that we have to judge with regard to "the degree to which these conditions must be borne and maybe turned … constructively, productively, socially" (ibid., p. 329). Philosophy, then, is related to a "sense of disappointment with the world" and "our entrapment in false necessities" (ibid., p. 328).

Let me, in contrast to this *philosophical* view, now propose a *pedagogical* or educational view that can open to an alternative cave story or fable, one that invites us to reconsider the way we conceive of education and philosophy, that questions the fabric of enlightenment, education, and liberation that constitutes Plato's philosophical story. This educational fable does not justify and affirm the primary need for a 'liberator' or philosopher; it does not conceive of education as conversion, but rather entails some suggestions concerning the emergence of the *school* and the appearance of the *pedagogue* as the one who leads to school. This pedagogical fable of the cave is the story of the beings that enter the cave and leave traces on its walls, offering a scene of the education of the human being as a scene of potency and immanence. This fable is not about 'enlightenment' in the sense of moving (returning) from opinion to truth and/or from illusion to clarity, but about the light that enables the beginning of something while exploring, disclosing, and exposing the 'world' by imagining it, by making images (as inscriptions). It is the story of the beings that find themselves in this world of shadows in the company of the sketches, imprints, inscriptions that they have made themselves with their hands, that open up their lives, and also make them dream. This liberation, however, is not pointing to transcendence but to immanence, it is no conversion or return but an *erring* as I will now further elaborate in what could be called maybe also first of all a story about the emergence of 'school' or the fable of the 'animal that goes to school'.

The Pre-sent (Main-Tenant) of the Cave: The Gift of 'World'

If we were to trace back the elements in this educational fable, we would have to point to a variety of (scientific) observations, reflections, comments, and interpretations related to the findings on and studies of all kinds of tracings (drawings, paintings) on cave walls around the world. Indeed, these have received attention not only from paleontologists, archeologists, anthropologists, and speleologists but also from novelists, artists, and … philosophers. The story, therefore, knows many versions,[7] but the versions that interest me, here, are those that do not overlook the phenomenology of the cave, that is, the spatial and temporal experiences related to entering a

[7] See, e.g., the reflections by George Bataille who maintains that it is precisely through these wall paintings, which were most of the time, but certainly not exclusively, paintings of animals (and, thus, not just of themselves), that 'men' emancipated from their animal nature (Bataille 1988, p. 262). Or the very influential comments of André Leroi-Gourhan who relates the paintings to the appropriation of the caves as religious sanctuaries and understands them first of all as spiritual symbols (e.g., Leroi-Gourhan 1965). This approach is very dominant today and very present in the work of one of the most famous French experts on Paleolithic art in general and cave paintings more particularly, Jean Clottes (see, e.g., 2008).

cave and dwelling in it as *particular milieu* or chronotope. Those that pay attention to the *gesture* of the act of tracing itself, as well as to the difference between the way in which a text and an image speak to us (because seeing is not the same as reading and listening, and an image can share without being a 'message', but simply by 'facing' us). These are versions that don't reduce the caves *immediately* to established symbolic places and don't trace the activities carried out within them *immediately* to cultural or religious practices and rules. The versions that interest me acknowledge the entering of the cave and the tracings themselves primarily as movements and gestures. Moreover, I am interested not only in the beautiful paintings of animals as being the beginning of art but also, and primarily, in the images of 'hands' (found in many caves all over the world and dating from a vast range of time periods)[8] and in the stripes, striations, dots, and spots, in the sketches, scratches, tracings, and drawings that often are not figurative and superposed. I will, in what follows, refer briefly to the writings of John Berger and Jean-Paul Jouary, but I will rely in particular on the work of Marie-José Mondzain, who elaborates the earlier, brief but very interesting 'musings' of Jean-Luc Nancy on the images of hands on cave walls.

Whereas Nancy refers almost exclusively to the traced hands found in the Cosquer cave discovered near Marseille in 1991, Mondzain bases her *fiction* mainly on the findings related to the discovery of the Chauvet cave in the French Ardèche region in 1994. This cave contains some of the oldest wall paintings yet discovered (dating from approximately 32,000 BC), paintings that are extremely well conserved and of an extraordinary beauty.[9] As she states it herself, Mondzain constructs a 'phantasia' (2007, p. 26), which is not telling the story of a return of humans to the light of eternal truth that is shining from behind them. The 'human being' of the Chauvet cave enters the cave instead of fleeing it and produces light with its own hands and on its own hands. These enlightened hands, according to Mondzain, will reveal their power or capacity to make an image, including precisely an image of the hands, an image of a being that becomes at once the spectator of the work of its hands, not simply as an object or tool, but as an image, thereby inaugurating the human gaze on the human being and on the world. As Max Horkheimer stated: "The facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; *they are shaped by human activity*, and yet the individual perceives himself as receptive and passive in the act of perception" (Horkheimer 1937/2002, p. 200, italics mine). This is echoed in

[8] The recently initiated Spanish *HANDPAS* project is precisely focused on documenting and exhibiting the Paleolithic hand representations in Europe. See http://handpas.eu/en/project/. Accessed 25 July 2017.

[9] A beauty that is rendered in a fascinating way by Werner Herzog in a documentary called 'The Cave of Forgotten Dreams'. The title resonates interestingly with another of his films, 'Kaspar Hauser', who is said to have been locked up in a cave (not unlike the prisoners in Plato's cave) and to have had no dreams until some time after his release from the cave. It suggests that in order to have dreams, and that means also in order to have the possibility to relate to what happens and not just be absorbed by it or enclosed in it, we are in need of some kind of (re-)presentations. Equally interesting is that, in this movie, just before Kaspar is taken out of the cave, he learns to *draw/write* on a piece of white paper.

Foucault's remark that "the eye was not always intended for contemplation" (Foucault 1984, p. 83). Nancy and Mondzain, then, suggest that human eyes were not from the outset destined for considering, thinking, and regarding. It is to these images, made by the hand in the cave, so this story goes, that we owe our having eyes that open themselves to the world in an incomparable way; it is to these images that we owe the experience of being able 'to (be)hold' ourselves and the world, making us into beings that (can) commence (anew). Or to state it differently: our capacity to regard (to look, but also to respect, consider) emerges out of our hands discovering the ability to make images. Looking at it in this way, we can further clarify the specific register of representation, the specific gesture of 'monstration' (which is the term used in the English translation of Nancy's work for the French 'monstration', which refers to the act of exposing, displaying to the eyes of a public), and the specific experience that we would overlook if we related the images directly to religious or ritual practices that have to be 'understood'.

Considering the painting of the hands on cave walls, Mondzain (2007, p. 21–58) distinguishes three acts, or operations, none of which is about return or conversion.[10] The first act is the being-becoming-human stretching its arm, which both leans on the wall and separates itself from it in the same movement: the measure of an arm that is indeed the first distancing of oneself from the plane on which a bond will be composed through contact. It is no longer as it is outside, in the sun, where its eyes can look much further than its hands can touch. Under the sun, its eyes are tools of its watching out, its foresight or providence; they measure a distance to be covered or installed (taken). Outside, its eyes have a distant horizon that it scrutinizes. The horizon is the experience of a gap that awakens a dream of mastery, provokes the desire for conquest, or inspires (paralyzing) awe. The horizon's inaccessibility meets with the imaginary figures of transcendence. But in the cave, the horizon is no further than the modest proposition of an arm's length. It is the immanence of a body-to-body or body-to-wall. The outstretched arm, the hand placed on the wall to maintain a distance. To maintain refers to the French 'maintenue', which comes back, as Mondzain and Nancy state, in the 'main-tenant', i.e., the French word for 'now' or 'present'. This 'maintaining' is at once a meeting, an 'entre-tien' ('holding between') in the sense that the human being is holding itself – in French: 'se tient' – before the wall, which forms the plane and constitutes the horizon (without horizon) of the gaze and has its own stance (tenu(r)e or holding).

[10] Hannah Arendt writes that the parable or the allegory of the cave "unfolds in three stages, each of them designated a turning point, a turning-about, and all three together form that … turning about of the whole human being which for Plato is the very formation of the *philosopher*" (Arendt 2005, p. 29, italics mine). These three turnings are freeing from the fetters that chain the future philosopher, which Arendt calls the turn of the scientist who "turns around to find out how things are in themselves, regardless of the opinions held by the multitude". He turns away from "their *doxai*, what and how things appear to them", from their position. The second turning is when he is not satisfied with the fire in the cave and finds an exit from the cave and an access to "the ideas, the eternal essences of perishable things and of mortal men", from where he "must return (the third stage) to the cave as his earthly home", where he can no longer feel at home (Arendt 2005, pp. 29–30). As I will indicate, Mondzain also distinguishes three acts, but neither of them is to be conceived as a turning.

And what will arrive between them is 'in the hands' of the human being. The eye is subjugated to the order of the hands. This gesture of distancing and binding constitutes the first operation.

The second act concerns the pigments. On the cave walls, the hands create an image of themselves, presenting them to the eyes – not by shaping and folding them to tools, but either by directly immersing the hands in the paint, posing them on the wall, and pressing them for some time, creating what are called positive hands. Or, it is assumed, by taking the paint in the mouth and spitting it at the hand pressed against the wall, creating so-called negative hands. A new gesture thus emerges, that also literally marks a distance – the arm length's – that is holding (in) the hand as a gesture of 'monstration', *showing* the hand at a distance. This gesture implies that the purpose and the use of the hand has changed; it performs neither acts of survival (fishing, hunting, agriculture) nor of making love, or of making objects or tools. The hand has ceased to be a hand that grasps, hews, carves, or even caresses, and the mouth has ceased to be a mouth that bites, tears, and swallows. The uses of the mouth and the hand are no longer the prehensile, possessive, feeding, or predatory, nor of caring and love, but rather establish a double movement of *reaching out*, with the hands and the mouth. The human being breathes on her hand, which holds nothing, but that 'maintains' that being in a relation with the wall. She inhales, exhales, she receives the paint and then passes it on.[11] The moment of expulsion, an exit of liquid, is the mise-en-scène that makes an outside on the wall into (a) 'work'. As Nancy states, the French 'maintenant' means holding by/in the hand; but the hand is not a stable place, suggesting that it will be released, that the now is between holding and releasing or letting go (Nancy 2016): "The hand posed, pressed against the wall, grasps nothing. It is no longer a prehensile hand, but it is offered like the form of an impossible or abandoned grasp. A grasp that could as well let go. The grasp of a letting go: the letting go of form" (Nancy 1996, p. 72).

The third act is withdrawal. The hand has to withdraw. The body has to separate itself from its support. But it is not its hand, the one covered with pigments, that the human being is looking at. Rather, before its eyes an image appears, its image, which it can now see it as its hand is no longer there. This hand as image, so Mondzain states, has none of the powers that the maker of tools would recognize. In the suspension of its manual powers, however, the *image* indicates the capacity or potency of the gaze that 'looks' at it, regards it. It is a 'work', a making that indicates a foundational capacity of the subject to compose its first gaze in the trace of its withdrawal. To withdraw oneself is to produce one's image and to give it to the gaze of the eyes, as a living trace, but separated from oneself. As Mondzain further explains, the human being had already seen its hand, but not its hand as resembling an image of oneself that keeps itself outside oneself on the unanimated wall. This hand, born out of the shadow, is now shadow itself. What comes to us from this

[11] Let me make a side remark to refer to Tim Ingold indicating that it is "with our entire being – indissolubly body and soul – that we breathe". He refers to Merleau-Ponty's essay 'Eye and Mind', stating "there really is inspiration and expiration of Being" as the "essence of perception" (Ingold 2015, pp. 67–68).

interaction is the work of *a separation and a bond*, which this sign composes with that from which it separates itself. To see oneself is always to see oneself at and from a distance. In the cave, however, this seeing is not seeing oneself reflected in the mirroring surface of the water or the eye of the other.[12] The wall is a 'mirror' of the human being, though not a specular mirror, and this hand is the non-specular self-portrait of the human being. And the same goes for the world: it is given to the gaze of the eyes but is separated from itself, *at a distance*. To see the world is always to see it at and from a distance, but here the seeing is not that from the top of a mountain, from the tracks in the forest, or on the plain. It is seeing images on a wall.[13] Images of animals, images of the hands, produced *autonomously by* the hands *before the eyes*, as pre-sent, as a *prae-esse* that maintains a relation and, therefore, is also a possible inter-esse.

In this wonderful 'phantasia', as told by Mondzain and Nancy, the cave as a limited, walled space does not appear as a prison, offering a scene of impotence and transcendence. Instead it offers a scene of potency and immanence, of liberation, in a particular sense. Let me indicate some further characteristics of this site and scene.

First of all, the caves in which the paintings are made – often very far from the entrance and on difficult spots on the uneven walls – are not family homes. There are no traces of habitation. But they should also not be too readily seen as religious sanctuaries, which immediately give the painted images and the site itself a meaningful place within a cult. There is, indeed, as Nancy writes, no reason to lend the images

> any other sense than *the sense without signification of the exposition* …: not a lost sense, nor one that is distanced or deferred, but a sense given in the absence as in the most simple estranged simplicity of presence – *being* without being or without essence that founds it, causes it, justifies it, or sanctifies it. Being simply existing. … its whole exercise is to exceed itself, not being itself anything but the absolute detachment or distancing of what has no foundation in the property of a presence …. Image, here, is not the convenient or inconvenient double of a thing in the world: it is the glory of that thing, its epiphany, its distinction from its own mass and its own appearance. The *image* praises the thing as *detached from the universe of things* … (Nancy 1996, 72–73, first and last italics mine).

The cave is a site of separation, departure, distancing, and suspension. Departure from a world of daily living, separation from the eternal cycle of life and death, from the cycle of the changing seasons, from the variations of temperature and of the rhythm of day and night. A site of suspension: images of the hands, of humans, of animals, of objects. The hands no longer tools, the animals no longer prey or predator, removed from the cycle of reproduction and survival, 'naked' and beautiful. The image is not the concept horse or bison or hand, but an image that is made and that contains a profanation and is a (temporary) suspension of the 'horse' or 'bison' in its natural or social environment (released, presented, exposed), a suspension of the

[12] In the pupil of the eye as a little doll, as Plato suggests in the Alcibiades 1. 133a.

[13] John Berger writes: "Traditional Chinese art looked at the earth from a Confucian mountain top; Japanese art looked closely around screens; Italian Renaissance art surveyed conquered nature through the window or door-frame of a palace" (John Berger, 'Past Present').

regular power of the hands. John Berger writes: "Step outside the cave and re-enter the wind-rush of time passing. Reassume names. Inside the cave everything is present and nameless" (Berger 2002). The images 'show' something and that means to set it aside "at a distance of presentation, to exit from pure presence" (Nancy 1996, p. 70), implying and offering the possibility for regarding and exploring new relationships to the self, others, and the world, *at a distance.* Not the kind of distance from a top of a mountain that evokes reverence for the greatness of the world or that sparks the imagining of conquest, but an *arm's length* distance (at hand, within reach). The hand "opens a distance, that suspends the continuity and the cohesion of the universe, in order to open up a world" (ibid., p. 75).

It is the place of another spatial and temporal experience, a particular chronotope or space-time milieu (including temperature, air, soil, smoke, smells, silence, sounds, darkness, etc.). It is a *real place* but also one without place in the regular order of places, a place without place. It exists in real time but out of regular time, a time outside time. Nancy calls it also 'additional time' (ibid., p. 74). Similarly, 'place without place' and 'time outside time' were phrasings used by Foucault to describe the heterotopia and the heterochronia (Foucault 1986). Within the *enclosed* singular space and the *dark* singular time of the cave, the human being becomes master of the light, master of day and night, since it has the charcoal torch that it enflamed with its own hands and that is throwing flickering light on the walls. As Mondzain suggests, the being that becomes human is not to be seen as fallen from the light of heaven and subjected to the powers of others or the Other, larger than itself and defining itself as impotent, incapable, and weak. It is rather a being that enters the cave to shape its own definition, at once creating itself and being created through the work of its own hands. Theology, she adds, prefers to make human beings come from the hand of a divine potter. The human of the cave fabricates its horizon and gives birth to itself by holding out its hands to an irreducible and vivifying strangeness: its own (hands). This 'art' as a making of images – which, as I suggest, is crucially also first of all a 'trying', 'exercising', 'sketching' that is not directed by a predefined end or projected accomplishment but always *erring* – *makes* the world visible or perceptible (i.e., makes it become apparent) in a new way. It makes ourselves perceptible in a new way: "… the monstration of … self outside of self, the outside standing for self, and he being surprised in face of self" (Nancy 1996, p. 69).

This being transforms a relationship of force, where the 'real' crushed it, into a literally imaginary relationship through what we could call a spatialization as grammatization: making images, tracing sketches.[14] There is no longer only time for living and time for working and loving, there is now time for attention and contemplation too: "the staging of a scenography in which attention is focused on one set of dramatized inscriptions", to displace the words of Bruno Latour (1986, p. 17).[15]

[14] See also the very illuminating remarks of Vilém Flüsser (2011) on the removal from the world of objects through the act of image-making.

[15] Let me, in this context, briefly recall an early text of Bruno Latour (1986) on visualization and cognition, in which he points toward a thinking with eyes and hands and where he invites us to not

Here, the relationship in which the human is bound by the power of a specific reality transforms into a relationship that offers the possibility to relate to the self and to the world and to start interacting with that world. As Nancy states: "… the eye, which until then had done nothing but perceive things, discovers itself seeing. It sees this, that it sees. It sees that it sees *there*; it sees there where there is something of the world that shows itself" (Nancy 1996, p. 79). It offers this being the capacity for (re-)birth, to have the experience of (be)holding, of having at (the distance of the) hand, the experience of a 'main-tenant', of a now or 'pre-sent' that allows this being to become the cause of itself, to come to the world and enter with the world into a relationship. This being (be)holds itself in front of a rock wall, in the opacity of a face-to-face in confrontation with this wall as horizon (without horizon), massive, mute, and without gaze. Facing a wall onto which the being itself casts light; not sunlight or divine light but the light of the torch held in its hands. The wall as a "setting aside and the isolation of a zone that is neither a territory of life, nor a region of the universe, but a spacing in which to let come … all the presence of the world" (ibid., p. 75). Present can also mean gift. This present, or now, is a gift, given: "I am given, *Es gibt* or *Es ist mir gegeben* … it is given to me … the opening of time that is not within time" (Nancy 2016, p. 2).

It is also important to mention that this being enters the cave *willingly* and that it has to find *the courage* to enter the cave (which is even darker than the darkest night, and so is uncomfortable, preventing any foresight). This being makes a *vital effort*, as the paintings are often very far from the entrance and in difficult to reach places. It is not moved by distortion or confusion; it enters the cave, *groping the way*, *thrilled*, out of *curiosity* and, as John Berger wrote after his exceptional visit into the Chauvet Cave in 2002, out of 'the need for *companionship*'. Thus, it is not looking first of all for truth but for *encounter*. Berger remarks that inside the cave there is a *balance between fear and* a *sense of protection*. In life, he says, most of the animals depicted on the walls were ferocious, but in the cave the relationship is that of '*respect*, yes, a fraternal respect' (Berger 2002). Moreover, the images on the wall inaugurate not only the human being as a monstrator and spectator but also a community as a public of spectators: a contingent collection of whichever singularities happen to occupy the space of the cave, the chamber where the images are made on the wall. A community not constituted by shared identity or belonging (to a family, a tribe, a religious cult), but by a relation to something on the wall, by a presence in a particular place. A chamber potentially populated by whichever others happen to occupy the space, near or next to each other, as contact. The images have no predefined or definite addressee or response; they are the vestiges of human presence, and the collectivity of the spectators is not based on psychological identification with the producer of the images and his or her desires, but relies on being in contact as monstrators and spectators of the world.

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relate the specificity of modern science to the existence of cultural differences or to the happy existence of special minds, but to explanations that take into account the hands and the inscriptions that they trace on flat surfaces creating an optical device (re-)presenting the world before the eyes.

The End (Without End): On Animals That Go to 'School'

Let me now give an additional twist or torsion to this cave fable starting from four observations. First, in his reflections on the cave paintings, Nancy also writes that the "traced figure is this very opening, the spacing by which man is brought into the world, and by which the world itself is a world: the event of all presence in its absolute strangeness. Thus, the painting that begins in the grottos … is first of all the monstration of the commencement of being, *before* being the beginning of painting" (Nancy 1996, p. 70, italics mine). Second, in his book *Préhistoire de la beauté. Et l'art créa l'homme* (*The Prehistory of Beauty. And Art Created Men*), which mainly focuses on cave paintings, Jean-Paul Jouary suggests that it was not already given (innate or acquired) human capacities (e.g., of imagination) that allowed the cave paintings to be made, but rather it was the evolving practices (and the accompanying technologies) that allowed such capacities to emerge and develop. He further elaborates the idea that it is not because we are human that we experience aesthetic pleasure or longing for it, but rather it is because we created (i.e., exercised!) that such feelings and perceptions could emerge and that we became and continue to become 'human'. He adds that this art, or these exercises, 'produced' writing, numbering, mythologies, and several forms of knowledge (Jouary 2001/2012). Third, the gesture that most attracts the attention of Mondzain and Nancy is precisely that of making the image of the hands by pressing them to the wall, which is seen as the first gesture, and is art only in a very general sense. It is not yet (the art of) painting, but the gesture that children still make today. Fourth, the location, i.e., the particular chronotope, is of course crucial in various ways for this story of the being-becoming-human. If 'art' created 'men', as Jouary suggests, then the evolvement of this art became possible in this enclosed place without place, this dark time without time, where the lifeworld is displaced.[16]

From here, I think we can call this story, without forcing it too much, the educational cave story and we can give this location the name 'school'. It has been often suggested that Plato's cave is also the paradigm of the cinema. And investigators of the prehistoric cave paintings indicate that some have been made in such an ingenious way that in the flickering light of the torches they actually appear as moving images (Azéma 2011). But if we take into account the operations of separation, suspension, and profanation, the time outside time, the place without place, the creation of an attentive, regarding public, the physical conditions and technologies involved, together with the *exercises* of the hand and the eye, which are still unsure and do not know yet what it makes or sees (the sketches, the dots, the striations) so that the 'human' is forming itself in a vital effort based on curiosity (i.e., looking for company and not in the first place for 'truth') and courage (which is not for conflict, but for encounter and exploration), it seems that we can also suggest that she bears

[16] There are of course very old wall paintings to be found outside caves (e.g., the famous Bradshaw paintings http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/index.php. Accessed 25 July 2017), but as Nancy states: "the painting that begins in the grottos (but also the grottos that painting invents) …".

witness to the event of school,[17] as the way in which a being without natural destination, without end, an erring being, is shaping herself and her *regarding* (in various senses, including considering, looking, gazing, concerning, being concerned, respecting, paying attention, relating to) of (the) world through technologies, exercises, and practices that she invents or uses, but that also, in turn, create that being and its 'arts', that open it up and expose it to a world that is given or presented to her.

The being-becoming-human/pupil is an animal that goes to 'school'. That is, an animal that not only becomes initiated and socialized but also discovers at 'school' its potency to shape itself and the world, a being without natural or projected destiny (i.e., it is undefined). A being that experiences the 'main-tenant', the present that we could maybe also call, with Arendt, the 'gap between past and future', which is not awakening the dream of mastery, but the experience of being able to begin: the 'commencement of being', as Nancy wrote. A being that we can imagine to (begin to) exercise, to consider, to think, and maybe also to dream. It takes its relationship toward the world and itself into its own hands without this becoming a dominating, seizing, grasping, or exploitative act, but rather an act of regard. Experiencing the sharing of a world to which it can relate and about which it can speak, or by which it feels invited or even urged, provoked to speak. Experiencing a shared beginning with the world and the possibility of being part of a public of spectators and monstrators that shares the place, shares the tracing exercises, shares the walls and what appears on them, shares the exposition, and has the possibility to communicate. The walls offer a space and create a milieu as a hole in regular time and environment.

The educational cave fable – and it is a fable, as was Plato's according to his own words, a 'phantasia', to use Mondzain's phrase, to populate our imagination – is not the biography of a being becoming philosopher in Plato's sense, but maybe that of a being becoming an artist, in the very general sense that Jacques Rancière understands everybody to be an artisan, i.e., a handler ('un manieur') (Rancière 1987, p. 110) and that the Oxford Dictionary indicates as "a follower of a pursuit in which skill comes by study or practice". This story does not call for a philosopher who leads the way out of the cave and into the light of a transcendent world and who tells us that we don't know what we are seeing and saying. But the story does suggest that we could find some help from the *pedagogue*, who goes along the way *to* the cave and offers support in this effort (of the will) that demands a certain degree of courage, as the cave is not home and is always a bit uncomfortable. Recall that pedagogue was the ancient Greek name for the slaves who brought the children to school, taking them out of the house, the *oikos*, and out of society, the *polis*. And we can imagine the teacher as not only the one who projects images on to the wall but also the one who introduces or incites words, naming the world such that a world is made available to a being that is also made available to itself – available, that is, for contemplation, study, and exercise, for (self-)education. A teacher who, as Rancière states about the emancipating schoolmaster, stays at the door to make sure that one

[17] Comparisons have often been made between caves and cinema, but surprisingly little between caves and classrooms, or if so, these were mostly in line with Plato's fable of the cave as prison. Michel Serres' (2015, pp. 202–209) reading is a notable exception.

does not avoid the effort and discipline necessary in order to be attentive to the world, to study, and exercise the hands and the eyes (Rancière 1987).

The educational fable is also about world-disclosure and world-renewal. This is conceived neither as a return nor as a conversion, but rather as a re-beginning that continues our erring without destination. As Michel Serres writes: taking up "the begetting and birthing of a child *anew*" (Serres 1997, p. 49, italics mine). Belonging, departing, and becoming. Education is not primarily dealing with truth and opinion; it is not so much about ignorance and illusion. Education is about the issue of 'companionship', being in company with others and with things (i.e., opening and disclosing the world), about enabling and exposing. The fable offers a different scenery of the (self-)education of the human being, affirming a belief in the absence of any pre-existing order and any human 'nature' or destination. It is not about 'enlightenment' by the sun, but about the little light that enables something to begin and that lets us attend to something in the dark (cave) that helps us to navigate, to make and find a way. According to Michel Serres, it is no longer the bright light of the sun, but the little lights of a starry night that offer a good image of what our 'knowing' and our existence are about. The bright light is, rather, more akin to a metaphor for ideology (Serres 2014, p. 319).

In line with Plato's cave fable, there seems to be a philosophical approach to education that, in fact, starts from the experience of adults expressing "a disappointment with the world" (Cavell 2005, p. 3) and of conducting "a life that calls for transformation or reorienting it" (ibid., p. 11). Philosophy therein is conceived, as Cavell writes, as leading "the soul, imprisoned and distorted by confusion and darkness, into the freedom of the day" (ibid., p. 4). Cavell himself sees it clearly when he calls philosophy in this sense an "education of grown-ups" (Cavell 1999/1979). The educational cave story, however, which takes the cave *not* (or not only) as a metaphor but as a *real place*, offers a *pedagogical* approach to education that does not *start* from the (adult) experience of disappointment, confusion, or distortion, but from the (childish) experience of being able to commence, of being curious and attracted to enter the cave out of the joy – joy being the signature of the event par excellence[18] – of the exercise-production-discovery of a new degree of freedom *and* (attachment to) a new world. Maybe this is related to philosophy in the sense of exercise – *epimeleia* – and, for sure, Cavell turns also to this experience. But the important thing is that, as *starting point*, such exercise is all about the discovery, disclosure, company and care of world and not so much about the care of the self or the art of living.[19] And education is, at first, not about telling the others that they are wrong, "telling them that they do not know what they are saying" (ibid., p. 326), but rather presenting (the) 'world', outside and beside themselves, telling them that they should attend and try. That seems to be what is at stake for animals that go to school.

[18] Cf.: "La joie, pourrait-on dire, est la signature de l'événement par excellence … Joie du premier pas, même inquiet" (Stengers 2013, p. 142).

[19] As Arendt (2006, p. 192) states, "school is not about the art of living".

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