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PEDAGOGUE AND/OR PHILOSOPHER?

Some Comments on Attending, Walking, Talking, Writing and ... Caving

For Myriam, Marthe and Sam

LABORATORY FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

The man has been teaching educational philosophy and philosophy of/as education at the university for a rather long time. Now, at his pleasant surprise, he has been invited to write an 'intellectual self-portrait.' He accepted the invitation, as he mostly accepts them, but he knows it would be an illusion to conceive of this labor as a recollection of his past. As if the words he heard, read and wrote and now intends to recall maintained their meaning, as if the desires which affected him still pointed in the same direction, as if the ideas which came to him retained still the same logic, as if the encounters he experienced simply conserved their effect. As if the man who is writing about what happened to him then is the same as the one to whom it happened. Besides, there is no final coherence to be discovered, but rather a fiction to be invented. The hundreds of (lost) events, places, encounters, moves, chances, errors and misjudgements which made appear what he values and inscribed themselves on the surface of his body, in the form of his hands, the style of his writing, the tone of his voice, the gaze of his eyes, the connections in his mind cannot be synthesized or traced back to their origin.

Nevertheless, the invitation is an occasion, he considers, to confront his memory. However, not as an exercise of recollection but as an attempt to think his past, his own history, which is crucially and essentially a shared history, and to explore to what extent this can help him, perhaps, to open his gaze for future perspectives. It is an occasion to re-construct the encounters and events, re-read the texts, re-watch the images, not in order to find out, confirm or explain who he was or is, not to reflect (on) himself, but rather in order to get himself at a certain distance from himself and his present. Maybe in that way, this writing of a self-portrait could become in itself an exercise in philosophy of/as education i.e. an exercise bringing he himself as a writer into play – a non-specular self-portrait – and at once an invitation to others to meet in the exercise and cross his thoughts. Another man, Michel Foucault, had said much earlier that today that practice which we call philosophy is only to be understood as an 'askesis': "an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought" (1985, pp. 8-9). Which echoes the words of this

amazing woman, Hannah Arendt, calling her famous essay on 'The crisis of education' also 'an exercise of thought.' And he strangely recalls that both of them – whose work he has been rereading time and again – at several occasions emphasized that they were no (professional) philosophers, both refusing the ambition to build systems of thought, refusing the critical judgemental attitude, the tendency to tell others where their truth is and how to find it, all of which they associated with philosophy. Both also claiming that their work was rather that of 'an experimenter' being a way to think and live the present otherwise. And yes, he tends to agree, and even wants to add that their work is maybe rather one of (self-)education.

So he decided to write a kind of selective 'pragma-graphy.' However, not in the form of a linear succession of sequences, but aiming at an approximate description of some events that actually happened to him and of what they brought about. These events were not spectacular, they were essentially invitations and/as occasions, but they made him move, they displaced him, not only his body but also his gaze and mind. They pushed him away from where he was and how he thought and lived. Not in one sudden big move (a sudden fulguration or an abrupt opening that sparks a profoundly reorienting conversion), but slowly from step to step they made him engage in particular practices, brought him to particular places and inspired thoughts he never could have imagined before. It was, thus, not that he had a great plan, some strong ambition, a clear ideal or big dream. In fact, he can't remember anything important in his life that happened because he was aiming at it or looking for it. It was that he felt always again that he had to accept the invitation, seize the opportunity, engage in the occasion and that he had to move away from where he was, from what he thought (and taught), that it was not so important to try to remain the same.

ATTENDING UNIVERSITY LECTURES, SEMINARS AND ... CINEMAS

One of the decisive moves the man made, was to leave his small hometown and go to the university. Another man had sung that there is only one good thing about a small town: you know that you want to get out. However, the move he made might not have been so exceptional, and had very little of a conscious choice. He in fact joined the fast growing number of young people out of the rising middle class that, at least partly due to the strong economic development, were offered the opportunity to access higher education and started to populate the 'mass' universities at the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies. His move was, thus, a very common one, but it nevertheless remained a decisive one, not only regarding climbing the social ladder, but primarily because it opened up a whole new world. Even if it was a world that precisely at that moment was also shaken into its very foundations. It were the beginning of the seventies and the May '68 revolt was still very much alive: long student strikes, occupations of university buildings for months, demonstrations, student pickets at factory's, student councils, endless discussions, anarchist, Marxist, Maoist groups calling for the revolution, fights with the police. The unrest shook the foundations of cities and states, and the

academic apparatus was itself one of its targets. At stake: democratization of higher education, solidarity between workers and students, solidarity with the oppressed in the 'third world,' the Vietnam War, struggles for independence and against oppression around the world, inventing new ways of living together (communes, community houses, etc.) and very central: the anti-authoritarian movement in all domains of society (family, church, education, state and the work place). All of these in the 'air' (radio, television, newspapers) but also very present within the buildings and surroundings of his university.

The man started to study educational sciences at the Leuven university, the university where he is still teaching today. It was a four year program strongly inspired by the German tradition of 'Pädagogik.' It was just recently created but already very popular. As popular as political sciences and mainly for the same reasons: it was seen by many students as a way to engage in the struggle for a better, just world. Indeed, education was not exclusively seen as a means for individual development and self-realization, but was regarded also as the road to collective emancipation and to a better common world. In his mother tongue, masters in educational sciences are also called 'pedagogues' and what he studied was called in fact, literally translated: 'pedagogical sciences.' He must confess that at the time he had not a very clear idea of what 'pedagogue' meant, but he associated it, like most of his fellow students, with emancipation and liberation and that was enough to attract him. In Leuven, as it was then the case in many continental universities, it was evident that multiple courses in philosophy were an obligatory part of the education of 'pedagogues.' So he attended lecture courses on 'philosophical anthropology,' 'philosophy of science,' 'ethics,' 'metaphysics,' 'epistemology and logic,' 'philosophical foundations of education.' He was thus introduced into the work of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Husserl, Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, and especially Heidegger and Sartre. Additionally his courses in education offered an insight into the rich tradition of educational thought and practice (from Plato over Rousseau, Herbart and Schleiermacher to Langeveld and Flitner), reconstructing that tradition mainly as one of enlightenment, progress and emancipation. Rogers' *Freedom to Learn* had been around since the late sixties. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Illich's *Deschooling Society* together with Marcuse's *One-dimensional Man* were becoming main references for critical emancipatory pedagogy all over the world and also in Leuven, inspiring even the teaching body to experiment with alternative forms of university education.

It was, he thought, as if in May 68 the awareness of the historicity of every present, to use Gadamer's phrasing, manifested itself massively on the public scene accompanied by a lot of noise and tumult. A manifestation in the guise of a contestation of authority and especially also of educational authority i.e. the authority which is related to the relation between the younger and the older generation and concerns the way in which we have to understand a valuable human life. Indeed, not only was the hope for a better and just world connected to education, as was often the case before, but simultaneously, and that was new, the central role of authority in education was attacked. It was attacked both theoretically and practically (he recalls all the experiments of anti-authoritarian

education at different levels, all the contestation of himself and his fellow students against their parents, teachers, pastors, politicians).

Mariette Hellemans – who had studied with Eugeen Fink (the disciple of Husserl and close colleague of Heidegger) and was trained in phenomenology – invited him to write his master thesis on the idea of critique in Max Horkheimer's essay 'Critical and Traditional Theory,' considered to be one of the main texts of the early Frankfurt School. In order to engage in this work he enrolled in a special philosophy program and attended a course by J.M. Broeckman, a then famous philosopher of law. It was this event that initiated him into the world of philosophy for good and offered the occasion to meet up with early critical theory. The course was in fact a comment on a footnote out of Horkheimer's essay: "Es muss nicht so sein, die Menschen können das Sein ändern, die Umstände dafür sind jetzt vorhanden" (Things must not be as they are, human beings are able to change Being, the conditions for change are actually present). From this course the man learned that it is indeed possible to comment during twelve two-hours sessions on one footnote of a few words, that attending somebody who really thinks in public can transform the listening public into a thinking public even if it is not invited to say a single word, that it is, hence, totally false to create an opposition between the lecturer who would be active and the listener who be just a passive receiver, and of course he would never forget the words anymore. The words resonated with the times, the era of emancipation and liberation, where students en masse enrolled in educational studies in order to be able to play a role in this emancipation and liberation movement. They resonated more particularly with the thoughts and practices of the German critical emancipatory pedagogy of Klaus Mollenhauer and Wolfgang Klafki which Mariette Hellemans started to introduce into the course program of educational sciences and which offered the man a basic educational thought frame that would never leave him anymore.

It is also she who invited the man to become an assistant at the Centre for Foundations of Education and to start a PhD research on Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and on the way it affects foundational ideas about speech and dialogue in education. In the early eighties he starts to delve into the rich history of Critical Theory and of Emancipatory and Critical Pedagogy in Germany. In the summer semester of 1984 the man is in Frankfurt am Main as a student of Habermas. It is the period where Habermas is working and lecturing on his 'Philosophical discourse of Modernity.' At the same time he invites many of his opponents to Frankfurt: Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Stephen Toulmin, K.O. Apel and many others appear in his Monday seminars. On Tuesdays he attends also his seminar on 'Communicative Action and Moral Consciousness.' One year later he will drive in his small car every Monday morning 350km from Leuven to Frankfurt, and 350km back in the evening to attend Habermas and Apels seminars and lectures on communicative ethics. And it happens that later in the week he drives another 300km to Paris, to dwell around in the bookstores but also to attend some seminars of Alain Touraine. All these seminars were at once overwhelming (he felt often totally lost and sometimes paralyzed) and fascinating and inspiring. And of course, he learned a lot. They made him discover in practice and in theory

the fundamental role of power, dialogue and speech in educational practices, they confronted him with the challenge how to think and conceive more particularly dialogue and speech in the context of educational relations which always seemed to rest on inequality (the teacher/parent in relation to the pupil/child) and to imply the operation of hidden power structures. These were challenges he would confront in his PhD through a reading of the work of Habermas, Arendt and Buber, in discussing German critical emancipatory education and arguing on Wittgenstein with his then colleague and friend Paul Smeyers. It were the challenges which would bring him through the brilliant teaching of Mariette Hellemans, who he assisted over many years, to Levinas and back again to Buber, before he would go other ways occasioned by his reading of Rancière's *Maitre Ignorant* (Ignorant Schoolmaster) with his students in the nineties.

But maybe all this was not the most important. What seems now maybe more important was that he apparently felt in love with the particular practices and places itself (lectures, seminars, conversations), with the way he could be in these places and practices: devoted to and absorbed by an issue, engaged in a common concern. In fact he realizes, that this is related to what Mariette Hellemans taught him through the way she embodied academic life: that the (critical) role the university has to play in society has to be related in the first place to the scene of teaching itself (and not to study as such). And he must confess to himself that he still loves to attend these places and practices, that he still feels a slight thrill and curiosity passing the threshold of the lecture hall or the seminar room, never knowing exactly what is going to happen, feeling exposed. Today, the man would say that this practice of attending lectures and seminars, which were essentially open for everyone interested, has offered him the crucial experience of these particular pedagogical forms of gathering a public and of public thinking where people are turned into students and professors (as in the lecture) or all into students (as in the seminar). And where matter (words, things, practices) becomes public matter, is getting authority and makes us hesitate and slow down in order to have a closer look, develop a better, different or more elaborated look and in order to think about it. Public gatherings, collective experiments that install hesitations, temporally suspend institutional positions and personal opinions, turn things into matter that provokes (public) thinking and discussion. Of course, sometimes during lectures and seminars he was overwhelmed, often also bored and absent, but there were always again those moments where something and some ones seemed to be really at stake.

And there is this other place he attended: the cinema. Indeed, the move away from his small hometown offered him also a sudden and unprecedented easy access to (bookshops and) cinema and the discovery of the movies of Italian neo-realism, the nouvelle vague and the surrealists (Bunuel, Fellini, Pasolini, Rossellini, Antonioni, Visconti, Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, and so on). It is of course a somewhat different place than the one of lectures and seminars, but it seems to him that it at least allowed for an experience which is strongly related to the one in lectures and seminars and which maybe can be called a basic educational experience. The experience which the Belgian filmmakers the Dardenne brothers

would much later describe to him as the experience where we forget regular time, where we lose even the company of ourselves and give up our usual vigilance, where we are brought as close as possible to our birth, to the silence of the beginning, where all images and judgments which made up our existence are for a moment suspended, where a different world can become alive, start to speak, where we can become for a moment someone different, someone which we can bring to silence again upon leaving the cinema, but someone which we could also allow to converse with us and with others about the world which was disclosed. And yes, when he thinks about it now, cinema and film altered him and have disclosed him the world, and he is surprised that he even thinks that only that world, the world that appears on the wall, is the real world, or better, the world 'as such.'

WALKING CITY LANDSCAPES: E-DUCATING THE GAZE

Being educated in the tradition of phenomenological existentialism, critical theory and critical emancipatory educational theory, he started to teach at the university at the end of the eighties. He tried to develop an idea of education as a 'responsive communicative action of doing justice' (rather than a productive intentional goal oriented action) and adhered to a longstanding critical tradition which conceives of the practice of philosophy (of education) primarily as a work of judgment (separating between valid/not-valid; right/wrong, etc.) or de-mystification (revealing what is underlying or supposed i.e. denouncing illusions). In a certain way, this tradition defines the public as people that lack enlightenment, that is, the appropriate knowledge (or the appropriate awareness, criteria, virtues, etc.). In that sense, it continues the inaugural gesture that lies at the basis of Plato's cave allegory: making a difference between those in the darkness of the cave and those in the bright light of the sun affirming that those in the cave need the philosopher to lead them towards the light. However, by the end of the nineties this philosophical gesture had become increasingly and patently questioned by so-called post-structuralism and post-foundationalism that seemed to demonstrate that it was impossible to get out of context, history and culture and that power relations reign everywhere. This made that the critical gesture more explicitly turned into a de-constructing and explanatory one, demonstrating exactly that and how we are all captured by language, embedded within cultures and histories, disciplined by omnipresent power structures. It therefore seemed often to lead to a nihilist impotence, bearable through feeling better than the others (who wrongly believed to have foundations or who were not aware of their assumptions).

Being very tired of being a critic and de-constructer and not knowing what exactly to do with his students, the man was invited, early 2002, by his friend, the architect Wim Cuyvers, to join him in a trip to Sarajevo. Almost 40 hours in a bus with a mixed group of students from architecture and educational sciences towards a devastated city to have students walk along arbitrary lines and think about the design of a school. It turned out to be the start of a new practice, constructing a new gaze. Ever since he travelled every year, often with Wim, or his other friend

Jorge Larrosa, with post-graduate students for 10 to 14 days to post-conflict cities (Sarajevo, Belgrade, Tirana, Bucharest, Kinshasa), non-tourist megapoles in China (Shenzhen, Chongqing), small banal cities (St-Claude, Kortrijk) and recently, on invitation, to an iconic city (Rio de Janeiro). Students are asked to walk day and night along arbitrary lines drawn on city maps. Lines starting and leading nowhere particularly, lines without plan, crossing at random neighborhoods, buildings, areas. Along these lines they map their observations and register parameters. He equally walks along these lines and every day, during long talks at night he asks each of them very simple questions: What have you seen? What have you heard? What do you think about it? What do you make of it? At the end of the travel students have to present in the streets somewhere in the city their 'design.'

In September 2003 the man organized a five day seminar in La Bâtie (French Vercors). Jorge Larrosa, Gert Biesta, Norbert Ricken, Ilan Gur Ze'ev, Wim Cuyvers and Maarten Simons participated in an exercise which started from viewing two movies of Rossellini (Europa 51 and Europa Anno Zero) in order to talk about education in the present conditions and in order to explore various educational practices: conversation, studying, recognizing, displacing, responding, and indeed also walking. The intensive talks helped him to clarify and articulate what was at stake in these practices and in the city walks. At first, he had no idea at all of what he was engaging in. He had simply accepted the invitation to go to Sarajevo, to leave the institutional space of the university and try to find other ways to deal with education, with students, with the world at a moment that he was in fact very close to step out of the academic life altogether. Now he thinks that it was the point where he started to deviate, where he got the sense that indeed other practices were possible, where his being enclosed in this dead end of a critical position that does nothing more than judging others and asking others to justify their claims in order to demonstrate that they are in fact unable to do so (since there seem to be no ultimate foundations possible, only historical, social or cultural ones) was getting loosened so that new thoughts could come to his mind and he could start to think differently. Indeed they could come to his mind and not out of his mind because he got exposed (out-of-position) himself. And he realizes that this had nothing to do with his intention to be exposed or 'open,' but that it had to do with the material, social and intellectual conditions that characterized more of less unintentionally the trip to Sarajevo which made him exposed and vulnerable. It were conditions which he reconstructed gradually only later on and then tried to produce more consciously in the subsequent city-walks. He can mention a few and hopes to once be able to write more extensively about it. First of all, he had no idea where they were going. Of course he knew things about the history, the war, etc. But he had never been there and was far from being an expert in the history of the Balkans or the educational policy of Sarajevo. It was thus impossible to take the position of the guide who explains what you encounter and relates it to history, culture or social conditions. Moreover, he had no idea of the kind of design that the students would have to come up with in response to what they encountered and registered during their walks, he could not lead them towards an outcome. In fact, the only thing he did do was offering them a protocol (go along the lines and stay

as close as possible to these lines, days and nights, make detailed maps of what you observe, take notes of your encounters) and helping them to keep to the protocol. There was the relative 'seclusion' strengthening the sense of being away: no internet, no google-maps, no mobile phone network available or very expensive. There was nothing really to see, at least from a tourist standpoint, the only more or less 'famous' building being the library which had burned during the war, on the other hand: a lot of devastated buildings, most facades plenty of bullet traces, the war written in stone and even more terrible than the ruins. There was the exhaustion, both of him and the students (40 hours bus drive, walking day and night, talking day and night). There were the poor living conditions which he shared with the students: rooms of 4 or 6, collective shower, no heating (with still snow outside). In fact all this made it that he and his students were more or less in equal position, more or less unarmed. He was surprised that it produced also a way of speaking with the students which was no longer about explanations, arguments and positions, being right or wrong, but, as Jorge Larrosa clarified to him, about regarding and conversing, about finding the right words. And later he learned that it was also interesting to have students or colleagues joining in the walks who spoke no Dutch, so that he had to speak another language, again something that helped to weaken his position. None of these conditions was decisive as such, but they contributed to make him (just as they did to the students) vulnerable and exposed, to be in a different position and relation towards students, towards himself and towards the world. As he mentioned already, it created conditions making it possible that new thoughts could come to his mind, that his intentions and urge to judge were suspended and that he could start to imagine a kind of critical thought that would intensify the possibilities within existence.

EXPLORING CAVES: FROM POSTMODERN ENLIGHTENMENT TO PREHISTORIC DARKNESS

It was during his first years at the university that the man learnt about caves. Plato's famous cave time and again recalled and discussed in his various philosophy and education courses. The caves of the age old wall paintings in southern Europe (Altamira, Lascaux) through the brief texts and films of Marguerite Duras and Georges Bataille discovered more or less by accident. But it was also the time in which he was invited by a student friend to join a caving club and to participate in their weekly cave explorations. In the karstic regions of Belgium at first, but later on throughout Europe. It was the beginning of a passion which has not left him ever since. During many years he spent almost every week at least some hours, more often many hours, underground. He discovered the hostile but fascinating world of caves and underground rivers, the marvels of rock walls, big chambers, deep pitches, small passages and got intrigued by the cave experiments 'out-of-time' of Michel Siffre. Later on, the search to explore caves brought him also to the most spectacular and beautiful landscapes of China and Vietnam, and occasioned a decisive encounter with caver-architect Wim Cuyvers.

The man realizes that his passion for caves has not only brought him to often remote and beautiful places as well as hostile fascinating environments, but that it made him also develop a desire for physical effort, even exhaustion, that it generated a longing for exploration of the unknown, for living and moving in uncomfortable conditions, that it formed the way he goes about things, also in his research and teaching, that it even is shaping the way in which he is travelling and walking with students in cities all over the world.

And although caves and caving have, thus, been very present throughout his life, it is only within the last years that it came clearly to his mind that, even if being strongly attracted by philosophy and by this movement of enlightening and liberation as ascending that is so powerful imagined in Plato's cave allegory, he has always looked for the opposite movement: to enter caves, longing to wander around in them even if they are, indeed, inhabitable and rather hostile. Exploring them in the light of a small lamp and relying only on the force of his body, the power of his senses and the company of his fellow cavers. And in fact, it was another man, Maarten Simons, a man who earlier had made him know Foucault as an unexpected great 'friend,' and who became in fact himself a friend, who now also helped him to discover that exactly this movement might be related to his other passion, the passion for the university and the school itself as particular places of education. Both strongly related to the adventure of humankind and the exploration and disclosure of worlds.

Philosophy had, thus, something with caves. Indeed philosophy and philosophy of education seemed to find in Plato's cave allegory their common inaugurating story, founding their own necessity and especially the necessity of the presence of a master. The story, as he knew, offers a scene of impotence: (wo)men chained in darkness, trapped in sheer appearances, who at the hand of the philosopher, who breaks their chains, have to turn around and ascend to the light, leaving the cave behind and going to a world beyond. The turn being in fact a return to the world out of which (wo)men had fallen into the final darkness of a disastrous condition. This philosophical story is basically a story to maintain the sovereignty of Being and especially also of the master as the one who is needed to lead the human being from the darkness to the light.

Foucault – in the lectures he had been given on the hermeneutics of the subject at the Collège de France, which the man heard from the tapes, and which he considers to be one of the greatest lectures on/of philosophy of/as education, to which he returns time and again – had taught him already that this conversion of the immortal soul ('epistrophé') towards the 'true world' of ideas as the source of light and being, was to be contrasted to the conversion of the immortal soul towards God in Christianity ('metanoia'). A conversion which is equally based on a distinction between two worlds: the bright reign of God and the dark reign of the devil. And, more crucially, for it opened up a different way to approach philosophy of/as education, Foucault had taught him about a third form of conversion: the conversion of the mortal soul to herself in the ancient form of 'care for the self' or self-education ('epimeleia') – a conversion which is based on a distinction between what is not depending upon us and what is depending upon us. This care for the

self didn't imply the withdrawal of oneself from the world but required precisely an acceptance of that world and a focusing on one's relation to the present world (rather than on the attempt to escape or get delivered from it). It didn't rest on a scene of impotence or transcendence which affirmed the exclusive value of the light or the divine order, but on a belief in the absence of any pre-existing order and any human destination and thus on the recognition of the value of shadow and on the affirmation of the central role of (self-)formation or 'epimeleia' in the undestined adventure of humankind. It was finally Marie José Mondzain who helped him to understand that he could maybe relate this scene to another cave story. A story, or phantasia as Mondzain (2007) calls it, which he would like to call the educational story of the cave, to be distinguished from the philosophical one. The story of the beings that enter the cave to paint on its walls, offering a scene of the education of the human being as a scene of potency and immanence. One that speaks to his own yearlong experience in entering and wandering around in caves. One that is not reducing the caves and the activities within them immediately to symbolic places and symbolic activities. One that starts from a phenomenology of the cave and of the time-space experiences related to entering and dwelling around in them, one that takes the activities of entering and painting first as gestures instead of symbolic actions, one that offers a different scene of the (self-)education of the human being.

Mondzain bases her fiction mainly on the findings related to the rather recent discovery of the Chauvet cave in the French Ardèche region which contains the oldest wall paintings of the world (approximately 32,000 BC), paintings extremely well conserved and of an extraordinary beauty. Paintings made in such an ingenious way, that in the light of torches they become moving images. The cave as the first cinema. Based on these findings Mondzain constructs a 'phantasia' which is not telling the story of a return of 'man' to the light of eternal truth which is shining from behind him. The 'man' of the Chauvet cave enters the cave and produces light with his own hands and to his own hands. It is these enlightened hands which will reveal their power or capacity to make an image, including an image of his hands. The image of a being which becomes at once the spectator of the work of his hands, not simply as an object or tool, but precisely as an image, thereby inaugurating the human gaze on the human being and on the world. Men's eyes were not from the outset destined for contemplation, thinking and regard. It is to these images made by the hand in the cave that we owe it, so Mondzain teaches him, to have eyes that open themselves to the world in an incomparable way. These image-building operations make the world visible in a new way, they make ourselves visible in a new way. To see oneself is always to see oneself at and from a distance, in the cave however this seeing is not seeing oneself from the mirroring water surface or from the reflection in the eye of the other, but from an image on a wall. And Mondzain further tells him: In the cave, the hand is not taking or hewing or carving, not performing the gestures for survival but changes its use and destination, thereby demonstrating a sort of sovereign de-adaptation: it is depositing paint on the wall. The hand marks a distance which it will propose to the eyes and which will also change their use. The hand produces before the eyes the object of

the first gaze, it makes visible and this making articulates itself in plain autonomy. It is not about the meaning of an object, but about the sense of the gesture, articulating us as beings who have the task and potency to humanize themselves. And he thinks that it is a truly fascinating story. The cave as a scene of potency and immanence, neither a prison or hell, nor a temple of the gods, but a limited, particular walled space, where light is made and images are projected on a wall (without horizon and 'out of time'). Images of the hands, but also images of animals and landscapes. The hands no longer objects or tools, no longer submitted to regular use. The animals no longer prey or danger, taken out of the cycle of reproduction and survival, naked and beautiful. Not the idea 'horse,' but an image which is made and contains a profanation and suspension of the 'horse' in its natural or social environment. The images offered for thinking and for exploring different ways to deal with oneself and the world, at a distance. Not from the top of a mountain, offering an overview that inspires phantasies of conquest or offers sights that inspire awe, but a distance at hands. And now the man realizes that here we have not only a truly educational cave story but the origin of a school history, the origin of an experience of potentiality. What is missing to turn the first 'cinema' in a school is not the master that leads out of the cave, but the pedagogue that leads towards the cave and the teacher that not only projects on the wall, but turns the wall also into the surface of a table where the image can become the subject of a conversation, where words are added to the image, not to explain them but to name them, making them into a thing (that starts to 'speak'). The school not offering a mirror or a window, but walls! Walls that shape time and space outside the 'natural' time and the 'natural' environment, walls that offer the world 'at hand' and make an experience of 'being able' possible, of being able to think and to take one's life in one's hands. Which is not the recognition of an 'essence' or a 'destination,' but an experience of the present, 'now' (main-tenant), of the contact in the darkness of the cave (within the shadow of the light of the torch). And so, at his surprise, his passion for caves seems to join his passion for the university and the school.

THINKING AND WRITING WITH FRIENDS

Of course many more things could be mentioned that shaped his intellectual life: the circumstance to have been at the crossroad of French, German and Anglosaxon thought and traditions, to have to inhabit, read and write always different languages, to be almost permanently 'in translation.' But there are two things he feels which have to be mentioned more particularly. First, he remembers Heinrich von Kleist's famous statement that thoughts do come to one's mind through talking to others ("I'dée vient en parlant"). For von Kleist these others can be anyone. And from his experience with all kinds of 'publics' or audiences and certainly also from his conversations with students and colleagues, he agrees. But, and that is the second point, there is something more to say about particular others and a particular experience. Indeed, he increasingly came to experience that it is impossible to talk, to think and write alone about the things that are really of

interest and really matter. Another, maybe the only name for that experience is friendship. Friendship is not about intimacy or privacy. It is a worldly experience; for friends the world becomes something of a concern, something to think about, something that provokes experimentation and writing. Is a philosophy of education, as far as it faces the world, possible without friendship? And of course, philosophy and friendship have been coupled to each other time and again, and in many very different ways, also in his case and engaging various young and old friends, nearby and around the world. But looking back he notices that in his case this impossibility of philosophy without friendship articulated itself more peculiarly in two kinds of joint exercises. First, through the city walks, as a space and time for friendship, as joint exercises of shared exposition and thought, especially with Wim Cuyvers and Jorge Larrosa. And secondly, maybe even more surprisingly within 'philosophy' – it seems indeed as if only few examples exist, Deleuze et Guattari being maybe the most famous one – through the exercise of joint writing, especially with Maarten Simons. Indeed, his writings have often been shared exercises, not 'his,' or better, not his alone, although it has never been, institutionally, more strongly required to indicate and claim one's own contribution. And he has frequently been asked how it works. But he can only say that it is truly joint writing, that maybe the new technology helps, and repeat that he experiences it as the articulation of a friendship, a time and space for friendship which however risks to be banalized under the changing conditions of academic life. And he liked it when Walter Kohan compared it to the Dardenne brothers, the Coen and Tavianni brothers, maybe again no coincidence: examples out of cinema.

BECOMING A PEDAGOGUE (THROUGH PHILOSOPHY)?

As he recalled before, he got an education as philosopher and pedagogue. And although he has never been really sure about what either of these 'titles' precisely meant, for a long time it sounded more serious to him to be considered as a philosopher (even if one dealing with education and therefore maybe not a 'real' one). However, since the turn of the century this started to shift fundamentally. The walks with students made him re-discover this beautiful meaning of education as *educere*, taking by the hand and leading out. And the conversations with his colleagues and students, with his old and young friends ('Paul, René et les autres') against this background brought him back to Socrates, who is commonly known as the founder of the school as a particular place of 'scholè,' and especially also to the original meaning of the pedagogue: the slave who accompanied youngsters to the school as a place and time of study and exercise. And now that he learned how 'school' can be conceived not as an institution (which in fact is mostly a taming of school) but as a form of gathering in a place of 'free time,' out-of-(regular)-time, out of the natural environment, where the world is profanated, dis-closed and can be attended, is at a distance, at hand and an experience of being able is possible, now that he learned that 'school' is a cave, now he can find himself not only in the idea of *educere*, but, finally, with enthusiasm, in being a pedagogue: leading out of the home into the world i.e. leading to school. And no, pedagogues don't lead

youngsters to a particular predefined goal, they don't practice the art of making others into some kind of (ideal) persons, or make them acquire predefined competences, or reach certain levels of development. Pedagogues do not help to 'develop,' they simply lead to a particular e-ducational place and help to make and protect that place, they engage in the art of making 'scholè.' And of course, he knows that there is "the usual passivity and dispassion that prevails in classrooms in schools and especially also in universities around the world." And he concedes that the university "is rarely a place to perpetuate the revolutionary desires of a young generation, that the tenure position can be a sleeping pill of comfortable living, and that the main arguments are now about the protections of the privileges of students and professors" (Kishik, 2012). However, he not only believes that within these institutions (and often despite them) there are still strong moments where lectures and seminars operate as educational spaces, where people are turned into students and matter becomes public matter (and he has to mention the Friday-seminars and the London-Leuven ones). But it became also obvious for him and for his friend, with whom he is writing about these things, that especially today it is worthwhile not just to defend such places, but especially also to try to invent and experiment with new forms of 'scholè,' to find new ways to enter caves and 'make' caves, to invent and experiment with new disciplines of mind and body, with new forms of gatherings and new ways of leading out. It became obvious that philosophy of/as education is in need of laboratories and fieldwork, in need of an academic community as a community of people sharing the exposition towards the present, whose speaking together is no imitation of war with other means, who do not so much share a language, doctrine or method, but have in common an experimental ethos putting themselves to the test. He now tends to declare that it is worthwhile to be a pedagogue, to be devoted to philosophy as education. And he confirms his commitment to the invention of forms of free time for all, and to the belief that there is no (predefined or 'natural') destination, but that the human being can be called with some reason an animal *educandum*.

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