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The Ethos of Critical Research and the Idea of a Coming Research Community

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Abstract

Critical educational research offers the researcher a position and an ethos of comfort. Even the declared recognition of the relativity of principles, norms or criteria so characteristic of much critical research does not prevent it from looking immediately for a way out of this uncomfortable situation i.e. to keep to the idea that comfort (for the researcher) is needed and desirable. However, we suggest that this uncomfortable condition is constitutive for critical educational research and may be even for education as such. Therefore the article can be considered as a genealogical analysis of this comfortable critical research, in which we show how the birth of the milieu of the modern school goes together with the instauration of two forms of a comfortable research 'ethos': a research ethos rooted in a pastoral milieu and a research ethos rooted in a bureaucratic milieu. In the last section of the article we indicate that another 'experimental' ethos of research is possible, including the acceptance of discomfort. This is the ethos of a critical researcher as an inhabitant of a coming research community and as being exposed to the present.

Keywords: critical research, research ethos, Foucault, governmentality, pastoral figure, experimental ethos

Introduction

In this paper we want to show that, in a particular way, critical educational research can be considered as a very comfortable practice. Or, to say it differently, that it offers the researcher a position of comfort. That seems to be the case even where critical educational research takes the form of a (deconstructive) exercise to keep its own discourse 'open', to not arrive at a positive result. In such an approach this not-arrival appears to be but the reverse of a 'being-always-already-arrived' and therefore offering an equal comfort. We can even say that the declared recognition of the relativity of principles, norms or criteria which seems to be characteristic of much critical research does not prevent it from looking immediately for a way out of this uncomfortable situation i.e. to keep to the idea that comfort (for the researcher) is needed and desirable. However, we would like to suggest that maybe this uncomfortable condition is constitutive for critical educational research and maybe even for education as such. Therefore the paper can be considered as a genealogical analysis of this comfortable critical research in which we will show how the birth of the

milieu of the modern school goes together with the instauration of comfortable research positions. In the last part we will try to indicate briefly that another 'experimental' ethos of research is possible, including the acceptance of discomfort.[1]

Towards an Analysis of the Figure of the Educational Researcher

Theoretical and philosophical debates on educational research are often concerned with the problem of methodology and the validity and reliability of research findings. In these debates, the researcher herself is often out of sight and the focus is mainly on epistemological issues and on theory of science. The main goal of this paper is to explore educational research, and especially so-called critical educational research exactly with the researcher as the point of departure. However, we do not opt for a psychological approach in order to present a psychological profile. Neither do we try to offer a typology of the educational researcher from a sociological or cultural point of view. Our intention is an explorative analysis of the *figure* of the ('critical') educational researcher at an *ethico-political* level. In order to understand this idea of 'figure' it is necessary to clarify first what is meant by ethics, politics and their linkage[2].

'Ethics' does not refer to a collection of rules and values, but to the way people relate to themselves. This relation to the self is not given, but is always the result of some work upon the self (cf. Foucault, 1984b). Through history, and probably also through one's lifetime, there are transformations of the relation to the self. An example of a particular relation to the self is to understand the self as a collection of drives that are in need of moderation. Another example is to constantly seek to reveal one's true self and try to act and think accordingly, as authentically as possible. More generally, this perspective allows us to understand notions such as individuality and identity not in some kind of essential way, but as part of a rather specific objectification and problematisation of the self (or others). Understanding ethics in this way offers the opportunity to write a history of the subject, i.e. a history of the relation to the self, or a history of subjectivity. In this view, to understand the educational researcher at the ethical level is to focus on her subjectivity; the way she relates to herself, and connected to this, relates to others and to the world. However, one of the basic insights of the later Foucault is that the questions of ethics and politics are closely related (Foucault, 2001, pp. 241–242). In order to understand this relation it is important to understand what we mean by 'politics'. Politics is also understood in a rather specific way. It does neither refer to the problem of political institutions, nor to that of power or legitimatisation. In accordance with Foucault, we displace the question of politics to the question of governmentality, i.e. a field of strategic relations of power acting upon the conduct of people (Foucault, 1981, 1982), which is to say that in order for governmental relations to be operational and effective, people are required to govern themselves in a specific way. In other words: for people to be governable they have to govern themselves (and 'behave') in a specific way. It is exactly this connection between government and self-government that expresses to what extent politics and ethics are linked. They do not refer to separate and/or opposite domains, but imply one another.

This preliminary elaboration enables us to define what is meant by an ethico-political analysis of the figure of the ('critical') educational researcher. We do not restrict ourselves to an analysis of the subjectivity of the researcher, but develop an analysis of her subjectivity as far as it is part of a regime of government, i.e. the researcher as a governable subjectivity. Thus, our assumption is not only that as a researcher a specific relation to the self is required, but also that this subjectivity or self-government is part of a governmental regime. And the notion of figure is used to refer to this relation between government and self-government. In this paper we limit ourselves to an explorative cartography of two main figures related to the privileged research domain of the modern school: a researcher figure rooted in a pastoral milieu and a researcher figure rooted in a bureaucratic milieu. This cartography will allow us to situate the figure of the modern critical intellectual and finally to explore an alternative critical research subjectivity, i.e. the ethos of a critical researcher as an inhabitant of a coming research community.

Before presenting the cartography of the critical educational researcher, it is useful to focus on her actual performance and its implications. Of course, critical thought in relation to education is multiple and diverse. The notion 'critical' could even be used to characterise most if not all of the (educational) research—probably no one would accept being categorized as uncritical. Our scope however, i.e. the target of this short genealogy, is rather limited. It is restricted to that kind of research that judges educational thinking and acting related to the school, by introducing a fundamental principle, evaluating current practices accordingly and offering this knowledge and judgment to these practices in order to optimise them. This line of critical educational thought has some important implications (cf. Masschelein, 1997; Hunter, 1996). First, this research and these theories are directed or addressed to practitioners who are in principle (though not necessarily in fact) rational and self-reflective. Therefore, the knowledge offered is considered to be emancipatory, i.e. having the force to develop rationality and self-reflection, and to arrive at a better understanding of one's situation. Second, the critical researcher is not just using her own (subjective) criteria or principles to judge a situation and/or practice. These principles, although not always immediately visible or accessible and often oppressed or concealed by forces of power, are nevertheless supposed to be given as such, and thus be not only accessible to and for the researcher, but in principle also to and for the practitioner. Third, and combining the previous implications, the critical researcher grounds her research on a general principle, a principle which also legitimates her position towards those who are in need of the output of the research, i.e. those in need of enlightening knowledge. However, as we have said, the aim of the paper is not to criticize this line of critical thought and its implications by pointing at the presuppositions regarding human nature and rationality that are involved, but to focus our attention on the 'ethos' of the researcher herself.

The 'Kingdom of Truth' and the 'Civil Kingdom'

Before describing two important figures of the educational researcher it is necessary to situate the modern school. As Foucault and Hunter have argued, two elements

have to be taken into account in order to understand the rather specific institutions of modern schooling; the pastoral care of the soul on the one hand and the birth of the modern state on the other hand (see Foucault, 1978a, 1979, 1981; Hunter, 1994, 1996). A short sketch helps us to understand how both elements play a role in the assemblage of the modern school and how they constitute its specific strategy.

The birth of the modern state is the birth of the state that understands its main task as governing people (the birth of a governmental state). Until the end of the Middle Ages, the problem of government was mainly a problem of legal subjects, of administration, of the territory and of obedience. A distinctive feature of the modern state is the ability and necessity to govern the lives of its inhabitants. The growing importance of the notion of 'population' expresses this shift (Foucault, 2004a, p. 68ff; 2004b, p. 6ff). A population is thought of as a collection of living beings, inhabiting a territory, and an important factor for the strength or force of a state. Understanding the people as a population means (1) that it is possible to speak for example of birth and death rate, of epidemic's, of labour forces, etc. and (2) that, besides the classical juridical instruments, a lot of regulation techniques can be put in action in order to direct and govern this population (and the processes related to it). It is for a governmental state that the training or schooling of the population is important: schooling can guarantee the good order (hygiene, etc.) within a population or, later on, can produce the kind of freedom required for a liberal, self regulating society. In other words, schooling or popular education can be regarded as a technology to govern a population (cf. Melton, 1988; Moog, 1967, p. 300 e.g.). It is the 'bureau' that plays a major role in this governmental configuration (Hunter, 1994). In this 'bureaucratic' milieu the population and its important features are calculated; processes, parts and domains of the population are problematised; schooling is regarded as a governmental technology and the relation between schooling and the population becomes an important object of knowledge. Moreover, the bureau is the milieu of a rather specific figure of an educational researcher. Before we elaborate this it is important to deal with the second element in the assemblage of the modern school.

The birth of the modern, governmental state in the Western world, the objectification of schooling against the background of the population and the problematisation of schooling as a governmental technology does not imply that the state has invented a kind of educational milieu for this purpose. Although it is not our purpose to present a detailed analysis here, it could be argued that Christianity, and especially the 'Christianisation of the masses' during and after the religious reforms, played a major role in assembling the pedagogic milieu of the school (Delumeau, 1988; Hunter, 1994). Important to understand this milieu and its outcome is on the one hand the figure of the pastor and on the other hand the repertoire of techniques and procedures to govern the soul. The pastor is someone who has an access to the truth but it is not his truth. Foremost, he is in a rather specific way an expert of the soul. The goal of his expertise is to bring about a transformation in the relation to the self in order for people to be able to tell the truth about themselves and govern themselves accordingly. The main goal is not in the first place a pedagogical initiation of people (or pupils) in a certain truth

(expressed and lived by a teacher), but a transformation of the soul of the pupils, a 'psychoagogy' directed at the constitution of a specific subjectivity (Foucault, 2001, p. 389; see also Foucault, 1981). With regard to the technology used here we could refer to Foucault's detailed analysis of disciplinarian power (Foucault, 1975; Pongratz, 1989). However, it is also important to stress the significance of pastoral power, the spiritual discipline and the government of the soul (Foucault, 2004a, p. 167ff). The school is not only a disciplinarian milieu acting upon and shaping the body, but also a pastoral milieu where people have to learn to look at themselves as in need of self knowledge, self reflection, self discipline and self guidance, to objectify themselves as intellectual beings, to problematise their flesh, etc. That and how we objectify ourselves as subjects of knowledge or problematise our body is not something that is given (or a kind of anthropological universal) but is the result of a rather specific 'psychoagogic' regime. In this sense the pastoral-disciplinarian milieu of the school is producing a rather specific kind of subjectivity, and the figure of the pastor is the figure of someone who has the moral authority and techniques of supervision to bring about this transformation within people (cf. Popkewitz, 1998).

In order to understand the assemblage of the modern school it is important to understand that the governmental state and its bureau is using this pastoral-disciplinarian milieu to achieve its goals. Schooling (among other things) is producing the kind of subjectivity and self-government used to govern a population (cf. Foucault, 2004a, p. 110). The modern school thus occupies a rather specific position between the 'kingdom of truth' and the 'civil kingdom'.[3] On the one hand, the pastor-teacher could be described as the gatekeeper of the kingdom of truth and as the one who guides people towards this kingdom and who equips people with the necessary subjectivity in order to pass the gate. The bureaucrat on the other hand is concerned with the order of society, the wellbeing of the population and the training of citizens. It is important to stress that these kingdoms have their own regime and that their inhabitants, and especially the pastor and bureaucrat, are characterised by a specific relation to the self. The pastor regards him/herself as an intellectual being and a reflective subject, in need of a spiritual discipline and subjecting himself to a divine tribunal in order to live a moral or virtuous life, whereas the bureaucrat is someone who detaches him/herself from ethical and personal (religious) commitments in order to be able to be involved in the administration of the population (as 'objective', 'neutral', 'impersonal', 'detached'). In other words, the pastoral-pedagogic milieu and the milieu of the bureau or administrative office have each their own ethos, both play an important role in modern schooling and finally both help us to locate the important figures of educational researchers: the administrative and the critical intellectuals.

One of the tasks of the bureau is to collect data in order to secure order and freedom within the civil kingdom. For this 'powerful machine for governmental analysis and intervention' schooling is a domain of special interest, and more specifically the relation between schooling and the order and progress of (civil) society (Hunter, 1994, p. 103). From a governmental perspective the administrative intellectuals in the bureau analyse what is going on in society and which

domains and parts of the population are in need of special attention and additional intervention. Through their intellectual-administrative eyes poverty for example is being problematised against the background of the level of education. Lack of hygiene and criminal behaviour are also problematised from an analogue governmental perspective. With regard to schooling there is also the installation of new faculties of educational reflection and calculation (cf. Moog, 1967). In these faculties, and with the population as a general background, statistics is becoming a main instrument to objectify and problematise what is going on in society and to offer targets for governmental action (Hacking, 1990). This governmental reflection and calculation, and the related professionalised gaze to look at schools in society, is developed in university departments and throughout different forms of social research. Thinking about education is becoming a matter of professional knowledge. In short, the civil or administrative intellectuals submit themselves to the rules and procedures of the bureau and the profession in order to be able to collect relevant knowledge about schooling as a governmental technology. It is important to stress that their 'object of knowledge' is not simply given, but only appears by their own submission to a professional and governmental tribunal. Therefore, the figure of the administrative intellectual and the educational professional implies a rather specific kind of self-government. In order to see and understand this 'object of knowledge' s/he must transform himself into a specific 'knowing subject'.

Since the figure of the critical educational researcher is far more important for us, we deal with it in a separate section.

The Modern, Critical Intellectual: her Tribunal and her School

While the bureau and the governmental concern with schooling in the modern state give birth to the figure of the administrative intellectual and the professional educational researcher, the pastoral-disciplinarian milieu gives birth to the figure of the modern, critical educational researcher. In order to make this argument, we use Kant as an exemplary articulation of this development.

The figure of the pastor is the guardian of the 'kingdom of truth'. Moreover, within the Christian tradition there has always been the tendency to submit the 'civil kingdom' to the 'kingdom of truth' and its divine foundation (cf. Hunter, 2000, p. 366). An early expression of this critical attitude is the disqualification of early modern government according to the reason of state as atheism (Foucault, 2004a, p. 247). This means that taking into account the rationality of the state and not the cosmo-theological order is regarded as being too narrow. The citizen is regarded as an impoverished human being; a human being lacking the spiritual self-discipline to govern herself according to moral principles. Kant's critical philosophy does not break with this tradition. Of course, his work criticises religious dogmatism and argues how freedom or autonomy is guaranteed by submitting oneself to the tribunal of reason (Kant, 1781/1997). But his critical philosophy could be read as presenting the (formal) guidelines on how to enter the kingdom of truth and the moral kingdom. And since people have to learn to look at themselves as both empirical and intellectual beings, as able to find the moral law within, Kant still

occupies a pastoral position. Enlightenment is not something freely chosen by people, but requires a rather specific kind of 'psychoagogy' and self-discipline, i.e. an initiation into the school of critical philosophy, learning first of all that autonomy and access to the truth is enabled by a submission to principles of the tribunal or court of reason (see Kant's preface to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant 1781/1997, p. 101.). This pastoral dimension of the modern, critical intellectual is also being articulated when Kant submits politics and government to the kingdom of truth.

In his essay on Enlightenment, Kant makes the distinction between the private and public use of reason (Kant, 1784/1992). The condition for Enlightenment is freedom within the public domain, while the private use of reason could be restricted—without touching the progress of Enlightenment. Citizens should pay taxes, an officer should obey his superior and a clergyman should teach according to the doctrine of the church; they belong to the societal or social machine. However, for intellectuals, and with regard to the public of the reading world, the use of reason should be free. So for Kant, Enlightenment is not in the first place connected with the domain of the citizen. Enlightenment is located within the kingdom of truth and this kingdom is situated above the civil kingdom. Therefore, he argues, the Faculty of Philosophy should also be located beyond all control, and the kingdom of truth should influence the formation and organisation of the state, e.g. the so-called moral politician. The Kantian project is directed at a sacralisation of the state, the development of a community of rational beings or an 'ethico-civil society' and 'kingdom of God on earth' (Hunter, 2000, pp. 366, 375). However Kant articulates not only the principles to which the other domains should be subjected. Foremost he regards himself as someone who is able to claim what is needed to become part of the kingdom of truth and how to make free use of reason. To become part of the 'republic of intellectuals' requires a specific intellectual discipline. Or as Hunter tells about Kant's teaching at the Faculty of Philosophy: '… it was a carefully controlled milieu of moral problematisation and discipline in which the capacity for critical self-reflection was internally dependent on unstinting surveillance and obedience. (…) Far from being a recipe for free self-reflection, critical philosophy can itself be seen as one variant of a spiritual discipline through which individuals learn to relate to themselves as subjects inside the relation of pastoral tutelage' (Hunter, 1994, pp. 162–163). To become a critical intellectual, to have access to the kingdom of truth and to be able to confront what happens in society with general, universal principles, requires a specific initiation into a pastoral-pedagogic regime, a specific relation to the self. Therefore, Kant shows in the first place how becoming a critical intellectual requires an initiation into the practice and discipline of self-criticism, requires the transformation of oneself into a specific knowing subject who is trained in the technique of abstraction and is able to judge oneself, others and the world according to the tribunal of pure reason. For the idea of pure reason to have any sense, a specific kind of self-government is needed. And this ethos of the critical intellectual is at the same time part of a governmental regime trying to install a moral community, a community of rational citizens. The critical intellectual, as inhabitant of the kingdom of truth, looks at others and the world as in need of pastoral care, i.e. the pastoral ethos of formulating

principles and limits that should be taken into account and offering—as long as these are ignored—the foundation for their position of moral superiority.

In educational matters, it is this critical ethos that is responsible for the invention of the idea of *Bildung* (or general edification). However, by this, the critical intellectual has not formulated the principle underlying modern schooling, but inaugurated a principled way to look at education. The idea of *Bildung* could be regarded as a way to reconcile the kingdom of truth and the civil kingdom, a way of offering a route to individual freedom, which at the same time guarantees the progress of society as a whole. In order to clarify this strategic dimension of *Bildung*, it is necessary to point at the governmental role of research and knowledge in modern society on the one hand and at the shift in the pastoral or pedagogic attitude on the other hand.

As pointed out, the accumulation of knowledge through research and science is becoming a governmental theme. In order to govern the population and the civil kingdom as a whole, what is needed is a trained citizen. And with regard to a number of spheres (medicine, policy, education, law, etc.) this means training based on scientific knowledge. In this configuration and in order to govern the civil kingdom, the figure of the professional, its professional community and its institutes for research and training play an important role. Although it would be interesting to elaborate the figure of the 'professional' from an ethico-political perspective, we limit ourselves to the observation that professional knowledge and research is becoming part of the civil kingdom and its government. Against this background, it is possible to understand the growing importance of the idea of *Bildung* and foremost of the pastoral technology directed at self-discipline and autonomy.

The self-declared goal of modern education is freedom as autonomy. However, the 'nomos' guaranteeing freedom is no longer a matter of a divine order, but human reason itself (cf. Kant, 1803/1983). In a general sense, it is the tribunal of reason, characterised by its universal and unifying nature, that guarantees freedom. In relation to this universe of reason (whether incarnated in scientific knowledge, culture or society) the modern teacher or pedagogue remains the gatekeeper of the kingdom of truth. Moreover, what is required is a pastoral attitude, an attitude which regards pupils as in need of a specific disposition in order to be autonomous, in order to speak the truth. They have to be able to look at themselves as subjects whose autonomy is produced by the installation of the tribunal of reason and as a result of the 'enlightening' role of research and knowledge. And, in the perspective of Humboldt and at the level of the university, it could be said that since knowledge is gained through research (*Forschung*), education and research are one: the process of research is the process of self-discipline required to become part of the kingdom of truth, becoming a member of the 'republic of 'the educated' (*Gelehrtenrepublik*) (Humboldt, 1810/1959). Therefore, neither the idea of *Bildung*, nor the 'idea of the university' is to be seen as a principle underlying modern education, but as the result of a principled way to look at education and society as a whole. It is a correlate of the gaze of the critical educational researcher who addresses citizens to look beyond the actual governmental configuration and to discipline oneself according to the law of reason. The critical educational researcher does not criticize the civil

kingdom and the social training of citizens as such, but introduces within this governmental configuration a technology of self-discipline and a community of rational human beings in the position of making universal claims and of having moral superiority. In short, the critical educational researcher looks at himself as being part of a rational community, an inhabitant of the kingdom of truth and looks at others, looks at the civil kingdom, its government and its professional knowledge and research as in need of an additional, principled guidance. The idea of *Bildung*, and the idea of the university, articulate the pastoral attitude of the critical researcher and in order to have any meaning require a principled way to look at oneself and the world.

Before concluding this section about the characteristics of the ethos of the modern critical educational researcher, it is interesting to indicate the recent expression of this ethos, which we can find in Habermas' work for example. Again, we do not focus in the first place on his philosophical ideas but on the way he addresses his readers and society as whole. According to Habermas, modernity and the idea of critique should be regarded as an unfinished project (Habermas, 1981). Undoubtedly, he claims, modern society and modern education is to a large extent organised by a strategic and instrumental rationality, by the logic of media power and money. However, Habermas not only points out that (and how) these rationalities govern the system and its subsystems, he also 'learns us' to make a distinction between the system and the 'lifeworld'. What is at stake in the latter is communication, and this communication has its own rationality. The communicative rationality is articulated in a discussion on the basis of claims of validity and (*a priori*) directed at mutual understanding. Habermas shows that as inhabitants of the 'lifeworld' we are subjected to a rather specific communicative tribunal. Certainly, there is a shift from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, but what remains is the promise of freedom and autonomy through the installation of a tribunal. In this sense, Habermas is able to hold the pastoral position of the modern critical researcher. His principled (or quasi-transcendental) gaze gives him the pastoral position to play the gate-keeper of the kingdom of truth, or as he claims himself, the mediating role in a differentiated society (Habermas, 1989, p. 73). And furthermore, it is the attitude of subjecting 'the system' (and its further differentiations) to the claims agreed upon in the kingdom of truth and the community of rational human beings. Therefore, it is no surprise that Habermas is able to reformulate the 'idea of the university' as a community of teachers and students who share the subjection to the tribunal of communicative rationality and the disposition of rational agreement (Habermas, 1986). What is shared is not universal knowledge, but a disposition directed at universal agreement and open to the force of the argument. Moreover, this rational community that incorporates the idea of the university is in a position of moral superiority towards the rest of society. It is an exemplary practice or model for the organisation of a true public space. But again, this disposition, this way of looking at the self and at the world, is not what is given, but what the pastoral position of the critical researcher produces.[4]

This short description enables us to conclude this section by mentioning some important characteristics of the ethos of the critical educational researcher. First,

the pastoral dimension of this ethos shows that it is very important to focus on what the researcher does; as gatekeeper of the kingdom of truth s/he guarantees that future inhabitants are trained in the 'practice of abstraction' and able to govern themselves according to the 'nomos' of pure reason or communicative rationality (Hunter, 1994, p. 29). It is this pastoral discipline which enables, with regard to education and schooling and their government, the formulation of an underlying principle and a critique of actual educational practices for not meeting this principle (criticizing them as 'instrumental', 'technocratic', 'managerialist', etc.). Secondly, the critical educational researcher is part of a rather specific community. While the (bureaucratic) professional is producing knowledge for an optimal organisation and development of (education within) the civil kingdom, the critical educational researcher occupies a position as gatekeeper at the border of the kingdom of truth. She is not only an inhabitant of this kingdom, but foremost an expert in the moral disposition which is needed to pass the gate. Therefore, the community of rational human beings of which she is part, is at the same time a moral community. Thirdly, as a kind of combination of the features mentioned above, the critical educational researcher is part of a 'school'. This school of critical educational research functions as a pastoral-disciplinarian milieu of critical intellectual thought directed at a principled reorganisation of education and society. It is a school looking at the civil kingdom as in permanent need of 'enlightenment', addressing people as in need of a subjection to a specific tribunal in order to be free.

Is it possible to describe an alternative figure of the critical researcher i.e. another way of relating to oneself, to others and to the world, another way of speaking the truth?

An Ethos for a Coming Research Community

What can we say about an alternative critical research subjectivity? How to describe an alternative figure of the critical researcher i.e. another space of experience, another way of relating to oneself, to others and to the world, another way of speaking the truth? And more specifically, how can we think about the researcher's task, community and school? In order to explore this, it is important to deal in more detail with the main characteristic of the modern critical research subjectivity, i.e. the pastoral attitude.

The figure of the critical researcher as we described above implies a specific attitude: the pastoral attitude, implying a certain ethos, a certain relation towards oneself and others as a result of some work upon the self. This pastoral attitude is always a *sovereign* attitude expressed in an act of judging, gatekeeping, enlightening, addressing or interpellating. Through these acts the pastor takes a position towards herself and others. On the one hand, these acts imply in themselves *a submission to a tribunal* (a divine tribunal, or the tribunal of reason, or the human tribunal, etc.) or an instance of judging according to principles and norms (a 'nomos') and on the other hand *an 'absence' of the person*. The pastor has access to the 'truth' (the 'nomos' of the tribunal) and subjugates herself under its tribunal, but it is not her truth. These pastoral acts call upon the others to recognize the value of the 'nomos' and to submit to its tribunal in order to speak out their own truth in relation to

this tribunal. The pastor thereby also functions as gatekeeper of the 'kingdom of truth' and as the one who can guide the others and equip them with the necessary subjectivity to pass the gate (she can enlighten and empower them). Enlightenment is only possible through pastoral care which guards, watches, monitors and enables the access to the 'kingdom'. And the educational researcher as enlightening, critical researcher is taking or claiming this 'position'. Although she recently seems to have lost a clear view on the 'kingdom' (on the 'nomos' and the tribunal) she still wants to keep to this pastoral (gatekeeping, safe-guarding) position. That she is speaking in terms of a legitimisation and justification crisis illustrates her looking for a new fundament, illustrates her still present search for a mediating position to make pastoral acts. In other words, the discourses on legitimisation and justification express not only the need for foundations but at the same time the need to relate to others as a flock in need of guidance.

This makes clear that what is at stake in exploring an alternative critical research subjectivity is leaving behind the pastoral attitude and its acts. Maybe we have to close the gate and renounce the will to install a tribunal, the will to be a gatekeeper and the will to look at others as a flock in need of permanent spiritual guidance. In short, for us, proposing an alternative critical subjectivity is resisting first and foremost the comfort of a 'position'. It is an invitation to an ethos characterised by an uncomfortable ex-position towards the present (cf. Masschelein & Simons, 2002, p. 601ff). Critical research should then no longer be related to a guarding, judging, legitimating, monitoring, controlling, saving or securing position, but to an 'experimental' praxis and attitude which is not concerned with 'legitimisation' (a relation to the tribunal) and with defining or defending a 'position', but with 'experience',[5] with experience in the literal sense of 'what is happening *to us*'.[6] In order to understand what is at stake when we accept closing the gate behind us and look for an uncomfortable ex-position, the idea of 'the present' offers a point of departure.

Of course, also the modern critical researcher is concerned with the present. As Habermas claimed, the present and what is actually happening should even be the major concern of critical thought. However, it is a specific, pastoral concern. What is important for modern critical thought is the present as an expression ('an example' or 'case') of an underlying 'nomos' and foremost the extent to which what is happening is in accordance with it. In this sense, it could be said that the modern critical position is a way of ignoring the present, it is a position of mediating between past and future and of positioning oneself towards the present as what is in need of additional steering and guidance, a position of legitimised limitation and judgement. Being ex-posed to the present, on the contrary, does not imply that the point of departure is what we see as necessary and universal in our present, but starts from what is *experienced today* as fundamental and necessary. Therefore, it is not an act of limitation but a limit-attitude, an attitude of susceptibility to the limits of the present (Foucault, 1984a, p. 53). These limits should not be understood as dividing an inside from an outside, but as what appears by focusing on what is presented to us as a necessity today. In order to explore further this limit-attitude of someone who is exposed to the present, i.e. exposed to its limits,

to what can and should be thought, spoken and written about, it is important to stress what is uncomfortable about it.

First it is crucial to mention that this other relation to the present is not given, is not what simply appears after leaving the old critical attitude behind. What is required is a rather specific relation to the self and therefore some specific work upon the self. We agree at this point with Butler when she reminds us that a critical attitude for Foucault is about 'virtue' (Butler, 2001). It is a virtue to question the given order. But as Butler argues, we should think about critique not in terms of judgement but in terms of praxis, i.e. a praxis of valuing and relating, which is postponing judgement. Judging is always separating the one who judges from what or whom she is judging, is separating the subject from the world, from the present. Instead, the praxis of questioning the actual order and the revelation and questioning of the limits of the epistemological field (of the truth) is in itself related to an (non-prescriptive) ethical exploration and experience. However, this ethical experience and exploration is not the result of subjugation under a prescription, a norm or order (a tribunal). In other words, it is not about finding a pastoral position but about being exposed to one's own thinking and acting. The virtue of being exposed to the present is the virtue of being exposed to one's own limits.

Therefore, it could be said that the critical praxis as a praxis of exposition is itself not about legitimating what is or what one knows already, nor prescribing or revealing to others their truth. It is, as Foucault claims: 'to explore what might be changed, in its own thought, through the practice of a knowledge that is foreign to it. The 'essay'—which should be understood as the test by means of which one modifies oneself through the play of truth and not as the simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication—is the living body of philosophy, … i.e., an 'ascesis', an exercise of the self, in thought' (Foucault, 1984b, pp. 8–9). Following Foucault it is important to state that critique for us is not the act of judgement or gatekeeping enabled by a pastoral position and directed towards the promising future of the present situation. It is a praxis in the present of which we are part and it is directed to our actual thinking and acting. As a praxis, and more specifically an attempt or an 'essay', it is exactly the opposite of a comfortable position. What is uncomfortable in this practice is not only the lack of a tribunal and of laws to look at the present, but the experience of being as a researcher part of this present: the experience that what is at stake is not only the given order but foremost one's own position in that order. Therefore, it is also important to stress that this critical praxis is not just to be seen as a praxis in the field of knowledge, as a praxis which is concerned about the increase of knowledge, but as a praxis concerned with self-transformation (Foucault, 1984c, p. 675). Furthermore, it is not only the praxis of critique as a praxis of self-transformation and exposition that is uncomfortable, but also that this praxis does not promise us a new, better position in the future. It is leading us out, it is a practice of education and not a process of acquiring a comfortable position in a new kingdom of truth.

This idea of critique as a praxis of being exposed to the present which is at the same time a praxis of self-transformation, enables us to look in another way at the ethos for a critical educational researcher, i.e. to reformulate its task, its community

and 'school'. We cannot develop this here in detail, but we restrict ourselves to some first indications.

In fact, the task of the alternative critical researcher is not anymore to judge the present and to guide the flock. Instead, her task could be described as presenting her answer to a present situation, as responding to the present. This response has a certain public character and could be seen as finding a 'right' answer, whereby 'right' is referring to an answer which allows that something-(new)-happens-to-us, that there is a future which is not just a repetition or conservation of the given.[7]

In a certain sense we could describe this task as an act of enlightenment, as an act of enlightening others. Enlightenment, however, not in the sense of giving a true explanation of what is going on, of offering a true representation, of telling the truth and defining what the problems are. It is a kind of enlightenment because it is about making visible what is already visible by a small gesture (Foucault, 1978b, p. 594). And because a lack of attention—attention meaning precisely that 'one-is-present-in-the-present'—could prevent us from seeing what is already visible, could make invisible what is visible, this small gesture is a calling for attention, it is an invitation to displace one's gaze. While the pastoral act is forcing someone to take a position in order to be able to speak the truth, a small gesture is about finding the right words to make visible what is already there in the present and as a result to let appear the present as a question. The act of the critical researcher is enlightening as far as it exposes the present and brings it out of position. What she does is not to open up the gate to the kingdom of truth, but to send an invitation for research. The words of this invitation offer insight, not at the epistemological level (the expertise of the pastor), but at the ethical or existential level, i.e. the level of how we relate to ourselves, to others, and the world. The critical researcher therefore would write books of experience and not books of demonstration, justification and truth (Foucault, 1980, pp. 239–40). A book of experience is a book that is a public gesture, an invitation to investigate oneself, a word and gesture that wants to introduce an experience, which prevents from remaining the same, a book which is not oriented towards explaining or understanding how things 'really' or truly are or how they have to be read or understood. Again, it is important to stress that in order to make such a small gesture the educational researcher should be attentive herself, needs to work upon the self in order to be exposed and has to be present in her thoughts i.e. to speak in her own name, to say what one has to say. An intellectual willingness is not enough, for what is required is for example the courage to give up a position and to be engaged in an uncomfortable praxis.

This very brief exploration of the new task of the critical educational researcher enables us finally to say something about her community and school. The research community could no longer be regarded as a community whose participants are sharing a common methodology or referent, nor a community of people who share the same position and tribunal, and could function for each other as a touchstone for the validity of propositions (which is related to this shared tribunal). It is a community of people who share an exposition towards the present. Members of this community do not interpellate each other. Their speech is not about arguing, it is not prophetic. Their discussions are not organised as 'parodies of jurisdiction',

as 'imitations of war' or as 'a passing judgments or sentences' (Foucault, 1984d, pp. 591–592). It is a community of a kind of 'curiosity' and 'care for the present' and where what is shared is not so much a common language but thoughts. This community does not require a school in the traditional sense of a pastoral milieu producing a subjection to a common tribunal. Instead of using pastoral techniques it is a community simply sending an invitation for educational practices.[8]

Notes

1. Although an echo of Foucault's reference to an ethics of discomfort can of course be heard in the background (Foucault, 1997), we do not follow the line developed by Harwood & Rasmussen (2004) which in a way leaves the position of the researcher herself completely untouched, whereas it is exactly this position which we want to address here.
2. For a similar kind of analysis concerning 'games of truth' and 'ethics of subjectivity' in educational research see Peters (2004).
3. For these notions we can refer to Hunter's analysis of Pufendorf: 'The kingdom of Christ therefore is a kingdom of truth, where he, by force of truth, brings over our souls to his obedience; and this truth has such powerful charms, that the kingdom of Christ needs not to be maintained by the same forcible means and rules by which subjects must be kept in obedience to the civil powers. And for the same reason, there need not be established a particular state in order to propagate and preserve truth, no more than it is necessary to set up a separate commonwealth where philosophy and the other sciences are to be taught.' (Pufendorf in Hunter, 2000, p. 195)
4. One could probably question the position of Derrida along more or less similar lines: i.e. we could ask whether he is not part of the same pastoral tradition. See Foucault's remark on Derrida's approach: '… je dirai que c'est une petite pédagogie historiquement bien déterminée qui, de manière très visible se manifeste. Pédagogie qui enseigne à l'élève qu'il n'y a rien hors du texte, mais qu'en lui, en ses interstices, dans ses blancs et ses non-dits, règne la réserve de l'origine; qu'il n'est donc point nécessaire d'aller chercher ailleurs, mais qu'ici même, non point dans les mots certes, mais dans les mots comme ratures, dans leur grille, se dit 'le sens de l'être'. Pédagogie qui inversement donne la voix des maîtres cette souveraineté sans limites qui lui permet indéfiniment de redire le texte' (Foucault, 1972, p. 267). And we could ask whether for example in his text on the 'university without conditions' Derrida really answers Foucault's very early objection (Derrida, 2001).
5. Our goal is to draw attention to Foucault's insistence on the meaning of experience (in a rather particular sense) as an important dimension of education and research. This way we are not following other formulations of a positive critical attitude which, referring to Foucault, point to utopian models to offer 'a unique methodological vehicle for redesigning the balance between individual freedom and the needs of community' (Olssen, 2003, p. 543). According to us such an approach does not break with the processes of individualisation and totalisation, which are characteristic of actual (pastoral) power configurations.
6. For this notion of experience, which has to be distinguished sharply from its pragmatic, phenomenological and hermeneutical interpretation, see Jay, 1998.
7. At this point, Foucault's analysis of truth-telling and his focus on 'parrhesia' could be mentioned (Foucault, 1989). By focusing on 'parrhesia' (a kind of truth-telling that originally had a political dimension and implied a kind of risk) Foucault tried to explore the roots of the critical attitude in Western society. Recently, these ideas have been introduced in educational studies (cf. Peters, 2003).
8. This article is thoroughly collaborative. The order of authorship is arbitrary.

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