

the language of the school. alienating or emancipating?

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1. in defense of our defense

It might have sound either outdated or arrogant, conservative and to some even aggressively neo-colonial to try to defend the school as we stated in the title of the little book that was published in Portuguese as *Em defesa da escola. Uma questão pública* in 2014. Indeed, in many different places all over the world (including the Brazilian or more broadly the South- American context) the school has been accused of being a normalizing, colonizing and alienating machinery that is more or less violently imposing, establishing or reproducing a certain social order (often that of the nation state) whereby, for sure, language plays a central role. In fact the language of the school is an issue we didn't really address in our defense, but we intend to make a very preliminary, unprotected and hence undoubtedly very debatable attempt to deal with it in this contribution. However, we want to recall explicitly that we didn't intend to defend the school as an institution of the state. We wanted and still want to take the school out of the hands of those who confuse school with all kinds of manipulative and institutionalizing mechanisms. We do not ignore or trivialize these mechanisms -- not at all -- but we think it is more just to talk *educationally* and appreciatively about the school first. Our ambition was to articulate school experiences, not the institutionalized experiences that are often mobilized to attack the school (see also SIMONS; MASSSCHELEIN, 2016). But to be clear from the outset, we want to stress that the school, just like democracy, is an invention (equally emerging in ancient Greece and maybe even more radical than the invention of democracy itself) and as such has nothing to do with the kind of natural or informal learning that is often (implicitly or explicitly) cherished by those who oppose institutionalized (or 'artificial') forms of learning.

In fact, we assumed that our explicit review of the charges leveled at the school and the extensive attention we gave to all kinds of taming of the school would have reassured the reader of the book that we are very aware of most of the critiques (including the one's by radical de-schoolers such as Ivan Illich) that have often rightly been directed at the school. We hoped that this would help the reader, at least for a moment, to suppress the strong (very common, and in fact rather uncritical) inclination to immediately reenact all those well-known and easily recognizable frustrations regarding school (that it is boring, disciplining, formal, 'dead', not related to the lifeworld, excluding, etc.). We invited the reader to accompany us in our effort to explore what makes a school into a school from *an educational point of view*. This is not a sociological point of view in terms of functions, not a philosophical one in terms of ideas or purposes, not a psychological one in terms of development, not an ethical one in terms of values, norms, or interpersonal relations, and not a political one in terms of struggle or interests. It is an educational one in terms of the effective and real operations performed by a particular arrangement of people, time, space, and matter.

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2. summarizing the school

Let us briefly summarize these operations since we will have to keep them in mind when dealing with the issue of the school language: (1) the operation to consider everyone as 'student' or 'pupil' i.e., *suspending*, not destroying, the ties of family and state or any 'closed' or defined community; (2) the operation of suspension i.e. putting *temporarily* out of effect the habitual order and use of things; (3) the operation of *making* 'free time' i.e. materialization or spatialization of what the Greeks called 'scholè': the time for study and exercise; (4) the operation of making (knowledge, practices) public and putting (them) on the table (what could also be called a profanation); (5) the operation of making 'attentive' or forming attention relying on a double 'love', both for the world and the new generation, and on disciplining practices to make attention and renewal possible. The school (as pedagogic form) refers, than, to an association of people and things arranged as a way to deal with, pay attention to, take care of something - to get and be in its company - in which this care entails structurally an exposition. The school in this sense, i.e. as a pedagogic form, is neither oriented towards and tamed by a political utopia nor by a normative ideal of a person, but is *in itself* the materialization of a utopian belief: *everybody can learn everything*. This belief is, in our view, not a kind of goal or aim (projected in the future), but the point of departure. There are clearly other points of departure possible when it comes to learning (e.g. some should a priori be excluded from certain subjects, natural ability is a decisive criterion to decide on when and what to learn). The school, for us, is the making possible of the 'everybody can' on the one hand, and the 'everything' on the other hand. In other words, instead of thinking about how an utopian school or an utopian educational system would look like (as is often the case), we suggest to look at the school itself, and by what it does through its pedagogical form, as the materialization of the utopian idea that *everybody can learn everything*. What it does is the double movement of bringing someone into a position of being able (and hence, turning someone into a pupil or student) which is at the same time an exposure to something outside (and hence, an act of presenting and exposing the world).

Furthermore, as we stated already above, we are aware of how, from its very origin up to today, the 'school' as pedagogic form has been subject to all kinds of tactics and strategies, more or less effective, to neutralize, to recuperate, instrumentalize or tame it, meaning that what is called school is often not scholastic at all. And how today, partly related to developments in ICT (e.g. e-learning), the school is even said to soon disappear. And of course, our defense of the school didn't ignore the devastating and profound critiques of the school as being something like a prison, as a subjugating, oppressing, colonizing, banking machinery or as an outdated technology of power. However, we didn't want to maintain that the school as we know it today as an institution or organization is scholastic in the sense that we tried to elaborate. But we did, and we still do believe that it is worthwhile to try to unearth the radical and revolutionary operations of the school as very particular *pedagogic* arrangement and practice of making things public and of gathering people and world which emerged in Greece.

We claim indeed, that just as the Greeks invented a particular way to deal with living together that is called democracy (which has provoked, of course, strong questions and debates regarding its 'essence', its 'desirability', its 'effectiveness' etc. ever since), they also invented a particular way to deal with the common world in relation to the new generations. This is not socialization or initiation, but precisely school education, that is, taking the new generation out of (any) family and getting them to school. School as first and foremost, a particular arrangement of time, space, and matter where young people are brought into the company of (something of) the world in a specific way. We have tried to explore what this educational invention is about, not to idealize the past (it is not about

romanticizing school), or worse, to return to the past (restoring the traditional school). The reason we took this approach is that we think that it is still worthwhile to deal with the future of our world and of the coming generations in this *pedagogical* way that we can call school. Although, just as with democracy, it remains an issue to be discussed and to be concerned about (i.e. a public issue). Much about the history of and accusations leveled against the school seems to be repeating what we all seem inclined to think about the school. Perhaps this criticism is nothing more than a kind of intellectual continuation or even cultivation of the feeling that people don't like to go to school - as if we want to forget about the school, and as if we are not pleased to be reminded that who and what we have become maybe somehow depended on the school. Of course, there is this typical appreciation of teachers, but at the same time there is the pervasive contempt toward nearly everyone who is involved with education.

There are many versions of this looking down on education, ranging from the often-repeated claim that teaching is not a real job, to educational research being not true research, to educational theory and philosophy being marginal. According to us, this contempt actually expresses how society deals with what is immature, with *minors*, and that one always assumes and protects the idea that being involved in serious matters requires a kind of maturity or being grown-up. Isn't there always a deep fear motivating this type of looking down? It results from recognizing that the coming generation actually becomes a new generation, and is directly or indirectly questioning what grown-ups value and take for granted. In *In defense of the school*, we took the risk of using the notion of school for the always artificial space-time configuration that makes this radical educational experience possible, instead of using the notion for what makes this experience impossible. Actually, we think it is our duty as educational theorists to take the notion of school out of the hands of those using it only to express political, economic, and ethical frustrations or expectations (i.e. to instrumentalize it in relation to political or ethical ideals or projects). If the school does not meet someone's expectations, isn't it also because young people (sometimes) do not meet expectations, and hence they do not fit or want to fit the image we have in mind for them. If that is the case, all this is about a fear for school, as far as school refers to the time and space that starts from the assumption that human beings have no (natural, or social, cultural, etc.) destiny, and therefore should have the opportunity to find their own destiny. We want to reserve the notion of school for that simple but far-reaching assumption. And de-schooling, for us, refers to the opposite assumption that society has to impose a destiny on young people through developing their so-called natural talents, through projecting a predefined image of the educated person, of the true citizen, the life-long learner, and so on.

3. exercises in familiarizing

It has been suggested that we are looking to the past in an idealized way, with our backs to the future, and without noticing crucial historical developments, current challenges, and other helpful conceptualizations. We are not sure. We experience ourselves living in the present and trying to open up another future by intervening in the current conceptualizations of the school, including in the historical narratives (of increased normalization, etatization, governmentalisation, educationalization, etc.) that are part of our conceptualizations. In that sense, our book is perhaps a counter narrative. Or to continue in a Foucauldian idiom: the book does not envision a critical but a creative ontology of the present, and history is not used to "de-familiarize" by warning how school education is in fact oppressive due to political, economic, or other powers, but to "familiarize" by remembering what school makes possible and by reminding we have been young too.

In order to further clarify what we were and are attempting to do and what we are defending and find very worthy of defense – and which is indeed neither ‘teaching’ or ‘learning’ but ‘school’ – we want to take this opportunity to address in a “familiarizing” way the really difficult and challenging issue of the language of the school. An issue which has come up strongly in discussions we had about our book in Brazil during the last two years, but is now also very much debated in our own country related to the issues of migration (including the arrival of refugees) and (national) identity. It is an issue which is emphatically and maybe also paradigmatically present in Brussels which is not only the capital of Belgium (with its three official languages) and ‘Europe’ (‘recognizing’ all ‘national’ languages of its member states) but also otherwise an extremely multicultural/multi-lingual urban environment (more than 110 languages are spoken). The issue of the school language is, of course, also one which has received already plenty of attention by theorists and critics dealing with ‘school’ in relation to societal issues such as (neo-)colonialism, justice, equality. Some of the analyses are famous and influential. The sociolinguistic one of Basil Bernstein (1971) making a distinction between the use of a restricted and an elaborated code and suggesting a clear relation to social class. An analysis which Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1970) sustained albeit within another theoretical framework. Ivan Illich’ sharp attack of the way in which various political authorities imposed one ‘national’ language thereby devaluing vernacular languages (1981/2009). And of course, Paulo Freire’s critique of the way in which the ‘words’ (language) of the dominant social group (the oppressors) not only alienate the oppressed from their experiences but also operates as a mechanism to install and reproduce the existing unjust social order (1968/1970).

While recognizing the importance and value of these analyses, and we will come back to some of them, in our contribution we will try to offer some reflections from a different perspective. We should also state from the beginning that we have no definite and clear cut answer, we will, therefore, not make a systematic argument, but we want to offer some reflections in the form of suggestions, hypotheses and possible consequences. These reflections do not intend to settle the issue of the language at school, but to open up (just start!) another approach to this issue, which we call a strictly pedagogical one lining up with what we indicated earlier: thinking about language starting from (the requests) of the school (and not from the individual, the family, society) as an arrangement to offer ‘minors’ (and perhaps also minorities) at once the opportunity to find or define their own destination (i.e. to become pupils or students) and to question directly or indirectly what ‘adults’ value and present to them. This could maybe help to think about this issue in a perspective that is not *immediately* occupied by political, sociological or psychological considerations, which does not at all entail that these are not important.

To move beyond these considerations and to address the issue of school language from a pedagogical perspective is the real challenge we have to face. It seems as if it is impossible to discuss the language of the school without immediately finding oneself in the middle of, for instance, a political discussion, if not to be blamed for always already taking a political stance. We do not want to disregard the politics in language issues involved, but by introducing a pedagogical perspective on the language of school we hope it becomes possible to look at the politics of school language from another angle. The pedagogical hypothesis we will elaborate can be formulated as follows: the language of the school is always an artificial language for it has to address on the one hand the coming generation as a new generation and on the other hand attempts to turn ‘objects’ (something of the world) into subject matter. School education ‘requires’ so to speak a particular language for pedagogical reasons. The result is that only at school, and while being exposed to the artificial school language, something like a mother tongue (the language spoken at home

or in a local community) and father tongue (the official, institutionalized and/or state language), as well as their (potential conflictual) relation, becomes an issue. Probably these ‘tongues’ precede the language of the school, but it is schooling that turns their relation into an issue. For that reason, our reflections will try to take into account some observations and remarks that have been made concerning the ‘mother’ and ‘father tongue’³. However, we will try to indicate why and in what sense we could say that the language of the school is actually the ‘children’s and the poets tongue’ and why this is actually implying a radical crisis or interruption of the (oedipal) logic of any family (including the ‘national’, the ‘native’ and the ‘scientific’ one).

4. the language of school: a love affair

Maybe first it is important to clarify in more detail what we have in mind when we refer to the language of the school. It can mean at least two things. First, what is often called the language of instruction or communication, and thus the common language in or through which students learn. Second, there is the language or often, the languages, that students learn (to speak, write, ...) at school or that students learn about or study during school time. Our focus is mostly on the first meaning, that is, the language that is part of pedagogic practices in schools, and that is spoken by teachers and (at least assumed to be) understood by students. As announced earlier, we will formulate the hypothesis that this language is always artificial, it is not a ‘natural’ language (no vernacular and no native one), nor a kind of ‘sacred’ language that is conserved or protected by a political or another authority. With a language being artificial we mean that it is always somehow ‘made’. To state it quite bluntly: nobody actually speaks ‘school language’ at home or at work (except for schoolteachers). When leaving the family and entering the school, students are often confronted with a language that differs from what they were used to speak. The language spoken at home can be a complete other language, or a kind of dialect. At this point, we will make a strong claim: the difference between dialects and actually different languages is not the major issue here, what is important is that the language of school is always different from the one spoken so to say ‘before’ school. But the language spoken at school is also different from the language (or languages) spoken ‘after’ school. These can be dialects, but also the institutionalized and protected or ‘officialized’ languages of a community or country. Of course, the school language has connections with these other languages, but it is always a transformed, modified language.

Taking into account the typical features of the school as pedagogic form, and considering school language as being part of a pedagogical school arrangement, there are at least two reasons for school language being artificial, or more precisely: two pedagogic operations that make a school language.

The first one is that the school is the place where subject matter leaves a mark on language. Take the example of the teacher of physics, history or mathematics. A specific language – in the extreme case a highly formalized or a symbolic one – is needed in order for the world (of physics, history and mathematics) to become an object of study. It is not just that certain words are not (yet) part of the vocabulary used in the family or local community. It is not only that school language is more formal. All that is probably the case. The main issue is also not just the difference between the restricted and the

³ These notions can be taken in different ways, we take them here to refer to the language (possibly languages in the plural) spoken at home, the mother tongue, and the official language (possibly equally in the plural), the father tongue. This use of the terms is different from e.g. Thoreau for whom the father tongue is referring to the written (literary) tongue (see STANDISH, 2006) or e.g. Illich who is not using the notion of father tongue, but makes a difference between the vernacular and the mother tongue (ILLICH, 1981/2009). The mother tongue being the artificial language imposed by the state as the official one.

elaborated code hiding class differences as mentioned by Bernstein. What we want to stress is that the language of school is always partly marked by or even co-constructed by subject matter. And for that reason it is always a language that is somehow 'emptied' or 'cleaned' from all sorts of (cultural, social, political ...) impositions or appropriations, exactly because it is used to present the world to students, it wants to name the world without already acting upon it. There is, of course, no such thing as a complete neutral language, but language at school - at least at the moment when it contributes to 'making' school - is successful in naming the world (and bringing something to the foreground) without all kinds of impositions and claims to have the upper hand. In that sense, one could say that it is always a strongly 'functionalized' language; it has no specific or single function, but can have any function (it has something of a pure function).

The second reason for the artificial character of the language of schools is that in schools - at least in sense we use the term school - the coming generation is being spoken to, invited to leave one's lifeworld. It is about exposing and gathering young people around a (subject) matter of concern. In other words, it is a language that should have the force to gather and expose in such a way that young people are placed in the '(ex-)position' where they become students, and thus, are able to start giving meaning themselves to the world and are able to 'shape' themselves through practice and study, through skills and knowledge. As such, this language is inviting to speak, and hence always also a language that can reach out, that can be stretched, that can be changed without too much consequences. In a certain sense, it is a kind of poetic language: it can address everyone, and while inviting and showing it does not really impose expectations. School language here is a language that allows the coming generation actually to become a new generation, and hence, a language that is not claimed by teachers (or others) but a language of words that can be given (away).

Combining both aspects, and drawing on Arendt's ideas, the language of school is a (strange) kind of love language that enacts the combined love for the world and the love for the new generation. It is a language of naming (without closing off), of inviting (without interpellation), of making something (subject matter) speak (without silencing students), of giving words (without imposing closed definitions or ask for return), of hyper-functionality (exactly because removing *specific* functions). Probably this also explains that school language is sometimes close to the language of 'poets' on the one hand (language to name, invite, inspire, making speak)⁴ and the language of science or to academic language on the other hand (strongly functional and abstracting language), for both being languages which are also strongly worked at or made (and nobody's native language). But these are at the same time very different from school language. It is not just about reaching out to the world, but always also to the coming generation. Hence, probably the often heard remark (as a complaint) of the teacher being too 'artificial and

⁴ As parenthesis, it is interesting to note that the sophists, to which we owe the first articulation of the belief that human beings have to find their own destiny and in that sense are related to the emergence of 'school', are said to have continued the tradition of the great Greek poets. Who were not in the service of Apollo, the god of wisdom, but received their tongue from Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, and her daughters, the Muses who in the first place tell and re-call 'stories', communicate their enthusiasm and inspire - and not impose - 'meaning' and in this sense can contribute to 'form' people or to allow them to form themselves. This formation implies crucially memory and presentation. It is telling that in order for the oral storytellers to memorize the content the poems contained much repetition and used formulaic epithets to maintain the hexameter structure. They were, we could say, grammaticalized. And we can recall that the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* are handed down to us in the Epic Greek dialect which is a purely literary dialect, combining vocabulary and even grammatical forms from several Greek dialects. No one ever spoke Epic as their native tongue. From which we can retain indeed that school language is in some way the language of 'poets' which is itself never 'native' and always crucially artificial (or even fictional i.e. 'made').

affecting' or too 'academic' in her speaking. But this also might explain why school language is at once nevertheless also a rather familiar language, that is, reaching out to family life and the life world of students. But again, it is not 'their' language, and when school language would become their language it would be difficult to reach out for the world (beyond their life world). It would be difficult to make them exposed and give the world a chance (to object, touch, ...). One could say that language within the school arrangement - and when it actually works as a school arrangement - is a (pure) means of communication, or perhaps more precisely, a means of commoning.

It should be clear that in our view, the question about the language of school is actually concerning the obvious question about how generations can communicate. However, it is important to be more precise at this point. The issue of generations, in our pedagogical view, does *not* refer to a matter of age or time implying the assumption that generations are given and evolve (as a kind of law of nature). Generations are always made, and themselves come into being as the result of putting something on the table and setting it free. They are not pre-existing this school act, which makes a new generation possible, and this act implies that school language is artificial, and actually never owned but opened for free use. If this is indeed the case, we should avoid to turn the issue of school language *too quickly* into a political issue of minority and majority languages or official languages and those that are not officially recognized or protected. The language at school - and again, we have to emphasize: if it works as a school language - can never just be a majority (nor a minority) language. Clearly, school language is often the language of the majority, or most close to their language, but it is not *their* language (anymore).

5. exploring the consequences of a hypothesis

The previous, short sketches should be sufficient to - hopefully - formulate our hypothesis: the language of school is always an artificial (purified, functionalized...) language that allows the coming generation to name the world and while doing that turning themselves into a new generation. But we also hope the hypothesis has some credibility in the sense of being prepared to think further along these lines and explore its consequences. But it is a real hypothesis for us meaning that we are not (yet) sure whether these consequences can support the hypothesis or undermine it completely.

One consequence - and in a way it is quite radical one - would be that school language is not just an artificial language but that at the same time it is quite arbitrary and partly contingent what language is spoken at school. It is arbitrary on the condition that the links (and the expectations related to these links) with its mother or father tongue are suspended. To reformulate this: school language always comes from somewhere (and indeed, probably often through imposition or other overt or less overt power plays), but its genealogy (and family obligations - towards the mother/home or father/nation) should be suspended in order to offer the coming generation school education. School language is somehow an arbitrary choice, but a choice that imposes specific pedagogic responsibilities that we explore in the next consequences. There is one additional element here: indeed since school is about the possibility to relate to that what is defining one's life (i.e. about emancipating) and not just being immersed or enclosed in it, school should always at least include the profanation of the mother tongue (or the language of the family). Which would mean for instance that for an Arabic family living in Brussels Arabic should be present at school, but as a subject matter (and thus grammaticalized) in the way we indicated before.

The second consequence is that since the language of school is a language that is not (yet) really spoken by students (in varying degrees), it is the school's responsibility - out of love for the coming generation - to teach or learn them speak the language of

school. To put it bluntly: this is in fact a didactical issue, and one should be careful not to turn it too quickly into a cultural, social and political one. By having (or 'deciding' on) a particular school language, students are immediately placed in a different start or beginning position, and the school has to compensate or remediate for that. Again, we suggest to look at this not immediately in terms of acts of cultural imposition or a matter of deficit reasoning and imposed 'treatment'. This (critical) framing only makes sense if school language is approached in terms of minority or majority, family or official language. As clarified earlier, we frame it as an intergenerational and artificial thing, and hence, the issue is probably foremost a 'didactic' one (how to compensate for the difference in beginning situation?).

The third consequence is, probably, that in school education the father or mother tongue is at once transformed into a subject matter. And in that sense it also becomes a tongue that starts to stutter, to hesitate, to fall apart, becomes analyzed, is turned around, recomposed, recreated – the tongue of a student/child. Again, we have to be more precise at this point. The existence of the artificial school language, and while being confronted with it, makes something appear as a mother tongue or a father tongue (similar to the idea that the existence of school turns society into a matter of concern). Perhaps this is first responsibility towards the coming generation: to grammatize the father or mother tongue, and allow that language becomes an object to study, that is something to relate to (instead of completely being absorbed or immersed in it).

This implies, first, that language should be 'available' or 'given' in some way, it has to be (re)presented or it should be possible to have it at hand so to say (to take it up, and take it up again and repeat it). Therefore, language has to be grammatized first in the sense that it should be 'written' (taken in a broad sense). It means that we can have no school without writing. Writing makes it possible that we can return to what is said, what is known, can archive it, pass it on, analyze it as an 'object', start with it again, etc. Second, the grammatization is referring also to the grammar not just in a strict sense, but more broadly to the externalisation and materialisation of what usually remains enclosed (the basic elements, principles, rules, definitions, ...). 'Naturally' you will not encounter language turned into the letters to be found in the alphabet and the letter box. Without this grammatization of the 'natural' we deprive children to relate to the world and to that what defines them to a large extent (i.e. precisely the language). Therefore there is indeed a difference between 'learning by doing' and 'scholastic learning'. Even if indeed grammars are often boring and in terms of immediate use often very useless, it is the knowledge of the grammars (in the broad sense) that allows us to not be just absorbed in and by the language, but to be engaged and at distance, to escape from being imprisoned or locked up in one's lifeworld. We can also reformulate this as follows: if a school states that Portuguese or Dutch is the school language, it should acknowledge not just that it is 'school Portuguese' or 'school Dutch' (as a mother or father tongue), but at once allow the students to relate to their mother or father tongue.

The fourth consequence is that school has to offer always more than one language to be learned and studied as subject matter. This is actually a strong way (the only way?) to contribute to the profanation of communication, that is, allowing for the experience of the ability/potentiality to communicate and the ability/potentiality to translate. More language refrain from turning the school language in a tool for baptizing the new generation. Here we have to keep in mind that these languages also become an object of 'study' (not just practice). Or put differently: at school at least two languages should be grammatized in order to allow for the crucial experience of 'translatability', the experience of being-in-the middle or, as Michel Serres states in the fold of the dictionary. In the *Troubadour of knowledge* Serres (1997) expresses his deep gratitude for having been forced,

being left-handed, to learn at school to write right-handed. He became a "thwarted left-hander" or better a joyful "completed half" ("completed body") who made the experience of 'handiness' as such and calls it, contrary to what 'we' today would expect, the most revolutionary event in his life. From which we can retain that school has to do with a force that draws us away from our 'natural direction', forces us to cross the river and leave our nest. It sets in motion a mutation (including a suffering, but also a joy) without which, according to Serres, no real learning takes place. Recounting this mutation, this "voyage of the children" (which is "the naked meaning of the Greek word *pedagogy*"), he uses the image of the one that swims across a large river, leaving one bank on which she stands (or belongs) e.g. one language – say Portuguese – to arrive at the other bank where she stands again (or belongs) e.g. another language – say English. However, Serres urges us not to forget the swim and the river in the middle or the middle as river; "(...) in the middle of the crossing, even the ground is missing; any sense of belonging, of support is gone." (SERRES, 1997, p.5) Crossing the river one arrives at the other bank where the other language is spoken, but one passes through a 'third world' which "has no direction from which to find all directions" (*ibid*, p.7). Passing a threshold without (one) reference (or where all references are abandoned or being equally far away), being very sensitive: "time and site of extreme attentiveness", "being nothing but potential" (*ibid*, p.25). One, now, not simply speaks two languages, one passes "unceasingly through the fold of the dictionary", "inhabiting both banks and haunting the middle (...) from which diverge twenty or one hundred thousand directions." (*ibid*, p.6) Thus learning another language, passing the fold of the dictionary, as a *pedagogic* voyage, allows for this experience of translatability – which perhaps always also involves the experience of what it is to 'have' a language.

The fifth and final consequence that we want to highlight very shortly is that taming the language of school (through imposing official or other majority languages) is probably the first and probably also a very effective way of taming and neutralizing the school.⁵ Making school language an official language always implies turning school education into a mode of socialization (and hence reproduction). And it also explains that counter-reactions to this taming through language policies are probably not really effective if they (only) impose a minority language as new school language. The result is often that the school is turned into a site of counter-socialisation and the production of a new society that the older generation has in mind for the coming generation. The risk here is that the coming generation is deprived of schooling (is only socialized) and hence of the possibility to become a new generation. Perhaps the school is the wrong place for the politics of language and related identity politics and cultural wars to be played out. This is not to say these wars are unimportant, but that we should be careful that they are fought at a time and place that is organized out of love for both the world and the coming generation.

⁵ We think that this is what Illich 'forgets' in his analysis (ILLICH, 1981/2001) of the way in which the imposition of a 'mother tongue' (i.e. "the language which the authorities of the state have decided ought to be one's first language") is actually a mining or capitalizing of commons (the vernacular) and making people dependent upon an institution that teaches them this 'mother tongue'. For Illich the school is the institution of the state that in the first place teaches people that they need this institution (and thus become dependent) to become free or independent (to be able to participate in the communication). We think however that he is totally conflating 'school' as a pedagogical form in our sense with the institution of a state. He is in fact taking an external functionalist perspective and neglecting the elements that he himself seems to recognize (in this text and in others, e.g. the ones on alphabetization and visualization also implying a grammar, implying artifice, implying a distance to the oral by writing and a distance to the written by reading aloud) as being important for enabling study and that, according to us, can be related to 'school' as we understand it. There seems to be a constant floating of the vernacular to the oral and implicitly also the 'natural' or 'native'.

We want to ask to not understand this as a plea for the school as a safe site of peace and understanding. It is our expression of the strong belief that society can be changed and renewed, that emancipation is possible through school, also that an intergenerational 'fight' is different (and perhaps more productive in the longer run) from a political or cultural war. But only if we also give the school and her language a chance.

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