

REDISCOVERING THE ART OF TEACHING: EDUCATION, THE SCHOOL AND THE TEACHER TODAY

Gert Biesta

MANY THANKS FOR THE INVITATION

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**an interesting challenge and opportunity
because I tend to speak a lot of 'German' in English
which I can now translate back into German!**

REDISCOVERING THE ART OF TEACHING: EDUCATION, THE SCHOOL AND THE TEACHER TODAY

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I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK ABOUT



THE UNIQUE INSIGHT OF STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION
THE UNIQUE PRACTICE OF STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION
THE CHALLENGE NOT TO FORGET THIS
THE NEED TO (RE)CLAIM A SPACE FOR THIS
THE URGENCY TO RETHINK THE WORK OF TEACHING IN LIGHT OF THIS

AND LEAVE TIME FOR DISCUSSION!



WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR? A BRIEF HISTORY

ANCIENT GREECE

GIVING FREE MEN WITH THE TIME AND RESOURCES TO BECOME MORE PERFECT

REFORMATION

LEARNING TO READ FOR ONESELF

ENLIGHTENMENT

GAINING THE COURAGE TO THINK FOR ONESELF

FROM THE LATE 19TH CENTURY ONWARDS

PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

2019

SCORING HIGH IN PISA?

BECOMING AS 'GOOD' AS FINLAND?

and so on . . .



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HAS CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION LOST THE PLOT?

THE RELENTLESS OBSESSION WITH TEST-SCORES,
MEASUREMENT AND LEAGUE-TABLES
DOES SUGGEST THAT THERE IS SOMETHING NOT RIGHT

THE QUESTION WHAT EDUCATION IS FOR
IS HISTORICALLY CONTINGENT

WHAT WE SEE AS EDUCATION'S TASK
DEPENDS ON HOW WE WISH TO RELATE TO [OUR] HISTORY

rather than (just) looking forward, we should not forget the past

WHAT ARE RELEVANT HISTORICAL 'MARKERS' FOR OUR TIME?



AFTER 'AUSCHWITZ' (1)



Theodor Adorno
1903-1969

Erziehung nach Auschwitz
»Die Forderung, daß Auschwitz nicht noch
einmal sei, ist die allererste an Erziehung.«

Theodor W. Adorno

1966

**„The first demand upon education is that
Auschwitz will not happen again.“**

**Sie geht so sehr jeglicher anderen voran,
dass ich weder glaube, sie begründen
zu müssen noch zu sollen. Ich kann nicht
verstehen, dass man mit ihr bis heute
so wenig sich abgegeben hat.
Sie zu begründen hätte etwas
Ungeheuerliches angesichts des
Ungeheuerlichen, das sich zutrug.**



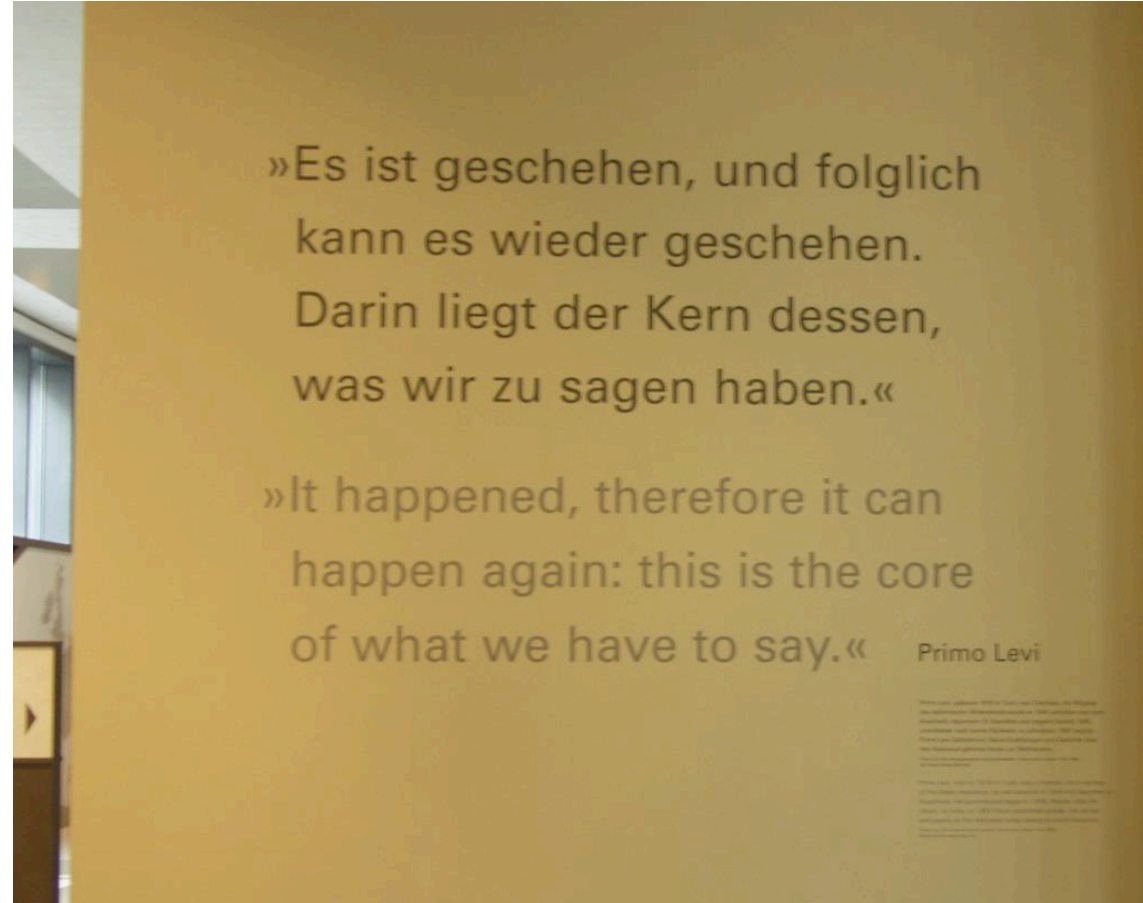
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AFTER 'AUSCHWITZ' (2)



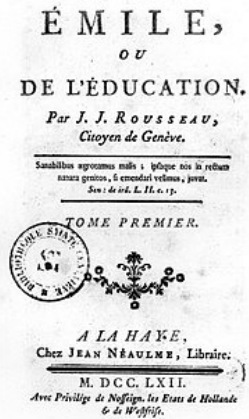
Primo Levi
1919-1987

**“IT HAPPENED,
THEREFORE IT CAN
HAPPEN AGAIN”**



HERE WE ENCOUNTER THE ISSUE OF HUMAN FREEDOM

perhaps the riddle of human freedom or the mystery of human freedom



THIS IS A 'MODERN' EDUCATIONAL CONCERN



Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Emile, or On Education (1762)

the two-fold task of the educator

[1] to shield the child from too strong influences from the 'outside'

[2] to shield the child from too strong influences from the 'inside' – the passions

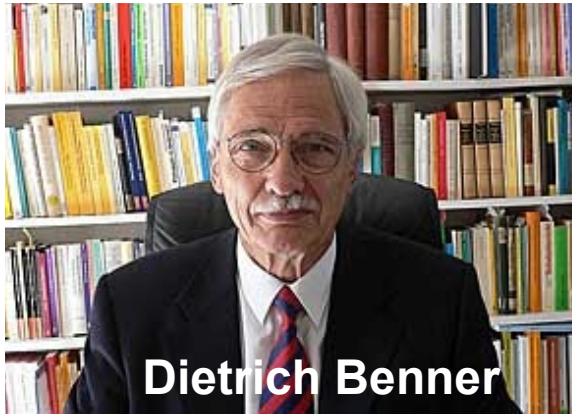


in order to achieve sovereignty



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WHAT IS THE 'STATUS' OF THE QUESTION OF HUMAN FREEDOM? and how is it a concern for education?



Dietrich Benner

DOES EDUCATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
WHAT IS THE CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION?

NATURE – NURTURE – EDUCATION

$1/3 - 1/3 - 1/3 ?$
 $50\% - 30\% - 20\% ?$
 $90\% - 8\% - 2\% ?$



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WAS ROSA PARKS UNABLE TO READ?



DID ADOLF EICHMANN LEARN TO LISTEN TOO WELL?



A REMARKABLE ANSWER



NATURE + NURTURE = always 100%!

**EDUCATION IS CONCERNED WITH A DIFFERENT QUESTION:
HOW AN 'I' CAN STEP FORWARD FROM THIS**

THE QUESTION OF EDUCATION IS OF A DIFFERENT ORDER

**NOT: which natural and social factors determine how we become who we are,
and how we can influence this process**

**BUT: Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit (summoning to self-action),
which is not the injunction to be yourself but to be a self**

We knock on the 'door' of our students and ask 'Is anyone there?'

THE EDUCATIONAL QUESTION IS AN EXISTENTIAL QUESTION

NOT THE QUESTION WHO WE ARE
or how we become who we are



IDENTITY

BUT THE QUESTION HOW WE ARE
how we try to live our lives, how we try to exist

what we will do with how we have become, with our identity,
with what we have learned, with our capacities and competences
but also with our inabilities, blind spots, and incompetences



SUBJECT-NESS

existing as subject, not object

**THE
EDUCATIONAL
QUESTION
IS
THE
QUESTION
OF
THE
I**

THE OUTCOME? THAT'S ME!



NOT THE 'I' ON ITSELF OR JUST INTERESTED IN ITSELF, BUT THE 'I' IN THE WORLD

**WHICH MEANS THAT WE NEED EDUCATION THAT IS WORLD-CENTRED
RATHER THAN CHILD-CENTRED OR CURRICULUM CENTRED**

**ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO TRY TO BE AT HOME IN THE WORLD
A QUESTION OF COURAGE!**

THE UNIQUE INSIGHT OF STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION

THAT THE CHILD IS NOT A DEVELOPING THING
WHERE WE SHOULD TRY TO DIRECT ITS DEVELOPMENT



THE PROBLEMATIC 'PARADIGM' OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION
(also via the brain, self-regulation, and so on)

BUT THAT EDUCATION IS ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE 'I' IN THE WORLD
WHERE THE 'I' HAS TO LIVE ITS OWN LIFE
WHICH NO ONE ELSE CAN DO FOR THEM

NOT A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE
BUT A BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

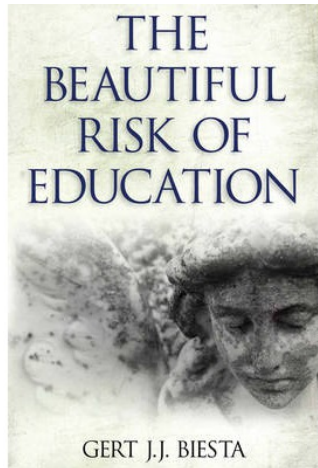
WHICH TRANSLATES INTO A UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE
at least if one looks carefully!

THE UNIQUE SIMPLICITY OF STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION

ONLY TWO PRINCIPLES: INCARNATION AND FREEDOM



HELPING THE CHILD TO ARRIVE IN THE WORLD
HELPING THE CHILD TO ACHIEVE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE WORLD
engager & émanciper (Philippe Meirieu)



this is not a matter of effective interventions
but a beautiful risk

because the 'I' cannot be produced
it is 'the work of the self'
'Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit'



arousing the desire for wanting to exist in the world as subject

OLD FASHIONED? OUTDATED?

**A 100-YEAR OLD EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT
STANDING IN A TRADITION OF AT LEAST 250 YEARS?**

ISN'T IT TIME we BRING STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION UP TO DATE?

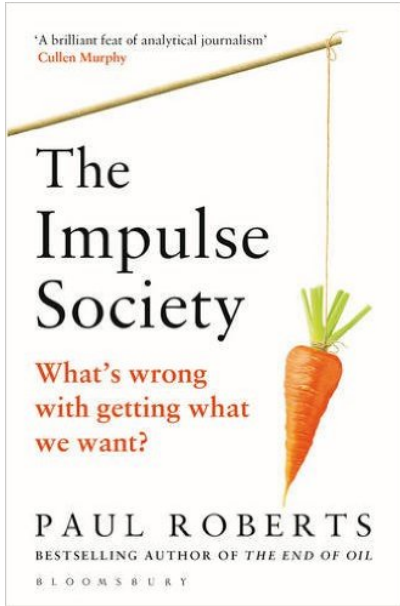


**such as 21st century skills for survival in an unknown future?
high achievement in order to contribute to the knowledge-economy?
instead of knitting, gardening and eurythmy?**

OR IS OUR TIME IN URGENT NEED OF STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION?

THAT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW WE CHARACTERISE 'OUR TIME'





AN IMPULSE SOCIETY

“America in the age of instant gratification”



“What is wrong with getting what we want?”
quite a lot actually!

the difference between wants and needs

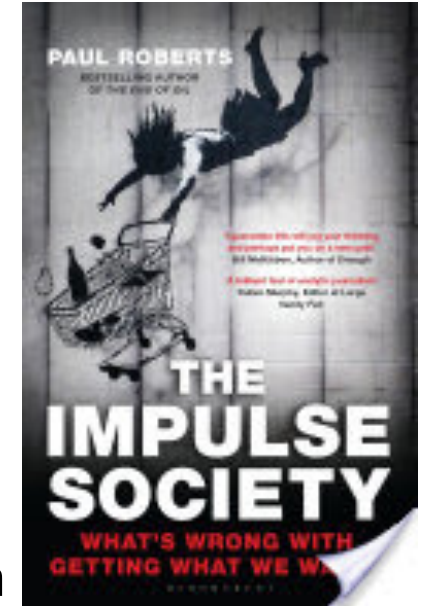


70% of the US economy focuses on discretionary consumption
not on the things we need, but the things we ‘fancy’

“How to cope with an economy system that is almost
too good at giving us what we want?” – obesity, addiction

“An economy reoriented to give us what we want
isn’t the best for delivering what we need.”

Where do our wants come from?



THE EMERGENCE OF THE DESIRE ECONOMY

How can the economy keep growing?

[1] in space – until the economy has become global

[2] in time – the stock market



“global capitalism has run out of space and out of time”

(see the most recent financial crisis)

How can the economy still keep growing?

By creating new desires!

Apple doesn't sell mobile phones . . .

“bit by bit, the market place has moved inside the self”

“only the bottomless appetites of the self can contain all the output of a capitalist economy which can never stop growing”

WHAT IS NEW IN THE IMPULSE SOCIETY?

not that we have desires and are sometimes selfish, but

[1] “that the selfish reflexes of individuals have become the reflexes of an entire society”

[2] “Government, the media, academia, and especially business – the very institutions that once helped to temper the individual pursuit of quick, self-serving rewards, are themselves increasingly engaged in the same pursuit.”

CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION SUFFERS UNDER THIS

not good enough, but excellent – number 1 in the league table
competition instead of collaboration

permanent improvement instead of realising good education here and now



and the question the impulse society doesn't ask and doesn't want to hear
is whether what is desired is what should be desired

TWO RATHER WORRYING CONCLUSIONS

[1]

**THE IMPULSE SOCIETY IS NOT INTERESTED IN THE QUESTION OF THE 'I'
BUT JUST WANTS EVERYONE TO RUN BEHIND THEIR DESIRES**

[2]

**THE IMPULSE NO LONGER HAS THE INSTITUTIONS
THAT CAN HELP US TO STAY IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR DESIRES**



THE QUESTION OF ACHIEVING SOVEREIGNTY

HERE WE FIND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL

NOT AS A PLACE FOR LEARNING

BUT SCHOOL – ‘SCHOLE’ – AS FREE SPACE AND FREE TIME
NOT YET OCCUPIED BY SOCIETAL AGENDA’S



**SCHOOL AS THE TIME WE GIVE TO THE NEW GENERATION IN ORDER FOR THEM TO
ENCOUNTER THE WORLD AND THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO THE WORLD**

**THE SPACE AND TIME TO WORK THROUGH THE QUESTION WHETHER EVERYTHING
THAT APPEARS AS DESIRABLE IS WHAT WE SHOULD BE DESIRING**

**THE SCHOOL AS THE TIME AND PLACE WHERE WE CAN TRY, FAIL, TRY AGAIN ...
... AND FAIL BETTER (Samuel Beckett)**

AND HERE WE FIND THE URGENCY TO RETHINK TEACHING

TEACHERS ARE BEING HAILED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT
IN-SCHOOL FACTOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

THIS IS NOT A COMPLIMENT, BUT AN INSULT
BECAUSE THE TEACHER IS NOT A FACTOR BUT A THOUGHTFUL PROFESSIONAL
AND EDUCATION IS NOT A PRODUCTION-LINE

it is an encounter between subjects in which the subject-ness of students is 'at stake'

the first orientation of all teaching is therefore on subjectification

“arousing a desire for existing in the world”

this also requires that we provide orientation: the work of socialisation
and it requires that we provide ‘equipment for living’: the work of qualification



a ‘flipped’ curriculum which Steiner-Waldorf education really ‘gets’

ALL THIS IS RISKY WORK THAT REQUIRES ARTISTRY

Why artistry?

ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC)

education is part of the 'bios praktikos' – the practical life
it takes place in the domain of the variable, not the domain of the eternal
not the domain of (blunt) causes and (predictable) effects
but of (intentional) actions and (possible) consequences



which is the domain of the arts not of 'science' (episteme)

but there are two arts

the art of making – poiesis – craft – how to do things
the art of 'doing' – praxis – wisdom – what should be done
the double art of teaching: craft and wisdom

which is risky because we appeal to our students' freedom
so they can always take our intentions into a different direction – and rightly so!

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

WE LIVE IN IMPATIENT TIMES
WHERE SOCIETY CONSTANTLY ASKS MORE FROM THE SCHOOL
IN ORDER TO SOLVE SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS
(workforce, citizenship, social cohesion, and so on)

PARTICULARLY IN SUCH TIMES WE NEED TIME AND SPACE TO HELP EACH OTHER
AND PARTICULARLY THE NEW GENERATION TO ACHIEVE SOVEREIGNTY



STEINER-WALDORF KEEPS CLAIMING SUCH FREE SPACE
AND CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY



THE QUESTION OF HUMAN FREEDOM-IN-THE-WORLD

CONCLUDING COMMENT

IN THIS WAY STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION RESPONDS
TO THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION 'AFTER AUSCHWITZ'



THIS PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT LESSON FOR ALL EDUCATION

AS LONG AS STEINER-WALDORF EDUCATION CAN FIND THE RIGHT LANGUAGE
FOR ARTICULATING WHAT IS 'AT STAKE' IN WHAT IT SEEKS TO DO
AND DOESN'T GET 'LOST IN TRANSLATION'

SO THAT IT CAN HELP SOCIETY IN UNDERSTANDING
THAT IT NEEDS EDUCATION FOR ALL THIS TOO

THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH!

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

