The Blindness of Education to the 'Untimeliness' of Real Learning

Dennis Atkinson

Goldsmiths University of London

Abstract

This paper argues for an educational project which does not read education through economic imperatives or through traditional humanism, which assumes what it is to be human, in that both presume and anticipate particular forms of learner and teacher subjectivities. An alternative project is proposed, informed by the work of Gilles Deleuze and others, which prioritises the notions of immanence, becoming, relationality and event, where learning emerges from within the contingencies, differences and diversity of the temporalities and ecologies of each individual life. It is a project grounded in the singularities of experience and the immanence of local becomings and thus concerned not with a pre-ordained subjectivity but with a subject-yet-to-come. This project raises problematic, paradoxical and perhaps impossible issues for effective pedagogies. I conclude with six principles for pedagogical action.

Introduction

In previous writing (Atkinson 2011, 2012) drawing on the philosophical work of Alain Badiou (2009) I was concerned with events of learning, what I call *real learning*, which involves a move into a new or modified ontological state. Two important notions taken from Badiou and applied to learning are 'event' and 'truth'. The former relates to a disruption, a rupture, to established patterns of existence whilst the latter is concerned with following through and persevering with the consequences (the truth) of such disruption. Truth therefore is not concerned with adequation or veracity but with a puncturing of established knowledge and values; a being truthful to something. Real learning for me involves a puncturing of assimilated ways of knowing, thinking and doing and the emergence of a new or reconfigured world for the leaner.

Equally this entailed theorising ways of supporting such learning through appropriate pedagogies that are able to respond effectively to the differences in the ways in which

people learn; to the 'thisness' or *haecceity* and the truth of learning. The term, *pedagogies against the state* seemed to me to be an appropriate way of thinking about pedagogical practices that might be commensurate to such haecceities. Here the term plays on the ambivalence of the word state, so that as regards learning 'state' can refer to a learner's ontological state, the organisational state of curriculum programmes or established pedagogies or the political state of government educational policies. The importance for me of the term pedagogies against the state, or pedagogies of the event, was and is to think about developing pedagogies that are not trapped by established methodologies, policies or ways of thinking about and supporting learning, as though we know what learning is, but through responding effectively to the different haecceities of learning we continuously expand our understanding of what learning is or can become. Thus pedagogies against the state relate to learning as a process of truth and becoming in contrast to states of being, they are concerned with subjects-yet-to come.

In this paper I want to extend this line of thinking about learning and pedagogy by developing these earlier ideas, expressed in very brief terms above, which lie in stark contrast to current neoliberal economist approaches to educational policy in England grounded in profit and competition, and to liberal humanist variants on education which tend to assume what it is to be human. Both of these approaches are grounded, I argue, in a metaphysics of individualism and transcendence which I contrast to a metaphysics of immanence and becoming that underpins my concerns with learning and pedagogy.

I begin with a very brief presentation and critique of neoliberal economist and liberal humanist variants of education which presume particular learner and teacher identities. I then turn to outlining a philosophical basis for an alternative educational programme and some key pedagogical principles that emerge from it which prioritise difference and becoming. I argue that whilst neoliberal and liberal humanist approaches to education adopt a series of prescribed teacher and learner identities (grounded in a metaphysics of transcendence) which by implication limit our understanding of what it is to teach or to learn, the alternative I offer assumes no fixed identity but a process of becoming and a subject-yet-to-come. Put another way neoliberal and humanist variants on teaching and learning tend to presuppose a transcendental metaphysics whereby the learner (or

2

teacher) is already conceived or determined according to a series of established values. In the alternative I am proposing learners and teachers emerge from *pedagogical intra-actions*, they are not determined by prior values, except to become more effective teachers and learners! I am using the term *intra-action* (see Barad 2008) to denote entangled pedagogical relationalities, a relational ontology which rejects the idea of preconstituted and separate subjects that 'interact', for an idea of relationality through which subjects emerge. Relations are therefore not composed of independently existing beings (teacher, learner) rather these emerge from the process of relation which is ontologically primary. This idea of intra-action thus moves beyond humanist ideas which are grounded in separateness or individualism and is committed to a metaphysics of relation. Emerging from this philosophical exploration are some problematic, paradoxical and perhaps 'impossible' pedagogical principles which require much more work.

The upshot of my paper is that recent denunciations by politicians of university ITE programmes which claim that they are 'too theoretical' and not sufficiently embedded in the practical contexts of teaching are myopic. On the contrary, what is required is in fact more work on pedagogy and its relation to practice, in both teacher education and continuing practice programmes, in order to develop more effective pedagogical insights and relationalities that can be responsive to difference and becoming.

Susan Buck-Morss (2010) discusses a persistent dilemma confronting institutionalised education systems, the collision of tradition with the new, 'the truly new, that none of our knowledge traditions has anticipated (ibid, p.77),' or put another way, the untimeliness of the present. The tendency to force the new into the 'Procrustean bed of tradition' thus destroys its global newness and potential (its truth in Badiou's terminology or its immanence in Deleuze) and constitutes, for her, a period of political danger.

> There is a blindness to institutionalised education that passes down the authority of tradition, a mental timidity, born of privilege or just plain laziness, that cloaks itself in the heavy bombast of cultural heritage and historic preservation. It generates enormous resistance to trespassing conceptual boundaries or exceeding the limits of present imagination, rewarding instead the virtues of scholastic diligence, disciplinary professionalism and elitist erudition, all escape routes

from the pragmatic necessity of confronting the new. Indeed extreme discomfort is caused by the truly new, the truly 'contemporary', that which Nietzsche called the 'untimely' – those aspects of the present moment that simply do not fit our established traditions or modes of understanding. (Buck-Morss 2010.77).

Buck-Morss, following Benjamin, argues that a generation's power of redemption demands the historical convergence of two ruptures, a moment of crisis (economic, ecological, military) that disrupts biographically lived time and a rupture precipitated by the 'hidden potentialities of the present, the *untimeliness* of our time' (ibid 77), that punctures established forms of knowledge and leads toward a reconfiguration of tradition. Thus the new as it were interrogates tradition as it passes through it to reconfigure and re-materialise being within a new trajectory.

In recent years we have witnessed a major crisis of industrial capitalism inflicting a cruel legacy on millions with devastating consequences on their lives while we await the 'hidden potentialities of the present' that might lead to a healing social reconfiguration. My interest is to employ these ideas of rupture, the untimely and potential in relation to an educational project concerned with real learning and commensurate supportive pedagogies. I am not concerned with education grounded in an economist pretext or with humanist variants on the purpose of education that work from established ideas of what it is to be human or what it is to learn. Rather my intention is to rework or rescue an idea of learning related to notions of 'not-knowing', 'becoming' and 'immanence'. This relates more to an idea of *poiesis* whereby new forms of thinking or acting appear, new becomings that emerge in spite of rather than within established realities (see Bingham and Biesta p.130), rather like the creation of a new or reconfigured world which can be gleaned in the production of poetic, artistic, scientific or political form.

In many ways this throws up a paradox in that generally speaking institutional policies of education, curriculum content and structure, teaching programmes, assessment procedures tend to demand homogeneity, linearity: clearly planned routes or aims for learning; whereas the notions of real learning or the untimely of learning refer to heterogeneous local contingent processes. The former are often blind to the latter. This raises an issue of temporality which requires a little elaboration; it concerns the

difference between (dissensual) existential temporalities of learning and (consensual/mythic) historical temporalities of policy and curriculum

Problems can arise when existential temporalities become subjected to or are mediated by historical temporalities. The temporalities of learning in a classroom or seminar group are not homogeneous but heterogeneous. In other words the contemporaneity of learning in such situations is not concerned with a 'sametimeness' but with a disjunction of time. It is not concerned with learners coming together in 'the same time' but rather with the different times of learners' lives coming together. In other words there is no temporal conjunction in such learning environments, a kind of classroom *zeitgeist*, other than the coming together of difference. Hence the temporality of the contemporaneity of a learning community such as a classroom might be viewed as a temporality of difference, alterity and potential instability, requiring a teacher, to make immediate decisions and judgements (see Osborne 1996, 2012).

On an existential level real learning involves a splitting of established representational orders, particular ways of understanding, thinking, doing, so as to produce reconfigured worlds. Curriculum programmes and policies on the other hand tend to assume a consensual and homogenous temporality.

Brief histories

Since the introduction of state education in England two recurring initiatives can be detected; one that is grounded in economism, the need to design an education system that fuels and sustains economic growth and the ability to compete successfully in market economies, and one that is immersed in a more humanist and communal tradition grounded in the notion of a public good. In recent years under consecutive governments the former project has dominated government policy, a key priority being to educate students in those subjects that will service and maintain economic competitiveness. The recently elected coalition government's White Paper entitled *The Importance of Teaching* (DFE 2010) which sets out its new agenda for the school education system, teaching quality and the curriculum in England begins with a statement from the Prime Minister David Cameron:

So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past.

This market-led philosophy, often named neoliberalism, not only predicates the purpose of education but also, more compellingly, determines the provision of education; where parents compete for school places, where there are winners and losers, where schools compete with each other, where league tables are ubiquitous, where different funding systems support different kinds of schools. Mortimore (2010) argues that in this market-led project education comes to be viewed as a private good and thus little attention is given to local communities and communal learning, even though the notion of 'every child matters' (no child left behind) is held as a guiding precept (DfES 2004). Stronach (2010) mockingly refers to how educational competition has produced and Olympic games of education: 'TIMMS [has become] the Olympic Games of international educational assessment' (p.2), where 'the game appears to be the same for all (p.22).

In the university sector in England crippling cuts to the arts and humanities drive these Faculties further towards a market-led logic that degrades or decreases the communal project of the university as a public good so that university education becomes more clearly defined as a commodity whose form is driven and regulated by the demands and benefits of individual consumers. Knowledge becomes a prized commodity to fuel the cauldrons of competitive markets. In 1984 Lyotard commented, 'knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power, is already and will continue to be, a major – perhaps the major – stake in the worldwide competition for power.'

In this economist market-driven scenario effectiveness and performativity become key conceptions driving ranks of targets, performance indicators or specified outcomes that many have come to experience through the strangle-hold of audit culture, strictly regulating and evaluating the way in which educational institutions function and which colonises their working discourses and reconfigures education as *praxis*. Here

performance is predicated upon rigid and prescriptive criteria of 'performance' which delimit its functioning reality. From the USA Eisner (2002) writes:

> What we are now doing is creating an industrial culture in our schools, one whose values are brittle and whose conception of what's important narrow. We flirt with payment by results, we pay practically no attention to the idea that engagement in school can and should provide intrinsic satisfactions, and we exacerbate the importance of extrinsic rewards by creating policies that encourage children to become point collectors. Achievement has triumphed over inquiry. I think our children deserve more.

At university level Henry Giroux (2011) comments:

> …the pedagogical nature of education [was] viewed by many members of the American public and intellectual classes as central not only to the civic mission of the university […] but also to the functioning of a just and democratic society.

> However under the onslaught of a merciless economic Darwinism and theatre of cruelty that has emerged since the 1980s, the historical legacy of the university as a vital public good no longer fits the revamped discourse of progress in which the end goal is narrowed to individual survival rather than the betterment of society as a whole. In fact, the concept of social progress has all but disappeared amid the ideological discourse of a crude market-driven presentism that has a proclivity for instant gratification, consumption and immediate financial gain (p.147).

Alongside this economist view sits the current drive by the UK Education Secretary Michael Gove to review the National Curriculum and introduce a new English Baccalaureate upon which White (2011) comments with some acidity:

> [Gove's] new English Baccalaureate is virtually a carbon copy of the 1868 Taunton report's curriculum for most "middle class schools", as they were then called. The new award will be given to all 16-year-olds who have good exam grades in "English, mathematics, the sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanity such as history or geography" Taunton's list is identical, except that it makes both history and geography compulsory. How is it that a curriculum designed for clerks and shopkeepers in Dickens' England is at the cutting edge in 2010?'

This is not the first time in recent decades when government has taken a reactionary stance toward curriculum content arguing for a return to more traditional subject disciplines that were established over a century ago. Michael Gove's attempt to introduce an English Baccalaureate has however been abandoned in a recent u-turn of policy due to strong opposition, he described this educational innovation as 'a bridge too far.'

Humanist projects of education can be traced back through time and include the work of Rousseau, Froebel, Montessori, Dewey, Holt, Friere, hooks, Giroux and others. The central purpose of education in such projects, though it varies according to context, can be considered in terms of a public good whereby the intention is to educate all students, whatever their capabilities, interests or predilections, to their full potential under the assumption, in turn, that this will create greater public benefit. Bingham and Biesta (2010) describe three kinds of educational projects grounded within a humanist narrative in their lucid account of Ranciere's intervention into the practice of education. These projects are summarised as traditional, progressive and critical (ibid 110-112). Traditional education's purpose, they argue, is to disseminate valued knowledge to students without taking into account how such knowledge relates to the experience and backgrounds of individuals. Progressive education is similarly concerned with the inculcation of valued knowledge but also with how this *can* be made relevant and accessible to individuals. The purpose of critical education, frequently grounded in the work of Foucault, Freire, Habermas, Bourdieu or Butler, for example, is to reveal inequalities in the educational system, curriculum and teaching methods, for example, accessibility and opportunity, resources or cultural bias, in order to argue for more equitable and emancipatory systems and procedures. Each of these projects register learning according to an established framework of knowledge (traditional, relational, critical) where the latter occupies a transcendent (controlling) relation to learning practices. In other words learning, or education more generally, are conceived from an external judicial position.

My purpose here is to argue for an educational project that prioritises an immanence of learning which is not controlled or constrained by established knowledge or practice.

8

Though it cannot avoid nor wish to refute the importance of established skills and knowledge in the education of learners, it is a project that remains open and alert to local and immanent potentials of learning which may not fit easily within traditional practices or conceptions of learning.

There are two concerns to cover; first the importance of real learning which I propose as a form of self-encounter, or a politics of the self, through which the self and world are reconfigured. This has implications for the idea of the 'learner-as-subject' where practising and experiencing in any domain is an immanent process of becoming in which each particular domain is experienced as part of self, a self which evolves in the process of making, doing, seeing, speaking, thinking. This self-encounter of learning constitutes a formative process/experience for each learner and his or her participation and practice in any domain of practice must also form the always incomplete domain itself.

Second how do these considerations concerning real learning and self-encounter impact upon educational projects, pedagogies and learning communities? Procrastinations from partisan agendas for specific educational programmes may serve some more than others and so establish a dominant world of learning and teaching that serves and protects particular interests and thereby reduce and regulate learning and teaching to these ends. Is it possible to have an education project in which no specific interests dominate?

Learning as a political act

To repeat the aim of this paper is to put aside the transcendence of economic of humanist registers that presume specific values and practices which anticipate particular forms of learner and teacher subjectivities. The alternative I attempt to formulate prioritises the notion of immanence, where learning emerges from within the contingencies, differences and diversity of each individual life. It is a project grounded in the immanence of local becomings, not concerned with a pre-ordained subjectivity but with a subject-yet-to-come.

In recent decades in England a widespread political advocacy to raise standards and achievement and to protest about failing educational practices and schools has become an endless mantra. A more singular rooted and communal notion of politics is discussed by Ranciere in many of his texts where, for him politics emerges as a struggle for equality in the name of a wrong. It involves the splitting of a social order whereby those who were once invisible, marginalised or illegitimate, those who had no voice, come into appearance and are recognised. For Deleuze and Guattari everything is political in the sense that what exists is as a result of struggles between divergent forces (see Thiele p.30). The key issue here is the force of dissensus, the splitting of ontological and epistemological orders. The idea of politics and aesthetics as disruptive forces can be applied to the process of real learning which involves a disruption of the onto-semantic orders of a learner's world, her assimilated ways of knowing, thinking, acting, to produce a reconfigured world. Thus learning can be conceived as an aesthetic-political event. For Ranciere aesthetics concerns what it means to experience the world not what it means to experience art.

The pedagogical task concerns how to support such learning so that it remains true to each learner's trajectory (its truth) and enable learners to become more effective learners. In more simple terms we are concerned with an educational project grounded directly in local practices and temporalities of learning and their local truths, as these evolve for each learner. Such a task cannot clearly anticipate particular subjects and is not grounded in prescribed futures but rather is concerned with a 'becoming active' in the world of each learner; with how each learner captures and realises learning; to extend what it is possible to become, to learn, to think.

Transcendence and immanence

The texts of Gilles Deleuze and his collaborations with Felix Guattari have been germinal triggers and inspirations for much philosophical enquiry over recent decades (see for example, Massumi (1992), Alliez (2004), Colebook (2002), Groz (1999,)) and their ideas have been the source for philosophy and theory in education (see Semetsky (Ed) 2004).

The notions of transcendence and immanence need to be differentiated to understand the importance of immanence for Deleuze and Guattari. Briefly, in philosophical terms the difference lies in their contrasting metaphysics of relationality. Transcendence implies a *relation to*, such as a relation to a fundamental concept, ideal or being (mind or God) whilst immanence indicates a *relation within* which emphasises intra-action, relationalities through which elements emerge as a consequence of relation. If we conceive learning or learners in relation to established structures and arrangements of knowledge which determine what learning is then learning is conceived through a metaphysics of transcendence. Alternatively if we conceive learning and learners, as much as we are able, as an intra-active process through which learning and learners emerge (transiently) then learning is conceived through a metaphysics of immanence. Whereas transcendence implies established terms that are prior to and which constitute relation, immanence posits relationality itself as primary.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari explore the notion of the 'plane of immanence' (1994, pp. 35-60) which denotes relations of chaotic forces, chance occurrences, unpredictable flows on the one hand with crystallisations of more structured thinking on the other which provides a sense of order (see also Stagol in Parr [Ed] 2005, pp. 204-06). The plane of immanence can thus be conceived as a dynamic process of becoming which contains an infinite potential inherent to the chaos of forces immanent to it. As Stagoll comments, the organisation of this flow of forces around a new concept provides a temporary consistency of thinking according to which one's world is organised anew (Ibid, p.205). To summarise: the notion of immanence denotes a flow of becoming which in-itself cannot be conceptualised but out of which emerge crystallisations in the form of concepts and affects that are actualised and provide what we might term holding-forms from which thinking develops. In some ways this can be equated with the constant flow of a river in which eddies form and dissolve, or where intensities form and dissolve whilst at every moment the river around them continues to flow. According to this descriptor becoming is conceived as a constant process of flow with inherent intensities that emerge and subside rather than in terms of more concrete notions of being and subjectivity.

Linked to the notion of immanence is that of univocity and the couplet actual-virtual. The notion of univocity is central to Deleuze's philosophical work and it posits a single plane of becoming where all events or phenomena are as real as any other; where memories, dreams, concepts and reflections are as real as tables, atoms, bodies or oceans. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994) Deleuze discusses how philosophy in the West has been dominated since Plato with the idea of equivocity which posits a series of transcendent relations where, for example, mind is dominant over matter or where the actual is real while the potential does not exist in the same sense. He draws from a different philosophical tradition which includes the work of Duns Scotus, Spinoza, Bergson and Nietszche which is underpinned by the idea of univocity where all being is considered as expressions of a single plane of being (or becoming). Each expression of being becomes in its own way without the determining factor of a prior or transcendent being. Thus the idea of immanence arises from univocity simply because if there is only one plane of becoming this has to preclude any external transcendent position beyond it, so that everything that exists does so 'equally' and is therefore equally real. The importance of this single plane of becoming for the couplet actual-virtual is of course that although determining different domains of 'reality' they are both equally real. Life is therefore a series of actualisations on the plane of becoming but equally such actualisations may be transformed by the power of the virtual. Thus the actual-virtual presents a split ontology where becoming does not depend upon what already exists (actual) but upon the power of the virtual on the actual which produces unforeseen ways of becoming. Becoming does not therefore affirm actual being but it expands being through the power of the virtual so that new ways of thinking, of learning are created....the actual-virtual inter-relation enables the human power of creation to overcome the human.

One way of reading this is to affirm the importance of becoming and the untimely and not to be totalised by established knowledge. With regard to pedagogy this has important implications in that the world is transformed from something given, that is to say already grounded in established knowledge, to something to be explored and continuously created not in terms of what exists but more in terms of 'what this world is

capable of,' (see also Bogue 2004). **(Pedagogical principle 1: to explore the world not in terms of what exists but in terms of what can be created).** The consequences of this for Thiele (2010, p.33) are that, 'not only what is thought (the world) becomes something else, but thought itself becomes...a world.' Thus a pedagogical project based on such ideas seeks to extend *what is* into *what it is possible to become* and thus by implication to extend what learning (teaching) is into what it is possible to become.

If we conceive learning as creation according to specific, local intra-actions then a commensurate pedagogical practice would be one which attempts to 'draw alongside' such local processes in order to discern their specific pathways. This seems to demand a practice of 'seeking' where we are not sure of our ground but conscious of the need to respond. Thus we are likely to require what I have previously called pedagogies against the state (Atkinson, 2008, 2011,) or what we might term 'untimely' pedagogies; pedagogies that hold at bay forces of normalisation and tradition that inscribe learners according to established concepts and practices, in order to respond to difference. **(2nd Principle: what we require are pedagogies against the state, pedagogies of the event, which repond to the ecological immanence and the truth of becoming).** The key point is to relax pedagogical practices from established transcendent values and positions that dominate thought and practice in order to try to respond to the local ecologies of learning and its subsequent power to become.

> Virtual difference has the power to become in unforeseen ways, always more than this actual world and not limited by its already present flow (Colebrook, p.96).

Such an approach to pedagogy recognises an equality of being without equalising inherent differences and if we subscribe to the idea of univocity which posits that all being is equal thus precluding any external or prior ground that categorises or measures being, then, as Thiele (ibid, p. 68) insists we reach a different way of thinking, 'in which equality no longer equalises differences, but a thinking able to 'live' the equality of everything unequal (see also Deleuze 1994, p.47). We are concerned with the interweaving of the actual and the potential (that-which-is-not-yet); real learning is such

13

a process in which we increase our power not by affirming what we have already achieved but by expanding through virtual potentialities that which we are not-yet. An education project grounded in an ontology of immanence, thus on the notions of becoming and difference (because becoming is always a becoming something new, a becoming-different), provides an opportunity to become infinitely without being directed towards pre-given targets. This does not mean that we abandon teaching particular skills and knowledge but that we approach the task of teaching by drawing alongside local processes of learning (intra-actions) and responding (intra-acting with) to them with commensurate practices that enable and empower.

This precipitates a difficult perhaps irresolvable paradox. How can we respond to immanence and difference without falling back on established concepts or theories of learning which would introduce transcendence and established subjectivities? Is it possible to escape from or relax transcendence in educational systems that are built upon it? Though we need the logic and creativity of concepts to think about learning and teaching, at the same time we cannot afford to let our thinking or practice become ensnared by them. Perhaps we need to recognise that the tension or the fricton between transcendence and immanence is necessary.

Deleuze is concerned with avoiding the traps of particular ways of thinking, or particular ways of 'sensing', viewing it as imperative, as far as is possible, to remain open to the flows of becoming that we are. In this sense terms such as 'human', 'learner,' 'teacher,' 'subject,' 'truth,' 'culture' and 'education' have to be seen as creative ideas that allow us to view the world in a particular way but they also form limitations to such thinking. In attempting to articulate experience or learning we have to take care not to allow particular forms of expression or ways of thinking to *explain* these processes, that is to say, to circumscribe how we understand them. Each new experience or learning process has the potential to transform what experience or learning *is*' (see Colebrook, p. 79). Though forms of expression, concepts, images, and so on, are likely to constrain thinking, we must also acknowledge that these are creative processes that themselves affirm the process of becoming.

All beings are just relatively stable moments in a flow of becoming-life. The obstacle to thinking becoming, according to Deleuze, is humanism and subjectivism. Both these tendencies posit some ground for becoming: either the human as knower of a world that becomes, or a subject that underlies becoming. Deleuze's work is an anti-humanism, not because it wants to replace the privileged image of 'man' with some other model for the emergence of life – such as culture, language or history. Deleuze's destruction of the idea of man as a foundational being is part of a more general affirmation of becoming: thought is becoming (Colebrook pp. 125-26).

This implies that beyond actual or more concrete actualisations there is an infinity of potential actualisations and, in relation to Colebrook's 'subject', an infinity of potential subjects; or in terms of the focus of this article, an infinity of potential learners (or teachers). **(3rd Principle: there is an infinity of potential learners and ways of learning. Learning encounters expand our conceptions of what it I to teach, to learn, to think.)**

These challenges invite us to use the human power of imagination to overcome what it is to be human. Education provides an opportunity to become infinitely without prescribed goals, beyond established logics of 'learner', 'teacher', 'practice', 'standards', 'assessment' and so on, beyond any privileged position. Clearly this idea of education has direct implications for current controlling images and practices of education and learning. Speaking pedagogically, we increase powers of becoming through learning encounters that challenge or expand perceptions, and thus challenge our perceptions of what it is to learn, not by over-regulating learning and teaching according to established modes and values of practice.

Ethics and learning

The idea of an immanence of becoming suggests that each learner has his/her own opening to the world and creates ways of making sense of experience. The pedagogical imperative would therefore be 'to become more effectively than before. Taking a passage from Spinoza, 'we do not know what the body is or can do' (see Deleuze 1988, p17.) we can add, we do not know what thinking or learning are capable of. **(4th principle: to learn more effectively than before, for we do not know what learning is capable of).** One implication of this imperative is that learning is conceived as an

All beings are just relatively stable moments in a flow of becoming-life. The obstacle to thinking becoming, according to Deleuze, is humanism and subjectivism. Both these tendencies posit some ground for becoming: either the human as knower of a world that becomes, or a subject that underlies becoming. Deleuze's work is an anti-humanism, not because it wants to replace the privileged image of 'man' with some other model for the emergence of life – such as culture, language or history. Deleuze's destruction of the idea of man as a foundational being is part of a more general affirmation of becoming: thought is becoming (Colebrook pp. 125-26).

This implies that beyond actual or more concrete actualisations there is an infinity of potential actualisations and, in relation to Colebrook's 'subject', an infinity of potential subjects; or in terms of the focus of this article, an infinity of potential learners (or teachers). **(3rd Principle: there is an infinity of potential learners and ways of learning. Learning encounters expand our conceptions of what it I to teach, to learn, to think.)**

These challenges invite us to use the human power of imagination to overcome what it is to be human. Education provides an opportunity to become infinitely without prescribed goals, beyond established logics of 'learner', 'teacher', 'practice', 'standards', 'assessment' and so on, beyond any privileged position. Clearly this idea of education has direct implications for current controlling images and practices of education and learning. Speaking pedagogically, we increase powers of becoming through learning encounters that challenge or expand perceptions, and thus challenge our perceptions of what it is to learn, not by over-regulating learning and teaching according to established modes and values of practice.

Ethics and learning

The idea of an immanence of becoming suggests that each learner has his/her own opening to the world and creates ways of making sense of experience. The pedagogical imperative would therefore be 'to become more effectively than before. Taking a passage from Spinoza, 'we do not know what the body is or can do' (see Deleuze 1988, p17.) we can add, we do not know what thinking or learning are capable of. **(4th principle: to learn more effectively than before, for we do not know what learning is capable of).** One implication of this imperative is that learning is conceived as an

open process which cannot remain transfixed by acquired forms and practices of learning. As learners we need to 'plunge again and again into experience' to resuscitate learning in order to think beyond 'ourselves' and our 'world'.

> Thinking experience as an open and immanent whole acknowledges that each new event of experience will transform what experience *is* thereby precluding in principle any final or closed ground for experience (Colebrook ibid pp.78-79).

Immanence should not be understood as a property *of* a subject (a learner) but, as described earlier, in terms of a flow of becoming, a series of intra-actions out of which 'ideas' or 'being' are precipitated. There is simply a flow of experience from which forms are effected through events, concepts and affects. Immanence is therefore a continuous dynamic flow out of which emerge ideas, subjects, bodies etc but which can never be reduced to these. Working from an ontology of immanence it is therefore not the case that there exists a subject who experiences, rather that subjects emerge (and change) from the immanence of becoming.

Ontology and ethics, pedagogies of becoming

There are ethical issues to be considered which have direct implications for pedagogical relations and practices. If we pay attention to the idea of immanence (as opposed to placing emphasis upon transcendence) as a working concept for pedagogies how might we respond to the question, 'what does it mean to learn or to teach?

An ethics of pedagogy could not be grounded in a common form if we are to attend to the immanence of each learner's learning, each learner's world of learning; thus we cannot base pedagogy on a common image of learning or learner (teacher). A learner (teacher) may transform his or her ways of becoming through learning encounters which precipitate new ways of thinking and learning. **(5th principle: pedagogical relations are entanglements through which learners, teachers and meanings emerge; they are not inter-actions between independent subjects).**

Thus the aim of pedagogy would be to initiate practices that expand learning and becoming thus simultaneously expanding our comprehension of what learning is, whilst

also expanding what teaching and pedagogy are so that both become creative and transformative projects. With this in mind we cannot afford to circumscribe becoming with current images of being.

We need to be circumspect in grounding pedagogic action on a common image of 'the learner' or 'teacher'. This is difficult to avoid in that it is almost impossible not to 'read' teaching and learning practices through assimilated transcendent ideas, values and expectations of practice. This is not to argue that such assimilations are wrong but that they are likely to be limited and that there is more going on, that responding effectively is more complicated so that we continually require new resources, adequate ideas, to respond to these complex processes. This paragraph emphasises the dilemma of either objectifying life (teaching, learning,) according to existing frameworks, values, etc., or evolving a creative responsibility and ethical imaginary for modes of living, teaching and learning.

This brings me to the equation ontology=ethics (taken from Thiele 2008) and its direct relevance for learning and pedagogical practices. Not only is real learning a movement into a new ontological flow but equally immanent to such flow is an *ethos*, an ethics of becoming (to become worthy of what happens to us...Deleuze, 2004, p.169). The relation between ontology and ethics is mutual in the sense that becoming involves a responsibility, a willing to become, of not being unworthy of our actions. Thus becoming constitutes an ethos to life (Thiele p. 164). Becoming is a creative act which involves a responsibility for creating, for thinking and acting. Consequently a commensurate educational project must affirm and extend such local becomings in their world 'as it is'...where *is* can only ever be conceived as becoming.

A recurring question then is how to square this approach to learning with what are often termed educational priorities. The notions of 'every child matters' or 'no child left behind,' though aspirational in a mediatised sense, become perverse if education equates to examination success and academic competition because within such systems as they currently function there are many who plainly in the end *do not* matter

17

or *are* left behind. In such systems these aspirational discourses become no more than empty rhetoric giving the false appearance of equity.

Real learning, as I have described elsewhere (Atkinson 2008, 2011), embraces a leap into a new ontological state, similar to Bergson's description of thinking as a leap into the unknown. The event of learning is an affirmation of local intra-actions of becoming, an interplay of local actual-virtual processes. Real learning as an event is therefore the creation and expression of a world, the event of learning creates a learner (subject)...and not the other way round where a learner is already posited.

An ethics of pedagogy requires the question of how to become capable of learning, it requires a *will to learn*, to become capable of the impossible in each local context in relation to established knowledge and practice. Learning is thus an 'impossible' demand in that becoming insists as an ongoing process of life and its problems. It is an infinite task that we never fully accomplish but which demands creative responses and so the ethics of learning (becoming) relates more to not what ought to be but with a more locally pragmatic question of becoming concerning what we can do next; the expression of an attitude which exposes and challenges a learner (teacher) to think beyond established thought and practice. **(6th principle: Learning (teaching) is an infinite task and responsibility which is never accomplished and which demands a will to becoming worthy to the truth of events. This involves an ethico-aesthetic dynamic).**

Learning (teaching) then involves what the Greeks termed *askesis*, the continuous exercise and practice of inquiry. The pedagogical imperative is therefore to become more effectively and an ethics of pedagogy asks us to become capable of becoming, to will a becoming that is not unworthy.

Deleuze (2004) makes a statement about ethics in *The Logic of Sense* which I think speaks directly to learning and the pedagogical project that I am trying to articulate:

> Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us...(p.169)

And later:

> Nothing more can be said and no more has ever been said: to become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby to be reborn....to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions, for the action is itself produced by the offspring of the event (p. 170)

The accusation of idealism circles persistently but I think that what I have written above concerning learning, ethics and an ontology of immanence can be demonstrated in the pedagogical strategies adopted by those effective teachers who attempt to release or precipitate events of learning in their pedagogical relations with learners, and who are working in many senses against the grain of current educational control. If we acknowledge the shifting ground of experience and becoming then there is a need to avoid a rhetorics of teaching and to focus upon the transient intra-actions of learning, their respective local histories and curations, coupled with the empowering function of a will to learn. Here then are the six pedagogical principles formulated in the above discussion.

1: To explore the world not in terms of what exists but in terms of what can be created.

2: What we require are pedagogies against the state, pedagogies of the event, which respond to the ecological immanence and the truth of becoming.

3: There is an infinity of potential learners and teachers and ways of learning. Learning encounters expand our conceptions of what it is to teach, to learn, to think.

4: To learn/teach more effectively than before, for we do not know what learning or teaching is capable of.

5: Pedagogical relations are entanglement, intra-actions, through which learners, teachers and meanings emerge; they are not inter-actions between independent subjects or objects.

6: Learning/teaching is an infinite task and responsibility which is never fully accomplished and which demands a will to becoming worthy to the truth of learning events. This is an ethico-aesthetic dynamic.

References

Alliez, E. (2004) *The Signature of the World, Or, What is Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy?* New York & London: Continuum.

Atkinson, D. (2008) Pedagogy Against the State, *International Journal of Art and Design Education,* Vol 27, No. 3. p: 226-240.

Atkinson, D. (2011) *Art, Equality and Learning: Pedagogies Against the State*. Rotterdam Boston Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Badiou, A. (2009) *Logics of Worlds:* London and New York: Continuum

Bogue, R. (2004) Search, Swim and See: Deleuze's apprenticeship in signs and pedagogy of images, in Educational *Philosophy and Theory: Special Edition* Vo. 36 No. 3 pp. 327-342.

Bingham,C. & Biesta, G. (2011) *Jacques Ranciere: Education, truth emancipation.* London and New York: Continuum

Buck-Morss, S. (2010) The Second Time as Farce…Historical Pragmatics and yhe Untimely Present, in *The Idea of Communism* [Eds.] Douzinas, C. & Zizek, S. London, New York: Verso pp. 67-80.

Cattegno, C. (1971) *What we Owe Children.* London: Routledge, Kegan-Paul.

Colebrook, C. (2002) *Gilles Deleuze*. London & New York: Routledge.

Deleuze, G. (1988) Spinoza, Practical Philosophy. San Francisco: City Lights Books.

Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and Repitition*. London:Athlone Press

Deleuze, G. (2004) *Logic of Sense.* London& New York: Continuum*.*

Deleuze,G & Guattari, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Athlone Press

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1994) *What is Philosophy?* London & New York: Verso.

DFeS (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. London: DFeS

DfE (2010) *The Importance of Teaching. London. DfE*

Eisner, E. (2002) *'What can education learn from the arts about the practice of education?* John Dewey Lecture Stanford University 2002

Giroux, H. A. (2011) *Beyond the Swindle of the Corporate University*. London: Pluto Press

Groz, E. (Ed.) (1999) *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jones, K. (2010) Patterns of Conflict in Education: France, Italy, England. In Geen, A. (Ed.) *Blair's Educational Legacy: Thirteen Years of New Labour*. New York: Palgrave.

Lyotard,J.F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge* (online). Availableat:http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/lyotard.htm (accessed 30 November 2011)

Massumi, B. (1992) *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Mortimore, P. (2010) *Markets are for Commodities: not Children*. Keynote Lecture Campaign for State Education Conference 20 November 2010

Ranciere, J. (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.* Stanford CA: Stanford University Press

Ranciere, J. (2010) On Ignorant Schoolmasters, in Bingham, C. & Biesta, G. *Jacques Ranciere: Education, Truth, Emancipation*. London & New York: Continuum, pp.1-24.

Semetsky, I. (2004) [Ed] Deleuze and Education, *Educational Philosophy and Theory: Special Edition* Vol. 36 No. 3.

Stagol, C. (2005) Plane in *The Deleuze Dictionary* [Ed] Parr, A. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press pp. 20-206.

Stronach, I. (2010) Globalizing Education, Educating the Local: How Method Made us Mad. London & New York: Routledge.

Thiele, K. (2008) *The Thought of Becoming*. Zurich & Berlin: Diaphanes

Thiele, K. (2010)   'To Believe in this World As It Is': Immanence and the Quest for Political Activism, in *Deleuze Studies* Vol.4 pp.28-45 Edinburgh University Press.

White, J. (2011) *Gove's on the Bac Foot with a White Paper Stuck in 1868.* Times Education Supplement January 2011.