



The New Student *as a Didactic Challenge*

Editors
Jari Ristiniemi & Olof Sundqvist



Swedish Science Press

Scientific Studies of Religion from University of Gävle, no 6

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Swedish Science Press
Uppsala 2011

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Layout	University of Gävle
Print	Universitetstryckeriet, Uppsala
Numbers printed	500 ex
Distribution	Swedish Science Press, Box 118, SE-751 04 Uppsala, Sweden Phone: +46 18 36 55 66, Fax: +46 18 36 52 77 E-mail: info@ssp.nu
ISBN	978-91-975446-4-1
ISSN	1652-7895

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Acknowledgements

The “New Student” project started in the spring of 2009. For several years lecturers in the Religious and Cultural Studies at the University of Gävle had discussed what we considered was a new learning situation in distance education: fewer and fewer students are present at the seminars; students seem to prefer to study wholly on the web; the immediate communication is only with one or two students. We found the situation frustrating. This student behavior did not fit our understanding of the nature of learning and communication. We considered that we had lost the dimension of immediate interaction and participatory meeting. At the same time we asked if our perception was correct: Is it really so that the students share the sentiment that something essential has disappeared from learning or is it so that they are comfortable with the situation and really learn things? An evaluation commissioned by the government authorities claims that the learning outcome in distance education is weak: the students simply learn less than in the traditional classroom or lecture-hall format. It is not the lack of students that led to the project; the student still participate in the courses even if they are not present at the lectures, but the new student behavior was the cause. A new learning situation with new student behavior, its presuppositions and possibilities, became the object of research in the new student project.

We wanted to analyze the prevailing situation in education socially, culturally and ideologically, and we wished to offer new strategies for education and learning locally and globally; education and research today happens in national and international networks. Consequently, society, learning strategies, and student behavior became the objectives of the research.

There are several persons who have made the project possible: We like to thank our contact librarian Anna Prymka who brought material to our initial seminars: “White bread for young minds, says University of Brighton professor” from *The Times*, 2008-01-14, was exactly what we needed to get started. During the initial phase there were several faculty members partaking in the discussions and we wish to thank Peder Thalén and Johan Höjer, to mention some, for their initial participation. Ursula Riedel-Pfäfflin from Dresden has worked as a dialog partner while discussing the texts and we appreciate her contribution! We also want to thank Andreas Persson, Marianne Carlsson and Catharina Nordh for their work with the manuscript. Thanks are due to Tore Nilsson, from the Department of Humanities, for translations and for improving the English of our texts. We are grateful to the University of Gävle for granting the funds necessary for the project. While working with the new student the new pupil has shown him/herself in the distance. The coming project will deal with education in religion in primary school and in high school.

Introduction – The New Student project

Jari Ristiniemi

“What? Has the world not just become perfect? Round and ripe?
Oh, golden round ring – whither does it fly? Away, after it! Away!”
Friedrich Nietzsche¹

New learning situation

Harry Dean Stanton steps out of the plane in the middle of nowhere, not remembering who he is, not knowing where to go, starting in this very desert, as will be found out, a journey back to life and love. In the desert, the feeling of life is out of touch, later in Paris Texas, other affections are present. In Bagdad Café Marianne Sägebrecht walks out of a marriage, there is nothing left to hold on to; she just walks out following the desert road. Later, with her magic, she turns the desolate café into a celebration of life. The desert might be read as the human predicament during the era of globalization: the familiar maps of orientation are gone and there is a feeling of being out of touch with life; people have lost the feeling of connectedness with *cosmos*; humans have become nomadic. Given the nomadic predicament there is the need of nomadic science.² Many of today’s nomads surf in the virtual/digital space. So much of the noise in the virtual/digital space seems to be out of touch with life, what is there to decide which noise or information is relevant? Truth and the noise in the virtual/digital space, is there any connection between them?

How, then, is the child’s consciousness qualified? It actually is not qualified at all, which can also be expressed by saying that it is immediate. *Immediacy* is precisely *indeterminateness*. In immediacy there is no relation, for as soon as there is a relation, immediacy is canceled. *Immediately, therefore, everything is true.*³

1 Nietzsche, 1975:288.

2 “It is not easy for us to characterize the nomad thought that rejects this image (the classical image of thought operating with representations or universals striating the mental space) and does things differently. It does not ally itself with a universal thinking subject but, on the contrary, with a singular race; and it does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is a smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea.” Deleuze & Guattari, 1998:379.

3 Kierkegaard, 1985:167.

For an immediate and indeterminate mind everything is true, including that what one finds in the virtual/digital space: from the axioms of Euclid to the axioms of soap operas. Immersed in the noise, we easily think that the solution to the questions life is more noise.

Today's students and lecturers find themselves in the digital space pondering questions of identity, value, and orientation. Voices come from South Africa, Sweden, Japan, Thailand, India, Paraguay, Ghana, Spain, perhaps even from a café in New York. Usually the lecturers do not know much about their students, perhaps only the names and the short information students send about themselves at the beginning of the course. For a lecturer in the digital space, under the predicament of distance education, the situation is much like that of Stanton and Sægebæcht: the information about the surroundings, including the "inhabitants", is minimal and one has to find out how to cope with the situation despite the feeling of being lost. For many students and lecturers today, the virtual/digital space as the learning space might feel, at least initially, as an empty desert. 95% of the courses in religious studies at the University of Gävle are distance education: some students are present at the lectures, but a growing number of them choose to read wholly on the web without taking part in the real time lectures and seminars. This student behavior was one of the reasons behind the new student project. "I'll be in Japan this semester, could I read the course wholly on the web", is no unfamiliar question these days. In the usual form of distance education, as it is applied in Gävle, the students are present through video-conference and there is a direct communication, at least to some degree, between the students and the lecturers. The lecturers prefer this direct contact, but students seem to think otherwise: today only a limited number of students are physically present and many of them follow the course on the web only. This means that lecturers never see those students who choose to study through the web, the visual contact is not there, only the email or the educational platform correspondence is available. Distance education and the development of technical communicational devices have led to a completely new learning situation. The new student project has addressed the implications of this change for higher education.⁴ In recent years, and this is our experience, the number of students who take the course on the net have grown. How to

4 This issue has to some part been treated in previous research, see e.g. Warmind & Thomsen Højsgaard, 2003; Larsson, 2004. But still this field needs more investigation.

cope with the new learning situation? What is education and learning in the era of globalization? Who is the new student? Does this new student need a new kind of teacher? These are some of the questions that have occupied us during the project.

The project started as a research project between the Department of Cultural Studies and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Gävle. There was a need to widen the both areas: to let cultural studies and the religious studies to enrich each other, at the same time as we tried to meet the didactic challenges the new learning situation had created. The University of Gävle has an Erasmus-agreement with the Evangelische Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit; the project invited Professor Ursula Riedel-Pfäfflin into the project. The project focused on the social, educational, ethical, and political conditions of the new learning situation.

The first thing a lecturer does in the morning is a short briefing with technicians that all is in order for the coming broadcasting. The distance between lecturers and students might be several thousand kilometers! Tomorrow the distance will be much more digitalized than is the case today. Today people buy merchandise on the net, tomorrow we will buy education just like any other commodity (to a certain degree this already is the case). That which characterizes the learning situation today is that the physical, geographical distance, the digital distance included, has grown; tomorrow the digital distance will be wider than today; the communication will be digitalized and the direct contact might be minimal. This means that the lecturers do not meet the students in the real time, nor do the students meet each other in the present, but communicate through the educational platform and other interactive media. When learning is placed in the golden ring, what implications does this change have for learning? The project has had two main parts: the analysis of the prevailing situation in education and the discussion of the new strategies of learning.

Development in the technical space is a paradigmatic shift: technical equipment has become everyday tools. Sixty years back the first computers were brought into use; in the beginning of 90's they were used in schools; today schools and universities use Facebook and Twitter as ways of communication. Education has moved away from the classroom, it has been lifted up into the digital space; tomorrow's education will be in the clouds. Twitter, Facebook, Tagged belong to everyday

tools. Teachers perhaps are able to manage only a slice of the virtual/digital space, the students surge half of the globe virtually and physically, these new inhabitants of the golden ring. Twenty years back a book was copied on a plastic disc, today the whole world is present in one's phone, in the laptop, in the iPad; a world is served on the plate. The digital space is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; it is not bound by any ordinary measures, there is no morning nor evening, the ever present noonday is here to stay; the world with the golden ring is one key away. Has Zarathustra's dream of the perfect world come true? How about the golden ring, does it help us to a deeper understanding of the world or does it take us away from the real world?

The feedback loop

Education is a part of the social, political, cultural, and economic situation. Education, at the same time as it is affected and conditioned by the prevailing situation, also determines it in many known and unknown ways. As we start to understand the world in terms of plural networks, we also see how the differing elements and actors of those networks affect each other through feedback loops.⁵ The feedback loops might be found on several levels: in the individual, on the group level, in the global economy. Students and lecturers, for example in Ghana, respond to the learning situation in Sweden and become a part of it, just like those in Sweden get involved in the learning situation in Ghana; both sides influence and learn from each other through the feedback loop. The created learning situation is unique to this network, but it is not separated from the economic, ethical, and the political situation or the other networks in those countries. Education today is in national and international networks; the social, economic, and political potential of

5 "The perceptible workings of the autopoietic feedback loop, apparent in all forms of role reversal between actors and spectators, allows all participants to experience themselves as co-determinate participants of the action. Neither fully autonomous nor fully determined by others, everyone experiences themselves as involved and responsible for a situation nobody singlehandedly created." Fischer-Lichte, 2008:165. "Paradoxically, there can be no individuals without the group and no group without individuals. As a result of this interconnection, subjects and groups are bound in loops of mutual influence. Since the relation between the individual and the whole is two-way, they form a system that is nonlinear. Instead of separated and isolated, as conceived in neoliberal economic theory and much recent financial economics, agents are interconnected members of networks in which all action is interaction." Taylor, 2004:284.

those networks has started to show itself today.⁶ The feedback loops on several levels seem to make up one of the essential elements of the new learning situation.

The virtual/digital space is loaded with representations and Feuerbach's words that representation has replaced reality seem to be true. Traditionally the relationship between reality and representation has been interpreted in binary oppositions, today the boundaries between the binaries have become fleeting.⁷ In the binary opposition between the inner/outer, representation/represented, passivity/activity, reason/receptivity, feeling/thinking, teacher/learner one side has been preferred at the cost of the other. Under the rule of the binary logic there is no room for the feedback loops; the affective dimension is denied. The either/or logic has been the *modus operandi* in the one-sided view; today's holistic models are built on the both/and. "Influenced as influencing: the teacher is also a learner and the learner is also a teacher."⁸ The inner and the outer, passivity and activity, reason and feeling, teacher and learner are in interaction with each other; there is a both/and between them, not an either/or between the binary oppositions. It is this both/and that creates the possibility of the feedback loop, which in turn creates the possibility of new synthesis in the individual, in the group and in the society at large, even on the global level, something new comes into being. The kind of learning in which interconnectedness and interplay in the individual and on the societal field comes to pass might be called integral learning.

The both/and logic or interactional logic creates new ways and possibilities of learning: humans as wholes participate in the learning process. The passivity of passion, for example, has been interpreted as something "unfavorable"; today it is admitted that passivity and activity are inter-active elements of whole human beings. We get to know

6 "Changes in religion, art, and philosophy influence political, economic, and technological development, which, in turn, condition cultural evolution. In this way, nature, society, culture, and technology are joined in mutually conditioning and reciprocally transformative feedback loops." Taylor, 2009: xvi.

7 "The aesthetic melts into the social, the political, and the ethical. (...) A constant exchange takes place between the perceiving subject and the object perceived, which dissolves the fundamental subject-object opposition that philosophy and the history of ideas so ardently insist on. Both autopoietic feedback loop and perception permanently glide back and forth between subject and object positions." Fischer-Lichte, 2008:172.

8 Kierkegaard, 1985:282 n 3.

activity and passivity in relation to each other.⁹ The passivity of passion expressed both in Paris Texas and in Bagdad Café is an essential human element. The relationship between passivity and activity is interactive and interrelated, a matter of both/and. The individual cannot know the one without the other, that is, activity is to be known only in and through the relation to passivity and *vice versa*; the elements work on each other and highlight each other, giving birth to something new in the individual, in the group, in the society. There is a kind of a feedback loop between the two creating the possibilities of new syntheses both in the individual and in the society. We are in the world *both* as passive *and* as active human beings. This not a new insight, but the frame or the model in which it is understood is new when compared with the dualistic view. “In the processes of generating meaning the subjects experience themselves actively as well passively, neither as fully autonomous subjects nor totally at the mercy of inexplicable forces. This binary opposition simply does not hold any longer.”¹⁰ In the new logic and in the new learning situation there is a new way of accepting passivity and otherness; only by that acceptance we have been given possibilities of being raised to a new level in education and in politics. To accept the otherness or the alterity of the Other is to create space for the self-learning of the Other.

The both/and logic might as well be applied to truth: truth is not an exclusive property of propositions, as some forms of modern philosophy claim, but truth, following Kierkegaard, is a matter of relating or, to express otherwise, truth is a matter of the synthesis (this does not take away the fact that there are true propositions). In the either/or logic truth is a matter of correspondence: if something is true, then the proposition or representation should fit with the signified or with the represented. In the interactive model, using both/and logic, truth is a matter of relation. Truth “belongs” to that *how* we are in the world as relational beings; truth, for Kierkegaard, belongs to the synthesis of

9 “The Other does not affect us as what must be surmounted, enveloped, dominated, but as other, independent of us: behind every relation we could sustain with him or her, an absolute upsurge. It is this way of welcoming an absolute existent that we discover justice and injustice, and that discourse, essentially teaching, effectuates. The term welcome of the Other expresses a simultaneity of activity and passivity which places the relation with the other outside of the dichotomies valid for things: the a priori and the a posteriori, activity and passivity.” Levinas, 2007:89.

10 Fischer-Lichte, 2008:155.

personality. To learn, then, is not only a matter of informative learning, when we learn “facts” about the world on the representational level, but it is also to get acquainted with different ways of living and being in the plural world, with the differing “hows” of human existence. To learn is to understand that how people live and have lived in different cultural contexts and during different historical eras, and, most of all, it is to comprehend the role of choice and action in creating the future or the genuinely new. “The Socratic ignorance gives expression to the objective uncertainty attaching to the truth, while his (passionate) inwardness in existing is the truth”.¹¹ In Kierkegaard’s view truth is congruent with that how humans develop their inwardness; how we are as human beings; how we develop our subjectivity in interaction with each other and our one common world; the how expresses the synthesis of personality created in interaction with other people. To cultivate inwardness is to let the passive and the active elements of personality to come together; it is to let the elements work on each other. The individuals, groups, and societies develop through this very colliding and create new syntheses of personality and of living together; something new is created. Immediacy comes to an end. The net and the virtual/digital space might be used to communicate the new ways of being in the world. The new students and the new teachers, are they on their way? Really, are these new people around us already?

11 Kierkegaard, 1974:183.

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Contents

Olof Sundqvist

Inaugurating the volume, the historian Sten O. Karlsson relates “the new student” to the pervasive transformation of Western society during the last decades. Karlsson takes his point of departure from the question: how has the change from a modern industrial society to a post-modern information society affected and fashioned attitudes towards higher education among the generations raised after the 1970s? In order to answer this question Karlsson takes the company of three influential contemporary critics. Jean Baudrillard, for instance, designates the “brave new world” which has emerged during these decades, as the age of simulation and communicative ecstasy, while Zygmunt Bauman describes it as the epoch of fluent modernity and obsessive flexibility. Thomas Ziehe has argued that the cultural changes have created a post-modern adolescent generation, which suffers from cultural lay-off and an egocentrism, which border on a pathological narcissism. According to Bauman, higher academic education must—if it is to survive—be more flexible and keen for the post-modern or late-modern mentality, which characterizes current students. An academic culture of education, which in a conservative manner watches over historical traditions and classical ideals of knowledge, is deemed to an existence in isolation, cultural marginalization, and, in a long-term perspective, economic decrease or even destruction.

In the second essay entitled “The art of learning and art in learning; difference between informative and integral learning”, the author Jari Ristiniemi makes a difference between the level of representations and the dimension of structural possibilities. Informative learning, he argues, moves on the level of representations, whereas integral learning focuses on those structures and drives that shape the representations;

the dimension of structural possibilities precedes the level of representations and structures it. Traditionally teaching and learning have made use of informative learning or, to use Freirer's words, the banking education. The integral learning deals with the structural capacities of the mind, as they come to expression in the shaping of one's world-view. Art, it is argued, expresses the first-forms of the mind-world or the self-world interaction; art is essential to learning.

German feminist theologian Ursula Riedel-Pfäfflin, from the Evangelische Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit Dresden, proceeds in her article from the idea that what we know we owe to space and time of our experiences from childhood until now. Her starting point is a meeting with people who grew up in Nazi youth groups, experienced the NSDAP regime, and the devastation of everything at the end of World War II. When these people meet today they can refer to something that their own children and grandchildren probably will never experience. Young people and students today are free to move to places of their own choice, not only in Europe but also elsewhere. Instead of the disastrous experience of destructive results of a nationalistic, monolithic and fascist worldview this generation lives in a post-modern world they acknowledge and pay tribute to diversity and differences as well as co-operation and unification over borders. Anyhow, some of the students in the younger generation are also influenced by the context of their parents and the value systems they experienced. The present resurgence of Nazi-ideology, right winged thinking, racism and nationalistic ideology, may be a reaction of the unresolved experiences their parents and grandparents experienced during the World War I and II.

Riedel-Pfäfflin also discusses the development of brains and minds in children and the importance of safety for learning and education. The research on this field may also be relevant for higher education and university settings. She presents the development of "systemic thinking" in the 20th century, as well as the paradigm of constructivism. She argues that one central goal of systemic didactics, besides instructive teaching of knowledge, could be the constructive opening of learning process. Teaching should not be seen as a transport of knowledge but as an arrangement of possibilities to learn. Therefore the context of learning is important, i.e. the construction of knowledge. Riedel-Pfäfflin also emphasizes that it is appropriate to master abstract language for casual linear thinking. In this context it is adequate to use a language of narration. The author reflects around the significance of narrative theory in

different disciplines and how important the process of narrating is for learning. Finally Riedel-Pfäfflin turns into different models of teaching in higher education. She first presents her own model in which the construction of knowledge is incited or stimulated by “integral learning” and ritual processes. The process of learning is framed by ritual beginnings and endings of the class time from arts: music, film-clips, paintings and narratives. She also presents the model of “*therapeutic Lehrpraxis* – teaching practice”. In this section she also discusses learning and teaching in diverse cultural traditions. In the very last part of her study she also addresses the theme of the new student. Who are the students of today?

In the article entitled “The new student – individualized and subjectivized”, Olov Dahlin discusses the advantages and disadvantages students at the University of Gävle experience with various forms of distance education. Dahlin takes his point of departure from a qualitative reading of questionnaire responses, where his intention is not to generalize, but to make a case study. According to the questionnaire responses, several students felt that there are many advantages of studying on full distance. This form of studying includes an opportunity to decide when-ever and wherever the lectures may be watched. A complete freedom from pre-set schedules seems thus to be appreciated. Dahlin relates this aspiration of freedom to tendencies of individualization and “subjectification” among today’s young people, as recognized by scholars such as Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Alain Touraine. The generation called “freedom’s children” lives in a world which they largely set up by themselves. They focus on themselves, self-development and their own path of life. Developments in technology have made it possible for individuals to emancipate from the common way of learning. According to Dahlin, the freedom of choice has also a seamy side. For certain students it creates stress and anxiety and for teachers the non-presence of students in tuition may lead to feelings of futility. Dahlin states that it is important to try to capture all students’ commitment, and invite them to participation, interaction and reflection. We must attract the students to participate and mutually exchange with us. Dahlin therefore wants to open the door for new ways of learning, where these efforts may be realized.

David Deborg investigates in his article who the “the new students” are and how the university can act in relation to these students. His discussion proceeds from interviews with teacher students in religion at a

university in Sweden, but also school pupils in the upper-secondary school, who intend to attend university in a near future. Deborg's questions concern the students'/pupils' expectations on the academic studies, but also the students' views on these studies after experiences them. Inspired by these interviews Deborg illustrates the current state in the field of didactics in the teacher education context with an "M-model", where the actors, i.e. the universities, the schools' teacher educators, and the students, tend to be alienated from each other. As an alternative to this model, Deborg suggests a new model called "The double M-model", where reflexive didactics could be the connecting link between the agents. This model includes concrete meetings as part of the learning process, such as meetings with students, meetings between teachers and meetings between school subjects, including the meeting with oneself.

In her contribution Febe Orést brings up the crucial question why some students on the web-based courses in the science of religion at the University of Gävle sometimes remain invisible for both the teacher and the other students. What can the reasons be to take the role of being the "invisible student"? In addition, she discusses the specific demands placed on teachers encountering these "invisible students". She proceeds from a qualitative method, based on three interviews, made with two female students and one male student. A specific focus is placed on role-taking, gender, and the significance of the rite in role-taking. Orést argues that the informants in general had low self-confidence. This low self-confidence might be the main cause in taking the position of invisible student. The female students conducted studies from their homes and this might also be a contributing obstacle in not taking the "traditional" student role. Orést states that teachers and also the other students need to become more involved in the invisible students; studying is co-responsibility. Sometimes the teachers need to make these students visible through another form of communication than the one seen in actual encounters: new working methods must be introduced, including more written assignments. The working methods in the distance courses are different from traditional pedagogical demands placed on the university teacher, and they are also more time consuming. Thus the invisible students are a challenge for universities applying web-based courses.

Birgit Lindgren-Ödén in "A young person in the periphery travels the world through higher education" discusses the new kind of Grand

Tour that some of the new students are on. During the 17th and 18th centuries the Grand Tour was reserved for the upper class travelers who had the means and leisure for such an educative enterprise; today's new students and Grand Tour travelers have differing backgrounds and motives for their travelling and education. Birgit Lindgren-Ödén has interviewed young people born between 1982 and 1983. The purpose of these interviews has been to understand how the lives of these people have been shaped in late-modern society, and in this particular case, in the Swedish province of Gästrikland, in the southernmost parts of Gävleborg's county. In her essay she has chosen to study a case, i.e. one female student on her grand tour, in order to find out her attitudes towards education. This case-study suggests that the local university may be the springboard out in the world for students. In Sweden there are good possibilities to study at local and central universities independent from social-economic background of the students. It means that individual students are able to borrow money from the state in order to carry out their studies both in Sweden and abroad. In the essay the student called "Lotta" gives her points of view on education and knowledge. She is aware about the fact that Swedish students have a unique possibility to advance by means of the state student loans. Ronald Inglehart's theory about "the silent revolution" is applied to Lotta's narrative. In the terms of Inglehart she can be described as a "post-materialist".

In the final article of the volume the anthropologist Juan Carlos Gumucio, from Uppsala University and University of Gävle, discusses the so called "Tuning Project". This project is part of the contribution of various European universities to the Bologna process. In a questionnaire distributed to graduates, employers and academics, priorities are established with reference to a given set of competences. In this study, focus is placed on the widened significance and the importance assigned in the Bologna reform to the concept of competence. This is followed by an examination of the priorities given by graduates in the questionnaire. Together with an appraisal of the many protests made against this reform, it shows that two main attitudes can be discerned among students confronting this new kind of educational landscape: one adaptive in the sense that it regards higher education as the means to obtain a degree that will provide access to a good job; the other one highly critical of a process that is seen as the commoditization of higher education.

The new student – a child of its times? Three perspectives on higher education, contemporary and youth culture

Sten O Karlsson

In his dialogue *Republic*, a discussion of the ideal society, Plato complains about the decay of Athenian democracy. Athens in the 4th century BC had become a society where even the donkeys had started to be defiant and where older men had to lower themselves to the level of the young people in order not to be ridiculed. Plato was definitely not the first one in history to find the youth problematic, anybody with a good knowledge of the Bible would probably be able to list a number of instances from the Old Testament.

Another period in history that gave rise to concern among social thinkers about the lack of norms and responsibility among young people was the first half of the 1960s. In *The Adolescent Society* from 1961 the American sociologist James Coleman argued that a special, detached or separated youth society was emerging “straight in front of the eyes” of the adult generation: “Subcultures with entirely different languages, with special symbols and, most importantly, with value systems that can be different from those of adults”.¹ Coleman argued that there existed “a set of small teenage communities” with vivid internal interaction but where exchanges with the adult world were sporadic and secondary. This was particularly evident among young people at high school, which posed a threat to the future development of higher education. The problem was serious as the high school students’ attitudes reflected norms and values that lead away from “goals established by the larger society”. A serious rift in values between the generations regarding social responsibility had emerged, and for Coleman it was evident that it was the youth who represented an abnormal departure. If the “youth world” was physically located with the territories of high school and

1 Bjurström, 2005:45.

college, it was mentally located in entirely different places, and stood in opposition to the goals and norms of the educational establishment. However, Coleman and his American colleagues in the same generation had little to say with regard to the actual constitution of these “abnormal” anti- and subcultures.²

Our contemporary society also finds the “youth world” difficult. Today’s university teachers are just as worried about the attitudes and behavior of young people as were once Plato and Coleman. We seem to encounter “a new student”, whom we do not quite understand; he/she is, in the very least, very different from ourselves. A frequently voiced opinion is that our students are children of their time and that this time displays a range of “post-qualities” in comparison to the time that formed us as academics. To pinpoint how this generation gap has emerged and to characterize the age in which we live we readily make use of labels such as “postmodern”, “post-materialist”, “post-political” and “post-religious”. The risk of using such labels is that they reinforce prejudice and stereotypical simplifications without really explaining anything important. And, of course, our images of “the new student” represent ideal types that are difficult to find in any real and pure form. Individual variations are probably greater than ever before. Still, there is something that unites today’s students; they have all grown up during an epoch that, from the 1980s, has generally been understood as that of “post-modernity”.

The purpose of this essay is to try to deepen the discussion of what “post-modernity” can be and its possible significance for tendencies we seem to observe in “the new student”. I will do this in the company of three influential contemporary critics, and I would like to begin with a discussion of how we can describe and understand what Jean-Francois Lyotard in 1979, termed “la condition postmoderne”. We will do this in companionship with another French thinker who, among other things, has been accused of being a cynic, an intellectual aristocrat and a deeply pessimistic technology determinist. Even if his account of “the post-modern” can seem unusually twisted it is difficult to ignore him. By using provocation as a weapon he has succeeded, like few others, in influencing the development of ideas in our own time, and he has forced a radical reappraisal of what intellectual foundations and what societal significance the scientific project today is able to invoke with any kind of credibility.

2 Bjurström, 2005:46-47.

A French dystopist

In the 1980s and 1990s, the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) gained international fame as one of the most influential thinkers on postmodernism and post modernity – something he himself would most likely have denied. Inspired by Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*, Baudrillard marked his intellectual autonomy against Lyotard and his followers by coining the concept of “non-postmodern”. In spite of this meta-ironical marker of independence, and regardless of Latour's and his own playfulness with concepts, Baudrillard was intensely busy investigating and debating phenomena that historically belonged to an era which had transcended modernity, that is, post-modernity.

Having been translated into English, Baudrillard became the theoretician “à la mode”, especially in American academic circles. His progress was so massive that a conservative resistance was mobilized. In the 1990s, something that has gone down in history as “the culture war” raged among American university intellectuals. It was an ideological battle where proponents of a canon, for instance the literary scholar Harold Bloom attacked neo-Marxists, post-structuralists and queer theories.³ In spite of Baudrillard's scandalous success in the new world it was more difficult for him to gain recognition as a prophet in his own country where he ended up in the shadow of other postmodern icons, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida.

For Baudrillard, the development of western societies after 1960 was a decisive historic breaking point, witnessing the emergence of a wholly new “mode of production” to use a Marxist term. If the pre-modern societies had prioritized social and symbolic values, the modern era had become completely fixated by material values such as production, benefit and (during late modernity) *consumption*. Baudrillard's analyses from the 1960s and 1970s can be described as a Marxist critique of the alienating, late capitalist consumption society, where everything, including the people, is commoditized with immediate alienation as an inescapable consequence.

Having dismissed Marxism as a bourgeois and not sufficiently radical critique of the consumption society, at the beginning of the 1980s

3 Concerning “the cultural war”, see Stefan Jonsson's essay i *Världen i vitögat* (2005). In 1994, Bloom published *The Western Canon* where he recommended reading 24 selected authors with extraordinary *aesthetic* qualities.

Baudrillard went on to maintain that western society had left the modern behind and had entered a post-modern phase. In this postmodern society, work, production and the consumption of goods had lost their powers over people's thoughts and actions; instead, post-modern man lived in a world dominated by *simulation*. Behind this development were primarily technological advances which had produced new media of communication such as television, computers, the Internet and virtual "realities". In this society technology had superseded the symbolic value of financial capital, and *semiurgy*, – the conjuring up of fiction, "information" and the sign – had replace material production as the dominant activity. Work had been reduced from a privileged and basic norm to being merely a sign of social position and lifestyle. Since wages no longer referred to work achievement but to social position, concepts such as class and class conflict had lost their political and analytic relevance.⁴

If Baudrillard was right, it would mean that the social background of the students is no longer of any importance in the encounter with the academy and its traditions. A 20-year-old Eliza from Edsbyn and a middle-aged professor Higgins from Uppsala would then be able to meet on an equal footing; the meeting would certainly be spiced up with piquant differences in lifestyles and habitués, but there would be no need to activate hierarchizing and subordinating power strategies. The question is merely why the "unacademic" Eliza should enter university studies at all. If the new basis for society is simulation, what would then Higgins have to offer? Perhaps he will have more to learn from her than she from him, for instance how Eliza has built her identity and what his own professorial authority really rests on – and not the least, how it may come across to students in Eliza's generation.

Since class has ceased to have a significant role in postmodern society, Baudrillard argues that the identity builder is referred to taking over the fictions, codes and role models of simulation.⁵ These are the factors that decide how postmodern individuals will construe themselves in a world where linearity and causality have lost all relevance (see also Bauman, below). The old idea of self-realization by crossing borders is superseded by a desire to emulate idols of fictitious characters from a

4 Baudrillard, 1983.

5 Compare the British Birmingham school whose cultural studies are used for semiotic and sociological analyses of young people's building of subcultures and style bricolage with material from the world of media and popular culture.

medieval fantasy world. (It was perhaps not a coincidence that karaoke, and so-called look-alike competitions became popular in Sweden during the second half of the 1980s). The power of simulation also changes the conditions for economy, politics, culture and the entire social life. Old boundaries and differences regarding class, sex, sexuality, and ideology will collapse through de-differentiation and they will implode (they will be melting into each other), so that sexuality, sex, politics and power become simultaneously omnipresent.

The so-called Lewinsky affair at the end of the 1990s could be said to support Baudrillard's theory; the story of how the oval room of big politics imploded in an oral room where the president and the intern pursued piquant experiments with cigars and other props with sensationalist journals as a grateful audience. In the modern society that we have just left it is doubtful whether the liar Bill Clinton ("I *did not* have sex with that woman!") would have managed to remain in office. Baudrillard's theory offers an explanation of his miraculous escape, even without too much tarnish to his reputation. Both when lying and when forced to confess his escapades, Clinton offered something that the postmodern "masses" crave more than anything else: spectacle and grand media entertainment.

Whether the media spectacles are "based on a true story" or hyper real is of little consequence, even that boundary has been broken down. Clinton may have been morally corrupt, but at least he was not boring. It is probably the same phenomenon that explains Silvio Berlusconi's astounding come-back to Italian politics. When politics has imploded in the same black hole as morality and sexuality, one has, first and foremost, to be sensational. In the society of simulation it is all about offering spectacle to the ironic and disillusioned masses, giving them the chance to debase the clowns of politics, only to afford the buffoons a renewed mandate later on, much to the annoyance of surviving modernists. As I am writing this I read a column in *Dagens Nyheter* about how the struggle to arrange the Olympic Games nowadays cause hysteria among politicians as well as the masses that have voted for them:

If it only was possible to say that the "people" did not care about these trivialities, that it is a spectacle for builders and politicians. But just as people cried for joy in Rio they cried with sorrow in Madrid. Is this excitement an indication of the absurd and growing power of sports?⁶

6 Nathan Shachar: 'Kampen om OS skapar hysteri', *Dagens NyheterVärlden*, 2009-10-16.

Baudrillard would no doubt have answered yes to this rhetorical question. According to him, individuals escape during post modernity from “the desert of the real” to “the ecstasy of hyper reality”, which has a dissolving and fragmentarizing effect on the subject. The World of Sports is unquestionably part of this hyper reality together with Eurovision Song Contests and Royal Weddings.

If modern man suffered from typical ailments such as hysteria and paranoia, schizophrenia has become the most common personality disorder during post modernity. Fragmentarization is the result of excessive stimulation and of socio-cultural promiscuity (compare Ziehe, below), which encounters no resistance in the form of an individual’s aura, neither mentally nor physically. This can be interpreted in the following way: the *habitus* which Baudrillard’s colleague Pierre Bourdieu made into a central explanatory concept has lost its resistance with regard to unwanted cultural change and its plasticity with regard to transgressing social subordination. From Baudrillard’s cynical perspective we all fall victim to the ecstasy of communication. For instance, in the long run we cannot defend ourselves against the imperative of always being within reach and online, nor can we hope to escape the mobile phone and e-mail as our electronic shackles.

As far as the young generation is concerned, they do not seem to view the phenomenon as a problem at all, something that middle-aged university teachers can be surprised at. Nonetheless, the ecstasy of communication leads to a didactic challenge when teachers and students are trying to meet in a dialogue with the purpose of reproducing existing knowledge and producing new. Lecturers are in a position where their own “signs” face unwieldy competition for attention in the form of other “information”, pressing virtual worlds and other types of simulacra. The task is not made any easier due to the fact that the epistemological truth claim maintained by science in the modern paradigm is reduced to a mere discursive language game among others in post modernity. Today the professional academic is facing the moral and pedagogical dilemma whether he or she should inform the student about these matters of fact, or let the students stay ignorant until they themselves discover the truth: that scientific truth is also among those things that have collapsed. Most teachers would probably to pass thinkers like Baudrillard in silence; one can always refer to the usual and infamous unintelligibility of French philosophers.

What has happened in the transition to post modernity is, according to Baudrillard, that the epistemological claims of modern theories to represent truth and reality have exploded (not imploded). The postmodern predicament has created a situation which has short-circuited the fuse and abolished the difference between the subject and the object. In that the philosophical subject has lost control over the objects the ambition to chart the true nature or essence of reality has become an irrelevant project. Our claims to knowledge of Nature, people, and ideas – and hence indirectly our claims to power over these – consequently lose their theoretical foundations. Modern conceptions about objective “outer worlds” and “realities” have been superseded by the power and attraction of the new “hyper reality”. What remains is, as I have said above, a language game of texts only capable of referring to other texts. Modern concepts such as “the social” and “the political” are drained of meaning in our media-saturated consciousness, and they are replaced by “narcotizing” and “hypnotizing” fantasy images, spectacle, and reflections that only reflect other reflections. This is Baudrillard’s explanation to what we see as a post-political generation of students.

In *The Perfect Crime* (1996) Baudrillard described the “destruction of reality” as the perfect crime and pointed to art as a strongly implicated accomplice. The project of modern avant-gardism to saturate the entire society with art had been completed through post modernity. But because the aesthetical has managed to penetrate everything, art has won a mortal victory. Its time as an autonomous and transgressing project is over. Art, like politics, economy and sexuality, had imploded and was turned into “trans-aesthetics”, “trans-politics”, etc. These imploded trans-processes had worked together to blow up the autonomy and reality of science, too. But through this transcendence the dynamiters could not be held responsible. That is why Baudrillard spoke about the perfect crime. With the destruction of reality followed the emancipation of intellectual analysis of society at the same time as the “masses”, which the Marxists once put their hopes to, were wallowing in a “media massage” without message or meaning. The majority of the citizens had been transformed into a silent mass, confirming the “death of the social” – and, as stated above, consequently also the demise of politics.

When class distinctions are transformed into “non-differences”, when face-to-face interaction withers away, and individuals flee to simulated worlds, social theory loses its object, “the social”, and political radicals lose their subject, “the activist”. The hyper real can expose

itself fully in an obscene gesture of relentless and accelerating growth unnecessary which leads to disaster for the subject whose fascination at the amount of simulacra more and more fades into exhaustion, numbness and mental fatigue. Baudrillard's prophecy from the 1970s concerning the threatened rule of the object had, in his own view, become true. The philosopher's dystopian energy thus reached its climax. The only way out that he could recommend was a "fatal strategy" of affirmation and encouraging the rule of artifacts in order to accelerate the collapse and cataclysm of a social culture which was fundamentally sick and against human nature.

If one wants to make it easy for oneself, one can dismiss Baudrillard's story about post modernity as a case of the poetic fantasies of a Nietzschean "*Übermensch*", or as high-strung metaphysical speculations from the ivory tower of philosophy. It is also possible to voice the objection that, even if Baudrillard in certain aspects managed to put the finger on important social phenomena, the message has reached hardly anyone outside the academic seminar. The masses themselves are blissfully unaware that they have become the victims of "the ecstasy of communication" or that they are wallowing in a "media massage". So, what has this to do with "the new student"? Baudrillard spoke of the faceless "masses", not about generation conflicts or a specific youth culture, such differences had, as stated earlier, imploded. The communicative ecstasy and the deluge of spectacle of the simulation society hit everybody, regardless of age, class or gender – such categories had also imploded and become meaningless.

What is important for us is to try to decide whether Baudrillard's dystopia says something important about today's society and whether young people who have lived through post modernity (that is, persons born after 1970) may have been affected by the spirit of the time. One way of examining the relevance of Baudrillard's discourse on post modernity in relation to the attitudes of a new generation of students could be to confront him with another – more modern than postmodern – thinker who has explicitly shown an interest in for changes in the mentality of young people and its connections to social and cultural change. I am referring to the German pedagogue and psychologist Thomas Ziehe (b. 1947). To what degree does Ziehe see the same tendencies as Baudrillard? What interesting differences are there between these two thinkers in their views on contemporary society and its influence on the individual?

The theory of the “culturally released youth generation”

Thomas Ziehe belongs to the so-called Hannover School, a school of thought with roots in critical theory and psychoanalysis. Influenced by the 1968 movement Ziehe published a study of a presumed post political youth generation: *Pubertät und Narzissmus. Sind Jugendliche entpolitisiert?* Twelve years later his second central study was published, which dealt with the emergence of a “new youth” formed on a new type of socialization with clear narcissistic effects. According to the Swedish youth researcher, Johan Fornäs, it was not Ziehe’s analysis of youthful narcissism that was discussed in Sweden in the 1980s but the much more superficial and normative one of the American Christopher Lasch whose *Narcissistic Culture* was published in Swedish in 1980. Fornäs complains about this since Ziehe’s analysis is more intellectually open in comparison to Lasch’s rather categorical and sweeping reflection on the degeneration of contemporary culture.⁷

Like Baudrillard, Ziehe thinks that he can trace a radical change in the societal culture that late modern capitalism has produced. But in contrast to Baudrillard, Ziehe does not experiment with “post-“ concepts and dramatic deliveries of death certificates of reason, politics, philosophy, etc. Ziehe’s analysis is rather more modest. He describes the change in terms of a *socio-cultural release*, which means that the contemporary western person has been released from the cultural traditions of previous generations. An important change is that popular culture has gained acceptance in all social classes and that high culture is no longer seen as better but rather as a more specialized form of culture. Ziehe has himself told stories about the children in his own home village who were called out to watch their comics being burnt as pulp culture while “good” reading was placed in their hands. Ziehe also seems to claim that the cultural release of the youth is, so to speak, “pre-programmed” by a media industry which, among other things, is aiming at an early expropriation of children’s primary experiences of sexuality. The effect is that the experience is directed by the media and already from the beginning it is up-loaded by the media world’s own images and interpretations. This affects our self-image. The individual starts to view him/herself from outside, “as on a video tape”. This meta-consciousness could develop into something positive, a vaccine against all totalitarian claims, but it can also reinforce the narcissistic alienating effect.

7 See Fornäs, Lindbergh, & Sernhede, 1991:28f.

Like Baudrillard Ziehe also sees how modern values such as strong work ethics, thrift and cautiousness have lost importance at the same time as the images, symbols, fantasies and dreams of the future that we carry with us more and more are formed by the media and commercial industries. He is also ready to agree that the influence of the market over the subject has been extended, which, among other things, means that looks and sexuality is linked to lifestyle. However, Ziehe would probably guard himself against the idea that aestheticization has invaded everything, or that sexuality, lifestyle and politics have imploded into each other. Above all, he would not agree that the ecstatic excesses of the media and popular culture have contributed to the total dissolution and death of the subject. It is this very subject, and in particularly the youthful subject's search for identity that is at the centre of Ziehe's analysis, constituting a synthesis of cultural theory and social psychology.

Ziehe argues that the cultural release in late modernity hits the youth the hardest in the form of a narcissistic disorder – which sounds much less dramatic than Baudrillard's diagnosis of the typical contemporary human being: schizophrenia. Ziehe is anxious to emphasize that he, in contrast to a Christian tradition, does not condemn narcissism as “self-infatuation”. Narcissism during puberty can be something positive and it can develop in an offensive and productive direction. This productive and healthy narcissism, however, has been injured by late modern social culture and it has transformed into an ambivalent disorder regarding the creation of *the self* (Ziehe avoids the term identity). Owing to insufficient libidinous energy the young person experiences a strong need to mirror him/herself in others in order to be able to experience him/herself. This is coherent with the fact that the “new youth”, through cultural release, has become much more self-reflexive, malleable and individualistic than the parent generation, creating a new possibility horizon of freedom that is not only positive.

The negative side of cultural release is that young people are facing almost endless alternatives when it comes to choosing activities, outlooks on life, lifestyles and life-worlds. This means not only considerable freedom but also frustration, despair and a sense of having been *forced* to a liberty of choice that the older generation did not have to deal with since their lives were expected to follow a clearly marked path. But how can late modern young people know that they are making the right choices? Do they cope fully with having to take responsibil-

ity for their choices and do the choices really lead to a better life than that of the parents? In a world that tends to be more and more impossible to grasp in its growing complexity this ambivalent combination of compulsion, freedom and insecurity creates a desire to expand the knowledge horizon and further develop meta-reflexivity. Through the processes of release and individualization we are left alone with these difficult problems, and from this stems a need to relate the self to others to be satisfied that we are on “the right way”. It is when this need of confirmation from others, and the existential insecurity from which it emanates, becomes too dominating a part of life that we can talk about a narcissistic disorder.

Cultural release, individualization and the increased influence of popular culture also have pedagogical consequences according to Ziehe. Through the more and more complex display of clothes styles, music, film, television, computer games, and Internet communities, interactive web sites, etc. that are offered young people, they are able to create their own introvert life-worlds that are largely inaccessible to the older generation. When, with mixed feelings of horror and amazement, we hear about young men who spend 24 hours a day in front of the computer, which transposes them to virtual worlds whose names we do not even know, Baudrillard’s images of communicative ecstasy and deluges of simulacra suddenly feel most appropriate. Recent phenomena such as Facebook and Twitter further expand the possibility horizon to seek confirmation from other young people that one’s own self is on the right way and that it is in agreement with an individualized and historically released normality in constant transformation. (Quite recently, there was a debate in Swedish newspapers about the way young people masturbate in front of the webcam without feelings of shame.) When these young people come to the university they surprise their teachers by readily rejecting the idea that knowledge of something that happened before they themselves were born could be of any interest. The question is what we as academic teachers, in history, literature or religious studies, can do about the new student’s egocentric and self-chosen lack of history, or even contempt of history.

Ziehe himself says that today it is necessary that we dare to challenge our students to lure them out of their self-created worlds. We have to confront them with entirely new knowledge and perspectives, shock them by showing something completely novel that, at the same time,

has the power to fascinate them. Speaking with Baudrillard, in order to compete with the seductive worlds of simulation, we need to confront the children of post modernity with even more fantastic stories, but “based on true stories” – which is easier said than done. The new youth is not content with reading Kafka just because the older generation has decided that it is part of the canon of world literature. Nor do they see the point in being able to recite the kings of Sweden (which a younger colleague of mine thinks is a reasonable and relevant requirement). The new student also demands convincing arguments why it is good to be able to write essays when they have already perfected the art of blogging and writing cutting text messages. Old arguments, such as “education is a light burden to carry” are rather lightweight in a time when popular culture sets the norms. It is the burdensome duty of the teacher, like a friendly tourist guide, to lead the recalcitrant student through the exotic terrain of education. As Ziehe said: “The tourist guide does not blame the tourist if he does not know anything about the pyramids, for example”. In short, it is we and nobody else who have to convince our students that the pyramids are worthy of our interest – even if they were build somewhat prior to the era that has brought forth our students.

According to Ziehe, we seniors can actually also benefit from the negative effects of individualization and cultural release. Ziehe refers to the insecurity and agony that is created by the forced freedom of choice and the existential responsibility it leads to. The existential insecurity – or narcissistic disorder – which the late modern and increasingly complex contemporary culture has brought forth means, according to Ziehe, that “young people today hate unstructured situations and need routines to feel safe (...) – they are a bit childish in that they find it difficult to handle setbacks”.⁸ Even if the youth is self-centered it is also soft-skinned and the self-esteem is really rather frail. Therefore, it is important that the teachers do not impose their knowledge on the students, at the same time as they offer the students safety in the form of structure. We should be authoritarian and charming. So far Thomas Ziehe.

The question is how useful this general advice is, or if it tells us anything new that not Socrates, Dewey or some other erudite didactic philosopher has already told us. There is another similarity between Ziehe and Baudrillard; notwithstanding their sharp analyses of contemporary society, neither of them is particularly good at predicting or pointing out

8 *Brus* (4), 2007.

accessible paths to a better future. Another thinker who has analyzed the meeting between a new self-centered generation of students and a university culture which is also in its own, but unfortunately rather dated life-world, is the British-Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (born 1925). In contrast to Ziehe's rather sententious advice, Bauman's solution to this post- or late modern dilemma fells both genuinely radical and creative, not least because he takes the didactic dimension seriously.

Postmodern learning and lagging universities

In an essay published in Swedish in 2001, Bauman discusses how academic institutions can relate to a new and extremely unstable world where the rules are changing all the time and with short notice, where no logical structures or norms are permanent, and where the best thing to do is to "make it a habit not to have any habits".⁹ (In this essay Bauman is still talking about post modernity but he has since then abandoned the concept and nowadays he talks about liquid modernity.) In this new world you live in the instant now, in an episodic time which lacks direction and linear cohesion. History and the future are void of meaning. If the modern era (solid modernity) put an end to eternity as a universal knowledge horizon, liquid modernity has abolished the future and progress as justification for the production of truth. According to Bauman, contemporary modernity is something completely new in the history of mankind; therefore, we also need a new view on knowledge and learning. This is not least true for the universities with their traditional claims on the right to be normative for other levels of education. In this respect, Bauman is very close to Baudrillard; like the latter, Bauman also says that consumerism represented a radically new phase in the development of modernity and it heralded liquid modernity.

Bauman's pedagogical analysis, however, emanates from Gregory Bateson, who has maintained that there have existed two modes of basic learning in all societies: on the one hand, a *proto-learning* which consists of determining *what* is worth knowing and reproducing for new generations (the content itself of "knowledge"); on the other hand a *deutero-learning* which is about learning to learn (that is, how knowledge is acquired in a concrete way). According to Bateson this ability

9 Bauman, 2001.

(“to crack the code”, which is the common phrase in the classroom) is seldom the result of the teacher’s efforts, but rather something that the students themselves, instinctively and unconsciously, learn through experience. Both forms of knowledge are natural and inevitable in all societies and they have been relatively easy to organize and control for the pedagogues in the modern project.

In liquid modernity, a third mode of learning with schizophrenic consequences has entered the stage – which sounds like a direct reference to Baudrillard. The idea of this *tertiary learning* – which becomes norm in post modernity – is to learn to break the rules, to liberate oneself from habits, to organize fragments into radically new patterns but of totally provisional character, and to live with a chameleon-like identity. This competence, to be able to quickly dissolve all mental patterns, reminds Bauman of the child who amuses him/herself with a kaleidoscope. In a world where nothing hangs together any longer, and where everything that seems solid immediately disintegrates, this mode of learning is eminently adaptive (Ziehe, too, is basically positive to experimenting with identities; it creates not only insecurity but also new possibilities of freedom). But from the horizon of the universities, this new form of student behavior is seen as a pathological symptom of a deep crisis, caused by dissolved values, privatized identities, and a division of life into a number of different games with incommensurable and quickly changing rules. The *surrounding world* and the contemporary are defined as anomalies, but, on the other hand, the academic normality tradition is not questioned – roughly as in Coleman’s studies from the 1960s.

The most common reaction from the universities has been a passive defense of the modern conception of “academic autonomy in the midst of society”. According to Bauman, the Magna Charta of the European universities expresses a nostalgic awareness of the present; a longing to retreat to the fortress, raise the draw-bridge and wait for the pathological surrounding world to recuperate. Their own ontological anxiety is counteracted by a zealous consolidation and defense of the canon, methods and assessment criteria of the various disciplines. Bauman interprets this as an inability to realize that those times have passed when science and power were symbiotically connected in the name of civilized progress. Knowledge of how Nature and man could be controlled, reshaped and used was exchanged for an official canonization of the

scientific epistemic truth claim. Within this canon, a complete understanding of roles as to who had knowledge and who was ignorant was taken for granted.

In the postmodern both these harmonious relationships have been dissolved. The political power has renounced all pretensions to control, govern and plan. The responsibility for development has been handed over to the “invisible hand” of the market. Under this reign it has become a completely open question as to what kind of knowledge is worth reproducing, who is the sender and receiver, expert and student. The scientist has had to accept being reduced from a monopolist to one of many “players” on the education market, not more credible or authoritarian than anyone else. Our professor Higgins sees himself in a new repulsive role as marketing man, completely exposed to what Eliza and her fellow students can possibly find “cool” enough to study. For who, in the era of the Internet can maintain his “natural” right to teach “the ignorant”? What knowledge is worth investing in is no longer decided by the supplier but by the consumers themselves: that is, a new generation of students who have grown up with Google, Wikipedia and Pirate Bay and who have mastered the art of *tertiary learning*.

An alternative to the nostalgic reaction to the postmodern has been for the university teachers to enthusiastically celebrate the new rules of the game. In the competition of the fickle preferences of the consumers of education, other assets than academic merits have become important. An idea has developed that professors that are famous from media exposure improves the chances of attracting students to the university and its courses, compared to teachers who are not known from the media but might be intellectually more outstanding. But in order to gain celebrity status the media opportunistic academic must subdue to stiff and often overpowering competition from much more spectacular competitors, such as star athletes, serial killers and winners of Idol. Nor must he shy away from superficiality since the episodic time frame that governs journalism as well does not allow him to formulate a thought “more than five centimeters long”, to cite the Norwegian contemporary critic and professor of anthropology Thomas Hylland Eriksen.¹⁰

According to Bauman this attitude is one of two ways of giving up intellectual autonomy (a loftily superior rejection of the contemporary world is not autonomy either, but “irrelevance”). But Bauman sees a

10 Hylland Eriksen, 2001.

third possibility. It consists of recognizing post modernity as something inevitable, albeit with a maintained intellectual integrity in relation to conservative elitism as well as to market opportunism. The possibilities and potentials are in the astounding multitude of thought styles, forms of interaction and interests which prevails in the academic world – in spite of the love for uniformity and harmony of late-modern bureaucracy. But if we want to make use of this possibility we must realize that our knowledge neither can nor should be measured with standardized systems of assessment, such as the ECTS. We must also humbly acknowledge that we are just as unsure and questioning as everyone else before the issue of where this development is taking us and what kind of expertise will be in demand tomorrow.

Bauman says that most of the modern foundations of the university must be critically examined. In the liquid and insecure world of post modernity, rationality is no longer a sufficient logic, the control of knowledge is no longer possible, and authorities are no longer reliable. What the new university teacher must do is to develop his tolerance for divergence and difference, he must cultivate critical and self-critical thinking, he must dare to modify existing frames and he must be curious and throw himself into the unknown and the unexplored – without thereby escaping responsibility. Such a pedagogical revolution in academia is incommensurable with the idea of proto-learning but partly reconcilable with that of deuto-learning – provided that we admit other information competences apart from those of the academic tradition. If we are prepared to be unfaithful towards the controlling ambitions of the syllabuses, we, together with the new students, will be able to change a “pathogenic” tertiary learning mode to a creative one. In that case we must use our intellectual energy to developing provisional models that allow us to take the leap into the unknown and that remain open and experimental; models that are not fixed at expected production outcomes and that are not immobilized at the fear of failure.

Baumans prescription is almost in total contrast to that of Ziehe. Where the latter recommends charming authorities and firm structures to parry the disorientation of young people, the former calls upon his colleagues to throw themselves into unstable pedagogical experiments. Reckless advice, from a professor emeritus who is safe himself? But Bauman would probably defend himself by saying that the transfer from solid to liquid modernity has presented not only the people but also

the institutions with big problems when it comes to consolidation and offering stable frames of reference for the life strategies of individuals. Long-term career or education planning seems a waste of time and effort in liquid modernity; instead one has to be able to change tactics and goals quickly regardless of loyalties to catch swiftly passing opportunities. And the choice is not free: we are all compelled to plan, act and perform cost-benefit analyses “under conditions of extreme uncertainty”.

Conclusion

The starting point of this essay is that something radically new has happened in the cultural history of the western world in the past 50 years. Something that represents a dramatic breach with the modernity of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. My hypothesis is that people in their twenties and thirties who go to university belong to a generation of young people who have grown up under the reign of *post modernity* – this is how I understand the concept “the new student”. At the same time higher education is still lagging behind mentally in a world characterized by the ideals of modernity, which complicates the meeting with students from the postmodern generation. This is why I think it is important to come to terms with what this “postmodern” can really be taken to represent.

Of the thinkers that have accompanied me, Baudrillard is the only one who has consistently analyzed the historic change of the 20th century as a transfer to a new social culture which represents a clear breach with the hegemony of modernity. The fact that Baudrillard himself used the term non-postmodern does not change anything of importance. Bauman, too, has lately abandoned the concept of post modernity and has started talking about *liquid modernity* while Ziehe has all the time kept *late-modern capitalism*. But regardless of how the change is labeled there are a number of characteristics that these three thinkers seem to agree on, both regarding what constituted the hegemony of the modern project and what is central to the new era that succeeded this reign.

If we begin with modernity they seem to agree that the typical mode of thinking was influenced by a strong belief in rational logic, the value of *continuity*, regulation and *stable* patterns of action. There was also a conviction that it was possible to *predict* and *control* development in

such a direction as would lead to “development” and growth, in social security as well as in material standard. The means for reaching these goals were, apart from political control (*social engineering*), scientific and technological development, strong work ethics and efficient production. Bauman and Baudrillard both maintain that the hegemony of work and production were transferred to a new regime in the early post-war years, where mass consumption became the new economic key factor for growth.

The “old students” who have been fostered in the spirit of modernity were able to invest safely in higher education, secure in the fact that society would want their knowledge and that a fruitful future professional career most likely lay ahead. The old (that is, the modern) student was expected to accept uncritically the contract between teacher and student giving the former full authority and right of interpretation when it came to the foundations of didactics: *what* was the content of knowledge, *how* it should be reproduced and *why*. The ideal modern student sat by the feet of his master, gratefully imbuing the knowledge and erudition that was “mediated”. (This was the principle at any rate until the student revolt of 1968 – which may be interpreted as an early sign of what was to come.)

What happened then and what led over to post modernity (or liquid modernity), the three thinkers are not in full agreement about. Baudrillard puts great emphasis on the explosive development of the media industry and the escalating supply of simulation that followed in its wake – and which has led to an explosion of possibilities for postmodern man to escape from social reality to hyper real imaginary worlds. I interpret his dystopian message thus: in post modernity, we have taken a road that inevitably leads to the idioticization of social culture, increased stupidity and political passivization. Bauman places larger emphasis on the new unpredictability and instability that has been the consequence of the retreat of the politicians and the surrender of power to a liberated market and its arbitrary fluctuations.

Although Ziehe does not speak of “the death of the social”, he still awards the development of the media industry an important part in the formation of the mentality of young people. For Ziehe the increased importance of the media industry and popular culture (at the expense of “high culture” and art) has played an important role in grounding the cultural release of the youth in relation to the older generation – and

their need of confirmation from their peers. Through the supply of introvert fantasy worlds, the media industry is party to pre-programming this narcissistic need for self-reflection and in the long run to a diminished interest in real history and social issues.

Bauman, too, emphasizes the new generation's extreme and history-less fixation on the present time and the moment at hand, but he also indicates how this tendency renders unsure any prognosis about the future. He says that this is a direct consequence of growing up in post modernity, an era where an episodic perception of time has become the norm, and where we cannot expect any durable knowledge structures of any kind to emerge. All cognitive horizons are provisional, valid only at this very moment, and are subject to constant re-negotiation. Choosing higher education as a career path and a secure future seems in such a perspective as a display of unrealistic "modern romanticism". The truly postmodern student should reasonably approach the university based on other expectations. The question is what expectations, and to what degree we teachers understand these new expectations.

In contrast to Ziehe Bauman does not seem to think that it is possible for an older generation of university teachers to lure the students out from their own worlds by inspiring alternative stories that can point the way to the existential security which they so urgently seek. Instead Bauman sees something positive and liberating in the new autodidact learning that today's youth has been forced to develop, due to the extreme instability and demands for flexibility that characterizes the postmodern condition. As children of their time the new students have acquired a historically completely new ability to combine disparate fragments of knowledge to a working provisional understanding, which they realize they will soon have to re-negotiate.

What is relevant and valid knowledge is unavoidably affected by a world controlled by instant decisions and unpredictable changes in a globalized world market, which with the help of new communication technology can operate without regard to time, spatial distance, cultural boundaries or national borders. The universities, too, are affected by these rapid changes in the world. The universities today are characterized by vain efforts to catch up when the surrounding world is changing, but they are doomed to lagging behind; for instance, due to constant reorganizations and changes to educational policies, but also due to the launching of supposedly trendy but often short-lived programs of study

for public relations officers, media studies, cultural entrepreneurs, etc. Many ideas for development are dated before they are implemented, the students apply for courses in April which by September they have lost interest in.

As teachers brought up in the spirit of modernity, when meeting the new generation we must, according to Bauman, avoid falling victim to market opportunism or to handling our ontological anxiety with elitist conservatism. But a third alternative demands of many of us a reappraisal, away from modern ideals such as control of knowledge, blind faith in rationality and unreflected pedagogical authority, and towards - without being guilty of “othering” – a meeting with “the new student” with a lot of curiosity about his or *her* experiences (the typical student today is a woman). This reapprochement must be characterized by tolerance and self-criticism, but that must not mean that we renounce the right to be critical based on our own historical experiences which have shaped us as teachers and as researchers, for better or for worse. It is only through a respectful dialogue that we will be able to discuss openly and without bias how the future academy should be formed. The new student forces “The New Teacher”, that is, a person who is prepared to self-critically and creatively deal with the very fundamental and pressing issues of the future. *What* should we learn? *How* should we learn? *Why* should we, in joint learning efforts, meet in the academy? Is it possible to consider other environments and contexts for a production of knowledge which is both conscious of the contemporary and critical to it?

From my own male late middle-aged perspective – shaped by the critique of modernity as well as of post modernity and its great stories – the challenge is basically about what kind of society and what kind of world we want for the future. The issue is about developing together a new culture of knowledge which succeeds in reinstating the interest in history, morals, nature and politics – at the same time as it dares to accept the lack of respect towards self-appointed authorities and their truth claims which is the great and positive achievement of postmodernism.

We must also be seriously interested in the alternative worlds that young people choose to inhabit instead of categorically dismissing them as “introvert” havens and “the opium for the masses” of our own time. Some media researchers argue that young people develop creativity as

well as critical awareness in their contact with digital media. My own experiences from student essays on this topic do not refute the thesis. We must understand the causes of the escape from the *reality* that post-modernism thought it had invalidated through ironic citation. If we do not understand the origin of the escape behavior, we will also have problem recalling the students to this so-called reality.

The thing is that I believe that we must reconstruct both ourselves and our students and make them into intellectuals who dare speak of *reality* and *the social* without ironic quotation marks. If we once more want to afford higher education a meaningful destination and our students a belief in the future we must try to influence the development of society together in a direction that leads away from confused identities manipulated by the media, unresisting adaptation to the market and an escapist running away from reality which is non-creative. But, again, how a new academy, congenial with this ideological project, is to be given concrete shape must be decided in an open and non-prestigious dialogue where it is not obvious who is the teacher and who is the learner, we or The New Student. If we fail there is a great risk that Baudrillard's dystopia will become true.

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The art of learning and art in learning; difference between informative and integral learning

Jari Ristiniemi

”The art is infinite.”¹

“Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.”²

A woman leans on the windowpane looking out, that what she sees and senses is one of the objects of *Woman at the window*. Caspar David Friedrich was not only reproducing the natural scenery, the seen object, but how the outer affects, forms and shapes the inner; a world is seen and sensed through the eyes and the shape of the other. There is the other and the opening up through the other and there is both the sense of wonder and the sense for nature in this interpretative setting. The painting is differential: it operates through the other and with its own other; it is possible to sense the differential elements of the painting. There is the sense for nature and the universe; there is the soothing light. It is the differential, sensed elements the artist/art gives to the spectator. The differential view came through also in philosophy during Friedrich’s life-time:

Activity and receptivity are related to one another as opposed terms [+ and -]. Thus, as the one factor increases, the other falls, and vice versa.(...) Activity and receptivity arise simultaneously in one and the same indivisible moment, and precisely this simultaneity of activity and receptivity constitutes life.³

Life was considered as the play of differential elements: “generally only the positive factor is beheld, and the negative is only felt”.⁴ The seen is

1 Wolf, 2003:17.

2 Deleuze & Guattari, 1998:4f.

3 Schelling, 2004:65.

4 Schelling, 2004:227.

“beheld”, the sensed is felt; the other of the painting opens itself for receptivity. The shape of persons in Friedrich’s art signalise attentive receptivity, by getting into their shoes the spectator senses the same things as they do.

A classroom-teacher by the windowpane, her attention is drawn to the children out on the school-yard. The moment gives her a relief from the unrest of the classroom; she protects herself from the fire burning in the youngsters, definitely they are on fire. The fire in the pupils is no soothing light, but a chaotic, disturbing, alarming, bubbling light. If some of the pupils (and even some of the teachers) are on fire and if there is fire and light in Friedrich’s art, is learning-with-art able to transport participants from a situation of dysfunctional learning – three of four pupils in Sweden say that the working situation in the classroom is such that they have hard times to learn – to a situation of deep-learning? How to move from chaos to active and self-active, integral learning? Is art an answer to questions people ask today? Deeply in debt, glaciers melting, cars burning, houses broken in the suburbs, threats of climate and threats in economics, no jobs in sight, suburbs and even whole towns desolate, what is art and education able to do in this situation for the people who find Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* as the last twilight of love and care in a civilization gone astray?

I do not think that it is possible to meet the threats and problems facing us with the means that have created them; a new approach and strategy are needed. It might be considered that education, far from being a solution, has been a part of the problem of the environmental/economical/social crises. Part of the crises is the widening gap between generations; the lack of trust and confidence in the democratic institutions; the surrender of existence-conditions to economics; the evasion of life-space by “the technology of power”, the outer invades the inner.⁵ There is the lack of meaning-orientation as well: no meaningful map of orientation is available for late-modern people.⁶ How to answer these local and global challenges facing life and humanity? One of the most severe problems facing us today is the surrender of existence-conditions to economics, how to meet that challenge? One possible way is to link economics to meaning-orientation and meaning-fulfilment; to stop the profit hunger by offering more meaningful alternatives.

5 Considering the technology of power see Foucault, 1995.

6 Charles Taylor makes this point in C. Taylor, 1992.

My purpose is to focus a holistic view on education and learning. I introduce a cultural analysis in terms of holistic webs of co-dependence, that is, I discuss different ways of understanding the human to human encounter, human-nature interaction, and the individual-society interaction and I discuss learning in relation to those webs and mind-settings.⁷ According to Henry A. Giroux we are to “develop a new ethical and political language” and we are to understand “how politics and power work through institutions, language, representation, culture, and across diverse economies of desire, time, and space”.⁸ What would a radically new ethical and political language look like? One way to sketch the contours of such a language is to discuss the new in relation to the old, perhaps the difference between the old and the new comes to light in that way. It seems to be the case in sciences as diverse as biology and economics that a new whole-oriented approach is coming through. The new approach emphasises wholes, forms, and shapes, it is holistic; the old moves “only” on the plane of representations or mental images, it is atomistic. There is a huge difference between the old way of learning, if we by that mean informative teaching under the guidance of representational objectivity (the one to one fit between the sign or image and the referendum, the object of representation) and some new ways of learning, like integral learning dealing with the elements of wholeness or wholes. We learn bit by bit, it is these bits of knowledge that the informative learning lends, but we also learn in terms of “background” wholes, when we get the pieces together and create more or less coherent wholes or contextual maps. Mathematics, for example, we learn when we get the key to the pattern, not only when we learn that $1 + 1 = 2$.

I discuss integral learning in relation to informative learning. Informative learning and integral learning complement each other; there is no informative learning without integral learning and *vice-versa*. This does not mean that there is no difference between them. In fact, the difference is essential for understanding the nature of learning, what learning is and how it comes into being. We also learn by erring; errors and being in error are a part of all learning; it is human to err.⁹ In my view art in its various forms is essential to integral learning.

7 Considering mind-settings see Damasio, 1994.

8 Giroux & Shannon, 1997:243.

9 “Error is only the reverse of a rational orthodoxy.” Deleuze, 1994:148. Orthodoxy does not allow nor for difference nor for the differential.

Differential holism; art, philosophy, and science

There seems to be both difference and connection between art, philosophy, and science; they are differential in relation to each other. They are different from each other on their own, still preserving a relation to each other:

The three planes, along with their elements, are irreducible: *plane of immanence of philosophy, plane of composition of art, plane of reference or coordination of science; form of concept, force of sensation, function of knowledge; concepts and conceptual personae, sensations and aesthetic figures; figures and partial observes.* (...) Now, if the three Nos (the pre-philosophical, the pre-scientific, and the non-conceptual in art) are still distinct in relation to the cerebral plane, they are no longer distinct in relation to the chaos into which the brain plunges. In this submersion it seems that there is extracted from chaos the shadow of the “people to come” in the form that art, but also philosophy and science summon forth: mass-people, brain-people, chaos-people – non-thinking thought that lodges in the three, like Klee’s non-conceptual concept or Kandinsky’s internal silence.¹⁰

Or to add, the No in Friedrich’s art: the outside sensed through the woman’s shape. The sensed, may it be found in a painting or in nature precedes the representation and is only hinted at, but it gives itself in a kind of a hermeneutic identification to the spectator. Art is still distinct as such (*Woman at the window* is a painting), but it reaches to levels that precede both perception and higher cognitive processes like language and thought. The point is that in brain all three: art, philosophy, and science fuse with each other, before they are put apart from each other at the conscious, structuring and categorical level (on the cerebral plane where awareness is born). Even if they are separate on their own, they still resonate in each other because of their cohesion in the preceding, in what might be called the dimension of structural possibilities. If thinking at its basic level consists of the resonate-impulses, then these impulses come through in all three. Art, philosophy, and science are separated from each other, but they are also related to each other and affect each other; they are differential. In representation they are different, but at their basic level they resonate in each other.

10 Deleuze & Guattari, 1996:216-218.

It is obvious that each scientific era has its own aesthetics: the Functionalism of 1920's is an expression of this and even the Futurism during that decade. Changes in science – that how science is interpreted and understood – affects aesthetics. The new understanding of science affects that how art is interpreted; the virtual space and all the possibilities of politics *and* art within that space are characteristics of today. In the web of co-dependence, the relationship between art, philosophy, and science might be turned around: changes in art affect also the ways of understanding science. Changes in one form of cultural activity affect the other forms, because of their rhizoid connections in the unconscious.¹¹ The relationship between art and science is thought in a new way today. There is a growing interest in music in healthcare, music has healing qualities; there is the mathematics of the composition, a new (perhaps age-old) understanding of spirituality and mathematics; there is the beauty of the theory, intuition grounding reflection. Aesthetics invade science; science gets connected with aesthetics. The new understanding of the relationship between art and science is perhaps an expression for the changes in the basic perceptual patterns of the self/world relationship; the cultural settings and patterns are changing. Changes in the understanding of the world, perceptual, emotive and cognitive give rise to new forms of science and to new forms in art; new forms in art give rise to new forms of science. In the web of co-dependence the different sides affect each other, because art, philosophy and science come from a common non-perceptual source preceding the beheld. To keep the three completely apart from each other would be disastrous; the three are “only” human cultural activities. Integral learning focuses at the cultural settings and their basic elements; it is a kind of a structural approach.

New science

The universalistic understanding of science, the old way of doing science which lets science stand out almost without human contamination, takes away the possibility to discuss the role of science in the society, in modern culture and in human mentality. The universalistic view is

11 “The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. (...) What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real; it constructs the unconscious.” Deleuze & Guattari 1998:12.

based on representational objectivity. The representational objectivity in its turn is based on the presumed one-to-one fit between the representation (sign, image, or name) and the represented (the object). If the representational objectivity is all there is, then there is no need to take a look inward, no inner awakening is needed, and there is no need to discuss neither the mentality-science interaction nor the science-society interaction. Still, science is of human making and it affects human life and the very elements of life, mind and society in profound ways.

The universalistic science moves on the plane of representations; it is based on abstract universalism and on the theory of truth as representation. Abstract universalism is that words are universal signs or commons, which stand for or represent real things. The representational truth presupposes that there is a one-to-one fit between the representation and the represented (the signified or the object, the measurable object or the state of affairs). This very fit, however, is problematic. The object of representation is not there as a “pure” natural object. Many interpretative steps are needed before the object is there:

In history as well as in physics, in ethics as well as in medicine, the observer wants to regard the phenomenon as it “really” is. “Really” means independent of the observer. However, there is no such thing as independence of the observer. The observed changes in being observed (...) There are no “things” in nature, that is, no objects which are nothing but objects, which have no element of subjectivity. But objects that are produced by the technical act (modern science is a technical act) *are* things. It belongs to human freedom in the technical act that individuals can transform natural objects into things. (...) In transforming objects into things, individuals destroy their natural structures and relations.¹²

Today there are the crises of representation, the questioning of the one-to-one fit.¹³ In physics there is a serious discussion of that how experimentation affects the situation of inquiry, it seems to be the case that the way the inquiry is done or set up, construed, gives the results; the

12 Tillich, 1976:70-74.

13 Considering the shortcomings of the representational truth Mark C. Taylor wrote: “The current crisis of confidence is the result of (...) a profound crisis of representation that is endemic to modern and postmodern society and culture. For the past two centuries, the line separating appearance and reality, truth and illusion, the material and the immaterial, the real and the virtual has been gradually eroding. (...) Postmodern religion, art, architecture, and philosophy are, in large measure, the cultural articulation of a crisis of confidence created by the crisis of representation”. M. C. Taylor, 2004:1.

results are not inquiry-independent.¹⁴ This does not have to mean that all is relative, it only means that the results are inquiry-dependent, no more or no less. The one-to-one fit is not all-inclusive; modern natural science gives only one perspective on the structure and nature of the world. Views of life, life-philosophies and world-views cannot be built only on science if we are to avoid reductionism.

In representation *Woman at the window* is “just” a painting, but by following the lead of the painting, by going beyond the representation, the differential elements come in view and art reaches the status of scientific knowledge, a new field opens itself up for science, perhaps a new kind of science. This new science no longer operates within the frames of the subject/object distinction and the binary logic (the logic of representation) internal to that distinction. “The work of art leaves the domain of representation in order to become ‘experience’, transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible.”¹⁵ Here science makes use of differential knowledge (the science of the sensible, based on that what one senses). The painting is a representation; the sensed is the differential, that what cannot be represented. Science of the sensible opens up the space that cannot be represented and does not have to be represented. Friedrich’s *Woman at the window* is a representation, but there is also the sense of nature and of nature’s light that only can be felt, sensed by the spectator. That what modern science and also modern learning many times lack is sensitivity and receptivity; art and new science are means of turning to senses. Art is to open up the senses and it is to make sense, not only in the representational sense, but also in the *performative* and in the *expressive* sense. Both performance and expression go beyond representation.¹⁶ Expressionism both in art and in philosophy transcends the usual subject/object distinction.¹⁷ Expressiveness is not to be found within the frames of that distinction: I have

14 Thomas S. Kuhn makes this point while claiming that science is paradigm-determined: “Something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself. What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see.” Kuhn, 1970:113.

15 Deleuze, 1994:56.

16 Fischer-Lichte, 2008.

17 “It is no longer a matter of finite understanding deducing properties singly, reflecting on its object and explicating it by relating it to other objects. It is now the object that expresses itself, the thing itself that explicates itself.” Deleuze, 2005:22. “In seeking for expressiveness in its creations it (art as cultural self-creation) is confronted by the question whether the arts express the subject or the object. (...) Thus to the question of whether the arts express the subject or the object, we must give the obvious answer: neither the one nor the other. Subject and object must be united in a theonomous creation of the Spiritual Presence through the aesthetic function.” Tillich, 1976:256f.

to have a sense for the infinity of nature for art to open that “sense” up (transcendental empiricism). Concepts and representations might be said to operate within the referential field (the fit between the representation/the concept and the represented/the referendum of the concept), but art, philosophy, and the science of the sensible go beyond that field to expressive and performative domains.

Activity of thinking and receptivity interact. When this interaction passes the threshold of consciousness, the other of abstract thought, otherness, comes in view. This is one of the first steps in coming into view of human subjectivity. There is now *both* the activity of thought *and* the sensed receptivity; receptivity and activity in interaction with each other. Activity and passivity, then, are integral to each other and cannot be put apart from each other as Descartes, Kant and the dominant rational model of mind try to legitimize. Thinking is not divorced from feeling and sensing, the two are integral to each other: “Not thinking thought, not thought which has itself alone as its subject and object, as its own organ and function, but rather seeing-thought, hearing-and-feeling thought. Or conversely, thinking-seeing, thinking-feeling.”¹⁸ This kind of integral or differential thinking, where feeling or sensing is an essential part of thinking, gives a totally new approach in learning, compared with the kind of thinking that has *cogito* and the informative learning as its necessary and sufficient conditions.

I make a difference between two levels: *the representational level* and *the dimension of structural possibilities*. The latter dimension is the level of shaping and structuring, and it is prior to the representational level. Representations are atomistic, partial, fragmented, referential, analytical, they are kept up by the power of the logic of exclusion (either/or). Structures are holistic, synthetic, binding, bonding, grounding, heterogeneous, they are linked by the differential logic (both/and). The dimension of structural possibilities comes to expression at the representational level, for example in the understanding of the self/world relationship, but it is not wholly congruent with representations. The dimension of structural possibilities underlies and precedes the higher cognitive processes like language-forming and representation; representations are symptoms upon a surface. In general, the conscious thinking is a symptom for underlying processes: personal, social, physical, cultural/political processes coming to expression in and through the

18 Feuerbach quoted by Marx W. Wartofsky from Bolin-Jodl's edition of Feuerbach's *Collected works*, volume X, 320. Wartofsky, 1977:430.

individual.¹⁹ To think is to catch hold of these underlying processes. In the dimension of structural possibilities chaos and the cerebral plane interact and come together, we might say that this coming together is the birth-place of thought, language and first-consciousness. Art gives us access to those first “happenings” and events, and what is more, art is able to shape the first happenings in a new way; art is able to yield new worlds. Integral learning deals with the dimension of structural possibilities, informative learning deals with representations only.

The dimension of structural possibilities and the level of representations might be said to be the main elements in differential holism. The mind as a whole has both the analytical and the synthetic, constructing capacities; it is active, it is receptive and it is, above all self-active, expressive in itself. Performance and expression have their values in themselves; they create value. The wholes or thought-forms are construed and created at the synthetic level. Art and philosophy meet in creation and in construction, in meaning-creation, in reality-making, and in meaningful wholes. In every situation of life we try to make sense and to create meaning. Meaning-making, however, is not only a subjective act; it is also a wider, participatory act. Creative meaning-making is one of the basic impulses of life itself and this impulse comes through all levels of life in things, in animals, in humans; meaning-making and reality-making are congruent with each other. The meaning-making of the universal life is not independent of human action, of activity and creativity in art, philosophy, and science: “there is no truth which is not also “done,” (...) and there is no aesthetic expression which is not also a reality. Beyond this, culture as spiritual creativity becomes, at the same time, Spiritual creativity”.²⁰ For many people Bob Marley’s spiritual creativity has become Spiritual creativity. In the old universalistic science “truth” was a quality of propositions: only propositions could be true or false. But propositions are a form of representation and construction and the new science goes beyond representations as it is clear that propositions presuppose long chains of production; propositional-ism is superficial. In new science truth becomes a matter of reality-making. The impulses precede the structural dimension, at the same time as they come through the structural first-elements. Art deals with desire-impulses and the first-forms.

19 “Thought thinks only on the basis of an unconscious, and thinks the unconscious in the transcendent exercise.” Deleuze, 1994:199.

20 Tillich, 1976:403. Culture was defined by Tillich “as the self-creativity of life under the dimension of the spirit, and it was divided in *theoria*, in which reality is received, and *praxis*, in which reality is shaped”. Tillich, 1976:402f. The division between theory and praxis is transcended or “looped” in the meaning-fulfillment.

Representation; breaking the tyranny of the same

Levinas' critical point is that the Western philosophical tradition and the representational way of thinking, which is a central part of the tradition, is domination over the other. "We have defined representation as a determination of the other by the same, without the same being determined by the other."²¹ In Levinas' view the subject, while moving within the domain of representations and making use of mental images in explaining the other and the world, is bound to domination. My representation of the other is not touched by the self-expression and self-understanding of the other; I move in the sameness of my own representations and images, while moving on the representational level. Things and humans, in Levinas' view, are "known" according themselves and out of themselves, out of their self-expression, not out of some universal, common explanation and representation.²² It might be thought that the representational mode comes to naught "only" in Ethics, but it has a limited and limiting significance even in relation to nature and in natural science, as we have seen. My representation of the natural world is not necessarily touched by the self-expression of nature or by natural relations, but it is characterized by objectified relations and represented objects. While representing things, both the represented and the representation are dependent upon the activity of construction. When the represented is explained, it is done with the help of one more representation and so ad infinitum. To break the tyranny of representations one has to step out of the circle of representations.

Representation as representation keeps receptivity out of sight. The same is, simply, the image-making capacity of the mind, the imagination. Imagination adds one more image to another, in that sense it only moves within the sameness of abstraction and image-making. All representation is in the first place imagination: something is formed in the mind as an image. So is a painting nothing but a representation, an image, if we keep it upon the representational level, but in the totality of the mind it gets other significance. To break the tyranny of representation in art is to open art for action, performance, and expressiveness. To dominate over the other through explanations and representations, through the image of the other, to claim that the other is such and such, is in Levinas' view to kill the other. I let my explanation of the other rule

21 Levinas, 2007:170.

22 "For truth is neither in seeing nor in grasping, which are modes of enjoyment, sensibility, and possession; it is in transcendence, in which absolute exteriority presents itself in expressing itself, in a movement at each instant recovering and deciphering the very sign it emits."

Levinas, 2007:172.

over the other; this is just another form of power over the other and the mastery of otherness. In modern society the explanations of the other and the images of the other are built in the technology of power, which presupposes that humans are turned into objects of knowledge:

One would be concerned with the ‘body politic’, as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.²³

How to move beyond the power over the other in learning? If there is interaction between the individual and the society/the other and if subjectivity is in activity in that interaction, then one possible way of overcoming the power over the other is by learning how subjectivity and subjugation come to play in learning. There are steps to self-activity and to self-determination. By identifying the steps to self-activity and to self-determination a situation of deep-learning might be created. Differential holism goes beyond the domination over the other as it admits the *alterity of the Other*: that the Other is something else than my/our explanations say about him or her. It admits the alterity of things, humans and animals, as it finds pluralism and difference in the matrix of the world.

So it is with plurality and difference. (...) Real difference can be derived only from a being which has a principle of difference in itself. But I posit difference in the original being, because I have originally found difference as a positive reality. Wherever difference is in itself nothing, there also no difference is conceived in the principle of things.²⁴

This differential holism is not what we have found in the dominant models of explanation, education, and learning.

The linear, “rational” explanation, which is a part of the dominant model, emphasis progress and utility, going from A to B, keeping the causes (activity and active agents) and effects (receptivity and the passive agents) apart from each other, but this linear explanation-model

23 Foucault, 1995:28. “The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he or she may find him- or herself, subjects to it his/her body, his/her gestures, his/her behavior, his/her aptitudes, his/her achievements.” Foucault, 1995:304.

24 Feuerbach, 1957:85.

does not seem do justice to that how, for example, economics function nor does it seem do justice to the learning situation. The “old” either/or logic does not give means to analyse learning nor the boom-and-crash economy. A much more fitting logic for economic analysis is the dialectical logic, which allows for disasters and catastrophes, zero-points, new beginnings, jumps, fast flows of cash and no-money-in-sight states. The interaction-model is to be found in economics as well:

Explicitly acknowledging his debt to philosophers like Hegel and Marx, Soros develops an analysis of reflexivity in which agent and system are thoroughly interactive. He distinguishes the passive function in which agents attempt to understand the context of their function from the active function through which their thinking has an impact on the “real” world. (...) Reflexivity is a non-linear relation in which cause and effect are interdependent: the thought and actions of agents influence the operation of the system, which, in turn, influences the thoughts and actions of agents.²⁵

This is to say that economics operate on a higher level than the linear model is able to explicate; modern rationalism, even in economics, falls short of being able to explain the nature of economical processes. In reflexivity there is interaction and a kind of a loop between cause and effect. Reflexivity, then, does not characterize the individual’s relation to the world only, but is the way the interdependent systems and wholes function. Interactional systems, like economics, seem to be reflexive-relational systems run by the feedback loops.

Politics and pedagogy

In the dominant model art, philosophy, and science were separated from each other, in most of the schools and universities they have been autonomous topics. In Sweden pedagogy and philosophy were separated from each other and they received their respective institutional affiliations in the 1920’s. Philosophy became theoretical, art and pedagogy practical; a binary opposition between the theoretical and the practical, between thinking and teaching became the sense-making model. This was a common trend in Western culture and it was a part of a wider

25 M. C. Taylor, 2004:284f.

model and way of thinking.²⁶ The binary opposition was clutched with a hierarchy: the theoretical interests are above the practical interests; theory is the important thing! Today the relationship between art, philosophy, and science, theory and practice, thinking and emotion, activity and passivity, are no longer interpreted in dualistic either/or terms. There is no binary opposition between them nor is there any hierarchy between them, but they are seen as parts of wider constellations and thought-forms. It is here that art becomes important for education, as art deals with the basic and elemental levels of shaping, construction and ordering the mind/world totality, in short, art is congruent with mind-maps and mind-settings and with the very activity of the mind; art deals with meaning-making. It is within this area that art is also congruent to philosophy, as philosophy primarily deals with the dimension of structural possibilities. Art is integral to other disciplines and it is integral to mind-settings, as these always are formed in one way or another. Art transcends the subject/object distinction; it is a way to explicate and to build up the mind/world totality. Art reaches into the very foundation of the world, in the self/world relationship, into those values that are inherent in the relationship and it reaches into the politics – art is political by its nature – of shaping the world and the soul.

A teacher's daily work is also political work: rather than denying this it should be admitted that schools and institutions are permeated with politics and power through and through. Earlier it was thought that education should be neutral, objective; today there is the insight that values are inherent to education, the question is *what values educators should promote* and which values they are to fight for. This is not to say that someone dictates the values, but it is to say that both the explicit and the implicit values and value-orientations should be brought to light. Thinking-feeling gives value-awareness. Even the claim that teaching should be value-neutral is a value-claim, as neutrality as such is a value. Value-awareness, which we have in our thinking-feeling, characterise the work of the educator today. There is

the stubborn myth that education can be fully objective, neutral, apolitical. As common as the myth of objective journalism is the myth that education does not have a political agenda. (...) On this view education does not seek

26 "The dominant culture tries to 'fix' the meaning of signs, symbols, and representations to provide a 'common' world-view." Trifonas, 2003:116. Cited from Peter McLaren, 1998, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundation of Education*. New York, 183.

to change individuals. To the contrary, we believe that education explicitly and implicitly, through overt as well hidden curriculum, shapes and changes individuals to adapt them to dominant cultural values, to the work force needs – in short, that education fundamentally shapes and changes every student.²⁷

Besides, it becomes more and more clear that objectivity in the sense that modernity defines it is a subjective construction.²⁸ The best way to secure the adaptation of the individual to the dominant culture with its pre-established values and understanding power, to implement the dominating structures in the mind, is to give them informative teaching only! In such a teaching context it is the mentality of those in power (schoolmaster-mentality) that shapes and construes the learning situation, not the needs of the participants, of teachers, students and pupils, not to talk about the needs of those “others” who also work in schools. People working in school- and university-restaurants, kitchens, taking care of the offices and classrooms usually know more about the students and about the institution than those who teach and are in charge! Integral learning deals with the mentality of the participants. Interaction is to deal with change and it is to welcome the Other and the world he or she comes with:

In order to grasp the other as such, we were right to insist upon special conditions of experience, however artificial – namely, the moment at which the expressed has [for us] no existence apart from that which expresses it; the Other as *the expression of a possible world*.²⁹

That how we understand and interpret things as wholes comes to expression for example in that how the class-room is construed; how the class-room situation is “performed”; in the values and emotions of those who share the situation; in the mind-maps and mind-settings, that determine the learning situation. Learning is a highly emotional enterprise: “In order to name, imagine and materialize a better world, we need an ac-

27 Trifonas, 2003:114f.

28 “The inscription of the subject within this tissue of relations results in the collapse of the absolute opposition between interiority and exteriority. (...) It is necessary to admit that objectivity is, in an important sense subjective and that subjectivity in undeniably objective. The purportedly “private” space of the “individual” subject is always inhabited by complex intersubjective structures of relationship.” M. C. Taylor, 1987:136.

29 Deleuze, 1994:260f.

count of how Western discourses of emotion shape our scholarly work as well as pedagogical recognition of how emotions shape our classroom interactions.”³⁰ Among the presuppositions of deep-learning is the whole situation of teaching-interaction (the culture) between individuals, organisation/structure/society, simply, the prevailing culture or cultures. The basic meaning of the word ‘culture’ is cultivation and *cultus*, culture, originally, is the soil upon which the growth and harvest come to pass (and even decay). Today’s Western culture, as we know it, is in its main mechanistic, quantitative culture, which is based on materialistic utility, and the same can be said of the food- and learning-industry. The form (its situational *morphé* or gestalt) of producing food changed with the industrial food-production.³¹ A kind of culture permeates the Western food-industry and the eating, perhaps even digestion, and, much in the same way, the mainstream culture with its way of interpreting power permeates the learning situation.

Given the perspective of interaction between the individual and society, politics and pedagogy intertwine. As educational institutions are political institutions they are permeated by power politics through and through and they express some understanding of the self/world relationship.

Toward a new model of learning

Colin M. Turbayne equates informative teaching with passive reading in his reader/writer model, that is, the informed takes over the information handed by the informant in a one-way communication, the new kind of learning he equates with the active mind.³² In Colin M. Turbayne’s view informative learning builds on the passive mind, not on the active mind. The Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian tradition (the three philosophers who have been extremely influential in shaping the Western modern culture and its pedagogical strategies) is built on the passive mind, and not on the active mind. The function of the active mind, on the other hand, is to activate the passive mind to think.³³ It is, then, not the outer impressions that activate the mind, nor the activity of the school-master,

30 Boler, 1999:xv.

31 Martin Heidegger points at the connotation of the shaping form (*morphé*) as being a situational form, a gestalt. The allusion to food-industry is from Heidegger, 1987:89. ‘Form’ or ‘gestalt’ is congruent with ‘constellation’, ‘thought-form’, and ‘mind-setting’.

32 Turbayne, 1993.

33 Turbayne, 1993:58f.

but the mind is active in itself; the activity caused by the impressions is a secondary dimension of the mind. If the active mind activates the passive mind to think, then the mind in itself is integral: receptivity or passivity and activity interact in the mind and in the mind/world relationship. If learning is solely based on transmission, then only the passive, receptive, reactive capacity of the mind is preferred at the cost of the active capacities. In informative teaching human subjectivity and activity do not have to come in view.

The difference of the new comes out in relation to the old. Immanuel Kant might be taken as a representative of the old model of teaching, he wrote the following: “For example, when people send children to school for the first time, the main purpose is not that they should learn something, but it is that they get use to sit still and carefully comply to that what is instructed and provided to them”.³⁴ I think that Kant’s pedagogy is a symptom, an expression of *his* understanding of the nature of learning, and prior to that, of his understanding of the human to human encounter and the self/world relationship. Focusing on the dimension of structural possibilities, on that how the self/world relationship is interpreted for example in Kant, helps us to understand why he considered pedagogy as being congruent with order and discipline. Kant’s was an interpretative setting, a mind-mapping and a mind-setting operating with binary oppositions (the oppositions between the *noumenal* and the phenomenal, the rational and the empirical, the theoretical and the practical). The mind-setting emphasising binary oppositions, seems to be the *modus operandi* in modernity. How did the binary oppositions come into being? To be able to move beyond the binary mind-set the genealogy of that mind-set is to be outlined; to learn is both to trace and to draw maps.

The Western culture, and with it education, has emphasised the binary logical and analytical capacities, it has been ruled by binary logics and oppositions. The synthesis and the ability for integral wholeness has been the other, hidden side of the dominant model of learning.

Brain-physiologists claim that today’s educational system actively promotes the logical and the analytical capacity, but not that capacity which: we possess physiologically; deals with the artistic; includes the possibility to see wholeness and synthesis; able us to think beyond the given frames; integrates emotional values and experiences in creating knowledge.³⁵

34 Kant, 2008:8.

35 Nobel, 2001:141.

In the traditional model one side of the binary oppositions is preferred at the cost of wholeness, interaction, and integration: to learn is to repeat information. In an integral model the difference between the surface- and the deep-learning is emphasised. The surface-learning and -teaching is congruent with the transmission of information, of giving information and facts about the world at the representational level (the informative learning). It is based on what Freire called “banking education”, people “passively accept the knowledge they are handed”.³⁶ The informative teaching makes use of propositions, representations and truth-claims; the pupils and the students, in exams, are supposed to be able to repeat the correct claims. It is considered that valves of the mind are empty, waiting for the knowledge to come from the outside in and to fill up those valves; the banking world does not ask for your personal opinion. It is obvious that this is passive learning which does not emphasise the self-activity of the learner nor does it aim to create room for self-determination and self-learning. Learning, then, does not mean that the teacher is to hand over his or her understanding of the world to the students, but learning is to make room for students and teachers to shape their understanding of the world as whole persons; each and every person we meet has a world and the understanding of the world along with him or her; people enrich each other. All participants, including teachers, have their understanding of the world and the informative dimensions in that understanding, but one particular understanding of the world should not dominate the learning situation.

In the following I explicate how to work with the dimension of structural possibilities in integral learning. Such learning deals with blocks, elements, coordinates, and first-forms, shortly, with the maps of orientation; to do integral learning is to draw maps. One of the points I would like to emphasise is that self-understanding is many times dependent on the underlying map or mind-setting, on that how individuals understand the self/world relationship and with it the relationship to other human beings, to society, to nature and to God.

The mind-making and mind-mapping enterprise; how and why did things become as they are?

Why do we have the old model of learning? Where did it come from, what is its genealogy, and what are its presuppositions? Who says that

36 Sonia Nieto in Collins, Insley & Soler, 2001:39.

the children are to sit still? I think that answers to these questions are to be searched in the genealogy of that mind-setting that is peculiar to modernity. It is in Descartes that the first traces, the first-forms of that mind-setting were discernible. Kant operated with that mind-setting too and it is still with us as the rational model, but reason is not to be equated with rationality or *ratio*; reason is congruent with the active mind. The active mind is the totality of the mind with its analysing, synthesising (shaping and constructive) and receptive capacities; there is activity as such, the activity of forming, shaping, and meaning-making; there is the reality-making; there is, perhaps, the future objectivity of reason.

Immanuel Kant's definition of art or aesthetics, as an observation of beauty in nature and in the object (painting, building, etc.), is a modern definition. Such a definition presupposes firstly that there is the subject/object distinction between the observer and the object observed and, secondly, that art is a matter of visual perception. In Kant, art becomes a matter of the faculty of seeing, not of sensed construction, nor of action or performance. Only secondary, if we follow Kant's interpretation, art becomes a matter of feeling or emotion, as the object of art arouses pleasant or disgusting feelings. Kant's conception of art presupposes the modern subject or the individual as an observing subject, but *Kant did not analyse the coming into being of this very subject*. The subject/object distinction between the individual (the subject) and the world (the object) presupposes that subjectivity posits itself in relation to the world; the individual gives him- or herself a certain "place" and status in relation to the world; he or she creates the binary frame of self-interpretation.³⁷ The modern subject interprets him- or herself as an autonomous, reflecting, thinking and observing subject. Such a positing or activity, the coming into being of the I, slips away from Kant's interpretative horizon; he did not consider how that very subject had come into being.

In my view it is the act of subjectivity positing itself in relation to the world that lays the ground of the modern mind-map; it gives the basic dual coordinates of the map of modernity. The subject positing itself in relation to the world becomes that of an independent and autonomous subject, the observing subject. In this very act the world becomes an object of knowledge and observation. Knowledge, after the act of positing, becomes congruent with representations, mental images, which

37 Considering subjectivity positing itself, see Feuerbach 1957.

the subject creates in his or her mind about the outer world, about objects. Knowledge, or scientific knowledge and representation, presupposes the subject/object distinction. With the subject/object distinction, given these basic coordinates, the fact/value distinction and other binary oppositions, such as the one between theory and practice, come into being. Facts are about the world out there, values are subjective likings or subjective projections; the theory, always of human making, is above the practical realm. The whole setting or the first-form is of human making.

The subjectivity positing itself is a matter of self-determination, a modern way of self-determination, and deep- or integral learning deals with self-determination and self-understanding. Given the position of the observing self, self-determination is done from the position of reflection. The position of reflection is not necessarily opened for the kind of self-determination congruent with act or activity. This later self-determination might be called *the first degree self-determination*, the former, the one that has reflection as its presupposition, might be called *the second degree self-determination*. Many interpretative steps are needed for the second degree self-determination to come into being: the subject has to posit the position of reflection and observation. The first degree self-determination precedes the second degree self-determination, as it deals with levels, structures, and fields prior to reflection; it deals with the positing. Once the subject has posited itself in relation to the world, the possibility of reflection, and thereby the second degree self-determination is there. Being in the hands of the second degree self-determination and self-interpretation one expresses something like this: "We who are able to control our feelings and passions have reached the higher degree of self-determination than those who are in the hands of their passions!" Those at the stage of the first degree self-determination might in their turn say that: "We make something out of passion, nothing good is done without passion; desire is the human potential!"

In integral learning it is possible to focus on the map-making activity; it is possible to show how changes in the mental maps come to pass in history. The move to modernity could be understood as the process in and through which the map of modernity was in making. Once the map was there, modernity was there, not *vice versa*. It was only when the map of renaissance, based on the Neo-platonic Aristotelian worldview, was passed by during the 17th century that modernity became

“accepted” in the Western culture; the process of incubation had started long before. Integral learning deals with the basic blocks and elements in understanding the world and in understanding the place of humans in history and in the world. Ultimately it deals with human self-determination in the realization of meaning.

The map of modernity as the result of the differentiation of subjectivity

The modern individual is the observing individual. The observing stance or position is, however, a result of the differentiation of subjectivity into the subject and the object. This very process, the construction of the observing subject had been in the making long before Kant and Descartes. It can be traced back to the beginning of the second millennium A.D., reaching its peak in Descartes’ dualism between mind and body. In Descartes the individual becomes a subject and an object to himself: on the one side the immaterial thinking substance, *consciousness* (in Descartes’ view the nature of human being consists of thinking) and on the other the material mechanical substance or the *world*, the human body being a part of the world, which was equated with the mechanical universe. Two blocks (the objective and the subjective block) stand side by side with each other. The Cartesian subject is the one whose aim is to control the world and the body; science, Descartes wrote, “renders ourselves the lords and possessors of nature”.³⁸ Today the disastrous consequences of the Cartesian stance are acknowledged. If you define body in terms of “pure” mechanistic matter, then it easily becomes a commodity to be sold and to be disposed at the will by the master. “The science founded on the Cartesian bifurcation of mind and matter ‘enabled atrocities of unimagined proportions to be administered’ against darker-skinned people by slave owners and armies”.³⁹ One way of understanding the role of Descartes is to see him as the map-maker of modernity: that he sketched the map of modernity and in that sense made modernity possible. The other way is to understand him as a symptom on the surface, as a symbolic sign of the process of the coming into being of the modern subject.

38 Descartes, 1981:49.

39 Trifonas, 2003:24. Cited from V. Deloria, 1997, *Red Earth, White lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. Golden Colo, 6.

The differentiation of subjectivity seems to be a process going on in the dimension of structural possibilities. This very process is one of the themes I discuss with students when dealing with identity, self-understanding, and self-determination. It gives a port of entry into discussing the modern ways of interpreting subjectivity and of making sense of the world. One aspect of deep-learning is to discuss the process leading to the subject/object distinction between the individual and the world. Another aspect is to discuss that what this very process leads to, it: lays the ground of modern forms of self-understanding; legitimises science as representation; makes religion into a personal, subjective concern; turns values into personal likings. One understands activity as the activity of thinking and passivity as the passivity and receptivity of the body; the self-determination follows the binary line. At the starting-point of the binary line we find the devaluation of the body, of the senses and of receptivity.

In the map of modernity there are the two blocks standing side by side, but the map is not complete with that, there is also God as the third coordinate. The map of modernity consists of these three basic coordinates: the subjective block, the objective block, and God. God is put above or beyond the two other coordinates; God is not at the same level with these two. The relationship to God is not in the objective block, there is the world and the world is the object of scientific knowledge but the scientific knowledge does not deal with God; God is an unnecessary hypothesis. The relationship to God is neither in the soul, as the soul by Descartes is defined as a thinking substance. According to Descartes, the idea of infinity in the soul gives a certain indirect, thought relation to God, but no actual relation. The relationship to God, in modernity, becomes that of faith or belief, a personal concern. My point here is that the map gives the “place” for God: God is beyond or above the world and God is beyond the human soul, in transcendence. The interpretative pattern gives religion and faith a certain interpretation, all determined by that how God’s relation to the world is understood in the light of the map. Immanence and transcendence are separated from each like two different worlds; the transcendent is above or beyond immanence. The map of Antiquity placed God or gods at the top of the vertical hierarchy. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and even Dante’s *Divine Comedy* presuppose the vertical hierarchy with the three levels: the heaven, the Earth, and the underground. The vertical hierarchy placed God or gods

above or at the top of the world. The vertical hierarchy was replaced by the horizontal dualism at the dawn of modernity. Horizontal dualism placed God beyond the world and beyond the soul in the unreachable transcendence. Only recently the hegemony of both hierarchy and dualism is questioned and new “locations” of the divine are introduced. Today we do not only operate with the dualistic map, but there are other options as well. God or the infinite gets another location in Paul Tillich and Mary Daly: ‘god’ is a symbol of the depth of being, the infinite is not above or beyond immanence, but is *in* immanence; the infinite is in the finite. Daly and Tillich do not operate with a dualistic map; theirs is a multidimensional map, which is beyond binary oppositions. A multidimensional map places God as the dimension of dimensions, as the dimension of depth present in all dimensions of life: inorganic, organic, historical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual.

Only the inorganic dimension is actualized in the atom, but all the other dimensions are potentially present. Symbolically speaking, one could say that when God created the potentiality of the atom within being and God, God created the potentiality of human beings, and when God created the potentiality of human beings God created the potentiality of the atom – and all other dimensions between them. They are all present in every realm, in part potentially, in part [or in full] actually.⁴⁰

Once the map of modernity is there, the binary oppositions with binary concepts could be put at their “proper” place: subject/object, subjective/objective, private/public, inner/outer, value/fact, opinion/truth (truth as correspondence between the truth-claim and the object or the state of affairs in the world), aesthetics/science, feeling/reason, thinking/passivity, soul/body, and activity/receptivity. My point is that the binary opposition presupposes the map, not the other way around; with the birth of the map, the binary oppositions come into being and the emphasis of one side of the opposition, the either/or logic rules. The map must be there for the binary oppositions and with them the characteristic ways of interpreting power as “power over” to be there: science renders ourselves (we, active subjects) lords over things and nature (over the passive objects), and as history shows, it renders ourselves masters over other people as well. To bypass the understanding of power as “power

40 Tillich, 1976:16.

over”, it is necessary to bypass both the hierarchical and the dualistic thought-structure and the positing enterprises that ground those maps.

I think that it is the dualistic thought-structure that has functioned as the basic presupposition of the informative teaching and learning. The power for self-organisation, self-determination and self-expression is another kind of power than the power over passivity and power over the other (discipline and control). I think it is in this respect we are able to create new politics and new languages of self-understanding and self-determination by focusing on the dimension of structural possibilities and by emphasising the fact that different maps are possible, not just that or those that Western culture holds high. When the dual binary map is passed by, the possibility of the first degree self-determination comes in view.

To talk about the power for self-organisation and self-determination opens for the discussion of self-determination as an act and not just an interpretation. It is obvious that the life of the other is in our hands in the learning situation, that what I say and that how I relate to the other has a tremendous impact, the responsibility is for the total-personality of the other; there is the pre-conscious influence (influence from distance) coming from one person to another. But how about the human-nature encounter and the human-God encounter? Does that how we humans live our lives affect nature and God? Does human self-determination, defined as an act, reach into the ontological recesses of nature and being? Is spiritual creativity able to become Spiritual creativity in the creation of the radically new in the universe? Does human self-determination have ontological effect? There are people who answer ‘Yes’ to those questions and who claim that human action and acts are able to load or to enrich God and in that sense to change God and the ultimate outcome of the universal life.⁴¹ If God is a living God and if change is a “part” of all living things, then change must be a part of the divine life. To take this stance is no ontological hubris, but an admittance of human responsibility. It seems to be the case that we humans affect nature profoundly and through nature we, perhaps, even affect God. As powerful as the means of destruction are, we are able to destroy the whole planet and seem to be on a “good” way of doing just that, just as powerful, and who

41 In history humans are able to create the radically new and this new in its turn is brought into unity with God, thereby the divine life is enriched. “We could speak about the ‘enrichment’ of the divine life through the historical process.” Schüssler & Sturm, 2007:197. Cited from Tillich, 1966, *Systematische Theologie*, Band 3. Stuttgart, 453.

knows, perhaps even more powerful, are the constructive means in the hands of humans. This means that humans are no passive “receivers” in relation to God, but active agents in a living and changing universe with an uncertain outcome both for all the agents and for the universe; the potentials of the universe are not realized or materialized yet. The learning situation might be set up the way that it creates space for the first degree self-determination. In that self-determination there is the spiritual creativity, which might be opened to the Spiritual creativity: the opening up of the world to the radically new, for a new kind of meaning-making and reality-making through art, science (including economics), and philosophy.

Key-words of integral learning

To focus on the map of modernity does not mean a ‘No’ to that map; it is to realize the impact and the importance of the thought-form (in this case the horizontal dualism between the two blocks) as a way of structuring, interpreting and understanding the self/world relationship. The map of orientation in Antiquity was different, it was characterized by a vertical hierarchy between ontological levels (Plotinus’s New-Platonism is an example of this); the image of the world was another. Today the maps differ both from the hierarchical and the horizontal models: they are multidimensional, giving place to pluralism, difference, and diversity. Deep-learning or integral learning deals with the dimension of structural possibilities. Informative teaching, which is based on representations, does not necessarily reach this synthetic/synthesising/mapping level of mind. The art of learning is to give room and space for the Other, to let him or her to make his or her thing, to come through. Perhaps the art of learning is to celebrate togetherness in the alterity of the selves? That space-creation, I think, is possible only after the moral differentiation: that one is able to make a difference between the Other and the image of the other; that the Other is something else than my explanations say about him or her.

Representation is objectification, but there are many kinds of representations. Representations range from naturalistic representations to minimalistic elements of the conceptual and non-conceptual art. Friedrich’s *Woman at the window* comprises the whole scale: the painting is an object on the wall, a representation, but the import opens the

painting for transcendental interpretation, for an interpretation that goes beyond the immediately obvious: the painting opens up a world and offers a world. The spectator makes use of the hermeneutic interpretation. Beyond this, there is “the performative interpretation”, which “transforms the very thing it interprets”.⁴² The words we say, write, perform, the things we make in teaching and learning, they all make a difference. One aim of studies both for the new students and the new lecturers might be “to make a difference in the world, rather than reflecting it”.⁴³ New students and new lectures are integral and they seem to need integral spaces, like art to work with the world; they work for the change of the society and of the universe. The new student and the new teacher need new cultural settings for his or her educational needs. It is not only informative knowledge he or she needs, but we all need means to orientate in the local and global world. There are different world-views, different life-philosophies and religions, each with their specific ways of structuring the world or the self/world relationship, each with their own aesthetics. To learn how human subjectivity functions and differentiates itself we might learn to differentiate between representations and the dimension of structural possibilities or the shaping capacities of the mind. Art, architecture, and aesthetics get a new meaning and interpretation. With the change in the understanding of art, philosophy, and science, the world and human action are understood in a new way.

42 Derrida, 1994:51. Cited in Giroux & Shannon, 1997:7.

43 Giroux & Shannon, 1997:6.

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Contextual, constructivist and complex: systemic perspectives on knowing and wisdom

Ursula Riedel-Pfäfflin

Space and Time

What I know I owe to the space and time of my experience from early childhood until now, and to generations of women and men in past, present and future. Space, landscape, place of living, surrounding, natural environment, social location, cultural and political traditions of my birthplace play as much a role in the way the map of my learning was shaped as do time and events – both in larger history, and in the family and societal system around me.

Just a few days ago, I participated in the yearly meeting of sixty people who were born in the same village in the Czech Republic around 1925-45. Their parents belonged to the Bohemian tradition of glass production in the beautiful Jizera Mountains; as children they experienced the abundance of rich forests, the hard working conditions of their parents and relatives, far walking distances to school and work, and long winters with plenty of snow and skiing. They also felt the social differences of working class people and factory owners, men and women, the German, Austrian, Hungarian, Slovenian and Czech, Sinti and Roma populations; they knew about the change of political systems: from the reign of the Austrian-Hungarian empire to the proclamation of the Czechoslovakian Republic, and the 1939 annexation by Hitler and the NSDAP, claiming the area as German Sudetenland.

At the beginning of World War II, most of them were incorporated in Nazi youth groups or military service, learning about the glory and honour of being German; at the end of World War II, most of them experienced the devastation of everything they knew and were familiar with: they had to leave their homes with their parents, grandparents,

babies and other relatives, they were robbed of everything they owned, they had to do extremely hard work in prison camps or to leave their homeland immediately under the worst conditions.

Knowledge and education in contexts of war and peace

One woman was pregnant when Russian and Czech troops marched in. She and other women tried to avoid rape by hiding in the woods. Yet a Czech neighbour watched for their safety. She gave birth to a girl who is now fifty-five, and never saw her father because he was shot. Some of them experienced how people were mistreated and humiliated, and most of them experienced the worst conditions of hunger, anxiety, and loss. Most of them could not finish their primary education in school; some of them managed to get higher education, and became teachers, engineers, managers, professors. Some also had to stay in the after-war circumstances of the communist Czech Republic and only moved to West Germany in the 1960s. Today, as they meet and tell their stories, some still express: I will never forget this time; I still see this place as my home and long for it. Others are glad that they had the opportunity to experience a new era of democracy or socialism, to have access to higher education, to become educators or managers with international work places. Their children and grandchildren have not experienced the existential threats and losses of this generation. Life conditions and circumstances for learning and teaching have changed dramatically in Germany and in Europe. The dichotomy and hostility of former enemies, of East and West, North and South, has changed to diverse ways of connection, cooperation, unification and differentiation. Students and teachers of universities and schools of applied sciences are privileged to move to places of their own choice not only in Europe but also in other continents and cultural diverse traditions. Diversity and the acknowledgement of difference have become one of the leading insights of post modern learning and teaching worlds. The disastrous experience of the destructive results of nationalistic, dualistic, monolithic and fascist worldviews in modern Western and Eastern Europe became the starting point for new ways of knowing in the 20th and 21st centuries.

I am telling these stories and reflections because in research in more-generational family work it has become obvious that today's generations of students and pupils are not only influenced by the context of

their own upbringing, the experiences and life patterns of their parents but mainly by the value system, the life experiences and the patterns of their grandparents and their great-grandparents. Untold and unresolved traumata and conflicts of two to three generations before have an impact on the generations of today and tomorrow, and are also relevant for the way pupils and students are able to learn, to clarify their own goals and to create good relationships in private and professional systems. The present resurgence of Nazi-ideology and right-winged thinking and acting in many groups of young people throughout Europe may have links to unresolved experiences of the history of two world wars, racism, and nationalist ideology which is still represented by some grandparents and their systems to present generations.¹

As a child of the generation whose parents participated in two world wars, I experienced the fading of all securities, the shattering of traditional values, and the construction of new societies in Europe as a starting point for new chances of learning and teaching. As a part of the generation of students in the 1960s and 1970s in Berlin, I experienced both: the unilateral, authoritarian and European centred teaching of Theology, Psychology and Social Sciences in universities, and the experiments of base democracy and creative learning and teaching in new projects for children, youth, women, and students of different cultural background. Today I am very thankful that I became a wanderer in the diverse worlds of living, caring, knowing, and wisdom traditions. I worked as a minister, pastoral counsellor, professor, and family therapy supervisor in several places of the world. Also in these diverse countries I encountered the impact of historical developments such as colonialism and the unresolved traumata and power problems of present generations of students - especially from continents like Africa and Asia.² The following research indicates once more the impact and importance of context for learning and knowledge.

Young minds and developing brains; the importance of safety for learning and education

In 2009 Charles and Kasia Waldegrave from the Family Centre Lower Hutt in New Zealand published a study on the development of brains

1 A parallel was found while one student interviewed several young men and evaluated their life-stories in regard to World Wars I and II and their grandparents in Saxony, Germany.

2 See Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka & Campbell, 2003.

and minds in children in which they provide “a critical overview of recent research into how minds and brains in young children develop, with some of its implications for families in New Zealand”.³ Both authors emphasize the importance of “pleasurable and loving experience for the maturing orbitofrontal cortex and the development of the social brain and emotional intelligence, as children learn to regulate their emotions and engage in increasingly complex interactions”.⁴ The development of two areas of knowledge has led to a new validation of the importance of pre-school years:

- It is crucial to notice the importance of interactions between genetic endowment and experience in the development of a child’s mind and brain, and the different impact of this development by care giving that provides safety and reinforcement versus neglect or violence, leading to traumatisation.
- It is critical that parents and educators mediate the interaction of the child with the environment, whether for good or for ill. It is contended that trauma in children leads to delayed or abnormal mind and brain development, which results in impaired intellectual, emotional and social functioning, whereas the active and loving engagement of the caregiver in the child’s exploration of their environment will assist their development, even if earlier growth was damaged.⁵

Waldegrave and Waldegrave evaluate a growing number of longitudinal evaluative research studies. They show that early childhood education and parent programmes can improve maturity for schooling substantially, can enhance parenting behaviour and also enhance the chance of productivity and economic success in adult life. Shonkoff and Phillips conclude in their studies on childhood and neuronal development that:

all children are wired for feelings and ready to learn. Early environments matter and nurturing relationships are essential. Society is changing and the needs of young children are not in some cases being addressed. Interactions among early childhood science and policy are problematic and demand re-thinking.⁶

3 Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009:5.

4 Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009:5.

5 Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009:5.

6 Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000:4.

Brain development is happening much earlier than our educational systems respond to, and many circumstances in the change of industrialized societies put constraints on parents of young children so that their capacities of learning are not enhanced: the amount of work, lack of work-life balance; continuing levels of economic hardship; increasing cultural diversity and persistence of racial and ethnic disparities; growing numbers of children spending large amounts of time in childcare of variable quality; the high levels of serious family problems and adverse community conditions – including abusive and neglectful care which are damaging because of the releasing of stress hormones in children. “By contrast, supportive and nurturing homes and other care giving environments protect children from this damage (...) and the ‘normal’ environment is naturally rich for most children.”⁷ With Nobel Prize winner James Heckman, Waldegrave and Waldegrave argue that there is evidence that upbringing brings learning and early investment, not only “cognitive” investment, in processes of learning is effective.

Why is this research relevant for higher education and university settings? Children who are impaired already in the first weeks, months or years of their lives by under- or overstimulation of their brains, by traumatisation and stress will have a much smaller chance to develop the social, intellectual and psychological skills necessary for complex learning and study processes, and the interactive skills required in today’s complexity of global development. Studies in Germany show that young women and men who come from families with academically or economically independent background or societal groups in which learning, education, and interactive competences are emphasized, have the best access to and the highest success rates in German universities. Likewise, studies in “Women’s Ways of Knowing” in the US emphasized that women who have experienced parenting by mothers and fathers with high verbal skills and professional interactive abilities succeed not only in objective and subjective learning, but also in their own constructive knowing.⁸

In School of Applied Sciences in Social Work, Science of Care and Pedagogy in Dresden, where I teach, we run a research program on adults who cannot read nor write, corresponding to a growing number of persons who cannot cope with the demands of a world directed by

7 Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009:18.

8 Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986.

complex administrative laws, mass communication and computers. We also offer a special bachelor's and master's program on early childhood education and constructivist concepts of learning.

Paradigm shift in science and teaching – systems theory, constructivist and narrative approach

Systemic thinking

Systemic thinking was developed at the beginning of the 20th century in diverse areas of science, promoting a differentiation to linear cause-effect models of natural sciences. Systemic thinking has led to a change of paradigm in scientific and practical work. Classical European philosophy and science was centred on either-or models of thinking.⁹ This was reinforced in the era of enlightenment and the development of natural sciences which separated the reflective power of human subjects from the object of nature which humans had to dominate (Francis Bacon). During the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, dualistic models were enlarged. Systemic thinking was developed as an alternative, which assumes that diverse and contradictory realities are mutually dependent on each other, and can only be understood in interconnection with each other. In systemic thinking one might see a re-discovery of very old traditions in human spirituality, like Taoism or pre-biblical wisdom writings, which express that all is connected to everything and influenced by everything; opposites are intertwined and belong together. Without depth, there is no height, and without recess no progress. Life is learning, and the goal of learning is unfolding in the never ending processes of becoming and transformation. Systemic thinking is about connecting the dots or making the connections between and within events and experiences.

Systemic thinking is a way of talking about multipersonal and reciprocal influences within certain contexts and making connections between our social location, immediate life situation, and the wider world of which we are part. We may ask, when people from different cultures and systems of meaning meet what happens to their beliefs and patterns of meaning making? (...) Systemic thinking can enable us to see the underlying patterns that connect one story with another when people from different cultures and systems of

9 See the article by Jari Ristiniemi in this book.

meaning meet. Systemic thinking can enable the discernment of a broader pattern of meaning. It involves recognition of a reciprocal relationship between inner self and public self, social and cultural patterns, social worlds, past obligations, traditions and meaning that continue to emerge from our ongoing interactions.¹⁰

Systemic thinking is different from causal and linear thinking in that it opens a multitude of perspectives and makes connections instead of following the pattern of an either-or, right-or-wrong paradigm.

In later theories, living systems are seen as processes of communication: parts interacting in ways that result in qualitative processes different from the sum of the parts. When we work with living systems we deal with relations of mutual influence and inter-connected communication. Systems develop their own autopoietic ways of functioning, patterns which are recursive. In processes with smaller and larger systems, we work with the description of patterns which influence each other in circular and recursive ways. Meaning is constructed in regard to context and patterns of behaviour, of feelings, thinking and believing. Behaviour is influenced not only by the behaviour of interacting partners but also by the meaning which is given to any event: the construction of reality by oneself in diverse contexts. This approach to systemic work is called “constructivist” because it does not assume an objective reality outside our perception which is false or true. Rather, constructivist views presuppose that women and men only perceive what is open to their perception. Humans co-create reality in lieu of the patterns in their brain, and the “*habitus*” of life (Bourdieu) they have learned. Constructivist didactics, which builds upon the systemic theory, argues that reality in human perception – as in the theory of *Gestalt* by Piaget – does not point out an objective entity but reality in regard to a person who – by the act of their perception – constitutes this reality. Systems therefore are understood as the result of a difference that we create between what we perceive and observe. Whereas machines and mechanical tools can be seen as trivial systems, living systems are characterized by their ways of self-reproduction; they are self-reproducing, auto-poietic, they operate out of themselves and create new structures out of themselves in self-referential and recursive ways – like the cells in the human body. In these processes, systems are determined by their actual structures.

10 Smith, Jr. & Riedel-Pfäfflin, 2004:11.

As autonomous, operational closed systems, living systems are also closed in informational ways. From this view, it is an illusion that living beings can be informed, instructed and controlled by the outside. The non-instructibility of living systems is called one of the central insights of systemic theories. Already Galilei knew: “You cannot teach anybody. You can only help them to discover it by themselves”.¹¹ Language and the way we use language play a major role in systemic constructivist work because perception is closely connected to language and the naming of things and processes. We can only name what we perceive of, and our perception is linked to the development of the synapses in our brain and the connections between sensing, feeling, interacting, knowing and speaking. “The map is not the landscape” – one of the famous quotations in systemic learning – represents a symbolic expression for this insight. Like landscapes which are not perceivable in all their detail and diversity, reality cannot be grasped in its complexity by any human being. Humans can only process the small segments of reality they perceive of, and therefore create mind-maps that are specific to their ways of cultural, engendered and traditional perceptions and experience.

Learning as process of self-organisation and self-organisation as process of learning – constructivist didactics

The core thesis in constructivist didactics could be summarized in the sentence: “Let learners develop themselves as didactic teachers”. Therefore one goal of systemic didactics is the constructive opening of learning processes. Teaching is not seen primarily as transport of knowledge but as an arrangement of possibilities to learn, and therefore the context of learning is of importance for the construction of knowledge. The human brain develops from the unstructured complexity of impulses of nerves to realities which ought to be stable and meaning-making. Therefore, construction of reality is never objective but shaped by the mental structure, desires, and expectations of the learner. It is possible to influence these processes but these are called perturbances which are only possible if the learner agrees with and welcomes them. The primary goal of teaching could be to perturb the autopoietic systems of the learners or make them curious by offering differences to their usual patterns of perception and thinking. The learner only grasps what

¹¹ Ferel, 2009:9.

grasps his or her personality, and only those subjects grasp a person which resonate with them, move or shake them in their learning context. Therefore freedom is the first presupposition of learning, and complexity or diversity of the situation of learning the second. Complexity means the totality of interaction between the elements of a system. The more complex the surrounding of learning, the richer and more stimulating the connections which a learner can decide to build in order to educate themselves. Not conformity and oneness are asked for but multiplicity and divergence, in order to lead the vivid spirit of the learner to her- or himself. One goal would be to challenge the learner not for blind loss of energy but for a challenge to deal meaningfully with situations of life. The process of this kind of learning asks for didactic materials and methods which speak not only to the intellect of women and men but also include their minds, hearts and hands. Thus, learning means the ongoing re-structuring, modification, complexifying and invention of new models of explanation, and therefore is not so much oriented towards results but stays process-oriented.

Narrative agency

Abstract language may be appropriate for causal linear thinking. Yet for contextual perceptions to be expressed it seems more adequate to use a language of narration. In the process of narrating, listening and telling the story another time, we realize that we deal with an exchange of different and diverse perceptions and not of true or false facts. Therefore, in recent years narrative approaches have gained in value in the systemic work of therapy and counselling as well as in the scientific work of sociology, psychology, theology, and pedagogy – especially in biographical research. Narrative agency is the recognition that we are story makers and story tellers who co-create meaning, make decisions and are moral agents who shape and modify the world through on-going activity. Narrative agency becomes a major role in systemic models because if we assume that reality is not out there right or wrong but we co-construct reality by our own views, patterns of perceiving, by our beliefs and projections, then the most adequate way of talking is narration, story, and not the once and for all truth sentence. Narration expresses the contextual truth of our views and experiences, and narrative agency is the unique possibility of each person to express, share

and communicate their reality within the larger context. “Experience is the fundamental datum of knowledge about reality. Narrative agency assumes that both self and world are woven together”.¹²

Nelle Morton, a North-American theologian, has introduced the beautiful sentence: “We listen each other into existence”. The narrative paradigm assumes that somebody becomes a person by other persons listening to them. These persons have also learned their language by listening to others. Each story is unique and new – even if the same content is narrated. As the breath of each person is unique, also the voice and expression of story telling and the way of listening are new. We tell a new story even when we talk about the same topics, and others hear something different – each and every one. Here lies the special chance to work with narrative models in teaching and training: they offer the possibility for women and men from diverse traditions and realities to be listened to into their specific and unique existence and to become authors of their own history rather than to be estranged and/or imprisoned by dominant knowledge and paradigms.

Especially in the teaching and training of religion, therapy, arts and pedagogy it is important to listen to the history and stories of different cultures and diverse traditions. For a long time, only Western models of research and teaching have been validated as parameters of the state of arts. This is in large part due to the history of colonisation and Western dominated teaching that are, throughout the world, dominated by models of knowledge and science from Europe and the United States of America. Theologically, churches have preached a model of brotherhood and sisterhood in the Lord, with the intention of creating life in community based in mutuality and equality. Yet the language used for God as Almighty, King, Judge over good and evil mirrors a language of dominance similar to political structures within which the realization of mutuality was severely restricted. The prejudiced nationalist European perception of non-industrialised, non Westernised and narrative cultures as “primitive” and “non developed” still permeates academic work in which students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have to adjust to our standards of speaking, reading, writing and doing research in order to complete any academic degree.

In order to understand these historical processes, the work of Michel Foucault has become a major basis of my approach to knowledge. He

12 Smith & Riedel-Pfaefflin, 2004:11.

analyses the way power and knowledge are intertwined and differentiates between *dominant knowledge* which is privileged in societies to establish unilateral power structures, and *subjective knowledge* of persons and groups. Unfortunately, subjective knowledge often is repressed, buried or extinct by dominating traditions, and needs to be uncovered and reconstructed. Fortunately new models of international cooperation have been developed which reconstruct, respect and re-value ways of knowing, describing, expressing and shaping of reality in diverse repressed and dominated traditions. In this spirit of acknowledgement and honouring of diverse traditions Charles Waldegrave, Taimalie Tamasese and Flora Tuhake from the Family Centre Lower Hutt in New Zealand have developed models of training, therapy, and socio-political research in which knowledge of gender, cultural and spiritual traditions are honoured and valued in their own diverse and specific traditions.¹³

Perception of cultural realities and space for stories about stories

When we listen to the narration of others without interruption and immediate interference there will emerge space in which perception will be possible, a perceptiveness that acknowledges variety, and also shows bonding by mindfulness and attention, heedfulness.

Tom Andersen, professor of social psychiatry from Tromsø, Norway, has developed a model for therapy and supervision from his interest in the uniqueness of each person and their story. In this approach, room can be opened for stories and stories about stories so that change can develop. He discovered that people are willing to change most easily when they experience something which is not too usual to their patterns, but also not too unusual to create anxiety. Then they perceive a difference that excites them to move, to experiment with, and to leave familiar patterns, a difference adequately unusual. Since 1974, he has developed work with “reflecting teams” as a space for dialogues which instigates new questions and new perceptions.¹⁴ In his view, change and learning can happen best: where there is free space for exchange of meaning between two or more people; where the individual integrity of all is cared for; where understanding is created as ‘active play of meaning’. Central values of the reflecting team work are: cooperation;

13 Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi et al., 2007.

14 Andersen, 1991.

basic equality of all engaged in a process; democratization of the healing processes; transparency; offering of complexity; conversations that are adequately unusual. This can be called a paradigm shift in helping professions and social sciences: democratization in the understanding of change in social systems and in work with women and men, families and larger systems. Reflecting teams work by using practical constructionism; there is a movement from dialogues of experts about people toward dialogues with people's dialogues. Dialogue between experts and clients or teachers and students remains transparent for and among all involved. Stories about stories about stories arise: the complexity and diversity of life, of different perspectives and possibilities to perceive and act and change are acknowledged and valued. This work is done in second-order cybernetics rather than first-order cybernetics, which means: the professionals work with the person's understandings of the 'thing' (disease, problem, interest, conflict etc.) rather than with the 'thing' and create understanding what the 'thing' is, which is just one of many possible versions of interpretation:

As Maturana says, life is constantly moving. The characteristic of the living is that it shifts all the time; life comes by itself. The moving life exists there, to let come, also with dialogues and the shifting descriptions and explanations they bring. The (shifting) dialogues exist as parts of the moving life. One does not have to make dialogues. Dialogues are already there to let come.¹⁵

Soft and non-intrusive: another path to change, learning and transformation

Giving up isolated dialogues of experts with experts also means that the power of interpretation and naming by experts is dissolved in certain situations. New possibilities arise to de-escalate relational conflicts. The circularity and reflexivity of relations become transparent. The work of teams is interpreted as a process of searching – acknowledging that experts do not have ready ways of healing or understanding. Resources and options are seen and searched for more easily because of the invitation to use a language of openness, speculation and uncertainty rather than statements, negative connotations or judgements. Symptomatic

15 Andersen, 1991:67

behaviour or problems can be regarded with positive connotations from various perspectives. Working with reflecting teams, we take a step forward from “teaching and helping others” to an induction of differences that makes a difference by stirring up the intrinsic resources of a system, and create time and space to become lively and effective.

Learning to learn in systemic ways: models of teaching in higher education

Biographical work in social pedagogy and religion

In my own teaching in the United States and at universities in Germany, I have developed a model in which the construction of knowledge is incited or stimulated by “integral learning” (pp. 43 ff.) and ritual processes: one phase of the seminar time is directed towards intellectual curiosity, one phase is connecting knowledge and thinking to the experience of students, to their own contexts, and a third phase is exercising methods for implementation or construction of their own praxis. All these processes are framed by ritual beginnings and endings of the class time from the arts: music, poems, film-clips, paintings, and narratives which speak to the sensual anchoring of knowledge and connect all aspects of perception and reflection. In these processes, working with reflecting teams has become very important for me. It enables students and teachers to listen to discourses about discourses, stories about stories and therefore gain respect for the complexity of subjects and themes.

In a class on methods of social pedagogy and religion students were invited to listen to the story of a person’s life in a mode of active listening. They also record some of the story; they summarize the life events and bring to class a symbol which fits to the story, their presentation of the person and the story, a life voice excerpt, and their own perceptions. The participants of the seminar listen without interrupting by questions. When the presenter has finished, the listeners are invited to do a reflecting team without the presenter, and acknowledge his or her presentation and the life story by reflecting on the following questions: What has impressed me while listening? What did I perceive of while listening? What kind of enlarging questions would I want to raise? After the reflections of 15 to 20 minutes, the presenter can tell the group what he or she picked up while listening, what was interesting, important or new

to them and what they learned from the team. Then a methodological evaluation of the presentation follows, and a closure is done by music, poem or other ways.

Model of therapeutic teaching praxis (*Lehrpraxis*)

Together with two colleagues in social work and the science of nursing, we have developed a seminar in which students can participate in the praxis of systemic therapeutic work so that they learn how to do counselling and working with clients, as well as acting as cooperating members of the process. Once a month, a person or a family can introduce a problem or a family situation by raising a question for the therapists (three professionals are present). After everyone has introduced themselves, one of us starts the process by exploring the theme or goal of the session. Then we stop and do a short reflecting team among ourselves, naming perceptions, raising questions and reflecting the way to proceed. One of us or two then continue the process and work with the client. The students are invited to be part of the process by doing reflecting teams, or by participating in a family sculpture. At the end, all participants express their empathy with the client and what they learned from the situation. We have offered this experiential learning for five years, and it was very rewarding not only for the clients and students, but also for ourselves in our cooperation as colleagues from different scientific backgrounds.

Learning and teaching in diverse cultural traditions

How do we as teachers come to recognize the common cry for nurturing relations in different traditions and cultures? Perhaps answers lie in the way teachers work in diverse professional settings and collaborate with colleagues and students from very different traditions and diverse engendered knowledge. The more the setting varies over time, the more it becomes evident that a starting point for personal and professional relationships is discovered in the intense and empathic listening to one another's life stories. Stories are embedded in specific, yet different social, political, economic, and religious contexts. They can yield rich accounts of human experience. Not without reason, narrative work is of major importance in counselling, supervision and research. It is here

that common threads and unique differences become visible. One is better able to understand other people's (as well as one's own) way of living and working when stories from diverse contexts are shared. If we do not know and understand a person's preferred way of communicating, and where his or her special vulnerabilities and strengths are located, patience can grow thin. Then it is hard to develop and sustain beneficial cooperation over time. When we listen to one another's stories about family background and experiences of suffering within the context of social history, the obvious differences are made clear. But so are the common threads that bind people who teach and care for others together.

My African-American colleague Prof. Archie Smith Jr. from Berkeley and I have chosen the symbolical expression "siblings in struggle – siblings by choice"¹⁶ in order to express this vision for another kind of working together and being together as professional colleagues. We wanted to acknowledge the problems we see throughout the world in terms of differences in access to power – for women and men, for people of different colours and from different continents. And we wanted to invite colleagues to intentionally explore new ways of cooperation in which inter-connectedness and responsibility for each other are seen as the ground we walk on – in the midst of all conflicts.

Wisdom and knowing

In the *Wisdom* – one of the books in the Hebraic Bible – wisdom is portrayed as a *Gestalt* who is precious and beautiful. She meets and lets herself be known by those who love her. She lets herself be found by those who search for her. Here the relational aspect of search for wisdom and the finding of wisdom are portrayed. Also Salomon, the king, describes the accepting of his own finality and humanness as the foundation for searching and finding wisdom: because he asked for wisdom and called for her spirit, she came to him and was given to him (*Wisdom*, ch. 7). The knowledge of things is connected to the experience of how the world is made, and how the elements are to be sensed: day and night, the change of the year, the blowing of the wind, how the

16 Smith, Jr. & Riedel-Pfäfflin, 2004:138ff.

See also: Riedel-Pfäfflin, Ursula & Smith Jr., Archie, 'Notes on Diversity and Working Together Across Cultures on Traumatization and Forgiveness: Siblings by Choice'. In *Pastoral Psychology* Vol. 59, Nr. 4, August 2010, 457-470; Riedel-Pfäfflin, Ursula & Strecker, Julia, 1999, *Flügel trotz Allem. Feministische Seelsorge und Beratung. Konzeption. Methoden. Biographien*. Gütersloh.

animals live and act, and how plants and roots are growing. Clearly, knowledge is connected and embedded in nature and cosmic processes, and is itself described in images of process: wisdom is very light, she moves and permeates everything; she stays the same and renews everything constantly.

In the German root of the word, wisdom is connected to *witan*: to see, to know. And the word learning comes from the root *lis* – to walk, to follow a trace. Learning is seen as a process of moving along a path.

In the development of new insights into human knowing and learning, especially women scholars and poets have researched the roots of knowledge and teaching in diverse traditions around the world. Together with publications from colleagues of indigenous people, new interpretations of integral learning arise in western educated research which acknowledge the impact and importance of old wisdom traditions of all regions of the world together with important developments in newest research in brain, physics, biology, sociology, theology and arts.

The new students

What are the traces that women and men from diverse traditions follow today? In a study on trends in German universities – published by “Der Spiegel” the question was raised: Who are the students of today, and what moves them? More than 160,000 young people were interviewed by Spiegel and studiVZ. The result shows six types of students:

- 19 percent were classified as people who look for career achievement and are very self-conscious. They come from homes with high standards of education, engage in many *practica* and use international experience, most of them study BWL (economic engineering) and only 34 percent of them are women. They do want to have family and children, but they do not want to engage in the education of their children; instead they head for high salary and prestige
- 19 percent were classified as “family people” who are connected to their home country or area, study languages or pedagogy; want to have security, a job in the governmental sector or non-profit organisations, like to marry and have children; 79 percent of these are women;

- 17 percent are called “the changers of the world”: they are politically and socially active, have top-exams, study mostly in law and social sciences; they look for nice colleagues, like to work in the public sector or projects, and 52 percent of them are women
- 17 percent are called “the rationalists”: their parents come from lower educational backgrounds, they do not often participate in practical work in foreign countries; they mostly study math, informatics or engineering; for them security and a high salary are important, they look for jobs in economic sectors and want to be insured in social respects; 41 percent of them are women
- 16 percent are “people who create self-fulfilment”: they do not plan in advance but choose their studies by interest; they want to work in flat hierarchies, embrace internationality, and like to create their own ‘start up’ position; 47 percent of them are women
- 12 percent are “ambitious career persons”: their parents have mostly low educational backgrounds; they do not participate *in practica* and international work; they prefer economic engineering, look for a high salary and prestige; family is no topic at the time, they focus on work and career; 44 percent of them are women.

Each group above has their own convictions, world-views, and goals. No group is larger than 20 percent or less than 10 percent; their views of the situation of society are also diverse; some think that the pressure on performance in society is very high, but for example students of medicine do not agree. Students of history look for a state which steers the economy; students of economy, of course, prefer a state which does not interfere with economics. Students of engineering and technical studies think that too many people rely on the government; students of social work and social sciences do not share those views; similarly, there are opposites regarding the question if one should restrain the challenges of work in order to care for family and children; most students of pedagogy are willing to do so – yet students of law and economic engineering prefer to focus on their career. The study comes to the conclusion that there is only one access to evaluate the present student: ask them

for their subject of studies, and you can figure out whom you are talking to and what they want.¹⁷

Context and history matter. The life story of each person and system of origin matter as much as their engendered and cultural knowledge; this was the starting point of my reflections. European students in a post-modern, post-colonial and post-communist era are not so flexible, internationally interested and trans-culturally open as the media and the global net like to make us believe. Values of past eras still permeate unconsciously the life choices and habits of today's educational worlds.

Contextual, constructivist and complex: teaching and learning in the 21st century require an awareness of the impossibility of the human brain to grasp all the differentiations that have shaped the life, the experiences and the knowledge of women and men in eras and areas of existence. Yet, as unique and special each human being is, there are also common threads which connect: the importance of the quality of relations in all processes of learning and knowing. I would like to conclude with a consideration by Jean Paul Sartre which is quoted by Michael Jackson in his book *The Politics of Storytelling*:

As Sartre argued, the conscious projects and intentions that carry us forward into the future are grounded in unconscious dispositions, accumulated habits, and invisible histories that, taken together, define our past. Accordingly, an essay in human understanding requires a progressive-regressive method that both discloses the preconditions that constrain what we may say and do, while recognising that no human action simply and blindly conserves the past; it goes beyond it.¹⁸

17 *Der Spiegel* (41), 2010:44-48.

18 Jackson, 2006:293.

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The new student – individualized and subjectivized?

Olov Dahlin

At the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Gävle we have been quite early in meeting the new demands from students regarding flexibility of study by offering distance courses. Ever since we began providing courses about 15 years ago, we have made use of video conferencing in education, in order that students would be able to participate from a learning centre near their homes around the country. For many years, participation in lectures and seminars was high, although there have always been students who have not had the opportunity to attend campus lectures and seminars, but instead had to study on distance. This category of students has, however, been small.

In recent years more and more students have opted for studying on full distance. Information technology has now made it possible to record video conferences and put them on the web for students to watch them later. We have also deliberately chosen to adapt to suggestions we have received from students and met them in their wish for such flexibility. The result is that fewer students are participating in our teaching in real time. The seats in video conference rooms are yawning empty in Gävle as well as at the learning centres around the country.

My contribution to the topic of “the new student” is precisely the problem I experience in encountering fewer and fewer students in the actual teaching situation. I find it a disharmonic situation which I would like to change. Yes, I can actually feel streaks of futility in this non-meeting. But, perhaps the time has passed when we met and socialised with students in the same room? Perhaps it's all about adapting and enjoying the state of being? Perhaps it is about developing new contexts in which to meet students and finding new meaning? Perhaps my

feelings are what Zygmunt Bauman refers to as a nostalgic reaction to post modernity's penetration into the academic world?¹

To get a material to work with in an attempt to illuminate these issues, I sent out a questionnaire to students on some of our courses on basic level. The questions dealt with what advantages and disadvantages the students experienced with various forms of studying (on-site, video conferences, full distance tuition); the role that the teacher and the other study contexts (fellow students, seminars, discussions, access to physical libraries) have in the learning process; the role of the course literature; how the Internet is used; the understanding of knowledge (intellectual, progressive, quiet, etc.); if there are alternative paths to knowledge; what meaning the studies have (if they are goals in themselves or means to an end); and finally, what the link between the studies and a future profession looks like.

Ten students answered the questionnaire. Of these, six were women and four men. In the following discussion, students have been given other names in order that their anonymity be preserved. The women included in the study are Cecilia (55 years), Julia (48 years), Beatrice (46 years), Georgia (41 years), Nora (37 years) and Tuva (26 years). The men involved are Ivar (56 years), Ragnar (47 years), Karl (43 years) and Urban (21 years). The average age of this group of students is high and is partly consistent with our students in general. Probably there is a connection here to the possibility of studying at distance from home – it is possible to combine studies with work. Many are therefore in employment and study part-time to broaden their skills, or they study just out of interest. Exceptions are the students studying on the teacher education program, the majority of whom are young adults. Tuition differs also as the subject didactics requires students to be in place in Gävle. Among those who took the time to complete the questionnaire, the average age is, as mentioned, fairly high, which allows us – with one exception – to conclude that we are dealing with students whose main purpose is to broaden their skills or who study out of interest. It is on these people's responses that this article is based. I make a qualitative reading of the questionnaire responses and the results are not to be generalised, but the investigation is more to be considered as a case study. In addition, I have used my own experiences and thoughts from teaching and some literature.

1 Bauman, 2001.

Students' perceptions

Several of the students in the survey see both advantages and disadvantages of distance education. A disadvantage is that you cannot participate in discussions in the same way as if you were physically present. One advantage is that you can arrange the studies according to your own schedule. Several of the students work full or part time concurrently with their studies and then it is important to be able to watch the lectures afterwards. Beatrice writes: "I greatly admire that I can govern my own time, otherwise it would have been impossible for me to read the program." Cecilia brings out the economic advantage of avoiding travels and the time she saves. She may, however, feel frustration at not being able to participate in the discussions taking place in the classes. Ivar thinks the recorded lectures are great as you can return to them several times. Julia values mostly studying on site, even if it is a freedom to be able to watch the sessions afterwards "if it would mess up." Nora lacks her class mates and calls for group time dedicated to students communicating with each other. What this communication would look like is not clear.² A few students seem to think that it is almost desirable not having to do with classmates. It "may take a bit of concentration from the studies", as expressed by Tuva. Urban describes that he often follows courses on distance since it is comfortable, even if he lives near the university. At other times this could be due to him not being sufficiently "focused". A further aspect that Ragnar highlights is that distance learning allows for studies in several universities simultaneously. This can be an asset as there may be special skills among teachers in different schools for interested students.

Several students think that if the teacher is knowledgeable in his or her field and is well prepared she or he can inspire, enthuse and motivate students to read literature and discuss the content in seminars. The lectures can make it easier to appreciate the literature as you read it and the teacher can clarify things that you readily do not grasp when reading the literature. Georgia says that she learns more by listening to lectures than by reading the literature. Ragnar, who is familiar with distance learning, is of the opinion that you can study without lectures, but the availability of teachers is good. Through the lectures you get a sense of direction and tips on how the teacher views the subjects.

² The course platform Blackboard gives students the opportunity to communicate with each other, either via email or via the Discussion Forum where you post for others to answer.

Beatrice argues similarly that the teacher is very important for learning since she or he sets the tone or direction of the studies. Tuva expresses that she has missed having the teacher on the spot. Many consider that exchanges with other students in the form of discussions are important. Beatrice lacks discussions, but says that they also take time. Ivar thinks that they can facilitate but that they are not necessary. Urban says that he is doing great without seminars and discussions as they are often perceived as irrelevant and immaterial in relation to the course by him. The same student comments that the library on campus is an asset as he is primarily trying to access information through books rather than through the Internet. Ragnar says that he has not lacked access to physical libraries, but that it might have greater significance than he himself realizes.

The literature is perceived by many as mandatory or, as Ivar says, a framework, beyond which they can then seek additional information through the Internet or other sources. Julia maintains that part of the literature should be firmly given, but that there should be a certain freedom to use other literature also. Karl understands the course literature to be a proposal rather than a requirement. Nora argues that literature provides guidance on what the task is about, but that she has read much more than that and that she thus has been considerably enriched. The literature can be seen as indicative, but Beatrice argues that it need not always mean that it is the best and most readable book on the subject. The teacher should know which literature is relevant, but at higher stages students should also be able to have a voice in the choice of literature, says Cecilia. Ragnar thinks it is a matter of managing time and that it is therefore important that the teacher clearly states what is mandatory. There are different ways to read and learn. You can read for the purpose of giving an account of everything that the literature addresses or for using the knowledge to solve more problem-based assignments on a course. Some students consider academic literature to have a value in itself, but that it partially depends on the subject and if you study for pleasure or for professional training. One point regarding the academic literature is that you read books that you otherwise would not read, says Ragnar. Urban believes that academic literature is rewarding because you get to learn new concepts and that it goes in depth in another way than more popular literature.

A couple of students, Cecilia and Julia, believe that they are not best friends with technology and that they have problems in seeking

information on the Internet. Otherwise, the impression is that many use the Internet frequently in their studies. It could be to get multiple angles on a subject, to search further or if there is something you do not understand. It can also be about seeking facts or searching for specific information that you do not find in the literature, or to provide evidence for something you want to express. Nora believes that literature can sometimes be ancient and that the Internet is more contemporary.

All students seem to think that a combination of intellectual or theoretical and experience-based knowledge is the best. Cecilia says that we for long have had too narrow a view of knowledge as merely theoretical but that knowledge of the hand and body has now also begun to be valued, but that there is still some uncertainty and confusion about what theoretical and practical knowledge really is. Personal experiences that you get through study trips can be rewarding. Similarly, a teacher's personal experiences may be extremely interesting, says Urban. Many subjects are not possible to understand without the experiential dimension, according to Ragnar. One example is the phenomenon of shamanism, which you can read about at the university. You do not, however, get to try the experience of altered states of consciousness which shamanism is all about. Nora emphasises problem-based learning, where the group discusses its way to the objectives and tasks, as a useful form of knowledge acquisition. More dimensions than the theoretical then enter the learning process. Urban, on the other hand, gives an example of how new forms of teaching were introduced during a semester on the teacher education program. "This was the worst I have experienced in all my years in school. We had to do everything from dramatising stories to singing and dancing. I never experienced anything like it before. So I feel comfortable in the traditional form of teaching and do not think it should be amended in any way."

Most students appear to believe that studying at a university or university college is not an outdated form of learning but still has a role to play in communicating knowledge. However, says Ragnar, it is very important that the academic community does not become a separate little world with its own values, but that research and development are carried out in cooperation with the surrounding society. Tuva contends that it would be good if students get different missions or tasks that force them to reach out into the community and get in touch with reality outside the academy. Another point raised is that developed technologies probably will lead to more forms of distance learning.

About half of the students expressed equal importance regarding the studies being both a means to an end and an end in itself. You read out of interest but also to get a job or to develop skills in your job. Many emphasise, though, that the interest to learn new things is primary. It may be about getting new perspectives and being “forced” to read the literature that you would not otherwise make time to read. Cecilia says that the studies when being young were more targeted, having the goal of getting a job. Later in life studies in various forms – as training or for pleasure – has become a lifestyle. For Urban the acquisition of knowledge is the main point, but there have also been courses in the program that he read as a “necessary evil”, as a means to the goal of entering the professional role.

Several students express a sense of purpose and optimism about job prospects or changing direction in their job after their studies, but many also feel hesitant or sceptical about the possibility of finding a job they really want. Both types of feelings are held by both young and middle aged. 46-year-old Beatrice writes in conclusion: “I will certainly get a job, but it is hard to say if it will be the job I want. I do not really know for sure what I want to work with when I have grown up.”

Reflections and discussion

This study shows that the students feel that there are many advantages of studying on distance. This may include eliminating pre-set schedules and that you may organize your time as you want. You do not need to travel to the site of education and you avoid the costs and time involved with travelling. You can watch the lectures when you want or are able to, and you can also watch them several times if you desire. You can streamline your studies and study at several universities simultaneously. You need not be afraid of missing any lectures due to illness or other activities that could come in-between. You also need not be “forced” into social interaction with classmates.³ It is in many respects a rational and convenient way to conduct studies. The only drawback, which most of the students also bring out, is that you cannot have face-to-face discussions and social interaction with classmates. But in terms of the benefits, the choice seems to be easy. You often opt for distance learning as it facilitates your everyday life. But you can also view the changed

3 See the contribution about the “invisible student” by Febe Orést in this volume.

preferences of studying as signs of present times in which you can trace an individualisation and “subjectification” of learning.

From the above, I have an understanding that many students choose to read on full distance. If I scrutinise myself, going 20 years back in time and wonder how I would have acted if the same opportunities had existed when I was a student, I find that I probably would have done exactly the same. I can, for instance, see the attraction of being able to travel around the world and still take courses at universities and university colleges in Sweden. The possibility was not just at hand then. Today the freedom to choose is so much greater – for better or worse.

Today, we are in almost every situation facing new opportunities and new choices. Now it is rather the fact that you cannot make the choice not to choose. Paradoxically, individualisation is a fate, not a choice – you cannot refuse to participate in the “individualisation game”. Individualisation, as Zygmunt Bauman writes, is here to stay.⁴ Individual freedom has become a natural and integral part of today’s young people in the West. Ulrich Beck terms this generation “freedom’s children”, who live in a world which they largely set up themselves, trying out various conditions and limits of life.⁵

Bauman argues that there is a connection between the individual’s emancipation and a non-engagement in relation to the common. The common is perceived to restrict individual freedom and, therefore, one is less interested in that which is understood as “common good”, “good society” or “fair society”.⁶ Citizenship would thereby slowly dissolve. Ulrich Beck seems not to be of quite the same opinion. He also sees personal responsibility, a will to act politically and a willingness to live for others – at the same time as the “freedom’s children” focus on themselves, self-development and their own life path.⁷

That the values in the western world have changed and undergone a “silent revolution”, where materialistic values are replaced by post-materialist, has been shown by Ronald Inglehart through the World Values Survey. The strivings for personal development, for example, gain a higher status when the basic needs have been satisfied.⁸

4 Bauman, 2001:66.

5 Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002.

6 Bauman, 2001:63.

7 Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:159-160.

8 See the website for World Values Survey: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/> There is an article available: http://margaux.grandvinum.se/SebTest/wvs/SebTest/wvs/articles/folder_published/publication_559/files/values_1970-2006.pdf

That many young people may engage in societal and even global solidarity issues is shown by the example of Avaaz (a word meaning “voice” in many languages in Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, according to the organisation’s website).⁹ The purpose of Avaaz is to strengthen democracy by reducing the gap between the world we have and the world people want. Most people want a better protection of the environment, greater respect for human rights, and joint efforts to put an end to poverty, corruption and war. By their actions they want to influence politicians and policy-makers in that direction. You can choose whether to participate with your physical presence at the various actions or simply by joining and influencing by e-mail. The organization is a kind of community of individuals who wish to acquire what Manuel Castells calls “resistance identity”.¹⁰

But if I look at my investigation and to the material I have obtained, I can still perceive a basic notion which in some regards is consistent with Bauman’s description. You choose a form of studying that suits the individual best and the common teaching with face-to-face discussions and seminars will be secondary. Developments in technology have evolved hand in hand with social development and made possible the individual’s emancipation from the common.

A couple of students (the two oldest women in the study group) feel uncertainty in relation to new technologies, for example, to search for information online and to orient themselves on the course platform we use on campus, while many seem to be comfortable with using the Internet in their studies. We are different as individuals, having different resources and experiences. Some have a greater inclination, or openness to assimilate new methods and ideas, while others may feel anxious for the new. Some may perceive news as exciting challenges, while others see difficulties and hesitate when confronting them. If you are crass about it, the latter category is less suited to living in the post modern society we have today, since it is constantly changing and you need to be adaptive in relation to the rules, frameworks and patterns that dissolve and transform.

Perhaps students at colleges and universities are the “winners” in the late modern period. They are people who want to develop and “keep up with time”. They generally have an openness to change and to be

9 <http://www.avaaz.org/en/about.php> Se också: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avaaz>

10 Castells, 2004.

shaped according to the needs and conditions of the labour market. The losers are elsewhere in society, for example those who were made redundant in the aftermath of the recession, or among those who fall by the wayside due to restructuring, deregulation and privatisation. The inability to deal with the present-day situation may, for instance, show itself in the form of sick leave.

In 2006, a government inquiry was carried out into adolescent mental illness in which it is concluded that ill-health among young people is a consequence of individualisation and the difficulty for any individual to manage and view all the options available, which then is understood to contribute to anxiety. Ill-health is more common among young women than young men. Ill-health is partly also related to the exaggerated expectation of life that young people may have since it is now easy to believe that anything is possible. This means that you may experience short-comings in society, despite the fact that we are living in a far more developed welfare state than before. Everything is relative and expectations depend on the frame of references you have.¹¹ Although the present day offers great opportunities for individual self-fulfilment, there are also limits to what we can become and what we can do. Modernity creates not only an infinite number of possibilities, but also differences, exclusions and marginalisation, as Giddens states.¹²

Influenced by what Gregory Bateson suggested already 25 years ago, Bauman argues that late modernity, which has now become the norm, from the point of view of human nature, is pathological and brings about a kind of state which is contrary to human hereditary and congenital conditions.¹³ All the landmarks in our lives seem to be changing. There are several games going on at the same time and the rules of each game change while being played. Significant for the present time is also that individuals are largely left to themselves with their problems: it is a lonely struggle against situations and problems that fall over you. If you happen to live in the most secularised society in the world, as Sweden is sometimes considered to be, a fixed reference point to a spiritual reality is also lost. Is it strange that many Swedes live with a high level of stress and that the number of burn-outs is high?

11 Statens offentliga utredningar SOU (2006:7): <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/06/74/72/ff3f46fd.pdf>

12 Giddens, 1991:14.

13 Bauman, 2001:153.

Two sociology students at the University of Gothenburg, Maria Kaller and Marie Lundgren, write in their degree paper about how some fellow students relate to the increased freedom of choice.¹⁴ An interesting thing is that the students interviewed did not highlight stress and anxiety significantly. One of the interviewees believed, however, that choice is “conditional” which means that there are things that we are not allowed to choose, or that we do not consciously select since each person has different prerequisites. So there are limits on the freedom of choice. Stress and ill health are something that the staff at the student health service and a student priest, who were also interviewed in the investigation, meet in students who come to them. Probably it is the “successful” students who have been interviewed, who found ways to deal with the freedom of choice. Those who have not yet learned to deal with it in the same way end up consulting the student health services and student priests for support.

The German thinker Thomas Ziehe argues that cultural release, along with the increased responsibility of individual decision making, also leads to increased performance demands and performance anxiety. That is one side of the coin. The release may, on the other hand, also be experienced as liberation from tradition and a freedom to shape one’s life at one’s own will. According to Ziehe it is, naturally enough perhaps, young people who are most aware of the cultural release, as they are fully engaged in their identity formation.¹⁵

A middle-aged woman in this study writes, probably with some self-distance and self-irony, that she is not quite certain about what she wants to work with when she has “grown up”. In late modernity it is up to the individual to constitute and assert her- or himself and to shape an identity. The determination of the social status has been replaced by a “binding and obligatory *self*-determination”.¹⁶ Bauman refers to the psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson, who believes that identity may be described as a subjective experience of life-giving unity and continuity. But in a kaleidoscopic world of the late modern time, such an identity is inappropriate. Rather, the effort should be an ongoing, always incomplete and unfinished project of identification. To be “on the way” has

14 Kaller & Lundgren, 2007:31-32.

15 Ziehe, 1999:156. (See Sten Karlsson’s chapter in this volume for a further discussion of Ziehe’s ideas about adolescents.)

16 Bauman, 2001:176.

become the permanent way of life for the now chronically “disembodied” individual.¹⁷

A contemporary sociologist who wishes to discuss individualization further is Alain Touraine. He uses and develops the term subject, rather than the word individual. He believes that every individual needs to develop a personal life-plan to survive the split between globalization on the one hand and particularization on the other. To become a subject you need to be an actor in your life and existence. In a way it seems as if he calls on an asocial and egocentric attitude in which only the personal project is emphasized. But Touraine argues that this is the only possible way to go – to recognize and nurture the personal subject. He wants to come to terms with what he calls “the interpretive tradition”, which puts the individual in different roles, belongings and social groups, hampering and threatening the subject. The gay movement and feminism are examples of events that contributed to raising the subject, says Touraine. Personal freedom and the fulfilment of individual desires are the highest goals of this “subjectivism”. It is only when we have heard our own voice and become who we really are that a social life can begin to be reconstructed. Today, more than ever before, the prerequisites for such a fulfilment of life-projects are at hand. A psychologist would probably call this the individuation? Then social institutions must be built that recognize and guarantee the subject’s liberty. That is, “subjectification” is not really antisocial in nature, but the social must be built correctly from the beginning, based on the subjects.¹⁸

Is this how we should understand “the new student”? Should we encourage and welcome the fact that our students are searching for their own paths even if we teachers may experience being secondary to them and that they do not fully participate in the social study context? Students do not want to conform, as previous generations did, to the group “student”. They want to feel free and flexible to “connect” and participate at their own choice.

At the University Teachers’ Meeting at Stockholm University in November 2009, Elinor Edvardsson Stiwné, Associate Professor of Education at Linköping University, characterized the young generation in the following way. The students are children of their time and are

17 Bauman, 2001:178. Sociologist Anthony Giddens is the originator of the term “disembodied” which refers to the individual freed from the traditional cultural and societal context.

18 See Touraine, 2003 and 2009.

scheduled in their parents' life projects. They have grown up in flexible family constellations in which the child has been at the centre. They are familiar with the Internet and various interactive media. They have had considerable freedom to make choices in life and as a result worry, anxiety and depression may follow. They live here and now, as the future seems unsure and uncertain.

In the book *The Me We Generation – What Business and Politics Must Know About the Next Generation*, the authors Mats Lindgren, Bernhard Lüthi and Thomas Fürth, describe the new generation as follows:

What we see is an evolving world of individuals, with multi-faceted personalities, trying hard to maximize their opportunities. These individuals most value personal relationships and distrust everything and everyone they consider to be superficial. They are crying out for authenticity. They regard technology as simply being about gadgets used to keep their herd (which is huge) together. For them work and consumption are platforms for self-realization where they can meet friends and experiment with their identities.¹⁹

The group of students whose answers I had access to in this study are not generally young and can perhaps not be said to belong to the freedom's children, me-generation, Moklofs (Mobile kids with a lot of friends), Nexters or MeWes as they are also known. Perhaps they do not entirely overlap with what we in this volume call "the new student". The students in my investigation have acquired a new technology that allows them to pursue studies on distance, but might not give full expression to the post-materialist values that can be said to be characteristic of "the new student". Nevertheless, I see that some of the values that are said to characterize the younger generation are also held by the students included in this study.

Madeleine Abrandt-Dahlgren, Professor of Education at Linköping University, stated at the University Teachers' Meeting that today's students want to acquire a kind of learning which includes commitment, participation, interaction and reflection.²⁰ They also want to see role models and representatives of the profession or field of knowledge which students will work in after training are visible and accessible.

19 Lindgren, Lüthi & Fürth, 2005:16.

20 The University Teachers' Meeting took place on November 19th 2009 at Stockholm University. Madeleine Abrandt-Dahlgren spoke on the theme: "Challenges for the professional training - the teaching of skills and abilities".

Associated with this, they want to be able to utilize a form of meta-learning, that is, not only learning about the contents of their future profession, but also about the occupation and role they are going to take on. Students are looking for authenticity and affiliation to reality. Finally, they want to be involved in the forming of curriculum structure. Here, studies have demonstrated that curricula which are thematically arranged support early identity formation the best. Curricula which instead are arranged sequentially or in parallel do not contribute to this in the same way.

It is not certain that the above statements apply to all students. Maybe it depends on the students' backgrounds? Maybe things are different among students at the University of Gävle than the study Abrandt-Dahlgren refers to? My own experience from tuition is that I often miss commitment, participation and interaction among students. Why can this be? Is it that we have not yet received the group "the new student" in any significant way? Is it because our students to a large extent are middle-aged people? We know that many of our students come from environments with less study experience. Perhaps attitudes about engagement, participation and interaction are dragging among our students when compared to a younger generation at the larger universities in big cities?

One example is that, for several years, our section has offered students to apply for scholarships in order to go on field studies in some developing country. Nearly every year we have troubles getting enough applicants. In most cases, those who have applied were not from our region, but instead were students at a university in a large city. The same applies for the exchange program Linnaeus-Palme which involves studying for a semester at the University of Accra, Ghana. During the four years that we have run the program, we had one single candidate for this offer and she did not come from our region. We think that the step for many of our students is large enough to start studying at our university. To travel abroad and be bound to communicating only in English may feel like too much.

Anyway, I think it may be important to absorb the message which Abrandt-Dahlgren provides – it is important that we try to capture the students' commitment and invite them to participation, interaction and reflection. We must try to be inventive, generous as role models and offer authenticity in our courses that can attract our students to participate and mutually exchange with us.

Perhaps it is that our students perceive video conference as an outdated technique, in that it does not provide the full flexibility sought for. You still have to leave home and appear at a location that represents an outpost for the university at a designated time that you do not control yourself. We who use video conferencing might think that these conferences have one major advantage over other social media in which the basis for communication is email or chat. The ability to communicate with participants in various locations by both sound and image we think would be preferable, but among media experienced students the lack of image and sound seem not to mean that they do not “meet” or “talk”.

In an effort to try to catch students in a new way of teaching, I chose the spring of 2010 to change one of our video conference courses to Adobe Connect, the new web-based teaching tool that is the sequel to the previous Marratech. The course in question is a meeting of cultures course in which tuition language is English. My hope with this change of teaching tool was that I would manage to engage some of the students, who would not participate in video conferences in a learning centre due to any of the reasons given initially in the reflections/discussion, to participate in the meetings. One idea was that students who are travelling the world could connect to the course from their personal computer. In this way the meetings would acquire an extra dimension by weaving cultural encounters in to the teaching situation through the experiences students encounter in the different cultural contexts they find themselves.

After a bit staggering start – due to my and the students’ inexperience of the teaching tool – six to eight students are usually connected to our meetings via their computers from a number of places in Sweden but also from New York and New Zealand.²¹ The latter two students happen to be women, and perhaps it is like the authors of the book *The Me We Generation – What Business and Politics Must Know About the Next Generation* writes: “girls seem to be taking the lead in the race for the future, while boys are more easily satisfied, striving for a less stressful life”.²² Two young students have taken the chance and travel

21 In addition a number of students have still chosen to study at full distance, that is, not to participate in the meetings but look at the recorded sessions afterwards.

22 Lindgren, Lüthi & Fürth, 2005:16.

the world in search for authenticity. Compare this with the case of “Lotta”, described by Birgit Lindgren Ödén in her chapter in this book. The quality of the sound and picture in the sessions varies and the number of students who can simultaneously be connected is limited, but on a small course with an international focus this seems to be a functional concept.²³

Through this tool, meetings and exchanges come about that would not otherwise have taken place. For example, it appears at our first meeting that I have already met with one of the students who are online – now from a cafe in New York – when I was on teacher’s exchange in Ghana two years ago! Is this an example of “the new student” - and “the new teacher”? This incident, anyhow, instantly relieved me from my feelings of futility and I felt a bit less alienated.

23 Our partners at the video conference bridge we normally use have (I believe as a reaction to my test with Adobe Connect) come up with the suggestion of letting students try to connect their computers straight to the bridge on a course which I will hold next semester. This will be possible through a new version of the bridge which also allows the sessions to be held in high definition (HD), implying much better image and sound quality.

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Exploring collaborative education – a reflexive perspective on didactics

David Deborg

The purpose of my text is to provide a few examples from my own perspective of who the new students are and of how the university can act in relation to these new students. I base my discussion on interviews with upper-secondary school pupils and university students. In my dual role as teacher at both upper-secondary school and at university I can contribute with a dual perspective on approaches to who the new student is.

The university students that I have talked to are teacher students that I have met both during the seminars on teaching aspects of the study of religion and during their placements when they work as teachers. I have asked them about how they view their studies, what strengths and weaknesses they see in their education, what expectations they had before they began their university studies, and what requirements and needs they have now on their studies and on themselves, having a few years of studying experience. Due to the selection of informants, a major part of my discussion will focus on the teacher education perspective. The reason why I choose to interview upper-secondary school pupils is that they are our future university students and consequently their perspectives can add further dimensions to the discussion of the new student.

The main part of my text will address issues related to how the Swedish higher educational system treats the new student. I want to focus on how universities meet, and could meet, the new students, partly by presenting a didactic model which aims to outline my views on how a developed didactic approach can be used in order to meet the new student. This discussion will also focus on the teacher education perspective, but it is relevant to all undergraduate studies.

The teacher students' perspective

A natural starting point is to discuss this topic by drawing on interviews with some of the teacher students in religious studies who I see in their course work. I have interviewed two teacher students who are about half-way through their study program and one teacher student who is at the end of her program. All students are studying at the University of Gävle, and I call them student A, B, and C, respectively.

Student A says that he chose the teacher training program because he thought that he would like the teaching profession and that his major was an interesting one. After a few years of studying, he is positive about the program and he says that the courses within the general area of the teaching profession are good because students with different majors study together. *"At first I thought it was nonsense, but then the insight that it was useful, particularly for shy students. Common sense on paper."*¹ As to his requirements, his thoughts during the interview are initially about being treated well. Student A uses the university teachers as examples and he says that they have a good knowledge of their discipline and good pedagogical skills but he wants to emphasize the importance of a positive climate between teachers and students. The importance of a good relationship is thus afforded the same weight as the importance of good knowledge. In this context it is also relevant to reflect on his second comment regarding his requirements on the study program. He says that the course work is too easy academically. His line of reasoning seems to be the following: many students have too little previous knowledge and therefore the level has been adapted and the courses have become too easy. The comment *"it could have been more difficult"*, describes his views.² I am interested to know whether the university teachers have adapted the academic level, and if so, do they claim that the students' standards are lower and that the students demand or need easier courses, or is it so that the teachers assume that the students know less than before and that the courses consequently have to be easier? Is student A representative of students in general? These are issues that I find interesting and that need to be discussed further. With regard to the needs that student A himself perceives to have, he says that there are too few classes. *"You get lazy. I need help to structure. Too much freedom can result in too little work. My own ability*

1 Interview with teacher student A 2009-04-29.

2 Interview with teacher student A 2009-04-29.

to take responsibility does not work quite yet.”³ In other words, student A has difficulties in assuming responsibility for his own studies, at the same time as he thinks the studies are too easy. Is this the new student?

Teacher student B has a positive view of his studies, based among other things on the variation between theoretical studies and teaching practice. Still, he wants more teaching practice. The main point in student B’s reasoning regarding demands and developments of the studies is the need of dialogue. In the courses within the field of general education area there are opportunities to discuss with teacher students from various areas of specialization and who are going to teach different age groups. Student B says that there ought to be these opportunities throughout the studies. When I ask him if the students could meet to create their own networks, he says that the university should provide such opportunities. In fact, most of our discussion focuses on networks and the possibility of dialogue. During the interview, student B also makes suggestions of ways in which students, the university and representatives from the profession, in this case teacher students, university teachers and the schools’ teacher educators can create joint meeting points. I will return to this so-called teacher portal below. When we come to the question of what needs student B has we also end up in a discussion on assuming responsibility for one’s studies. Student B thinks that the students do not manage the step from upper-secondary school to university in the same way as students find it difficult to take the step from secondary to upper-secondary school. The higher studies are constantly “freer” than what the student is able to cope with. Student B says “*put us behind the school desks*”⁴, thus describing the needs caused by the large amount of freedom, which is a problem. Just as student A says, student B has a need for structure and continuity.

Student C is coming to the end of her studies to be an upper-secondary teacher in religion and Swedish. She thinks that all the subject area courses have had a high academic standard with some research profile while the courses within the general education area have been somewhat too easy. Student C had very high expectations on the university and she describes herself as extremely curious with a desire “*to bury herself in the topic*”.⁵ What, then, are her requirements on the university?

3 Interview with teacher student A 2009-04-29.

4 Interview with teacher student B 2009-04-29.

5 Interview with teacher student C 2009-05-13.

How can the study program be improved? Student C emphasizes the importance of the pedagogical aspects. She says that didactics must be there to connect academic disciplines to the teaching of school subjects. Issues of teaching methods are not the primary task of teacher education; it would only result in an unreflected transfer of knowledge. Instead, it is the university's task to introduce the didactic questions to the students. Student C also discusses organizational issues. She points out that the university has a considerable responsibility regarding the collaboration between the university and partner schools to make the practice placements work well. She suggests that too few people have an overview of the whole study program, something that ought to be required of everyone. Student C demands "an organization with an overview".⁶ I want to know what needs student C and how the university has managed to satisfy these needs. The answer is that student C has felt a need to form her own studies, for instance by shaping the content of assignments based on general frames. Another aspect that she highlights is that, as a student, it is important not only to take responsibility but also that you understand why you take responsibility. Student C is certain that the student's own sense of responsibility is essential and that the kind of freedom that results from this responsibility creates possibilities instead of limitations.

The Upper Secondary School pupils' perspective

As a teacher in the Swedish upper-secondary school I come into contact with the young people who will soon be the new students at our universities. I want to investigate what experiences these pupils bring with them in their new roles as university students. This is why I have interviewed two upper-secondary school pupils about how they view their future academic studies. What expectations, demands and needs do they have? I justify this selection in that both are final-year pupils and that they aim to study at university level as soon as possible. I call them pupil A and pupil B.

The first thing I notice when I talk to pupil A is that she seems very goal oriented. She says that she has attended a lecture on study

6 Interview with teacher student C 2009-05-13, where student C says that everybody in an organization, particularly in an educational organization, should have a good overview of the content.

technique at Södertörn university and that, for the past two years, she has searched for information and acquainted herself with the various education alternatives. The Internet is her primary and almost exclusive source of information. Her overall aim is that the study program she applies to should be broad and give her several options in the future. She also wants an international profile on her studies. She has not formulated very clearly any demands on the study program, on the university or on the academic teachers. *“The academic teachers are doing their job. They do what they have to do. There is no relationship between teachers and students”*, is her viewpoint.⁷ She argues that the university should not take the individual student into consideration, but that he/she has to take care of him/herself. What is behind such a statement? Is this the picture of the new student on her way to university, or is it perhaps the student herself who has begun her socialization process towards the university she is expecting to encounter?

Pupil B has a clear picture both of her future studies and of her future career. She describes herself as independent and individual but with a desire to adapt. She expects to get a good education through her university studies: *“they should look after you even if you have to take more responsibility yourself”*.⁸ She expects committed teachers and that she will get good guidance and counseling. Her demands on the university are that the teachers should be knowledgeable and focus on the teaching. In addition, she views the practical perspective as equally, or more, important than the theoretical one. She says that practice is relevant on all study programs in order to let the students *“try their wings”*.⁹ The question about her needs leads her back to her thoughts about theory and practice. According to pupil B, the university should prepare students to turn theory into practice, to aid them in the transfer from studies to a professional life. Based on the arguments put forward by pupil B, should the university develop the links between theory and practice in the study programs?

The situation above will be used as a starting point for my main issue: How should the Swedish university act in relation to the new student? Before moving on this issue I would like to point out that the five interviews that I have conducted with teacher students and upper-secondary

7 Interview with pupil A 2009-04-30.

8 Interview with pupil B 2009-05-19.

9 Interview with pupil B 2009-05-19.

pupils partly present a different picture compared to those discussed in other texts in this volume. In my material there is no “Lotta”, who is described in the text by Birgit Lindgren Ödén as a new postmodern student using the whole world as her university; nor is there an “invisible” student as described by Febe Orést. Still these five people are part of the current and future cohort of students at our universities. All five have gone through a decentralized Swedish upper-secondary school system and they have been shaped by this. They are also children of their time, just as “Lotta”, although they do not seem to fit into the description of the postmodern phenomenon which Sten O Karlsson, with references to Baudrillard, discusses in his contribution to this volume. Could it be that the three teacher students that I have talked to have a fairly clear picture of what the future teaching profession will entail? They discuss in this way because they are studying for a particular profession. Could it even be that teacher students are generally different from students on other study programs?

The challenges of meeting the modern student

What is required from the university in order to meet the new student? What pedagogical challenges are the teachers facing? Should we meet the new students actively or passively, with the same means as before or with developed methods and revised content? Maybe it is the case that the Swedish universities have not been able to utilize the assets of the new students, but instead have regarded the changing situation as a problem to be solved. One solution that has been used for some time is to offer basic foundation or introductory courses before beginning the regular courses in order to give all students the necessary knowledge to pass the course. Mathematics is one example and the grammar courses in Swedish are other instances. The University of Gävle introduced a general course in study technique in the autumn of 2009, which is an indication of a more comprehensive situation.¹⁰ This can be seen as an example of a passive measure in the sense that the relationship to the student remains passive although a purportedly active measure has been introduced. It seems to be about adjusting the students to the academic

10 The University of Gävle offers the course “Knowledge, learning and study technique”, 3 credits. On the homepage, www.hig.se, the course is introduced with the purpose of providing new students with new and more effective ways of studying. It is also stated that this course is useful both for further studies and in working life.

studies and I wonder whether this is really an example of a student-centred approach. I do not think that it has to be the other way round, but there must be an interest to understand who the new student is and there must be some awareness of the necessity of change in order to develop the courses. Issues surrounding this type of remedial courses also lead to thoughts about surveying remedial measures in the whole university system. How is this support organized at the various universities? As a representative for religious studies I also ask myself whether these remedial measures have been used not only in mathematics and grammar but also in religious studies. These issues bring me to thoughts about a developed approach to didactics and a didactic method to meet the new student. However, before discussing this in more detail, I would like to define didactics and offer my views on it together with a pedagogical model which illustrates didactic work in teacher education.

Didactics

Firstly, it is important to outline my definition of the term didactics. In English and in an English educational context the term usually has a negative connotation. I use didactics to describe the reflection, the reflexive thinking, and the collaboration of the teacher (and others involved in the educational process) in an educational context. My translation and usage of the term didactics comes from a German, French and Scandinavian interpretation.¹¹

Frequently, didactics is simply translated as “theories of teaching”. It may also be possible to argue for the more comprehensive definition “theories of education”. In a specific teaching context, didactics is about what (kind of) knowledge is needed, why this selection has been made, how to teach it, and who the learner is.¹² In a wider societal context, didactics can address questions on curriculum design or other controlling mechanisms for education. There are numerous definitions of didactics, along with several approaches to its study. I would like to focus on didactics as method (as practical work) and didactics as a learning-process in teaching. I argue that one way of meeting the new student is to consider how to work in order to achieve didactic collaboration and development.

11 See Sjøberg, 2005 and Gundem’s definition in Gundem, 1998:12.

12 The didactic questions what, how, and why are generally accepted in didactic research. See Blankertz, 1980.

Didactics in a subject-specific context addresses issues on connecting didactics with a specific (school) subject. In the present text my point of departure is the didactics of religious studies. Svein Sjøberg says that subject-specific didactics links the subject and its pedagogy. He also says that subject-specific questions can be the following:¹³

- How does a subject become what it is?
- How is the subject legitimized and justified?
- What is the uniqueness of the subject?
- What is the central content and what are the central processes?
- What values and ideals are invested in the subject?
- How does the subject contribute to reaching the goals of the school?
- How is the content structured in order to enable learning?

Sjøberg's examples provide suggestions as to the nature of subject-specific didactics and there are reasons to come back to this and give examples of relevant questions and topics to consider in the type of collaborative didactics that I will deal with later in the text.

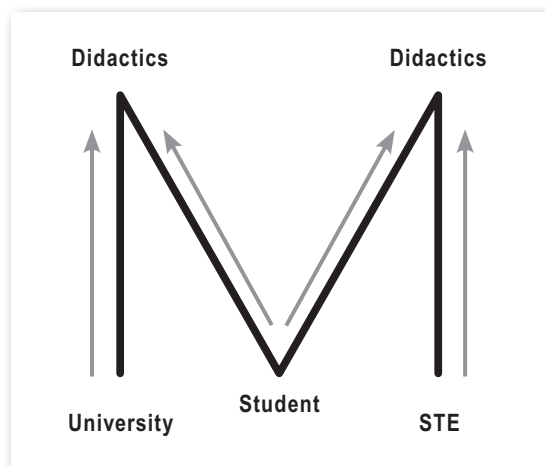
For me it is also important to point out what Björn Skogar says about subject-specific didactics. In *"In the storm's eye – some preliminary theoretical considerations in the teaching of religious studies"* [*"I stormens öga – några inledande teoretiska vägval i religionsdidaktiken"*], Skogar states that it is the task of subject-specific didactics to function as a meeting place between the practical work in schools and the research-oriented university.¹⁴ Subject-specific didactics should be at the point of focus, in what Skogar calls the storm's eye, and which I call the didactic "field of tension".¹⁵ I am also interested in Skogar's choice of words – meeting place. What is the physical meeting place for the didactics of religious studies?

13 Sjøberg, 2005:30f.

14 Almén, Furenhed, Harman and Skogar, 2000:102-116.

15 Subject specific didactics is referred to as a field, often based on Pierre Bourdieu.

The M-model – a didactic model



My conception of didactics as a method, visually, is that it moves between or rather through three pillars, which are symbolized by the letter M. The two outer pillars represent the Swedish universities and their collaborative partners, respectively (the collaborative partners can be the various institutions in society) with the student at the centre. Didactics influences students from two directions. Given my teacher education context, for me the outer pillars consist of the teacher education programme and the partner schools where the students' teaching practice is located. To clarify further, I have replaced the partner schools by the schools' teacher educators (STE). It is the STE who is the primary actor in the didactic collaboration. In this way, my model has three actors – the university, the teacher student, and STE. The didactic M-model is supposed to explain how didactics and learning function in my view, or risk functioning, namely that the didactic work risks being limited to a two-way communication situation, which results in didactic work where the student communicates, reflects and learns either in the direction towards the university or in the direction of the STE. In this way didactics becomes one-dimensional because there are separate didactic discussions aimed at separate pillars. The arrows in the model

indicate the direction of the didactic reflection, from the student in two directions, which I call reflective didactics.¹⁶ Admittedly, the student develops a didactic competence in relation to and in collaboration with both the university and STE, but the reflections are divergent and there is no field of tension between the two. In spite of a high level of didactic awareness at the university as well as at the partner schools, there is no exchange of thoughts between them. The student is always at the centre as a necessary part of the didactic work. The letter M thus symbolizes the three pillars of didactics in a teacher education context, but the M is also a symbol for meeting – the meeting that does not take place when the outer pillars do not communicate with each other. The one-dimensional didactics, characterized by no meetings, non-existent collaboration and no didactic field of tension results not only in an absence of positive effects but also in a presence of negative ones. Different traditions, together with differing views of knowledge and didactics at the university and at the schools lead to contradictory signals for the student, which must be confusing. Consequently, the M-model points to a dual problem. Positive effects are partly missing and negative ones arise. Below, I will argue for a developed view of didactic collaboration to meet the new student, but first another concept will be introduced.

Reflexivity

The word reflexive roughly means "reflect" or "revert", to refer back to oneself, which means that what already exists acquires another image or dimension.¹⁷ From an academic perspective, the word reflexive means several things. In the following, I will discuss various aspects and functions of the term reflexivity in order to arrive at a definition of it in relation to didactics.

Billy Ehn and Barbro Klein describe reflexivity from an ethnographic and anthropological perspective as the researcher's awareness of him/herself in relation to the object of study. They say that the term is about being conscious about one's consciousness, about realizing that one's own self affects the object of inquiry, and they also argue that reflexivity is necessary to gain a deeper insight into how knowledge is formed.¹⁸

16 It is common to connect didactics with reflection in didactic research. See Linnér and Westberg "*Kan man lära sig att bli lärare?*" where reflecting didactics is discussed at length.

17 See for instance *Nationalencyklopedin*, www.ne.se/lang/reflexiv

18 Ehn & Klein, 1994:10-12.

Referring to Giddens, Mia Lövheim uses reflexivity in 'Religious identity on the Internet' ['Religiös identitet på Internet'] to describe identity formation as a reflexive process. The individual is shaped, changed and developed through events and various experiences, for example on the Internet. The development of the individual's identity takes place in relation to and in concert with something else. Lövheim argues that identity formation is a constantly ongoing reflexive process.¹⁹

Reflexivity is also used by Jari Ristiniemi in "Att medvetandegöra handlingsansvar – om etikundervisningens mål och medel".²⁰ Ristiniemi explains reflexivity in relation to reflection. He says that reflection or thought is a singular process – an either/or-way of thinking. Reflexivity leads to a both/and-way of thinking. Reflexivity is the activity and thought between the subject and the object – between the researcher's own self and the other.

Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg also make a distinction between reflection and reflexivity. They describe reflection as a thought focused on a specific method or interpretation. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is multi-dimensional and interactive by nature.²¹

Consequently, reflexivity can be a tool to understand one's own effect on what one is working with; the researcher's effect on the object or the text, one's own effect and that of the surrounding on one's own identity formation process, the teacher's effect on didactic processes, the teacher's effect on the pupil, and so on.

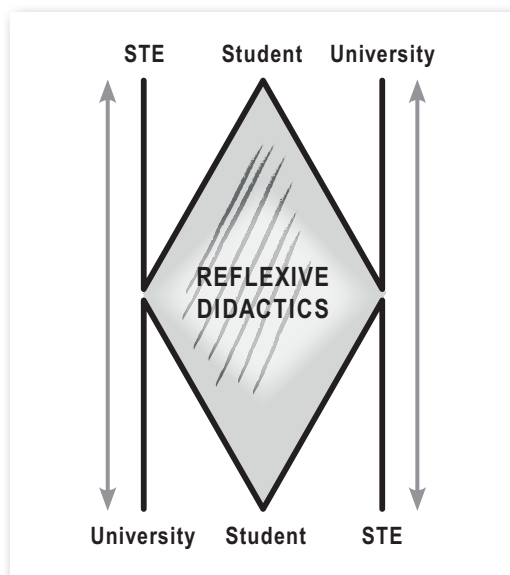
Reflexivity can also constitute a theoretical approach to knowledge and the development of knowledge; furthermore, it can be used to describe the development of knowledge as such by focusing on learning processes. Reflexive learning is then about learning from oneself and from each other. A third function of reflexivity is to use it as method. One of the justifications for a reflexive method is that, as indicated above, reflexivity (in contrast to reflection) enables a multi-dimensional field of tension.

19 The discussion on reflexivity and the creation of identity by Mia Lövheim in the article 'Religiös identitet på Internet' in Larsson, 2003.

20 Jari Ristiniemi discusses reflexivity in Lindgren-Ödén & Thalén, 2006:77-87.

21 Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:248.

The double M-model – a reflexive didactic model



The new student should be met in a new way. My suggestion, which the model above tries to capture, is that a developed view of didactics gives us new possibilities to meet the new student. The two-way didactics or reflective didactics outlined above as an explanation of how the teacher student develops didactic awareness and competence is perhaps not enough to meet the new student. By combining the reflexive perspective and learning with didactics we reach what I call reflexive didactics. In a visualized form the model is based on the didactic M model reflecting itself in a true reflexive spirit, forming another inverted M, thus creating the reflexive double M model. Reflection becomes multifaceted and there arises a multidimensional and multi-path interaction which can be said to constitute reflexivity. Reflexivity permeates the whole didactic field which is seen in the dual M model – reflexive didactics. The various pillars touch each other and are included in the didactic field of tension. In addition, there are direct paths for meetings between the outer pillars, between the university and the schools, without involving the student. Below I will show what concrete effects reflexive didactics will have in practice.

Reflexive didactics

With the help of the model above I would like to introduce a reflexive didactics. I would also like to point out that reflexive didactic work can be done in many different ways in order to best meet the new students. In the present text, I deal with reflexive didactics as method, for concrete meetings and as learning process, and I focus on meetings with oneself, meetings with students, meeting between teachers and meetings between school subjects.

1. Meeting with oneself

From a learning perspective reflexive didactics is about not stopping at a reflection on the questions what, how and why, but also about being aware of the fact that working with the didactic questions affects who you are and who you work together with. The didactic questions require reflection to be answered. How should teachers teach? What should be taught? Why are these choices made? These questions are answered with an awareness of what student group is to be taught. The teacher chooses and justifies his/her choices in relation to the others – to the object. The reflexive didactic question places one's own self in relation to the choices instead of focusing only on those to be taught. How are the choices affected by the fact that it is the subject – I – who chooses? Who the reflective practitioner is will have an influence and therefore reflexive didactics poses the question from a teacher perspective: who am I (in my role as a teacher) and how does it affect my didactic awareness and my role in the teaching process? You have to know yourself first in order to be able to work with others. I argue that this question is very important to consider in development work to meet the new student.

2. Meeting the students

My interview with student B sparked the thought of a meeting place, a teacher portal, both as a forum on the Internet and in real terms between students, the schools' teacher educators (STE) and the university teachers.²² The teacher portal should be a forum for communication and should contribute to creating a complete picture for all parties and also lead to new knowledge for those involved. For example, issues arising from the key words used in my interviews – expectations, requirements

²² This type of meeting place or network can be used within all kinds of study programmes in all types of professions, but my example deals with teacher students and the teaching profession since this is where student B and myself are when we discuss the topic.

and needs, can be vividly and thoroughly discussed. Such a solution could contribute to giving very valuable support for students who need structure in their studies. In private business it is sometimes said that mentors are important to cope with tough demands. In schools, new graduate teachers and newly employed teachers get a mentor. A better idea would perhaps be to use mentoring at the beginning of the teacher training programme, possibly through the teacher portal. Could it be that the meeting place and the discussion forum is more important to the new student than remedial theoretical foundation courses? Teacher student B also points out the importance of meetings and stresses the work place meetings in schools which fulfil the function of a forum for communication. “It is a bit like a synagogue”, as student B chooses to express it.²³

The two upper-secondary pupils that I interviewed had divergent opinions about the relationship between teachers and students at university. Pupil A said that there was no such relationship; nor should there be any such relationship. Pupil B, on the other hand, said that the university teachers should take care of the students well, although teaching is the central aspect. Teacher student A emphasised the importance of good relationships between teachers and students. I think it is necessary to consider the expectations, requirements and needs that the university teachers have and also those of the students. In order to find out about this it is necessary to have meetings between teachers and students.

3. Meetings between teachers

As I pointed out above, the symbolic value of the letter M is that it stands for meetings. Reflexive didactics creates possibilities but requires concrete, physical meetings between the various didactic actors. The Swedish Higher Education Act also demands that, in addition to teaching and research, universities should interact with other parts of society. Jan Karlsson says that networking is a good method but also points out that there are certain problems with this within the academic world since the organisation and budget are more focused on education and research than on co-operation and collaboration.²⁴

The discipline of Religious studies at the University of Gävle has applied what I would call a reflexive didactic approach and will serve as an example in the following discussion. There is a network consisting of

23 Interview with teacher student B 2009-04-29.

24 Karlsson, 2008:16.

academic teachers and school teachers where didactic issues related to the teaching of religious studies are discussed in general terms although the main objective of the network is to discuss issues related to the teacher students practice placements. The importance of the meeting has also been shown when the university has engaged in reflexive didactic work by employing didactically skilled school teachers as junior lecturers in the teacher education programme and also by using STEs in the academic courses. There are examples of teachers from secondary as well as upper-secondary school who have been employed for regular teaching and for separate sessions. The opposite can also be the case, that reflexive teaching means that academic teachers teach at upper-secondary schools.²⁵ One example of this is “Rosendalsgymnasiet” in Uppsala, where teachers from Uppsala University teach upper-secondary school pupils in some subjects.²⁶

Other forms of reflexive work between teachers are also of interest. The upper-secondary school is going through a process of change where the teachers have to change their way of working and thinking, among other things due to “the new pupils”. Perhaps some of these experiences and knowledge can be transferred to teaching at higher levels? One possibility is that university and upper-secondary school teachers can learn from each other when it comes to the didactic question how. How are religious studies taught at upper-secondary school and what can the university learn from this to better meet the new student? I also argue that upper-secondary schools are more used to cross-disciplinary work. What role has the use of literature, film, drama and music in teaching religious studies at upper-secondary school? What can the university learn from this? What methods can be transferred and used in “our” context? Enhanced co-operation between upper-secondary school and the university will also lead to a better understanding of the students who come to the university directly from upper-secondary school. What can teachers at upper-secondary schools learn from teachers and researchers at the university? One suggestion among many is that academic teachers can present their research and thus contribute to the professional development of upper-secondary teachers.²⁷ I would

25 The idea of performing a concrete switch of work places is also put forward in Birgit Lindgren-Ödén in Lindgren-Ödén & Thalén, 2006:117-124.

26 www.rosendalsgymnasiet.se/ny/sidor.php?avdelning=1&sida=16

27 In “Dilemmafyllda möten – erfarenheter av pedagogisk handledning i samverkan mellan skola och högskola”, Rosendahl and Rönnerman point out that in addition to teaching and research, the universities have a third mission, that of dispersing information about research.

argue that it is not possible for upper-secondary school teachers to keep up-to-date on research issues on their own whereas academic teachers have this possibility. The various participants in the teacher education programme, who I use in my didactic models, could for example discuss research presented by the academic teachers. A concrete example that could be of interest to the teaching profession: an Irish study²⁸ suggests that students who film each other in the classroom can help each other develop their reflective skills, which in turns means that the gap between theory and practice can be bridged and lead to improved learning. The results of the study also show that the teacher students started thinking about how their role in the classroom affected the pupils instead of, as earlier, focusing on their own activities.²⁹ It is my experience that STEs have difficulties in coming into contact with research and that is one of several reasons why there have to be meetings. Furthermore, during the meeting itself it is possible to discuss research results and how to use them. In the Irish case, is it of interest that teacher students film each other in the teaching situation as part of their course work? There are also other tasks for the academic teachers, in addition to presenting research results. In a well-functioning network the academic teachers can function as “critical friends” for the school teachers.³⁰

There can be difficulties in the meeting between school teachers and academic teachers. Bridget Somekh says that development in the educational sphere is limited by difficulties in understanding each other's worlds. She says that the basis for a successful meeting and for collaboration is that there is an understanding and a conviction that both parts will benefit and contribute, albeit in different ways, to increased knowledge. It is both about contributing with new knowledge, and your own learning. She writes “...collaboration is about celebrating difference and strengthening one's own sense of identity; and at the same time it is about developing knowledge and understanding of the other so that movement between the two castles is pleasurable, challenging and mutually empowering”.³¹

28 Harford & MacRuairc, 2008.

29 My example is a suggestion on research that upper-secondary teachers can find useful. It is also another example of reflexive didactics.

30 Referring to Lauvås and Handal, Karin Rönnerman writes that a critical friend has the task of challenging an awareness of one's own activities and that this critical friend cannot be a member of the group but must come from outside. Rönnerman's research is based on the Swedish pre-school and I argue that this principle is applicable on all levels of education. See Rönnerman, Moksnes Furu & Salo, 2008.

31 Somekh, 1994:373-378.

As I have stated above, it is wise to develop ideas about collaboration and networks. The meeting between teachers is important. I have given some suggestions on what we can learn from each other, but the most important thing is not to offer suggestions at this point but to create a place for the meetings. The physical meeting creates possibilities for discussions of what is good and what needs improvement. The meeting enables development! Of course, it is not only a question about academic and school teachers as in several of my examples; it should also be interesting to develop collaboration across wider fields. The project Vertical Integration Gävle is an example of this.³²

4. Meeting between disciplines

Another angle on reflexive didactics from a learning perspective is to develop inter-subject collaboration. In 2010, the University of Gävle is undergoing a reorganization to allow subject divisions and departments to create new possibilities. It is a reasonable assumption that the aim of a new organisation is to be better equipped for the future by offering better study programmes. Each subject division has new conditions and should utilize the possibilities inherent in this change. Reflexive teaching in my view means a type of teaching where taken-for-granted boundaries are dissolved. The prerequisites for this are there. Reflexive didactic work creates new possibilities to develop teaching and knowledge, and one way of doing this is to integrate subjects with each other. What possibilities do religious studies have to improve and thus create better ways of meeting the new student? Some examples: What can religious studies, in co-operation with educational art do in the interpretation of symbols? The knowledge of the power of drama and knowledge from educational drama can provide a deepened understanding of ethical and existential questions. By discussing and analysing fiction together with literature new possibilities of using fiction as course literature are opened up, possibilities that can be used as a basis for teaching a number of areas in religious studies. These are just a few

32 The VIG project (Vertical integration in Gävle) was initiated by Jan-Erik Liljegren, then head of the Department of Quality Issues, Gävle municipality. The background was that the Gävle schools results were lagging behind those of other comparable local authorities. All interested teachers were invited to form a group to chart the situation regarding Swedish, English and mathematics and to draw up plans of action. The results of these investigations were presented to all head teachers in the local authority and formed the starting point for the VIG project. Representatives from the University of Gävle were also present as the teacher education programme was thought to influence directly the results in the schools. (Based on e-mail contact with Olle Käll, upper-secondary school teacher and one of the project co-ordinators).

examples and it is of course possible to discuss this much further, but in the present context I would like to stress that more extensive collaboration between subjects and departments at the university will lead to increased possibilities of meeting the new students. Ilse Julkunen gives us further perspectives on this when she writes about new research on collaboration between researchers and practitioners.³³ Then there is also the intention to meet, to “*create reflexive spaces*”.³⁴ Yet another aspect of this is the possible contribution from PUX (Pedagogical Development Centre, Gävleborg), an organisation which, in my opinion, creates possibilities for using reflexive didactics.³⁵

A concluding view

Do we know who today’s new students are? Do we know how the university can meet the new student in the best possible way? My text has presented some suggestions by discussing some interesting thoughts that have emerged in my interviews with students and pupils. The main aim of the text was to focus on how the university can act to meet these new students and I view reflexive didactics as a tool for establishing a multidimensional view on didactics and a shared view on didactic work which creates possibilities for concrete meetings where development can take place. The didactic field of tension which emerges in reflexive didactics also leads to possibilities for the university to better meet the new student. I should also point out that my thoughts on reflexive didactic models should not only be seen from a teacher perspective, although this is my starting point for my writing, but they are applicable to all academic studies and can be used to meet all new students.

To look ahead finally, who are the new students of tomorrow? I note that at the same time as I write this that a new Swedish upper-secondary school is being developed. The key words in this reform suggest a reversal to something that has been rather than point to something new, all in the hope of better preparing the pupils for academic studies. Consequently, there are some old aspects and a partly romanticizing view in the new Swedish upper-secondary school. What pupils will then be sent to the Swedish universities; the new students – or the old ones?

33 See Julkunen, 2005.

34 Julkunen, 2005. Julkunen is referring to Marthinsen.

35 PUX functions as a link between the schools and the university.

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New students – invisible students

Febe Orést

At the University of Gävle, distance education via video conference is a common form of education. It means that the teacher is in a studio together with some students. Around the country other students take the course by participating from a local learning centre. The session is recorded and posted on the Internet for the course participants to use afterwards. In most of the courses that I have been involved in, there are a number of students who participate only via the Internet. This also means that students outside Sweden take these courses.

Some students on these web-based courses remain invisible for both the teacher and the other students. The identification of them is based on their applications to the course. After admission to the course students are asked to accept their place to the course coordinator and this can be done in various ways. From then on, students participate in the course through web-based communication between the student, the teacher and the other course participants. Their achievement are assessed by the examiner through a variety of evaluations, and through assignments submitted by the student.

Students of the science of religion at the University of Gävle are partly young people who have just left school, and partly professionals who have a growing interest in the study of religions. From a gender perspective women are in majority among the students. The courses I am involved in are primarily in the social sciences of religion. The focus is on the significance of religion for the development of identity, the interpretative patterns for various types of human behavior advocated by different religions, and the various roles assumed by people in different contexts. We also study how religions and ideologies impose norms on roles and behavior and what consequences this can have for

the individual. Many students have extensive prior academic education. Among these, it is often the interest in existential questions that attracts them to study social sciences aspects of religion. The program of study Man-Nature-Religion does not lead to a professional degree but the students are awarded a Bachelor's degree in the science of religion. After the program students can work in areas where extensive knowledge of human behavior is needed.

Among the students who study the science of religion at the University of Gävle there are, in every course, a number of invisible students. These students do not participate in the regular teaching. When these students break off their studies it is likely that this is not noticed or followed up since the interaction with these students is less tangible compared to other students. Breaking off the studies can be a costly affair for students on study loans since these are based on achievement and there are restrictions as to how many years a student can get study loans. Furthermore, the interrupted studies are costly for the university as well since the state funding for the student's achievement is withheld. Other reasons why it can be particularly valuable to study these invisible students are to investigate the causes behind these students' choice to be invisible, and what didactic or strategic requirements this invisibility places on the teachers in order to motivate the student to finish his or her education.

The teacher education program on distance has been evaluated by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (HSV). According to their report a majority of these students chose distance studies because of their family situation. Other students stated both their family situation and their job situation as grounds for choosing distance studies. Of the students, 57% lived more than 90 kilometers away from the university campus.¹ In the evaluation HSV states the following:

Self-studies are basically organized in two ways. In courses where the study group is geographically spread out they are almost entirely individual, and the contact with teacher and fellow students mostly take place via the Internet/learning platform and e-mail. One advantage of this type of studies, stressed primarily by the older students, is that they can be adjusted to each and every one's job and family situation. The drawback can be that studies alone sometimes require too much self-discipline.

1 <http://www.hsv.se/download/18.1b5d7151142bc5ae1180002603/0741R.pdf> : 2010-11-04.

In other courses the students gather at a local learning center in local study groups, for group assignments and for working with individual assignments. In the group it is possible to exchange experiences and to motivate each other. The local study groups were emphasized as something valuable in the survey answers.²

The participation of the teacher was described as central. The teacher, or the local study center tutor, is needed during the self-studies to define demands and to give advice when the students have problems with their studies. The students who participated in the evaluation regard it as important to meet each other and the teachers. It is important to remember in this case that they were preparing for a profession where they will be exposed to other people.

The purpose of this study is to discuss the causes leading to certain students' choosing to be invisible. It is done by analyses of three written interviews. The question the study aims to answer is: What can the reasons be for certain students' choice to take the role of the invisible student? If there are several responses from each student the most salient reason for invisibility is emphasized. The method is qualitative and, based on the answers, which should definitely not be taken as generalizable, the study discusses what role the teacher may have to take in the interaction with the invisible student. The study will also discuss specific demands placed on the teacher.

The study is based on the life stories of two women and one man, stories about their study situations and explanations to why they have chosen not to appear among the other students. Their stories will be interpreted and discussed from the following points of view: role taking, gender, and the significance of the rite in role taking.

The search for the invisible student

The students focused on in this study are individuals that have chosen not to show themselves to other students. Based on this criterion I asked all invisible students in a course to tell me if they were willing to take part in the study. Those who wanted to do so would receive a questionnaire with open questions. The answers would then be treated confidentially and any identifying information would be altered. Anna and

2 <http://www.hsv.se/download/18.1b5d7151142bc5ae1180002603/0741R.pdf> : 2010-11-04.

Aron belong to this group. Berit, on the other hand, belongs to another student group. I contacted her after receiving the following message:

I feel a bit unsure if I'm going to manage this course. I carefully searched for (what I thought) were pure distance courses last summer on studera.nu and never understood that there were obligatory seminars on this course.

I have suffered from anxiety hysteria and social phobia since I was eight (largely because of being bullied at school) and this course awakens strong feelings in me. Among other things after having read "Children's thoughts about life". Is there any possibility that you can give me a chance of completing the course completely on distance?

I understand if you say no to this but in that case I must get the chance to think about whether I will be able to complete the course or not.

A suggestion to the university would be to write clearly if obligatory sessions are included in the course or not, already on the course page reference from studera.nu. I was there today but I did not see anything on that page. However, I saw that it was on the course syllabus, but I don't know if I had access to it in July when I applied for the course.

I felt that I had to write an e-mail to you to account for my feelings and for my health. I have had many sleepless nights over this and the panic is rising because I'm afraid of not finishing my studies.

I would be grateful for an answer if there is any possibility for me to do the course completely on distance (Anna).

Anna would not have applied for the course if she had known that it meant meeting other students in seminars. Her choice to only take web-based courses is based on severe social phobia. She was given the possibility of taking the course and she completed it. During this time she wrote her life story, which is one of the stories discussed in this essay.

Since the present study is primarily conceived as a basis for a possible didactic model dealing with distance students who want to remain invisible to other students, I will briefly discuss some pedagogical theories that can form the starting point for a way of thinking about didactic strategies.

Knowledge development – different solutions to problems

John Dewey's theory of problem-solving will be used as a pedagogical framework for interpretation, given that studying is often about solving problems, which in the stories of this study can be different depending

on personal experience and gender. Dewey argues that a person who is facing a problem becomes powerless to act. When a person thinks about the situation, the thoughts refer both to the past and the possible future, which are anticipatory or predicting.³ The anticipatory thinking is based on past experiences, and the person's thinking predicts what is to come based on past experiences; understanding has a tangible basis.

One of Dewey's basic pedagogical ideas was that the best development of knowledge takes place by problem-solving which is also connected to action, that is, *learning by doing*. This pedagogical approach requires that the teacher bonds with the pupils and view their individual interests and personalities, and that the work forms are activity oriented.⁴ Based on Dewey's pedagogical ideas about learning such teaching contexts can be compared to Donald Winnicott's theory on the role of play, and the importance of the area of playing in learning.⁵ The people who participate in the play, which is also very serious, interact with each other, and through the interaction the participants develop new knowledge which also widens the person's previous limitations.⁶ Since the interaction crosses boundaries it also creates new boundaries and changed roles. With reference to Winnicott's theories and in agreement with Carl Rogers's *Freedom to learn*, I argue that cognitive learning also depends on emotions.⁷ In other words, I assume that learning depends on personal experience, that unresolved conflicts or unsolved problems can block out the development of new knowledge and that negative emotions can be an obstacle to the cognitive development of knowledge.

3 Dewey, 1910.

4 Dewey, 1936; 1991.

5 Winnicott, 1971:51. Winnicott writes: "The playing child inhabits an area that cannot be easily left, nor can it easily admit intrusions. This area of playing is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world. Into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from the external reality and uses this in the service of some sample derived from the external reality and use these in the service of some sample derived from the inner or personal reality. Without hallucinating the child puts out a sample of dream potential and lives with this sample in a chosen setting of fragments from external reality." Winnicott, 1971:51.

6 Winnicott, 1993; 1998.

7 Rogers argues that it is necessary for the teacher to be honest and open to the students – that he or she takes part in and shares the student's feelings and thoughts. Furthermore, the teacher needs to show appreciation and thoughtfulness and have confidence and show respect for the student. If the teacher is emphatic he or she will have created a learning climate which stimulates self-initiated learning and development. Rogers, 1976:118; <http://www.toodoc.com/Freedom-to-Learn-Carl-R-Rogers-pdf.html>: 2011-01-25.

The texts that are analyzed below are presented unabridged in the following section. They are followed by the framework for interpretation that I use in the ensuing analysis and discussion.

The stories of Berit, Anna and Aron

In this section, the students' stories are presented. I have altered such information as can potentially identify the student. The stories are translated from Swedish; the sentence structure has been preserved as far as possible.

This is Berit's story:

I am 30 years old and I was born at the Kronofors maternity hospital in Dalsland. I am married to Börje and we have a son together, David, who is 3 years old. My family also consists of mother, father, brothers and sisters and their families.

I grew up in the country, not on a farm or such like, but not close to a large town. I grew up in a large and rather noisy family, we lived in a house in a community where everybody knows everybody.

I have had a very safe and loving childhood, when I hear friends and acquaintances talk about their childhood I realize how different our family is/was. There is so much caring and compassion among us. We often see each other all brothers and sisters and parents.

Before I started studying religion I tried various things, out, I didn't know what I would do. I worked as a temporary teacher, I worked at a saw mill, I took courses at a university nearby. I went from one thing to the other, but found nothing of interest. I have always had lots of plans of what to do, but I have never dared to realize any of them. Why I don't know! I have been through some life crises, landed on my feet and I'm grateful for that.

The reason why I chose religion is that I'm interested in the inner life of people. Thoughts and ideas about my own search. I have always thought it was fun to discuss the great questions of life. (Berit)

This story emphasizes the importance of the family, which is also characterized as large and noisy. Then Berit describes that she has had a hard time to find a meaningful job and sufficiently interesting studies. She also describes that she has had many ideas of what to do but that she has never dared to realize them. Finally she tells us about her interest in the inner life, psyche or existential questions of people.

Anna's story was conceived while she was reading the course literature. This is how she describes her childhood:

[...] write down a few things here partly from my adult perspective and also how I as a child felt. I feel however that it will be difficult for me to delimit myself and that I perhaps will not manage the task in a satisfactory way.

I think that I probably would have developed well and that I would have become quite "strong" if I hadn't been repressed and bullied in school by other pupils and by one of the teachers. To hear on a daily basis how bad you are and how little you are worth as a person "broke me down". All the name-calling and blows did not make it any easier. However, I had a secure home environment where my mother, grandmother and grandfather were the most important people for me. It is about respect for the child and how, as an adult, you should act in relation to that. Respect is the key word in this context. The female teacher I had in my second year (and half of the third year) never showed this respect to me, something that I noticed very clearly. I was not allowed to take medicine with my food. She spoke badly about me in front of my class mates etc. The head teacher believed the teacher when she said that I was the worst pupil she had ever had and demanded that I should be "removed" from her class. The head teacher was also my mother's boss and strangely enough I felt that he liked me when I saw him.

I have happy memories from my time at playschool and pre-school. In my first year at school I helped others, I was well liked, I participated, I was honest, I had a lot of friends (mainly boys), I was quite tough but always friendly towards others. I played a lot both alone and with friends. I did well in most things and active, playing the violin, singing and folk dancing. In my second year some of this happiness went away. I remember among other things being accused of stealing (which I hadn't). Today there is no other alternative for me than "right is right" and so it has been since that episode. In my third year the teacher demanded that I should be removed from the class which meant that I had to change schools and classes.

The child tries to like both the teacher and the pupils, and the child tries to be liked, too. This is something that has characterized my life as I have always tried to please others. In secondary school I lent money to other pupils, I tried to "buy" my friends in one way or the other because I was so lonely. I have terrible memories from years 4 to 6. It was many times that the teacher had to come and force me to leave the toilet because the class had started. I often locked myself in there because I had been beaten, threatened or quite simply frozen out.

I can really agree that children imitate life and that every kind of evil is represented. Children are creative little beings. The boys hit me on the

upper arms where usually nothing showed and the girls scattered when I approached them. I was afraid, sad, lonely and abandoned. I had many different feelings and I get angry when I think that nobody really understood how bad things were. It was not only my class mates who caused trouble, but the age span was large since most of them were my mother's present and former pupils. If I make a comparison of what I was like when I was 7 and when I was 13 I can see that a lot of things happened in those 6 years. I became shy, I was truant, I acquired a poor self-image, I was oppressed and did badly in all school subjects except English and music. I also quit all my spare-time interests. I stopped singing, playing the violin, folk dancing, etc. I had one or two friends whom I was good enough for when it suited them, otherwise I was most often on my own. In spite of everything I still helped people and I was always there when they needed me. In upper-secondary school I was called a "swat" which meant that I stopped putting my hand up. Something that I have been thinking a lot about while I have been reading the book *Children's thoughts about life* is: What kind of person am I? What could I have become? One thing is certain, I don't think that I had developed anxiety hysteria and social phobia if I had not been bullied in school. I often feel like two different persons depending on the situation, the shy, introvert person and the tough, extrovert person. I have not had the help I have asked for to deal with the injuries I have suppressed from my time at school. It feels as if I am (unconsciously) trying to keep everything away from the conscious (Anna).

This is the third person's story:

My name is Aron Persson. I was born in a little village outside of Havsstad, and I was born in 1975, so I am 33 years old now. My family consists of parents and half-brothers and half-sisters in various forms, I grew up with my older half-brother and my mother, as my father moved to Svealand with his new woman when I was seven. Later he had two more children with this woman, who also are my half-brothers. I would describe my family as a bit scattered. I cohabit without children so I don't consider myself having a family of my own making today.

My childhood I spent until about the age seven living with both my parents and my older half-brother in a house in the countryside in Götaland, until my parents separated after which I and my older half-brother moved with my mother to a smaller village nearby, where we lived together until first my brother left home and then me. I moved when I was 16 when I started upper-secondary school, since the school was a boarding school. After this I lived with my mother for a while before I left home.

As I am 33 I have of course done different things before I started studying religion. I was at a boarding school at Trädgårdsstads Naturbruks-

gymnasium outside Havsstad, where I was on the Agricultural Program with a specialization in gardening for three years. This primarily since my grades were too bad to get in anywhere else (according to the old grade system: 1.6 grade average out of 5.0 possible), but I finished the program with a passing grade in all subjects. After finishing the program (graduation in 1994) I have worked as: gardener, construction worker, recruiter at a direct-advertising company, flag-stone layer, railroad worker, demolition worker, and then flag-stone layer again. This between 1994 and 2006. The major part of this time as spent as a flag-stone layer.

In the autumn of 2006 I saw to it that I was dismissed from my job as a paver with a small firm in Högstad, partly since I did not feel intellectually stimulated and challenged in my work any longer, and partly because I had pains in large parts of my body because of the physically hard work. Among other things I had tennis elbow, which is quite devastating for a flag-stone layer, and I more and more noticed how worn out my older colleagues had become from the work and I was not impressed by my future prospects. At this time I separated from my wife to be, and all these factors together contributed to my decision to start studying. In 2005 I had done the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test and got a good score, with the thought of possible future studies. When I had decided to begin studying I thought long and hard about what to study. The natural thing I suppose would have been to apply to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp, only a some kilometers from home, I had my grades and the score from the university exam and job experience from the sector, but then I would have been forced to work in the same area that I had just tired to get away from. Instead I chose the MNR program in Gävle (Man-Nature-Religion). This because religion had long interested me, and then primarily *why* people believe, *how* they believe, and how it *affects* their lives. That it was a program on distance was decisive because I did not have to commute or move. Distance studies appeal to me since I am not a social persona, and I am very happy in my own company (Aron).

Berit and Anna have participated in the course on the web. Aron has participated via video conference, but he never showed himself in close-up when the first interview was made.

The questions I asked the students are about their previous and present social context, why they chose web-based tuition and what purpose they have with their education. At the follow-up of the first interview Aron accounts for this intellectual and personal development. He also describes contact with others and his future intentions. Berit never responded to the follow-up. Anna has not been followed up.

The results will be based on the personal situation of each student, and what social or personal factors can be behind the choice of studying as an invisible student. Furthermore, the personality descriptions will be discussed from the point of view of role-taking. Aron has done more than one year of this study program when the second interview was made. From his text the evaluative parts will be highlighted. That result will also be discussed from the point of view of intellectual and emotional development. The methods and theories used in the analyses are presented below, followed by the interpretation of the stories.

Roles – cognition – emotion

According to Berger and Luckmann we define and understand ourselves and each other from an abstract and comprehensive system of legitimization, called a *symbolic universe*. In this system everything that we perceive, think and experience is arranged according to a coded system.⁸ It creates a structure for human communities where people interact with each other by means of various roles. In order for one person to assume a specific role that person will initially have identified and accepted the role in another person. At the same time as this happens the role is confirmed by the other interactant. Through the role-taking both persons become capable of predicting each other's behaviors and intentions. When the roles including their intentional actions have become habitual the participants have created the basis for an institutional order. When additional participants enter the context the roles of the primary participants are communicated together with the actions and intentions that are part of the role, which leads to institutionalization.⁹ Hjalmar Sundén explains a role in the following way:

(A role) comprises the attitudes, values and behaviors which society affords all persons holding a certain status. The status of the individual is accorded to him based on age and sex, birth or marriage within a certain family unit, and so on. He learns his roles from his status modes, the ones he has or can be expected to obtain. (...) The status mode from which an individual appears is his active status mode at the time in question. His other status modes are then latent.¹⁰

8 Berger & Luckmann, 1979:114.

9 Berger & Luckmann, 1979:72-77.

10 Sundén, 1959:52.

According to Sundén, role-taking means that, based on the context, a certain behavior leads to high status and then this behavior is anticipated as a role. Every role contains frames for behavior at the same time as it is a frame of reference for cognitions.¹¹

Berger and Luckmann explain that role-taking and institutionalization are connected to language. Through the objectified language each role is made concrete in a specific institution, whereupon the individual participates in a specific socially constructed world. When the role is internalized the social world is perceived as real to the person in question.¹² Man is part of a symbolic universe where gender is also a part of it.

Gender and role-taking

The gender perspective is an important aspect in role-taking. Nancy Chodorow states that children learn very early what is female and what is male. She says that the mother has the greatest influence on the genderization process, which is the social process that creates our perception of sex or gender. The importance of the mother afforded by Chodorow is connected with her conception of the relationship between mother and daughter as more interlaced and intimate than the one between mother and son. This means that the daughter liberates herself later from the mother compared to the son and, consequently, women reproduce characteristics such as care-giving and emotional commitment as specifically female and not male characteristics. The characteristics that the boys perceive and develop as masculine are the opposite ones, which means that the boys acquire a more active view of their lives and that they value accomplishment more than emotional commitment.¹³ The way we think about gender is also connected with our symbolic universe.

Gunnel Forsberg discusses space and place from a gender point of view. The public place is the men's space and it is presented as the reproductive and transcendent place. The private space is the women's space and is presented as reproductive and immanent. When this space takes the form of a place it is loaded with meaning and identity. Each

¹¹ Sundén, 1959:53.

¹² Berger & Luckmann, 1979:91.

¹³ Chodorow, 1978.

http://books.google.com/books?id=pLhb4dAWIAGC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Nancy+Chodorow&source=bl&ots=HNDgMWMtWR&sig=XbJ61CQ9C6y7elcB5DRhazesPFc&hl=sv&ei=V3WTPmAMMihOtGnxIgK&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=13&ved=0CEgQ6AEwDA#v=onepage&q&f=false; Chodorow, 1988.

place is charged and some places are so charged that people will defend it when it is threatened. The places connect people through social patterns of action that are specific and have specific rules. By studying how women and men experience space and place the researcher can demonstrate how the differences are parts of both a social construction of gender and of space. From this are created the various gender relations in our everyday activities in various places and in various contexts.¹⁴

The rite has an important function in role-taking. I discuss this in the following section.

Ritual and role-taking

A ritual is a form of behavior used in religious contexts as well as in everyday life. In the Swedish *Nationalencyklopedia*, ritual is defined in the following way:

The ritual is symbolic in that the formalized behavior expresses a more profound religious, magical or other type of meaning. (...) The social function of rituals is to confirm and strengthen the collective's sense of unity regarding its fundamental values.¹⁵

According to Erik H. Erikson, ritualization is an agreed form of interplay between at least two people who repeat the ritual in a recurrent context. The rite has the form and detail of the ceremony and a feeling of a higher symbolic meaning. It engages and activates the participants. In addition, it promotes self-growth and it emphasizes a specific interpretation of human existence. Furthermore, the rite forges groups of people into units.¹⁶ The rite is both verbal and physical. It leads the human being into her new role and helps her to take the new role.

Arnold van Gennep concluded that all rites consist of three phases which he calls *the separation phase*, *the liminal phase* and *the incorporation phase*. Each phase is a rite in itself that does something special to the participant. In the separation phase the participant is ritually separated from his/her position in society, after which the person is led into the liminal phase, which is characterized by transformation and

14 Forsberg, 2002:14-17.

15 www.nationalencyklopedin.se/lang/ritual: 2010-12-06.

16 Erikson, 1966:337.

transcendence to another role or position in society. The liminal phase takes the person into the incorporation phase. In this phase the person is readmitted into society, but on a different level and with a new role.¹⁷ van Gennep's model is dynamic and suggests that participation in the rite enables the participants to change places and status in society and also that it transforms the entire personality.

Jörgen Podemann Sörensen characterizes rituals as consequential acts.¹⁸ The science of religion studies various religious acts that lead to new roles based on their reference to important phenomena described in a particular religion. The same line of reasoning can be used regarding secular acts with special reference. Podemann Sörensen argues that rites have important social functions in uniting people since, through their content, they refer either to a specific form of association between the participants, or to the political or social structures of the association in question. Rites lead to changes in the social status of the participants.¹⁹ An example of a consequential act is to apply for a program of study. These consequential acts initialize a new context. The new context is to break with the current context in order to become part of a new context after graduation. I will return to this process below.

Cathrine Bell writes that Roy Rappaport has concluded the following:

Ritual (...) not only regulates the relationships between the people and their natural resources (...) but also can regulate the interaction of humans with local materials, foodstuff (...) ²⁰Rappaport's approach is (...) "system analysis," in which ritual is shown to play a particularly key role in maintaining the system since it claims an authority rooted in divine, as well as in tradition.²¹

According to this, rites are significant where the objects and various activities make human interaction easier. Moreover, Rappaport stresses the importance of the study of ritual to include systematic analysis, given that the ritual system is also dependent on an authority which is anchored within the tradition being studied.

17 van Gennep, 1999.

18 Podemann Sörensen, in Jensen, Rothstein & Sörensen, 1996:28.

19 Podemann Sörensen, in Rothstein, Sörensen & Warburg, 1999:70.

20 Bell, 1997:29.

21 Bell, 1997:30.

Valerie DeMarinis argues that symbols and rituals are most often connected with religion and religious behavior, but all people use symbols and rituals in their daily lives. Therefore it is important to conceive of symbols and rituals as objects and acts which create meaning and consistency in life.²² Based on the theories of ritual outlined above I will give examples of how learning and teaching situations can be understood as ritualized behavior. I begin by discussing objects and acts that are present when a person takes the role of student.

The student role is prepared in compulsory school when the person was a pupil. In this process, all pupils have used daily rituals from the beginning, which means that they put on special clothes for the school day. Most of them leave their home carrying materials that will be used during the day and they prepare for the daily learning. Based on van Gennep's theory, this act can correspond to the separation phase. The objects obtain a symbolic function and they help the person to become separated from the previous context and to prepare for the next one. In the learning process itself the pupils use, for instance, books, paper and pencils. They train themselves in terms of sensory, motor and verbal development; they scribble, take notes and review certain tasks until they have achieved certain skills, which are then evaluated by others. These acts and this learning can be understood as different rites performed during the liminal phase. At the end of the school day, the pupil enters the incorporation phase, where the activities during the day have contributed to a transformation of the participants. When the pupils leave compulsory school, and also when they leave upper-secondary school special rites are performed where they are given new status and new roles. Each new school year commences with a roll call that all participants have prepared for. The entry to secondary school, and particularly to upper-secondary school, is framed by special rites that also give new status.

The transition from upper-secondary school to university is regulated by special rules. It is prepared and initiated by a special application procedure, which is a consequential act. The initiation itself is done through the so-called ragging, a formal rite of initiation with a clear purpose of creating a sense of unity between the students. Furthermore, ragging has the implicit purpose of separating the participants from their previous context and it marks the separation phase. The initiation

22 DeMarinis, 1998:53.

rites lead the participants into new roles and ragging helps the participants to take the student role, which is different from the person's other and previous roles. The student role is practice and lived for a limited time.

During the course of their education the students take part in daily rituals which consist of reading literature, lecture notes, answering questions and accounts of their own observations and conclusions. The objects used in learning are literature, paper, pencils and computers. The students are trained to become more and more independent and more and more critical towards the literature. The student role is a long period in the liminal phase given that the focus is on the studies.

At the end of their studies the students enter the incorporation phase, which eventually takes them to new contexts with higher or different status than before and with new roles.

The student role is verbalized in various stories. Through these most young people have understood how the student role is performed and how higher studies are conducted. There are also stories that a possible partner may be among the other students, that another type of social life is established during these years and that the studies lead to new roles and status in society. These stories are connected with personal liberation which can also mean liberation from the original family and a desire to have a home of one's own. In other words, higher studies mean changes in roles and in social life in relation to childhood and the teenage period. Studies lead to change and the person's own ideal can be realized or reinforced.

When a person is a student it means in sum that the person, under ritual circumstances, takes a role for a certain time, at the same time as the conception of that role builds on previous experiences and other people's stories. Future actions that are connected to new roles are connected to the person's future intentions, which are also based on various roles with implicit actions.

Based on the structures described above regarding a symbolic universe, roles, gender and the significance of ritual in role-taking, I will now present my interpretations of the life stories.

Roles, role-taking – the significance of context

In this section I will discuss an interpretation of the explicit or implicit roles and role-takings of my informants in taken these roles. The

interpretations are based on the theories discussed above, and are not intended for generalizations. The stories are interpreted in the following order: Berit, Anna, and Bertil. After this I will discuss the gender perspective.

Berit, 30, grew up in the countryside, where everybody knows everybody. She characterizes her family as large and rather noisy. Furthermore, she has had a secure and loving childhood where her parents' tenderness and care were very pronounced in comparison to those of her friends. The description includes attitudes, values and behaviors that also awards the parents very high status. They are awarded higher status than the parents of her friends.

The description of her present family includes her son and her husband. Then she also adds that her parents, her brothers and sisters and their families are part of her family, and she sees them frequently. Berit's account of her family and, above all, her close relatives, suggests that they are highly significant in her life. Between the lines, the familial context and roles emerge as very important and institutionalized.

According to Berger and Luckmann institutionalization occurs in an activity where the actor identifies and accepts the behaviors that are part of the role. When the person reflects on his or her actions the distance to those reflected on is re-established.²³ Berit's story suggests that she has assessed her family context as highly significant. The familial roles are intimately connected with Berit's parents and her brothers and sisters. The context described centers on the roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. Furthermore, she connects her present family with the families of her parents and her brothers and sisters. These families together comprise a total and important connection that is repeatedly confirmed. She also evaluates the tenderness and care of her parents as more pronounced than those of other parents.

Referring to what she has worked with, studied or done before she started studying the science of religion, she has written the following:

Before I started studying religion I tried my hand at various things, I didn't know what I would do. I worked as a temporary teacher, I worked at a saw mill, and I took courses at the University of Karlstad. I went from one thing to another, but didn't find anything of interest. I have always had a lot of plans on what to do, but I have never dared to take the chance of realizing any of them. (...) I have been through a few crises, have landed on my feet and I'm grateful for that. (Berit)

23 Berger & Luckmann, 1979:91.

This text can mean that it has been difficult for her to decide what profession to choose. The jobs she has had never became interesting to her. Her description of when she was studying at the university indicates that she did not find a scientific field that could capture her interest. In addition, she says that her self-confidence has been low and also her confidence in her being able to realize her ideas.

Based on the quote, it can also be argued that she has not been engaged in an activity where she has developed either a specific professional role or a student role. She worked as a temporary teacher and consequently she has not identified herself as a substituting teacher. She worked at a sawmill but she has not identified with the role of sawmill worker. When she was at university she went from one thing to another without finding anything of interest. She was not a student studying a discipline, but a seeker who searched for something that would catch her interests.

Berit writes about her low self-confidence and her difficulties in realizing her dreams, but she does not question her upbringing, which is understandable since she is writing to a person she does not know. She attributes her self-reliance to the crises she has gone through, and consequently, she does not have to consider the possible influence of her childhood, and thus she takes responsibility for her own life. In this way she can also legitimize the roles of her parents and brothers and sisters as good, thus legitimizing her own context or symbolic universe, too.

The reason why Berit has chosen to study the science of religion is her interest in the inner life of human beings. The study of religion means that she can understand and formulate phenomena that are part of her own search for a deeper understanding of existential questions. She expresses this in the following way:

Thoughts and ideas about my own search. I have always thought it was fun to discuss the great questions of life. (Berit)

Berit is one of the new and invisible students who have chosen this program to obtain an increased level of self-understanding. She is stimulated by discussing existential questions, but she chooses not to do this in interaction with me or with the other students. However, she has not made it explicit in her text why she chooses to be invisible. She takes part of the teacher's lectures, the other students' questions and seminar discussions after they have taken place. She discusses these in writing,

which can also be a means of interaction with others. Parallel with her studies, she can also be in her home where she is able to simultaneously take the roles of daughter, sister, mother and wife.

Given that Berit did not answer the following interview I investigated which courses she was taking at the time the questions were sent out. It turned out that she had temporarily interrupted her studies that term. The social reality leading to new role-taking is dependent on a continuum of recurring interactions with others may have failed to manifest itself. Consequently, the anonymity and the invisibility may have been contributing factors to her interrupted studies. By interrupting her studies she is able to choose the roles that are familiar, reliable and desirable for her in her own group. After some time she returned and was examined for half of the content of the previous term.

The roles that are made explicit and that are valued as important in Berit's story are the parental and the familial roles. No future intentions are expressed in her story; however, she writes that her own interests are aimed towards the inner life of human beings and therefore she has chosen to study religion. She has also been through several crises. Based on the short life stories one purpose of her studies may be that she wants to create a new self-understanding for herself, which also can be an alternative to therapy. Her story will be further interpreted in the next section. I now turn to the next story.

Anna is 35. She grew up in a secure environment, in a small town in Sweden. Her childhood family consisted of her maternal grandmother, her maternal grandfather and her mother. She describes her childhood until her second year in school in the following way:

I have happy memories from my time at playschool and pre-school. In my first year at school I helped others, I was well liked, I participated, I was honest, I had a lot of friends (mainly boys), I was quite tough but always friendly towards others. I played a lot both alone and with friends. I did well in most things and active, playing the violin, singing and folk dancing. In my second year some of this happiness went away. I remember among other things being accused of stealing (which I hadn't) (Anna).

In connection with the false accusations some of Anna's joy in her school work disappeared. In the description she presents herself as basically active and extrovert. Her injury is lifted up as a mile stone that makes her a reserved and introvert person.

Starting from her injury and the teacher who violated her she further describes how she has been harassed by her teacher, also in front of the other pupils. For Anna, this primarily meant a loss of honor which subsequently escalated. The teacher, who initially had a forging role in that she forged the pupils together as a class, was transformed into a dividing role, which is evident from the following quote:

The female teacher I had in my second year (and half of the third year) never showed this respect to me, something that I noticed very clearly. I was not allowed to take medicine with my food. She spoke badly about me in front of my class mates etc. The head teacher believed the teacher when she said that I was the post pupil she had ever had and demanded that I should be “removed” from her class. The head teacher was also my mother’s boss and strangely enough I felt that he liked me when I saw him (Anna).

The teacher, who was a model to the pupils, divided the group, but she blamed Anna for being a dividing force. Here the child has to carry the quilt of the grown-up. Furthermore, the teacher’s actions must have divided the teachers since Anna’s mother was one of her colleagues.

The teacher’s role and her actions can be discussed in relation to role-taking in the institutionalization process. When a person is learning a role, that person must have acquired the routines that are necessary as a basis for understanding for the other actors. Furthermore, the role-taker must have a good knowledge of the cognitive and affective structures that are activated and that, consequently, belong to that role, directly as well as indirectly.²⁴ In the current situation it could be that the acting teacher was unconscious of the fact that her actions divided the group and that she projected the division on Anna, who later took the role of the absent and thus invisible pupil.

In all teacher roles there are various types of fosterage. Based on the fact that Anna was not allowed to mix her medication in her food, the teacher dismissed Anna’s mother as a good fosterer, at the same time as she herself took on the role of a good mother. Through this, the other pupils, and also Anna, could have thought that her familial context was different from that of other families. The fostering role taken by the teacher could lead to a division where the other pupils’ behavior was the norm, and Anna’s behavior was the opposite of the norm. This phenomenon is described by Berger and Luckmann as a part of institu-

24 Berger & Luckmann, 1979:94.

tionalization. They write: The social division of knowledge effectuates a dichotomization in terms of general and role-specific relevance”.²⁵

In the institutionalization process a specific role is determined for a specific occasion. At the same time it gives the opposite role to the other interactants. The characteristics of these roles are not accepted in one's own group. Consequently, certain roles are excluded from being positive. When a collective has interacted with a person who has been allocated a negatively evaluated role, that person can assume the role. Through this, that person will also acquire a negative self-image which can manifest itself in various forms of withdrawal, and also, as in Anna's case, a role that can be connected with a psychosomatic condition that is very difficult to handle, and which can lead to social disability.

Anna expresses her self-image in the following way:

I think that I probably would have developed well and that I would have become quite “strong” if I hadn't been repressed and bullied in school by other pupils and by one of the teachers. To hear on a daily basis how bad you are and how little you are worth as a person “broke me down”. All the name-calling and blows did not make it any easier. However, I had a secure home environment where my mother, grandmother and grandfather were the most important people for me (Anna).

Judging from this description she has had a self-image which includes such characteristics as can lead to an ability to take initiative to and participate in new social contexts. This is confirmed in her aspiration to take part in various social contexts, such as school, music and socializing. Given the value ascribed to the social context she used various strategies to be able to be one among the others. She writes:

In secondary school I lent money to other pupils, I tried to “buy” my friends in one way or the other because I was so lonely (Anna).

When she looks back on her life she describes herself as active and social. But through the harassments she became shy, played truant and acquired a poor self-image. As a result of the oppression she performed poorly in all school subjects apart from English and music. She also gave up singing, playing the violin and dancing folk dance. What she was subjected to as a child has made her into an introvert person, who

25 Berger & Luckmann, 1979:44.

also became invisible within her own group. The self-image she presents is basically positive but the roles that she has taken through the values of the collective are negative. She suffers from severe social phobia stopping her from participating in education of various types, and also from taking part in social activities where several people interact, but she can participate when she takes the role of the invisible student. The course she is reading confirms her behavior as adequate given what she has been exposed to. The course literature has made her aware of the fact that she has chosen the courses to come to terms with her life.

The third person I interviewed is Aron, 33. His childhood and family are described in the following way:

My family consists of parents and half-brothers and half-sisters in various forms, I grew up with my older half-brother and my mother, as my father moved to Svealand with his new woman when I was seven. Later he had two more children with this woman, who also are my half-brothers. I would describe my family as a bit scattered. I cohabit without children so I don't consider myself having a family of my own making today (Aron).

In Aron's story a family emerges that can be characterized as a divided unit or as a divided universe. The family type he describes has become increasingly common in Sweden.

When he was 16 Aron left home to attend an upper-secondary boarding school for gardeners. After upper-secondary school he lived with his mother, but soon moved to his own dwelling. He had poor grades in school, but in upper-secondary school he passed all his subjects. Regarding his professional roles he writes:

Gardener, construction worker, recruiter at a direct-advertising company, flag-stone layer, railroad worker, demolition worker, and then flag-stone layer again. This between 1994 and 2006. The major part of this time as spent as a flag-stone layer (Aron).

According to his story he has had several professional roles. When he worked as a flagstone fitter he was intellectually under-stimulated. His job did not give him any new challenges and his body was affected by the physically demanding work. Therefore, he saw to it that he was dismissed by his employer. At this time he also separated from the woman he had been living with. These factors, together with a good score on

the Scholastic Aptitude Test contributed to him starting to study. The reason why he chose the religious studies in Gävle, instead of the agricultural sciences, which would be a further development of his previous profession, he describes in the following way:

Because religion had long interested me, and then primarily *why* people believe, *how* they believe, and how it *affects* their lives. That it was a program on distance was decisive because I did not have to commute or move. Distance studies appeal to me since I am not a social person and I am very happy in my own company (Aron).

His choice of studies is based on a genuine interest in how religion can function and affect people in their lives. The reason why he chose distance education are both to do with infrastructure and with his personality which makes him less socially inclined.

This invisible student has a previous professional life behind him. But he chose to study religion on distance instead of developing his previous profession closer to home. The choice of discipline is based on an interest in religion, not on gathering knowledge for a future profession or professional role. Based on this attitude to studies the student also becomes capable of creating a platform for himself for future work, and of contributing to creating a symbolic universe which also contains a number of different roles that can also be a part of the new institution of tertiary education.

In the following section parts of the stories will be interpreted from a gender perspective. I will primarily emphasize the private and the public spaces and the informants' role-taking in relation to the places they choose as their places of study.

The invisible students in female and male spaces

In the following interpretation of the contexts described by the informants, their social contexts play a decisive role in explaining why they choose distance education. According to the first interview, the informant's own family has a very important function. The social life described is family centered and her own family also revolves around her parents and brothers and sisters with their families. The space that Berit uses for her studies is, according to Forsberg, the women's space, which is characterized as reproductive and immanent. In this space various roles

are reproduced that are tied to traditional acts connected with gender roles where the mother has an important function. Other activities that are performed in the home are tied to familial roles in various types of activities.

In the story it is clear that Berit always returns to her family. From a gender perspective she reverts to the gender-based roles that she has previously internalized. The fact that she has chosen the religious studies because of her own interest in human existential questions can also be understood as a female attitude towards studies. This would mean that she studies to obtain answers to her own existential questions, her own thoughts and ideas, which could be related to her own crises. Based on Chodorow's theory, this invisible student could have a conception of self which is initially conflated with that of her mother, and later with that of her husband. The conflated self conception tends to reproduce such characteristics as sensitivity and emotional commitment among women, characteristics that would also seem to be important to Berit.

When the follow-up interview was not returned, in spite of the fact that the receipt indicated that the message had been opened, I checked the student register and found that Berit had interrupted her studies. The invisibility, which is part of her student role, can contribute to a sense of alienation, which can make it easier to drop the courses. In my interpretation she consequently reverts to the more familiar and desirable familial roles, which already have a very high value. These roles are practiced at home – the feminine space, which is reproductive and immanent.²⁶

For the second student invisibility is based on a severe case of social phobia that stems from her years at primary school. The harassment has taken place in the public space, which, according to Forsberg, is the men's space, described as the reproductive and transcendent space. There various roles are transformed which differ from the roles that are considered as natural. The public spaces have had a continued and very negative effect on the person; she suffers from anxiety hysteria and she has returned as soon as possible to the home, that is, the female, reproductive and immanent space. In the female space she can read the course literature, and she can confirm her behavior as normal and then she can complete her assignments. Through this, the courses would

26 Forsberg, 2002:14-17. She sees the private space as the women's space, which she also characterizes as reproductive and immanent. The public space is the men's space. It is characterized as reproductive and transcendent.

have added psychological and emotional values, beyond the academic and cognitive content. Although the courses are based on academic criteria the literature can act as a form of symbolic interactant, and the student can be placed in the situation she was when the violations took place. The emotions and the situation as it was perceived then are communicated through the course assignments, which means that the course could lead to a higher degree of awareness of her own problems; in some cases this could have healing capacities. This process can be compared to a therapeutic process, but there is no transfer to a therapist. In my interpretation the student did not take a new role. The invisibility and the retraction were accepted by the teacher, the other students and by the student herself. Thus it is theoretically possible that the role as the invisible student can be reproduced and strengthened, and it can be confirmed as normal behavior.

For the third student (male), the physical presence of the family has been of low importance. This can be explained by Chodorow's gender theory. She argues that the boy develops his self via a basic rejection of the mother and he develops his conception of the masculine from a notion of what is not feminine.²⁷ This student had very poor grades in compulsory school, but improved considerably in upper-secondary school when he had moved away from home and was active in the public space. He has worked as a craftsman in various public spaces. After a number of years, he felt that he was not sufficiently stimulated intellectually. From a gender perspective the roles he has chosen are male. He also chose to leave home when he was 16, something which is a male action according to Chodorow.²⁸ He chose to study the science of religion out of an interest which is primarily focused on the functions of religion. In his description he takes the perspective of the beholder and studies what functions religion has. His studies take place in the public, male, reproductive and transformative space. His assessment of his own personality as less social can explain the fact that he is shy and more or less invisible, based on an assumption that he has not practiced roles that are characterized by extroversion.

Based on the discussion above, I will account for how Aron has assessed and experienced his development after further studies. The discussion is based on an interpretation of his narrative.

27 Chodorow, 1978; 1988.

28 Chodorow argues that boys, in comparison to girls, liberate themselves earlier from their mothers. Thus, it is more natural for boys than for girls to leave home at an earlier age. Chodorow, 1988.

Invisible student becomes visible

Below are some extracts and quotes from the story Aron wrote one year after the first story.

The theoretical knowledge that Aron thinks he has developed concerns his ability to treat the literature and to pass it on. He thinks he has learnt how to write papers in an understandable and relevant way. Through this specific writing he has developed his ability to express his knowledge in writing. He has also become better at criticizing and assessing various sources. Furthermore, he thinks his education is a foundation on which he bases his learning and continual development. The description he has given about learning is similar to Dewey's pedagogical ideas about students' learning by doing. In order for this pedagogical approach to function, it is necessary for the teacher to connect the content to the students' individual interests and personalities, which I argue amounts to creating a play area in accordance with Donald W Winnicott's definition. In this specific context Aron's personality has been described as shy and less social, which he has also been allowed to be. He was interested in religion before he applied to the religious studies. From this interest and his own way of completing the assignments, which has been confirmed as good, he has taken over and integrated a student role. This student role contains specific acts, with specific intentions resulting in him completing the assignments.

Aron also writes that the students have affected him in another way. He writes:

By internalizing theoretical knowledge I think I have developed a better ability to talk with people, and also to understand them in a better way. Through the education I have also developed greater curiosity, both in areas that are directly relevant to my studies, and also in other areas that I think can be linked to the education, such as philosophy, psychology and social sciences (Aron).

The quote indicates that the formerly quiet person, who rather spent time with himself, has become more communicative and more social. He has also become curious about other disciplines. Furthermore, he writes that his studies have given him a better self-confidence. He writes: [...] *that with ongoing and escalating learning the self-confidence also increases which benefits me as a person in general.* This quote suggests that Aron

has had a low self-confidence, which has grown during his studies. He has also developed a better ability to understand other people in various situations and to influence other people.

The placement period of the education gave him the following insights:

The good use I feel that I have had from the placement period I have completed, as this has given me the opportunity to relate my knowledge to working life and to see how it works in this context and consequently also see how my skills can be used practically. (...) the insight that the more I learn, the more I realize that I don't know as much as I thought (Aron).

He is able to understand how people's religious attitudes can manifest themselves in working life and this makes him understand how his knowledge can be used in the future.

Given the fact that distance education means working alone, above all for the invisible students, it is important to stress how the study program has affected the student's social life. This is how Aron describes his former and his present social context:

I was single and lived in a town in the south of Sweden. I had a small network of friends who I saw sporadically and I was happy with that. At this moment I live together with a woman in a little village in the countryside (...) I am still in contact with the friends I had back then, I see them occasionally on weekends and the contact we have is still relaxed and spontaneous (Aron).

He has moved, met a new sweetheart who he lives together with and he has kept his sporadic contact with his friends. He spends a lot of time with his partner, with whom he has a very good relationship. According to his story he has changed and he says that he is *somewhat of a recluse*. On the other hand, moving has meant that:

I have got a half-time job beside the studies, and my colleagues are intelligent people that I think I can interact with and I hope that this exchange is mutual. I am happy with my social situation as it is now, but I think I am a very adaptable person who can function in almost any environment (Aron).

Given Aron's description of himself as somewhat of a recluse, being a part of his basic personality, he also possesses extrovert characteristics that have made him *get* a job beside his studies. Through work he has also acquired new and intelligent colleagues, with whom he has mutual exchanges in interesting discussions. He also assesses his own personality: very adaptable. This description suggests that Aron has changed from a shy recluse to a more extrovert person who likes intellectual conversations with other people. His contacts with the other students are very sporadic, which he explains as a result of his quiet personality. The relationships with the other students are not important since they are not of a lasting nature, which is another argument against building relationships with them. I understand this argument from the point of view of bonding, where the separation creates grief. At the same time, he wants to stress that his fellow students are: *very nice and solid people*. In contrast, he would benefit more from more exchange with the teachers.

Finally, Aron writes that he is interested in further studies. The education has affected him in several ways: from a recluse to becoming more social, from unemployed to having a job where he works as a form of personal tutor, and from a quiet to a more communicative person. He also gradually became more visible during the courses. The study program lead to a change, where the teachers have an important function and who he really wanted to have more contact with. Consequently, the teachers have an important function in the development of the student, but this function can differ depending on the individual personality of each student.

Another important perspective on role-taking is that many distance students do not take part in an initiation ritual, which can be an important step in the process of taking a new role. I will discuss this in more detail in the next section.

Rites and invisibility

The students who study the science of religion at the University of Gävle do not, as a rule, participate in any form of initiation ritual or transformation rite to give them the student role. Many of the students read the courses at home, which means that they can keep their familiar roles and study on distance at the same time. They take the courses on the

Internet, which means that they do not meet teachers or fellow students in actual interaction, a situation which also becomes ritualized.

Our interactions are important in relation to taking new roles, which also take place in the form of continuous meetings with other participants. Regarding the students' role-taking, each seminar contains a form of ritualized behavior that each participant prepares for.²⁹ Each seminar makes the student and also the teacher focused on and absorbed by what is studied. If teaching works in this way, the learning situation corresponds in van Gennep's theory to the liminal phase of the rite. At this stage there is a joint development of knowledge. During this phase objects such as pencil, paper and notes are used, which have the common purpose of creating enhanced understanding and new perspectives that can be acknowledged or rejected by the participants. Based on the personal stories in this study it may be the case that the student who participated via video conference integrated the student role more easily than the two who participated via the Internet.

Two of the persons who participated in this study were completely invisible during the time I taught them. The third student was sitting far away from the camera, but came closer to it towards the end of the course. The participants have studied the science of religion out of their own interest in religion. None of the students have chosen the study program as a basis for a future profession. In the story analyzed in the present study it has emerged that the persons have been studying to gain, if possible, a deeper or different understanding of their selves and an understanding of how religion affects human beings. In addition, these students have indicated that a low self-confidence may be a reason for remaining invisible. The public, manly space which is reproductive and transcendent may be so charged that only the brave students can cross its threshold and then dare to return.

One of the invisible students interrupted her studies in the third term, which she did not inform me about when she was going to answer the follow-up questions of the first interview. According to her story, she has always interrupted the activities she has ventured into, with the exception of the familial situations, which are very important to her. By studying on distance via the Internet she can also be daughter, sister,

29 DeMarinis (1998) argues that symbols and rituals are used in daily life in the form of objects and acts. In my interpretation, such objects can be clothes items in the form of identity markers, paper and pencil, and the student's own notes to be discussed at a seminar.

mother and wife, roles that are used in the feminine space, that is, in the home, where she also pursues her studies. Furthermore, she has gone through some crises and from what I see in her text, she has always returned to the familiar roles.

Human reality depends on continuous interaction, leading to participation and integration of the roles that are relevant to the context. In the present situation, the continuous interaction connected to the student role may not have taken place, or taken place too seldom. The way in which these studies are pursued does not have to be connected with ritual acts, which is what campus-based studies really are. Consequently, the sense of unity with either teachers or other students may not have been realized, which can make it easier to decide to interrupt the course and also to remain anonymous in this interruption. Based on her story, it is difficult to say why she chooses to be invisible. It can be due to difficulties in leaving certain roles and about bonding with others. But there could also be other reasons.

The other student lacks the courage to enter the public, manly, reproductive and transcendent room since she gets attacks of anxiety hysteria there. As a result, she does not participate in rituals that are connected with both learning and the taking of a new role. This student has taken several separate courses in religion on distance, where she has always been invisible. The course literature she studied took her back to her childhood and early adulthood, and above all, to situations in school where she was subjected to both psychological and to physical violence. These situations, which since before are connected with rites, founded her role as the invisible pupil, which can be seen in the fact that she more and more often stayed away from school. She has always taken this role in study contexts. By giving her additional assignments she has been able to finish the courses she has applied to. This requires a high level of commitment from the teacher.

In view of the psychological condition of the student, and this can be the case for many students, it may be necessary to have more frequent and deeper contacts with some students, in order to develop recurrent rites and a type of interaction on distance. The reason for the invisibility of this student is a social phobia which is connected to severe anxiety. She does not practice a new student role since she can take courses that confirm her behavior as normal, based on what she has experienced, at the same time as she remains invisible. It has also transpired that it is

difficult for her to participate in the public space, which makes the taking of new roles more difficult.

The student discussed above can be a representative for some invisible students who study the science of religion. They attend courses or a program of study with the primary purpose of understanding themselves and their own search. Consequently, it can be important that the teachers have more frequent contacts with each student.

The person who is part of the study has participated from a video conference center, where initially he was sitting a long way away from the camera. None of the other participants were able to see what he looked like. But the students who participate via video conference go through the same rituals as the campus students, that is, they prepare at home, leave home, then enter the public space and take out the symbolic objects connected with the learning situation. In addition, they develop specific ritual acts, such as pressing a button when they want to talk and show themselves on screen. This primarily requires courage to cross the threshold to the public space and then sitting down in front of the camera. Then it requires great courage to press the button to be heard and seen, albeit at a distance. This form of study can train the invisible student to become more and more visible.

The student's choice to follow the course on distance was an infra-structurally conditioned possibility without having to move. Another important factor behind the choice is his personality which he terms *less social*. In the follow-up interview there is a description of his development over the time of study, which means that he has learnt how to assess sources, extract important information to understand text and write papers. He also assesses his own intellectual and personal development as good. From this the student's self-confidence has grown and, according to the text, but not in his self-evaluation, he is characterized as more social than before. This student has been present during video conferences, he has participated in the public and masculine space. He has not shown himself in close-ups, but in the course of his studies, he has moved closer to the camera. He has separated himself from his previous professional areas, and he actively enters new context where he conducts intellectual conversations with new colleagues. Through his education he has conquered new areas here he can take new roles that are meaningful. In the text Aron expresses a desire for closer contact with teachers is expressed, which he, among other things, considers to

have a great impact on the cognitive development. In my interpretation, this student has chosen to be invisible because of his low self-confidence, which has improved considerably. The ritual participation in the public space means participating in the game in the area of playing, and this develops the participants in many areas and helps them to take new roles.

Invisible students – new teacher roles

In the present study, it has transpired that the invisible students have had low self-confidence. One of them has also had low trust in realizing her dreams and ideas. For the women in the study, the Internet-based studies, which have primarily been conducted from their homes, may have been a contributing obstacle to take the student role. Furthermore, the more as a study place can mean that the original roles are reinforced. In my interpretation, students who study at home may need to develop different rites resembling the behaviors used by campus-based students and those who take part via video conference. In addition, the teacher and also the other students need to become involved in the invisible students. This conclusion is based on the stories examined in this study and on Dewey who stresses the importance of the teacher connecting to the individual interests and personalities of the students, and that the work forms are activity-based. This means that the teacher who works with students who do not show themselves need to make these students visible through another form of communication than the one seen in actual encounters. It also means that assignments in one way or another need to be discussed on the basis of the students' experiences and the literature.

The study also shows that the students' reading of the course literature can function as an object relation, in which the student interacts with the content of the literature. This type of reading can be compared to play, given that the reading can place the reader in distant time at the same time as she is here and in the future. This means that the teacher needs to understand what emotions can be awoken in the student. Some students may also need the teacher as a conversation partner without the teacher taking the role of a therapist.

The new teacher role which means that the teacher cannot observe the student's body language means that the teacher needs to use another

type of communication to understand the student. This communication must build on confidence and trust so that the student feels accepted for what he or she is. The study also shows that the teacher has a very important role for the student regarding feedback, which may have to be done more frequently.

The new teacher role which is connected with Internet-based teaching requires both other types of knowledge and new working methods, comprising a higher frequency of ritual behavior where the student and the teacher interact in the liminal phase. Such working methods could include more written assignments that acknowledge the person at the same time. This knowledge and working methods are different from traditional pedagogical demands placed on university teacher, and they are also more time consuming.

Today's students often study out of their own personal interests and many of them study to sort out various problems that stem from previous violations, going back to how they have been treated in school. The new student is a challenge for today's teachers.

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A young person in the periphery travels the world through higher education

Birgit Lindgren-Ödén

Over a number of years I have interviewed, or rather talked with some young people within the framework of the study *Some young voices in late modernity*.¹ The overarching purpose is to try to understand what the lives of some individuals look like in a late-modern community, in this case the province of Gästrikland, the southern part of the county of Gävleborg. The county is plagued by sinister newspaper headlines concerning the low education level, the high unemployment rate and the tepid interest in participating in democratic decision processes. In the 2003 referendum on the euro the inhabitants of the county were not interested in joining the monetary union. Participation in the election to the European Parliament in 2004 attracted little interest, with only the county of Blekinge showing a lower rate of participation. At the parliamentary election in 2006 the county ended up second from the bottom with regard to participation rate with the Malmö city constituent at the bottom.

In Gästrikland the basic industry is still the forestry and steel industry, but there is a marked increase in the number of service companies in Gävle, the county town. In Hofors and Sandviken the situation is very problematic as the local industries, Ovako Steel and Sandvik AB, respectively, are struggling with low profitability. The possibilities of maintaining a livelihood are therefore limited and the young people are the most heavily exposed group. Statistics from the employment agencies show that the county of Gävleborg has the highest youth unemployment rate in the country with 20.1 % unemployed in the age group

1 Lindgren-Ödén, Birgit (on-going project) Longitudinal studie on persons born 1982-83. The interviews were made between 1999 and 2008. The informants come from Gävle, Hofors and Sandviken in the province of Gästrikland.

18-24. This can be compared to the county of Stockholm where youth unemployment is 5.7 % and the national average is 11.8 %.² Regional development is consequently a pressing issue for the county. The young people need alternatives to unemployment to meet a challenging future. *One* such alternative can be tertiary education.

The University of Gävle – a platform for the travelling student?

The heading suggests that a university or a university college can be the starting point for further studies, not necessarily the only stop on the way for a student in postindustrial society. The expanding regional university is a platform as well as a beacon. In the academic year 2004/2005, around 10,000 people were studying at the University of Gävle.³ Of these, 64 % were women. Out of the 15,000 applications to courses and programs of study for the autumn term 2008, nearly 5,000 were made by people who had never before studied at a university. The share of young students (19 years old) has increased in the whole country.⁴ The economist Susanna Holzer has studied the effects of the expansion of Swedish higher education and states that more young people without an academic background will begin studying if there is a local university.⁵ It has also become more generally accepted among more socioeconomic groups to regard higher education as equally important as entering the labor market.⁶ After taking the leap of applying to the local university, it also becomes a natural choice to study at another university. This also means that the role of the local university in a county without an academic tradition is greater than the sum of the courses and programs on offer. It can also be a platform for the travelling student, or why not, for the educational traveler.

2 This is the summary of the employment situation in February 2010 according to the National Employment Agency in Sweden. Unemployment is accounted for in the age span 18-24. http://www.arbetsförmedlingen.se/library/documents/ams/pressmeddelanden/sammanfattning_10_02.pdf.

3 The University College of Gävle/Sandviken was established in 1977. Teacher education dominated. Technical programs were located in Sandviken 1977-1994. When the programs were moved to Gävle the name was changed to the University of Gävle.

4 See SCB 2009.

5 Holzer, 2009:2-4.

6 Holzer, 2009:29.

A renaissance for the Grand Tour?

The purpose of this text is to focus on the attitudes to education in late modernity of *one* person born in the 1980s. In this context, the new student should be understood as the relationship to education of one individual. Here I have chosen to describe the educational route of Lotta⁷ from her last year in upper-secondary school in 1999/2000 to 2008. Lotta will probably find inroads to gaining her livelihood in a society where we no longer can forecast the future labor market with any degree of certainty. Lotta is well oriented, she is critical towards traditional educational programs and she has a financial freedom through the state-funded study loan system, that is, she travels the world and studies on distance by means of the Swedish system of study loans and grants (CSN).⁸ Authenticity is an important part of her view of knowledge and she says: - why read books about Uruguay when I can go there myself and experience things? Why is Lotta not satisfied with first studying at an institution and then, as far as time and money permit, travel the world? Is this a form of contemporary educational travel?

The journeys of the aristocracy in the 17th century was part of aristocratic pedagogy and with the following motto they conquered the world: “A brave mind and high spirits will not be confined to its house like a mollusk.”⁹ In contrast to the aristocratic educational journeys, the present-day commoner can leave Sweden and go to the “university of the world” during his or her studies.¹⁰ Scholarly erudition is brought to life in genuine encounters. The role of the “preceptor”¹¹ used to be to accompany and watch over the noble young men on their journeys. Today they¹² do not travel with the students but stay at home and enter

7 The name has been made up.

8 CSN, Centrala studiestödsnämnden, National Swedish agency, that handles applications for study grants and loans for studies in Sweden. The government decides which types of education programs are covered.

9 Lindroth, 1975:58.

10 *Univérsitas*, (lat.). I use the original meaning of *whole, the whole world*. Nordisk familjebok.

11 *Praeceptor* (lat. *praecēptor* ‘teacher’, av *praeci pio* ‘I teach’), a holder of the office of *preceptor*, closest in rank below that of full professor in the humanities and the social sciences. The office was created in 1947, and was changed into associate professor in 1969 and to professor in 1979. (www.ne.se) In the 17th century Erik Lindeman - Lindschöld was the companion and teacher (preceptor) for Gustaf Carlson, Karl X Gustav’s illegitimate son. For nine years Lindeman-Lindschöld and Carlson travelled around Europe, partly to study at various universities, partly to obtain a general education (language, culture, etc.).

12 In this context, *they* should be interpreted as professor or lecturer, that is, the teacher teaching the course.

grades for the learning achievements sent in by students from an Internet café. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has surveyed Swedish students' studies abroad. In the academic year 2008/2009, over 24,000 students studied abroad on exchange programs or as free-movers and they received study grants from CSN. In the group of free-movers (official label for students who are studying "on their own") there is a small increase in the number of students (three per cent), compared to the year before.¹³ Languages and art are the most common disciplines studied, which means that there are similarities to the earlier educational journeys of the young nobility. The above-mentioned free-movers seem to have an expanded view on education and consequently I ask the question: why? One explanation may be found in what the political scientist Ronald Inglehart¹⁴ calls "The silent revolution".

The silent revolution

Ronald Inglehart's macro level studies have inspired and informed my micro level study. Inglehart investigates changes in political and economic goals, religious patterns, norms and family values to explain how these changes influence economic growth, political strategies and the possibilities of a democratic institution. I am studying how these changes in society affect some young people in a small and limited area. Inglehart argues that the surrounding world means that every generation acquires a common frame of reference and that this, in turn, leads to a development of joint strategies and values where basic values are formed in childhood (socialization). It is a reasonable assumption that each generation acquires shared frames of reference but it is also relevant to investigate the individual differences there might be within the group.

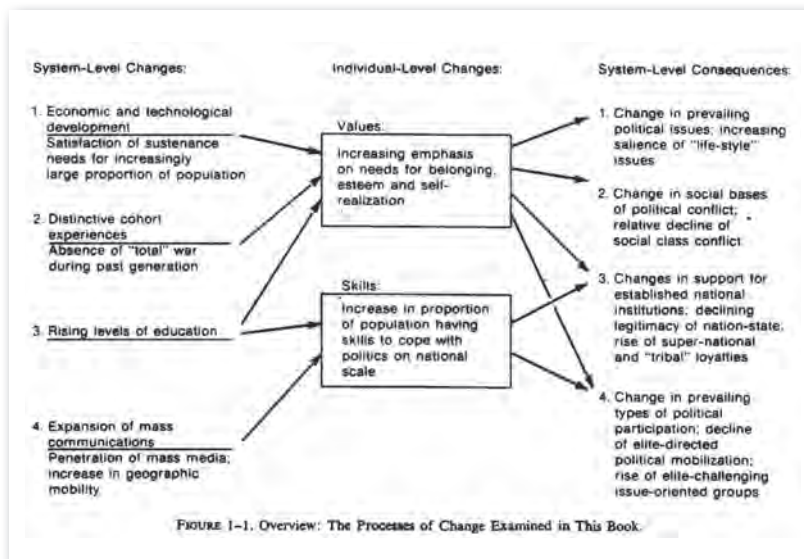
Inglehart says that the individual interacts with society. This process has three stages:

- 1 a change on the societal level leads to
- 2 a change on the individual level, which in turn
- 3 has consequences and leads to changes on the societal level.

13 Högskoleverket (2010:R). Kapitlet om internationell mobilitet (Report from the Swedish National Agency for Higher education, (2010:R), Chapter on international mobility).

14 Inglehart, (1977/90/97/2003/2005) studies changes in values in several Western countries.

Summary of Inglehart's theory (Inglehart's schema for change 1971):¹⁵



The economic and technological development in the western world has contributed to a higher degree of needs satisfaction regarding basic needs such as food and security.¹⁶ The younger generations grow up in a time without direct experiences of war, which probably leads to a higher sense of security.¹⁷ A higher level of education, expansion of the mass media and increased geographical mobility probably contribute to major societal changes that will affect the individual person. Inglehart argues that this development enables changes in values on both on the macro and on the micro level. The changes noticed by Inglehart are that people who feel safe and have enough to eat aspire to higher steps on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.¹⁸ At the individual level there are changes in values where values such as spirit of community and self-fulfillment become important. These changes have societal consequences. Inglehart predicts that new political issues will be important, especially those

¹⁵ Inglehart, 1977:5.

¹⁶ Bolman, Lee, G., & Terrence, E., Deal, 2005:154.

¹⁷ The *indirect* experiences are not discussed here. It is probable that many young people have been affected by, for instance, the Vietnam War (1960-75). Inglehart discusses the consequences of indirect experiences in later works.

¹⁸ Maslow's hierarchy of needs is: 1) physiological needs, 2) safety needs, 3) love and belonging, 4) esteem, 5) self-actualization.

with a focus on lifestyle. Confidence in one's own abilities will also lead to an increase in civic competence, which will enable more people to participate in the political process. Political differences will emerge between new groups and not necessarily between the traditional political fractions, which in turn can lead to reduced conflicts between classes. With a higher proportion of well-informed and well-educated citizens the confidence in the state and its agencies will diminish and the legitimacy of the nation state will be reduced. Loyalty can be global, but also local in a small community or interest group.

These new forms of political participation with a reduced element of mobilization of the "masses" controlled by an elite means that various interest groups will challenge the established political system. The silent revolution is a gradual, silent and slow change. In due course post-materialist values will saturate society. Inglehart also says that the quiet revolution is not only about post-materialism/materialism. There are also changes to be expected in religious behavior, moral values and norms.

Inglehart's starting-point is the major changes that western society has experienced after World War II. The focuses on four aspects:

1. *Increased material wealth.* Through economic growth the standard of living¹⁹ has improved since incomes after the Second World War have doubled or even quadrupled per capita in many western countries, including the years of the energy crises 1973-1975. (1977)
2. *Absence of direct experiences of war* since the Second World War, that is, the majority of young people do not have any direct experiences of war.
3. *Improved level of general education.* There are three times as many post-materialists among young people with a university education compared to people of the same age with only compulsory education. Inglehart argues that higher education leads to intellectual growth; that it is a sign of having attended a special, often secluded social environment with a marked ethos; and that it is a sign of good financial family background. University education also teaches a post-materialist attitude. Course

19 The calculations are based on Inglehart's early research (1977); it is likely that the economic growth has increased over time.

literature and tuition can be permeated with a post-materialist spirit. Inglehart sees before him a young and well-educated elite as intermediary of the post-materialist values of the future. Inglehart notices an important factor in the tendency that more and more people are going on to tertiary education. Surveys at universities show that students have become more liberal, less dependent on authority and less dogmatic, and more tolerant and more interested in political issues.

4. *The growing influence of mass media*, spread of information and its agentive role in the socialization process. The development in mass communication affects people's values; as early as in the 1970s Inglehart saw technology as an important factor in the future. He describes the technological innovations in terms of emerging national and international networks, leading to faster communication between geographically separated people.

The post-materialist – who is s/he?

According to Inglehart it is mainly the younger generations that develop post-materialist values, and primarily within two areas: their political competence and central systems of value. Development takes place thus: "The rise of emancipative orientations, such as individualism, autonomy, promotion orientations, and self-expression values, reflect the process of human development".²⁰ The post-war generations have lived with an increase in the spread of information via mass media and an increased level of education which has lead to increased civic competence. Consequently, according to Inglehart, the citizens will influence the political system in accordance with their values and demand that society prioritize the new central systems of value.

These gradual changes can be hard to perceive and according to Inglehart this can be due to an inclination to stick to traditions and an absence of *concepts or models* that can encompass processes or alternative visions of the future. A phenomenon that cannot be understood or explained is edited and adapted to the old map. Inglehart advocates a new map when, in comprehensive surveys, he shows that changes of values are taking place in large parts of the western world. Changes in

20 Inglehart & Welzel, 2005:145.

values are occurring because the majority of the young people have had favorable material conditions during their formative years and consequently they do not need to fight for basic sustenance; it is there already. They keep this view of living conditions over time which also means that societies will eventually be permeated by these norms. Inglehart predicts that prolonged education programs, more people in education, the increased amount of mass media and an experience of a lack of context in life make people change their values in many areas.

The post-materialist – a lone ranger?

In a report from The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs,²¹ the author refers to Thomas Ziehe and his concept of “cultural release”.²² The conclusion of the report is that youth today is qualitatively different compared with the conditions of previous generations. Nilsson says that this cultural release will probably mean that aspects such as age, sex, and social and cultural background will not have the same conditioning influence in a range of areas on the individual person as before. Nilsson also refers to Britta Jonsson’s results in her study *Ungdomars livsprojekt och moderniseringen av Sverige* (1993).²³ To find oneself, to look inwards, develop one’s personality and to find an identity can be a way of creating security and stability in a world of quick change.²⁴ Nilsson sees a decisive difference between the youth of today and yesterday when electronic media enable contact and a spirit of community in a wider context. Nilsson argues that it is easier today than before to realize that the dreams and visions you have as a young person are not much different from those in other countries. The sociologist Michel Maffesoli²⁵ discusses new lifestyles and says that there is a change in the attitude towards common interests among individual people and in certain groups. In parallel with “old patterns” we also find new ways. In postmodernity we form different groups or *tribes* where we are still allowed to be individual persons but the group is held together by a sense

21 Nilsson, 1996:12-38.

22 Ziehe, 1994:38. Ziehe discusses the dismantling of traditional patterns of orientation.

23 Young people’s life-projects and the modernization of Sweden.

24 Jonsson’s description of young people’s values accords well with Inglehart’s definition of post-materialism.

25 Maffesoli, 1996:6-8. See also Lindgren, Luthi & Furth, 2005. *MeWe or Mobile Kids with Lots of Friends* in the sense: not only just me or just us, a study of the 1908s generation.

of sociality. Maffesoli argues that postmodern society consists of a quilt of various units with specific feelings of sociality that are specific for a particular tribe. The group is loosely organized and free to enter and leave for the individual person. Young people who are travelling around the world seem to have a well functioning network and a sense of sociality with each other regardless if they are at the same place or not. Lotta can belong to this category!

Lotta – a postmaterial tribe member?

In the text below Lotta talks about her dreams for the future. She is 18 years old. Further on in the text we accompany her on her “journey”. Lotta is in her last year in upper-secondary school when I meet her for the first time.²⁶ This is her reply to my question about her future dreams:

Lotta: Wow! I have like seven hundred million things that I want to do. I haven't travelled a lot, hardly anything, as a matter of fact. So that is what I would like to begin with when I leave school. My dream is to just travel around to different countries and to experience different cultures and to meet different people, but it can be a bit difficult to do that because of one thing: money. There is a price for everything. But I'm going somewhere anyway, maybe combine travelling with studying + having an extra job wherever I end up. I have studied some languages a bit, too, it would be fun to go to those countries. Then I want to go on studying too, well, want to or want to. I suppose I have to, if I'm ever going to get a job. I'm torn between going straight on to further studies or doing something else. But I cannot afford to do anything else. I don't know where I would get the money from, and do something else.

After leaving school, Lotta travelled around. In the autumn of 2001 she went to Barcelona to study Spanish and Spanish culture.

Lotta: Then when I got back home I started to study English (pause) I had planned to work. I didn't quite want to study yet [...] I felt that I wanted to work then. But if you come straight from upper-secondary school with no experience, they offer – what is it? Two and a half thousand a month after tax for a full-time job! One of those practice-jobs for young people. And

26 I met Lotta for the first time in 1999.

then I thought: I'd rather study and have a grant of two and a half and study, and do something fun instead of being at some kindergarten. Then I started working extra at a kindergarten...

After a while in her own apartment and studies at the University of Gävle, things start happening.

Lotta: In Barcelona I could go to school and study Spanish, but I couldn't talk to the people in the street. And then I wanted to study some Catalan because that's what they speak in Barcelona. And then I was longing to go back to Barcelona a lot. So that was my plan. But my Colombian friend took off to Columbia and then I thought: it would be fun to go and see her (?) but I cannot afford it if I stay on my own. So I moved back home to mum and dad in the autumn term to save some money because I didn't have to pay any rent there. So I studied Spanish at the same time as I was living at home. I took my last exam on January 10 I remember, and then I went to Columbia on January 11 (pause) as quickly as I could.

Having come back from Columbia the rucksack was packed again for more language studies in Barcelona. When she got back to Sweden again she began to study at a university.

We met again in the autumn of 2005 when Lotta was on a quick visit to her home town. Lotta was busy as she was once again packing for a year's travel in South America.

Birgit: Why have you become so keen on travelling?

Lotta: Well, I've been thinking about it, why, (pause) I don't know, I have no good answer to that, I just want to, if you want to find out about something it's the only way to go and look at it in reality. It doesn't work to read about things, if you experience something or read about the same thing then it is two completely different things. Yes, but this is how things work in Uruguay, nothing will be as in reality and if you are supposed to learn something it feels like you have to travel around. And I want to have this foundation as it were, that I, I don't know how to explain, I don't know if I know myself what I mean (laughter)

School offers teaching and real life offers learning. Tage Kurtén²⁷ says that one attitude in modern/late modern society is to doubt ready-made

27 Kurtén, 1997:34-36.

thought systems. He argues that the modern human being's way of viewing his or her situation is as a subject in relation to life and reality: "It is the enlightened man who has dethroned every authority from its pedestal." Kurtén finds it problematic that there is a strong belief in the autonomous self. This freedom of thought and of the individual does not agree with the fact that people are in fixed social contexts that are realized and decided by certain given views. My objection is that the fixed social contexts can be changed over time, if we want them to! Barbara Czarniawska²⁸ says that it is a pressing but difficult task to break patterns that are taken for granted and she refers to Davies Bronwyn: "The power of the pre-existing structure of the traditional narrative to prevent a new form of narrative from being heard is ever-present".²⁹ Is it possible for given ideas and fixed social contexts to change over time or are there (un)voiced barriers?

To understand, I continue by asking Lotta what she means by "doing something for real".

Birgit: You spoke earlier about getting this experience, meeting people, meeting another human being and about it being for real.

Lotta: But, but, you know what will be the big thing is just his (pause) what I want to get out of it, is that I will learn for my own sake. I don't care (pause) the most important for me is not that it looks good on paper, what I have done later on. The most important for me is that I get out of it what I want. I want to go to South America and learn about all the things (pause) (...) I want to go there and learn about it. Then I will develop as a human being. And that will give me much more than if I have good credits from something, when I'm applying for a job. It will give you self-esteem, or a knowledge that will go much further than many other things you could do.

Inglehart's definition of post-materialism as "the rise of emancipative orientations and self-expression values" is well in agreement with Lotta's values. I go on to ask about how the path from thought to action has grown:

Birgit: Why did you choose this? I mean, why did you decide...

Lotta: We were in New York last autumn (...) Then we met some guys from Trinidad (...) and then we thought about it, I don't remember how but we

28 Czarniawska, 2004:91.

29 Bronwyn Davies cited by Czarniawska in Czarniawska, 2004:91.

thought about this idea but if we're going to study anyway and the courses are offered as distance courses and we don't have to be in Sweden at all, because at that time my friend had just started studying on distance and she had gotten into this, then you can be anywhere, she studied in when we were in New York, you know, and then she handed in an assignment, you know, but why should we then be in Sweden and pay a lot of money for a 23 square meter student flat and not have money to food and anything when in Uruguay you can live like king on 6,900 a month and still we can study and travel around and see a lot of things.

These mobile students who persist in messing up the education system! What consequences will this have for universities? I would like to come back to the observations and conclusions that Susanna Holzer report on in her dissertation, that the extended role of the universities in education in the future. A not too bold assumption is that the future (global) labor market will demand cultivated as well as educated employees. It should be a regional and a national issue to choose education whether they are at home, in another part of Sweden or the world. This also means that the education opportunities should be close to the young people who will then use the regional university as a spring board.

Robin Moberg³⁰ hopes that the Bologna process will result in increased mobility since Swedish students tend to stay at home. He argues that the inclination to stay within the Swedish borders is a good evaluation of Swedish universities, but mobility has added values that need to be stressed. The vision is that studies abroad become matter of course and the model is the classic educational journey which in the long run is not confined to Europe. Moberg sees the future student in: - The whole world is the goal! Lotta, a young woman from a small place in Sweden has already done what Moberg is dreaming about.

I continue to ask Lotta about her aims with education:

Birgit: How do you picture your future? Do you have a special type of education in mind or?

Lotta: I will never do a full program of study, I will be reading courses, the problem is that I have taken a lot of foundation courses, I have not come any further, because I cannot make up my mind what I want to do, it all

Birgit: Everything is interesting?

30 Vice chair of the National council of student unions (Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer) discusses the new goals of the Bologna process in *Universitetsläraren*, May 2010, 11.

Lotta: Yes, exactly or it feels that if I'm focusing on sociology then I will miss political science and if I focus on English I will miss sociology, so I must just not care about missing things some things I can read on my own, just because I'm not taking a course does not mean that I won't read books about political science, or something like that, I just have to, it doesn't really matter what I read I will be happy anyway. I just have to make up my mind. I guess that's it (thoughtful pause) (...)

The problem (if it is a problem!) today is that what is on offer and the ensuing wealth of possibilities can make the choices a agonizing process! What should I choose, or rather, what should I drop. Ziehe³¹ talks about a multitude of fields of knowledge that are relatively simple to conquer, which in turn can mean that the individual (the young person) jumps between different fields of knowledge instead of stopping at one and digging deeper there. Ziehe argues that this diversification also leads to diversified learning. This means that the young person knows a little about a lot instead of a lot about a little. Is this a sign of accelerating superficiality or is it a consequence of our time? What skills and knowledge are in demand today? The ability of young people to be flexible and mobile and to navigate in various contexts, I think is a necessity to cope with the various actors that, whether we want it or not, are in operation in our immediate surroundings. It should be noted, however, that pure professional training still requires in-depth knowledge in the disciplines leading to solid professional competence.³²

Lotta lives in the present, but she is aware that several years' of study loans for reading basic or foundation courses can mean that she will not be able to get a degree but large debts payable to the state. Below, Lotta talks more about the strategies she has. In the autumn of 2008 Lotta talked about the time in South America and about life at present. During her journey she earned 30 credits. She travelled on her study loan and staying with her friend's uncles gave her a sense of authenticity. For three months they could stay for free at a relative's.

Back to Sweden and studies at a university and Lotta is talking about what she is doing just now year 2008:

Lotta: Right now I'm reading sociology, it doesn't matter what I study, I can put my own angle on it. I have also read political science but sociology is broader. I changed my mind after the B-course so I don't have the C-essay

31 Ziehe, 1994:67-68.

32 In contrast, it is a difficult task to identify the professions that "last" on the job market.

(Bachelor's degree essay). The topic, the issue was about fair trade, which I had formulated together with the supervisor does not feel right any longer.

The youth researcher Mats Trondman³³ sees an increased degree of subjectivization in youth groups. By this he means that young people tend to do what feels good to them right now, and he also says that young people are relation oriented, that is, they put a lot of emphasis on how people treat each other.³⁴

Lotta continues:

I have also done Spanish B-level, I cannot get a Bachelor's degree there. The quickest way to a degree is through sociology. My study loans ended last term so this term I started on a folk high-school course because that will give me an extra term's study loan for studying at the upper-secondary school level

I'm also thinking about some kind of practice placement (...) if I can get can get into the association then I can apply for project money. I'm not so interested in what they do, but I'm interested in the method. I could also do the second term of the tourism course because it includes six weeks' practice which means that I could combine the final assignment with the sociology course so that during this time I can finish my degree essay (...)

Paying back my study loan, right now I guess it is about 1,000 per month and it must be paid back in 20 years, but at the same time I think that I have no other loans. I don't regret going to South America and that I had that opportunity via the study loan.

Lotta knows how to use the study loan system but she is also aware that she will have to pay back the money over a long time.

Sending in exam papers from internet cafés worked (...) We have had books, but we have also included genuine material, we ask people about information of the country, etc. This goes for both sociology and political science. You got fun ideas all the time. I have never studied what I thought, and now I want the easiest possible way to my degree.

Talks and interviews in the field in combination with course literature, an optimal environment for learning.

33 Utbilder, 2004:3-5.

34 See Mafessoli's concept of *Sociality*.

Sweden in the world and the world in Sweden?

Studying outside the borders of Sweden is no new phenomenon. Historically it was the noble young men who made these educational journeys, and in later years fortunate recipients of scholarships have received the opportunity to be exchange students (which is not quite the same thing). Today different categories of Swedish students have the chance of widening their horizons and, to use Inglehart's terminology, of being post-materialists in practice. This means that the state finances the young person's development, to become someone, but not necessarily something.³⁵

The educational journeys³⁶ which marked the endpoint of academic education have, in these cases, been replaced by a *both and*. The Swedish study loan system makes this possible, albeit on borrowed money but on the other hand, the student receives an education and learning with the same money. The new student goes out in the world to observe and to get answers to questions that universities have not defined beforehand. This happens in a time when the established institutions no longer have the information privilege.³⁷

A reasonable assumption is that Lotta, in her own way, will "live up to" the expectations that are placed on the new student in relation to the learning outcomes of the courses.³⁸ The new student (who makes up a small category in the total number of students) or why not the young postmaterial self-taught person³⁹ does not necessarily have to surf only

35 *Generationsanalyser – omfördelning mellan generationer i en växande välfärdsstat*, Rapport till ESS, Expertgruppen för Studier i Samhällsekonomi, 2006:6. The conclusions in the report on material conditions in Sweden show that people born in the 1930s and in the 1980s are the winners with regard to receiving funding from the public section. Second only to people born in the 1930s, people born in the 1980s receive most money from the public section, due to their relatively shorter work life compared to previous generations. This is a consequence of late entry into work life. See also Ingleharts four points in this text.

36 Lindroth, 1975:56-65.

37 Gustavsson, (1999), discusses public life in the following sense: who has the right to read, hear and view x? but also: who has the right to write, shape and influence x? According to Gustavsson, the information privilege is the access to facts in a society. I agree with Gustavsson's ideas.

38 The Bologna process and "Learning outcomes". In accordance with these directives, expected learning outcomes should be stated in terms of competences, knowledge and skills.

39 Maksim Gorkij walked barefoot and longed *to go to* university; Lotta is *walking away* from the university, with a set of shoes to use depending on her current choices. Gorkij wrote about this in a book; Lotta is writing about it on a travel blog. With the phrase the post-material self-taught person I mean that a set of shoes should be understood as her having a broad base of *foundation* courses from university. Gorkij had to manage without them!

between different universities, but in authentic encounters he or she can form opinions about the state of things by comparing the content of the course literature to empirical observations where the primary sources become central in a time characterized by great changes. The possible negative effect I can see is that stressing the importance of the person's own experiences can reduce the importance of scholarly based queries and theories. A natural step would then be for the university teachers to leave their department from time to time to accompany a student on a journey. To this I will return in my article "Arenas for learning".

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Author's material

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Jointness & individual student's aspirations: Reflections on the Tuning Project, universities' contributions to the Bologna Process.

Juan Carlos Gumucio

The main scope of this article is to analyze the results of a questionnaire on competences in teaching and learning, in the context of the Bologna Process and the Tuning Educational Structures project,

(...) a university driven project which aims to offer a concrete approach to implement the **Bologna Process** [*highlighted in the original*] at the level of higher education, institutions and subject areas. The Tuning approach consists of a methodology to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes for each of the Bologna cycles. It can be considered worldwide, since it has been tested in several continents and found fruitful.¹

Focus will be on the differences that can be appreciated in the answers to questionnaires distributed to graduates, employers and academics, in various countries and from different European universities, dealing with assigned priorities to a given set of competences. It is envisioned that their implementation and development will contribute to a common reflection, an increased level of joint work and comparability of curricula at university level in Europe. The necessary discussion for this has been channelled along five different themes, which are: generic competences, or transferable skills, subject-specific competences, the role of ECTS, that is, the student centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a program, approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and, finally, the role of quality enhancement, emphasizing systems based on internal institutional quality culture.² This paper deals with the two first themes.

1 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:9.

2 Ibid:13.

The Berlin-Cologne conference of 2003³ reinforced the emphasis on efforts to achieve better results in developing appropriate structures for higher education institutions so that students are given a life-long learning perspective, for a productive career and for citizenship.⁴

The process has the ambition of meeting the challenges of a globalized world, in the conviction that European education has to be an integral part in this dynamic arena. It aims at providing a homogeneous training with an ambition of excellence in relation to social values, critical enquiry and fluency in at least one other language than the one acquired at home.

The aim is also to introduce the student into the European a common labour market, a market with a high degree of jointness. This is a controversial aspect that has been very much the focus of attention in recent widespread protests that have taken place against this educational reform. Students in Louvain, Leon, Brussels, Kassel, Berlin, and various other cities and universities have organised strikes and protested against what is perceived as a concerted effort – imposed from above – towards the commercialization of academic degree and too much interference of corporative economic interests in specific aspects of the reform.

I want to argue that the tension arising between what can be called the hegemonic dynamics of the goal of jointness and the critical issues related to the student's individual aspirations constitutes a still unresolved problem.

Tuning – Key Questions and Competences

The list of key questions addressed by the Tuning project are listed in Appendix 1 of Gonzalez & Wagenaar.⁵ These key questions are the context within which competences are best understood in their scope and significance, keeping in mind that the explicitly stated starting point of competences has its focus on a paradigm of comparability and student-centred education, that is an educational system in which the student, the learner is the focus within the context of a European jointness.

3 <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/index.htm>

4 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:92.

5 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:135f.

Questionnaire and Competences

Previous to the questionnaire and its results, there is an introduction to what is understood here by competences.⁶ It is not within the scope of this article to give a full account of this section, but in short, a competence is understood to begin with as a *capacity, ability and skill, something that a person is able to achieve*⁷. This is the conventional meaning of the concept, that the mastering of a competence is the ability to perform well a certain task, and also to possess the formal authorisation to actually carry out the task.⁸

In the Tuning project however and as explained in this document, several kinds of competences are subsequently distinguished, finally giving the concept a much wider meaning. Thus, competences include also *knowledge, understanding and values*.⁹

A basic distinction is also made between Generic Competences, or transferable skills, that relate to those competences which are common and can be identified in different degree programs, and Subject Specific Competences. The distinction made here is far from unproblematic. As is well known, something *generic* pertains to a higher classificatory relational order, which in social taxonomies means a set that, compared to the specific level, is more related to various factors pertaining to various other socio-cultural domains. It would then appear that Generic Competences should be much more culturally embedded and *less* transferable than Subject Specific ones, and so this emphasis on generic competences as transferable skills seems misplaced. As will be seen, the list of competences presented in the questionnaire tables below show that the concept employed is wide indeed, and including not only skills, closely related to practicalities, but also moral principles and even the general theory and methodology pertaining to a certain area.

Moreover, this conflation of practical skills, intellectual abilities, ethical and professional aspects, is done haphazardly so to say, not quite conforming, not to mention guaranteeing, the demands of clarity and consequence expressed in the set of Key Questions given in this very document (see Appendix).

6 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:25-54.

7 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:27.

8 Granberg, 2008:92.

9 Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:28.

The following tables show a simplified ranking of preferences given to 30 different competences divided in three, not clearly justified, categories: systemic, interpersonal, and instrumental. The tables show how a group of graduates, employers and academics rated the competences. As will be readily appreciated, the lists are rather disparate, and one might want to rearrange, reformulate and give clearer formulations to the contents of these tables. Taking this into consideration, some tentative conclusions will be drawn from the results obtained.

Not many details are given in the document as to the particulars of the participants in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, each university sampled 150 graduates that had graduated within the last 3-5 years; the selection was random. Then, every participating university gathered information from 30 different employers, belonging to organizations and companies known by the university as employing graduates or at least expressing interest in doing so. Lastly, each university sampled 15 academics, working in relevant areas.¹⁰

The numbers to the left in the table do not denote rank, they are simply ordinal. The number in the columns under the respective groups does denote rank, so that the lower the figure that goes along a competence, the higher ranking it receives. Consequently, for instance, in the table beneath, competence nr 4 is given a middle ranking by graduates (16), rather higher by employers (10) and very high priority by academics (4).

1. Systemic

This category refers to those skills and abilities concerning whole systems, combining *understanding, sensibility and knowledge*. So far so good, but there is a telling (not to mention *disquieting*) coda to this:

*They require as a base the prior acquisition of instrumental and interpersonal competences.*¹¹

¹⁰ Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:33.

¹¹ Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:33. This appears as nothing less than disquieting considering the low priority actually given to competence nr.16 (see next table) by Graduates and Employers. This means that graduates assume that the acquisition of instrumental competences is not particularly or very significantly related to critical abilities (priority 17). As it could be expected, academics give here a priority 6, which means it is ranked in the upper 1/5 range.

	Graduates	Employers	Academics
1. Adapt to new situations	8	7	7
2. Applying knowledge in practice	6	2	5
3. Concern for quality	11	5	-
4. Generating new ideas	16	10	4
5. Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit	22	19	-
6. Leadership	27	25	-
7. Learning	3	1	3
8. Project design and management	23	24	-
9. Research skills	25	29	11
10. Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries	30	30	-
11. Will to succeed	13	14	-
12. Work autonomously	4	12	-
Average	15.66	14.83	6

It is remarkable that, as a whole, these sets of competences are ranked much lower by graduates and employers compared to the average given by academics. Even if the set of priorities is not comparable in a totally consistent way, due to the reduced set of competences tested with academics, the difference seems significant. Adapting to new situations is given a similar level of priority by all three groups and there is a marked similarity in the high priority given to nr. 7. Learning Capacity, albeit somewhat surprisingly, is given the highest ranking by employers and not by teachers.

2. Interpersonal

These aspects include individual abilities related to the capacity to express one's feelings, and possess critical and self-critical abilities. Also included are social skills relating to team-work, together with social and ethical commitment.

	Graduates	Employers	Academics
13. Communicate with experts in other fields, Ability to	18	20	-
14. Diversity and multiculturality, Appreciation of	29	28	17
15. Ethical commitment	28	22	13
16. Critical and self-critical abilities	17	16	6
17. Interpersonal skills	9	9	14
18. Teamwork	14	6	-
19. Work in an interdisciplinary team, Ability to	21	18	10
20. Work in an international context, Ability to	26	27	-
Average	20.25	18.25	12

Compared to Academics, Graduates and Employers rank these Interpersonal competences rather low. Particularly remarkable, considering that the whole Bologna process envisions a multinational European arena, is that both Graduates and Employers agree on such a low priority to competences nr 14 and 20. The general degree of agreement between Graduates and Employers is rather high. The only competence with a marked lack of coincidence is nr 18, Teamwork.

The close coincidence between the listed number (16) of Critical Abilities and the level of priority given to it by Graduates and Employers would seem to imply a high degree of conformity to a given discourse and situation; these two groups do not appear to quite grasp the fundamental importance of this competence for any learning process, right from the very beginning. Not surprisingly, non-conforming Academics rank this competence much higher.

3. Instrumental competences

These aspects include cognitive abilities, methodological capacities, technological and linguistic skills.

	Graduates	Employers	Academics
21. Analysis and synthesis	1	3	2
22. Basic general knowledge	20	20	1
23. Computing skills, elementary	7	17	16
24. Decision making	15	15	12
25. Grounding in basic knowledge of the profession	19	23	8
26. Information management skills	5	8	-
27. Knowledge of a second language	24	26	15
28. Oral and written communication in native language	12	11	9
29. Organisation and planning	10	13	-
30. Problem solving	2	4	-
Average	11.5	14	9

The low average shown in the Academics column is rather much the result of the high priorities given to competences 21 and 22. The difference in competence nr 22, compared to the other two groups is as remarkable as the coincidence between all three in competence nr 21. There is a remarkable difference in the priorities given to competence nr 23, on Computing Skills. Instead of speculating on what might lie behind this discrepancy between Graduates on one side and Employers and Academics on the other, it might suffice to say that further research seems to be called for here. The tendency shows scant differences in the rankings given by Graduates and Employers. They differ considerably, however, from the list of priorities given by academics, e.g. in competences 4, 9, 22, 25 and 27.

Particularly remarkable - in the context of a multinational labour market - is the low priority given to competence nr 27, Knowledge of a second language. This is moreover consistent with the low priority given to competences nr 14 and 20, in Table Two.

The background

It is difficult to avoid the impression that this multiplicity of fine points,

this variegated significance of what competences are, contributes to a legitimisation and naturalisation of power. In more precise terms, this proliferation of competences, as made explicit in the questionnaire, and in the context of the Key Questions detailed in the Appendix, takes the air of the educational version of a big scale process of economic production.

It seems then that we are facing a process of mystification, so that what is presented in terms of professionalization is in reality a commoditisation of education. Higher education in the interests of the labour market, shades of Bourdieu (1989). Certainly, it would be far too simplistic to say that the Tuning project is merely an instrument of such a programme, but the tension is there, and it is possible to discern a sort of path-finding course where many issues seem to be still in the making. According to the document:

The Tuning Project does not seek to resolve this debate [between commoditisation and public good] but nevertheless wishes to indicate its awareness of it... Construction of outcomes that are embedded within market approaches to education reform, legitimize the dominance of “private goods” and undermine the view that public education is an enterprise for the public good in a democratic society.¹²

So professionalization seems to implicitly mean the application on higher learning of a system focused on the integrated and technological management and the development of learning outcomes in terms of a set of competences. With uncanny precision, and responding to these signals students today often adopt an attitude towards teachers as if they were there to provide a service. They are consumers, investing time and money, in order to obtain a professional exam that will give access to a good position in the labour market. Here the Tuning Project and the whole Bologna process simply elaborate on the theories and operational models of Human Resources Management (HRM) and Learning Content Management System (LCMS) that have been gaining ground in Europe since the 1980's.¹³

¹² Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:92.

¹³ Granberg, 2008:9f.

Reactions

In spite, then, of its motto of a student centred education this system can be called, following Ramon Flecha, not an emancipating, but rather a conservative project inasmuch it wants to achieve efficiency and homogeneity to make students orient towards a set of dominant values, and then to live within well established structures.¹⁴ So, not surprisingly, resistance to the Bologna process is growing among academics and students in different countries across Europe. For instance in Spain, December 2008:

Angry students have stepped up their protests by occupying university buildings, blocking train lines and interrupting senate meetings. The Spanish government has tried to defuse the situation but last week more than 600 students were occupying various buildings at the University of Barcelona while universities in Madrid, Seville and Valencia were also affected.

The students are protesting at what they see as a creeping privatisation of state universities, in which they allege private interests such as those of employers are taking precedence over the common good.

With few grants available and, as yet, no student loans, most Spanish students work and study at the same time. They complain that Bologna developments such as the European Credit are increasing workloads and making this impossible.

This abridged quotation can be read in its entirety in the website indicated below.¹⁵

There have been similar protests in Germany, with claims that “universities [are being] reduced to factories producing workers for the economy”:

Protests began on Monday and are slated to continue all week, with students protesting the introduction of tuition fees and the bachelor and master system into German universities, the shortening of college prep school programs, and what they describe as the increasing commercialization of their education.

¹⁴ Flecha, 2009:329.

¹⁵ <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=2008120509191347>

“We need independent, publicly funded education,” Mo Schmidt, a student leader from the University of Marburg, told Deutsche Welle. “Because that’s essential for democracy.”

The students are planning demonstrations, blockades and sit-ins. The primary goal, said Schmidt, is to raise awareness and kick off a discussion of the role of public education in Germany.

On Friday, groups from across the country are planning to meet in Berlin to protest a meeting of state education ministers and to mark the 10 year anniversary of the signing of the Bologna declaration.

While supporters say this will increase the competitiveness of European universities and increase mobility for European students, **the student strikers argue that the changes have made study** programs inflexible and have reduced universities to factories producing workers for the economy.¹⁶

Protests have taken place even outside Europe. On the 5th November 2008, a coordinated action proclaimed the “*International Day of Action against the Commercialization of Education*”. Groups arranged demonstrations of protests in Zagreb, Düsseldorf, Mannheim, Belgrade, as well as in Monrovia and Dhaka, where a whole day was filled with a programme to raise awareness regarding the global perspective of the struggle.

At the heart of their protest, said student leader Schmidt, is the worry that education is becoming less about seeking knowledge and more about preparing to fill a need in the economy, whereas before these reforms took place, “you went to university for yourself, to gain knowledge ... now people are studying for the labour market”. Schmidt himself is studying sociology and economics, “not because it increases my value on the job market,” he said, but because “I want to understand society”.¹⁷

16 For the unabridged text, see <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4328767,00.html>

17 http://fading-hope.blogcity.com/students_protest_worldwide_against_commercialisation_bologn.htm

The Tuning project threads a rather uncertain path between the conflicting demands of one education system for the public sphere, so to say, and one for the demands of the market. It clearly reflects this commoditisation of education that is pernicious in the sense that it seems to presuppose some kind of naturalness. This happens, at the same time that modernity is so keenly aware of the significance of constructions:

Each practice, as determined by history as a whole, engenders its own corresponding object (...) Things, objects are only the correlative of practices. The illusion of a natural object (...) conceals the heterogeneous character of practices.¹⁸

Consequently, at this level one perceives a certain generic incompetence that could be avoided if the extensive and confusing lists of Learning Outcomes and Competences could be simplified and made more consistent. One thing to do can be to replace some of the more pedantic points with something along the lines of *Don't Always Expect to Clearly Learn Many Things that will be immediately Apparent or Applicable* in this particular programme or module. Just allow the insights you might obtain to mature and in time you will extract some lesson or lessons for life. Or, you should perhaps not expect a guarantee, at least not every time.

On that keynote one could say that an approach better tuned to the ambitions of a critical education would show a clear commitment along the following lines:

1. Instead of “generic competences”, a set of principles that places the whole educational reform in the context of a distributive justice, that identifies inequalities within Europe and on a global basis as a major obstacle to development, and of ethical norms that are clear on everyone's duty to perform in a responsible way towards the enhancement of democracy and the sustainable management of natural resources.

18 M. Foucault, cited by Rosa Maria Bueno Fischer in Bueno Fischer, 2009:210.

2. Avoid a multitude of fine points as if education was industrial production transposed. Critical and creative education emphasises some basic competences and then how to be flexible and open to the inevitable changes in how these basic skills will later in practice be done in different labour situations.
3. Allow more generous margins for the individual student to freely decide on how and when the knowledge and skills acquired will be integrated and applied as part of a personal process or life-project ¹⁹

Appendix. Key Questions²⁰

1. Degree profile

Has the need for the degree programme been established?
Was this need established through consultation with stakeholders?
Is the definition of the programme stated in clear terms?

2. Learning outcomes

Have clear and adequate learning outcomes been identified?
Is the progression and coherence of the programme sufficiently guaranteed? What guarantee is there that the learning outcomes will be recognized and understood within and outside Europe? ²¹

3. Competences

Are both subject-specific and generic competences to be obtained clearly identified and formulated? Are they expressed in such a way that they can be measured? Are the approaches chosen clearly specified, varied and innovative? If applicable, are the competences comparable and compatible with the European reference points?

¹⁹ Grande, 2009.

²⁰ Gonzalez & Wagenaar, 2009:135-139.

²¹ This last question is rather surprising; of course the answer must necessarily be “none”.

4. **Level**

Does the level of Competences correspond to the levels of the degree foreseen in the European and National Qualification Framework? In what terms are the levels expressed?

5. **Credits and workload**

Have credits been adequately allocated? How is a balanced workload guaranteed during each learning period? Is information on the programme presented as described in the ECTS User's Guide?

6. **Resources**

How are the formal acceptance and the staffing for delivering the programme guaranteed? How is staff development foreseen? How are the structural, financial and technical means guaranteed?

7. **Monitoring**

How is the quality of delivery monitored? How is staff quality and motivation monitored? How is student performance monitored? In what way is the employability of graduates monitored?

8. **Updating**

How is the system for updating the programme organized?

9. **Sustainability and responsibility**

How is the sustainability of the programme guaranteed? How is it guaranteed that the relevant bodies take responsibility for sustaining and updating the programme? ²²

10. **Organisation and Information**

How is the updating of information organized and guaranteed? How is the adequacy of the system of student support and advising ensured? Is a diploma Supplement issued to students automatically and without charge?

²² Considering the last question in §7, this should also include the preparedness to discontinue a certain programme.

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Scientific Studies of Religion from
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The New Student as a Didactic Challenge

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Olof Sundqvist

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www.hig.se

Scientific Studies of Religion from
University of Gävle, is edited by
Olof Sundqvist and Peder Thalén



Swedish Science Press, Box 118
SE-751 04 Uppsala, Sweden

ISBN 978-91-975446-4-1

ISSN 1652-7895

