

ANNE O'BYRNE

PEDAGOGY WITHOUT A PROJECT: ARENDT
AND DERRIDA ON TEACHING, RESPONSIBILITY
AND REVOLUTION

Nobody wants to introduce as many reforms as children do. Franz Kafka *Fragments from Notebooks*

One . . . must stop talking with authority about moral or political responsibility. Jacques Derrida *The Other Heading* 41

When, in 1958, Hannah Arendt diagnoses a crisis in education, it is a crisis brought on by the disappearance of authority from the modern world.¹ The word of God, or the law of nature, or Platonic ideals no longer provide the authority to make legitimate. the exercise of political power, and with authority thus gone from the political realm, educators can find no grounds for maintaining it in the realm of education. The result is a disaster: progressive education is the order of the day, teachers are no longer experts in what they teach, children are too often left to their own devices and students graduate without being able to read, What is to be done? The answer, surprisingly, lies in the reestablishing of authority, albeit a new authority that is dispersed rather than centralized, restricted to pedagogy and still banned from politics, and based on responsibility rather than, Arendt claims, on received laws.

¹ My thanks to Greg Johnson, who provided the first occasion for engaging with these issues, to Richard Bernstein, who alerted me to the unpublished remarks on university education that Arendt made at Bryn Mawr, and to Jay Bernstein, Russell Wiener, Gert Biesta, Eduardo Duarte and three anonymous reviewers at *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, all of whom made valuable comments and suggestions.



Some 15 years later, when Jacques Derrida diagnoses a crisis in the teaching of philosophy, it is, on the face of it, quite a different crisis.² Here the concern is with an academic subject (one for which Arendt professed to have little patience) taught only to a few students in university and, in France, to the last class of secondary school. Such a crisis would seem to be an esoteric, self-referring crisis of crisis, a parochially academic affair. As for what is to be done, the response appears to be the opposite to Arendt's. There is no defence or apology for – and certainly no reaffirmation of – pedagogical authority; rather, the response is to champion a progressive pedagogy that will deconstruct the educational institutions to which power has accrued. Indeed, writing more recently, Derrida explicitly debunks the myth of the authoritative expert teacher, suggesting that the least desirable thing now would be a return to that model of education (Derrida, 2001a, p. 45).³

I will argue here that Arendt and Derrida in fact offer accounts of the same crisis and that it is the crisis in which we still find ourselves. Moreover, Derrida's response is a continuation and radicalisation – in the sense of deepening – of Arendt's response. Specifically, reading Arendt through Derrida allows us to see the equivocal nature of the concept of responsibility on which she founds her new thought of

² Although Derrida has written extensively on education and has long been active in the politics of education in France, his writings devoted explicitly to pedagogical issues have not been translated into English with the same alacrity as his other work, and thus the theme has remained somewhat neglected in the English-speaking world. The assumption appears to have been that these are in some sense secondary works. Now, with the appearance of part of his collection *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990) in English under the title *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?* (Derrida, 2002a), that situation has begun to change. This is not to say that the issue has been utterly neglected. *Derrida and Education* edited by Gert Biesta and Denise Egen-Kuehne (Biesta et al., 2001) is the most comprehensive treatment, while Peter Pericles Trifonas *The Ethics of Writing* is a valuable though none too readable source. See also the 1996 volume of *Philosophy of Education*, (*Philosophy of Education*, Urbana, IN: Philosophy of Education Society, 1996) particularly Gert Biesta "Education, Not Initiation," (Biesta, 1996), Denise EgeaKuehne's "Neutrality in Education and Derrida's Call for 'Double Duty'." However, none of these, with the exception of Trifonas' book, take account of the texts published in *Du droit à la philosophie*.

³ Derrida (2001a, p. 45). The essay, originally a lecture at Stanford University entitled "The Future of the Profession: or, The University Without Condition (Thanks to the 'Humanities,' What Could Take Place Tomorrow)," appears in an English version as "The University Without Condition" in *Without Alibi*, (Derrida, 2002b, 202–237).

authority. At the same time, reading Derrida after Arendt to develop his thought that education is itself philosophical show that he, like Arendt, is above all concerned with education *in the world*. More particularly, what Derrida in the threat posed to philosophy (which, when addressing an audience, he extends to include the humanities⁴) by the instrumentalisation of the university is what Arendt treats the hegemony of the social realm and the evacuation of it where Derrida addresses the privileged institutional place of university. Arendt sets education apart as a quasi-public phenomenon Derrida describes as the profession of the turns out, after all, to be a version of what, for Arendt, is the authority of the educator, what is to be gained from re-thinkers together, then, is an insight into their respective equivocations, an indication of their shared attentive work a thought, built by both, of impossible, worldly education help us to grasp our own, contemporary, crisis of education.

THE CRISES IN EDUCATION

In her essay "The Crisis in Education" (Arendt, 1977b, pp. 177–180) Arendt uses *crisis* in at least two ways, the one reactionary, the other revolutionary. On the one hand, she lays blame for the crisis evident in the United States in the late 1950s on the absence of common sense. She writes:

Whenever in political questions sound human reason fails or gives up to supply answers we are faced by a crisis; for this kind of reason is really sense by virtue of which we and our five individual senses are fitted world common to us all (Arendt, 1977b, p. 178).

On such a scheme, a crisis is a failure, a fact to be lamented, something that has gone wrong and what is needed is a return to the way of doing things, the way dictated by "sound human reason." Arendt is too modern a thinker to settle for the rule of a common sense. Earlier, in "The Concept of History" (Arendt, pp. 41–90), she has reminded us that, in the days of the Republic, the education of young citizens consisted in inculcating them to the words and deeds of the great Romans of the past, doing so in such a way as to impress upon them the demand

⁴ This is vital to his argument *L'Université sans condition*.

dition: "Be worthy of these ancestors." Tradition was a cumulative force and the citizen's task was to sustain it; to re-educate himself was to become one with tradition. Such an understanding of education and indeed of self is impossible after the advent of modernity and this is not what Arendt proposes. Arendt's targets are the excesses of progressive education that make it tempting to hear only the traditionalist connotations, and her argument certainly trades on that association. Her mistake here is the conflation of "crisis," understood as a moment of common sense, and "disaster" understood, as she argues in the same essay, as the result of responding to a crisis with unexamined judgments, that is, prejudices. "Such an attitude not only makes the crisis but makes us forfeit the experience of reality and the opportunity for reflection it provides" (Arendt, 1977b, p. 174). The problem might be described like this: in this essay, Arendt takes a critical eye on crisis, neglecting the fact that critique and crisis are one in the other (a fact which is indicated, Derrida will argue, in their sharing a common root in the Greek *krinein*, which demands a critical response, but the practice of critique is not a crisis, with the result that modernity, the age of enlightenment, is also the state of permanent crisis. On the other hand, when Arendt frames the issue of her essay, she understands of crisis that begins to acknowledge precisely what she writes that:

away facades and obliterates prejudices ... [providing an opportunity] to inquire into whatever has been laid bare of the essence of the matter. The absence of prejudices simply means that we have lost the answers on which we ordinarily rely without even realizing they were originally answers to questions that force us back to the questions themselves and requires from us direct answers, but in any case direct judgments (Arendt, 1977b, p. 174).

Arendt has a sophisticated understanding of *common sense* as a Kantian *sensus communis* from the *Critique of Judgment*. There is a common sense by which our senses of taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell are shared, but it is also construed as the shared sense that makes possible Kantian intersubjectivity or, as Arendt puts it, fits us into a single world. The thought is troublesome, however, given that it is never made clear how the sense that binds my senses becomes also the sense that binds my fellow subjects in a common world but, more importantly, it is also a detailed treatment in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* that shows how that common sense can fit us into a common world.

Here it is not the failure to supply answers that is the cause for concern, but rather answers themselves as calcifications that have come to be regarded not as answers at all but as truths exempt from critique. Thus crisis provokes critique and demands judgment, while her language here does suggest that crisis is a discrete and rare phenomenon, it is nevertheless true that at the core of her argument is a claim that thoroughly undermines any such implication: the fact of natality – that is, that each of us had to be born – means that we are constantly experiencing the arrival of newcomers by birth whose introduction to the human world will always promise – and threaten – to tear away facades and obliterate prejudices. Provided, that is – and this is the whole point of her theory of education – that the natalis' capacity for newness has not been educated out of them.

This is an indication of what Gert Biesta calls the deconstructive understanding of Arendt's work (Biesta, 2001, p. 391). It is true that while she rejects the traditionalist Roman model, she replaces it using the thought of natality and the constellation she builds around it in *The Human Condition* – plurality, action – to explain that newcomers are free – even obliged – to remake the world. Yet this is a line of thinking that quickly exceeds itself. We rebuild the world by acting, but, because acting is always acting with or in the midst of others, we have no control over what becomes of our action. It depends utterly on the actions and reactions of those around us, all free, natal, contemporary inhabitants of our shared world, and all confronted by the universal fact that the constantly rising wave of newcomers by birth stands to provoke constant crisis.

Thus, when Derrida addresses "The Crisis in the Teaching of Philosophy" (Derrida, 1990)⁶ some 15 years later, in France and Benin rather than in the United States, and in the context of late secondary and university education rather than elementary school, he nonetheless addresses the same crisis.

Derrida's early explicit attention to philosophical pedagogy comes in the wake of the *la réforme Haby* which, in 1975, proposed a restructuring of education in France in such a way that, among other things, philosophy would be all but eliminated as a subject in secondary schools. Just 4 years earlier, Arendt also found herself again addressing the issue of education in a short, unpublished address at

⁶ "La crise de l'enseignement philosophique" in *Du droit et à la philosophie*. The English translation appears in Derrida (2002a, pp. 98–115).

Bryn Mawr College (Arendt, 1971a). The historical moment the two writers thus shared is a significant one because both find themselves responding to the post-1968 reform of higher education in France and the United States, respectively. In a later interview, Derrida couches the reforms and his response in these terms:

[A]fter the fact [of the 1968 movement] ... I saw the spectacle of resentment and of reassertion of control by the most conservative, even retrograde forces, especially within the University. It is in the aftermath that I began to give a more visibly, let us say, "militant" form to my work as a teacher. The formation of the GREPH [*Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique*] dates from those years. (Derrida, 2001b, p. 61).

Meanwhile, in her Bryn Mawr address, Arendt rejects the trend of reforming universities and colleges on the model of vocational education with its focus on applied knowledge and skill acquisition, what she regarded as the use of "modish fads in order to satisfy not the needs of the mind but the needs of society." She says:

[H]igher education will either understand that the life of the mind is something to be cherished for its own sake, that learning can exist and flourish only if it is done for its own sake, or it will wither away and die (Arendt, 1971a, p. 12).

Derrida too – in his militancy – finds himself also taking a conservative position against reform. Yet to be conservative where philosophy is concerned is to be critical, which is to say that conserving philosophy means conserving critique and perpetuating crisis. This is Derrida's alibi in the fight against reform. He writes:

Philosophy will always be the very experience of its own crisis, it will always live by questioning itself about its own resources, its own possibility, in the critical instance of judging or deciding (*krinein*) as to its own meaning, its own survival, and of evaluating itself, posing the question of its rights and its legitimacy (Derrida, 1990, pp. 157–158, 2002a, pp. 100–101).

This has particular significance for the teaching of philosophy: "Philosophy repeats itself and reproduces its own tradition as the teaching of its own crisis and as the *paideia* of self critique in general" (Derrida, 1990, pp. 157–158, 2002a, pp. 100–101).

Arendt insisted on often reminding her readers that she was not a philosopher and that what she was engaged in was not the practice of philosophy; for her, philosophy was the name for the *vita contemplativa*, a valuable but necessarily solitary and disengaged form of the life of the mind. In the Bryn Mawr address, she is committed to the

preservation of the university precisely as a place where crises of the intellect could be and should be undertaken on its own sake." (Arendt, 1971a, p. 12). For Derrida, in questions that philosophy poses to itself in its crisis – questions about its own rights and legitimacy – are also questions about the world, that is to say, they must also be a worldly critique. Worldly critique requires a worldly, public space and, hand, Derrida and Arendt are united in their concern at a space. What would seem to divide them, on the question of whether or not the realm of education, the university, is that space.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE SPACE OF CRISIS

In Derrida's case, the loss is the experience of finding the longer in the place where philosophy's crisis and self-critique destined to reproduce itself" (Derrida, 1990, p. 159, 2002). He argues in "The Crisis in Teaching of Philosophy" that this space has closed over. Rather, we have exceeded it. When we talk about a crisis of philosophy, philosophy to adjudicate its own critique. That is to say stand philosophy not as the Queen but as the Empress of the one who – as ontology – specifies the regions of being other disciplines are responsible, but who is itself answerable to its own self-questioning. Today, however, in what Derrida calls the age of deconstruction, the empire's constituents (and it is that he appeals to the model of post-colonialism in a lecture in Benin, the former French colony in west Africa) are willing to receive word; the imperial authority has been withdrawn from the side of history, politics, linguistics and so on, with that philosophy – understood as ontology but also as political critique – is brought into question, that is, subjected to what he called hetero-critique.⁷ It now becomes clear that philosophy perpetuated, self-critical crisis relied on the assumption of the possibility of decision and the logic of decidability and Derrida writes:

⁷ See "Coup d'envoi (pour le Collège International de Philosophie) (1990, p. 581). The English translation appears in Derrida (2002c).

The very concept of "crisis," insofar as it belongs to a logic of opposition and decidability, [comes to vacillate]. A crisis of crisis, if you will . . . When the crisis of crisis concerns the mode of production and reproduction of *the* philosophical as such, of self-critique and the onto-encyclopaedic itself, it is naturally also a matter of teaching (Derrida, 1990, p. 160, 2002a, p. 102).

While there is no trace of nostalgia in his assessment of our exceeding philosophy's critical space, Derrida is loath to abandon it. After all, it is here that we are free from merely instrumental thinking, that is, that mode of thinking that tries to answer the question of how we can reach an end rather than why that end is what we should aim for at all. This is precisely the space Derrida needs in his struggle against the Haby reforms, themselves an example of the far more general threat of global instrumentalisation. Those reforms claimed to be motivated by the technical-economic need to direct secondary school students away from "literary" disciplines. Derrida writes:

The unprofitability of philosophy in this industrial society – its immediate unprofitability – which it would share with all the "humanities," notably history, had for years already justified an active, indeed violent and frenzied orientation of students selected as the "best" toward scientific disciplines in the lycées (Derrida, 2002a, p. 109).

Of course, Derrida adds, this need is in no sense an objective necessity but rather a self-interested interpretation construed by certain technocrats and managers as a general necessity. In an advanced industrial society, how is it possible to identify their interpretation as such if not from the critical point of view of a realm free from domination by instrumental thinking? How are we to think about the value of industrial society unless we have a public space (Arendt), the space of crisis (Derrida) where we can ask and engage precisely the question of ends?

Meanwhile, Arendt's depiction of public space involves far more than the requirement that it be a space not dominated by instrumental thinking. While the university may satisfy this requirement, does it also satisfy the others, particularly the requirement of equality? Can it satisfy this requirement insofar as it is a teaching institution? In other words, does the classroom share the other characteristics that Arendt includes under "publicness"? Is it a place where we enact our human plurality in its "twofold character of equality and distinction"? (Arendt, 1958, p. 175). In a properly public space, we appear before our fellows to demonstrate who we are. The difficulty is that the young, the members of the new generation, are in

the throes of becoming and they must have a sheltered private, not-quite-public space where they can come to the classroom provides that space as the "institution that wobbles between the private domain of home and the world in order to effect the transition from the family to the world possible at a certain moment" (Arendt, 1977b, p. 189).

Is a system of education based on the idea of the class as a realm of equality imaginable? It is important to recognize the question of whether or not the classroom can function if it is a realm of inequality between teacher and student is the same as the question of whether or not education can work without authority. The answer is an emphatic "No" and the aim of her "Crisis of Authority" is to show the need to find a new source of authority now that the experts in teaching and not in the material they teach. What is the fate of authority in the world at large, it cannot be abandoned. The realm of education because, Arendt says, of the natural relationship between the young and the old, between the new generation and the old. The educator is responsible for creating a realm in which the young become capable of withstanding the private force of the social forces of their peers and the critical scrutiny of which is to say, she must set her authority against the familial bonds of love and duty, against the tyranny of tradition and at the boundary of the public realm.

This is the core of Arendt's assessment of the crisis in education: a crisis of education but of modernity. She writes:

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a way that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition (Arendt, 1977c, p. 189).

Such a thought of authority is complex and ambiguous, and it is remarkable that Arendt refuses to reject authority and instead dwells upon it to the point of inhabiting the realm. Her contribution is understanding that this authority is not responsibility, and the danger in jettisoning authority would be that we would find ourselves in a world afflicted, as our world is, with violence and injustice as a state of affairs for which

⁸ In "What is Authority," (Arendt, 1977c) Arendt writes that authority is understood as a natural and as a political necessity. The appropriate, since as such, that authority is included in the realm of what is to be critiqued, debate and deliberation; the former poses the difficulty, since the phenomenon as natural has the result of setting it beyond critique.

claim responsibility. But now that authority in political life is sent or highly contested, what becomes of responsibility? Possible? According to Arendt, no-one and everyone. The authority means that we cannot trust nor do we want a ruler responsibility for it all, as a result of which we either refuse to claim of the world to which we have a responsibility to respond and by taking on responsibility for the world and assuming what is shared by us all. Of course – and Arendt begins edge as much – it is not a matter of either/or. Rather, we are fully caught in the grip of both repudiating and grasping authority and responsibility.

Arendt will insist that the educator cannot be allowed. She must not abandon authority but must grasp it not on her command of all academic tradition of her assumption ability for the world. She writes:

... we stand in relation to the young as representatives of a world for which we assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it and they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is ... Anyone who assumes joint responsibility for the world should not have children and should not take part in educating them (Arendt, 1977b, p. 189).

of the loss of authority, the teacher must affirm a new, authoritarian authority, and she must do so as a teacher but also jointly responsible for the world. There is a continuity between what Arendt writes in the essay, or in "Reflections on Little Rock," (Arendt, 1959) clearly has early education in mind and her remarks at the end of the essay "Truth and Politics" (Arendt, 1977d) and in the book *The Life of the Mind* (Arendt, 1971b) where she clearly has the university in mind. It is a continuity most clearly in her specific understanding of the role of the educator. In turn, is continuous with the role Derrida imagines for the educator.

THE PROFESSOR AT THE LIMIT

the educator's liminal position. If the elementary school is the process of introducing her pupils to the world, she is with them the somewhat sheltered place of the school, but as it were, at its edge, in the place where she can gesture

towards the public world, describing it as "our world".⁹ In a related way, the professor – an educator–researcher – must maintain the distinctively professorial relationship with the public realm, on the one hand, and with students on the other. The Arendtian professor would seem to have a three-fold role: to pursue the life of the mind, to perform a "politically relevant function ... from outside the public realm (Arendt, 1977d, p. 262)" and to inculcate new participants into intellectual and public life. All three are part of a single task, and each is quite thoroughly implicated in the others. What concerns me here is the last – the professor's role as educator – and concentrating on this will allow a reading of the other two as sources of authority for the university teacher. First, the professor's ability to fulfil the role of solitary, disinterested scholar can be identified as the source of her authority in much the same way that, in the days before educational reform, teachers at all levels received their authority from their command of a body of knowledge. Yet it is not exactly the accumulation of information that lends this authority, but rather the commitment to the pursuit of a truth that is independent of the intrigues and power struggles of political life; at its Platonic extreme it is the philosopher's attempt to mimic the "highest god," who is "forever solitary by reason of his excellence, able to be together, he himself with himself, needing nobody else, neither acquaintance nor friend, he sufficient with himself," (*Timaeus* 34b, quoted in Arendt, 1971b, p. 92). By her withdrawal into thought, and through her scholarly work, insofar as it is the product of such philosophical withdrawal, the professor shows her students what it means to be engaged in thinking. Yet will a student body meeting such authority for the first time be capable of recognising it as such? Will a group of

⁹ It is in part this concern with protection and shelter that led Arendt to her controversial position on desegregation in the Little Rock schools, and it is not merely coincidence that the two essays – "The Crisis in Education" and "Reflections on Little Rock" were written at the same time. "Reflections on Little Rock" was written in 1958 but did not appear in print until a year later. In her preliminary remarks to the published essay, Arendt writes: "[A] friend rightly observed that my criticism of the Supreme Court's decision did not take into account the role education plays, and has always played, in the political framework of this country. This criticism is entirely just and I would have tried to insert a discussion of this role into the article if I had not meanwhile published a few remarks on the wide-spread. Uncritical acceptance of a Rousseauian ideal in education in another context, i.e., in an article in the Fall 1958 issue of *Partisan Review*, entitled "The Crisis in Education" (Arendt, 1959, p. 46).

le not already initiated into the ways and values of the life heed this authority?

ace of this doubt, the professor's second role suggests force of authority. Her scholarship might require withdrawal, instead of a Platonic withdrawal towards an other-ness, it may be a Kantian withdrawal whose aim is to enlarge picture of *this* world, a withdrawal for judgment the withdrawal of the philosopher (Arendt, 1971b, p. 94). g spectator, the scholar is again in a liminal position, not actor, but engaged in an "act of deliberate, active non-ness in life's daily business." (Arendt, 1971b, p. 93). She is up in the play of opinion but is in a position to attempt to the meaning of the scene as a whole.

marks at Bryn Mawr, Arendt seems at pains to emphasise these professorial roles, suggesting that the professor is job as an educator when she is committed to the purest of pursuits. The professor thus instills a spirit of intellectual er students through her commitment to "serious scholar-pursued in "conditions of austerity," (Arendt, 1971a, p. er, in "Truth and Politics" that model is supplemented by ofessor who understands the relevance of that pursuit for of action. The universities, Arendt argues, perform a e that of the judicial branch of government. They are truth, places from which very unwelcome truths can challenge power in the political realm, just as very judgments can be handed down by the judiciary. Within ty, this crucial political function is performed not by the nce divisions – for all their importance for the national it by the "historical sciences and the humanities which are o find out, stand guard over and interpret factual truth". 77d, p. 261). Thus the professor is the educator whose sts in her clear-eyed grasp of some impartial truth about und her insistence on making it known.

e find Derrida, in "University without Conditions," story of the professor, he does so in terms that resonate with this Arendtian picture. He recognises that we are and of a certain sort of professor and a certain sort of authority, but holds that there is still a need for the . The word "professor," he points out, originally referred made a profession of faith, that is, to someone joining a der. A profession, then, was a vow or promise, in the

strongest sense, an engagement (Derrida, 2001a, p. 35). It is used today to mean a free, open, public declaration, itself an engagement, an intervention in the public world. In other words, the professor, like the Arendtian educator, stands at the limit between the public world and the quasi-public world of the university. For the professor, as for the Arendtian educator, it is a matter of responsibility: "to profess is to offer a guide in the course of engaging one's responsibility" (Derrida, 2001a, p. 35).

How does Derrida come to this characterisation? Why must the educator take responsibility? Not for the sake of authority, and for two related reasons. First, he refuses to claim a need for authority on the basis of nature. When Arendt claims that the original need for authority in education lies in the *natural* inequality of children and adults, she sets the ground of her argument beyond critique. This is precisely why Derrida, at every turn in his fight for philosophical education in France, will resist the temptation to claim that philosophy should be taught at all levels because humans have a natural propensity to it. Second, Arendt bases her understanding of authority (not just in education) on the historical Roman thought of the authority (*auctoritas*) that augments (*augere*) a foundation (Arendt, 1977c, p. 121). That is to say, Arendt's critique stops short not only by leaving the realm of education the realm of authority on the basis of an uncriticised claim about nature, but also by sustaining a foundational thinking of authority. Given her reading of authority, along with her desire to maintain its place in the quasi-public realm of education, she finds herself forced to find another source of authority that must have something of the same foundational structure. This is why she says that the teacher must unequivocally grasp responsibility and thereby authority, and here the deconstructive reading of Arendt's work reaches a limit.

Derrida comes to an understanding of the educator that is more critical, that is, more Arendtian than Arendt's. He does so precisely by grasping the impossibility of foundations and thereby allowing us to discern the deeper insight that remains implicit in Arendt's own work, under girding her thought not only of education and authority but also on revolution. It is a familiar Derridian mode of thought, the one carried out with such rigour in his work on friendship, the gift, hospitality and so on, and involves thinking the impossibility of responsibility and, indeed, of education. It is a thought that has already been treated with great acuity by writers such as Julian Edgoose (See Edgoose, 2001) and Gert Biesta (See Biesta, 1998), and I

draw upon their analyses to argue that Arendt's thought of taking responsibility is more thoroughly haunted by the repudiation of responsibility than she allows.

The point is made well by Edgose in "Just Decide!: Derrida and the Ethical Aporias of Education" (Edgose, 2001). Here, responsibility is the Levinasian ethical responsibility for the other which is extended by Derrida and revealed to be structured on an irreconcilable tension. Although Arendt is specifically concerned here with a political and not a moral responsibility, and although this sets her use of the term at a great distance from Levinas', the tension is not dissimilar.¹⁰ In the face of the call to responsibility, as in the face of the demand for justice, we are struck – not to say stricken – by the aporias of the situation. If I am responsible for something in the sense of having been its author, taking responsibility is not a choice I can make; that is not my prerogative. If I take responsibility for something, whether or not I am its author, I, in doing so, repudiate responsibility for all the rest. If, then, I take responsibility for the world, I am assuming responsibility for something for which I cannot have been responsible and it is not clear that this can be distinguished from the repudiation of responsibility as such. Yet the world continues to issue its demands, and we must still respond, still take responsibility, make that decision in the face of undecidability. It is vital to remember that undecidability never shields us from the demand to decide; rather, it makes possible our decision, because undecidability is "that condition from which no course of action necessarily follows" (Laclau, p. 78, quoted in Biesta, 1998, p. 509).

On Derrida's understanding, taking responsibility cannot grant a foundational authority with the result that Arendtian education is rendered impossible. This is entirely appropriate. Geri Biesta, appealing to Arendt's concept of natality and her insistence that education hold open the possibility for a new generation to do something new, has argued precisely this. He quotes Derrida:

¹⁰ For Arendt's distinction between moral and political responsibility, see *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Arendt, 1977). Too simply put, Eichmann bears moral responsibility for his actions as a functionary in the Nazi genocidal system; we all are required to take responsibility for that genocide in the sense that we are called upon to take responsibility for a world that has, as one of its major features, the fact that that genocide happened.

When the path is clear and given, when a certain knowledge opens advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that make; irresponsibly, and in good conscience, one simply applies o program (Derrida, 1992, p. 41, quoted in Biesta, 1998, p. 510).

An educator cannot conceive herself as implementing or moulding minds, or, for that matter, conveying inf knowledge. She can lay claim to no stable authority that granted by her constantly renewed claim of ri That is also to say that she should not be imagined as the authoritative professor of times gone by, since hers being which quite exceeds that of one who is merely ec techno-scientific knowledge. It is a step beyond the i Kantian professor inhabiting a Kantian university wi make judgments and draw conclusions about the tru within the confines of the university. While securing s from the police powers of the state was a remarkable ; it was won at the cost of denying the professor the I making any prescriptive claims about the world. I cludes:

I do not believe that this limitation was ever tenable or respectabl principle. But the transformation of public cyberspace, a globally f yond all national frontiers seems to make it more archaic and imag (Derrida, 2001b, p. 45).

If the university is a privileged quasi-public space, its prc be the ones who stand at its limit, engaged, as a matter o with the public world as well as with teaching and re fessing, Derrida explains, presupposes a public eng ethico-political responsibility. In other words – and this demonstrate how misplaced Arendt's faith in the old was, or at least the inadequacy of her description of the authority – the professor as public thinker is the opy figure that we have in its absence, that is, the expert o ticularly, the television expert. While the public intellect not all that well) in France, the mass culture that has public space in the United States has no place for sucl preferring as it does the expert whose pithy assessment o

sily digestible and easily contained in a sound bite.¹¹ Experts are certainly – for the most part – possessed of the hat, as Arendt claimed, used to give authority to teacher expertise is technical and need have nothing to do with skills of the engaged thinker, and the result is that we must let their predominance in mass culture is evidence of the self-instrumental thinking and the triumph of the social

PEDAGOGY WITHOUT A PROJECT

Derrida presents the publicly engaged professor as the far of the unconditional principle of resistance of the university, it is far too late and the professor professing will find herself in confrontation with students not just quite committed to non-critical modes of thought, but an overwhelming tendency to regard themselves as autonomous consumers of an educational product.¹² What he argues, is progressive education. Yet the term is a theory and in fact having as its central proposal the education in philosophy to the early years of school.¹³ Derrida, as a member of GREPH, argued that education in philosophy should start very early. It is not enough that lines that form part of the primary and secondary school contain philosophical elements. He writes:

the effective and concrete conditions of these teachings, however, are that these so-called human, economic and social “sciences” are the same as saying that there are no intellectuals in the United States important things to say that are of great relevance to public affairs. My hope is that these figures have no proper place in public life, and their role reduced to sound-bites of expertise.

Biesta's Arendtian response to this trend in education in Biesta and GREPH shifted quickly from describing its campaign as a campaign for education to one for the extension of philosophical education. As a term of philosophical progressivity is used, it indicates the movement of a student from a frame of philosophical thought. See Derrida (2002c, p. 162).

object of uncritical discourses, ones crammed with very particular ideological contents (Derrida, 1990, p. 167, 2002a, p. 110).

The solution must be to give philosophy the right already possessed by every other discipline to have students work through a long and progressive curriculum beginning in the earliest classes.¹⁴ Without this, access to a teaching of philosophy is granted to students only at a stage in their development when other teachings “(notably those of the “humanities” and of the so-called “human” sciences) have played their role of ideological impregnation” (Derrida, 1990, p. 173, 2002a, p. 112).

It is worth noting that Derrida is less dismissive of the humanities when he addresses an American audience (at Stanford University in 1998, see Derrida, 2001a), which can in large part be accounted for by the different institutional and disciplinary arrangements in France and the United States. As one no doubt apocryphal anecdote goes, a French philosopher once asked about philosophy in the United States and replied: “Ah yes, I know that. It's called Comparative Literature.” Yet whether in Europe or America, each discipline – philosophy included – has its own requirements, its own canon consisting of texts that make their own demands; what is peculiar to philosophy is the essential role of critique. Even if one can conceive of an expert in literature who is not a literary critic and a research historian who does not explicitly engage questions of historiography, the same is not true of a philosopher who eschews critique. Insofar as they are critical, all the humanities are capable of harbouring resistance, but only philosophy is essentially critical and therefore the philosopher cannot avoid bearing a peculiar responsibility to resist. The philosopher withdraws from the world experiences this as the disciplinary

¹⁴ There are several groups interested in some writing on philosophy for children, though it is rare to see thinking in that takes anything of the deconstructive approach I am investigating here. See, for example, Robert Fisher's “Philosophy for Children: How Philosophical Enquiry Can Foster Values Education in Schools” in Gardner (2000, pp. 50–66) where the author relies on a model of community and communitarianism that does nothing to challenge the hegemony of the autonomous subject. On the other hand, some exceptions to this tendency, which deserve more attention, include William Hamrick's discussion of the teacher who leads by civic example in “Civic Virtue: Democracy and the Philosophy for Children Program” and Hans-Ludwig Freese's. “Philosophie Unterricht für Kinder im Lehrgang: anhand von Texten oder Philosophie als Unterrichtsprinzip?” which deals with specific questions regarding which texts from the history of philosophy are useful for teaching children and how they can be used, both articles appear in Camby, pp. 55–65 and pp. 71–75.

responsibility to resist the pressure of the tradition by means of a critical engagement with it; the Derridian professor or the Arendtian educator, positioned between the realm of education and the public world must also experience it as a responsibility to resist the forces of received public wisdom and to critically engage ideological and instrumental thinking.

This principle of resistance is at work in the professor's role as a teacher, and it is as relevant in kindergarten as it is for college students. What Derrida advocates is a pedagogy which, though structured and involving a long introduction to the history of philosophy, is essentially a pedagogy without a project. It is a pedagogy that not only struggles to hold open a space – for non-instrumental thinking, for action – that might otherwise be filled with the concerns of economics, science and technology but is also attuned to the fact that this involves a new approach to the student's own conception of her goals, her projects, her self. Remember that Arendt does not think of action as consisting of the deeds of already self-possessed individuals; rather, it is *in* acting that we show and at the same time discover who we are. The same thought is expressed by Biesta when he argues that those undergoing education are doing so precisely because they do not know what they need to know, a fact that undermines all consumer models of education (Biesta, 2004). In Derrida's terms, it is a matter of constantly disrupting the model of product or project which, at its deepest, involves disrupting any tendency to think of our selves as projects moving towards completion. Indeed, it undermines any thought of the self as a completed or complete-able being.

In philosophical terms, this is a demand for the displacement of the subject. More concretely, from a student's point of view, it is the experience of realizing that it is not all about her. A rigorous exposure to the history of philosophy has the advantage of providing the student with a starting point that is something other than her own immediate experience of the world, and starting there in a spirit of critical hermeneutic openness puts not only that history but also her self in question. If the humanities remain committed to the notion that the human – understood as the modern self – is the measure of all things, they can only hinder the fostering of that spirit and that questioning; if they can become the place in which the very concept of the human is re-thought, they become the privileged site of "irre-dentist resistance, that is, by analogy, a sort of principle of civil dissidence" (Derrida, 2001a, my translation).

The structure is the same as the openness that in those experiences of public happiness that, for Arendt, moments of revolution. She remarks, quoting René C. hering, that the structure is left to us by no testament (Arendt, 1977e). The first person plural is not accidental. A set of newcomers arriving into the world with the force of its natal energy, capable of destroying that heritage; what gives education a particular difficulty is that the newness of the newcomers destroyed by their heritage. As a result, paradoxically, the new must be conservative if it is to hold open the chaotic and foster the possibility for these newcomers to become and enact their revolution. It embodies a principle because it must preserve for itself a quasi-public realm of public happiness that is gradually shown to the world without ever being thought that how it is how it must be. To fall into such a trap is to lay the ground for conformity and inaction and the capacity to criticize, not to mention the chance to experience happiness of public life. The examples of such happiness Arendt provides, the moments she mentions when the treasure that is the joy of acting together are all moments: 1776 in Philadelphia, the summer of 1789 in Budapest, and we could add the spring of 1968 in Leipzig and 1991 in Belgrade.¹⁵ These are moments of struggle with responsibility and for authority is univocal the happy polar opposites of the similarly univocal authoritarian oppression.

Yet, insofar as the professor is engaged in the *vita* alone, she can enact resistance only in the rarefied intellect; from the point of view of the world – of the world of the professor's public realm – her resistance is merely form. Derrida's account of the profession of the professor is that the professor is a scholar and educator and actor. If any claim on her students' thoughtful attention be a claim on her authority of the expert who can impart a body of knowledge and thus produce satisfied student consumers, it is a claim that would call it authority – based on this threefold profession

¹⁵ To begin such a list is dangerous, since one quickly encounters cases. What, for instance, would be an Arendtian reading of 1979 important to remember that in each case she has in mind the revolt and not the inevitable institutionalisation or constitutionalisation of a revolutionary spirit, See *On Revolution* (Arendt, 1977a).

of responsibility that cannot be reduced to or divided every and practice (Derrida, 2001a). conclude, then, by claiming that the aim of education is revolution I am echoing Biesta's claim about the impossibility of education (Biesta, 1998, pp. 503–505). Given the unpredictable nature of action emphasised by Arendt, and the fact that there has been every appearance of an endeavour that can never fail or produce a desired outcome; it cannot have a goal. Yet this impossibility reveals education as a process in which the virtue of its indeterminacy, a great deal is possible. What has allowed us to see in Arendt's work is that the decision to educate – she describes it as the decision that we love enough to take responsibility for it (Arendt, 1977b, and the decision for revolution are essentially the same, and the decision made in the face of undecidability. This is what it means to have after authority.

REFERENCES

- Arendt, H. (1977a). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, H. (1977b). Reflections on LittleRock. *Dissent*, 1, 45–56.
- Arendt, H. (1977c). *Remarks by Hannah Arendt*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College Press.
- Arendt, H. (1977d). *The life of the mind*. San Diego: Harcourt.
- Arendt, H. (1977e). *On revolution*. New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1977f). "The Crisis in Education" in *between past and future*. New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1977g). What is authority? In *Between past and future*. New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1977h). Truth and politics. In *Between past and future* (pp. 227–244). New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1977i). Preface. In *Between past and future* (pp. 3–16). New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1977j). *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. New York: Penguin.
- Arendt, H. (1982). *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy*. In Ronald Beiner (ed.), *University of Chicago Press*.
- Arendt, H. (2004). Against learning: Reclaiming a language for education in an age of globalisation. *Nordisk Pedagogik*, 23, 70–82.
- Arendt, H. (2005). What this pedagogy might look like is difficult to answer in without appearing to present another program. Biesta directs us to Arendt's "What do you think about it?" pedagogy and to Jan Masscheire's education as problematisation (Biesta, 1998, p. 505, no. 16).
- Biesta, G.J.J. (2001). Preparing for the incalculable. In G.J.J. Biesta (Ed.), et al., *Derrida and Education* (pp. 32–54). New York: Routledge.
- Biesta, G.J.J. (1998). Say you want a revolution...suggestions for the impossible future of critical pedagogy. *Educational Theory*, 48(2), 499–510.
- Biesta, G.J.J. (1996). Education, not initiation. In *Philosophy of education* (pp. 90–98). New York: Penguin.
- Biesta, Gert & Geert Jan J.M. Stams (2001). Critical thinking and the question of critique: some lessons from deconstruction. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 20, 57–74.
- Camby, Daniela (Ed.) (1990). *Wenn Kindern philosophieren*. Graz: Leykam.
- Derrida, Jacques (1990). *Du droit à la philosophie*. Paris: Galilée.
- Derrida, Jacques (1992). *The other heading: reflections on today's Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas.
- Derrida, Jacques (2001a). *L'Université sans conditions*. Paris: Galilée.
- Derrida, Jacques (2001b). A certain 'madness' must watch over thinking. In G.J.J. Biesta (Ed.), et al., *Derrida and education* (pp. 55–76). New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques (2002a). *Who's afraid of philosophy?* Translated by Ian Plug. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques (2002b). *Without Alibi*. Edited and translated by Peggy Kamuf. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Edgeose, J. (2001). Just decide! In G.J.J. Biesta (Ed.), et al., *Derrida and Education* (pp. 199–133). New York: Routledge.
- Fischer, Robert (2000). Philosophy for children: how philosophical enquiry can foster values education in schools. *Gardner* 50–66.
- Fresse, Hans-Ludwig (1990). Philosophie Unterricht für Kinder im Lehrgang: anhand von Texten oder Philosophie als Unterrichtsprinzip? Camby 71–75.
- Gardner, Roy (Ed.) et al., (2000). *Education for values*. London: Kogan Page.
- William Hamrick (1990). Civic virtue: democracy and the philosophy for children program. Camby 55–65.
- Laclau, Ernesto (1996). *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso.
- Masschelein, Jan (1998). In defence of education as problematisation: some preliminary remarks on a strategy of disarmament. In Wildemeersch 144–180.
- Rancière, Jacques (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Trionfias, Peter Pericles (2000). *The ethics of writing: Derrida, deconstruction, and pedagogy*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Wildemeersch, Danny (Ed.) et al., (1998). *Adult education and social responsibility*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Department of Philosophy
Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY, 11549
USA
E-mail: phiaco@hofstra.edu*