

Editorial: Forgotten connections Thirty years after

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Forgotten Connections: On Culture and Upbringing, the English translation of Klaus Mollenhauer's *Vergessene Zusammenhänge. Über Kultur und Erziehung*, has recently been published in English more than three decades after the first German edition of the book came out in 1983. The Dutch translation was published in 1986, the Japanese in 1987 and the Norwegian in 1996. Does it make sense to translate this book into English for the first time after thirty years? Is it possible to convince the Anglo-American reader of the value of general pedagogic, knowing that this typically Continental discipline lost its central position in educational sciences on the continent a long time ago? What has been happening on the frontlines of education during these years to justify a resurgent interest in the book just now? When we sent out invitations for short essays for our Special Issue, "Forgotten Connections: Thirty Years After," seven scholars replied enthusiastically. Some of them were on the scene when the first German version came out. Two of the authors have translated the book into their own mother-tongue, and some are students and teachers who see the significance of Mollenhauer's book from reading, re-reading and teaching it through many years.

The turn to general pedagogic

For me, Bas Levering, the publication of Klaus Mollenhauer's book thirty years ago was a special event. It looked like Mollenhauer did what I was longing for: he turned the face of general pedagogic in the direction of the subject matter again: the moral relationship between the older and the younger generation. Since the late Sixties and the beginning of the Seventies, the so-called "methods controversy" (*Methodenstreit*) in German sociology had changed the scene of general pedagogic in The Netherlands completely. The subject-oriented human science approach of Martinus Jan Langeveld, which had been dominant at my university since the end of World War II, was not abandoned but sharply criticized on a meta-theoretical level, and degraded to the level of only one of a number of possible approaches. In the introduction to the Dutch collection of essays entitled *Theoretische pedagogiek* (*Theoretical Pedagogic*) (Spiecker, Levering and Beekman 1982) the editors, in presenting a state of the art of the discipline, tried to ameliorate the relentless focus on methodology by reintroducing themes like "the pedagogical relation" and "pedagogical responsibility." One year later Mollenhauer's book *Vergessene Zusammenhänge* concentrated fully on old, fundamental pedagogical questions such as: "What is education?" "What is educability?" "What is autonomy?" The way he approached these questions was really special: he analyzed all kinds of unconventional sources like autobiographies and paintings in a new way. Paintings, for instance, had certainly appeared in works of theoretical and historical pedagogues, but in this context, they were used merely as illustrations of theories to be defended. Mollenhauer's approach was different indeed. He used the analysis of these original sources as the basis of his theorizing as such. This is what Mollenhauer, who was driven away

by the turmoil of the methods controversy himself, brought back to hermeneutics.

The starting point of *Forgotten Connections* is situated beyond the methods controversy of the seventies. Mollenhauer takes another controversy as springboard for his new approach. He analyses the crisis of general pedagogic in the eighties by considering the claims of anti-pedagogic on the one hand and postmodernism on the other. Both are mistaken, in Mollenhauer's diagnosis. Anti-pedagogic holds that education is always a form of oppression – a claim that, without doubt, contains a fundamental critique of the possibility of the project of education. Postmodernism delivers a rather convincing critique of the possibility of bringing about hoped-for changes in societies and in human beings. This critique of the so-called “moldability”-thesis (as the English translation indicates, there is no proper word for *Bildsamkeit* in the English language) gets to the heart of the project of education or upbringing. Mollenhauer's defense against these two attacks is simple and effective. His answer to the claim of anti-pedagogic is that it is impossible for an educator *not* to affect young people. The mere presence of an educator is enough to influence the child. To put it into the language that Mollenhauer developed, “there is always presentation.” In his response to the claims of postmodernism, Mollenhauer is prepared to admit that the educator is not capable of *making* the child autonomous. But he stresses that this does not mean that the educator can do nothing at all. What the educator *can* do is to *challenge* the child to become autonomous. It is up to the child to take up that challenge and most children do. But in upbringing, success is never guaranteed.

A rough sketch is enough

One of the basic problems for the English translator of Mollenhauer's book is the perennial problem that there is no Anglo-American pedagogic tradition. It is not easy for the continental pedagogue to explain to an Anglo-American audience what pedagogic is. Theoretical pedagogic (or *allgemeine Pädagogik*) cannot be equated with philosophy of education. One of the nasty difficulties is that the word “education” refers to what is happening in the school, whereas pedagogic refers to everything that is happening to a child between the earliest childhood and adulthood; pedagogic refers to the broader upbringing. When I (Tone Saevi) wrote a book review of the English translation (Saevi 2012), I initially pointed to Mollenhauer's own tentative words about the intent of his book; to bring to light some collective pedagogic insights current for today's educational theory and practice. He calls his book “a rough sketch of what a general study of *Bildung* and upbringing could be today” (2014, p.9). He introduces in this rough sketch a “basic set of issues that no one who wants to raise and educate a child in a principled manner could ignore, regardless of the position held in our system of education” (p. 6). The book outlines this basic set of issues. I refer to Lars Løvlie who, in his introduction to the Norwegian translation of the book (Mollenhauer 1996, p. 6), makes the observation that Mollenhauer deliberately seems to keep distance between school and education because schools have become specialized institutions and education has become a branch of science. As a result, the threads of upbringing have been gathered in too few hands and are no longer shared or woven in the common texture of culture. Today's educational practice and theory have forgotten the existential qualities of pedagogic and thus we have to return to the origin and start anew. “The cultural-existential discussion that used to be the point and the end of education, increasingly found solutions in a specialized, interdisciplinary and professionally-oriented education locked up in educational institutions” (Saevi 2012, p. 181). Løvlie's point about maintaining a distance from institutional, educational specialization shows why Mollenhauer's pedagogic approach matters today.

This is the moment to emphasize the importance of the subtitle of the book. The translator translates *Über Kultur und Erziehung* correctly as *On Culture and Upbringing*, because the book is definitely about “upbringing.” In the continental pedagogical tradition “upbringing” (*Erziehung*) is the broader notion, and education is subordinate to “upbringing.” Yet, with the historical move from “presentation” to “representation,” as Mollenhauer explains, the focus ends up being very clearly on the school. He looks at the way a society is capable of transmitting or reproducing culture from one generation to another, and perceives a big change in Europe in the early modern period. Before 1500, the transfer of culture from one generation to the other seemed to be unproblematic; presentation was sufficient. However, society soon became too complicated to be transferred by mere presentation. Explication was needed, or, to put it in Mollenhauer’s words: “we do not simply *present* other ways of life to children but we provide them to children in a different manner – we *represent* them” The ideal example of the transformation from presentation to representation can be found in the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658) by the Czech pedagogue Jan Amos Comenius, wherein pictures were used to show reality as if for a “second time.” One could even say that Mollenhauer’s concepts “presentation” and “representation” designate the didactical problem – in the broad sense – right from the start.

Identity as fiction

Mollenhauer’s book can be seen as a historical analysis. His description is definitely chronological. Here and there Mollenhauer even adopts an original position in “the history of childhood”-debate, for example. But it is not Mollenhauer’s main enterprise to find out how it really has been in the past. Mollenhauer tries to find new answers to old pedagogical questions by taking detours through the past. In this book he is quite brief about his new method, but three years later in 1986 he used the word “detour” as the title for a collection of essays: *Umwege. Über Bildung, Kunst und Interaktion* (*Detours, on Education, Art and Interaction*). The full meaning of Mollenhauer’s new approach, however, is demonstrated in the last chapter of *Forgotten Connections*, where he tries to find a solution for a new pedagogical problem: the problem of identity. Up until the eighties, “identity” had not been recognized as a pedagogical theme; but now the postmodern “disorder” makes the quest for identity an urgent question with serious pedagogical consequences. Confronted with problems in identity diagnoses, Mollenhauer sees the matter as too difficult to solve as an empirical psychological problem. Instead, he dives into history to see if it can shed light on the problem. Identity, Mollenhauer claims “is the relationship of the I to itself” (2014, p. 116). Identity is understood as an existential rather than a psychological or sociological differentiation of self from others. Mollenhauer interprets identity as a relational fiction of the self, and in this way goes beyond the apparently real. Identity is not a problem to be sorted out and solved, but rather is nurtured by dissatisfaction with oneself (not only with one of one’s roles), and thus stays an unsolved and unsolvable problem, or as Mollenhauer says, one “characterized by an intrinsic instability [...] a constant movement into the future” (2014, p. 117).

The relational as pedagogic basis

In my (Bas Levering) lectures for undergraduates at the University of Utrecht in the late eighties I had an exceptional opportunity to show Mollenhauer’s innovative approach in *Forgotten Connections*. I was used to introducing the central pedagogical concepts and

themes on the basis of Langeveld's book *Beknopte theoretische pedagogiek*. (*Concise Theoretical Pedagogic*, 1945). Through the years, it had been a thrilling enterprise to discover and demonstrate what aspects of Langeveld's theory had survived since 1945 on one hand, and what adjustments had to be made on the other. But Mollenhauer's book introduced some fundamentally different views on similar basic concepts and questions. Langeveld, like his entire generation, considered *Bildsamkeit* as a capacity of the child, as an anthropological quality. Mollenhauer considers *Bildsamkeit* not as a feature, but a disposition of the child, which only manifests itself expressly as a reaction to particular expectations. That is a fundamental difference indeed. In Langeveld's view *Bildsamkeit* is ready-made. In Mollenhauer's view, *Bildsamkeit* arises in the relation between the adults and the child. In our time however, it is dominated by neurological and biological research, and the gain that Mollenhauer made seems to be lost again.

Showing the deep significance of Mollenhauer's 1983 reformulation of some core concepts of human-science (*geisteswissenschaftliche*) pedagogic cannot conceal the fact that Mollenhauer's book did not create a revival of general pedagogic. The empirical-analytic approach became the dominant approach in the educational sciences on the continent, as it had dominated the Anglo-American world for years earlier. The last generation that was educated in the old human-science approach is reaching the age of retirement. For a new generation of European students and teachers it turns out to be extremely difficult to understand pedagogic in the old way. For the Anglo-American reader it must be almost impossible to get in touch with the pedagogic tradition and it can be doubted if the English edition of Mollenhauer's book on its own is going to do the job. As I write in the aforementioned book review (Saevi 2012, p.188): "My worry is that the book will ignite enthusiasm in some readers, but the flame might soon be extinguished because the culture and the educational system go against such 'heretical' pedagogical thoughts." This is a serious situation globally today. The paradoxical view that children and young people are best served with a pedagogic involving open relational structure and reflexive and concrete interpretations of pedagogic situations is replaced by managerial and abstract directives that increasingly alienate the child from the adult and both from the experiential and existential world.

A general pedagogic for the future?

The contributors of this collection of essays are more than convinced of the importance of restoring the interpretive and open relation between culture and upbringing and between the experiential and existential world of the adult and the child. As far as we know, the call to introduce the term "pedagogic" into the English language has been heard so clearly in so many texts from so many perspectives.

The first essay, by Stein M. Wivestad, who also translated *Forgotten Connections* into Norwegian in 1996, emphasizes that Mollenhauer's text is indeed a sketch of a general pedagogic. This thorough review demonstrates the coherence of Mollenhauer's thoughts and purpose despite his many, complex and seemingly disordered array of fictional and theoretical sources. Wouter Pols, who was responsible for the Dutch translation, stakes a claim for the return of pedagogic. In the midst of huge changes in the "field" of pedagogic, professional pedagogues continue to put forward pedagogic arguments and ways of thinking in the Netherlands (and in the rest of the world). In his paper, Pols makes an interesting comment on the translation process as an act or "art of self-cultivation," and highlights the experience that "Mollenhauer was not only the author of the book we translated... he became our educator." In Norm Friesen's paper, the use of the book in his university classes is exemplified. As the

translator of the book into English (Mollenhauer 2014), Friesen also draws close connections between the book's content and Mollenhauer's personal life experiences. This biographical approach is pursued further by Alex Aßmann in his attempt to differentiate between scholarly generations around Mollenhauer in his essay on Hitler's child soldiers and 1960's revolutionaries. He highlights the dissimilar views on the problem of education and emancipation in particular, seeing it as an existential or political point of affirmation or conflict in various pre-and postwar generations. Gert Biesta argues why and in what ways theorizing about education has to be pedagogical rather than educational. He puts it like this: "[w]hat Mollenhauer is trying to show is that education works with fictions – that its dynamics precisely have to do with bringing something in that is obviously not there and, more strongly, that it is not there is some kind of potentiality that just would need to be cultivated." Tone Sævi reconstructs the basis for Mollenhauer's sketch of a general pedagogic. This is the moral and asymmetric relationship between the older and the younger generations. She suggests that Mollenhauer practices an unspecialized pedagogic that originates from and returns continually to human existence and children's lifeworlds, which has complex, difficult and often unknowable experiences at its core. Stefan Hopmann reports on his own experiences encountering Mollenhauer in different stages of both his (Hopmann's) and Mollenhauer's intellectual development. However, Mollenhauer's issues (which also were Hopmann's own) addressed the important educational questions of late 20th century, which remain the basic questions for pedagogic today: Is education possible, and if so, how? How can education empower or emancipate those being educated? *Forgotten Connections* speaks of the preliminary and limited nature of pedagogic and in particular of the pedagogical relation, "not because the final version has not yet been made, but because there are no final answers." Jan Masschelein, who was in communication with Mollenhauer when he was working on *Forgotten Connections*, insists on the persistent relevance of the basic intellectual project it represents. Masschelein suggests a radicalization of presentational force in our times of extreme representation. How can we, in a world of screens, monitors and mirrors, make the world present, and "ensure it becomes real and can speak meaningfully to us." This, he says, "is not a psychological issue of motivation, but an existential issue in relation to our world." Bas Levering takes a critical look at the methodology of *Forgotten Connections*; he focuses on Mollenhauer's analysis of self-portraits. He characterizes Mollenhauer's hermeneutics as being just as tempting and risky in 1983 as it is today. Concurrently, he suggests good reasons to question Mollenhauer's introspective and emotionally oriented interpretation of these portraits both in terms of originality and with regard to recent discoveries concerning specific features of some famous self-portraits.

Finally, Peter Willis contributes with a book review of *Phenomenology of Practice*, Max van Manen's recent book on phenomenological method and methodology. His analogy to being a "cavalier" or a "roundhead" nicely hints at van Manen's scholarly and evocative approach that in Willis' words indicates a "careful poetic texture [...] in which the phenomenon could be caught sight of and, at least to some extent, understood in their raw "initially connected" state through tentative, aesthetic processes"

An eventful period of work has come to an end for the contributors and editors of this special issue. We have learned much from re-reading Mollenhauer's essay in "general pedagogic," and from the insightful contributions here presented to the readers. The modest intent of this special issue on Mollenhauer's general pedagogic is to introduce the significant and particular meanings of the phenomenon of pedagogic to an English-speaking readership, perhaps for the first time as a concise and particular term, in a collection of essays from experienced scholars. We virtually give, and give back, the phenomenon of pedagogic itself –

by appealing to you, our readers, to continue to explore its meanings and implications without recourse to pat definitions and easy theoretical conceptualizations.

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