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Education after the 22nd July 2012

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The background: 22 July 2011
A lively and healthy democracy is not only built upon education, it must be aware of the difference between an educated person and someone with insight, capable of using knowledge to create a better world: a better world, meaning a world with equality, dignity and freedom, as well as a place for critical reflection where political, religious and moral discussions are encouraged. We have seen through history too many examples of educated citizens who have misused their knowledge, acted against democracy and in the extreme ended up as perpetrators, oppressors and terrorists, who show us that education in itself is not a guarantee against violence, humiliation and abuse.

Key words: Political Education, Utøya Massacre, Insight

In the summer of 2011, shortly after the conference on democracy at the University of Oslo, a terrible and horrific event took place in Oslo and at Utøya. Seventy-seven people, both at the government headquarters in Oslo and at Utøya outside of Oslo, where engaged youth participated in a political camp for social democracy, were brutally killed by a terrorist – the vast majority of them at Utøya. The nation went into collective shock, but instead of meeting the actions with fear and demands for revenge and more police and armed security, it seemed as if the people of Norway gathered around democratic values such as more openness and more solidarity. And shortly after the killings the streets of Oslo were covered with roses, in front of the Lutheran cathedral, Parliament, the government buildings, City Hall and the Royal Palace.

But then the reflection started: How may our society be inclusive and at the same time defend its own values? How can we express even more

clearly the respect for human integrity and our inherent value as humans? How can our society make room for unpopular and extreme opinions, while at the same time be sensitive to the fear of terror? And not least: How may we combine fruitful and sound nationalism with global solidarity? To answer these questions we need to take better account of the aggressive and radical internet discussions on immigration, national identity, violence and culture. We need to confront the uncomfortable ideas that exist in our society and in this confrontation refine our views on tolerance and intolerance.

The events in Oslo and at Utøya in the summer of 2011 add an important dimension to the need for reimagining a democratic society: The terrorist's own ideology showed distaste for weakness and a romanticising of violence, combined with a desire to be a uniformed hero. The terrorist was also a product of our society and his ideas have their roots in the middle of our ordinary lives. How do we confront ideologies of this type, how do we build up resistance towards such inhumane actions, and how do we create a public culture of debate and actions that appeal to a diverse and modern society?

Education is a part of the answer, but we cannot "teach away" the terrorists. In this article we will argue for an education that seeks to foster critical, reflective and moral individuals who are first and foremost morally capable of creating moral disturbance, confronted with the current global dilemmas, with the classical questions in science and society, and who have internalised the academic virtues of being analytical, critical and ethical – arguing with precision, care and sufficient knowledge. Such dramatic experiences as those of summer 2011 in Oslo and Utøya may open up two windows into academic society: first, the liberal education that we need from the historical and multidisciplinary knowledge of the universities for any unknown event in the future; and second, the awareness of what is lacking in today's democracy. The core task of an open society is to develop and develop again and again, for every new generation, a public dialogue – a dialogue broad enough to face uncomfortable dilemmas.

Reimagining democratic societies: deliberative democracy

Political education often begins with personal experiences of infringement, injustice or lack of respect for oneself and others, by being drawn into political movements and organisations, or by dramatic political events. It may also come down to the more commonplace influence of a good friend, an inspirational teacher or an absorbing book. In any case, it seems to begin

with what we call *in media res* – in the middle of things, by time and by place: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963, the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, and now in Oslo and at Utøya on 22 July 2011. A person does not become politically-minded out of the blue, but through their upbringing, which makes us part of a society of political institutions. Even when we are children, the past is engraved in our minds in the form of attitudes, customs and concepts. But it is the incident which ignites our perception of history, making a difference and thereby becoming significant. Utøya was one of these instances.

We will let the incident of 22 July lead us into the subject: education in a democracy. The bombing of the Government block and the massacre on Utøya increased the significance of what is known as deliberative democracy, based on the concept of a political debate in which everyone, in principle, has a right to their opinion, and in which people follow common rules of objectivity. In terms of methodology, the deliberative is based on a dogma of objectivity[1], while it is clear that a political education is more than a mere skill and an instrument. It is the everyday world which makes the dogma of objectivity and political debate possible, and it is tradition which provides cultural resources. If we are to talk of democracy in the Western sense, then we require concepts and values such as freedom of expression, equality, solidarity and tolerance.

Moreover, we relate to such values in a rhetorical field in which irony, paradoxes and deconstruction all form part of political education. But let us begin at the heart of the reality of 22 July. The attacks were carried out by an ethnic 32 year old Norwegian, born and brought up in Oslo, who, to everyone's astonishment, was operating alone. We cannot begin to explain Anders Behring Breivik's actions. He made the impossible possible, but we cannot prepare for the impossible. We can improve the upbringing provided by schools, but we cannot "teach away" the terrorists. When psychological diagnoses result in the increasing isolation and stricter treatment of potential offenders, when measures to safeguard against the impossible move us further towards a surveillance society, when the media fuel people's fear and loathing, and when the reaction of schools is to indoctrinate, then we are moving towards the very totalitarian society that Breivik wanted. Breivik is a neo-fascist ideologue, urging us to fight against what

[1] The translation from Norwegian "saklighet" to "dogma of objectivity" or "objectivity" is somewhat problematic because "objectivity" could also mean that something could be tested independently of the individual who tests it, but still we have chosen to use this translation.

he perceives as a back-door Islamification of Europe. That ideology is based on the premise that the Muslims' invasion is supported by the governing political elite and the public media and that the political youth organisations of Norway are continuing this tradition. On the day he carried out the attacks, Breivik published a 1500 page political manifesto, cut and pasted from various sources and supplemented by his own comments. It is worth mentioning three features in this context, features which lead to the question of how we envisage education in a deliberative democracy. The first feature is ideology and is tied up with viewpoints which are as common on populist immigrant-sceptic internet forums as on Europe's extreme right wing. Those who envisage what they call Eurabia do not necessarily lack political knowledge. The flaw in their argument lies in the facts, in a logic that concludes with the absurd, in a judgement that is warped. The second is immunisation, which is on the emotional level and can act as a motivator towards extreme actions. This is about the "big conspiracy", namely the alleged Muslim plot to take over political power in the West, an intrigue in which the Western elite is a willing participant.

What are the typical features of this kind of conspiracy theory? Naturally, it is immune to criticism. Counterarguments against the theory are by definition part of the big conspiracy. They only reinforce the belief that the other party is embracing the whole pack of lies. This paranoia and lack of trust preclude any actual objective discussion. The third feature is self-imposed isolation and denial of reality – withdrawal from interactions with family, schoolmates, friends and colleagues. (We do not in this essay discuss the terrorists psychological and mental illness, whether his actions also relate to, and may be explained by, his mental disorders, something which does not affect our more general arguments on political actions). This creates a social and mental void which limits any recognition of others and means that family authorities can have only a limited influence. What insights do we gain from this? Firstly, that knowledge is not enough. It must be disciplined by a communicative, discursive rationality and controlled by reasonable procedures. Secondly, that faith-based immunisation prohibits the discursive public that Kant in his day envisaged, where people have the courage to express themselves based on personal autonomy and a healthy examination of reality. Thirdly, that self-imposed isolation leads to real isolation and lack of judgement; for judgement is another word for social common sense, and we develop this by interacting with other people. These conclusions can be summarised in the concept of a deliberative or discursive democracy.

Some history

The word "to deliberate" roughly means to evaluate, discuss and reflect, but has no immediate function in everyday language. The word "discursive" can be substituted for the word "deliberative" and we may differentiate between three different types of discussion. The first type is when we verify statements of fact, to find out whether they are true or false; the second type is when we make normative statements, i.e. right or wrong; the third is about values, in other words the issues with which people identify, that they esteem and want to preserve. Empirical and normative statements in speech, writing or images are in principle free, public and available to all. Verification is a form of criticism which does not reject other people's statements, but examines them in a public debate which must adhere closely to facts. The same premise applies to the question as to how we should act towards other people in a multicultural society which is based on the principle of complying with what is right and what is fair. However, discussions regarding values cannot be approached in the same way as letting the cows out in spring, where points of view can be allowed to roam in different directions until they run out of energy, and where people can choose to live by certain criteria, for example by what is fair play at work, good music in a concert, or suitable content for the school curriculum. A complete concept of democratic education must therefore be extremely extensive. The debate can then range from the formal research seminar to newspaper articles against discrimination and even to the question of what is a nation. It can take place in all its variations within a common horizon, using everyday language as a medium. There is nothing to prevent the classic trio of that which is true, right and noble from forming the basis of political education.

Historically, deliberation or discourse goes back to the European Enlightenment and can be found in Immanuel Kant's concept of "publicity", in Edmund Burke's idea of parliament as a "deliberative assembly" and later in John Stuart Mill's proposal for a "rule through discussion" (Elster, 1999, p. 1ff) Discussion in our sense includes the constitutional state and civilian society, and ranges from Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) to voluntary organisations such as Save the Children. We can differentiate between three different practices in our democracy: representative, participatory and discursive practices, or, if you prefer, choice, negotiation and debate. We achieve the first on Election Day, the second during salary negotiations, and the third by justifying moral and political statements. John Dewey's republican ideas, in books such as *The Public and Its Problems* from 1927, of the state as a "political public" created by "common activities" and "articu-

lated" by selected representatives (Dewey, 1927, p. 67), covers these areas. His proposal of education based on general logic as a means of solving problems, a "logic of inquiry", has similarities to Jürgen Habermas' idea of justifying a linguistic philosophical profile by the use of arguments. On a more general note, the Second World War led to a general requirement for Scandinavian education to offer a more political upbringing and knowledge, to such an extent that it is possible for us talk, with Theodore Adorno, about education after Auschwitz (see Adorno 1971).

Discourse and education

Education is not achieved solely by setting requirements for knowledge and skills. Having a reading list and ensuring that skills are learned is, of course, essential, but introducing a regulation for education in the form of the European qualification framework – a key element of the Bologna Process – creates a quasi-legal governmental regime with formal obligations and sanctions. The framework itself is not open to debate. The problem may be illustrated by the most recent upper-secondary school curriculum in Norway. While it was being developed in 2005 and 2006, several drafts of the Norwegian plan were published on the internet. One of them proposed that the issue of the canon, which is the basis for the prescribed reading list, should be included in the curriculum, thereby making it an issue not only of content but also of scope. The proposal was removed in the next draft and the curriculum thereby lost its self-critical function, which is to address any differences or rough edges in its own concept and system. We do not know of any reason why the proposal vanished, but we have two hypotheses. The first is the view that this "metalogue", to use Gregory Bateson's (1972) term, could create conflict for the teacher or be too difficult for the students. The second is that as long as the students are acquiring knowledge and skills, the teachers are doing their job. Schools should prepare students to criticise, but do not need to criticise themselves. Both are problematic. Traditionalists view education as an initiation into the ways of the bourgeois middle classes – a way of getting the barbarians inside the walls of civilisation, as the British educationalist R. S. Peters once put it (Peters, 1972, p. 107). But children are not primitive beings living in the wilderness; they do not live as barbarians before they can talk or heathens before they are christened, but from birth – and even before – they are actually living among us adults inside the four walls of our houses. Over a period of time, education is there to cultivate attitudes and mentalities that promote independence and

criticism. It imparts political insights that make pupils and students aware of simple and more subtle power mechanisms in society and thereby help to increase their political and moral understanding and judgement. This is also a key element in Wittgenstein's philosophy, where meaning is something already established and the upbringing a process of learning how to apply the rules of meaning and sense, and to learn to speak is not to learn by pointing at things and connecting them with names, but by using words in contexts that already have meanings: "light dawns gradually upon the whole"[2].

The line between initiation and social criticism is not easy to define. The American philosopher Richard Rorty tries to solve the conflict in one fell swoop, and he does this by locating the conflict in various educational phases. In his article "Education as Socialization and as Individualization", originally published in 1989, he suggests that up until the age of 18 or 19, education for most people should be about socialisation, about instilling traditional values: "…getting the student to take over the moral and political common sense of the society as it is" (Rorty, 1999, p. 116). After students have left school and gone on to college and university, it is time for their "rebellion" against indoctrination and for them to realise themselves as individuals. This view seems to hit two stumbling blocks: one on the psychological and the other on the logical level. Firstly, young people are capable of social criticism based on their own experiences and on what they learn at home, at school and from their friends. Since socialisation goes hand in hand with individualisation, the solution of postponing children's criticism does not seem to be a particularly good idea. Furthermore, children have, in many ways, more inquiring minds than adults. Let us move on to the stumbling block of logic. It seems no less impossible to believe that the transition from indoctrination to criticism comes as a surprise on one's eighteenth birthday than it is to believe that knowledge is transformed into action as if by magic. Students are developing their critical repertoire at the same time as they are learning facts, acquiring good habits and using the ability to evaluate what is part of a critical debate.

These observations require us – parents, teachers and citizens – to take responsibility for an early, multidimensional schooling in critical thinking. This schooling takes place in the form of indirect encounters with democratic ideals, by demanding respect for children's boundaries, and encouraging them to speak rather than strike, to accept rather than bully, and to

[2] Wittgenstein (1953) Philosophical Investigations

include rather than isolate. Criticism feeds on diluted authority, for example allowing teachers the freedom to design their own methods and curricula which free teachers and pupils from rules and regulations that create lifeless routines and absolve the parties of everyday responsibility for themselves and each other. Moreover, when students are valued using double descriptions: as self-centred yet social, reckless yet cautious, or unreliable yet responsible, teachers may find that it is a hard balancing act to choose between whether to demonstrate a point of view or leave it open and whether to stand by their authority or accept their fallibility. Responsibility for one's own opinions, the *Mündigkeit* (authority but also coming of age) mentioned by Kant cannot be put on hold, but should be cultivated over time through usage and experiences shared by teachers and pupils. This is highly relevant in today's facebook-culture of "likes" and "dislike" – an uttering that needs no argument or reason whatsoever. The ideal of taking responsibility for one's own opinions is an educational view and the basis for a broad discussion of a discursive democracy as an educational project.

The need for rationality

It is no new discovery that democracy is a vulnerable institution, nor that in the long run, sound and well-based arguments and the search for objectivity are a good and preferable safeguard against fear, discrimination and hatred. Kant's Enlightenment Age contribution was his concept of what we could term a regime of rational discussion. Regimes like this set strict boundaries for a reasonable debate. One example is Arne Næss' principles for a fair debate in preliminary tests in philosophy, which later became the *Examen Philosophicum* (a one semester introduction to philosophy and logic previously required of all university students in Norway). In the 1960s, in his little book *En del elementære logiske emner* (Næss, 1941/1982) he defined the field of objectivity as avoiding irrelevance, ambiguity and irony. Now, of course, irony does not have to be subjective. It can be a particular way of relating to the world, as we find in Richard Rorty's irony, in which the ironist appreciates what is contingent or random in his own convictions and in which this doubt is tied up with the hope that it may be possible to reduce the cruelty of the world. Similarly, ambiguity does not mean several ways out of the fox's den, so to speak; rather it refers to the complexity of interpretation and rhetoric.

We have outlined a concept of objective discussion that ranges from the requirement for unambiguous, consistent thinking and its relatively strict

rules on arguments, to discussion by topic, which has room for interpretation, irony and paradoxes. It is one thing to verify empirical statements, but another to justify normative selections and a third to interpret a text and lead value discussions. But then we are also talking about maintaining the scope of the practice that we know as education. In the introduction, we mentioned that knowledge is not enough, but that empathy (having personal experience of something as unjust, unfair and opposing personal or collective values), political sense and the ability to tackle an objective discussion are also needed. When knowledge is on the table, it should be verified and justified in an argument involving two or more people in a conversation or discourse. In a dialogue there are always two or more participants who need to listen to each other, argue and justify the validity of their ideas and theories – and they need to engage in each other's positions. There is always a counterargument, always another way of looking at things and always another human being with rights, convictions and dreams.

Educationalists are prone to perceive language as a means of communication, something that we use to make ourselves understood and influence others. This is interrelated with the current focus on knowledge and skills, in which language skills – you must be able to read and write – become part of a person's competence, enabling them to succeed in a professional environment. Traditional rhetoric may support this view. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* was used by the Roman upper classes as an educational methodology. In addition, languages exist in the plural form, and having language skills could now mean mastering e.g. Norwegian, English and French. But language also exists in the singular form, language as a background and medium, the cement of society. According to what is known as the linguistic figure of speech, society is not based on man's awareness or on society's institutions – its basis is not Kant's "I think" or Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life – it is rather everyday language. Here, we will identify and examine some linguistic uses of "reason", and attempt to reconstruct them. Your and my uses of reason pass from being pure thinking to becoming public and communicative, put on social display and realised in Richard Rorty's "conversation of mankind". We can make this conversation or dialogue more specific, using the grammar encountered by children in their first years at school. In the expression "I think…", I use the first person to address another person from within an originally physical and musical relationship between child and carer, but now based on a generalised expectation that the other person will answer and thereby take responsibility for the social relationship.

The educationalist and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt had faith in the individual and claimed that *Bildung* is a *Selbstbildung*, an education of the person or self. He assumed firstly that language is not simply a means to make oneself understood (*Verständigungsmittel*), but also an expression of the individual's "soul and perception of the world (*Weltansicht*)" (Humboldt 1963:135). He then stated that we as people develop in the living environment in which we participate, but that this participation has its motive in the fundamental social relationship between the "I" and the "you". We now see in this relationship "the deeper and nobler feelings, which in friendship and love and in every spiritual fellowship bind the two together in the deepest sincerity" (*idem*: 140). Individual and society are not pitted against each other here; the differences between the two rest on a linguistic fellowship (a fellowship that may consist of words or body language). The purpose of upbringing is an independent self that cannot be considered to be isolated from mankind as such (Humboldt 1827/1963, p. 135). You and I are abbreviations of the self that is already interacting in a world that is maintained and conveyed by language. The grammatical conjugations of "I am", "you are", "it is" actually direct us towards the relationship between self-awareness, the other person and the rest of the world.

Reflective education

Reimagining democratic societies is about self-reflection and self-scrutiny. We have to look at our own history and our own institutions critically: What kinds of values are present in the curricula of schools and universities, how do we express the core values at the different schoolyards, campuses and in the seminars? How seriously do we debate with radical opponents, how open to all political and ideological views is the society of schools and universities and how do we as teachers act as role models when it comes to being inclusive and caring – while at the same time encouraging intellectual inquiry?

From one perspective education is formal, that is, it is something you have or do not have, in contrast to the process of understanding and reflecting upon what you have read and heard and said; an understanding of knowledge on behalf of which you act. From another perspective education is static and has a given duration, while our use (and misuse) of this education is a never-ending process of making knowledge meaningful – a process of maturation that takes place in each individual (Bostad, 2009 and 2010b).

One line of western history goes back to classical philosophy, not least to Plato's Academy, where we see a notion of general education or *Bildung* emerging related to the concepts of virtue or capability, and that mastering life is a matter of refining one's personality or character (Bostad, 2012)[3]. Such a notion is, for instance, seen in Aung San Suu Kyi's political rhetoric of personal virtues of "kindness and uprightness"[4]. In Plato's ideal school, general education does not occur through passive acquisition of facts and skills, be it science, law or policy, but rather through a unique matter of self-knowledge. The Platonic ideal of education lifts the rational, free man up as an ideal citizen, and our point in this essay is not to complement this with dependence theory, but rather show how concepts of general education may be fruitful in our current context in the way that it is about being *deeply convinced* of a claim, a reason or an argument, as opposed to being *persuaded*. A person who is *persuaded* has accepted facts or skills without reflecting on them, perhaps repeated something more or less automatically, whereas a person who is *deeply convinced* understands why and has a consid-

[3] Official Norwegian Report NOU 2007:6 *Objectives for the Future. Objectives for Kindergartens and Education and Training. Report from the committee appointed by Royal Decree on 2 June 2006.* Presented to the Ministry of Education and Research on 8 June 2007. Chair: Inga Bostad. The mandate for the Bostadcommittee to formulate new objectives for kindergarden and primary and secondary schools in 2008 was: What should the purpose of education be? What values should be upheld and promoted in modern schools, and what kind of views of learning, maturation and general education should teaching be based on? Are there any common values that the whole of society agrees on? It was a democratic process where representatives from different religious, political, ideological and social groups were present. The discussions in the committee showed that there was little support for attempts to be value-neutral, which was regarded as being synonymous with indifference. Cultural heritage had to be regarded as dynamic – that it shapes us and we shape it, and that the next generation's cultural heritage will consist of the things we have been involved in giving content to and conveying – elements we have picked out and valued. Last, but not least, cultural heritage is, if not cacophonic, then at the very least extremely polyphonic. The committee ended up formulating some concrete core values that were to provide a direction for schools and express common consensus, a process that also allowed the individual members of society to justify the values in their own way – on the basis of their own religion and beliefs. It was essential that schools should be based on respect for human dignity, intellectual freedom, charity, equality and solidarity, at the same time the principles of religious freedom and non-discrimination were included. Religious and philosophical freedom is protected by several human rights conventions that also ensure the right to teaching and education without preaching and indoctrination.

[4] As she put it in her in her acceptance speech at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo in June 2012.

ered, personal relationship to the knowledge they have acquired. In other words, the teacher convinces the student, not only by showing the students the pros and cons, and the arguments behind the arguments as well as the counterarguments – but also by being in the unknown, the open arena[5], with the students. This implies a fundamental shift in the way of looking at the relationship of teacher and student – it is not purely a "student-centred" way of learning, it is an "inquiry-centred" approach to academic knowledge where the common aim for both teacher and student is to succeed with serious inquiry. The teacher and the students are "in it together", trying to go deeper into an unsolved problem, analysing a concept together, looking at it from shifting perspectives. It is an essential democratic element in the dialogue that shifting perspectives are encouraged and lifted up as an ideal.

The philosophical dialogue may be structured in different ways, due to the curriculum, the age and cultural background of the students, but the common method follows a specific pattern intended to lead the parties in the dialogue to greater clarity and understanding of general issues related to human life, primarily by *uncovering* problems, but also by searching for good, tenable arguments, viewpoints and perspectives. This inquiring method is open and invites a range of creative and impulsive hypotheses. Ideally, the structure of the dialogue has no room for ready-made solutions or predefined answers; ultimately it rests on the possibility that individuals can draw conclusions that may well be changed in the next round of discussion.

In practice, this does not undermine the position of the privileged teacher and her authority. To lead this type of academic dialogue presupposes authority and knowledge on both the subject and the method of inquiry where the teacher/conversation leader encourages new quests (Bostad 2006, chapter 6) disturbing the students, asking provocative questions and making them think in new terms. But in addition to the platonic ideal of a search for truth, a modern university needs to continuously be aware of, and reflect upon, the environment that determines any learning situation, that the students are persons with a gender, a personal history, a religion or a personal conviction, at a specific place and time.

In other words; the *praxis* of philosophical inquiry is a "happening", as Hannah Arendt puts it (Arendt, 2004, p. 297): something unpredictable, uncontrolled and unexpected, which challenges every theory and method

[5] What Bostad has referred to in other articles as ("forvirringens hav"), "the ocean of confusion".

of pedagogy. To ask and make inquiries in a dialogue is to place the question itself out into the open; in contrast to repeating what is a common truth, to ask open questions makes the topic itself and its different possibilities "floating", as Gadamer puts it (Gadamer, 2004, p. 348-349) and reveals the distinction between understanding and reflecting or thinking, which also implies the process or understanding that something will never be understood.

The tradition of "mindful" pedagogy of encouraging and accepting thoughts and emotions which are revealed in a learning situation (Hansen, 2008), is to be distinguished from philosophical *praxis* of critical, creative and humorous inquiry of knowledge, wisdom, beauty and meaning. This praxis is not in the same manner as the traditions of mindful pedagogy concerned with care and upbringing, according to the Danish philosopher Finn Torbjørn Hansen – it is more rebellious and unpredictable. Even if Hansen's concept of "being in the open" is a fruitful perspective on the process of understanding and grasping knowledge as something different from thinking (which often implies being silent and in wonder), a framework of care and dignity is missing in his philosophy. Participating in an academic dialogue requires an environment of academic values such as respect, equality, autonomy, sincerity and a sense of unity in diversity. It is naïve to believe that education is free, that it sprouts and grows in every individual as long as we ensure that reflection is open and inquisitive (Bostad, 2009). The social reproduction of education is one of the major challenges to education today, as Hilligje van't Land suggests[6], and furthermore the power relations that exist in all forms of learning require an understanding of existence and use of the cultural capital in society for instrumental perspectives on learning pressure and learning outcomes.

The arguments

We now return to Næss' dogma of objectivity, since it centres on the formal requirements for conversation as a means of argument, and it is relevant to our discussion, for three reasons. The first is that Breivik's manifesto has confirmed the fatal labyrinths of the madcap. The second is that discussions since 22 July have been related to truth and justification. The third is that

[6] In a lecture held at Universtity of Oslo, June 2011, at the conference "Reimagining democratic society".

the incidents confirm the need for political education to contain methods that objectively legitimise political statements and programmes.

Some people are simply not concerned with facts. One example is the Progress Party politician Carl I. Hagen, who almost immediately after the incident stated in an interview in the major Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* that all Muslims might not be terrorists, but that "almost all terrorists are Muslims". This caused a stir, as it seemed to be a repetition of something he had said as far back as 2005, something which was demonstrably wrong. Svein Abrahamsen, at http://liberal.no/2011/08/faktasjekk-er-nesten-alle-terrorister-muslimer/, immediately went through Europol statistics, and found that in the period between 2006 and 2010, extreme Islamists represented 0.4 per cent of terrorist activities in Europe., while French and Spanish separatists represented almost 85 per cent.

The FBI statistics for the period between 1980 and 2005 showed that extreme Islamists represented nine per cent of such incidents. Hagen's view was refuted by various media, including *Aftenposten*, but Hagen remained immovable, claiming that he had been thinking about global figures when he made his statement. However, Abrahamsen has found that during the period between 2006 and 2010, less than 30 per cent of attacks worldwide were carried out by extreme Islamists, and that includes attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan. (http://liberal.no/sveinabrahamsen/).http://liberal.no/sveinabrahamsen/). Abrahamsen shows how in political debate arguments should be based on facts, documentation and the means to publicly disprove a distorted reality. Naturally, his documents may also be debatable, as he has not taken into consideration those instances where the authorities averted Islamic terrorist attacks. In any case, knowledge is and always has been the first commandment of education, and refutation based on facts is its first servant. Statements about Muslim terrorism are closely related to statements about the alleged back-door Islamification of Norway. The first kind of statements can be refuted relatively easily by referring to facts. But the second kind becomes part of a wider discussion, about a conflict of civilisations, about Muslims speaking with forked tongues, and therefore about conspiracy. It makes a difference. It is one thing to check facts against sources, but quite another to discuss values against culture. The latter requires broad interpretations and historic rationalisations.

The background culture, a mutual horizon of ideas, must be taken into consideration. It is not possible to exchange views about what is reasonable and fair without some kind of mutual understanding of national and local traditions, including customs, rituals and interpretations, which are not necessarily part of the discussion. This implicit lifeworld has already given

us customs, metaphors and concepts which make individual interpretations possible. Shabana Rehman is a Norwegian writer of immigrant (Pakistani) origin. Her consistent critique of the oppression of women in the Norwegian-Pakistani community was based on the idea of the autonomy of the individual and the universal right to think out loud in public, on behalf of oneself and others – a living assertion of Kant's principle of thinking. These days, many people who are involved in the immigration debate expose a similar degree of oppression in Norwegian culture, for example of discrimination in the workplace. Since 22 July, deeply rooted prejudices have started to appear in the political arena as ideologies and rhetorical manipulation – and people have become more aware of this. Extreme right-wing bloggers with their back-to-front perspective have more than reminded us that politics is language and that talking may lead to action. The rules of the argument stand out as a civilising factor in a multicultural society that depends on the agreement of the people – and if necessary, on their right to disagree.

Which criteria are necessary for objectivity? Here are a few random examples: Play fair, allow your view to be open to criticism, admit that your assertion has been repudiated before you put forward another one that backs up your main point ("I didn't really mean Europe, I meant global terrorism"), do not generalise one case to all ("Some immigrants are villains, therefore all immigration is bad for Norway") and take the consequences of losing the argument. But as von Humboldt already implied, the linguistic figure of speech is to the detriment of Næss' doctrine of objectivity, at any rate as a pure method. A method is a tool that needs to be justified by something other than itself; it needs more than a decision from the education authorities and a proposal in the curriculum. The universal validity of politics is not good for local traditions, based on the idea that personal autonomy easily goes hand in hand with community responsibility. In objective discussion, in principle everyone can join in, even if in reality the discussion is limited by culture, gender, class, education and in some cases just bad luck. It is these limitations which make people write off arguing as an attempt to cast people in the same mould, created by an elite and an expression of the West's intellectual lust for power. But then we have people like Shabana Rehman, who demands individual independence for all, and Abid Qayyum Raja, who managed to get hot-headed young people together into a political discussion at Oslo's House of Literature after demonstrations against the Israeli Embassy in 2009, thereby introducing them to discussion as an important part of democratic political practice.

We have suggested that political education must be based on knowledge and an objective treatment of the facts, based on rules that we may summa-

rise in a dogma of objectivity. What is needed, then, is the knowledge and skills to enable us to lead a conversation according to mutually accepted rules; in other words, a method or system to focus and guide us through the process of solving problems. Examples from political parties show that the requirement for objectivity is often weakly represented in election campaigns, for example, and that the issue of what is right and what is fair loses out to political expedience. In fairness, the politicians did unite during the autumn 2011 local elections and agree to be "nice", without in any way minimising the differences between the parties; perhaps an admission that democracy must be protected and that objectivity must come before expedience. Surprisingly enough then, it turns out that the events of 22 July have weighed in with more stringent demands on political rhetoric – we will see how long these last. But political education inside and outside the arena of party politics should be examined against a content that is detrimental to knowledge and skills. What we would call *the pragmatic-linguistic figure of speech* introduces something new here, namely an analysis of what we must expect when we enter into an objective discussion. This is about clarifying what is implicit in our speech acts, without falling back on subjective experiences and blind faith in our own opinions or in research institutions and communications experts, but on the bonds of everyday language.

Why examine these bonds, which are not the bonds of law or regulation? It is primarily to see how a practical fellowship, in this case a fellowship of language, can be described as education. Within certain boundaries, we can defy the law's rules and replace them with others, and that is what happens when people protest against laws that give to the rich and take away from the poor. We can also forget some skills and replace them with other, more adequate ones, and this has happened with the introduction of the computer. But the general contention now is that certain prerequisites need to be present if we are to be able to talk about a moral discussion at all. Without these prerequisites, we end in absurdity. To put it differently, some prerequisites can be regarded as norms which are constitutive or essential prerequisites of conversation between people. These can be identified using a philosophical reconstruction reminiscent of a psychoanalyst's work on memory, except that here it is the use of language in a social context that is being examined.

Identifying the obvious

Jürgen Habermas suggests the type of reconstruction of things that already have to be in motion when we are involved in a discussion of right and wrong. We must presume:

a) that the other person's understanding of the words we are using is roughly the same; in other words, that we share an interpretation horizon and an unambiguous vocabulary,
b) that the other person is of sound mind, that is that they are an independent or autonomous person, someone who can speak for themselves, and
c) that they are truthful and not speaking against their better judgement.

Yet these norms are obviously idealisations, since we cannot assume that these prerequisites will actually have been met in every discussion. On the contrary, reconstructing them serves to identify – in the manner of Heidegger, as it were – the prerequisites for a serious political discussion. And it is here that we find the suggestion for a political education within the framework of our democracy: the fact that education not only implies norms but also explicitly relates to them, and still practises a form of self-criticism. In a way, this then confirms what we implied at the start: that a given culture has already formed its students and that eager educational agents can also say that they are making the understood understandable. Education is not just a content that we should acquire, a method we should use or a result that we should achieve, but a reflection of something that we already have to understand if we are to participate in an informed political life.

The Norwegian philosopher Gunnar Skirbekk has pointed out that we should reject the classic German *Bildung* idea of the perfection of man, and admit instead that we are under a certain obligation to realise discursive norms, in the certainty that we are fallible. Of personal autonomy in the Kantian sense of thinking for oneself, he says that it is "a question of graduality, not of perfection" (Skirbekk, 2009, p. 98) Participants in serious discussions must recognise their mutual fallibility and thereby accept "a gradual autonomy which needs improvement". The requirement of arguing without manipulating then goes together with the mutual need to reinforce personal autonomy. The idea of personal autonomy is constitutive in the sense that without the prerequisite in point b) above, we may well have a conversation of one kind or another, but no discussion. Since the idea of

autonomy prescribes a task that can never be completely achieved because of human fallibility, it can only be possible to live by an ideal that is by definition beyond the reach of man, and which must have a nature of expectation or hope – that is, a utopia.

If someone wants to try to achieve this ideal politically, and turn the utopia into reality, this brings two known potential evils into play. The lesser is paternalism, or knowing it all, which allows an authority such as a leader or member of the elite to define your goal for you, and determine the course you must take. The greater evil is achieving the perfect discursive democracy, since that ends in a terror of opinion and the totalitarian state. To nurture a hope is to think ironically in Rorty's sense of the word: a thinking which is sceptical of its own thoughts. However, the counter-factual is not about ignoring facts or putting reality on hold, but about avoiding a concretism which underestimates the place of idealisation in everyday life. We do not need to decide to act according to the ideal prerequisites that are in operation in the conversations we have with each other. Idealisation is already in circulation in language, in the form of approaches and invitations to join a sensible political way of life. These are practical themes in the democratic metabolism. They also act as sentinels, providing us with criteria with which to identify breaches of the objectivity norms and thereby enabling us to correct an unsuccessful or dysfunctional communication. What actually permits us to criticise the popular rhetoric is linguistic reflection, which also tells us what we must in fact expect if we are to be able to say that something is deliberation and not preaching or propaganda – or the rhetoric of power, where the individual is set aside.

Skirbekk introduces the thought of man's biophysical existence, with all its vulnerability and inadequacy (Skirbekk, 2009, p. 169). He advocates a concept of personal autonomy not as fact and perfection, but as an ongoing draft or project that is controlled by the thoughts of "more or less" and "little by little", and of the transition from something that is poor to something that is better. What is important for this educational project is the idea of improving people's independence by protecting them against personal infringements – he allows this thinking to fall under the banner of "meliorism". This is not about lofty ideals or strong formalisations, but about idealisations in a pragmatic and existential setting.

Rehman's requirement that we should be treated as independent, authoritative individuals and Raja's invitation to talk instead of climb the barricades introduce implicit validity requirements and include everyone who allows themselves to be persuaded by those values which we hold in esteem in a democratic society. But the intention of achieving the political

ideal and turning utopia into reality brings two potential evils into play. The lesser is paternalism, or knowing it all, which allows figures of authority such as politicians, bureaucrats, head teachers or teachers to tell you what is best for you. The greater evil is achieving the perfect discursive democracy, since that ends in the same totalitarian state that Fascists dream of. To think in idealisations is to think counter-factually, yet that does not mean ignoring facts or putting reality on hold, it is rather about avoiding a concretism which ignores the place of idealisation in everyday life. Habermas puts it like this: "The point is that if we want to enter an argument, we have to take the argument's prerequisites as a *fact*, even if they have an ideal content that we can only get close to in reality" (Habermas, 1993, p. 164). . In other words, they exist as an "as if" in objective discussions and this hypothesis or expectation appears as a practical requirement.

There is an obvious example. The Norwegian Education Act's first paragraph, which describes the objectives of Norwegian schooling, contains strong ideals of intellectual freedom, equality and solidarity[7]. If we take these values at their word, and wish to achieve them in a specific set of quality-assured qualifications, we encounter a new paradox: the paragraph outlining the objectives cannot be turned into reality in the form of specific learning objectives unless it abolishes itself. The reason for this is that values are not the same thing as knowledge, skills or individual expertise, but idealisations woven into language and existence. This paradox is also the paradox of education. From 2013, the national qualifications framework will apply to all higher educational institutions. The idea of a common qualifications framework is to try to standardise education so that it will be possible to compare achievements measured on an individual level with the results from other countries. But the better we are able to define education through learning outcomes and institutional rankings, the less we tend to be able to reflect on the type of institutional practice.

In a way, the argument is an invisible institution since it has no address, no offices and no budget. It contains a formalisation of everyday discussions and is a mode or practice that we can elect to use when political opinions, values and objectives come into conflict, requiring further justi-

[7] "Even if we see a modification of the egalitarianism of the Norwegain people in an ongoing research project at ESOP (…), University of Oslo, where groups of people from different places in the world were asked to share an amount of resources, and the conclusions were that the Norwegian group was not more egalitarian than for instance the AfricanW (speech by Kalle Moene, Forskningstorget [the Research Agora], September 2011, University of Oslo)

fication. Discourse can generally apply to the boundaries of freedom of expression, the market, or state intervention in the private sphere, but applies more specifically when university researchers protest that the results of their contract research is falsely presented or teachers protest against the increasing amount of testing in schools.

Let us summarise some of the potential educational benefits of a deliberative practice. Students are trained to develop inquiring minds, to see statements as hypotheses that must be tried in discussion and to see the results of an argument as provisional and open to further discussion. To argue requires the skill of putting forward a problem, grasping significant aspects, bringing in different contexts, formulating a view, working towards potential agreement, respecting the rights of others to disagree and accepting the better argument, even if it means giving up a cherished conviction. Conflict is not necessarily an evil. At best, a discussion of the objectives and meaning of schooling will not only improve people's ability to justify their views, but can also create the trust that is engendered when people recognise each other as responsible citizens and honest debaters. These are some of the qualities that are included in what Habermas calls the democratic education of opinions and will. The argument has its limits, which we have touched upon while discussing this subject. But it permits judgement, thinking for ourselves, and it disciplines thinking without making its results all-encompassing. Democracy is an unfinished project.

Democracy and the access to knowledge

Democracy in the broad interpretation as participation and involvement on all levels, in all discussions, especially when it comes to the minorities, disabled persons and so on, fits neatly into the Norwegian version of democracy. As in the other Nordic countries, our current economic and social model is based on democratic principles such as openness and transparency, equality, egalitarian and extensive welfare benefits, and political organization based on the right of participation. As Nina Witoszek says in her book "Norske naturmytologier" (Witoszek, 1998), the special Scandinavian form of social democracy is a tradition based on values stemming from the Christian period of Norwegian history, starting around AD 1000. It is a form of social democracy that has promoted egalitarian ideas, placed a focus on the weak and underprivileged while at the same time promoting a pragmatic worldview. Today, we see a political tension in the national policies for education between the right-wing parties' effort to develop tools for

the best students and the leftist parties holding on to the values of reducing social inequalities.

Social reproduction is an ongoing challenge in all education, primarily by focusing on the relationship between good grades and mastering of the curriculum on the one hand and privileged background on the other. This implies that the children from less privileged backgrounds are not able to develop their potential. Or in other words: there is nothing wrong in following up the "best" pupils or the best students with high demands, as long as there are equal opportunities for all to get there. Education is regarded as the most effective institution to reduce social inequalities in society, but there is no clear and simple answer to the question of how to reimagine democratic societies; the formal conditions are free access to education for all, no or low school fees, and a strategic policy of public education, but the political-philosophical goal is to develop attitudes and ways of thinking which promote independence and critical abilities.

Knowledge and education have been – and most certainly will be in future – closely connected to power and social inequalities. Throughout history, access to education has been reserved either for the elite, for men, or the privileged. Also today, we see that the current policies and ideology for education in society are a mirror for the government and elected representatives in Parliament.

A responsible educational institution

A good school, as well as a good university, must acknowledge and take responsibility for its ability to influence both the personal development of the pupil and the student, as well as the spread of knowledge at a global level. And the only way to succeed is to understand the potential of educational institutions as nexuses for global solidarity. A university which is firmly rooted in academic freedom is an independent body able to criticize, propose radical ideas, and challenge dominant paradigms. This is the reason that political and social movements often start, or find a nurturing environment, at universities. Although it might seem so obvious that it does not need to be stated, a school, as well as a university, is a place where beliefs, opinions and ideas are exchanged across the sometimes rigid boundaries of cultural, social and political backgrounds. It is a place of synthesis and discovery, and a place that of necessity encourages openness to free thinking – because at any given time, a sudden liberating thought may arise

According to Geoffrey Boulton (2009), the challenge for universities now is to articulate clearly what they stand for, to speak the truth to the authorities, and to be steadfast in upholding freedom and autonomy as crucial values to safeguard the future of society. But a responsible university is also a place where students are aware of their rights to participate in every committee, and where engagement is seen as an obligation towards a common social goal.

To reimagine democratic society we must also search for the correspondence between freedom and education, or freedom *in* education: What parts of the learning methods and curriculum ought to be elective and decided by the school, the single teacher or the pupil – and how much should be compulsory and a part of a common culture and a historical-social canon? How should the rights of every child to be guided into their cultural heritage be balanced against the right and freedom of the parents to raise their children according to their own religion and faith? And how should the protection of an individual's right to intellectual and spiritual freedom be balanced against the recognition that the values may be expressed and reasoned for differently in different religions and belief systems? The answers to these questions are dependent upon the ability of schools and universities to stimulate and create autonomous individuals – who think independently, pose critical questions, make ethical choices and participate in the social debates (Bostad, 2010a).

As we also have seen in the recent debate on general education in the United States, intellectuals like Anthony Kronman (2007) and Martha Nussbaum (2010) have argued for a new non-profit perspective on higher education; Kronman with an existentialistic approach and Nussbaum with a moral quest – both of them by appealing to humanistic values. Where Kronman sets out to meet the future of universities with giving the students existentialist space for enquiry and wondering, Nussbaum argues for a new humanism where education is a moral tool not only for respecting diversity, but for improving our understanding of the current complexities in society. General education is needed for the ability to solve transdisciplinary problems in a just and informed way, according to Nussbaum. General education is a means for the personal transformation of being an individual and finding a way of mastering our own life, is Kronmans' perspective.

The goal for higher education is not merely tolerance, but understanding[8]. To engage with the other person is crucial and this takes courage;

[8] Linda Alcoff during a lecture in connection with the bestowing of honorary doctorates at the University of Oslo, 30 August 2011

to disagree with someone is often challenging due to the framework or the settings. We must teach and encourage the student to be critical through seeking confrontations with people they disagree with – visiting other cultures and religions and trying on their way of looking at the world.

The Norwegian social scientist Nils Christie wrote a book called "Prison Guards in Concentration Camps" (Christie, 2010) – a book about Norwegian prison guards in concentration camps in Northern Norway during the Second World War. This book has been ranked as one of the 25 most influential works in Norwegian social science ever. Christie shows the effect of seeing others as human beings – and more importantly why humans are capable of violence and torture. Prison guards who had even the smallest minimum of *personal contact* with the prisoners did not participate in the torture; reading letters the prisoners wrote, knowing they had a family back home, made the guards aware of the human nature and dignity of the prisoners and put restrictions on their primitive view of the prisoners as animals.

Christie provides important insights into what constitutes society. And he asks how we create a society where everyone contributes and participates. Such knowledge of human behaviour is also important for scholars on democratisation mainly because it looks at core values also central in human rights and the modern welfare state, such as the intimate relationship between a social right and a social duty. In her book "Not for Profit" Martha Nussbaum argues for a new humanism where education is a moral tool for "the ability to think critically; the ability to transcend local loyalties and to approach world problems as a "citizen of the world" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 7), and finally, the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person". In this way, higher education may contribute to and stimulate a modern democracy for our time – seeking to be the room for inquiry that matures the students as well as society as a whole.

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