



BOOK REVIEW

Schleiermacher's Outlines of the Art of Education

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Mrs. Ramsay, a character in the novel *To the Lighthouse*, watches her children play in the garden. She wonders: "Why should they go to school? [...] Never will they be so happy again" (Woolf, 2008, p. 50).

The translation of Schleiermacher's 1826-lectures *Outlines of the Art of Education* from German to English is a significant contribution to educational research. This edition offers both a translation, by Norm Friesen and Karsten Kenklies, and a discussion in five chapters. Schleiermacher's lectures take the form of an enquiry, via dialectics, into what one calls "education" (*Erziehung*). The lectures might not provide any satisfying answers to Mrs. Ramsay's question, nor to its readers' potential questions. However, as the discussion elucidates, what makes his lectures worth engaging with are not Schleiermacher's answers but rather his educational questions and how he explored them.

The discussion is led by scholars in education and history of education engaging with different parts of Schleiermacher's lectures. In the first chapter, "Schleiermacher's Pedagogy: A Thematic Commentary", Michael Winkler reminds the readers of the fundamental importance of Schleiermacher's work in the early 19th century, notably his involvement in turning education into an independent discipline. Winkler's commentary also includes a discussion of the newly discovered notes by one of Schleiermacher's students (the Sprüngli edition).

Next, David Lewin's chapter, "The Educational Awareness of the Future", starts with one of Schleiermacher's most unsettling questions: "is one allowed to sacrifice one moment for another?" (Schleiermacher, 2023, p. 66). How can we justify to sacrifice the present for the preparatory dimension of education? Schleiermacher's dialectical inquiry begins with conflicting positions (thesis/antithesis), e.g. play/exercise; being in the present/being future-oriented, etc. This exploration leads to new theses, and ends with the answer that such sacrifices could be justified as long as the child can find satisfaction in educational exercises. Leaving aside Schleiermacher's answer, unsatisfying and incomplete, what is unsettling is his

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assumption that education is not always a good thing, for the simple reason that educators cannot know the effects of their educational influences in advance. For Schleiermacher, education is a matter of influence, and the various questions he asked in his lectures can, for Lewin, be “crystallized” into the one question: “how is educational influence justified?” (p. 135).

Equally insightful is Karsten Kenklies’ contribution, “Entering the Circle. Schleiermacher and the Rise of Modern Education Studies”, which takes the very first sentence of Schleiermacher’s lectures as its starting point: “One has to assume that we are all familiar with what is commonly called ‘education’” (p. 21). The statement implies that all grownups (Schleiermacher, his students and readers included) have an understanding of education, for example from having been a child brought up by adults. Theorizing operates as a reflective activity that departs from a common pre-understanding of education. Kenklies shows that this first sentence announces the “purpose” of the lectures: not to reflect for its own sake but to lead his students from one level of (pre-)understanding of education to a more reflexive one. Hence “education changes from being merely ‘familiar’ (*bekannt*) into something that is ‘known and understood’ (*erkannt*)” (Kenklies, 2023, p. 150). To do so, Schleiermacher first has to recall how we tend to understand education to begin with. Kenklies argues that, in contrast to the opening sentences in Locke’s and Rousseau’s works on education, Schleiermacher acknowledges a wider “hermeneutic” conversation that precedes him, in particular languages and historical contexts (p. 154).

And the conversation goes on, with a more historical approach in Rebekka Horlacher’s chapter, “Schleiermacher’s Educational Theory in the Context of the Debate on Vocational versus Liberal Education”. Horlacher places Schleiermacher’s works on education – his lectures, writings, and participation in educational reforms – in early 19th century Prussia. Schleiermacher’s works on education are thus framed in their context, as a reply to the debates on the role of education and schooling in the Prussian state. Last but not least, in the final chapter, “Accentuate the Negative: Schleiermacher’s Dialectic”, Norm Friesen aims at mapping Schleiermacher’s dialectical path. Friesen demonstrates the originality of Schleiermacher’s dialectical way of writing and thinking which is less procedural and more flexible than Hegelian and Marxist dialectics. A fair warning: Schleiermacher’s dialectical thought can be difficult to follow as he constantly shifts positions, often unexpectedly so. This is both a weakness and a strength: a strength because the dialectical shifts enable the study of some fundamental educational paradoxes, such as the already mentioned sacrifice of the present moment for the future.

The five-chapters discussion is a truly engaging one. However, to me, it fails to sufficiently engage with the question of translation (and of untranslatability). Apart from the section on “Schleiermacher’s Terminology” in the introduction and some brief remarks in Kenklies’ chapter, little is said on the question of translation which seems to be so important for Schleiermacher. This is not only due to his own experience of translating Plato’s works, or his influential lecture on translation (2004), but rather because, as Schleiermacher puts it, his “theory” of education “is limited to the domain of [one] specific language, and not similarly applicable to other language domains” (Schleiermacher, 2023, pp. 40-41). This observation hints at the paradox that his theory cannot be translated and yet one must keep on translating. A way of approaching the issue of untranslatability could be to draw attention to the gaps between languages, between knowledge traditions, to what fails to translate – in a word, to what Barbara Cassin calls the “untranslatables” (2016).

Let us return to the opening sentence: “One must assume that we are all familiar [*bekannt*] with what is commonly called ‘education’ [*Erziehung*]” (Schleiermacher, 2023, p. 21). Even though *bekannt* means familiar, readers who know German or Scandinavian

languages may hear that this term also refers to a particular form of knowledge as being acquainted with (*bekant – bekendt – bekjent*). *Erziehung* means education in the broad sense of formal and informal education and upbringing. The concept is closer, but not equivalent, to its Scandinavian counterparts (*oppdragelse – oppfostran*).

The question of *Erziehung* is a “central” one in Schleiermacher’s lectures, i.e., “What does the older generation actually want with the younger?” (p. 24). Under the influence of Schleiermacher, Klaus Mollenhauer would later rephrase this as the “first” pedagogical question: “Why do we want children?” (Mollenhauer, 2014, p. 8). A discussion chapter dedicated to the question of translation, or a bilingual edition of Schleiermacher’s lectures in German-and-English, could have invited the readers to dwell longer in, and to learn more from, the gap between *Erziehung* and education.

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Conflict of interest

Authors state no conflict of interest.

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