ENTERING THE CIRCLE
SCHLEIERMACHER AND THE RISE OF MODERN EDUCATION STUDIES

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Abstract

Next to Johann Friedrich Herbart, Schleiermacher is seen as one of the founding fathers of a modern discipline of Education Studies. Indeed, his lectures on pedagogy from 1826 (a part of which is presented in this volume) present a form of reflecting on education that is completely new. Nowhere is this more visible than in the first sentence of this lecture series. Through an analysis of this opening line and a comparison of it with other opening sentences of earlier seminal texts on education—namely Locke and Rousseau—this chapter shows how it is only with Schleiermacher that a modern hermeneutic understanding of Education Studies is realized in academic reflections on education.

1. Introduction: First Sentences

> *First sentences have what I call "an angle of lean;" they lean forward, inclining in the direction of the elaborations they anticipate. First sentences thus have content in prospect […]. Even the simplest first sentence is on its toes, beckoning us to the next sentence and the next and the next, promising us insights, complications, crises, and, sometimes, resolutions.*
>
> *Stanley Fish (2011)*

Indeed, first sentences are special sentences: They set the tone, they invite and, at the same time, set expectations for what is to come. In one way or another, they provide the foundation for everything to follow. This is not only true for novels or other types of writing but often also for speeches and oral presentations: Readers as much as listeners are to be directed in a certain way through the very first sentence of the written or spoken word. Especially what we might call 'programmatic' texts or speeches very often rest on their first sentence: It's frequently the first sentence that lets us know in which direction the argument will develop. It might therefore not come as a surprise that a comparison of the initial sentences of three seminal texts in pedagogical

discourse reveals more than just superficial differences attributable to authorial vicissitudes or the different times and circumstances under which they were written: They reveal fundamental differences that mirror the fundamentally different positions the authors assume toward education and educational thinking. Of course, differences of the kind shown below should never be overestimated, they hardly can be taken to represent differences between the entire oeuvres of certain authors, let alone whole cultures or traditions of thought. They are, after all, only three texts that to some extent stand on their own and for themselves. This is especially true when we talk about pre-modern texts which have a specific and often troubled history of transmission and, in addition, are generally discussed in translation. However, looking at opening sentences might sensitize readers to perceive certain variances in educational thought, and it needs to be left to the individual to decide if those differences can be understood as representations of something far more complex than just the individuality of the texts which they introduce.

This chapter discusses the opening sentences of three different seminal pedagogical texts: J. Locke's *Some Thoughts concerning Education* of 1693, J.-J. Rousseau's *Émile ou De l'éducation* of 1762 and Schleiermacher's lectures *Grundzüge der Erziehungskunst* (Outlines of the Art of Education) of 1826. In exploring those, the chapter draws attention to certain differences which might indeed represent more than those that one would naturally expect to separate three random texts. Introducing three texts written in three different periods of educational thought and three different contexts, these first sentences shed some light on new ways of educational thinking introduced by Schleiermacher: the originality of this way of thinking lies perhaps not so much in *what* Schleiermacher says about education but *how* he says it. Drawing attention to the ways of reflecting on education, this chapter aspires to provide insight into the origins of what subsequently became known as the academic discipline of Education Studies—an academic discipline in its own right.

2. Theoretical Considerations. The Hermeneutic Foundation of the Circle

Looking at Locke, the first example listed above, one instantly recognizes that a certain direction is being set: "A Sound Mind in a sound Body, is a short, but full description of a Happy State in this World: He that has these Two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, is but little

the better for any thing else" (Locke 1693, p. 1) It is with those words that John Locke begins his essay *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, published 1693 in London. What Locke is attempting here seems very obvious. Since that the title already gives away that the text will concern itself with education, the first sentence introduces an ideal state of being for humans which, not surprisingly, will function as an image for what education is to aspire to. Leaving open the possibility that a person might not have yet achieved this state of being (the ideal, so to speak, is not necessarily natural), education is already alluded to here as providing the means to achieve this end. This is the expectation that the first sentence raises in the reader – an expectation that is indeed satisfied by further reading.

At least two aspects are interesting here: Firstly, education seems to be defined predominantly by the specific goal that is to be achieved. To discuss education, in other words, means to discuss its goals, its purpose. And, secondly, on a more fundamental level, it seems that a treatise on education *can* actually start with a discussion of the goals of education. In other words: a new concept of education can be introduced by introducing a new goal for education and, perhaps, a new method of education (or, to use an all too frequently shunned word in the Anglophone world: a new didactic). This is the scope in which education can and should be explored here with Locke: discussing education means discussing purposes and methods of education.

Looking at the second example, things appear slightly different. *"Tout est bien, sortant des mains de l'Auteur des choses; tout dégénere entre les mains de l'homme."* (Rousseau 1762, p. 1) ("Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; but everything degenerates in the hands of man.") Those are the words with which Jean-Jacques Rousseau opens his hugely influential treatise *Émile ou De l'éducation*, published for the first time 1762 in Amsterdam. Again, the book title itself suggests that the text will concern itself with education. However, unlike Locke, we are not immediately confronted with a specific ideal state of being which then proves to be the goal of education. That is not to say that Rousseau's opening assertion does not contain a specification of a state that will turn out to be the goal of education. It does this, however, in a much more indirect way: By introducing the idea of an ideal state which has been lost through human interference, it leads one to guess that it will be the purpose of education to either reverse this process of falling from grace, or to shape education in a form that does not allow for this loss in the first place. Both are possible, but we are not told what this ideal state would be, except that it is a godly state—it is both an original and good state. So, in comparison to Locke, what Rousseau lacks in detail he

makes up by metaphysical weight; whereas Locke will talk on a very pragmatic level about purposes and methods of education, Rousseau will embed his theory of education in a substantial metaphysical frame without which his theory cannot be conceived (a fact that is commonly ignored by those who think Rousseau's so-called *child-centred pedagogy* could easily be secularized and be used independently from its metaphysico-theological foundations).

As in Locke, we can see in Rousseau that here the very notion of education (if we accept for now a rather hasty translation of *l'éducation* as *education*) seems unproblematic: A reader can easily be confronted with a new metaphysical foundation, with a governing principle out of which everything else will be inferred. Much in the same way that Locke, apparently without any difficulty, infers from a defined (or newly introduced) purpose a wide range of further specifications for education, Rousseau assumes that his reader can simply follow him in his alleged re-invention of education through his implied introduction of a bold metaphysical foundation.

Both Locke and Rousseau, then, assume that a discussion of education consists of a discussion about purposes and their justification: Whereas Locke has a more pragmatic (one might say: empirical, given that most of his musings are based on an empiricist epistemology) approach in establishing what such a purpose of education could be (and he does introduce a very clear purpose of education), Rousseau is more metaphysical, and he will remain a lot more vague throughout his treatise than Locke. Nevertheless, neither see any problem in assuming their readers know what they are talking about. Even though they might intend to completely change their readers' minds in matters educational, it seems they do not have a conception of how such a discussion, a communication between themselves and their readers, might be possible at all; their texts are in this sense not self-reflective: the educative character of their own writing is not explored. This changes with Schleiermacher, and this change is already recognizable in the very first sentence of his lectures *Grundzüge der Erziehungskunst*.

Schleiermacher's lectures on pedagogy that he gave to students at the University of Berlin in 1826 start with one of the most famous sentences in the German speaking world of Education Studies (*Erziehungswissenschaft*): "One must assume we are all familiar with what is commonly called education" ((p. xx); *Was man im allgemeinen unter Erziehung versteht, ist als bekannt vorauszusetzen*). Even though this looks at first glance like a very simple and almost innocent sentence, it represents a fundamental change in the way educational thinking is conceived. With it, reflection on education can be said

to become self-reflective, i.e. self-conscious in a modern sense.

These few words give expression to a range of concerns which will be explored in the following sections:

- They refer to the necessary conditions that enable Schleiermacher to talk to his audience and to be comprehensible for his students.
- They refer to the hope that the necessary conditions of communication are met even though this can be proven only in the process of communication without becoming absolutely certain at any given point in time.
- They refer to the inevitable conditions that restrict what Schleiermacher is going to introduce as reflections on education and pedagogy.
- They refer to his students' actual level of comprehension educational matters at the beginning of the reflective explorations of his lectures and by implication, also references the possible level of comprehension of educational matters at the end of the reflective explorations of his lectures.
- They also open his musings on education and pedagogy to the wider methodological questions of how those kinds of reflections are possible and to what end someone would engage in such reflections.

The Possibility of Publicly Talking and Theorizing About Education

"One must assume" that we are familiar with the word "education." Indeed, as a lecturer who sets out to talk about education, Schleiermacher must assume that his audience has at least a basic understanding of the word "education" (and, of course, of all the other words he is using in his speech). And not only does there have to be a basic understanding of the word—it has to be to at least to some extent a shared understanding. Enshrined in the word "commonly," Schleiermacher declares this shared understanding to be a form of shared knowledge which is knowledge precisely because it is shared: "If the knowledge stands the test of public communication, we have to regard that reasoning as knowledge in which we also presuppose the identity of the process of reasoning within all" (Schleiermacher 2001b, p. 129)[1] without this (preliminary) knowledge, communication would be impossible. In presenting this as a condition that must necessarily be met, Schleiermacher accepts that reflecting on education to an audience (in oral or in written form) rests on an assumption of a shared understanding of the meanings of words. Whatever

[1] All translations from the German are my own; emphasis is always as in the original.

Schleiermacher sets out to explore in his lectures, he accepts that his students come and indeed must come with a pre-existing understanding of the words he is using; on a basic level, his students need to understand what he means when he is talking about "education." In this special case – the case of the word "education"—his students need to know which practices he is referring to when using the word "education." Based on the insight that every discussion aspiring to enlighten people takes on a dialectical form trying to first establish and then to overcome antagonisms, Schleiermacher establishes the *conditio sine qua non* for such a discussion in his *Dialectics*: "Conflict in general presupposes the recognition of the identity of the matter of discussion, and therefore also the general referring of reasoning to being" (p. 19). Schleiermacher accepts that he cannot start a kind of public reflection without this kind of pre-given referential understanding on the side of his students: whatever he is aspiring to say about education rests in its comprehensibility on the original comprehension of his students. He cannot start completely from scratch; reflection on education will always have to be a reforming of an original understanding, and it can never be an introduction of something absolutely new. In this, Schleiermacher's reflections on pedagogy seem different to his explorations of religion. There, he seems to adopt a much more pessimistic outlook on what he thinks his audience would know about "religion:"

> *I wish I could present religion to you in some well-known form so that you might immediately remember its features, its movements, and its manners and exclaim that you have here or there seen it just this way in real life. But I would deceive you. For it is not found among human beings as undisguised as it appears to the conjurer, and for some time has not let itself be viewed in the form peculiar to it. (Schleiermacher 1996, pp. 18-19)*

Indeed, assuming such an unfortunate state of affairs, Schleiermacher begins his explorations into religion with a more or less negative description, by stating what religion is *not*, relying on a more or less vague feeling in his audience to judge his assertions. Talking about education, Schleiermacher seems less concerned with such ignorance: he assumes that everybody commonly understands what he refers to with the notion 'education.' It appears, at least for Schleiermacher, that the notion 'education' enjoys a more widely shared understanding than the word 'religion'—which is maybe not that surprising given that all have been subjected in one way or the other to education (and, just like today, this seems to generate the commonly shared

feeling of being entitled to having a strong view on education).

The Assumption of Successful Communication about Education

A shared understanding of the word 'education' is a pre-condition for the public discussion of educational matters. Schleiermacher has to assume that his audience does, in a very general sense, know what he is talking about and what he is referring to when discussing this notion. However, even though this is indeed a prerequisite for a successful communication (and therefore for an enlightening lecture series), the mere mention of this condition betrays a certain hesitation: Schleiermacher remains very aware of the fact that even if he has to assume that there is shared understanding, to have any justification for starting to talk at all, there is no guarantee that this is actually the case. As in all communication, Schleiermacher knows that one must assume the existence of intersubjective understanding in order to engage in communication in the first place but that one should be ready to accept a breakdown of this communication at any moment (caused by a misunderstanding), and that even the apparently successful continuation of communication is not a proof of an existing intersubjectively congruent understanding: Just because interpretations on both sides exist does not mean that they are identical or even broadly consistent. Manfred Frank, one of the leading German experts in reviving recent interest in Schleiermacher and in editing and re-publishing his works, has called this the "hypothesis about the schematization of the experiential material through the other members of a reasoning or language community" (Frank 2001, p. 38). In this sense, public reflections on pedagogy remain an adventure and a challenge as much as any communication: Founded on the hope of an intersubjective understanding, it is only the presence of an ongoing process of communication (and maybe of living and acting together) that can, if not prove, then at least point toward the possibility that people do actually understand each other in some way. However, for this hope to be realistic, communication (even as public theorizing) has to rest on acts of conscious interpretation. In other words, communication needs to incorporate hermeneutic acts on both sides of the communicational divide (which is one of the reasons Schleiermacher was so interested in hermeneutics and why he is now seen as the founder of modern hermeneutics).

The Limitations of Publicly Talking and Theorising about Education

Pointing out conditions of oral communications is tantamount to drawing attention to the limitations of these very communications. It was only much

later that the enabling and at the same time restricting characteristics of language, i.e. its discursive structures, have been described, acknowledged and appreciated in a more thorough way: Through his poststructuralist musings about power, for example Michel Foucault and, later, Judith Butler, have both pointed out that power is not something that can or should be demonised (as it so often is). For both, it is obvious that structures of power restrict the possibilities of subjectification, of becoming a subject, but in doing so they enabled this very subjectification in the first place. Restricting and enabling go hand in hand. The question then arises: In what way does Schleiermacher acknowledge that the very conditions that allow for communication to happen in the first place also restrict this communication?

The most obvious acknowledgement of this simultaneous enabling and restriction Schleiermacher can be seen in his decision to start with the initial understanding of his audience and to then gradually develop and reform(ulate) this understanding. Far from being convinced that a discussion on pedagogy can pretend to charter unknown territory right from the start, Schleiermacher designs his lectures as a gradual unfolding of an argument that accepts a starting point presented in the (allegedly commonly shared) understanding of 'education' and the commonly shared notions used to refer to educational matters (such as 'education' itself as well as 'teacher,' 'student,' etc.), just to slowly draw out what could possibly be ingrained in those notions and what they (can only) mean on a higher level of understanding, thereby gradually introducing the new language of theory which he calls the language of "pure reflection" (*reines Denken*) in his *Dialectics* of 1822 (Schleiermacher 2001b; especially §4). Often referring to historic examples, Schleiermacher reveals his explorations to be bound to a tradition of educational thinking and practice (or in today's language: discourse) which is thereby vindicated as enabling and exposed as restricting at the same time.

For Schleiermacher, both theoretical and the non-theoretical ways of understanding (i.e. utilizing either theoretical notions or pre-reflective un-theoretical ones) are not exclusive to each other but co-exist. But notions (and types of propositional knowledge) are discriminated by their purpose for referencing in general: The theoretical reference is born out of love for the world and knowledge in itself; nontheoretical notions are representative of instrumental human tendencies , i.e. the use of notions and knowledge for a certain purpose, and it is only the former that Schleiermacher sees as "pure reflection."

The difference, then, lies not in us having a continuous area of imperfect perceptions

> *which are opposed by a series of perfect ones, i.e. some being very much common whereas others being more elevated. As a matter of fact, our reflections are of two kinds: one where the reflection is an end to itself, and another where reflection is a means to another end. (p. 103)*

Learning to theorize therefore does not mean to simply unlearn former ways of knowing by replacing them with some form of pure reason. Instead, it means to slowly add yet another layer of understanding—i.e. another way of talking about the world—to existing understandings of the world. And it is to acknowledge that both layers can never be completely separated from each other: whatever new understanding gradually arises, it will always arise out of existing understandings and it will therefore always be influenced by it.

Of course, both, Locke and Rousseau very consciously place themselves into a tradition as well: by stating an apparently obvious fact about the ideal state of being human, Locke draws attention to the discussion around the actual characteristics of this state of ideality; Rousseau's dictum on the fundamental "goodness" of all things as they are created positions itself very openly against the then widely shared assumption that we are all tainted by Original Sin—as Rousseau very openly admits in his discussion with the Archbishop of Paris (see: Rousseau 2013). Both Locke and Rousseau are participating in an ongoing debate and assume positions already available within those debates; they are not independent from such debates (or discourses, as Foucault would have it). However, Schleiermacher goes further by acknowledging that it is indeed not only the structural positions within the discourse that are pre-existing but the very words we use are loaded with meaning and associations that are not ours when we start to use them (very much in the same way that later Lacan, based on Lévi-Strauss, acknowledged that language precedes and forms us inasmuch our unconscious is itself linguistic). There is a reason why philosophers tend to try to invent their own words in attempting to express something that leaves common semantic structures that are part of our world. The language Schleiermacher uses enables him to express something and enables him to project a shift in meaning. The most famous example for this shift in meaning is probably his redefinition of the notion of education: Starting his lectures based upon a commonly shared understanding of this word (as some sort of teaching that parents, private tutors and school teachers engage in), he changes this meaning in course of the lectures when he re-formulates education in a much broader sense as the endeavour on the part of the older generation to "form"

the young generation by the older generation. However, acknowledging that his definition has to start with the commonly accepted to be then changed only step by step, Schleiermacher accepts that whatever he presents as his unfolding argument will always be bound by its origin in common understanding. Pointing in a similar direction, Schleiermacher's *Dialectics* asserts that any sort of discussion can proceed only if participants speak the same language (Schleiermacher, 2001b, §2). The same is expressed in the lectures on pedagogy of 1826: "It [the theory] is therefore limited to the domain of one [specific] language, and not similarly applicable to other language domains" ((p. xx), above). Whatever theory will be developed, in other words, it will be valid only for the language realm in which it is formulated and to which it is bound, and therefore it can and will never be radically different or new—at least in the most extreme senses of these words.

The Beginning and Goal of Reflecting on Education

The first sentence in Schleiermacher's 1826 lecture series introduces a paradox: if the audience of the lectures (and, subsequently, its readers) are generally already familiar (*bekannt*) with education, what then are the lectures going to explore? What are the lectures going to offer, and to what degree will it be educational? Indeed, it is the very word "familiar" that opens up the possibility for the lectures to be educational itself. Attentive listeners (and readers) can hear an echo here as the word recapitulates a distinction that one of the most influential philosophical contemporary with of Schleiermacher, G.W.F. Hegel, famously introduced in §31 of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and that Schleiermacher was most definitely aware of: "What is 'familiarly known' is not properly known, just for the reason that it is 'familiar'." (*Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt.*) With regard to Hegel, Rosen (1982) explains this as follows:

> *In the first place the contrast between what is* bekannt *and what is* erkannt *expresses the contrast between what we know at first hand and what we have only descriptive knowledge of – like the contrast of our knowledge of the 'look' of anger in someone's face and the information that they are angry. But, in the second place, there is a quite separate distinction between something which is known 'only' implicitly (and hence not with full clarity) and what is fully explicit … Both the* bekannt *and the* erkannt *are forms animated in the virtues of the Scientific consciousness. But while one of these forms of consciousness is in the form of* Vorstellung *(and therefore, in some way, only imperfectly self-aware) the other—*

> *Thought—as Absolute Knowledge is completely self-transparent. (Rosen 1982, p. 56)*

However, one notable difference separating Schleiermacher from Hegel is that for Schleiermacher, there cannot ever be a full reconciliation of reason and nature just as for Schleiermacher, there cannot ever be Absolute Knowledge or absolute self-transparency: for the Protestant theologian Schleiermacher, human reflection will always be limited, and even though we can be (and are) on the way to ever greater clarity, we will never arrive at an endpoint of perfection, at absolute unity of reason and nature.

Even if Schleiermacher has to concede some preliminary knowledge in his audience (and readers) in order for them to be able to follow him on the intellectual journey that is his lecture series, he is adamant in his conviction that this level of understanding can (and needs to) be changed to be superseded by those who are to become professional educators: for something to be familiar is not nearly enough. But we first need to know what the features of this 'mere familiarity' are before they can be changed. And as a next step, it would be necessary to ask why such a change is desirable. However, before the reason for change is explored, the change itself needs to be characterised.

The exploration of both, the character of this change and the necessity for a change—a qualitative and quantitative increase in knowledge of education—are related to Schleiermacher's *Dialectics*. Indeed, his lectures on pedagogy can be seen as nothing other than the type of dialectical discussion he envisioned and presented in his texts on *Dialectics* from 1814 and 1822 (i.e., in Schleiermacher 2001a & 2001b; see also the chapter by Friesen in this collection). To gain insights into the change Schleiermacher hopes to induce in the knowledge of his audience, we need to understand what he perceives *Dialectics* to be and what he sees it as capable of achieving; it is here where we not only understand what kind of change is possible, but why such change would be of any value. Of course, this chapter cannot be the place to engage with a lengthy discussion of Schleiermacher's *Dialectics* in general (e.g., see: Rieger 1988), or to consider the role of the dialectical discussions in Schleiermacher's lectures on pedagogy (i.e. the relation of pedagogical theory and pedagogical practice in particular, see: Kenklies 2012); so only a few remarks will hopefully be sufficient to point us in the right direction.

The Purpose of Reflecting

As has already been stated, Schleiermacher envisions a sort of development

through continuous reflection for his audience. To understand this further, we need to better grasp what "reflection" means here. In his *Dialectics*, Schleiermacher distinguishes between three types of reflection: pure reflection, occupied reflection, artful reflection (*reines Denken*, *geschäftiges Denken*, *künstlerisches Denken*) (Schleiermacher 2001b, p. 5). Pure reflection arises from the pure will to know; it is reflecting in and for itself. Occupied reflection is reflecting to achieve something else; it is reflection not for itself but to achieve a given purpose. Artful reflection, like pure reflection, is reflection for itself and not for another purpose, but it differs from pure reflection in as much as it finds its criterion of evaluation solely in the individual and in the momentous pleasure that it offers to the reflecting subject (whereas the pure reflection finds its evaluative criterion in the extent to which it produces insights which are universally, i.e. intersubjectively, valid). Looking at these three forms of reflecting, Schleiermacher continues to describe his Dialectics as the *Kunstlehre* of "pure reflection"—as a kind of instruction manual that introduces the general principles according to which one has to proceed in order to arrive at real, i.e. intersubjectively valid, knowledge. In Schleiermacher's words, a *Kunstlehre* is: "any sort of instruction that explains how to proceed in an orderly manner with certain activities in order to arrive at a given goal" (p. 13). On other occasions, Schleiermacher uses the notion of theory (*Theorie*) to describe the same sort of reflection which he here refers to as *Kunstlehre* (p. 74) and it might be futile to attempt to draw a systematic distinction between the two: we seem to be looking at the moment in history when the notion of theory gradually assumes its modern meaning as a set of coherent and valid statements. However, what can be seen in his book *Dialectics* is the way, Schleiermacher himself envisions how to arrive at general principles for reflection. In that sense, the book *Dialectics* is not so much a compendium of rules for reflecting but an example that shows those rules being enacted (they demonstrate the rules by showing how to reflect according to them). This way of reflecting then is what is usually called *dialectical*, according to Schleiermacher: The book *Dialectics* presents its argument in dialectical form.

In the same way as the *Dialectics* is then the *Kunstlehre* for the art of reflection, Schleiermacher's *Pedagogy* is meant to be the *Kunstlehre*/ *Theorie* of the art of educating, and the *Pedagogy* as lectures proceed in the way demonstrated in the *Dialectics*, i.e. dialectically. As such, the *Pedagogy* as *Kunstlehre* or theory has the aim to dialectically develop and present the rules and principles according to which the practice of education has to proceed to achieve a certain goal. This goal is to turn it from a humble and more or

less unreflected pre-existing practice—and one that is based on simple notions and, if any, only incoherent principles—into a reflected practice that follows a set of rules and principles consistent with the standards set by pure reflection. It would then become a *Kunstlehre* or theory that basically follows the Platonic dictum that correct action follows from true knowledge. With regard to the notion of familiarity, this means: For the audience (and the reader), education changes from being merely "familiar" (*bekannt*) into something that is "known and understood" (*erkannt*). As such, this process of reflection and the enacting of a reflected practice is part of the greater human (and therefore forever fallible) endeavour to unify nature and reason (for much greater detail, see: Kenklies 2012).

Thus far, we have looked at the very first sentence of Schleiermacher's lectures in order to understand how much reflection on education can be said to have entered a new—even historically unprecedented—phase with his musings. Far from being a reflection that begins completely anew, Schleiermacher has embraced the idea that the kind of reflections presented in his lectures are always enabled and also limited by the periods and results of reflection that preceded one's own endeavours. Reflection never fills a blank slate but always only transforms what is already there. In conceding as much, Schleiermacher exposes the inherent hermeneutic quality of theoretical reflections in the way they always rest on what has been given before: every theory has to work with and through those hermeneutic prejudices and preunderstandings (Gadamer 1989) that allow for this theory to exist in the first place. Every act of theorizing has to become conscious of its own foundations, its own starting points—it has to become self-conscious, i.e. self-reflective: Theorizing thus means to jump into a hermeneutic circle of reflecting on and with what has been given before, and every theory, in general or on pedagogy, therefore becomes part of the hermeneutic circle of human (self-)interpretation. And this circle itself has its beginnings in the times of our ancestors and in the moment when they became self-conscious beings. This circle, further, is one—at least for Schleiermacher—without end, but in a process of eternal re-formulation.

The question then arises: How is this practice of reflecting now institutionalized? The next section will therefore look into the ways in which Schleiermacher describes institutionalized practices of reflection, i.e. institutions of (higher) education, of which his lectures on pedagogy are a part.

3. Practical Considerations. The Enacting of the Circle

For Schleiermacher, the university represents a natural place for the organized endeavour of reflection. Situated between what he calls "schools" and "academies," it is the university that attempts to awaken the spirit of reflection in those who are interested and capable of this way of relating to the world. Schools are responsible for training one's basic faculties and transmitting foundational knowledge, and academies are highly specialized academic institutions in which experts for the specific fields and disciplines. However, it is the universities that have the task of educating students in academic ways of reflecting: "[T]hrough it [i.e. the university] the scientific spirit is to be awakened in young people and raised to clarity of consciousness" (Schleiermacher 1991, p. 23). (The German word for science, *Wissenschaft,* refers to nearly all fields and disciplines studied at universities, not just to the natural sciences.) It is therefore not so much the transmission of a collection of facts (however true they may be) that characterizes the aspiration of university teaching—something that is predominantly the task of schools—but the awakening of a certain academic attitude and the capacity to act in accordance with this attitude. This is reflected in the fact that students generally spend less time at university than at school:

> *The situation is not that they [the students] do not require more time to learn everything but learning how to learn can be accomplished in a shorter time. That is, only one moment is actually spent at the university, only one act is completed: the idea of knowledge, the highest consciousness of reason, awakens in the person as a regulative principle. (p. 17)*

But how is this to be achieved? Are we to conclude that Schleiermacher's lectures are what he imagines to be the starting point for those who wish to become professional educators?

We have to remind ourselves that for Schleiermacher, professional educators have to acquire what he calls a *Kunstlehre* or theory of education that organizes their educational practice. For this to happen, they have to engage in the kind of reflections that Schleiermacher undertakes or performs in his lectures. However, those reflections are not and cannot be separated from the much wider realm of reflection: in order to be able to reflect insightfully on education, one has to be able to reflect on the whole world in a way that fits academic purposes. In other words: theories of education are already one of the specialized fields of reflection which can only be engaged

in after having become acquainted with more general principles of reflecting on the world. And it is probably not surprising that for Schleiermacher, it is philosophy that takes pride of place as the general introduction to academic thoughts: "The scientific spirit is awakened by philosophical instruction." (Schleiermacher 1991, p. 19), and:

> *That is, the most general subject matter is common to all; all begin with this, and only later do they divide themselves within the domain of the particular, as in each person one's distinctive talent is awakened and along with this one's love for that occupation wherein one can especially exercise it. Everything begins, therefore, with philosophy, with pure speculation, and whatever belongs propadeutically to that as a transition from school to university. (p. 27)*

Schleiermacher proceeds to lay out what is commonly known as *Studium Generale:* philosophy, philology, ethics, fundamental theory of nature, natural philosophy and history, mathematics and geography. Only after completing these general studies are students allowed to proceed into more particular areas, such as the arts of the cultural development of the state (i.e. political studies) and of the human beings inhabiting them (education studies). That means that Schleiermacher's lectures on pedagogy rest on a broad foundation not only of factual knowledge but, much more importantly, practiced academic reasoning (the necessity of which becomes immediately visible when attempting to read those pedagogical lectures with first year students).

However, even though these lectures represent a more specialized application of faculties of reasoning, they still follow the general principles outlined above (and identified as dialectical), which Schleiermacher understands to be fundamental to all academic enquiries and therefore to all academic teaching:

> *[T]wo elements are indispensable in this kind of discourse and comprise its distinct nature. One I choose to call the popular kind: the exposition of whatever condition in which the listeners presumed to find themselves, the art of pointing out to them what is problematic in it and painstakingly [pointing out] that what is not known amounts to nothing. This is the true dialectical art, and the more strictly dialectical it is the more popular. The other I would call the productive kind. Here the teacher must have all that is to be said emerge in front of the listener, not simply recounting what one knows but reproducing one's own coming to know, the act itself, so that the listeners are not constantly gathering mere information but are directly perceiving the activity of reason in bringing forth knowledge and are perspicaciously continuing that activity. (adapted from: Schleiermacher 1991, p. 29)*

It can easily be seen how the two principles outlined here are aimed at the teaching of a method of reasoning and reflecting rather than on teaching facts of knowledge. They start with becoming conscious of one's own prejudices to then gradually moving toward a better understanding (this is why we can justifiably call this a 'hermeneutical' understanding of academic reasoning). They then proceed by demonstrating the different, sometimes opposing positions on a given matter (thereby enacting a sort of dialogue between different positions) to come to some kind of position by either refuting some earlier positions or by reconciling them on a more abstract level (which is why this can justifiably be called a 'dialectical' approach to academic reasoning). Whatever practical purpose academic lectures have in the end (with regard to pedagogy: providing the correct *Kunstlehre* to successfully engage with the practice of educating) they are part of the general human endeavour of gradually developing an interpretation of the world which then leads to a new practice within it. As such, their main focus lies in the development of the general capacity to interpret reasonably rather than to teach an apparently reasonable but pre-existing interpretation. Unlike so many contemporary universities, especially when it comes to initial teacher education, Schleiermacher offers an alternative to statements about teaching that present themselves as apparent facts. Instead, he understands teaching at university as a teaching of (more or less) stable methods to gather forever precarious knowledge whose tentativeness demands a concentration on acquiring methods of producing and evaluating statements rather than accepting them as apparent facts.

4. Epilogue: Education Studies as Hermeneutic Academic Discipline

With Schleiermacher's lectures on pedagogy, the academic discipline that reflects on education, i.e. *Pädagogik* (Pedagogy) or in its more modern form *Erziehungswissenschaft* (Education Studies), enters modernity: here we can see educational reflections gaining self-awareness or -consciousness. Not only do these reflections offer certain concepts of education, of their anthropological and ethical foundations, of educational goals, methods, agents, institutions – they also reflect on the conditions of the possibility of the reflections themselves, on their necessary preconditions, on their own nature, their limitations and possibilities. We can see how Schleiermacher outlines this new way of engaging in educational reflection, how he understands his own version of education studies as an academic discipline, specifically as a

hermeneutic project. This is expressed above all in the way Schleiermacher's method acknowledges that it can only participate in an already existing conversation and that it has to use the notions passed down through history even though it aspires to gradually change the general understanding of education and with it the meaning of those notions. But for this to occur, these initial meanings first have to become obvious for those engaging in this kind of reflection. With Schleiermacher, we jump into the circle of reflection, and through this, we become aware that those kind of reflections represent not just a circle, but a spiral whose constant turning seems to move forward in its introducing of ever changing interpretations of the world and of what can be deemed to be "educational" in it. His optimism that this ever-moving spiral of interpretation does indeed move forward, i.e. toward the desirable goal of the unity of nature and reason, also characterizes his theory as modern theory. And it is just one little step from here to acknowledging that this movement is not a movement forward in any meaningful sense but nothing but an eternal play of signification where one interpretation replaces another one without end; from here, it is but a small step into postmodernity. Schleiermacher didn't go this far but he did indeed go as far as any devoted Christian probably could go. And in this, he is certainly a lot more modern than many others are and have been

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