

Teaching How to Learn and Learning How to Teach

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ABSTRACT. This essay takes offence at Holzkamp in order to honour him. Above all, the “teaching–learning short-circuit” he proposed and the question concerning emancipatory teaching left out by this concept are critically analysed. However, the critique follows Holzkamp in many details. The objects of critique are Holzkamp’s use of language, his exemplary method, his way of dealing with reality, and the determination of subjects/students. The critique offered is meant as a retrieving critique (*aufhebende Kritik*). On the assumption that Holzkamp’s standpoint and perspective are similar to those of this critic, critique can keep Holzkamp’s work alive, precisely by interrogating it. A series of doubts regarding Holzkamp’s thought sharpens the critic’s own procedure. In this respect, the study is nourished by his suggestions, particularly in those places where it rejects them.

KEY WORDS: Gramsci, language, learning, Marx, method, reality, standpoint, subject, teaching

The title of this article is meant as a challenge. Insofar as it moves learning and teaching into a relation of mutual dependence, it directs research interests precisely to this process of mutual exchange—instead of making the object of research either teaching, as is normally the case, or, even more commonly, learning alone. Still, we assume, particularly if we are teachers, that learning can be learned, and that it is our task, among others, to be the mediators of this learning process. This problematic of teaching and learning takes the form of diverse discussions about the appropriate learning environment, about curricula, and about forms of schooling. However, teaching appears as a problem independent from these discussions of learning (e.g., in didactics). It is deemed to be a competence completely independent of the processes of learning.

It was in this context that Klaus Holzkamp intervened with his book about learning (*Lernen. Eine Grundlegung*, 1993). Beginning with a critique (“Re-interpretation”) of current learning theories, he develops his concept of

learning as *subjective action*, *intentional*, and as *problem-orientated*. Only when something becomes a problem for “me”, as one of my goal-orientated actions, do I pause in full stride, as it were, in order to learn the competencies that I lack. With that, the reference of the action is changed. It requires a suspension of a previous action in order to put in its place, as a new goal-orientated action, the filling in of the “hole” in competencies. Strategies of knowledge appropriation are developed and deployed until the problem is resolved and the old action can be continued. Holzkamp’s theory of learning from the standpoint of the subject speaks exclusively of this standpoint. This theory therefore takes the self-determined subject/ student with determinate causes as a point of departure, thereby “making the subject of learning once more capable of discourse and discussable” (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 15). Holzkamp’s theory of learning is presented as a “scientific investigation of subjectively rational grounds” (“*subjektivwissenschaftlicher Begründungsdiskur*”, p. 15).

Despite providing perfectly reasonable considerations regarding why it is nonsense to think of processes of learning as automatic school-institutional processes—if “learning in itself”, which certainly occurs all through life, is investigated—Holzkamp nevertheless dedicates almost half of the book (200 pages) to a critique of the school and the role of the teacher. Among other things, a fierce critique of teachers’ monopoly of questions—a scenario that, at any rate, appears to have been largely overcome in the meantime by other diverse strategies—leads him finally to the “critique of the teaching–learning short-circuit” (pp. 391ff.). What is meant by this phrase is that it is an error to think of learning processes as a type of transmission in which the teacher sends stuff and students wait to receive stuff and, in the end, learn what they are supposed to learn.

The denial of the mediation of learning activities by subjective learning motives is already done by the conceptual short-circuiting of “teaching” and “learning”: that is, the positing of the equivalence of learning with teaching = learning [*Lehrlernen*], in which the contradiction between the official idea of teaching (normally) necessarily brings forth, when there is optimal instruction by the teacher on the basis of their professional competence, the intended learning processes, and the reality of learning and schooling from the standpoint of the students which gets in the way of these ideas, can be “managed” by manifold linguistic-practical shifts in meaning. (p. 391)

Holzkamp provides a foundation for this sentence by means of considerations and discussions of schooling as a disciplinary power which supervises, controls, demands, and measures performances; which sanctions and differentiates, and finally “mystifies marks” (p. 377). As much as a whole series of rational grounds and phenomena related to these may be exaggerated in their particulars or may even have been outdated, there is nevertheless a general sense that the school system deserves to be revolutionized from the ground up, a sense so strong that it seems to be futile to evaluate anything and everything which speaks for such a transformation. Agreement with Holzkamp’s critique in general produces a type of indifference toward the legitimacy of his substantiating statements. However,

my uneasiness remains. It concerns the radical mode of Holzkamp's articulation, which is unambiguous, allows no doubts, and recognizes no contradiction. In short, overall I am left with the impression that teachers, even if innocently bound to curricula and institutions, are harmful for students. As proponents of "teaching = learning" (*Lehrlernen*) (from p. 391 onward throughout the rest of the book the concept is used pejoratively), teachers pursue a false praxis.

Agreement as Critique

My uneasiness prompts an intervention on different levels. I am immediately in agreement with the different statements on "teaching = learning" (*Lehrlernen*), but in a way which intensifies the feeling that I am making it too easy for myself and, above all, that I am sitting on the side of the winner: that is, on the side of those who hold learning facilitated by teaching (*Lehrlernen*) to be practically impossible and who therefore do not have to attempt it.

This pose of the winner is shaken by the necessity to reproach myself with the fact that I myself teach (just like Holzkamp did); that we have been pursuing something in our practices up until now according to the conception that learning is advanced by teaching, however much it is of course clear that any learning must be done by the respective students/subjects themselves.

I have transformed this problematic into a research question: Do students really have no need for a teacher, or, can teachers really not be helpful in any way in the learning process for those learning?

These questions lead me to the connection between teaching and learning given in the title; a connection that I now, on the contrary, assume *positively* and change into a new object of research. What do we actually know about teaching and the role of learning in teaching?

I am beginning to have doubts about the way in which Holzkamp presents reality (in this case, school and teachers) as proof for his theoretical statements.

These doubts are also based on the method of presentation which I would like to provisionally call "subliminal". I mean by this a linguistic procedure which uses words in such a way that the reader produces a meaning—for example, that teachers are harmful for students—which, however, is not to be found exactly so in the text at all, thus enabling the "defenders" of Holzkamp's statements to insist upon a retraction of charges against him.

Since both of the first two points are merely questioning points of self-clarification, I will examine the last four points in reverse order.

Subliminal use of Language

I thus begin with the last point and place Holzkamp's previously quoted statement under the magnifying glass: It commences: "[T]he denial of the mediation

of learning activities by subjective learning motives ...” (1993, p. 391) Denial is a strong word. It suggests that someone actively and persistently describes a given set of facts falsely. The statement appears in the context of school curricula in which the learning goals are formulated. Undoubtedly, what is meant is that the “subjective learning motives” are ignored in curricula or, at least, are not their point of departure. The accusing word “denial” makes it necessary to assume that there is a bureaucracy which intentionally makes real learning impossible for the students. This, according to Holzkamp, is “already done by the conceptual short-circuiting of ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’, that is, the positing of the equivalence of learning with teaching = learning [*Lehrlernen*]”. This first part of the sentence gains its convincing power from an analysis in which one is carefully led to the conclusion that the establishment of learning goals and the commissioning of teachers with their modes of implementing these goals is on the whole the victim of a type of anti-democratic reification of the subject. It is suggested that whenever teachers pursue a learning goal (i.e., a goal for the students’ learning)—for example: “Today we will read about the French Revolution,” during which the teacher hopes to transmit history and at the same time to strengthen feelings of justice and to animate a love of freedom and solidarity, possibly even mixing in Olympe de Gouges with her grand sentences about the connection between social decay and the oppression of women—the teacher, in setting or pursuing the goal, posits him- or herself as the student/subject of learning and so fails the students because this is not the students’ learning goal/problem. Talk of the teacher as “substitute subject of the learning process” (p. 390) draws its plausibility from the condition that teachers are responsible, as it were, for ensuring that the learning goals are followed. Here, once again, one is readily scandalized by the implied reference. Moreover, the question about what teachers can do as teachers increasingly vanishes from view due to the way the problem is posed.

This reduction of teaching to one sole function (ensuring that learning goals are followed) obscures the role of teaching. This is then intensified by the remainder of the sentence:

...in which the contradiction between the official idea of teaching (normally) necessarily bringing forth, when there is optimal instruction by the teacher on the basis of their professional competence, the intended learning processes, and the reality of learning and schooling from the standpoint of the students which gets in the way of these ideas, can be “managed” by manifold linguistic-practical shifts in meaning.

Since the context and direction of the sentence tend towards a negative perception, one reads in each instance the opposite as positive and gains the impression that the “professional competence” of teachers is, if not damaging, nevertheless superfluous. As an explanation, Holzkamp adds in this context that the failure to reach learning goals—for example through physical (“often not there”) or intellectual (“doesn’t pay attention, doesn’t listen”) absence—is motivated. One is once more required to think that both being

present and listening do not have any relevance at all for learning processes, which, instead, are exclusively dependent on the students' subjective way of posing a problem, precisely because learning must be subjectively motivated, or is a subjective act and self-directed. But what are the consequences of this claim for teaching?

On Dealing with Reality

Holzkamp does not choose as a reality-excerpt this impetus to historical-political clarification such as the history lesson on the French Revolution that we considered above. Nor does he choose the example of how Critical Psychology can be taught. Rather, he selects the school curriculum (from the Berlin Senate Commission, *die Berliner Senatsverwaltung*), in which he finds that "here the connotation of 'teaching' and 'learning', along with ignoring the learning subject, is already established by the choice of words and the type of formulations" (1993, p. 393). The curriculum is organized according to learning goals and learning contents: that is, what should be transmitted and by means of what material. For example, the learning goal is to see philosophy as a means of coping with life, and the reading material is the Latin instruction of Cicero and Seneca (p. 394). From the fact that teaching tasks are formulated in these terms of goals and contents, Holzkamp draws the conclusion that here, in an exemplary way, the "teaching-learning short-circuit" is at work.

From the type of prevailing specifications, it follows that what the teacher has to teach at the time is continuously expressed in terms of learning effects upon students: "the child comprehends ...", "the child can ...", "the child has at his/her disposal ...", and "the student is able". The question about how and from what evidence one thus knows that the students have here taken over what was taught by the teacher as their learning problematic can no longer be posed: the learning of students is, according to official school regulations, solely a problem of the teacher. (p. 395)

Agreement with this diagnosis hides the necessary questions that are disguised by this way of posing the problem. It is certainly correct to assume that teaching plans are full of insinuations, that they overlook learning students/subjects, and, above all, that they posit ideological goals. However, the absolutization of this specific context and its transformation into categorical theorems makes the following complex of three questions, which are particularly important to me, completely invisible, if not in fact impossible. First, the critical differentiation internal to given learning goals and their definition: that is, the capacity to make a distinction between whether adaptation and subjugation are drilled or instead whether the opening up of the aspiration for emancipatory horizons is desired. The over-generalization condemning learning goals as being imposed from the outside is the same, whether the goal is domination or liberation, since Holzkamp rejects learning goals outright. But this

would mean that there can be no worthwhile dispute about curricula at all. Second, the question concerning the quality of the teachers, their competence, expertise, and qualifications is entirely obscured. If it is deemed generally valid that teachers do not actually have anything to do with the learning process, then, equally, the manner in which they fulfil their teaching task is irrelevant. With the demise of the teacher, the third question arises, namely, how do we think of political enlightenment, the passing on of knowledge of liberation, and the deployment of one's own experience; in short, how do we think of emancipatory teaching? What is meaningful for us as teachers in teaching? Why are we teachers anyway?

All of these questions are cancelled by Holzkamp's absolutization of self-activities in learning. While I strongly agree that learning is a subjective activity and can only be carried out by the students/subjects themselves, it remains uncertain whether and how this self-activity can be prepared, supported, nurtured, promoted, or hindered—for example, by teachers.

On the Relation of Teaching and Learning

We thus come to the heart of our formulation of the question concerning the connection between teaching and learning. The terrain is littered with various potential pitfalls. Critiques of centuries of terrible schooling practices and authoritarian styles of discipline have prepared the way for a united struggle against any and every educationalism, against any transmission of knowledge from above. It is from this history that Holzkamp's position draws its plausibility and his radical rejection of teaching = learning. With the attempt to hold firm to the necessity, indeed, to the pathos of teaching, we furthermore find ourselves on the fragile terrain of political action. History has taught us that all forms of leadership from above and attempts at movements from below through models of the avant-garde or through the dictatorship of a party are doomed. "If we don't liberate ourselves, freedom for us will remain without consequences," as Peter Weiss (1976, p. 226) memorably writes about the necessity of the self-activity of the many.

And yet it remains an open question as to the how and why of teaching: how this teaching itself can be learned, and how *learning* must be taught. These questions immediately have general import: How does one become a member of one's society? How does one appropriate the powers of human species-being, which Marx (1845/1998) said were the "ensemble of the social relations" (p. 6)? Holzkamp's absolute focusing on self-activity in this process ignores the fact that individuals can definitely fail to achieve this appropriation; that what they experience and accept as a "subjective learning problematic" is itself already socially formed. Therefore it is not entirely sufficient that we direct the question of learning processes, processes of one's own development, to the student/subject, or to oneself.

In short, the same everyday experience of learning from which Holzkamp drew his examples for the absurdity of the assumption that learning goals in the curricula could coincide with the learning movements of the students incites me to an opposed consideration: namely, how and when teachers can contribute to the success of learning goals; or how teachers can motivate learning processes and prevent students' self-damage. Holzkamp's examples at this point are coherent and enlightening, much more convincing than the chaotic experiences of everyday life. Thus he gives the example of a student who sits in class and learns; the student is really struck by a problem posed by the teacher and then proceeds to work on the problem himself, to take the problem on "as his learning problematic". This process requires a labour which deeply grasps in inner monologue the uncovering of deeper structures, and so on, which were not all intended in the course of instruction, and during which the student "disturbs" the lesson, so to speak, by reflection and, if he wants to remain in the classroom after the allotted time of 45 minutes to take notes, is sent by the teacher out to the playground (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 477). The curious thing about this example, like others Holzkamp gives, is that its ideal-typical imaginary picture is so constructed that it is entirely inappropriate for actual learning situations, schooling processes, and the ways in which individuals work themselves into their societies, but rather posits instead a pure construction. It belongs to the early skills of dealing with our fellow human beings wherein we do not immediately notice, say, every expression of emotion in the other's facial features. Everyone knows that the situations in which one is completely immersed in a single task and no longer notices anything going on around one are very rare. Yet one learns early on to do different things at the same time and above all to think of different things at the same time. So there is nothing to speak against finding one's own path through the school situation: "with one ear" paying attention to the progress of the lesson and "with the other" to be planning the afternoon, and so on. The rigidity with which learning here appears to be tied up to a monk-like isolation excludes the majority of society's members from learning, and not only in the school—incidentally, particularly women with small children on whom one must always keep "one eye". However, Holzkamp, recounts the drama of a student plagued by school discipline, a teacher and a curriculum, in an increasingly dramatic way, until he comes to the conclusion that what is lacking for learning in school is "an unthreatening state, removal of burdens, unconditional trust ... tranquillity" (p. 485). On this account, teachers, the means of the school, could then only be useful if

I thus were not through that permanently obliged, besieged, forced onto the defensive, that is, I must withdraw, feign, do a deal in order to survive, but rather, if I could freely relate to the offer [*Angebot*] of schooling ... before this background the real school appears, despite claiming to be a site of learning, as a location of human neglect and neglect of the learning culture. (p. 485)

In my opinion, Holzkamp's language slips into the field of an "offer", as a possible arrangement of schooling worth striving for, and "demand", as "free

behaviour” as individual choice, because in the construction of his examples he misses the opportunity to think of learning as a social process, and “growing up and into” society as a laborious task—these being contradictory to schooling. Above all, the capacity to organize self-actively a learning process in one’s own time is posited as an ideal student/subject who is not fuddled by any of the social rubble. One is not supposed to give in to the temptation to set against Holzkamp’s ideal-type image the history of other students/subjects since, presumably, others are of course always excessively present in consciousness.

Teaching for what Ends?

The one-sidedness of Holzkamp’s “learning” construction and its verification by the reality of schooling induces me to proceed just as one-sidedly and to insist on the merits of school learning and teaching. But because I am not unimpressed by the impulse to regard the school as damaging and the teacher as disposable, I have posed the problem from the opposite side: for what could students/subjects, who we thus think of as self-active learners, *use* teachers? This way of posing the question goes beyond Holzkamp’s teaching–learning short-circuit in that we now do not begin from the assumption that there is a correspondence between teaching material and learning effect. Rather, we suppose that there are different paths to different learning goals which more or less reach such goals depending upon the teachers’ skill and the capacity to select and offer from the multitude of social knowledge such as will be accepted by the individuals subjectively as their learning problematic, that is, as something which they want to know. This formulation admits of a series of presuppositions which need to be made explicit. The most problematic of these are perhaps those that presuppose that individuals are always already a part of a society which they find ready-made and in which they must conduct themselves such that they are disposed to limit their selection of goals they deem worth striving for. If one observes children, one will recognize without much difficulty that even at play they do not shirk effort and exertion. Rather, even from early on they are already eager to do freely everything that leads to something useful in life at least once, and to avoid doing so over a longer period. Briefly, children at a very young age develop an instinct or sense for what could be regarded as work and, in opposition, claim the right to not-work. As long as one views work activities, that is, activities which contribute to the reproduction of one’s self, others, and the society, as not contributing to the development of the individual, this almost spontaneous flight of fancy may be unproblematic. For the project of shaping the conditions of life in common, and based on mutuality, there are large problems to confront. These appear in the form of ethics, that is, the question of how the orientation (*Haltung*) of mutuality can be learned. Furthermore they also appear in the form of the question of how the cultural technologies of humanity can be appropriated.

“Opening of the world” (*Weltaufschluss*), as Holzkamp refers to this, also includes, of course, working oneself into existing skills and discoveries. This can also be experienced as work that, of course, is not to be thought of merely in the form of wage labour, but as every goal-determined confrontation with the world which seeks to shape it.

The school is an achievement! It is set up so that those growing up may be integrated into society but not yet to integrate them as children into the wage labour process. Rather, its purpose is to organize for them a common time-out, in which, stated in ideal-typical terms, they are able to appropriate in common the socially available capacities and accumulated knowledge. Of course, the school is located in the middle of a society torn apart by contradictions. It is therefore to be reckoned that the organization of the school also serves a disciplining function in a determinate society such that the wage labour competencies necessary are indeed acquired. Furthermore, it is clear that students come from different milieus and hence that there are class, ethnic, and gender differences/problems to be dealt with prior to the strived-for social capacities. In the family and on the street, individuals have already been sorely rubbed and formed; they have already had experiences and already developed behaviours that avoid learning. All of these preconditions determine the learning climate when teachers, themselves equivalently more or less competent and operating in similar contradictions, walk into the school classroom. What, then, can teachers do in order to enable and to support learning processes of students?

My intervention “Leading Experiences into Crisis” (see Haug, 2003, chap. 4) was from the beginning strongly contested as well as enthusiastically received. In that work I sought to ascribe to teachers a function in very difficult circumstances. Since teachers are at the front line in terms of encountering students (also those at university) who already come with a learning orientation (*Haltung*) which can cause damage to themselves, a process must be worked out which, in the one movement, both sets about the forgetting, or “unlearning”, of the old and, at the same time, strives for the appropriation of the new. Therefore, students should come to be in a position where they can reflect on themselves, contradict themselves, and cast aside habits and open themselves to the new. Spontaneously, it occurs to me that there are concepts which are relevant to attempts to teach, concepts whose dubious character is already obvious in the appellation. Are we supposed to convince the students, to seduce them, or to manipulate them? The task of enabling students to know and acquire capability begins differently from where Holzkamp begins. It begins not from a type of innocent willingness to learn but rather, on the contrary, from the task of the teacher to bring about some movement in students’ refusal to learn in this society. From this starting point, teachers are confronted with the task of placing students’ habits in question, shaking their fixed knowledge, and analysing their fixed orientations (*Haltungen*). In doing so, students are challenged emotionally so as to secure the uncertainties that accompany a departure from old positions. However, students also need to draw upon their own experience with dealing

with their experiences in this society, a fund of knowledge and perceptions; in short, a “critical competence for dealing with experience”. To lead students’ experiences into crisis is supposed to mean making it impossible for them to remain stationary in positions that are themselves the result of the processing of experience. In this way, “unlearning” or forgetting becomes a central subjective task, and to make this possible and to secure it becomes a goal of teaching.

This way of posing the question subverts Holzkamp’s idea of the subjective posing of the problem without, however, negating it. The displacement aims at the problematic of making possible “subjective problem posing” and at the same time places in question the fact that the members of this society, coming out of difficult relations, pose themselves subjective problems which are useful and central for their capacity to deal further with life. It is hard to write this without immediately being subject to the suspicion of claiming to know it all, and the right to know what is good for others. There is thus no way of avoiding the question: Is there not, in all the affirmation of the self-activity of learners, both knowledge that contributes to domination and knowledge that contributes to liberation, both of which can be transmitted and taught, even if these have not been posed by individuals as their own tasks?

Self-Determined Subjects?

Through this focus on teaching, it can appear as if the students/subjects of learning remain under-attended, as if learning is not discussed from their standpoint. However, the theory of teaching presented here is indebted to a determinate conception of the acting students/subjects. Doubts about the idea of setting up self-determined subjects in successful learning processes is based on the view that the subjects themselves are involved in the dominant relations, that they are not unitary but multiple, inwardly torn, fragmented; that they build themselves and regularly transform themselves. In short: the suggestion to take the student/subject as the point of departure of science first of all requires a critique of subjects within dominant relations. This moves the posing of the question concerning learning in the direction of ideology-critique and political pedagogy. Teaching becomes a psychological and political intervention and fundamentally assumes diverse knowledge about domination and its reproduction, about society and its possibilities of appropriation, and about the socialization of individuals. In my learning book I have closely examined, among other elements, “Master Teachers”, in order to learn the art of teaching from them: notably, Bertolt Brecht and Virginia Woolf.

Brecht as ‘Master Teacher’

Brecht is for me of particular importance because he ran his theatre as a critique of experience. He recommended departing from people’s daily experience to

observe the people on the street. He staged possibilities for them to transform themselves: that is, he worked precisely at that point where being taught is abandoned in favour of self-learning, for which teaching is nevertheless still necessary. Teaching is shown to be an art. Its instrument is to take up people's experiences affirmatively and to lead them into contradictions so that other experiences, ones which they also could have had, are called upon in order to self-critically abandon old positions. Teaching becomes dialectics: that is, it becomes the task of showing things in the flux of movement.

I analysed Brecht's *Flüchtlingsgespräche* (1967), or, rather, reconstructed his procedure regarding this material. One sees how Brecht lets single words be recognized as ambiguous traps and at the same time never loses his adherence to the experiences of individuals. Thus, for example, when he lets a refugee say that the word "good" has an "unpleasant aftertaste", then unexpectedly the "good" is recognizable as a founder of order in class societies. Nevertheless, the word cannot be abandoned but belongs in relations with which it can fulfil the hope which has been set upon it. The politics which Brecht pursues with the word is inflammatory. The chief method in his work with experience is that of comparison, and the word is shown as an instrument of domination just as it is a means for liberation. Comparison creates unrest, both when it is appropriate and when it is inappropriate.

Common sense (*der Alltagsverstand*) works with a large range of comparisons. As sayings and maxims of worldly wisdom, experiences are registered from below just as knowledge of domination is imposed from above. For example, everyone from an older generation who has gone to high school still knows the sentence from their Latin instruction, seized upon particularly by reluctant students: "We don't learn for school, but for life."¹ Brecht makes this sentence dance. He forces it into many-levelled comparison, or he puts the implied comparison under the microscope: if the school really was just like life, the necessity of a thorough-going transformation would therefore follow as an absolute motivating perspective. Ziffel, the physicist refugee in Brecht's narrative, reported praising words of the meanness of the school and the teachers to whom he was subjected. He remembered with gratitude one teacher in particular:

Carried away by no material interest at all, he was able to concentrate on building up the souls of the young people and to teach them all forms of deception. Thus he prepared them to enter into a world where they immediately met other people such as him who were stunted, damaged, and washed with all waters. (Brecht, 1967, p. 1404)

He imagines what consequences school reform would have if children would be treated "justly and with empathy".

Everything which they would have learned in school, from contact with teachers, would induce them, outside in life, which is so very different from school, to the most ridiculous acts ... they would be delivered to society completely uneducated, unprepared, and helpless. (p. 1404)

The new point of departure, namely, that the school is not like life but that it somehow prepares for life, is comparatively confronted with reality: if it is supposed to prepare for life, it must be like life. This is particularly valid when life proceeds according to unjust, nasty principles—these are so unfavourable to humans that, in order to survive, nastiness must be learned from the time when one is small, from adaptation in the school, for example, to the relations of life. Brecht was interested in behaviourism, whose cynical sequences he employed happily. There is, for example, learning according to a model. From the mouth of Ziffel it sounds thus:

The brute sharply confronts the young person in school in unforgettable ways and relations. He possesses an almost unlimited power. Equipped with pedagogical knowledge and many years of experience he educates the students to be the very image of himself. ... The students learn everything that is necessary in order to succeed in life. This is the same thing that is necessary in order to succeed in the school. It is a case of deception, faking of knowledge, the capacity to take revenge unpunished, a quick appropriation of commonplaces, flattery, servility, preparedness to betray one's own equals to those above, etc., etc. (p. 1402)

The comparison has numerous functions: it places the beginning sentence—"not for the school, for life"—in question, or, rather, reckons accounts with it. In a society in which one, equipped with the habitual capabilities and orientations (*Haltungen*) which one would learn in a good school, fails, a school must be established according to the model of life, in order to learn for life. The comparison gives such a terrible picture of the school that the reader is finally forced to glance, not on the school, but on the society with an eye to improvement. The lesson which the readers draw is that in order to have a fairly acceptable pedagogy, we require another society. That is not simply the general phrase about the necessity of social transformation which is always valid; rather, it implies that a better school would turn the students into people who are incompetent in life. But the competence that they learn is that of the brutes. The affirmation of the comparison of school and life is thus untenable. Who is for the affirmation of brutes? The comparison has the effect that afterwards a solution must be sought in which the comparison could once again be correct in a humane way. Thought is also encouraged by this comparison to become more flexible: There aren't any fixed solutions. The comparison, which was correct regarding the inhumanity of school and life, can become incorrect, without this being accompanied by the appearance of an improvement, for example, through transformation of the social meanings. Ziffel says:

I had ... reason to expect that, equipped with some moderately bad habits and still acquiring some not too terrible dreadfulness, I would go through life in a half-way reasonable way. That was a deception. All of a sudden, one day, virtues were required. (p. 1405)

One suspects that the equilibrium of the moderately bad habits becomes unbalanced by the declaration of virtues and therefore for the first time really

threatening. The comparison and its movement give rise to the thought experience that we are dealing with complicated changing relations which must be thought in large praxis-contexts, in which the change of one instance—even if it looks good at first glance—indicates a greater disturbance.

In this context, the story of the teacher Herrnreitter is told, a story worthy of consideration also for thoughts about teaching and learning. On the first day of school, he allowed the students to seek out for themselves a place in a room—but there was one seat fewer than the number of students. The student who found no seat received a box on the ears: “That was a very good lesson for all of us that one was not allowed to have bad luck” (p. 1405). And the readers learn that bad luck is not a condition or a situation but, rather, a praxis. Here the readers’ comparative thought is claimed in another way. Herrnreitter, equipped with such genial educative capacities, by means of which he merely reflected reality, remained a simple secondary school (*Volksschule*) teacher. As an astonishing laconic commentary, we read: “He must have had an enemy in the school administration” (p. 1406). The thought experiment once again focuses on the expectation, fed by experience, that a teaching praxis that corresponds to, or reflects, the practices of the societal relations is rewarded by promotion. Where teaching praxis does not correspond to societal relations, we cannot expect improvement of a type of a higher justice but must rather suppose another swinishness or an in-house disturbance.

Brecht changes the question of whether one can learn from experience, of whether one can learn without experience, or from which particular experience one learns, into the question of the investigation and presentation of how one can learn from experience. The criterion of learning is the attainment of a greater capacity to act. A level on which the comparison can be practically developed is that of common sense (*Alltagsverstand*). The comparison assumes that at least one of the two compared elements is known—or, better still, that both are known. The readers, too, must have had experience with that. But the experience is at the same time the space in which lessons are ordered, which immunize against further learning. One knows that something is so and so, it was always so, it will always be so. Common sense (*der Alltagsverstand*) gathers experiences on many levels; indeed, it is able to pass them on.

Common Sense (der Alltagsverstand)

Antonio Gramsci departs from the perspective that common-sense experiences from different times and consciousnesses are uncritically amassed and, according to need, one or other is selected and elevated for the legitimation and explanation of one’s own activities and decisions. Common sense is thus simultaneously the basis from which individuals work out the world and seek to carry out activities in order to fulfil their needs, and also an obstruction to the capacity to act for the ends of emancipation. Common sense is contradictory; at the very least, it is incoherent and in accord with the environment in which collective individual practices and their working out belong, and in which their rational

grounds are culturally anchored. Thus one can have a scientific *Weltanschauung* while being superstitious in many everyday decisions; work out things for the well-being of all and, in another dimension of one's thought, give all capacity to act to another, a leader. On the basis of this incoherence of common sense, Gramsci drew the conclusion that each individual must give an account of himself or herself regarding the stratum in which their judgements have matured, and whether they could hold such judgements to be adequate to the standards of the most advanced consciousness of their time. They must thus draw up an inventory of their common sense or, if you like, a list of observations and new orderings that enable them to develop a greater capacity to act in a sense which they themselves must affirm (Gramsci, 1994, Vol. 6, H 11, § 12, fn. 1, p. 1376). Brecht used this conception of common sense in order to understand active learning experience. He mobilized the different levels of experience and aimed them against each other, so that these different levels judged each other.

Holzkamp dedicated a longer chapter in his critique of schooling and teachers' behaviour to the posing of the question in the pedagogical process. His critique scandalized the teacher's monopoly of questions and asked that real questions be given—as distinct from bogus questions, which are merely meant to serve as proof of having learned—as the essential foundation of exploratory learning. In my book on learning, I problematized the almost innocent way of thinking in which “the question” appears as a completed entity and in which it appears to be mainly a case of “distributing” it (Haug, 2003, p. 15, p. 286). In contrast, I characterized questioning as including diverse ways in the ordering and learning contexts, as a way of dealing with the world which must itself be learned first, in order further to open the world (*Weltaufschluss*). Questions also are to be posed in the context of appropriation of the world and determinate social relations. In order to be able to question, one must set aside the knowledge that one already has: that is, one must forget or “unlearn”.

Learning from Virginia Woolf

In search of further taskmasters in the art of teaching, I considered Virginia Woolf, because she brings into literary analysis the subjugation of women as an additional contradictory dimension of common sense. She taught, among other things, the art of asking questions, in which the question is elaborated as a means of both domination and liberation. I chose her essay *Three Guineas*, which can also be read more generally as a school of questioning (Woolf, 1938). At first it is necessary to take the questions seriously, to overcome them through recognition, to work out their hidden assumptions, to confront them with their opposite, to push them into the corner where they must reveal that they hide other, further-going questions, in order then to replace them with new questions. In short, while Woolf opens an extensive search for questions, she teaches amazement and wonderment, and shows where things have not been thought out fully, where things must be further investigated. In this, there is no question which is rejected

as too dumb, for in each question there is a piece of common sense, with which it is at first necessary to struggle, which must be confronted by the mirror of its consequences, before we can move onto new questions. This means that the essay comes out without any educationalism, even though it deals with education and wants to educate; it is undogmatic, even though Woolf has a very clear judgement on different points, which she also does not hesitate to give. And she does it in an exciting way, even where the text only informs about numbers or history dates, because the facts are represented in such a way that they can give answers to long-suspected questions and encourage new questions. The method also shows that one should not simply accept a question and ponder an answer; indeed, it shows that answering too quickly in fact blocks a quest for knowledge. For her it is therefore a case of bringing into movement the good sense (*der gesunde Menschenverstand*) which is registered in any question, for example, not by rejecting this question but rather by taking it really seriously, by tracing it to its (usually multiple) roots.²

The Theses on Feuerbach

My own interest, which also determines the choice of literature consulted, has shifted Holzkamp's object, namely, to formulate a foundational rule of learning, to the problematic of teaching and education and, at the same time, into one concerning a politics of liberation. Holzkamp does not deal with the art of teaching for liberation—rather, because of the way he poses the question, he posits teaching for liberation as making little sense, because he condemns teaching as such, even though he himself works in the political field with the goal of liberating knowledge and increasing the capacity to act. His critique of school is also concrete and highly relevant to everyday experience as it challenges us to undertake practical action. Thus, I suppose that both his and my concerns with education have the same origin, and it is therefore appropriate to posit the question about the “increasing opening of the world” (*Weltaufschluss*) as a question concerning political enlightenment in the broadest sense, concerning emancipatory pedagogy, concerning political action, as I do below.

Every theory comes upon its fundamental distinctions on practical grounds. It relates, even if for the most part indirectly, to projects of maintenance or transformation of relations. If there is no theory without this dimension, there are nevertheless theories which do not reflect upon it. Not all will accept the proposal to conduct the “inter-paradigmatic” discussion on the level of the relevance to praxis of their network of concepts. (Haug, 1993, p. 78)

Our network of concepts about teaching and learning, for the sake of “teaching = learning” (*Lehrlernen*) with the central focus of a critique of teaching for the sake of learning, is shifted once again. The question of how teaching can be learned concerns not only the learning of students. It must also be

asked concerning the learning of the teachers, that is, the teacher as student. Marx in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845/1998) sharply intervenes here regarding thinking according to the importance of the standpoint of the subject and its sensuous praxis. The third thesis states:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. (pp. 5–6, trans. modified)

The text brings together in a very condensed form that which should be carefully taken apart. The first part openly criticizes those who, for example, fight for the destruction of capitalism and educate people with explanations and clarifications; those, therefore, who want to make revolutionaries out of undemanding subaltern people. The choice of words binds political revolutionary praxis, or the critique of it, with everyday school praxis, which can be articulated on a similar political terrain. It is also the case here that the manner of transformation of the educational institutions and the transformation of pedagogy is insufficient, if not problematic. The second part of Marx's sentence turns the tables and changes the question concerning transformation into a question concerning the subject: Who are those who transform? This change posits the problem in another location: those who need other conditions in order to be able to develop fully are themselves already embedded in the old conditions—the process of transformation which must be made by them changes them as well. Or even more complicatedly: in order to transform society, humans must have a transformative way of dealing with themselves, that is, be self-reflexive and ready to act in complex contexts.³ The concluding sentence reckons accounts and shows that even the search for general transformation is not possible if all of those participating are not doing so equally. Every attempt from above, from outside, that seeks to induce others to transformative activity destroys the perspective precisely because the standpoint is not one held in common, but which rather posits domination, leadership, and an upper class whose possession is enduring, and which thus “divides society into two parts”.

Gramsci's Reception of the Theses on Feuerbach

Gramsci takes up the third thesis on Feuerbach in another way. In the *Prison Notebooks* (1994) he discusses the connection between common sense and science and critically notes Feuerbach's criticism about theory:

In reality he capitulates before common sense and before customary thought because he has not posed the problem in exact theoretical terms and consequently is therefore practically disarmed and powerless. The raw uneducated milieu⁴ has dominated the educator, customary common sense has put itself in the place of science and not the reverse; if the milieu is the educator then this must also be educated in its turn. (Vol. 6, H 11, § 22, p. 1420)

The saying speaks to the problematic of the common sense, which is also the self-moving centre of teaching and learning. It is necessary to comprehend common sense in “exact theoretical terms”; where one does not do this, one is overpowered by it. This also means that where one does not comprehendingly tackle reality, one is captivated by the “facts” as they are spontaneously imposed; one simply duplicates the existing state of affairs. The necessity of educating the educators is derived from the *Theses on Feuerbach*: educators are the milieu in which opinions of everyday life and with them the ruling ideas are reproduced. With that the teachers move not only in the direction of the universality of that which transformation must also promote along with itself; universality means that this education also proceeds mutually: the students are the “raw milieu”, which in its turn drives forward the education of the educators.

The question in learning contexts as so formulated is more precisely: How do those teaching learn from the challenges of their students? The question is posed in terms of a science of the subject. Teachers are asked regarding the milieu in which they learn while teaching.

However much teachers learn from their students, this seldom occurs consciously such that it could be documented and one could learn from it. As soon as one leaves behind the prejudice that teaching is transmitting knowledge and that the art of teaching involves thinking the most possible, refined forms of the transmission of knowledge, and confronts the fact that it is a matter of the opening of the world (*Weltaufschluss*), that is, orientations (*Haltungen*), feelings, and also knowledge, it becomes clear that practically every new student transforms the world of teaching and gives the teachers other lessons.

Gramsci takes up the question of the learning teacher and moves it into a political and social context. If, he asks, once again relying on Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, human being is “the ensemble of the social relations” (1845/1998, cited in Gramsci, 1994, Vol. 4, H 7, § 35, p. 891), this includes “the idea of becoming”:

Man becomes, he changes constantly with the transformation of the social relations. ... It is necessary to elaborate a doctrine in which all these relations are active and in movement, fixing very clearly that the location of this activity is the consciousness of the single man who knows, wants, admires, creates in so far as he already knows, wants, admires, creates, etc., and conceives himself not as isolated but as rich in possibilities offered to him by other people and by the society of things, of which he is not able not to have a certain knowledge. (Gramsci, 1994, Vol. 6, H 10, Part II, § 54, pp. 1346–1349)

For Gramsci, teachers have the task of passing on from generation to generation that which has been experienced and appropriated; but they are, above all, likewise there until the end of their life to appropriate “their human being”. Set into the relations at home, in different and even opposed cultures, with ways of thinking full of superstition and full of prejudices, they must make themselves “coherent”, compile an “inventory” of themselves, work on themselves, in order to be socially capable of action. This is a process without end. Gramsci continues, in a

condensed way, that “man” as a social being cannot appropriate this social being at all if he doesn’t continually work on his own self-transformation. This task is not only a psychological task. Above all, it is a political task, because it necessarily includes the shaping of society. “Therefore it can be said that everyone changes themselves, becomes something else, in the measure to which they change and modify the totality of relations in which they are themselves the centre of connection” (Gramsci, 1994, Vol. 6, H 10, Part II, § 54, p. 1348). To this extent, teachers can be differentiated according to their degree of political engagement and self-critique. What they transmit is a recognition of relations and recognition of the possibilities to transform them. This proposes “to recognize them genetically, in the flux of their formation, because every individual isn’t only the synthesis of the existing relations but also the synthesis of the history of these relations, that is, the summary of the entire past” (Gramsci, 1994, Vol. 6, H 10, Part II, § 54, p. 1348). Not even the teacher is an “immobile prime mover”.

Learning Journals

I have not really consciously sought to learn from those learning; nevertheless, I have understood my own teaching in such a way that I certainly wanted to bring to the lesson the “process of becoming” of the individual students: that is, their recognition of the world. As students combining apprenticeship and formal study (*der zweite Bildungsweg*), they had varied experiences in professional practice. It was necessary to draw out these experiences, as in an empirical collection of elements, and to recognize them in a comprehension of the totality of experiences they shared in common. The task which I set myself and pursued over more than two decades was theoretically and didactically orientated to the learning subjects/students, and while this did not explicitly include me as subjugated in the same relations, the question of the inclusion of the others in the relations became an extra task which was difficult to manage.

In reform pedagogy—indeed, in any emancipatory didactics—my procedure is called “beginning from the experiences of the individuals”. It is supposed to awaken interest by making each individual feel acknowledged such that she or he has something to contribute. It is thus simultaneously like, for example, a gathering together of worldly experiences, which leads, or, rather, is supposed to lead, to an even more comprehensive state of social knowledge. Of course, this pedagogical method thinks the learning process completely from above and from outside, despite all attempts at the integration of individuals. That is, while those teaching are not brought into the gathering of experiences, while they don’t make their own experiences available, or while their self-transformation and their learning is not thought at all or rather is thought only as a type of contemplation of varied levels of other people’s realities, one will observe in the study of this pedagogical process a certain sterility, a staying put, precisely where it should be particularly lively and interesting for observation. The experiences of

individuals articulated hesitatingly and stagnantly and, indeed, reluctantly hardly interests the others who are present at the time. The exchange of experiences becomes an obligatory exercise, whose denial, in turn, hardly advances learning.

Personally dissatisfied with a certain stagnation in my efforts, I integrated the writing of learning journals into my seminar work over a period of almost 10 years (see Haug, 2003, chaps. 8–9, in which 80 such journals are evaluated). To report on these journals would go beyond the bounds of this study. At any rate, what is interesting for us here is what can be learned regarding the connection between teaching and learning. There was a peculiar question posed to those writing the journals which, however, was completely trapped in the prejudice that learning and teaching are absolutely separate processes, and which asked the students merely for a critique of forms of teaching. This question (one of three—the second regarded the material or the content of instruction, and the third treated those learning together or the group) remained completely unanswered in all journals. There were some comments on material, such as, for example, that one had not understood it. However, the central focus of all the journals was the seminar format as such, the fact that one was supposed to learn with others. These “others” were perceived as enemies or, at any rate, as opponents, people before whom one could make a fool of oneself, who did not wish one well, and before whom one had to conceal oneself. These anticipations, combined with students’ low self-esteem, hardly allowed an opening of the world (*Weltaufschluss*). A particular hindrance was my attempt to focus on experiences. Here it was soon shown that a completely naïve concept of experience underwrites this pedagogical concept. Experience is certainly not simply collected knowledge. It is much more one’s own struggle over that which, of the many things one has lived, can become experience, which in turn becomes the foundation of the critical movement which we name learning. Living something, or going through something, is in the first instance set in domination and oppression, and correspondingly carried out through guilt and shame, resistance and forgetting. In this context the question concerning the experiences of individuals is itself experienced as a challenge: for example, to expose oneself, to admit defeat, to confess in public the inferiority one feels, and so on. Furthermore, individuals do not normally give an account of themselves on an everyday basis: that is, that which they have lived is not translated into forms that are able to be recounted.

On the Problematic of Experience

Walter Benjamin (1982, p. 610) diagnosed a general degeneration of experience that occurs through a process of substitution: the story is dissolved into communication, which in turn is replaced by the news, and this finally by sensations. Therefore, Benjamin transformed the question of what experience is into the question of how experiences are made, and he then linked this question to the research question concerning the construction of the cultural.⁵ From the learning

journals and Benjamin's clues, I learned that it is necessary to begin a research project on experience before experience could be built into a teaching process as an instrument. Furthermore, I learned that a scientific orientation (*Haltung*) is advisable which finally allows itself not to consider anything as finished, or fixed, but rather to think all things in flux and therefore to think its own possibilities and necessities for intervention as a dimension in such a movement. As soon as one admits this—and this is a second lesson for teaching from within this context—it becomes obvious that it is completely nonsensical for such attempts to work on the everyday experiences of the world without also including teachers' own experiences, as if teachers were not from the same world as their students. On the contrary, one's view of the world gains if the insights and dealings of different standpoints or worlds are included. Only in an open context is the teacher also an expert with a living connection to the world. Characteristically, I had already "known" as much and developed it as a method of "memory work" (*Erinnerungsarbeit*; Haug, 1982, 1999), which was likewise included in my learning book (see 2003, chaps. 10–12), without, however, at the same time finding a way to integrate it into my way of teaching. One can, as Gramsci does, certainly depart from the fact that we have several—at least two—theoretical consciousnesses that coexist with each other. In his *Philosophy of Praxis* (1994, Vol. 6) he proposed to reflect upon the different "consciousnesses" and to work them out coherently. The question of the working out of the experiential becomes always more urgent. Gramsci (1994) built up his considerations in this context into a roughly sketched theory of personality:

One's own personality is created: (1) by giving a determinate and concrete ("rational") address to one's own vital impulse and will; (2) by identifying the means which render such will concrete and determinate and non-arbitrary; (3) by contributing to modifying the totality of concrete conditions which realize this will in accordance with the limits of its own power and in the most fruitful forms. The human is to be conceived as an historical block of purely individual and subjective elements and of elements of the masses, objective and material, with which the individual is in an active relation. Transforming the external world, the general relations, means to strengthen oneself, to develop oneself. (Vol. 6, H 10, Part II, § 48, pp. 1341–1342)

Expansive Learning

This context as sketched out by Gramsci is ubiquitous in Holzkamp's writings. By extending the capacity to act to mean the transformation, together with others, of the conditions of life, and to exert this shaping influence in a way such that one can develop oneself, Holzkamp also formulates his idea of learning. Hence, Holzkamp's rejection of teaching in appropriating the world cannot be definitive. In conclusion, let us examine how Holzkamp imagines a reformed school and a critically worked-out pedagogical process which makes possible—in his words—"expansive learning".

First, Holzkamp tears down the barriers which allow school learning to be separated methodologically from other types of learning. School is an everyday experience, and learning in such a place is thus, in terms of a learning biography, generally able to be remembered. The procedure appears immediately correct, but leads away from our teaching problematic. It renounces from the outset the task of working through as such the privilege of having a type of time-out (from work, from the family) only for the appropriation of social knowledge. Therefore the teachers, who know how to use this time-out, do not come into view at all. In the absence of learning-biographical investigations, Holzkamp departs from his own subjective memory. Here he names the possibility of “memory deception” and its functionality, and thus transfers the investigation of memory, that is, the “embeddedness” of memory in the total social process of domination and oppression and subjective dealings, into a “future learning-biographical research”. On the one hand, this certainly appears legitimate, but, on the other, it allows him to deal with memory in a largely speculative manner and so deal with his own memory in a way derived from previously developed theory. Instead of working with memory, he immediately announces in passing: “I have obviously also learned reading and writing where this did not appear to me at first glance as a separate learning problematic” (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 493). He concludes, reasonably, that reading and writing must have been such unambiguously necessary skills that they were able to be appropriated simply while learning other skills (*Mitlernen*). Since I, in distinction from Holzkamp, depart from the fact that in the learning of determinate skills we also learn at the same time orientations (*Haltungen*), just as we are able to carry over dimensions of these skills to other activities, the question of learning to read and to write interests me just as much as a subjective process. In my own memory (Haug, 2003, pp. 13ff.), I had great difficulties bringing letters together into words, a problem that, according to a small survey, is remembered by many. Actually, it appears that in the meantime completely new practices for learning reading and writing have been developed in school didactics in which this leap from letters to the word occurs almost in an instant.⁶ Unfortunately, Holzkamp does not dwell on his memories of school, despite his promise to proceed in terms of a subjective learning biography, because these memories would simply illustrate the previously analysed school learning hindrances. Fleeting memory confirmed that which was suspected. Therefore, he concluded concisely:

My expansive learning interests which appear (which disturb) in this school-discipline context and corresponding attempts to put them into practice were evidently so massively hindered, restricted, and brought back into line that their results have hardly left traces behind in my further intentional learning history. (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 494)

Since reality, according to this evaluation, doesn't appear to be worth remembering exactly, the teachers of such a type are excluded as people who could be

useful and meaningful for learning a second time. Nevertheless there remains a memory of a “magic moment at school” (pp. 494ff.). It has the exceptional character of taking place beyond school discipline, curriculum, or evaluation on the part of the teacher and beyond the refusal and resistance on the part of students.

Despite this rigid preliminary construction, much can be learned from such a memory for the question of teaching. In Holzkamp’s story, the teacher taught music, but not in a boring way, thus arousing sympathy. Rather, he played it and students “began to discuss it” (p. 495). That this can be formulated not as a simple proposal for music teachers (and also actually occurs in the real schooling praxis in numerous ways) is due to the theoretical construct according to which all school learning must be comprehended with the verdict of learning alongside the learning of other skills (*Mitlernen*) or defensive learning. From this, something like a denial of the schooling process is belatedly repeated and carried over to the level of theory.

Two further stories of “expansive learning” follow the previously developed thought that the teachers’ monopoly of questions is to be broken and that, as soon as students are entitled to question, the subjectively problem-orientated learning process will come into play. The assumption is not so much to be doubted as it evades the difficult problem that also questioning itself must be learned (see Haug 2003, p. 15ff.) and that the democratization of questioning has long since been integrated into the general schooling process. Further extra-scholastic “learning episodes” (e.g., reading Kant) lead to the conclusion that, in order to learn, what is essentially needed is “tranquillity, lack of distraction and regularity in the conduct of life” (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 498), a requirement which can certainly find general assent and which in the structure of the school should be organized against the demands of familial duties and those of childcare, especially in agrarian regions, reaching out over all class boundaries. Here it gains its new pathos because it regards early isolated scientific work. Holzkamp calls it “penetration into the deep structure of learning objects” (p. 499).

Participatory Learning

Holzkamp treats the transgression of school teaching = learning (*Lehrlernen*) under the concept of “participatory learning”, and the perspective of teaching under the concept of “cooperative learning” (pp. 501ff.). Since both of these are of great importance for our study, let us follow the individual definitions. First, “participatory learning”. The first metamorphosis occurs through a particularly magical phrase (according to Lave & Wenger, 1991). Students and teachers become “apprentices” and “masters” (p. 501), instruction becomes apprenticeship, and the location of learning is in “communities of practitioners”. Correspondingly, the following descriptions resemble the manual labour apprenticeship of the old type, in which the polytechnical moment of gradual introduction into the corresponding praxis can certainly be an important dimension of a

reformed curriculum. Holzkamp emphasizes that the new element in this relation is that the dichotomy between teacher and student is gradually deconstructed into a new relation, which could become that of master–apprentice—in which students do not become teachers during the schooling process. Nevertheless, emancipatory learning could also be comprehended precisely as a gradual deconstruction or decommissioning of the teachers, or at least as an overcoming of the rift between teachers and learners. Once more, it is the precise rigidity of the analysis of the schooling process that makes a discussion of teaching impossible from the outset. Holzkamp (1993) maintains that there is a “fundamental difference” between the apprentice/master and the student/teacher relations: that the former is given the possibility to learn what she or he can do while the latter appears only as the executor of school order and curriculum (p. 503). The reform of the school into a free workshop and the transformation of the word “teacher” into “master”⁷ now enable Holzkamp to make general demands on teaching–learning processes: no instruction, no evaluation, therefore the possibility to pose questions without self-blame, from which follows that the learning activities occur on the side of the students. Of course, with these definitions we are now precisely there where we were in the analysis of the school. As to the qualifications of the teacher, at least we gain that he is capable of and knows something, so that it is at least worthwhile for the students to question him. Actually, Holzkamp also problematizes the role of the “master” because in practice the “master” appears as a model, and so the learning problematic does not arise in the learning object, but rather, in the teaching–learning relation (p. 506). The limits of the master are the limits of the student; therefore, the “participatory learning relationships ... [are also] traditionally organized” (p. 507). But if not participatory learning, how then are we to conceive of learning?

Cooperative Learning

Holzkamp (1993) represents “cooperative learning” as a development beyond a given stage which must now also provide information for the search for emancipatory teaching. For him, this means finding out “the possibilities of expansive learning given in interpersonal learning episodes” (p. 509). The presupposition is a “common learning problematic” (pp. 510 ff.) wherein differences in definitions are discussed such as to make learning in common possible. He continues, “Accordingly, cooperative learning is founded on agreement ... definitions about what should be regarded as the learning problematic” (p. 520). These first definitions are immediately a refusal of teaching: no one should stand between me and the learning object like a “know-it-all”—everyone finds him- or herself in the open field of possibilities for activity and learning. Holzkamp then sketches something like a research collective in which all advance the matter upon which they have agreed with equal rights and while sharing the labour. Great weight is given to no one having

authority; to excluding no one. One decides oneself how long one works communally, and so on. At least four notable features immediately appear:

1. The utopia of equality, which makes such a research collective among equals possible and fruitful, is indeed known as an ideology of the Greek *polis* and later as a utopia, from the early socialists to the anti-authoritarian student movement. In fact, however, it is nowhere to be found in reality.⁸
2. The fixing of emancipatory learning definitions for such a collective has long forgotten the student–teacher problem.
3. However, also for adult, educated researchers there is the necessity of passing on to the next generation, by means of experience and age, and also by means of particular ways of learning, appropriations of knowledge, experience, and orientation (*Haltung*). That humans are historical beings who transmit possibilities of activity from generation to generation requires not only the school. In reality, it also requires forms of teaching which are not “convenient in the given power relations” and are not to be judged primarily as “authoritarian”, but which can be welcomed as an introduction into the world, according to utility.
4. One learns nothing about the problematic of teaching if it is defined out of existence. The whole problematic is marked by the fact that learning, while it was orientated to self-determination and a subjective learning problematic, can leave this circle in favour of social reality only with difficulty. Expressed in other terms: the attempt to found learning exclusively upon one’s own subjective learning problematic assumes an “I” which, unaffected by the social contradictions in which it exists and which surround it, poses directly the decisive questions and—with others or alone—pursues them. Society emerges here as a “reconnaissance field”, but not immediately as one made by humans and therefore capable of being transformed by them, or, on the other hand, as sealed by relations of domination, as inverted, and, above all, as also divided into classes, separated into poor and rich, those who know and those who do not. The way to liberation, which must also be travelled during learning and teaching, finds no place in Holzkamp’s conception of individuals immersed in their own problems. Moreover, also missing in the learning definitions are the objects that it is necessary to teach and to appropriate. Completely in opposition to the intention of Holzkamp’s own life, the political dimension of the whole process is lacking.⁹

School Reform

However, after an excursion into the educational collective, external to the school, which had set out to learn collectively, in a new way, without authority,

but which had then proven itself to be just as restrictive as the school,¹⁰ Holzkamp returns to the school in order to work out just how much it was, after all, not worthwhile to transform the school with the new definitions forged for the purpose of expansive learning. There is a short summary of school reform discussions which are essentially centred on the “opening of the school” or its connection to the reality outside the school. Holzkamp (1993) notes briefly that in this he didn’t really discover possibilities “for transforming the school from a place of defensively normalized learning into a workshop dominated by expansive learning” (p. 537). The perspective is that “the students themselves [posit together] their own learning process” (p. 541) according to their “own subjective learning problematics”. However, these would be immediately withdrawn by obligations, for example the obligation also to regularly attend the chosen course; the students would not have the right to have influence on the content, and so on. The question concerning the teachers is dropped as trivial, leaving no doubts. Sometimes it comes into view almost in passing, when “anticipatorily knowing questions” are eliminated and evaluation by reports or assessment has to give way to “support”.¹¹ The teachers themselves are not seen as subjects with emancipatory desires, with or without competencies, with tasks in the division of labour, but rather, appear, as it were, as an effect of Holzkamp’s own theoretical definitions, as executors. Their desired qualification would consist exclusively in the capacity to pose questions in such a way that students do not come under pressure. Included in that is the idea that teachers work with students on learning difficulties until they are overcome, so that the goal of the school curriculum, of sending students onto different treadmills in life, is made impossible. Holzkamp sees that his explanations lie close to the conclusion of completely doing away with the traditional school. On the other hand, he sketches out, in concluding, his vision of the school in a few consistent definitions: the goal is

... a school without the division between the official teaching–learning short-circuit and learning subjects set apart from the society, without encirclement movements and universality of evaluation, with the structure of the interpersonal relations of questions which seek knowledge and students requesting support and nurture. (p. 558)

What about teachers’ qualifications? From the borrowed standpoint of a student, Holzkamp writes in conclusion the following about the teacher:

He could answer my questions in such a way that I work out what is going on in a better way; he could help me, with his questions, to find out where I haven’t got something and how I can get over that; he could prevent me, by the mode of his problematizations, from kidding myself about something, from unknowingly harming myself, from deceiving myself and others ... and he would sooner bite off his tongue than bore me senseless with know-it-all nonsense and insult the way I express myself with censorship. (p. 561)

Uncannily absent are society and its regular lessons of order, the “damaged goods” which students bring with them and which were the starting point for the

problem of forgetting or “unlearning” as a precondition of learning. Also, here it is no longer a case of the shaping of society which would be something to be managed in common. Thus, in the end, the teacher is an “ally” for the self-movement of a student. Both are on the way to struggling for a society, the one learning from the other, the one teaching the other, as would need to be done with existing knowledge in a society in which another school would be possible.

In Conclusion: Discussion with Holzkamp

Without doubt, Holzkamp’s thinking about learning, teaching, and schooling has the great merit, especially when compared to the usual learning theories, of having brought the learning subject into the centre of his theory about learning. This enables him to develop a systematic critique of theory as well as his own learning theory that inquires into the subjective grounds for the self-posed learning problematics. He comprehends learning as a particular action alongside other actions which active subjects undertake in the world. One grasps this action of learning only if one has a problem, that is, if one cannot reach a goal without augmenting one’s abilities. The action of learning is distinguished from other actions, therefore, by the reference—an ability—and thus by the duration and subjective ground. Learning is thus always comprehended as intentional. “In fact, for the specification, precisely, of learning problematics, we only consider the reference to intentional learning, that is, learning on the basis of the undertaking of an action specially directed towards learning” (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 183). Included in Holzkamp’s analyses is a fundamental critique of the school. It culminates in what he names the “teaching–learning short-circuit”. With this concept, he comprehends all attempts to understand the learning of students as determined by the teacher, as if learning could thus be an effect of the effort of the teacher. He thus criticizes the school and teaching in general.

As comprehensive as Holzkamp’s critique of the school and the teacher is in its individual details, it nevertheless becomes impossible to pass from his analyses to a definition of teaching and its interactive relation to learning. It also becomes impossible to comprehend the teacher as an organic intellectual (Gramsci) and as him- or herself a learner. On the other hand, I have moved the context of teaching and learning into the centre of my own analysis intentionally drawn from Critical Psychology. The chief displacements in relation to Holzkamp are: to posit the subject not as a fixed entity, but, rather, as contradictory and embedded in contradictory relations, thus making possible both a critique of the subject and self-contradiction. In this process teachers are included as learners. Their chief task is to facilitate the processing of experiences. Based on Gramsci, Brecht, and my own research, I move unlearning, habit, ideology critique, crisis, and contradiction into the centre of my account. However, my critique of Holzkamp takes up the leads that he pursued. Thus it works seriously with the dialectical thought that things are always in flux, that nothing can be assumed to

be fixed. It argues that the method of concept formation, the reference to reality, how topics are to be thought, and what emancipatory intervention could be—how, therefore, teaching and learning are to be understood—are to be comprehended differently. The discussion is not yet finished.

Notes

1. Holzkamp brings in this sentence as well, but cannot make anything relevant out of it (1993, pp. 490, 494); a situation which, in my opinion, is due to his procedure of “realizing” (*verwirklichen*). That is, instead of really departing from everyday life, he derives an idea of everyday experience from theory—or theoretically—and thus he also proceeds when he talks about everyday experiences in the school, instead of departing from real humans in their real connections and relations.
2. Virginia Woolf’s method can be compared with Socrates’ “midwifery”, namely, that there is a mass of knowledge in everyday life which had not been acknowledged as such, and that it was necessary to bring it into the light.
3. Brecht (1967) also narrated this complicated event in the explication of the contradictions which lie within it. The worker Kalle talked about it in the following way:

You gave me to understand that you are searching for a land where such a state of affairs reigns such that taxing virtues like patriotism, hunger for freedom, kindness and selflessness are so little necessary as shitting on one’s own carpet, servility of the soul, brutality and egoism. Such a state of affairs is socialism; at the same time I draw your attention to the fact that very much would be necessary to reach this goal. That is, the most extreme bravery, the most profound hunger for freedom, the greatest sense of selflessness and the greatest egoism. (p. 1499)

- Rosa Luxemburg spoke similarly about the possibility of transformation. In her small text “The Female Worker” (“Die Proletarierin”) (1914/1970), she wrote: “For the bourgeois woman with property, her house is the entire world. For the female worker, the entire world is her house: the world with its suffering and joys, with its entire cruelty and rough hewn greatness” (pp. 411–412).
4. Gramsci translated Marx’s “Veränderung der Umstände und der Erziehung” with “l’ambiente è l’educatore”. In the German critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks* (*Die Gefängnishefte*), “l’ambiente” is translated with “Milieu”.
 5. In August 2004 there was a cultural event in a village in the Canary Islands, a village which is indeed affected by tourism and where, of course, a television antenna stands on the roof of every hut as a sign that one is also entertained at a world standard, but, at the same time—or, rather, precisely *not* at the same time—that the old village culture of the extended family is still preserved in many forms. As a communal special event there was free entry to an open-air cinema which had been specially decked out for the film *Matrix Revolution*. The visitors were mostly children of 4 years onwards, while the largest group was children of 7–8 years old. The film “treated”, practically, nothing other than violence, which flashed by in quick succession with high-tech media and amazing computer effects. However much it is to a large extent unimaginable for me which imaginary was developed for the children in these circumstances, such a mode of dealing with the world could perhaps be described as a process of substitution, in Benjamin’s sense (*Ersetzungsprozess*), and not as an opening of the world (*Weltaufschluss*).

6. The new procedure consists, among other elements, in no longer cutting up phrases and texts into single, individual letters, but, rather, in encouraging the students to read entire rows of words and to write without any grammatical or spelling rules which could block the learning process in the early stages. Thus there arise long chains of word objects, initially without spaces between them, which, onomatopoeically placed together, simultaneously give grounds for thinking about the characteristic way of writing the language correctly. Parents are encouraged not to correct the students. According to my only very limited experience, the students can already after one year read long and complicated texts very well and, even if with errors, also write. It gives all the impression of fun, like playing with Lego.
7. In some free schools in Germany the teachers have also exorcized the bad reputation which has been ascribed to students by a piece of sophistry. They call themselves *Bezugis*, shortened from *Bezugspersonen*—reference people.
8. And incidentally, certainly not in collectives with Klaus Holzkamp, who was an excellent teacher, but determined in a highly authoritarian way what was useful, how the work was to be carried on, which ways led to nothing, and so on.
9. As usual, also here the reality-excerpts, the substantiating references, which Holzkamp advances in order to make his claims clear are to be understood only against subjective resistance—particularly when one has lived through and in the movement which he judges. Thus, he imagines a women's group which would like to gain an "insight into the patriarchal mechanisms of women's oppression", and claims that

... whoever wanted to bring for common consideration within such learning processes, for example, whether the construct "patriarchy" really contributed to the comprehension of women's oppression, or whether it was not, rather, a cliché in place of analysis ... this woman or man had not given a constructive contribution according to the standard of the prescriptive consensus of the respective learning group, would not have learned what was correct. (Holzkamp, 1993, p. 521)

Here it is a case of a retreat or disqualification. I have actually never experienced a women's group with such biased professions of faith. Especially in the case of the question of patriarchy, a glance at the readily available feminist literature would have been enough to see that the concept of patriarchy and the uses of its deployment for the comprehension of women's oppression have been contested for many years. I am searching for a concept for this procedure of propping up difficult theoretical contexts in a populist manner—here, for example, what he names the "thought and praxis figure of instrumental learning formation" (p. 537)—through common prejudices which were apparently reported by a third party filled with resentment. For the time being, I'll get by with the concept of "unworked out common-sense examples as proof of a theory". It would have been good to be able to discuss this still with Holzkamp himself.

10. This is incidentally just as customary in schools in Spain as it is in parts of the American school system; although in both cases, it is not bound to the wishes of the children, as Holzkamp proposed.

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