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Abstract

This article considers the place of theory within education in two contexts – Sweden and the UK – and advances the argument that both governments and academics themselves have contributed to a 'theoryless' education. Examples are offered from the fate of education science in Sweden and, in the UK, from responses to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and from the actions of a group of independent academics charged with producing guidelines for assessing qualitative research. Work with the Council of Europe in which theory was used to guide discussions with Government Ministers is described and the paper ends with some proposals for enabling academics to engage more fruitfully with theory. These involve a framework of ethics, informed by Levinas, and a 'creative ontology', developed by Simons and Masschelein.

Keywords: educational theory, difference, ethics, Levinas, Derrida

Introduction

Levels of injustice within education continue to be a source of concern (Rizvi 2009; Jackson 2012) and the extent of these, and their consequences, have been well documented in this journal and elsewhere (Alexiadou 2011; Lindgren 2010; Nylund, 2012; Jackson 2012), together with a recognition that diversity is experienced as problematic (Arshad et al. 2012; Heath and Sullivan 2011; Putnam 2007). The pathologising and naming of individual deficits within education represents what Thomas (2008, 7) calls a "closure on learning", which produces and reinforces disabled, ethnic, class and gendered identities as failures and, as Gillborn and Youdell (2000) have documented, there is a channelling (and rationing) of educational support away from these individuals and towards those most likely to benefit. There may also be cause for concern not only about how these injustices are caused, but also about how they are recognised and understood. In this article, I will argue that a forgetfulness of the Other (Levinas 1969, 1996) within education produces injustice. I will also argue that an unwillingness to make use of educational theory (or a lack of capacity in this regard), and the favouring instead of 'what works' oriented research, leads to both a failure to apprehend the nature and causes of injustice and further injustice. I will outline the way in which the Other is disappeared in education, then explore the (lack of) engagement with a theoretical understanding of

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this phenomenon in relation to the being, knowing and doing of theory. Drawing on examples from Sweden and the UK, I will attempt to show how governments, but also academics themselves, have contributed to a 'theoryless' approach to education and that this reduction makes academics less critical and less capable. A comparison of examples from these two countries is of particular interest because of their relatively different educational traditions that can be seen to be currently both converging and diverging. Sweden's history of comprehensive schooling, resting upon national independence and with democratic values and social welfare as cornerstones, has been of considerable recent interest to the UK Government, with detailed attention to the Swedish voucher system (http://www.tes.co.uk/article. aspx?storycode=2635240). The UK has had recent experience of the effects of neo-liberal ideas such as competitiveness, freedom of choice and performativity in a context of devolved responsibility for education and such ideas appear to be having an increasing influence on the Swedish education system. The particular examples selected involve the development – and demise – of education science in Sweden; along with the response to the formal system of assessing research (Research Excellence Framework) and the establishment of a quality framework for research. Although different in nature, the examples highlight the strenuous efforts to limit or eradicate both diversity and critical engagement within the field of education; they also illustrate the negative consequences of a lack of engagement with educational theory. I offer a more positive example of engagement with theory, involving work within the Council of Europe. In this context, theory has been 'eased in' in order to help Ministers of Education think about difference – differently. The paper ends with some thoughts on the possibilities for making a difference with theory and these are in relation to an ethics and a creative ontology of the present.

The disappeared other in education

Two key theoretical concepts are helpful in understanding how and why diversity is experienced as problematic and why it provokes its reduction or removal from education. These are Levinas' (1996; 1998; 1999) concept of the Other – and our disposition towards a forgetfulness of the Other – and Derrida's (1993) conceptualisation of the "aporia", oppositional or contradictory imperatives which force choices to be made which lead to the exclusion of the Other. Levinas' notion of the Other also has the potential to trouble the "stuck places in our thinking about difference" (Ferri, 2006, p. 304) by enabling a reorientation towards the Other that constitutes an ethics and this is discussed later in the paper in the context of a proposed theoretical response to diversity. Levinas' concept of the Other denotes a relationship with the Other which Blanchot calls "a curvature of intersubjective space" (Levinas 1969, 291), with the Other experienced as the high point of the curvature. This relationship is both burdensome and asymmetrical because of one's own inadequacy in the face of the demand of the other (Critchley 2007) and is

experienced, because of one's own inadequacy in the face of the Other, as not benign, but as a responsibility that "persecutes me with its sheer weight" (Critchley 2007, 59). The responsibility, according to Levinas, is also "indeclinable" (Levinas 1998, 134) and thus we cannot say 'no' to it:

> to be a 'self' is to be responsible before having done anything ... I am not merely the origin of myself, but I am disturbed by the Other. Not judged by the Other, but condemned without being able to speak, persecuted (Levinas 1996, 94).

In spite of this, however, Levinas suggests that we do refuse the Other, say no to it and forget it through practices of speaking which amount to a privileging of the said over saying. Whereas the act of saying involves a proximity and a commitment to the Other, these intentions are compromised when saying "enters into the service of the said, that is the thematization of the being" (Hand 2009, 52).

A further eradication or forgetfulness of the Other can be seen to arise within education, a field characterised by what Derrida (1993: 12) calls aporias, double contradictory imperatives or moments of 'not knowing where to go'. These competing obligations can be seen, for example, in relation to raising achievement and standards – becoming 'world class' on one hand and promoting inclusiveness and equity on the other; or concerning the education of individuals who can hold their own in the competitive world, yet ensuring those individuals can collaborate, co-operate and understand their civic responsibilities. Derrida suggested that, far from being troublesome, these aporias can be highly productive moments where justice is possible because of the very uncertainty that is generated. Yet, the decisiveness called for within education denies these aporias and is, according to Derrida, irresponsible because of the closure it creates. Derrida (1992, 26) referred to the moment of the decision as a 'madness' because the way forward is clear, undecidability is denied, possibilities are removed and all that remains is a technical solution. Decisiveness also leads to injustice by allowing the Other to be forgotten:

> Injustice – not to mention racism, nationalism and imperialism – begins when one loses sight of the transcendence of the Other and forgets that the State, with its institutions, is informed by the proximity of my relation to the Other (Critchley 1999, 233).

This forgetfulness of the Other becomes formalised and justified through practices which endorse solution, resolution and "the desire for translation, agreement and univocity" (Derrida 1992, 78). Thus, the *and* between, for example, achievement and inclusion is where justice is possible, but is also where it is denied. Derrida calls for a better understanding of the processes whereby injustice is produced and, more generally, advocates that those in authority, including educationists, pursue a better understanding which is at the same time a recognition of a *lack* of understanding. This is an invitation to theorise rather than to hunt down practical solutions, and to

favour undecidability over calculability. However, it is a tall order for education since, as will be discussed below, engagement with theory is somewhat ambivalent and even troubled.

Engagement with theory: being, knowing, doing

Being (in) theory

Lyotard (1986) reminds us that in a world in which success is equated with saving time, theory, and thinking itself, reveals its fundamental flaw to lie its capacity to waste time. Further, as Peters et al. (2003) suggest, value has replaced values and both theory and thinking struggle to prove their 'worth'. A more significant problem might be a resistance to theory, or rather to the disturbance it might create for what Nicholas Kristof (2009) calls the "Daily Me" in which information is gathered merely to support pre-existing views and what potentially clashes with them is ignored:

> There's pretty good evidence that we generally don't truly want good information – but rather information that confirms our prejudices. We may believe intellectually in the clash of opinions, but in practice we like to embed ourselves in the reassuring womb of an echo chamber.

This resistance to theory, which may in fact be a resistance to thinking, is most evident among governments:

> Governments, and some within the scholarly community itself, seem to be seeking to turn educational research into a technology that can be applied to solving short-term educational problems, rather than a system of enquiry that might help practitioners and policymakers think more productively about the nature of the problem and how it might be addressed (Torrance 2008, 522).

As Torrance (2007, 5) points out, speaking particularly about education, "Globalized policy developments chase each other around the world as governments eschew 'theory' in favor of identifying and borrowing 'what works'". Further, policymakers seem keen to borrow from theories of change without acknowledging them as theories.

Theory lurks within the educational terrain as a malevolent and shadowy figure, hidden behind 'what works' and evidence-based practices so that policymakers do not see it. At the same time, and appearing as an *aporia* (Derrida, 1993), what is presented to educational policymakers as theory, by an often complicit research community, is ill-formed and inappropriate (Torrance 2007), amounting to "theory junk sculpture" (Thomas, 2007, 1), a "cacophony of incompatible explanations", (ibid.). Taylor (2001, 47) suggests we have reached the stage of a "critical emergency", having exhausted theoretical resources to the point that they have become "repeated and routinized until they yield arguments that are utterly predictable and familiar" (ibid.).

Knowing theory

The removal or reduction of theory from teacher education has been recognised as a global phenomenon (Sleeter 2008; Furlong and Lawn 2009; Beach and Bagley 2011) and Dennis Beach (2012) draws on Basil Bernstein to illustrate the negative impact this has had on beginning teachers' thinking. Bernstein (1999, 6) distinguishes between a horizontal, everyday discourse, linked to common-sense understandings that is often tacit, oral and context-specific, and a vertical one produced within universities and which offers "a scientific 'know why' discourse". The erosion or the removal of the vertical discourse (through a move away from an emphasis on scientific praxis or the removal of philosophy of education) could, Bernstein suggests, be part of a move to undermine the knowledge interests of a professional discourse and open them up to influences. But, as others have argued (Apple 2001; Beach 2012; Sleeter 2008; Lauder et al. 2009; Oancea and Bridges 2009), the erosion of the vertical discourse removes the capacity of beginning teachers to think critically and to understand the global influences on their profession and their selves, precisely at a time when the effects are considerable. Further, the absence of this discourse, and the criticality that comes with it, may leave teachers less able to recognise competing demands of equity and choice and therefore find a balance between them (Alexandersson 2011) and, in turn, puts them at greater risk of political manipulation and economic exploitation (Sleeter 2008).

Doing theory: A question of capacity?

How do researchers learn to do theory work? It is certainly not with the help of texts on educational research, especially those aimed at doctoral students and which have salubrious titles such as *How to get a PhD* (Phillips and Pugh 1987), or books on the foundations of social or educational research (e.g. Crotty 1998). The problem with the 'how to' books (aside from their exaggerated promises) is that they deny both the intensely political aspect of educational research and the interwoven nature of theory, philosophy, practices and material realities (Kuhn 1970; Shostak 2002; Punch 2005). The failure to acknowledge and engage with these interactions means that students part with their cash in the hope of gaining meaningful advice and instead find themselves unable to cope with the series of "derailments" (Shostak 2002, 5) their research presents and enter the "logical graveyard where sense and nonsense fuse and meanings are loosened from their anchorage in master narratives" (ibid.). The foundational texts, such as that by Crotty (1998, 1), provide frameworks which align methods, methodologies, theoretical perspectives and epistemologies in, by his definition, a "reasonably clear cut way", but in a manner that does not always connect with students' sense of the social world and leaves them trying to squeeze their research, and their theory, into the framework and not giving up until it fits, however uncomfortably. And by the time students hit upon a passing,

but unexplained, reference to paradigms, as they do in the Crotty text, followed by a dismissive assertion that "ontology and epistemology tend to merge together" (ibid., 10), they have usually lost the plot.

The prolific lensification in educational research suggests a further ambivalence with the engagement of theory and a somewhat half-hearted take up of theoretical ideas. A lens is either given by particular concepts, e.g. "provided by Foucault's concept of knowledge and power" (Rodriguez and Craig 2007, 739), used as a means of "complicating power relations" (Fenech and Sumeson, 2007, 109) or in order to seek alternative educational possibilities (Butin 2002). Curiously, there is such a material thing as a Foucault lens, an optical device (a microscope), that bears the name of Foucault, its optician inventor, but which was developed to counteract the aberrations caused by imaging, by lenses at high power. He also developed a "Foucault test" for evaluating astronomical mirrors, described as "cheap and easy to do" (www.myoptics.at/jodas/foucault.html). It may be unfair to suggest that those adopting lenses have enticed by a similar apparent simplicity, but the limited use made of the theories themselves, with lenses in many cases serving as little more than a gloss, may warrant such a suggestion.

In order to further explore the engagement with theory within education, I will examine two contexts – Sweden and the UK. I suggest that in each case governments have successfully 'talked out' theory but that academics have also done this to themselves.

Sweden's education science

Sweden is a forerunner among the Nordic countries in 'calculative practices' of national testing, with recognition from the OECD that centralised practices of evaluation and assessment are crucial to the effectiveness of its highly decentralised system (Nusche et al. 2011). The new Swedish Education Act, in effect from 1 July 2011, further enhances the supervisory power of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate by allowing it to impose fines and other sanctions on those running schools (Rönnberg 2011). The Swedish Government, like many others, is currently concerned with educational quality and this is played out in public through the favourite expressions of the current Education Minister in Sweden, Jan Björklund, which are "flumpedagogik" and "flumskola", "woolly pseudo didactics" and "a degenerated school system fostering woolly thinking and imprecise knowledge" (Täljedal 2011, 319). Using Skinner's (1988) speech act theory, Andrea Bergh (2011) shows very powerfully how a linguistic struggle for control has led to educational quality becoming less linguistically powerful as an outcome of results-based quality, market quality and system quality. This kind of theory work is extremely important in understanding and potentially countering the impact of such struggles.

The introduction, and then subsequent erosion, of education science in Sweden illustrates an attempt to establish a stronger theoretical component within teacher

education, or establish a vertical discourse to enable critical thinking, but which was then pushed back out in favour of a "retraditionalisation" (Beach and Bagley 2012) of teacher education and a retreat. Education science has only been in existence in Sweden as a university subject since 1999 (Beach 2011). It was introduced to establish a research area concerned with the science of teaching, learning and their outcomes, deemed necessary because of the new competence required of teachers in response to reforms such as decentralisation, criterion-referenced grading and independent schools (Beach 2011; Fransson and Lundgren 2003). This occurred even though earlier commissions (Teacher Education Expert Committee, 1960 and the Teacher Education Investigation 1974) had already argued for training in research as a means of making teachers not just competent but critical (Beach 2011). The committee from which education science had emerged, (Lärarutbildningskommittén; LUK 97), argued that pedagogical research had not served teacher education sufficiently well and had advocated better integration rather than a separate discipline. However, instead of accepting the committee's proposals, the Swedish government set up a special science education committee, then charged it with developing (separately) education science explicitly for teacher education. What has ensued over the last 12 years, cemented by a Government Commission Green Paper (HUT 2007; SOU 2008: 109 *A sustainable teacher education*) and a Government White Paper based on the recommendations of the Commission (Swedish Government Bill 2009/10: 89 *Top of the class: Swedish Government Bill*), has been competence-oriented knowledge relating to teacher behaviour, with an emphasis on a functionary knowledge base rather than critical thinking (Beach 2011; Sjöberg 2011). Specialised content relating to the sociological, political, philosophical, economic and ideological dimensions of professional knowledge has been stripped (leaving only psychology and brain-based theorisation) plus subject knowledge or, in Beach's (2011, 218) words, "blown away and replaced by something less profound".

According to Inge-Bert Täljedal (2011), a former vice-chancellor of Umeå University, academics themselves have also pushed the constraining and limiting of education science towards being "practitioner focused and practice based". He notes that it was left to the universities to direct some of their research funding towards education science and they could only manage marginal redistributions of their existing institutional grants. The intended strengthening of teacher education was thereby "effectively limited to a half measure" (Täljedal 2011, 326). This vice-chancellor also noted a "power struggle" (ibid., 327) between the traditional professors of *pedagogik* wanting to hold onto this discipline, and the teacher educationists wanting something more practice-oriented. As a former medical professor forced to adjudicate between these two 'camps', Täljedal found the established education academics' (*pedagoger*) arguments "academic and theoretical" (ibid., 327) and those of the teacher educators "more valid and convincing" (ibid., 327), but suggests that in the end the conservatives (the *pedagoger*) won out.

In the case of Sweden, government actions have limited the extent to which strong educational theory has been allowed to function, but academics may have let some of the opportunities to influence the direction pass them by.

UK research

Turning to the UK, it is apparent that academics within the UK, when called upon to reflect on and respond to the conditions in which they undertake research, have been unable to provide a theorised response and, in the absence of such a capacity, appear to have only two registers: hyperbole and silence. I illustrate this with examples, first, from the current exercise in assessing research excellence – the Research Excellence Framework (REF) – and, second, from the actions of a group of independent academics commissioned by the Cabinet Office to come up with 'guidelines' for judging qualitative research. Starting with the REF, the Consultation Document, issued in 2009 ahead of the 2014 exercise, included a promise:

> We will be able to use the REF to encourage desirable behaviours at three levels: ... individual researchers ... research units ... whole HEIs (Higher Education Funding Council 2009, 1).

Expressing concern about the intention to influence individual behaviours, one commentator opined:

> ... the REF proposal provides not just the poison to kill independent academic research, it offers a syringe for injection, too (Borovik 2009).

> There is a danger that, at department level, the REF might be translated into unheard of levels of bullying and harassment (Borovik 2009).

There was also considerable fury from this commentator and others that the newfound emphasis on non-academic 'impact' would enable Heads of Department to "warn staff off doing their preferred research and onto more 'impactful' projects" (Borovik 2009). Yet Technopolis (2010, 11), reporting on the pilot exercise undertaken with several institutions, indicated that "few of the Pilot Institutions expect the behavioural changes to be as profound as those brought about by the Research Assessment Exercise, when it was first introduced".

By the time it came to the consultation exercise, no concerns were expressed about attempts to change behaviours; the education panel attracted no specific feedback, unlike some of the others; and the objection to measuring impact appeared to come only from a small minority, according to the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC 2010). Although it acknowledged that 17, 500 academics had signed a Union (UCU) petition, it discounted this on the grounds that it presented the proposals as seeking to prevent impact rather than assessing it historically. An engagement with theory might have enabled a more considered response.

The second UK example concerns a group of independent academics commissioned by the Strategy Unit of the government Cabinet Office (Spencer et al. 2003) to produce 'guidelines' for assessing the quality of qualitative approaches and methods. It was in the process of succumbing to the imposition of 'standards' on qualitative research – troubling enough in itself – that the researchers addressed theory and resolved it, according to Harry Torrance (2008, 515), "in a bloodless, technical and strangely old-fashioned counsel of perfection". In developing their framework for making judgements about qualitative research, the academics tried to understand theory or, in their words, the "various philosophical assumptions which underpin different approaches to qualitative research" (Spencer et al. 2003, 8). In so doing, they sought to pin down qualitative research as no more than a series of oppositions between quantitative and qualitative and between scientific and naturalistic paradigms; they then sought to "position" researchers, claiming to have found among their interviewees a "realist", a "subtle realist" an "interaction constructionist" and an eclectic who referred to him or herself as "a bit of a whore" (ibid., 49). Such positioning of researchers as fixed in theory is, of course, unhelpful but after declaring the diversity of ontological and epistemological positions and the impossibility of encompassing these within its framework the researchers then set about "specifying the range of philosophical and methodological assumptions with which we believe our framework is compatible and those which lie outside its scope" (ibid., 49). Astonishingly, they then produced a table which ruled assumptions, relating to the nature of reality, relationships between research and researched, the relationship between facts and values, the nature of knowledge and appropriate methods, either in or out of their framework. They also removed from the discussion of research any acknowledgement of the Other, in the shape of "contingencies, political pressures and decisions that have to be made" (Torrance 2008, 516).

Making a difference in policy

Having suggested that a limited engagement with theory by governments, and to some extent, academics has created some silences and even some exclusions, I now want to report a positive example of theory at work. The example comes from my work within the Council of Europe in which I acted as an 'Expert' in the preparation and conduct of a number of high-level meetings including a conference of all Ministers of Education; a meeting of the Ministers of Education of the Western Balkans and a stakeholders' meeting which included Ministers and top administrators from across Europe. Each of these meetings was associated with developing systems, including teacher education for responding effectively to diverse societies and my so-called expertise was associated with diversity and inclusion. My role was to provide discussion papers for the meetings, be present at the meetings themselves and help draft the communiqué which follows each meeting and to which Ministers

indicate their agreement by signing. The challenge here was to work within a brief that permitted, usually, three to five pages, three questions for Ministers and two examples.

In the context of these meetings, I engineered to insert theory surreptitiously and deployed Derrida's (1992) notion of an *aporia* as a strategy to encourage Ministers to see decisions as not necessarily resolvable or reducible to one single choice and to understand that it was the very process of keeping two apparently oppositional questions open that was at the heart of justice. Efforts of this kind had previously been made within the context of a Scottish Parliament Inquiry, a relatively new space for educational policymaking. Some success had been achieved in encouraging the Scottish Ministers to think differently about questions of inclusion and they had introduced some radical – and more equitable – legislation and policy as a result (Allan 2003). Further engagement with policymakers, using this theoretical approach, took place within a knowledge exchange project and succeeded in drawing the policymakers' attention to the potential exclusionary effects of some of their decisions (Allan et al. 2010). Within the Council of Europe forum, questions were framed and presented to the Ministers as *aporias*, for example asking them to consider how, on one hand, student teachers might learn to develop as autonomous professionals and, on the other hand, learn to depend on others for support and collaboration; or how new teachers might work to maximise the achievement of students, with an eye on performance profiles and at the same time ensure that all students improve and that no student is excluded.

The Ministers were advised that, although the challenge of developing systems to support education for diverse democratic societies was both enormous and complex, there was clearly much that member states could do which did not depend on vast amounts of resources, specialised technical knowledge or personnel, but involved finding ways of simultaneously creating opportunities and removing barriers to dialogue and participation. Their response was one of recognition and desire and, although such formal events can be more memorable for their Ministerial platitudes than for their evidence of transformative thought, there was a proliferation in the dialogue with the Ministers of a terminology of balance and of acting with two hands, with "on the one hand … and on the other hand …" being a frequent refrain. The subsequent declaration the Ministers signed expressed a significant commitment to, and responsibility for, the Other and an intent to remove barriers to intercultural dialogue:

> RECOGNISING that, in times of global economic crisis, European societies are facing many challenges such as increasing inequality and social exclusion, which threaten the fundamental principles of socially sustainable societies including equal opportunities and social justice. … CONSIDERING that all teachers and other education professionals are one of the essential pillars of the process of building sustainable democratic societies and need to develop the necessary transversal competences; these are interrelated

knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling teachers to model democratic and participatory processes based on respect for human rights, diversity and human dignity (Council of Europe 2010, 2–3).

Beyond the formal language of the declaration, the Ministers can be seen to be highlighting the centrality of teachers as agents of intercultural dialogue and signalling the importance of teacher education in equipping teachers effectively and appropriately – enabling them to be democratic citizens in order to cultivate these values and attributes among their students.

The modest success here, if I might claim such a thing, was evidenced by Ministers using the language of aporias to describe double and apparently contradictory responsibilities; calling for shifts in thinking, for example from needs to rights; an apparent willingness to experiment with difference; and undertakings to promote inter-cultural dialogue in Ministers' own Member States. It appeared to have been achieved by gently steering the administrators away from assumed knowledges about both students with diverse backgrounds and what their teachers need to manage them but without abandoning these completely. It also repositioned diversity as interesting and as something for teachers – and indeed governments – to be curious about. This reorientation to difference as positive was experienced not as disruptive but as inviting and the notion of decisions being multiple and aporetic, rather than as involving stark choices which would inevitably create disadvantage for someone, came as something as a relief to the Ministers. The particular context of the Council of Europe appeared to enable an engagement with theory. The Council's commitment to dialogue beyond a rhetorical level has made it open to ideas of a theoretical nature even if they were not named as such. Further, its relative lack of power compared with the European Union is also its strength as it leaves it free to guide and give direction to educational policy in a more ethical and responsible way. It may be more difficult to operate in this way in more formal and closed policy contexts, but the example offers insights into what may be possible.

A theoretical response?

A key challenge is to address the inequalities produced by an education system that insists that "everyone do better than everyone else" (McDermott 1993, 274) and I argue that what we need is a theoretical response which has two dimensions: the first is an ethical one; the second, following Simons and Masschelein (2006), is a creative ontology of the present.

Ethics

It is the disappointment that comes from the recognition of injustice that could provoke the need for a response from theory that is ethical and that rescues the Other from its obscurity and place of denial. As Critchley (2007, 38) points out,

philosophy begins not with wonder at what exists but "from an experience of failure and lack". Thus, theory (if a momentary reification can be forgiven) could enable a recovery from the failures caused by a lack of responsibility through the establishment of an ethics which "might be able to face and face down the iniquities of the present" (Critchley 2007, 88). Such an ethics, informed by Levinas (1969, 1999) and not in itself a theory but a reorientation to human subjectivity, has as its core an absolute responsibility to the Other. The responsibility that one has to the Other operates at three levels: responding *to* the Other; responding *for oneself* to the Other and responding *for the other,* by substituting oneself for the other person in his or her responsibilities (Hutchens 2004). And whilst these are heavy responsibilities, as Butler (2004, 43) reminds us, being disturbed by the obligation of the Other is a vital part of what it is to be human: "Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if not, we're missing something". Such a reorientation to subjectivity and to the Other, informed by an ethics, would enable us to counter some of the inequality by reducing the likelihood of it surfacing in the first place.

Creative ontology

Foucault urges us to "live the present otherwise" (Foucault 1979, 790), but this is difficult to achieve while we remain troubled by the things which seem to govern our lives, academic or otherwise. These things, which include governance itself as well as quality, assessment and measurement, appear intractable. Simons and Masschelein (2006, 302) suggest that we should not be concerned with resisting such things as quality but should instead resist the subjectification of the self that goes with it. Their suggestion of a creative ontology is an important one and involves finding new words or phrases that do theoretical work or at least reminds policy and policymakers of the "*impossible* domain" of educational policy because it seeks to govern that which is to come. As Hacking (2002, 8) suggests, "With new names, new objects come into being. Not quickly. Only with usage, only with layer after layer of usage". The theoretical work done by a creative ontology could also limit inequality by constantly reminding us, in Foucuault's (1984, 343) words, "not that everything is bad but that everything is dangerous ... If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do". It also enables individuals to see themselves as the main source of transformation, rather than waiting for a more substantial structural or material change and leads "not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (Foucault 1984, 343). As Veyne (1997, 231) observes, "the self is the new strategic possibility" but this has to be accompanied by an intensive reading and theorising of the self.

Concluding thoughts

The Swedish and UK educational contexts each appear to have struggled with diversity and a critical engagement with it and in both the development of education science, in the case of Sweden, and in debate and consultation about research in

the UK, efforts to respond to diversity have led to it being managed out and to its reduction. The highly politicised context of education in both Sweden and the UK is evident and is clearly concerning academics, but there appears to have been some reticence to challenge some of its more overt manifestations and even some suggestion of academics' complicity in this regard, having "run out of steam" in respect of critique (Latour 2004, 225). The limited use of educational theory to challenge some of the closures in policy and practice is, perhaps, surprising given its evident potential, and Latour's (2004, 243) urgent call for progress towards "a *fair* position" and for us to become critics who work positively and constructively towards the ends that we desire is one that we might do well to heed:

> The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naIve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is not the one who alternates haphazardly between antifetishism and positivism like the drunk iconoclast drawn by Goya, but the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution (Latour 2004, p. 246).

Efforts by Brooke and Frazer (2010) to locate education (pedagogy, curriculum, socialisation, university and scholarship) within the context of political theory and philosophy merely underlined the separateness, caused by disciplinary specialism and departmentalisation of education, from these other disciplines. Further, Hanley (2011) reminds us of Adam Smith's (1176/1981) quite negative description of universities as being little more than "sanctuaries in which exploded systems and obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection" (5.1.f.34). There is, however, exciting scope for theoretical work generated from within the field of education and beyond. For this to be possible, there may need to be changes within universities themselves, in their governance and in the development of a "new quality culture" (Hudson, Zgaga and Åstrand 2010) within teacher education. More importantly, however, academics may need to refocus their attentions in new and unforeseen directions, adopt a radical openness to, and responsibility for, the Other and take up the invitation to theorise.

Julie Allan is Professor of Equity and Inclusion at the University of Birmingham and Visiting Professor at the University of Borås in Sweden. Her research interests are in inclusive education, disability studies and children's rights and she has a particular interest in educational theory and philosophy of education. Her most recent book, "Psychopathology at School: Theorizing Mental Disorders in Education", co-authored with Valerie Harwood, is published by Routledge.

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