

Chapter 9

Thinking Democracy and Education for the Present: The Case of Norway after July 22, 2011

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My ambition with this chapter is to throw some lights on the close link between “democracy” and “education” and their mutual interdependence. I hope to do so by performing a three-step philosophical analysis of an event¹ linked to the terrorist attack in Norway July 22, 2011. By drawing on the political philosophies of John Dewey, Chantal Mouffe and Alain Badiou, I read this event to illustrate democracy and education as a way of life, an ideal, and an outlook.

Within democratic welfare societies, such as the Nordic countries, education is a fundamental civil, political, and social right for all. A central task is to promote active citizenship (Marshall, 1949; Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). Thus, educational institutions are crucial for building and promoting democratic citizenship² (NOU, 2011:20; Strand and Huggler, 2011). However, parallel with increasing economic, political, social and educational inequalities, new and ugly processes of marginalization emerge. One example is how the “lost generation” of European youths now experience poverty, hopelessness, and distrust in nearly all major institutions. Another example is how everyday racism and xenophobia undermine civic participation and engagement for all. So what may be the potential possibilities of rethinking and strengthening the link between democracy and education in the present?

Already by now I should stress that I do not question the value of democracy. By contrast, democracy is here taken as an axiom, which means that the worth of

1 The term “event” is here used in line with Alain Badiou’s philosophy, which aims to conceptualize the potential of radical innovation. The event I am analyzing here was a particular occurrence “at the edge of” the terrorist attack in Norway July 22, 2011 (Badiou, 2005a, p. 175).

2 In Norway, public schooling shall “promote democracy, equality and scientific way of thinking” (“Lov om grunnskolen og den videregående opplæringa (opplæringslova)” (The Norwegian Act on Education, § 1–1, 4th section). The democratic mission of the school comes forward in the mission statement “promote democracy,” but also in the way in which the Act on Education emphasizes that “the students must have responsibility and right to participation” and how “all forms of discrimination should be counteracted.”

democracy is seen as self-evidently valuable and true. This worth represents the very starting point and basis for my analysis on the link between democracy and education. My assumption is that an idea of ethical-political education cannot be separated from the idea of a vigorous democracy. Moreover, that education *within* and *toward* the democratic is a vital precondition for building, maintaining, and justifying a vigorous democracy.

The notion of “democracy,” however, can be given multiple interpretations (Dewey, 1985[1916]; Held, 2006; Honneth, 1998; Mouffe, 2000). The term is composed of the Greek *demos* (people) and *kratos* (government), and translates as “governed by the people” or “rule of the people.” In general, “democracy” denotes a political community in which all members have an equal say in decisions that affect their lives. Social and political studies tend to explore democracy as a form of government or political system justified by the people (*demos*). But educational studies turn this notion on its head as educational research sets out to explore democracy as lived experience.³ Democracy is not here seen as a form of government, or as a model of a state, or as an abstract idea that every now and then materializes into everyday experience. Democracy is rather studied as tangible forms of everyday and inclusive practices which mirror and shape loyalties and identification with a polis (body of citizens). In doing so, the focus is not so much on citizenship-as-legal-status, but rather on citizenship-as-desirable-activity.

Consequently, the identities and loyalties of citizens are drawn to our attention: The health of a democracy does not only depend on the legitimacy of its political system. A healthy democracy also depends on the citizens’ sense of belonging; “their sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic and religious identities”; their “abilities to tolerate and work with others that are different from themselves”; their “desire to participate in the political processes in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable”; and “their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibilities in their economic demands and in personal choices which affect their health and the environment” (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994, p. 353). So, “instead of limiting the participatory activity of citizens to the function of periodically legitimating the state’s exercise of power, their activity ... should be

3 It needs to be stressed, however, that educators should handle several democratic concepts simultaneously: First, students should, of course, learn that “democracy” is a rule that requires that all citizens are heard in decisions concerning themselves. They should also learn about different ways to practice such a system of government and understand not only the normative basis and justifications of democracy, but also that there is no universal accepted definition of the concept of democracy. In Norway, the national curriculum states that: “the school should be an important democratic arena for children and young people where they can experience empowerment.” Thus, the students’ council is on everybody’s work schedule. All children will be given experience of democratic participation; both in terms of formal and informal forums where decisions are made that will be binding on all members of the group. The idea is that each student will gain experience with democracy as a procedure of making joint decisions—albeit in a miniature version.

understood as the source of all political decision-making processes” (Honneth, 1998, p. 763). Thus, in the intersection between “democracy” and “education,” democratic will formation seems crucial.

Processes of Marginalization

If a democratic will formation is crucial, we are invited to question the processes of marginalization now playing out within and beyond the classroom. In a world characterized by increasing economic, political, and social differences, more and larger groups of fellow citizens balance the limit between social inclusion and exclusion (Born and Jensen, 1998; OECD, 2011; Pedersen, 2010). Thus, their possibilities of self-determination and co-determination seem threatened.

Europe's Lost Generation

With an average youth unemployment rate close to 24 percent—and as high as 57.3 percent in Greece and 54.9 percent in Spain—an entire generation of young Europeans now experience poverty, hopelessness, and distrust in nearly all social institutions (Eurostat, 2014; OECD, 2010). In December 2012 OECD reported that the gap between rich and poor had reached its highest peak for 50 years (OECD, 2011). This puts societies' social contract to a test. Examples may be the continuous demonstrations in Athens, the wild youth riots in Great Britain the summer of 2012, and the Occupy Wall Street movement, which spread from the USA to other countries and continents. Norwegian youths are far more employed than the European average (Statistics Norway, 2011a). But despite a low unemployment rate, youths are more vulnerable than other sectors of the population. Financial crisis, a knowledge-intensive society, and the free flow of workers beyond national borders contribute to the fact that youths lacking formal education or training are offered fewer opportunities and are far more vulnerable than before. Workplaces earlier available for school drop-outs no longer exist, or the positions are already occupied by skilled workers. Moreover, several studies document that youths between 15 and 24 are more negatively affected by being unemployed than others (Reneflot and Evensen, 2011).

Everyday Racism and Xenophobia

Moreover, everyday racism and xenophobia seem to undermine the possibilities of participation and active citizenship for all. Racism is systematic discrimination on the background of assumed inherited qualities. Xenophobia is based on feelings, and is a fear or dislike of strangers. A Norwegian study carried out in 2011 documents increased xenophobia. One-third of the informants claimed that

immigrants make an unsecure society.⁴ This seems paradoxical since 76 percent of the informants reported that they had been in contact with immigrants, and that this contact was a positive experience (Blom, 2011). All 35 percent agree with the statement that “immigrants misuse the welfare arrangements,” which is a significant increase of 4 percent from the year before (Blom, 2011).⁵ Another large study, however, documents that immigrant youth between 16 and 25 years old—with Pakistani, Vietnamese and Turkish backgrounds—are not behind other Norwegian youths in terms of being occupied by full-time studies or work. A remarkably large percentage of these youths reported discrimination on the basis of their immigrant status (38 percent of the youths from Pakistan, a lesser percentage of the youths from Vietnam and Turkey). Of those who had experienced unemployment, as many as one out of three reported that discrimination by the employer was the *reason* for being unemployed (Løwe, 2008, 2010).

Opposition to Multiculturalism

A third, but less visible, fact is opposition to multiculturalism. “Multiculturalism” is a normative stance that celebrates cultural diversity, often substantiated by the claim that such diversity benefits the larger society. Multiculturalism as an idea should not be conflated with a multicultural society. A multicultural society is a society consisting of several cultures. Multiculturalism is a normative orientation that can motivate a policy of promoting cultural diversity, often justified by the right of different groups to receive recognition and respect. Multiculturalism can also justify the protection of minority cultures (Bø, 2011; Eriksen and Næss, 2011). Opposition to multiculturalism have many faces. One way is to openly reject a policy of cultural diversity, which may be seen as naive, relativistic, and a threat to the basic values of society. The arguments may be that multiculturalism encourages parallel societies, promotes conflictual values, ignores problems, promotes ugly practices, and provides free passage for terrorists (Eriksen and Stjernfelt, 2008; Kymlicka, 2009). Another way of rejecting multiculturalism is the social construction of a form of “Norwegianness” that is difficult or nearly impossible to access. Examples are the idea of Norway as a nation of skiers, the common distinction between “ethnic Norwegians” and others, and the communal self-satisfaction expressed in the saying “It is typically Norwegian to be good”

4 It may seem contradictory that everyday racism and xenophobia is so prevalent when immigrants make up only 10.2 percent of the Norwegian population and the majority come from neighboring countries in Scandinavia and Europe (Statistics Norway, 2011b).

5 The survey from 2011 also shows that the Norwegian population is divided roughly down the middle when it comes to accepting refugees and asylum seekers: 44 percent think it should be made harder to stay, while 45 percent think the right of residence should be as it is today. Only 6 percent think it should be easier to stay in Norway. The groups that are most sympathetic toward immigrants are those with higher education, those who live in urban areas, and those who have most contact with immigrants (Blom, 2011).

(Gullestad, 2002). The dilemma, however, is that an idea of an exclusive and excluding “Norwegianness” may turn the fear of parallel societies into a self-fulfilling prophecy (Strømme, 2011). A third way of opposing multiculturalism is to be found in the anti-Islamic political orientations now emerging on the internet. These debates often promote a strong disapproval of Islam and carry more or less the conspiracy theories related to the Eurabia thesis. Eurabia is a social–political neologism, which refers to the alleged Arabization or Islamization of Europe, as a result of immigration from Arabic countries. The conspiracy theory holds that the Arabization is the result of a conscious plan in which the main actors are the government, politicians, intellectuals, and journalists (Strømme, 2011). In Norway, we experienced a completely unthinkable and cruel manifestation of this conspiracy theory on July 22, 2011, when a Norwegian terrorist⁶ exploded a bomb in the government quarter and massacred 69 youths at a political summer camp to protest the Norwegian government’s immigration policy and the increasing number of Muslims in Norway.

This dark scenario—increasing youth unemployment, everyday racism and xenophobia, and oppositions towards multiculturalism in a Europe in transition—is definitely a sign that more and larger groups of fellow citizens balance the limit between social inclusion and exclusion. So how does this influence the identities and loyalties, and thus the democratic will formation, of these citizens?

Sophia’s Letter

Just a few days after the terrorist attack in Norway on July 22, 2011, the Norwegian Broadcasting Company (NRK) initiated an online meeting with experts on violence and traumas. Here, a Norwegian teenager wrote:

Hi. I am 13 years old and Norwegian Muslim. I feel that I am to be blamed. He says that he killed everyone because I am here. Should I move out to protect Norwegian children in the future? This is what I feel. Regards, Sophia.⁷

Sophia’s letter received a lot of media attention. As already mentioned, I treat this letter as an event. It should be stressed, however, that here I use the term “event” in line with Alain Badiou’s philosophy, which aims to conceptualize the potential of radical innovation. Drawing on set theory, Badiou (2005a) holds that an event does not make sense to the rules of the “situation.” An event “is not”; it is “an ultra-one relative to the situation” (Badiou, 2005a, p. 507). So, for an event to be

⁶ The terrorist, Anders Behring Breivik, is a so-called “ethnically Norwegian,” polite young man brought up in the affluent neighborhood of Oslo West.

⁷ Sophia’s letter can be retrieved from <http://www.nrk.no/norge/han-gjorde-det-pa-grunn-av-muslim-1.7738745>.

counted as one, an intervention needs to decide that it belongs to the situation.⁸ In other words, the event happens when the situation accounts for, acknowledges, or defines it as part of the situation. This happened on August 4, when Sophia was interviewed on a talk show on national television:⁹

–Sophia Adampour. You were the one submitting this question. Welcome to Sommeråpent

–Thank you

–You should tell us what happened. You were on the internet. And then you discovered the online meeting at NRK. And then you wrote this question. What ... what did you think when writing this?

–*I have learned, through my upbringing and the fact of being Norwegian and Muslim and Iranian that we should care for each other and protect each other no matter what background or orientation ... hmm ... yes ... and appearance*

–So, you were thinking ... What made you think that you were to be blamed?

–*Ehm. He was not a Muslim, but he said he did it because of us Muslims. And ... yes ...*

–What were you thinking while you wrote this? What did you want ... What did you wonder?

–*No ... if ... if what we should do, then, to protect Norwegian children in the future ... yes.* (NRK, 2011, my translation)

The terrorist attack aroused a call for “more democracy, more openness and more humanity” (the Prime Minister’s address to the nation on July 24, 2011). There are now signs of an increased awareness of the democratic mission of the school (NOU, 2011¹⁰) and a revitalization of long-established discourses on democracy and education (Løvlie, 2011; Steinsholt and Dobson, 2011). But to what degree do current philosophies and theories of education relate to what is going on? The example of Sophia may help to rethink democracy and education in the present, as her letter can exemplify democracy and education as a *way of life*, an *ideal*, and an *outlook*.

8 Consequently, an event is relative to the situation as it is “the multiple composed of: on the one hand, elements of the site; and on the other hand, itself (the event)” (Badiou, 2005a, p. 506).

9 The interview with Sophia can be viewed at <http://www.nrk.no/skole/klippdetalj?topic=nrk:klipp/774789>.

10 The Norwegian Report on Youth, Power and Participation (NOU, 2011), published in December 2011, looked to public school as an important arena for citizenship education (despite the fact that public education is not included in the Committee’s mandate). In doing so, the Committee pointed to how the terrorist attacks on July 22 demonstrated the necessity of educating in democracy and active citizenship from early childhood.

A Way of Life

First, it is noteworthy how Sophia is oriented toward the community. She claims to “have learned, through my upbringing ... that we should care for each other and protect each other.” Background, orientation or appearances have lesser priorities. Caring is more important than demonstrating individual differences. Even, the norm “to care” is so precious that Sophia conceives the norm as an imperative: “we *should* care for each other and protect each other.” This imperative has priority over personal needs or interests. Consequently, she asks in the online meeting: “Should I move out to protect Norwegian children in the future?”

In this way, Sophia’s letter reveals a *solidary citizenry*. When claiming that “we should care for each other and protect each other,” she demonstrates her orientation toward the common good. Following Honneth (1998), such an orientation toward communal goods not only proves solidary citizenry, but also points to the normative basis of democracy, since the citizens’ orientation toward common goods is the very source of our normative judgments and decisions (Honneth, 1998). A perspective on active citizenship can therefore not be limited to a perspective on to what degree each citizen is being included and involved in formal democratic procedures and decisions (i.e., Habermas, 1996). Active citizenship also concerns the formation and strengthening of a democratic will (Honneth, 1998, p. 763). Or, in other words, a perspective on active citizenship should include the citizens’ orientation toward and their *will* to promote communal goods (ibid.). The production and formation of such a will happens through formal and informal education situated in, and oriented toward, the democratic.¹¹

Such a democratic will formation is the focus of John Dewey when he uses the term democracy synonymously with education in *Democracy and Education*.¹² Dewey’s perspective opens not only a way for a normative concept of democracy that moves beyond other models of democracy, but also a way for a perspective of democracy based on, and justified through, the social. Honneth (1998) points to the fact that Dewey’s model of democracy is unique since it starts and ends in the social. Moreover, Honneth argues that Dewey’s concept of democracy is “not just an alternative but is superior to the approaches predominating today” (Honneth, 1998, p. 765). For Dewey, democracy and education are reflexive cooperative and social processes played out in people’s everyday life. This means that democracy exists only as lived experience. Next, democracy needs to be created, recreated, upheld, and justified through an open dialogue and confrontational forms of practices within and between groups.

To Dewey, however, the value of such confrontations depends on to what degree the interest of the group is shared by all as well as to what degree the social

¹¹ Consequently, it seems paradoxical that a vital precondition of democratic education seems to be the fact that democracy already exists.

¹² However, in “Democracy and Education” (1916) Dewey uses no less than four different concepts of democracy.

group participates in open and free dialogues with other social groups: “The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (Dewey, 1985[1916], p. 105). Hence, the worth of democracy is based on, and justified through, the social:

From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups in which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common. (Dewey, 1991[1927], p. 147)

When Sophia was asked “What were you thinking while you wrote this?” she responded by pointing to her upbringing: “I have learned, through my upbringing ... that we should care for each other and protect each other no matter ...” The interview with Sophia may thus be taken to illustrate how her upbringing and education has shaped her orientation toward some communal values to approve of and respect, which then shapes her democratic will.

In other words, democracy starts and ends in the social. Like education, democracy is to be seen as a social process characterized by participation, communication, shared interests, freedom of speech, and unlimited experimentation. The value of these confrontational interactions depend, however, on to what degree the communal interests are shared by all members of the group and to what degree the social group is free to interact with other groups. Consequently, democracy is a social process of educational and reflexive cooperation in which the child has a vital contribution. Through these social processes, the child will adopt community values, and then use these powers to social ends, such as in the school:

I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use these powers to social ends. (Dewey, 1998[1897], p. 230)

For Dewey, a democratic way of life is both the mean and the end to realizing the democratic within and beyond the classroom. A prerequisite is that the democratic already exists. Concurrently there is an expectation of democracy to come. But to what degree does Dewey’s harmonious image of democracy and education overlook today’s realities of children’s lives, both within and beyond the classroom?

An Ideal

Democratic ways of life presuppose the support of the democratic as an ideal. On the one hand, the ideal concerns our *community values*, which serve as the normative basis for justifying education within and toward democracy. On the other hand, the ideal concerns our shared images of the *ideal society*, which constitutes the aim of democracy and of education. Third, the ideal concerns the relationship between the two.¹³

Sophia may illustrate this when asking in her letter: “Should I move out to protect Norwegian children in the future?” Then, when responding to the question of what she was thinking while she wrote this: “I have learned, through my upbringing and the fact of being Norwegian and Muslim and Iranian that we should care for each other and protect each other no matter what background or orientation ... hmm ... yes ... and appearance.” At first glance, this may signify Sophia’s high regard for communal values in that she is willing to move out of the country in order to protect that which she sees as an ideal society.

However, contrary to what Sophia—with her more or less naïve statement that “we should care ...”—seems to believe, the concept of an ideal society is never given. Values and ideals earlier regarded as shared and justified by all are continuously being questioned, challenged, and renegotiated in societies marked by transnational flows of people, ideas, knowledge, and cultures (Beck, 2006; Fine, 2007; Strand, 2010). Chantal Mouffe (2000) thus speaks of a new symbolic order in which communal values represent an empty space. Thus, modern, pluralistic, and complex societies seem to be characterized by a radical indecision (Benhabib, 2011; Neumann, 2001; Mouffe, 2000).

Sophia seems to be articulating this kind of indecision. On the one hand, she speaks of herself as “*Norwegian and Muslim and Iranian*,” but, on the other hand, she is concerned to protect Norwegian children. Thus, she mixes up ethnos and demos as she portrays herself as both Norwegian and non-Norwegian. She is concurrently part of a “we” and “the other.” Consequently, she asks: “what should we do, then ...”?

An Outlook

Sophia’s question is important. Because in a new world order—which represents a new framing of identities, loyalties, and self-understanding and also new ways in which they are negotiated according to people’s unsecure nationalities, religious aspirations, and struggle for recognition—people’s active and loyal citizenship is not based on nationality or cultural heritage only. Citizenship is also marked

¹³ As a noun, an ideal is distinct from an idea by the fact that the ideal exemplifies, typifies, and materializes more or less vague or abstract ideas. Democracy as an ideal refers to a conception of democracy as an honorable or worthy principle or aim. Democracy thus becomes a model for imitation, a standard for perfection, and an ultimate goal.

by people's engagement with, commitment to, and identification with a polis (Benhabib, 2011; Delanty, 2006; Kymlicka, 2009). So, who are we, and "what should we do, then ..."?

In this regard, the interconnection between democracy and education is about a perspective, a point of view, a normative and diagnostic outlook. When Sophia claims to have learned "that we should care for each other and protect each other no matter what background or orientation" she reveals the type of outlook that justifies her present commitment: "Should I move out to protect Norwegian children in the future?" Such an ethical-political outlook is different from an abstract ideal, since, to Sophia, caring is not only an idealistic mindset, but a point of view that generates her choices of action. There is no easier or cheaper way to mislead oneself than to put up something as an ideal, and then exempt oneself from realizing that ideal. But Sophia demonstrates that she is not misled. She does not only hold universal caring as an ideal. Universal caring also constitutes her normative and diagnostic outlook. As an ideal, universal caring is future-oriented. But, as an outlook, it is a prospect from a particular place that concerns everyday practices here and now. In short, an outlook is a way of seeing the world generated by earlier experience that may justify present moral, political, and social commitments.

When such a normative and diagnostic outlook presupposes what it wants to create, the perspective makes us realize that which is absent. Sophia's impulse to move was motivated by her urge to care, and also by the fact that the terrorist attack demonstrated that such caring was absent. Consequently, the formation of a democratic will seems to be based on the paradox that the absence of democracy is its very prerequisite. So maybe it is her eye for that which is absent that motivates Sophia's question: "what should we do, then, to protect Norwegian children in the future?"

But to what degree does such an outlook merely confirm the same world as it is a product of. Or, does it carry a potential for going beyond and changing the present?

Education Para Doxa

Dewey points to democracy and education as lived experience, while Mouffe points to the inevitability of conflict in political life. The political theories of Dewey and Mouffe both have a great influence on educational thinking. The vital contribution from Dewey's model of radical democracy may be summed up in his statement that "[a] democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1985[1916], p. 87). The vital contribution of Mouffe's agonistic model of democracy comes forward in her claim that "a project of radical and plural democracy ... requires the existence of multiplicity, of plurality and of conflict, and sees in them the *raison d'être* of politics" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 18). But neither Dewey nor Mouffe seems to offer good enough tools for performing sharp analysis on the ways in which the

multiplicities of values and omnipresence of power within complex societies now seem to make traditional-oriented political perspectives insignificant. The problem with Dewey's theory of democracy seems to be the way it is "based on the idea of an integration of all citizens in a self-organizing community" (Honneth, 1998, p. 765). The problem with Mouffe's agonistic model seems to be the fact that it lacks substantial tools that help "to renew and expand democratic principles" (ibid., p. 764).

The French philosopher Alain Badiou, however, offers an alternative perspective on democracy and education. Badiou argues against those who tend to conflate politics with philosophy and also truth with knowledge. To him there is no such thing as a philosophical truth. Philosophy cannot and will not tell what particular position to take in politics or science because truths are produced and continue to emerge in other, non-philosophical spheres of life: in love, art, politics, and science. Here, "truths not only are, they appear" (Badiou, 2009b, p. 9). However, philosophy—and philosophy alone—contains the resources to reveal and preserve the appearance of truths. In this way, philosophy deals with logical transformations: truths as creation. But philosophy is neither the interpreter nor mediator of truths (or truth-procedures). The task of philosophy is rather to "examine the constitution, in singular worlds, of the appearing of truths" (ibid.). So, the task of philosophy is to reveal the ways in which truth-procedures emerge and develop. Truth-procedures do not only change our thinking about a phenomenon. Truth-procedures also contribute to a radical change of the very basis of our ways of thinking.

So, for Badiou, the object of philosophical analysis is thinking as such, not, as for Dewey, different forms of practice, or, as for Mouffe, different discourses. In this way, Badiou's philosophy represents an unusual logic, an alternative meta-philosophy that offers new ways of performing philosophical analysis. But this meta-philosophy is never disconnected from practical reality. Because, as Badiou states, "Philosophy is not worth an hour's effort if it is not based on the idea that true life is present" (2009a, p. 14). Philosophy connects with reality by affirming three major dimensions of emerging truth processes: the event, fidelity, and truth.

The event is unexpected and unpredictable, something that vanishes and disappears. But it institutes a radical rupture, as it brings to pass instituted outlooks, knowledge, and opinions. In this way, the event is both situated and something additional to the situation: on the one hand, it is conditioned by a situated void, around which a plenitude of outlooks, knowledge, and opinions circulates. On the other hand, the event carries a radical novelty, a deep-seated change, a completely different logic that implies that it is impossible to continue to practice—let us say a field of science or arts—in the same way as before.

Fidelity amounts to a persistent exploration of the situation under the imperative of the event itself. Fidelity is thus the name of the processes of immanent and continuing ruptures. Truth is internal to the situation and produced by fidelity: "Truth is what the fidelity groups together and constructs, bit by bit" (Badiou, 2001, p. 68).

But does Sophia's letter represent an event? Does Sophia's letter make it problematic to think of ethical-political education within and toward the democratic in the same way as earlier? It is true that the letter received enormous media attention—and not without reason, because it represents something never seen before. The letter signifies something totally unexpected in the days shortly after July 22, 2011. When Sophia, as a Norwegian, Muslim and Iranian, says she is considering changing her life on behalf of “Norwegian children,” her letter—against all odds—invites us to see that something is missing in Norwegian society. Sophia's letter not only demonstrates universal caring, deep loyalty, and commitment toward larger society, but also reveals a kind of solidarity citizenry that most Norwegian citizens have never imagined or dared to think. Sophia's letter thus surprises and confuses.

The surprise is in the dislocation of meaning from one scene toward another. After July 22 Norwegians were taken by surprise by the fact that the terrorist was an insider, a so-called ethnic Norwegian citizen as well as by the fact that the unconditional will to care for and protect Norwegian children belonged to a young girl who was concurrently an outsider and an insider. The dislocation of meaning thus occurred as a deviation from conventional beliefs about citizens' various loyalties and roles in Norwegian society, but also because a young Muslim teenager appeared as the accountable and vigorous caregiver, while Norwegian children were those in need of protection. This dislocation and deviation causes confusion because of the contrast between the common and widespread beliefs about immigrant children (Statistics Norway, 2011b) and the way in which Sophia wants to protect Norwegian children.

- One in three Norwegians hold that “immigrants are a source of insecurity in society” (Blom, 2011). But, on the contrary, Sophia's letter shows that she wants to do whatever possible to create a safe society.
- There is also a tendency to define immigrant youths as caretakers. But here there is an immigrant youth being the caregiver.
- Norwegians hold that the liberal immigrant policies are threatening Norwegian society. But Sophia does not represent a threat. On the contrary, she reveals an urge to protect Norwegian citizens.
- It is also said that immigrant youths do not participate in the larger society. But Sophia appears as an active, participating, and vigorous citizen.

Sophia's letter therefore appears as a surprise and a confusion because it jumbles our categories of thought by mixing ideas and realities. Consequently, the letter disturbs the stereotyped perceptions of immigrants and also the very ground of our thinking about democracy and education. We are therefore invited to imagine something totally new.

Hence, the confusion is caused by the fact that Sophia makes us realize the impossible image of the normative basis of democracy: that all citizens have an equal say; likewise, that democracy is provided by the citizen's legal status and

sense of belonging; furthermore, that the utopian idea of solidary citizenry exists. Furthermore Sophia's letter signifies a deviation from already existing myths about "the good Norwegians" and "immigrant children." So, there is a thorough mix-up of our categories of thought, and of our ideas about "truth" and "realities" (which were suddenly made insignificant by Sophia's letter and her appearance in the talk show).

The most important work of this mix-up therefore does not concern the deviation or displacement of meaning, but rather the ways in which it might educate us. Education can happen because the logical mismatches and jumbling of categories carries some potential to violate our previous ways of thinking by disarranging the very categories that generate the ways in which we think. Sophia's letter should therefore not only be read as a testimony to Sophia's active citizenship and democratic will, but also be read as a way of initiating some truth-procedures that then may educate the greater public.

In this way, the example of Sophia may challenge our perspective on democracy and education for a new era—and also educational discourse.

What Now?

In sum it seems pertinent to ask once again: to what degree do educational theory and practice relate to what is going on? Do educational policies and practices help to strengthen the next generation's democratic will formation?

The philosophy of John Dewey focuses on democracy and education as a lived experience. For Dewey, democratic life in schools is the very precondition for promoting a healthy democracy. But education is not just a means for the formation of good citizens; it is the very way of living and experiencing citizenship. The school should therefore not be perceived as a place to promote active citizenship for the future, but rather as a place where competent children are continuously living, experiencing, learning, justifying, strengthening, and developing democratic ways of life. However, a prerequisite is that democracy already exists in the larger society. A Deweyan outlook on democracy and education may thus serve to strengthen already outdated ideals and practices of democracy and education.

Chantal Mouffe, by contrast, helps us to realize the paradoxical fact that the absence of democracy is one of its vital preconditions. She also points to the impossible fact that the relationship between that which is included and excluded seems to be a central characteristic—and a vital precondition—of democracy in complex societies. In this way, Mouffe offers tools to reveal democratic will formation in complex societies. Also, her theory may help us to recognize and strengthen democratic vision and will formation of the present.

Alain Badiou's philosophy offers a different perspective, as it provides tools to reveal the incommensurable logic, the paradoxical situations, and the events in which truth-procedures appear. Sophia's letter after July 22 is an example of such an event. The event was totally unexpected and unpredictable. Sooner or later it

will die out and disappear, but it has already instituted a radical rupture, a break with former ideas of democracy and education. Sophia's letter signifies that the event has brought to pass instituted outlooks, knowledge, and opinions. On the one hand, Sophia's letter was conditioned by a situated void, a negation, something unthinkable. On the other hand, her letter carried a radical novelty, an essential different perspective that implies that it is impossible to continue to practice citizenship education in the same way as before. In this way, a Badiouan analysis may help to extend and renew our thinking of democracy and education for the current era. A precondition, however, is that we read the situation, recognize the extraordinary, and ask new questions.

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