

The nature of critique and educational discourse

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Since 1994, South African society has been set on the road to becoming a democratic society. This transformation has far reaching implications for educational thought and practice. The present ANC led government has advocated the establishment of an educational discourse conducive to critical thinking as an integral part of its education programme. In this article, I reflect on the nature of 'critique', in an attempt to suggest what kind of critical discourse in education would best be able to contribute to those attempts being made to lay the foundations of a critical civil society in a democratic South Africa.

Introduction

There is a plethora of literature that vividly depicts how the Bantu Education and Department of Education and Training (DET) system was used by the apartheid government to perpetuate rote learning and passive acceptance of "the facts". There are many examples, both overt and covert (hidden curriculum), that illustrate ways in which apartheid education tried to maintain and reinforce the *status quo*. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the apartheid education system not only encouraged the idea of the passive learner, but also actively discouraged critical thinking. In fact, Taylor (1993:3) and Saunders (1992:6) are of the opinion that there is a wide and enduring view that apartheid education was more about socialisation and instilling passive acceptance of authority than providing students with the conceptual tools necessary for creative, critical and independent thought.

The call for critical thinking, in terms of the empowerment of persons to think independently, to be centrally integrated into the curriculum is not a new one. The importance of critical thinking has for a long time been associated with an alternative curriculum and was articulated in South Africa as early as 1986 in the demand for "People's Education". Although couched in a different discourse, the youth, then organised under the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), in demanding "People's Education", were challenging the hegemonic and oppressive syllabus which characterised the Department of Education and Training (DET) curriculum. In fostering this challenge, they demanded an education which prepared people for total human liberation; one which helped people to be creative, to develop a critical mind, to help people analyse; one that prepares people for full participation in all social, political, or cultural spheres.

In direct contrast to the previous government, the ANC-led Government has advocated in the National Plan on Higher Education (2001) an educational discourse that will be directed at supporting a culture of human rights by educational programs and practices conducive to critical discourse and experimental thinking, cultural tolerance, and a common commitment to a humane, nonracist and non-sexist social order. It has also incorporated critical thinking skills as an integral part of its education programme and of its drive towards lifelong learning. This is also clearly articulated in many policy documents, such as the National Basic Education and Training Framework (Department of Education, 1995:1), which states that

"... (a) adult basic education and training have been successfully used and can be used to help promote the principles of co-operation, critical thinking, and civic responsibility and equip people for participation in a high skills economy and society as a whole".

It is not only at the level of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) that the developing of critical thinking is taken seriously. At the other end of the education continuum, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the White Paper 3 Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (Department of Education, 1997), lists as a major goal for higher education,

"... the production of graduates with the skills and competencies that build the foundations for lifelong learning, including critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as the ability to deal with change and diversity and in particular, the tolerance of different views and ideas."

In the light of the emphasis on the role of critical thinking in education, in policy statements emanating from the ministry, I wish to explore in this article some notions of critique that might indicate the nature of an appropriate critical discourse in education in South African in the post-apartheid era. In other words, what notion of critique could possibly address the education legacy of the past, while at the same time contribute to those attempts being made to lay the foundations of a critical civil society in a democratic South Africa. In considering this question, I will direct attention to three critical programmes in philosophy, namely, critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction, which each reveal different critical styles. Besides an examination of the critical potential of each programme, I will compare these programmes in order to suggest which programme(s) might best support that educational endeavour which is directed at the establishment of an open critical civil society in a democratic South Africa.

Critical programmes in philosophy

"Critical philosophy" in the sense that Kant (1992) meant it, was the process of reasoning and understanding questioning itself; questioning its own nature, its conditions of possibility, and its limits — not as an absolute or given, but as an object of reflection. Critical philosophy was "critical" in the sense of questioning "pure" or absolute reason, but importantly it was also critical in the sense that it was reflexive and self-critical, about its own nature and limits.

But there are many other important senses of what it is to be critical. Biesta (1998; 2001a) identifies three critical programmes in philosophy, namely, critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction, that each reveal different critical styles, and what it means to be critical in the context of educational discourse. The first of these he identifies as critical dogmatism.

Critical dogmatism

According To Biesta (2001a:60), critical dogmatism can be defined as any style of critique in which the critical operation consists of the application of criteria. The operation is critical, in that it gives an evaluation of a specific state of affairs. The operation is dogmatic, in that the criterion itself is kept out of reach of the critical operation and is applied to this state of affairs "from the outside". Critical dogmatism, therefore, derives its right to be critical from the truth of the criterion. From the standpoint of critical dogmatism then, critics identify and diagnose an unacceptable set of beliefs or state of affairs and invoke certain explicit or implicit values in the process.

Critical dogmatism is quite common in educational discourse. Critical work is, for example, carried out by means of a definition of

what counts as education. Dearden (1972), Hirst (1970) and Peters (1966, 1979), for example, used such definitions to evaluate educative practices and theories, which they suspected could in fact be non-educative or indoctrinary. Such a programme of evaluation characterised the work done by some proponents of Fundamental Pedagogics during the apartheid era in South Africa. For example, De Jager, Reeler, Oberholzer and Landman (1985) regarded Fundamental Pedagogics as a philosophy of education, which set out to know the phenomenon of education by undertaking radical reflection on the educational situation or occurrence. The essence of the educational situation was then described in terms of pedagogic categories and corresponding criteria derived from them for purposes of evaluating any so-called educational situation. Critical dogmatism can also be found in the work of those educationists, for example, Lipman (1988) and Lipman and Sharp (1978, 1992) who see themselves as children's advocates. In this instance, the basis for critique is the conviction that the child represents a value of its own; a value that must be respected in educational theory and practice. Another example is the work of educationists such as McLaren (1998), McLaren and Hammer (1999) and Giroux (1999) who take "emancipation" to be the general criterion for the evaluation of educational theory and practice.

For critical dogmatism then, the only foundation of critique is a dogmatic foundation. This means, therefore, that the only possible form of critique is dogmatic critique. Biesta (1998:323), however, notes that this conclusion raises certain problems. If dogmatism is fundamental to the critical enterprise, the critical operation seems to be immediately subverted. How can critique be possible if its ultimate foundation is asserted dogmatically without such a foundation being subject to critical reflection, that is, if the criterion itself is asserted dogmatically? This is not to suggest, that the application of criteria have never had any positive effects or that any critical work in education along these lines has been in vain. But we should be aware of the paradoxical character of this style of critique. In this regard, Albert (1985:18) points out that any attempt to articulate foundations — and in critical dogmatism the criterion founds the critical operation — leads to a situation with three alternatives, namely:

- an infinite regress, because the propositions that serve as a foundation need to be founded themselves;
- a logical circle that results from the fact that in the process of giving reasons, one has to resort to statements that have already shown themselves to be in need of justification; or
- breaking off the attempt at a particular point by dogmatically introducing a foundation.

Since neither the first nor the second alternatives appear to lead to any satisfactory results in founding a criterion, it could be concluded that the only possible foundation for critique is a dogmatic foundation. All this would seem to indicate the paradoxical character of critique as the application of a criterion that is itself beyond critique. This does not mean, however, that the possibilities for critique as such are thereby exhausted. Biesta (2001a:61-65) claims that there is another critical style which can circumvent the paradox of critical dogmatism. This is transcendental critique.

Transcendental critique

Transcendental critique, in like manner to critical dogmatism views the critical operation as the application of a criterion. The main difference between the two critical styles, however, is to be found in the way in which the criterion is justified, and in the case of transcendental critique, it is by means of a transcendental form of argumentation.

Transcendental critique in educational discourse is characterised, Bloomberg (1999:1-14) notes, for example, in the philosophical work done by Dooyeweerd's structural-empirical methodology and enunciated in his "philosophy of the cosmonomic ideal". Dooyeweerd (1948) endeavoured to base his transcendental critique of theoretical thought on reflexive grounding and the determination of the conditions for knowing accurately. More recently, the transcendental style of critique in education is evidenced in the writings of Siegel (1988a;

1988b; 1996; 2001) where astutely defends the transcendental approach in his apologetic for the ideal of rationality in philosophy of education. In this regard, Ennis (1989:402-405) points out that, Siegel in his transcendental rationality, attempts to provide a universally applicable rational defense of rationality and of critical thinking.

Transcendental critique has its roots in the emergence of the scientific world view which replaced philosophy in the endeavour to provide knowledge of the natural world (physics). As a result philosophy could no longer claim to provide knowledge of the natural world and consequently gave up its role as a foundational discipline. Kant (1992), however, put philosophy on a new course — the transcendental course — where it became the proper task of philosophy to articulate the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge.

Kant's programme was, however, marked by a reflexive paradox in that it sought to acquire knowledge about the process of knowledge acquisition itself. The reason why Kant did not perceive this paradox had to do with the framework of the philosophy of consciousness in which he operated. Kant dogmatically asserted that the "*Ich denke*" (I think), was the highest point, to which we must ascribe all processes of understanding, even the whole of logic, and conformably therewith, transcendental philosophy.

With reference to this Kantian paradox, Biesta (2001a:62) asserts that the work of Apel (1980) can be seen as a (re)articulation of transcendental philosophy that tries to circumvent this "dogmatic element" in Kant's position by making a shift from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of language. The main difference between Apel and Kant lies in Apel's recognition of the fact that all knowledge is linguistically mediated, while Kant assumed that the acquisition of knowledge is basically an individualistic enterprise. Apel (1987:257) argues that our individual experience must be raised to the level of a language game in order to become knowledge. The link between experience and language is, however, not established automatically. The question of the validity of our individual experiences has to be answered by means of argumentation, and because argumentation only makes sense within a language game, within a "community of communication", Apel concludes that this community is the condition of possibility of all knowledge.

Apel's emphasis on language results in the recognition of the *a priori* of the community of communication. This in turn, means that any reflection on language can only take place in a specific language game or community of communication, because we can never get to a stage prior to the actual use of language in a specific community of communication. The pragmatic realm is, therefore, the most fundamental dimension of language, and it is for this reason that Apel refers to his position as "transcendental pragmatics". Although Apel establishes a strong link between transcendental pragmatics and really existing communities of communication — a manoeuvre which seems to give his project a strong conventionalistic basis — he introduces a critical element that is meant to enable transcendental pragmatics to go beyond convention. This element is the ideal community of communication or the transcendental language game. Apel (1991:57) claims that a participant in a genuine argument is at the very same time a member of a concrete community of communication and a counterfactual ideal community of communication, a community which is, in principle, open to all speakers and which excludes all force except the force of the better argument. This community is, at least implicitly, anticipated in all human actions claiming to be meaningful and it is explicitly anticipated in philosophical arguments claiming to be valid. Any claim to intersubjectively valid knowledge, therefore, implicitly acknowledges this ideal community, as a "meta-institution" of rational argumentation, to be its ultimate source of justification. Communication would lose its meaning if one no longer aimed at this ideal. The notion of the ideal community of communication provides a criterion which makes critique possible.

Biesta (2001a:64) notes that what distinguishes Apel's position from critical dogmatism is that this criterion is not introduced dogmatically but by means of a process of reflexive grounding. This

process is foundational in nature, but not in the sense of raising the question of the 'foundation of foundations' in a deductive sense, which must necessarily result in an infinite regress. Rather, Apel attempts to view the question of foundations in another way, other than deductively. This he does by considering the conditions of possibility of the argumentative use of language.

Apel starts from the recognition that the conditions of possibility of argumentation have to be presupposed in all argumentation (otherwise they would not be conditions of possibility). But if this is so, then it follows, that one cannot argue against these conditions of possibility without immediately falling into a performative contradiction, that is, a situation where the performative dimensions of the argument (the act of arguing) contradict the propositional content (what is argued). From this, Apel concludes that all contentions that cannot be disclaimed without falling into a performative contradiction, express a condition of possibility for the argumentative use of language. The principle of performative consistency is, therefore, the criterion which can reveal the ultimate foundations of the argumentative use of language, that is, those propositions that do not need further grounding, because, they cannot be understood without knowing that they are true. The application of the principle of performative consistency, therefore, brings into view the foundations of all forms of the argumentative use of language. These foundations outline the ideal community of communication.

Biesta (1998:328) points out that, the importance of Apel's position lies in the fact that he goes beyond the individualism of Kant's transcendental philosophy in bringing the transcendental approach into the realm of argumentation and communication. Apel's programme of transcendental pragmatics attempts to argue for the application of criteria for critique, non-dogmatically and in the context of a community of communication. Furthermore, it is apparent that the critical style of transcendental pragmatics is motivated by rationality insofar as Apel is concerned to avoid the error of performative contradiction in establishing the conditions of possibility for the argumentative use of language. In other words, rationality provides transcendental critique with its distinctive style of being critical in that the critical potential of the idea of performative contradiction is used as a form of internal critique, where the main critical work consists of a confrontation of a position or argument with its conditions of possibility.

Biesta (2001a:65) believes that transcendental critique presents itself as a stronger conception of critique than critical dogmatism, primarily because it claims to be able to articulate its choice for rationality non-dogmatically, and also because, it advocates a critical programme that is not founded on arbitrary, dogmatic choices for criteria. Compared to critical dogmatism, it would seem that transcendental critique is indeed a more sophisticated critical programme. However, the transcendental style of critique remains problematic in that it assumes that it can bring the foundations of critique into focus by means of the application of the principle of performative consistency. In this respect, transcendental critique displays a totalising tendency. However, transcendental critique is not the last word about the nature of critique and in this regard, Biesta (2001a:65-68) directs our attention to the writings of Jacques Derrida.

Deconstruction

In his philosophy of deconstruction Derrida articulates yet another critical programme. In fact, deconstruction has oftentimes been used *in lieu* of the word 'critique'. However, Derrida (1988:3) insists that: "... in any case, and in spite of appearances, deconstruction is neither an analysis, in the sense of a regression toward simple elements, toward an indecomposable origin, nor a critique in a general or Kantian sense."

In pursuing this line of thought, Derrida (1978:281) argues that the history of Western philosophy represents a continuous attempt to locate a fundamental ground which serves both as an absolute beginning and a centre from which everything originating from it can be mastered and controlled. Since Plato, the origin has always been

defined in terms of *presence*. The origin is thought of as fully present to itself and as totally self-sufficient, while the "determination of Being as presence", Derrida (1978:279) holds, is the matrix of the history of metaphysics which coincides with the history of the West in general.

Biesta (2001b:38) points out that Derrida's writings want to put this metaphysical gesture into question. Derrida (1978:280) acknowledges that he is not the first to do so. But against Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger and all other "destructive discourses" that wanted to overcome metaphysics, Derrida argues that we can never make a total break. "There is no sense," he argues, "in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form of logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest." While Derrida definitely wants to "shake" metaphysics, he acknowledges that this cannot be done from some neutral and innocent place outside of metaphysics. Derrida wants to shake metaphysics, to put it simply, by showing that metaphysics is itself always already shaking, by showing the impossibility of any attempt to fix being through the presentation of a self-identical, original presence. This implies, among other things, according to Derrida (1991:273), that deconstruction is not something that is applied to the texts of the metaphysical tradition from the "outside" and consequently, it is, not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Rather, Derrida (1991:274) asserts that, "... deconstructions, which I prefer to say in the plural ... is one of the possible names used to designate, in sum by metonymy, what occurs, or cannot manage to occur, namely, a certain dislocation which in effect reiterates itself regularly — and everywhere where there is something rather than nothing."

In other words, with reference to deconstruction, Derrida attempts to show in his readings of the texts of the Western tradition that any presentation of a self-sufficient presence can only be done with the help of that which is excluded by this presence. He attempts to show in other words, that presence cannot present itself, but needs the help of what is not present, of absence. This puts the non-present in a kind of double position. On the one hand the non-present is what is totally different from what is present. And yet, the presence upon which its definition depends can itself only be articulated with the help of that which it is not.

In developing his thoughts concerning deconstruction, Derrida (1982:1-28) goes on to direct his attention at the notion of *différance*, which he articulates with reference to the theory of signs and language developed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Contrary to the idea that language is a naming process, attaching words to things, Saussure argues that language is a structure where any individual element is meaningless outside the confines of the structure. In language there are only differences. These differences, however, are not differences between positive terms, that is, between terms that in and by themselves refer to things outside the system. In language there are only differences without positive terms. From this assertion Biesta (1998:329) believes, two conclusions follow.

First of all, the idea of differences without positive terms entails that the "movement of signification" is only possible if each element "appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself." What is called the "present" is, therefore, according to Derrida (1982:13) constituted *Aby* means of this very relation to what it is not." This contamination is a necessary contamination. For the present to be itself, it already has to be other than itself. This puts the non-present in a double position, because it is the non-present which makes the presence of the present possible, and yet, it can only make this presence possible by means of its own exclusion. And it is this apparent complicity, Derrida (1981:41) argues which "outplays the legality of the decision to exclude" in the first place.

Secondly, if this is what deconstruction can bring into view, then we can already get, according to Biesta (1998:330), an idea of its critical potential, because at the heart of deconstruction, we find a concern for the "constitutive outside" of what presents itself as self-

sufficient. This reveals that deconstruction is as Gasché (1994) argues, more than just a destruction of the metaphysics of presence. Deconstruction is first and foremost, an affirmation of what is excluded and forgotten. An affirmation in short, of what is other.

There is, however, Biesta (2001a:67) notes, a complication which concerns the question of how deconstruction can bring that which is excluded into view. For if it is the case, that in language there are only differences without positive terms, then we have to concede that we can no longer articulate the differential character of language itself by means of a positive term like, for example, "differentiation". Difference without positive terms implies that this "dimension" must itself always remain unperceived, for strictly speaking, it is unconceptualizable. The "play of difference," which is "the condition for the possibility and functioning of every sign", is, according to Derrida (1982:5), "... in itself a silent play."

If we would want to articulate that which does not let itself be articulated and yet is the condition for the possibility of all articulation — which we might want to do in order to prevent metaphysics from re-entering — we must acknowledge that there can never be a word or a concept to represent this silent play. We must, claims Derrida (1982: 5-6), acknowledge that this play cannot simply be exposed, for "one can expose only that which at a certain moment can become present". And we must acknowledge that there is nowhere to begin, "for what is put into question is precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure". All this is expressed, Derrida (1982:7; 13) claims, in the new word or concept — "which is neither a word nor a concept, but a neographism" — of *différance*.

The reason why Derrida (1982:11) introduces that "what is written as *différance*" is not, according to Biesta (2001b:43), difficult to grasp. Although "the play of difference" is identified as the condition of possibility of all conceptuality, we should not, according to Gasché (1986:316-317) make the mistake to think that we have finally found the real origin of all conceptuality. The predicament is this: because we are talking about the condition of possibility of all conceptuality, this condition cannot belong to that which it makes possible (the "order" of conceptuality). Yet, the only way in which we can articulate this condition of possibility is within this order. Because the condition of possibility is always articulated in terms of the system that is made possible by it, it is, in a sense, always ready "too late" to be its condition of possibility (which implies that the condition of possibility is at the very same time a condition of impossibility).

Biesta (2001a:68) points out that at this level, the critical potential of deconstruction returns in an even more radical way. The point here is, that because conditions of possibility are always already contaminated by the "system" that is made possible by them, this "system" is never totally delimited by these conditions. *Différance* is, therefore, a quasi-transcendental or quasi-condition of possibility, because, as Caputo (1997:102) aptly describes, it "... does not describe fixed boundaries that delimit what can happen, and what not, but points a mute, Buddhist finger at the moon of uncontainable effects." Deconstruction tries thus to open up the system in the name of that which cannot be thought of in terms of the system (and yet makes the system possible). This reveals that the deconstructive affirmation is not simply an affirmation of what is known to be excluded by the system. Deconstruction is an affirmation of what is wholly other (*tout autre*), of what is unforeseeable from the present. It is affirmation of an otherness that is always to come, as an event which Derrida (1992:27) claims, "exceeds calculation, rules, programmes, anticipations." Deconstruction can, therefore, be construed, according to Caputo (1997: 42) as, an openness towards the unforeseeable in-coming (*l'invention*; invention) of the other. It is from this concern for what is totally other, a concern to which Derrida (1992) sometimes refers to as "justice", that deconstruction derives, according to Biesta (1998:332), its right to be critical.

According to Derrida (1992:27), justice is, therefore, always directed towards the other. Seen in this light, justice is not a criterion, but rather it is the relation to the other. If justice is a concern for the

other as other, for the otherness of the other, for an otherness that, by definition, we can neither foresee nor totalise, if justice, in short, always addresses itself to the singularity of the other, then Derrida (1992:20) claims, we are obliged — in the very name of justice — to keep the unforeseen possibility of the in-coming of the other, the surprise of the invention of the other, open. This means, however, that the very possibility of justice is sustained by its impossibility. Justice, Derrida (1992:16) summarizes, is, therefore, "an experience of the impossible", where — and this is crucial — the impossible is *not* that which is not possible, but that which cannot be foreseen as a possibility.

The implications of this insight are not restricted to the determination of whether a situation or a person is just, but extend to the very definition of justice itself. Here again we can say that it is for the very sake of justice as a concern for the otherness of the other that we can never decide once and (literally) for all what justice is. Justice is, therefore, not a principle or a criterion (as this would mean that we would know right now what justice is), nor an ideal (as this would mean that we would now be able to describe the future situation of justice), nor even a regulative ideal (which would still imply a description of what justice is, although with the implication that the ideal is not expected to be ever present in some future). It belongs to the very structure of justice itself that it never can be present (and therefore never will be present). It is by necessity, as Derrida (1992: 27) states, a "justice to come," which means that it is *always* to come.

The fact that justice, is not a criterion or a principle means that it is not something about which we can have knowledge and only need to apply. To speak of justice is not a matter of knowledge, it is not a matter of application and calculation, for as Derrida (1997:17-18) claims:

"Justice, if it has to do with the other ... is always incalculable ...

Once you relate to the other as the other, then something incalculable comes on the scene ..."

The claim that justice is not a criterion, that it has no ground, so that at the basis of all our decisions lies a radical *undecidability* which cannot be closed off by our decisions but which "continues to inhabit the decision" (Derrida 1996:87), could be taken as the contention that in the end, and despite all that it claims, deconstruction is destructive and relativistic. But this of course only holds as long as we assume that ethics and politics can only exist on some firm ground.

Against such a foundationalist point of view Derrida (1996:85) argues that, ethics and politics only *begin* when this undecidability, which makes the decision at the very same time "necessary and impossible," is acknowledged.

In his exposition of the nature of deconstruction as a style of critique which is concerned to open up, neither in order to install a new totality, nor by means of another new totality, Derrida reveals that there is no certain ground upon which we can base our decisions, that there are no pure, uncontaminated, original criteria on which we can simply base our judgements. Derrida (1996:87) claims that at the basis of our decisions, there lies a radical undecidability which cannot be closed off by our decisions, but which continues to inhabit the decision we make in relation to others. Justice is, therefore, a matter of extremely careful judgment in response to what Derrida (1984:1; 18) refers to as the "... call of the other".

Biesta (2001b:25) notes that Derrida does, however, not tell us how we should respond to the call of the other in order to be just or render justice. Unlike a whole generation of educators and educational theorists, often of a critical bent, Derrida does not try to give an answer to the question of how we can emancipate or liberate. He rather invites educators to return to the question itself, to the question of what it could mean to respond to the call of the other, to respond responsibly to the otherness of the other — and to return to this age-old question *today*.

Forms of critique and education

In the preceding paragraphs I have discussed three ways in which, according to Biesta (1998, 2001), we might view the form and operation

of critique. Each of these three ways are enunciated in programmes which derive their right to be critical from different sources, namely, truth, rationality, and justice.

From this it is evident that these three programmes, namely, critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction, view critique differently in terms of its fundamental form and operation.

For critical dogmatism, critique is a matter of evaluation by invoking a criterion or set of criteria. But for transcendental critique, critique is not always a matter of evaluation. Kant perceived of critique as the process in which reason seeks to understand and question itself: questioning its own nature, its conditions of possibility, and its limits — not as an absolute or given, but as an object of reflection. Here critique is seen to question 'pure reason' or absolute reason, but more importantly it is also seen to be reflexive, and self-critical about its own nature and limits. For Apel the leverage point of critique is the set of conditions that make language itself possible — the conditions of communication that are invoked implicitly if not explicitly every time we speak and expect others to understand or to agree with us. These conditions are characterised by the ideal community of communications, a counterfactual ideal. But in this instance critique, or "criticality" as Burbules (1999:56) refers to it, is not a matter of evaluation by invoking a criterion or set of criteria. One does not identify and criticise dishonesty, for example, by saying "that is not how people in an ideal community of communication would act." Rather, one raises the argument in the hopes of persuading others in a manner that they will come to change their patterns of action. The reference point of critique is not the ideal, but the implicit norms to which the speaker transcendently commits himself or herself; these are what create the possibility of change. It is this capacity to bring about change that makes this approach critical, and not the extent to which it can ground its evaluation in fixed criteria. In this sense, transcendental critique concerns itself with critique as a stimulus to change, and not only diagnosis and critique. In the third instance, deconstruction by way of the "neographism" *différance* operates as a quasi-transcendental condition of possibility. But what does this mean? For Kant, reason could explore the conditions of possibility for its own knowledge; with Apel, as for Habermas, this became the conditions for communication. For Saussure, in a different way, difference became the condition for language itself, because of how sign systems operate as a system of differences between signs. For Derrida, the conditions of possibility for any system are never wholly within that system, but inevitably rely upon that which cannot be thought of in terms of the system (and yet makes the system possible). Acknowledging this necessity, and so remaining open to the other, what Derrida refers to as "justice", is the criterion supporting the right to be critical. The idea of critique that we find in deconstruction thus seems to be concerned with effecting and changing the way people think, act and speak in relation to others.

All in all, what this means is that by examining the changing meanings of critique, we see that what changes between these views is not only the kind of justification and grounding that is given to critique, but seeing critique as a different sort of endeavour, not always a matter of evaluating in reference to a criterion or set of criteria. In other words, what we need to examine in the attempt to justify critique is not only what gives us the right to do it, but the effects we mean it to have.

When we supplement the question 'What supports the right to be critical?' with the question 'What are we trying to do when we are critical, and what is critique for?' then we start seeing these three traditions in very different ways.

For critical dogmatism, for example, there is a point where the questions stop: one simply must accept certain premises or the other arguments never get off the ground. This is not just a logical problem about the limits of justifying one's own foundations. This is a serious impediment from the standpoint of trying to persuade or influence others. Think about the point one reaches when being asked a series of 'why' questions by a three year old. One reaches a point where the only possible answers are 'just because' or 'I don't know' or 'we don't

have time for that now' or 'you will understand later', or 'because I said so, now be quiet'. If we are to transpose this experience into the domain of philosophy, then, dressed in more subtle language, perhaps, these are the only answers the critical dogmatist can, beyond a certain point, give. This defines the limits of educability, and from this standpoint it is a serious impediment to the value of this mode of critique for educational discourse.

In the mode of transcendental critique there is something hermetic, very neat, in the argument that to ask a question is already to have committed oneself to the answer. But I would like to argue that no one who has ever seriously posed such questions was ever really convinced by such an argument, which basically comes to 'You must agree with me because although you do not know it, you already agree with me.' Or one might put the problem this way, showing that the logic of the argument is reversible: if someone seriously questions what is (transcendentally) self-evident, then they are probably not the sort or person who will be, or even can be, convinced by such an argument. This is the educational question, and as so often happens, the more closely one examines an educational problem, the more one finds a really important philosophical insight lurking there.

With deconstruction, something is going on that partakes of the transcendental search for the conditions of one's own philosophising, and, like the critical dogmatist, finds a limit for how far that self-examination can go. The difference, however, is to be seen in how one responds to that limit: by recognising it as a limit and so responding with an openness to the other, by asking of one's own limits what is excluded by them. What makes this mode of critique educationally useful is that it helps create a perpetual openness — a self-examination that is truly critical, and not only a search for confirmation or a grounding for one's own judgments. Such a critique is not characterised by an valuation based on a criterion.

What it is, is a condition for the possibility of thinking differently, a condition of profound caution and tentativeness about one's judgments and criteria, a condition of openness to the 'constitutive outside', a condition of continuous learning. By accepting that all systems are necessarily incomplete, one also must accept both the necessity of others and yet also the limits of one's ability to understand them fully. This dialectic yields the most fertile philosophical attitude and resource of all for educational discourse: modesty.

Conclusion

The existing educational discourse in South Africa is profoundly shaped by its modernist past, in which it functioned as an ideological handmaiden serving group interests in maintaining relations of domination and power. This educational discourse encouraged immense conformity by way of its authoritative presence and discouraged and delimited critique.

I have considered the critical possibilities for educational discourse of three critical programmes, namely, critical dogmatism, transcendental critique and deconstruction. Critical dogmatism founded, its critical endeavour, on the *truth* of the criterion of evaluation; transcendental critique founded it on *rationality* and deconstruction on *justice*. From this it is evident that 'critical' does not mean the same for each of these three programmes. Whereas, critical dogmatism perceives criticality as a matter of evaluation by invoking a criterion or set of criteria, and whereas, transcendental critique views the critical operation in terms of the ideal of transcendental rationality, deconstruction, on the other hand, regards the capacity to bring about change as what makes an approach critical, and not the extent to which it can ground its evaluations in firm criteria. In other words, the programme of critique in deconstruction actually seeks to affect and change the way people think, speak and act in relation to others. Such a critical programme, which seeks to restore a sense of agency in empowering persons to think and act independently, while at the same time focusing on a concern for the other as other, might well be suited to those educational endeavours which are directed at the establishment

of an open critical civil society in a democratic South Africa. This suggestion is open to further critical reflection, discussion and debate.

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