

**The Urban Pedagogy of Walter Benjamin.
Lessons for the 21st Century**

Part 1

By

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Preface

Walter Benjamin was a literary critic, essayist, translator, a collector of fine books and rare toys. His interests spanned Surrealism, Communism and theology. He grew up in Berlin at the turn of the 20th century, with Jewish parents. As an adult he visited and published travel accounts of Naples, Marseilles, Moscow and he came to know Paris intimately in the 1930s. He committed suicide in 1940, while attempting to escape from France as the Germans increased the tentacles of their occupation. Of his acquaintances, Brecht is probably the most famous, to scholars of the social sciences his at times fraught friendship with Adorno is often mentioned. He wrote essays on Kafka, Baudelaire, Brecht, Karl Kraus, technologies of mass reproduction, language, violence, photography, the storyteller and Surrealism. He wrote two academic dissertations, one on Goethe and one on allegory and its role in German tragedy. The latter was never accepted as his *habilitationsschrift* and resulted in his never qualifying as a university lecturer. He turned his attentions elsewhere: made a series of radio programs for children, retreated to libraries to research his never completed *Arcades Project* and wrote pieces for a number of journals.

With such a varied set of concerns it is not surprising that since his death he has attracted the attentions of several generations of professional scholars and political activists, including media specialists, linguists, committed revolutionaries, theologians and students of urbanism. Modernists, anti-modernists and post-modernists have tried to claim him for their respective causes. This collection thus appears as one further attempt to appropriate his work for a distinct cause, the study of culture in an urban environment, where the weighting is towards pedagogy, But, not a pedagogy by any means limited to classroom studies, instead one spilling over, into the education and experience of urban life. To become in short a handbook, constructed after the principle of montage, for those wishing to explore urban environments, intoxicated and inspired by Benjamin.

How might educationalists and those interested in the study of cultural life read the work of Walter Benjamin? His essays, aphorisms and unfinished texts span numerous themes and can easily take on the appearance of a fragmented and esoteric set of concerns. The following entries have been crafted with the intention of developing insights drawn from these fragments and telescoping them into the present. Thus, generating a rupture or shock as the subsequent confrontation stops the time of the present, as we live it today, and an opportunity is created for the instigation of the educationally new and memorable. It is a mimetic project looking to found dialectical images not upon the return of the “educationally same”, but on the return of the “educationally new”. A critical commentary then, but only on the premise that Benjamin can, or should work for our particular historical juncture and interest in the role of urban pedagogy, the pedagogue and cultural studies.

The essays in the three parts of this series vary in complexity, some pre-suppose a certain familiarity with the work of Benjamin. The accompanying critical dictionary of fragments, with entries at the beginning of each part in the series, is most clearly an introductory text presenting several of Benjamin's key concepts, as well as applying them to a selection of contemporary socio-educational issues. The intention in the three parts is to present a number of suggestions, rather than a definitive set of final statements, on an urban pedagogy and what might have been Benjamin's contribution to such a pedagogy for the 21st century.

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Critical dictionary of fragments

Cracking the code Prior to the First World War, the young Benjamin was active in the German Youth Movement. Influenced by Wyneken's views on the school as a community and school reform, the Movement advocated 'no corporal punishment, but rather a teacher-pupil relationship based upon mutual respect.' (Benjamin, quoted in Brodersen, 1996) They envisaged a wider goal for education: education was to support and create a youth culture interested not in the reception of received traditions, but with shaping a new future utterly alien to the mentality associated with the one in existence. There was a certain amount of idealism in the movement, as it directed its attacks upon the parental home and conservative school traditions. Its goals were close to many similar European movements of the time. That is, the call for progressive education in various forms, some more limited to the classroom and others more insistent upon societal reform. These youth movements, however, lacked the wider goals of the revolutionary socialist movements that would attract the older, more mature Benjamin in the late 1920s.

Perhaps, it is the case that each generation seeks to rebel against its parental generation and the power it holds. In order to do this, youth must *crack the code*, which exerts a strangle hold on existing conditions. In its place they propose and actively enforce an alternative *code*. Various intellectual instruments and tools of a more practical character are enlisted for these acts of *code breaking* and *code creation*. For the young Benjamin the code to be cracked involved parental conservatism and the need for school reforms. Their intellectual resources were taken from the ideas of Wyneken and practically they organised their youth movement into working committees, held meetings and organised conferences.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the less youthful Benjamin sought to crack a different code, namely the dominant capitalist code. In pursuit of this goal and also as a resource for an alternative code he enlisted the insights of the Surrealists (to enervate the powers of the unconscious), Klages (with visual as opposed to purely conceptual knowledge), Communism (emphasising criticism of commodity fetishism). The practical tools he looked to support his code cracking and alternative were not necessarily Party membership, mass movements and revolution on the barricades. He seems not to have opposed such forms of activity, but was himself not a card carrying party member. Instead, he looked to the potential contained in different media: the newspaper (with space for the printing of the reader's letters and other contributions), photography (revealing the taken for granted movements of the disciplined factory worker's body at work and in motion) and film (the viewer could develop their critical rationality in the course of viewing).

In the 1960s, youth desired to crack the code maintaining sexual, social, racial and political oppressions. The code they offered as an alternative, like Benjamin in his pre-war days, took as its starting point the energies contained in youth movements. Student revolts were connected with movements of

rebellion in a number of sexual, social, racial and political spheres. The intellectual resources came from writers and theorists such as Mao on the Cultural Revolution, Marcuse on sexuality, one dimensional man, art and socialism, and Feminists such as Greer, who radicalised and socialised the individualistic and somewhat subjectivist, existential views of de Beauvoir. In practical terms, alternative collective life styles were proposed, encompassing popular music forms, smoking dope and living in environmentally friendly ways.

What then of today? What codes are being cracked and what new codes are being proposed as alternatives in their place? As with Benjamin in his pre-war days, the enervating energy for changing codes is found in youth movements and cultures. Two can be mentioned as examples. The first is hip hop, evolving in the U.S.A. in the late 1970s and 80s, and still exerting an ever stronger global influence. The code it cracked was that of complacency and passivity, which had socialised successive urban youth cultures into accepting unemployment and racial and ethnic oppression. The code it proposed in its place was a mixture of rap, music, dance and graffiti, where in some forms, the affirmation of an oppressed identity was countered by violent, sexist and gun-mediated activities. The hip hop code shared many parallels with Wagner's *gesamtkunstwerk*, embracing many forms of expression in a total, manifold sense. Hip hop has had, however, a greater street following, with a less elitist style of life in itself. Intellectually it developed its alternative code through pop artists such as Snoop Dogg and Ice-cube.

The second example is that of the internet which cracks the code of communication restricted to more asynchronic forms, such as the surface or air-flight transported letter. Its global linkage of computers founds and supports a code, which is potentially more synchronic and capable of overcoming the limits of space and time upon communication. Its intellectual resources seem to develop more organically on the basis of its users practices and intentions. Users who don't necessarily intend a reproduction of the norms dominant in face-to-face communication. There are however a number of parallels, as in the e-mail practice where messages are designed to *flame* and *insult* their recipients. This is paralleled by the face-to-face version of the open, raised-voice argument where the intention is to offend the other party.

What does all this have to with Benjamin and the question of an urban pedagogy? Could it be the case that Benjamin as a writer and also in his daily life as an urban flâneur, proposed and lived according to a strategy based upon cracking the codes of restrictive existing conditions, and proposing the creation of different alternative codes in their place. Code breaking then, as a way of unravelling the darkened labyrinth of existing urban society, and proposing in its place an equally demanding set of codes, which have to be mastered by their users, if they wish to gain entry and acceptance, as well as power, in the society of adult and fully qualified citizens. A pedagogy then. not merely for the classroom, but extended to the act of code breaking and making in the course of everyday urban life.

Bernstein (1971-73) understood the code-based character of the pedagogic process, he coined the term restricted codes and their opposite, elaborated codes. Likewise, Bourdieu talked of cultural capital as a master code governing pedagogic activity and societal recognition and access to power. But, they both underplayed, or perhaps even lacked Benjamin's insight that codes can change with each new generation, in a dialectical process of opposition, where the breaking of one code and the imposition of its successor can be a violent and turbulent affair. This means that if pedagogy is to have more than a descriptive task limited to exposing and confirming existing codes in society, it must have additionally a political and emancipatory project: the breaking and making of new codes in an urban environment.

Violence All parties, not least teachers, refuse to condone violence. But, as Benjamin noted a distinction must be drawn between so-called sanctioned violence based upon the power invested in state laws, such as those covering the 'limits of educational authority to punish', and unsanctioned violence, when revolutionary masses threaten the very framework of a society. (Benjamin, 1979, p134)

The problem for society is that violence is an inherent natural capacity 'de facto' at the disposal of the individual, something noted by Spinoza and implicit in the conclusions of Darwin's biology. Benjamin argues that this leads society to see 'violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system.' (Benjamin, 1979, p135)

Sanctioned violence is to Benjamin synonymous with the etui-man looking for comfort and the preservation of their bourgeois domestic interior against unsanctioned violence. (Benjamin, 1979, p158) To counter this bourgeois desire for the repetition and reproduction of the re-assuring *ever-same* he evokes the *destructive character*, who 'knows only one watchword: make room; only one activity: clearing away.' (p157) Of this character he notes:

The destructive character is young and cheerful. For destroying rejuvenates in clearing away the traces of our own age... the world is simplified when tested for its worthiness of destruction. (Benjamin, 1979, p158)

Educationally, the *destructive character's* value is revealed most clearly in their pursuit of the situation as opposed to the power of property, wealth and capitalist reproduction, 'some pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them, others pass on situations, by making them practicable and thus liquidating them.' (p158) With this awareness, Benjamin was a forerunner of the Parisian Situationists of the 1950-60s and their psycho-geographical colleagues who attacked the society of the spectacle. Benjamin, the Situationists and the *destructive character* shared the desire to interrupt the increasing tendency for capitalism to commodify events, performances and instigate the society of spectators entwined in the society of the spectacle. The interruption had as its goal to increase

participation and therefore break the passiveness of the spectator. Street disturbances, disobedient pupils in the classroom – they have their value.

The influence of friends Educationalists have always been anxious that their pupils were unreceptive and pacified by the knowledge taught. Take for example Dewey, well-known for his views on education and pragmatism, who sought to practically occupy pupils with sewing, carpentry and cooking. Acquiring skills through *learning by doing* was integral to an active reception and retention of knowledge, and it was also meant to instil a social spirit and a sense of community.

However, Dewey's strategy all too often leads to a reproduction of the status quo. Benjamin was an apologist for a different form of learning by doing. From his friend Brecht he learnt of the alienation effect, but without actually following his example and becoming a professional revolutionary. He learnt of the secrets of Judaism from his friend Gerhard Scholem without fulfilling his promise to join him in Palestine and complete his learning of Hebrew. Likewise, he listened patiently to the criticisms of his friend Adorno, but he made only slight alterations to, rather than abandoned, the emerging direction of his Arcades project. On one level, Benjamin appeared to have learnt from the example of his friends, to do as they suggested and threaten the status quo; on another level, he never fully adopted their examples, or realised their radical intentions. In such a manner, he limited the influence others had upon him as guides into new fields of disruptive knowledge, enlightenment and revolutionary commitment.

A strange learning by doing, where to do and to learn were separated. For Benjamin, learning by doing meant to be more a commentator of the radical and revolutionary deeds of others, than to be a doer of these actual deeds. And yet, to commentate was for him a form of intervention, and in this sense it represented a way of doing. He also learnt from his experiences of an extended visit to post-revolutionary Russia in the late 1920s. In his opinion, Russians editors were more than willing to encourage the written contributions of their readers:

The distinction between the author and public, which the bourgeois press maintains by artificial means, is beginning to disappear in the Soviet press. The reader is always prepared to become a writer (schreibender), in the sense of being one who describes (beschreibender) or prescribes (vorschbender). As an expert - not in any particular trade, perhaps, but anyway an expert on the subject of the job he happens to be in - he gains access to authorship... Authority to write is no longer founded in a specialist training but in a polytechnical one, and so becomes common property. (Benjamin, 1983a, p90)

Extending the application of this practice to our present situation, children as well as adults should be encouraged to write not only of their inclusion in the world of work on Saturdays, or their delivering newspapers on weekdays, but

also of their leisure time pursuits. Benjamin would have approved of the internet because it gives the child the chance to write and strike up friendships with fellow writers beyond the sphere of the workplace, the classroom and the jurisdiction of the employer, parent or teacher.

Readers, spectators and children are turned into *collaborators*. For Benjamin, and for Brecht in his reworking of epic theatre, it was essential that these collaborators shouldn't 'reproduce conditions', but disclose and uncover them. Action, adored by children, must be brought to a standstill in mid-course, so that the spectator is compelled 'to take up a position towards the action, and the actor to take up a position towards his part.' (Benjamin, 1983a, p100) The child as pupil thus gains the opportunity, training and authority to intervene in the course of events.

Reading So much educational effort expended through the centuries, with each successive generation learning, at times in a forced or secretive manner, to read books - works overburdened with text, emanating the aura of eternity and venerated accordingly. Benjamin identified a change:

Printing having found in the book a refuge in which to lead an autonomous existence, is pitilessly dragged out onto the street by advertisements and subjected to the brutal heteronomies of economic chaos. This is the hard schooling of its new form. If centuries ago it began gradually to lie down, passing from upright inscription to the manuscript resting on sloping desks before finally taking to bed in the printed book, it now begins just as slowly to rise again from the ground. The newspaper is read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane, while film and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular. And before a child of our time finds his way clear to opening a book, his eyes have been exposed to such a blizzard of changing, colourful, conflicting letters that the chances of his penetrating the archaic stillness of the book are slight. (Benjamin, 1979, p62)

Accordingly, the return to the vertical has been embraced by capitalists advertising their commodities and by politicians marketing their allegiances and manifestoes in catchy captions. Teachers in the classroom are skeptical, reading the signs of the street is less easily controlled than reading from the blackboard. But, even they must admit that there exists a yet to be limited potential in the anarchist writing of graffiti artists and street gangs who mark their territory for future generations of psycho-geographers. This is to say nothing of the young surfer's of the global net, who read from their screens (sometimes vertical and sometimes tilted or mobile upon their laps or palms) – and the teacher who struggles in vain to control this potentially anarchistic activity, whether it be textual or iconic.

Is resistance possible? The 'dictatorial perpendicular' at every opportunity 'penetrating the archaic stillness' of those seeking refuge in the book, or

even of those walking in the street, accosted by the advertisement. It is said that the painter Edvard Munch at the turn of the century, while walking in European cities would look to the ground – the impressions and look of others were too strong and threatening upon his imagination and composure. Vietnamese culture has talked of the impoliteness of making direct eye contact with figures of authority. In a photograph of Benjamin, the melancholy of his expression has attracted remarks – he too looks to the ground and away from the intrusiveness of the camera and viewer.

Knowledge As a German it is not surprising that Benjamin at first felt compelled to ground his view of knowledge in the framework of Kant. But, he was always critical of Kant's desire to limit knowledge and its truth to the certainty provided by universal categories held by the subject, in their encounter with the object transformed from an object-in-itself to an object-for-us.

He did agree with Kant that some knowledge was generated by the subject's own category determined perception of the object, but his argument was that Kant calculated his yield on too narrow a concept of experience. An experience too wedded to the 'cognizing consciousness' of the ego placed in front of the object. The boundaries of the sane, healthy, Euro-centric ego can be crossed to gain entry to the Other's experience of knowledge:

We know of primitive peoples of the so-called pre-animistic stage who identify themselves with sacred animals and plants and name themselves after them; we know of insane people who likewise identify themselves in part with objects of their perception, which are thus no longer objecta, "placed before" them; we know of sick people who do not relate the sensations of their bodies to themselves, but rather to other creatures, and of clairvoyants who at least claim to be able to feel the sensations of others as their own. (Benjamin, 1983a, p44)

In Benjamin's later work the consciousness of the bourgeois, healthy, sane ego was transgressed in search of access to knowledge and truth held by the proletarian mass and street dwellers normally considered part of the lumpenproletariat, such as rag pickers or prostitutes. It was therefore not accidental that while he was on the pay roll of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, drawing a small stipend, he was also associated with the Collège de Sociologie in Paris. From 1937-1939, intellectuals such as Bataille, Leiris, Caillois, along with Benjamin and others, met in a Latin Quarter Café dining room to discuss and investigate sacred, ritual moments when 'experiences outside the normal flow of existence' sought collective expression. (Clifford, 1988, p141) If the Institute demanded more traditional presentations of knowledge in the form of articles for its journal, the Collège made no such demands and allowed Benjamin to pursue his interest in other forms and sources of knowledge. Could this be a clue to understanding the ambitions of his Arcades project?

Benjamin therefore refused to confine knowledge to the safe, secure, propertied domain of the institutionalised (social) scientist, teacher and member of the bourgeoisie, where the role of subject and object were unthreatened. The chance that a person on the street might suddenly tap you on the shoulder and say, "I know you", means that other, potentially anonymous people, can have knowledge of you. The scientist, teacher and member of the bourgeoisie are not therefore the only personages with access to knowledge. What of the police who appear, as in Kafka's *The Trial*, without prior warning one morning? And Benjamin notes, we are startled, knowledge of the world suddenly revealed - not having had time to breakfast, not having therefore made the rupture between the nocturnal and the daytime worlds...the fasting man tells his dream as if he were talking in his sleep.' (Benjamin, 1979, p46)

The giving and reception of counsel The teacher lecturing to a lecture hall full of students can agree to the democratic demand that all should have the right to attend and learn. For Nietzsche this was bound to result in a lowering of standards, equality rather than quality, such that the presumed existence of a few students of excellence was eclipsed in the desire to meet societal demands for more and more qualified workers and civil servants. (Nietzsche, 1990)

Dewey, a favourite of pedagogues, argued that instead of the lecture hall or blackboard classroom teaching, where students might be bored, unengaged and hardly motivated to stay awake and learn, *learning by doing* should be the goal. Students, could then work in groups to solve in project form, problems posed by themselves or their teachers. The students were to actively search for and acquire their knowledge, with the ambition of consolidating it in newly mastered skills.

The arrival of the internet and different information technologies has increased the student's opportunity to search for knowledge. Hence, the increasing relevance of project work and problem solving as a learning strategy, where access to knowledge is a vital ingredient. These new (computer mediated) communication technologies also increase the teacher's ability to address a large number of students, either synchronically through video-conferencing to different locations and lecture halls/classrooms, or through the asynchronic storage of the lecture for a later point in time to suit a potentially infinite number of students.

Benjamin lived before the time of the internet and he posed the question of teaching differently. For him it was a question of the communication of experience. Not just any kind of experience, but experience communicated in story form and experience for which, the hearer would find a future use. To put it differently, it was a question of the teacher being able to offer counsel to the pupil in an individual manner. Individual in the sense that it accorded with the pupil's own particular life, viewed as an ongoing story for them and for those around them.

Benjamin added, however, that in twentieth century information-saturated society it was less easy to offer counsel:

In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel...but if today "having counsel" is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. (Benjamin, 1992, p86)

Benjamin, writing in the 1930s viewed the rise of the newspaper as typical of information society, 'every morning it brings us news of the globe, yet we struggle to integrate it so that it is relevant for our daily lives'. (Benjamin, 1983, p112-113; 1990, p89) That is, we don't readily, or easily, make it into part of our experience and life story, so that we can in turn make use of it and communicate it as counsel at a later date.

For Benjamin, there was no point sitting in a lecture hall, or doing different projects, if the knowledge had the character of information and wasn't integrated into the individual's reservoir of experience. This was the problem for soldiers returning from the ravages of the First World War – poorer, not richer in experiences considered worth telling. (Benjamin, 1990, p84) Furthermore for Benjamin, a student being in a position to search freely on the internet and select the knowledge considered suitable for their own experiences - this would not in itself have been enough: would the student in the course of their search or on attaining the required knowledge - would they receive the counsel they desire, and then in turn be in a position to offer counsel? Counselling defined as the communication of something more than just knowledge of the lecture hall or the completed project. Namely the communication of experience, with experience turned into knowledge.

For Benjamin, this desire for counsel was the connecting link between the knowledge taught and desired by the teacher and the motivated student. And, this explains why he expressed sorrow at the demise of the storyteller who could give counsel. Searching for knowledge on your own on the internet, to complete a set project or learn a skill, is not then the same as receiving counsel from another. There are those who offer counselling services on the internet, but are they willing to listen to the whole of a person's story, of the particular context in which the person finds themselves? What if the counsellor on the internet charges by the minute, or limits their availability to certain times in the week or day?

Benjamin, in evoking the role of 'experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth', was undoubtedly looking back to a presumed golden age when Greeks, like Socrates, could hold dialogues with pupils or strangers in the street. Asking them questions and refusing to provide ready-made recipes and answers to their desire for counsel.

The dialogues of Socrates are presented in the form of unhurried dialogues, where Socrates shows a willingness in the course of the dialogue to admit that he might in fact have been mistaken and must revise a point of view. For example, in his dialogue with Cratylus on the origin of words, he argues that they arise in the naming of objects and actions according to their usage and nature. Later, Socrates has to revise this and admit that some names are derived from convention and traditional, so that the object or action can be recognised by the listener.

Some teachers utilising the internet and new information technologies want these technologies to increase the amount of dialogue they have with their students. They also believe that internet communication is more effective if there has at some earlier point in time been face to face communication between the parties involved. But, is it more effective communication which is desired, if by this we mean the quick and cost-effective attainment of knowledge and skills? What is arguably required, as Benjamin would insist, is the opportunity, as teacher, to give counsel in a slow, unhurried fashion, where experiences can be communicated in such a manner that they are only slowly accommodated to match the needs of the recipient. Accordingly, the recipient must be called upon to interpret the counsel given, they aren't to passively accept it as necessarily true and valid. And, if the knowledge has been received under the guidance of a counsellor, then there will be a greater probability that it can be communicated by its recipient to others, who have themselves benefited from experiencing the counsellor-counselled relationship.

So, has the arrival of new technologies changed the teacher's role and the demands made upon it? In the perspective of Benjamin's interest in counselling, communicating knowledge as experiences attuned to the ongoing story of the student, the teacher using the internet and new technologies as a medium will not necessarily be content with video conferencing to lecture halls, or setting students to independently work on projects to enhance and realise their *learning by doing*. They will still desire to enter in an unhurried dialogue with the student. This means that the teacher's role will demand not a new didactic, but the recovery and re-actualisation of the dialogue, as proposed and practiced by Socrates.

To bring about what has fashionably been called, *collaborative learning* through the medium of the computer. Popular at this moment as a term, collaborative learning is but a re-working and revaluation of the presence of Socrates to mean: a counsellor who contextualises, monitors, prompts and most importantly weaves the different threads of a person's life or of their knowledge into a story. (Sorensen, 1997, p72)

Put concisely, a pedagogy of dialogue based upon the communication of experiences and not information; where information stands for knowledge less easily, and never fully, integrated into the life story of its recipient.

Translation, pedagogy and the destructive character

Could it be that pedagogy is simply the question of translation between teacher and pupil: from the teacher's textbook to their spoken word, and from there again a translation to the exercise book of the pupil and their minds? Translation in the widest sense of the term, for pedagogues referring to the communication of texts, events and experience as knowledge between generations or between teacher and pupil, and building upon the experiences of what is more narrowly understood to be translation. Namely, the translation of languages, texts, linguistic utterances and their meanings. Put differently, could it be that the art of translation, as much as the knowledge contained in texts, events and experiences communicated, is what the educationalist should study? In a phrase the existential condition of the *pedagogue as translator*. And let it not be forgotten, the underlying, if under-stated assumption in the argument that follows is that, Benjamin in his urban wanderings, in his seeking the company of dramatists, Marxists, Surrealists, theologians, in his academic works was to all intensive purposes exploring this existential condition.

Directing the focus of the pedagogue towards translation between generations of knowledge contained in texts, events and experiences is further justified by the recognition that attaining knowledge of the original as it is actually brought forth in a foundational manner for the benefit of future generations is difficult, if not impossible. The original is always open to re-interpretation by future generations, it decays or the context of its original production and consumption change, the context of its present or future consumption may also differ. The original refuses to be fixed. (Cadava, 1997, p92) It's consumption and communication therefore requires a re-interpretation, or better still what could be called a translation. A continual translation without the revelation of an endpoint.

Part I: Respecting the foundational, original text, event or experience to be translated as knowledge

Benjamin wrote an essay, the *Task of the Translator*, where he argued that the translator's object of concern wasn't so much the information contained in the original, what we might call knowledge of the foundational text, event or experience as referent. The translator's object of concern was instead the language of the original. But, neither was the translator out to reproduce the language of the original in a new language with such mirror-like consistency and efficiency that the original's language should become obsolete.

He proposed the following:

The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect (intentiona) upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original... The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational. (Benjamin, 1992, p76-77)

The translator should expose and echo how the poet has achieved his graphic experiences, hence the derivative project. (Jacobs, 1993, p137) Or, to put it differently and to extend the argument to the practice of the pedagogue, the translator and the pedagogue, should desire to echo and show the methods used by the original to communicate its content. And such an endeavour will of necessity lead to a focus on language itself. Hence Benjamin's point:

A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade. (Benjamin, 1992, p79)

In other words, the translator works with the words of the original language, such that 'a literal rendering of the syntax' in a new language will permit an insight into precisely the language effects of the original and its content. Hence his view that the sentences of the original are in fact a wall or barrier preventing a deeper contact with the original language. It is necessary to break down these sentences and reconstruct them through a literal syntax (ordering) in the new language. Such a literal syntax will reveal language, that of the original and of the new, not to be a walled, restrictive barrier, but an arcade permitting numerous encounters and effects.

Steiner is skeptical of Benjamin's literal translation because he understands Benjamin's goal as the pursuit of the spirit of the original. Nevertheless, he seems to agree on the importance of emphasising the necessity of a dislocation between the original and the translation, and if anything suggests precisely some essence or spirit of the original. His definition of the 'supreme translation' therefore emphasises the importance of the translation being similar to, rather than the same as the original:

Supreme translation... it can illuminate the original, compelling it, as it were, into greater clarity and impact... by deploying visibly, elements of connotation, of overtone and undertone, latencies of significance, affinities with other texts and cultures or defining contrasts with these – all of which are present, are 'there' in the original from the outset but may not have been fully declared. (Steiner, 1996, p206)

To summarise, the translator, and by extending the argument, the *pedagogue as translator* concerned to translate texts, events or experiences as knowledge for a new generation, should according to Benjamin concern themselves with echoing and showing the methods of the original. Through literalness for example, the intention to reproduce in mirror-like fashion and make obsolete the individual language would be thwarted. The original language and the new language would then remain separate, and the content

of the original language would also have its own place, connected more directly with the original language and more indirectly with the new language.

To repeat, should the pedagogue therefore attempt to make themselves invisible and let the light of the original shine ever more brightly? Drawing on Benjamin's line of argument the answer would be that this could only be desirable if the pedagogue intended to reproduce totally the language and content of the original in the new teaching language and context. And this is impossible, to begin with, the context of the now will never exactly mirror that of the original. One argument in support of this is that there can be no eternal return (Nietzsche) or return of the ever same (Benjamin), which is other than a mythical illusion designed to deny the flow of time and history. Hence the view that the original and the translation should remain, for the pedagogue, as two recognisably different entities, separated by context and also by time.

And yet, the pedagogue might regard their task differently: as analogous to the professional translator working to translate a contract of law for a foreign company, or, a person desiring that their school diplomas should be translated to assist their application to a foreign university, such that the content of the text is important. The pedagogue with such tasks of translation in mind then has to strive to make themselves and the difference between their text and the foundation text invisible. It may be the case that the translation Benjamin had in mind dealt not with meeting the pragmatic demands of the capitalist in an enterprise or the university registrar, but with the less overtly utilitarian demands of the aesthetic work of art. The subtitle of his essay on the translator was *an Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens*.

If this is correct, the pedagogue is therefore faced with a choice: to translate and strive not to overlap and make obsolete the language and content of the original. That is, a goal whereby the teacher is determined to leave their mark upon the original and mark their differentness. Alternatively, the pedagogue must strive to leave no trace of their presence: to communicate both the language and content of the original with such a strength and intensity that the flame of independent identity uttering them has been extinguished.

The latter type of pedagogue may provide a path into Benjamin's reflections on the destructive character, 'the destructive character obliterates even the traces of destruction'. (1979, p158) Take for example the following experience: some may have experienced teachers who communicated knowledge and experience we have had cause to return to at a later date, but can't remember their names or faces. All that remained was the aura of the original and not a mark of the translation or the translator.

To strive after not leaving a mark of presence upon the translated and communicated knowledge in such a manner will require a destructive act in the sense that the pedagogue or translator must actively destroy their presence. But, it can also be argued that the destructive character is also necessary where the teacher as translator desires to leave their mark of differentness on the original. In this latter case, the distancing from the original and its inclusion in a new language, text or for a new generation will

destroy the real or imagined context of the original to make a space for the context of the new one. Older or previous meanings and turns of phrase may also have to be destroyed in the process of wrestling this space and context for the new translation.

As Nietzsche put it, it is a case of creative destruction, and this will then characterise the task of the translator and *pedagogue as translator*.

...the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life...(Nietzsche, 1969, p104)

However, it is important to note that this destruction in order to create doesn't necessarily have to lead to the final imposition or choice of one new version to the exclusion of all alternatives. The necessary choice of a new version is always re-negotiable at a later point in time. Or, to put it differently the closure is never permanent. In Benjamin's phrase(1979), perhaps inspired by Nietzsche, 'the destructive character sees nothing as permanent...no vision...few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed.'

This has not stopped those who have regarded the *creative destruction* involved in the translation of and communication of knowledge across generations as a type of nation building project, if by nation it is meant an enclosed set of meanings and delimited experiences, that is, the imposition of a unity founded upon a closure for socio-political purposes. For example, to Germanise the foreign and thereby create a culture and tradition more in keeping with the everyday needs of Germans lay behind Luther's translation of the Bible, 'to translate was for Luther to Germanise'. (Ulriksen, 1991, p 208) But, this maybe more of an ambition and stated goal than a realised project. With Luther's Bible, different interpretations of the text arose and with them the desire for new translations.

In other words, each translation will be the desire to create a space for the new translation, at the same time as this new translation, however momentary, in its very emergence leads to a certain closure. Heidegger called such a presencing a clearing of the space of Being(Ge-Stell – letting-come-forth-here), and he connected it with the desire for closure and concealment at the same time, the 'conflict of clearing and concealing'. (Heidegger, 1971, p55, 84) It is precisely this concealment as closure, which Benjamin (1971) would deny, 'the destructive character sees nothing as permanent'. Respect for the foundational, original text, event or experience to be translated as knowledge therefore entails a number of choices about destructive intentions and *the pedagogue as translator's* intention to erase or alternatively mark their presence.

Part II: the question of the untranslatable

To connect the actions of the translator and the *pedagogue as translator* with violence, destruction and the obliteration of traces would be anathema to

either of these figures as professional occupations, even though there might be talk of a *creative destruction*. Their argument would be that to teach/translate can hardly involve destruction and all its connotations of undesired force and will to power; on the contrary it involves creation, in an ever more distilled and cultured manner. But to side-step their argument somewhat, connecting destruction and violence with pedagogy and translation is to draw attention to the role played by the emotions.

In most discussions of translation the emotions engaged in the activity are brushed over. Thus, in typical fashion Paz directs attention to the question as to whether everything is translatable. His conclusion:

...translation of the denotative meanings of a text is possible; on the one hand, opinion is near unanimous that translation of the connotative meanings is impossible...I confess that this idea repels me...the lists of words are different but the context, emotion, and meaning are analogous... Hugo and Unamuno show that connotative meanings can be preserved, if the translator-poet succeeds in reproducing the verbal situation, the poetic context in which they are set... similar effects with different means. (Paz, 1991, p190-191, 196)

Apparently addressing the issue of the emotions, he does in fact seem to leave untouched one of the most important emotions, and it provides the implicit background for his comments. This is namely a certain *anxiety* that there might be texts, events and experiences which are untranslatable as knowledge. The translator, and by extension the *pedagogue as translator*, become then the first to encounter the foreign words, culture and knowledge and thus the first to meet the presence of this *anxiety*. As a consequence, much responsibility rests upon their shoulders to alleviate this *anxiety*. This is how I would like to read Paz's comments on the act and art of translation and also by extension the activity of pedagogy.

Of course, there have been others who have met this challenge and *anxiety* head on and refused to find arguments or means to alleviate its emotional force and consequences. Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* is a case in point. A text which draws upon over sixty different languages. Instead of translating and removing their mutual presence and the formation of one text in one master language he follows several strategies, such as crafting portmanteau words comprising many mother tongues. Mother tongues of course in this context is a misnomer. Joyce lets the many languages run riot, like disobedient and rebellious pupils in a classroom where the teacher is absent. Joyce thus refuses to translate one language, culture and knowledge into another. And there are no indications of his feeling overwhelmed by an *anxiety* for the untranslatable and the cultural imperative for its control and discipline.

Here is an example from the scene in the book, where the children in the act of doing their homework reflect upon history as the movement of conflict and war, sexual intrigues and the motive of money or profit:

da, da, of Sire Jeallyous Seizer, that gamely torskmester, with his duo of druidesses in ready money rompers...(Joyce, 1975, p271)

(From the Russian *da* means yes; *Jeallyous Seizer* is a pun on Julius Caesar immersed in jealous intrigues; *gamely* meaning in the game of, but also from the Danish meaning the old man; *torskmester* meaning task, master and leader, but also meaning cod master and fisherman; and *money rompers* referring to the role of money as a motive in history, as well as sexual desire in *rompers*, revealed in one of Joyces' notebooks as connected with a woman's skirt)

If anything, Joyce seems to enjoy the experience of unresolved difficulties in the encounter between different cultures, languages and generations. A second example can stand as a further illustration, this time taken from his earlier novel *Ulysses*. Instead of the Catholic belief in *transubstantiation*, a form of translation in itself, whereby bread and wine in the Eucharist actually become the body and blood of Christ, and instead of *consubstantiation*, a refusal of translation, favoured by Lutherians, where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of the same substance, but result in bread and wine co-existing rather than becoming the body and blood of Christ, Joyce favours his own variant, namely *substantiality*. In his novel, *Ulysses*, this is found in the debasement of the substance of bread and wine through episodes of bestiality. Specifically, in a discussion of the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception and Léo Taxil's view that Mary's pregnancy could be traced to copulation with a sacred pigeon. (see the Oxen Episode in *Ulysses*. Joyce, 1992)

So, long before he completed *Finnegans Wake*, it seems Joyce envisaged not the translation of substances into the one and same substance (for example, in our context, the pedagogue's belief in a mirror-like translation, what Benjamin warned against) or their co-existence despite the sharing of some substance (for example, in the context of pedagogy this could be the pedagogue or father/mother's recognition that the next generation belong to the same culture or linguistic group, but won't receive through translation an exact reproduction of its texts, events and experiences as knowledge), but their debasement, or to put it differently the necessity of respecting differentness prior to the potential debasement or decay of one or both of the substances in their encounter.

Joyce was therefore throwing down the gauntlet and challenging those who feared the *anxiety* of the untranslatable. In the context of the *pedagogue as translator*, Joyce met this challenge not in the view that texts, events and experience as knowledge from another time was absolutely incomprehensible, or that contemporary society can have no insight into how things really were, rather he looked to the mixing of languages used to represent these events and how this might give a fuzzy, clouded conception open to dispute. But, in refusing a mirror-like translation or its opposite, of an absolute difference between the text/event/experience and its translation as knowledge, he was also refusing Paz's confidence that the denotative, emotive and connotative could be translated to achieve 'similar effects with different means'. Where Paz desired to overcome the untranslatable and the

implicit *anxiety* presented by the threat of the untranslatable, Joyce lets language communicate the approach towards - without falling into it - the abyss of untranslatable knowledge of texts, events and experiences between generations and people.

This mixing of languages may be enjoyable and not a source of *anxiety*, it may also represent how languages develop by borrowing and transforming words and phrases, but the suspicion is that Joyce on occasions actually enters the abyss of the untranslatable. And, once in this abyss it is doubtful if people will be able to communicate with each other at all. Instead of a pedagogy translating texts, events and experiences as knowledge between generations, the student and the teacher will remain apart in their separate worlds. The result will, then not be a dissemination of knowledge and insight for the benefit of the student and coming generations, but the isolation of students and their potential stagnation - unless some form of Rousseau inspired perspective on learning naturally and independently is promoted.

Part III: Translation as experience

What needs to be addressed, and even here perhaps Benjamin takes it for granted, is the very experience of translating and what it might mean for the translator and the *pedagogue as translator*. I shall argue that to translate, and by extension the activity of the *pedagogue as translator*, involves a mix of five far from exclusive experiences.¹ Two of the five experiences of translating have already been discussed above. Firstly, the translator having to make choices on their degree of anonymity in the language and content of knowledge communicated; and secondly coming to terms with the not necessarily removable presence of an emotion of *anxiety* connected with the possibility of untranslatable texts, events and experience as knowledge.

Both of these experiences will carry with them consequences for the *pedagogue as translator*. If the pedagogue attempts to erase their presence then students might under-estimate or neglect their role as guides into the acquisition of this translated knowledge. In other words, to erase their presence might undermine the respect and authority which students have of them. Alternatively, the pedagogue desiring to leave a personal mark upon the knowledge of texts, events and experiences translated might face a different, almost apposite consequence. Namely, that the pedagogue's presence takes over and eclipses the very knowledge translated. Secondly, if the pedagogue expresses their *anxiety* over the threat of the untranslatable, then the student might adopt this *anxiety* themselves, or, alternatively lose respect for a pedagogue regarded as too emotional and subjective, lacking in the ability to deal objectively with knowledge.

The act of translating as both translator and pedagogue also involves a third experience. This is anger or perhaps even resentment, to use Nietzsche's term. For Nietzsche (1969) resentment was found in the emotional condition

¹ The criteria for their selection is based upon my inductive experiences of translating over a number of years, predominantly involving texts from Norwegian into English.

of a subordinate who plans and cultivates projects of revenge upon those leaders above them who have acted unfairly towards them or set them tasks which they regard as unjustified. The person consumed by resentment becomes incapable of acting spontaneously.

Anybody who translates a demanding text where the writer or speaker is not present risks feeling a certain anger towards the writer of the text who it is felt hasn't made the same choices that as translator, are regarded as obvious and necessary. Alternatively, the translator might feel overwhelmed by the sheer brilliance of the text and that it is impossible to produce even the 'similar effect with different means' suggested by Paz. As a consequence the translator and *pedagogue as translator* will experience a feeling of resentment towards the author as a source of anger or admiration.

However disquieting and unsettling the feelings of anger, admiration and resentment experienced in the course of the act of translating might be, it is not necessarily the case that they should be removed. It is arguably better that the translator is emotionally engaged in the perpetual attempt to create 'similar effects with different means'. If the translator and *pedagogue as translator* is emotionally cold to the text, the recipient of their efforts may sense a lack of engagement and interest and hence reproduce this rather than the intended effect of the original writer or speaker. In other words, the pedagogue's lack of engagement will result in a lack of engagement in the student, and the latter will lack a motivation to accept the knowledge communicated by the pedagogue.

The fourth experience of translating varies according to whether the task is the translation of a written text or the simultaneous translation of a verbal utterance. In the former case, the *pedagogue as translator* may work alone and face the experience of isolation. In the latter case, the translator may work in the presence of others, such that translation becomes a visible and shared social activity. Of course, in the latter case, the student can witness the efforts of the pedagogue. This will provide for the foundation of learning by example and perhaps the opportunity to engage in a collaborative act of translating along with the pedagogue.

A variant of this translating alone and translating in a more collective and social context can be found in the pedagogue as translator who prior to the teaching activity makes a partial translation alone, only to later complete it in a collective manner with the students. Such a movement between isolation and sociability suggests the necessity of a fifth experience while translating. This is the experience of concentration. The translator of written texts often talks of how demanding it is to maintain concentration on the task at hand. The translator of verbal utterances also expresses the need to not let their concentration drop for a moment. It is thus, not without surprise that professional translators engaged in both these types of translating activity value their breaks and the chance to do a different activity.

To summarise, it is the case that the *pedagogue as translator* should accept the presence of emotions such as anxiety, anger, admiration and resentment when texts, events and experiences are translated and

communicated as knowledge to students. They should also negotiate the isolation – sociability dilemma and the anonymity –presence dilemma as they privately decide and prepare knowledge translated for its subsequent social dissemination. The *pedagogue as translator* will have the need for intermissions in teaching and in preparing lessons, when the company of others teachers may be sought.

Discussion

The main argument presented in this essay is that pedagogy is at base a question of translation, and more specifically the existential experience of translation. A point made by Paz:

To learn to speak is to learn to translate; when the child asks his mother the meaning of this word or that, he is really asking her to translate the unknown term into his language. In this sense, translation within a language is not essentially different from translation from one language into another...
(Paz, 1991, p184)

It has been argued in this sense that translation, referring in the narrow sense to language, texts, linguistic utterances and their meanings, and by extension to the activity of the *pedagogue as translator* with respect to texts, events and experiences as knowledge to be translated involves a related number of activities and experiences.

A number of points arise as points for additional discussion. First, Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, talked of a type of inner war in each individual between the instinct to love, 'perpetually attempting and achieving a renewal of life', and the death instinct assuring 'that the organism shall follow its own path to death'. (Freud, 1991, p311, 318). He also talked of the inner conflict between internalised disciplinary paternal and maternal figures, represented in the superego to use his terminology, and other instances in the psyche, such as the id and the ego. Potentially these Freudian ideas on the psyche's topology could be usefully re-conceptualised as a question of the translation of experiences and normative guidance and prohibitions between different instincts or different instances of the psyche. This would mean that the ego and id are forced to translate the imperatives and experiences of the superego, just as the instinct of love must be translated and come to terms with the instinct to kill or destroy. This would entail enlisting the pedagogue to map and understand translation as an intra-psyche phenomenon and not simply as an inter-psyche phenomenon between generations or between peer group members.

The point for discussion and research is therefore to widen the task of the *pedagogue as translator* to include not only inter but also intra-psyche phenomenon and experiences. And here, the understanding of Freud might have to be widened or criticised to include how the warring instincts or warring topological instances should also refer to the desire of the child to resist change from the known and familiar to the unknown and new imposed

by the internalised desires of the adult world and figures of authority such as the teacher. This is not to imply or argue for the view that every pedagogue should be versed in the world of psychology and psychiatry, but that the pedagogue should envisage and anticipate a widening of the sphere of their concerns to include the practice of translation between people, an inter-psyche activity, and also the practice of translation as an intra-psyche phenomenon.

A second issue of discussion is the argument that the pedagogue as translator's activity envisaged as emotionally weighted towards anxiety, admiration, anger and resentment, as a choice between sociability and isolation, as a destructive activity, as in general the social and experiential context of the activity, has ignored what translation is basically about. Namely, the translation of meanings from one language or generation to the next, and in this respect, the search for *metaphors* to replace those of the original and/or the creation of *metonymic* meanings to create chains of association. For example, refugees arrive in Norway and substitute new signifiers of meaning for known and familiar ones. For instance the Norwegian mountain hotel, used as a reception centre, becomes a metaphorical signifier of isolation in place of the Iranian coastal hotel in the homeland as a familiar signifier of pleasure. On the level of metonym, the red envelopes given by Vietnamese parents to their children at autumn parties signify larger, more inclusive, connected chains of meaning associated with the homeland, rites of passage into teenage years, happiness and good luck. Just as the metonym Bordeaux for Frenchmen is part of a chain of meaning associated Bordeaux as a place, as a colour, as a type of wine.

However, two extensions of this recognisably Lacanian framework are required. (Lacan, 1977) Firstly, metaphorical and metonymic systems of meaning are the site of hegemonic struggles. This is also the case when new signifiers of meanings arise: Norwegians and refugees themselves seek to consciously impose different meanings and signifiers in the struggle to define experiences. For example, in 1986 there was a sudden influx of Iranian asylum seekers into Norway. They were temporarily accommodated in expensive mountain hotels. The refugees disliked the hotels, regarding them as signifiers of isolation a long way from towns and other refugees and Norwegians. The Norwegian population refused such signifiers of meaning. To them mountain hotels were signifiers of luxury, privilege, peace and tranquillity.

Secondly, the concepts of metaphor and metonym are often applied to an analysis of signs, symbols and meanings divorced from their embodied connection with speakers and their life worlds That is, it is on the level of language that 'each word draws its meaning from all others.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993: 117) Instead of this it is necessary to identify the corporeal medium used in the living of signifiers and their assignment of meaning, as well as the general context and activity into which they are being inserted and from which they have been taken.

To paraphrase the later Wittgenstein, as opposed to the earlier Wittgenstein (with his concern to limit each word to a specific meaning and picture of the

world), it is not meanings per se which become the focal point, a typical concern in a text-bound conception of translation, but their use in *language games* and accompanying *forms of life*:

...the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others:

Giving orders, and obeying them –

Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements –

...Making a joke; telling it –

Solving a problem in practical arithmetic –

Translating from one language into another –

Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying. (Wittgenstein, 1994 §. 23)

And, when the second extension is made, the activity of *the pedagogue as translator* is no longer restricted to a narrow definition based upon metaphoric and metonymic shifts of meaning on a textual plain. Translation and pedagogic activity then necessarily includes the topics that have been discussed: the emotions of those involved, such as anxiety, the violence of destructive characters attempting to create, the question of the sociability or isolation of those involved.

With this the argument of this paper reaches its main goal, a goal which was perhaps evident at the outset to those experienced in translating as an experience: the *pedagogue as translator* is an existential condition giving rise to language games and forms of life.

An illustration: The storyteller as an image of the *pedagogue as translator*

Benjamin in his essay, the *Storyteller*, traces the lineage of the storyteller from its verbal beginnings to its later textual form in the novel, 'which neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it'. (Benjamin, 1992, p87). He is somewhat ambivalent: with the First World War and its after effects he identifies a decline in the ability of people to tell stories, in the context of the previous discussion, this would be a decline in the ability to translate experiences for the following generation. He discusses how it is not only the content of World War I experiences which are considered less worthy of being communicated (stag inflation, accounts of war, poverty and so on); it is also the very act of communicating experience, in the context of our discussion the translation of experience, which is becoming difficult, distorted or thwarted. In his famous essay on the reproduction of art, which he was also working on at about the same time, such a development was connected with the manner in which different media competed over the opportunity to transform experience into new forms of consumption: the cinema film, the radio and the newspaper, to mention a few.

As suggested he was ambivalent about these developments, even if the decline of the story and the storyteller was imminent, he refused to give up a

belief in the potential which remained in the story and the activity of the storyteller. The storyteller always demonstrated an orientation towards practical interests: Hebel 'slipped (in) bits of scientific instruction for his readers', some inserted a moral. What all aspired to was the giving of counsel, in the words of Benjamin, 'counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom'. (Benjamin, 1992, p86-87)

However the giving of counsel, in this context the activity of translating experience, is not as straightforward as it might seem. Consider the way one of Benjamin's sentences in this essay has been translated from the German into Norwegian and English. Or to put it differently, the consequences are far from without consequence:

In Benjamin's mother tongue (1961, p413):

Rat ist ja minder Antwort auf eine Frage als ein Vorschlag, die Fortsetzung einer (eben sich abrollenden) Geschichte angehend.

In English (Benjamin, 1992, p86) this has been translated as:

After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding.

In Norwegian (Benjamin, 1991, p182), the German source has been translated as:

Et råd er jo ikke så mye svar på et spørsmål som et forslag som har å gjøre med fortsettelsen av en historie, som i alle fall går sin gang.

Note how the English translation has the phrase, 'which is just unfolding', which appears in the source German sentence as, 'eben sich abrollenden', meaning 'at any rate roll on', or, 'at any rate occur'. It is present in the Norwegian, 'som i alle fall går sin gang', which can refer to how the recipient's own story, their life as experience, will continue on a course to an end, even if the counsel is not heeded. In other words, what Benjamin seems to say, according to the Norwegian version, and which the English translation glosses as unfolding, is the manner in which counsel can be heeded or ignored, but irrespective, a person's life story will reach and move onwards to an end. So, even if the life story is unfolding, and the counsel ignored, it will reach an endpoint. This carries the wider implication that humans must acknowledge their fundamental mortality. And, talking of death and mortality - providing counsel upon it - is one of the things Benjamin explores in later sections of in his essay on the phenomenology of the storyteller.

Highlighting the two different translations might seem to be an insistence upon the content of the translation, in this case the presence or absence of a reference to a person's own life story with an endpoint. However, attention must also be directed to the manner in which the translators have formed the communicated sentence and thus also its experiential content. Here it is not so much a question of the literal translation of the German and preserving a

respect for its language, as Benjamin proposed. Neither is it a question of the untranslatable, the German phrase, `eben sich abrollenden', received a translation. Nor is it a question of the translator's resentment or admiration for the source text, the mentioned and translated German phrase hardly gives rise to one of these motives.

What is at issue is the way in which translating is the opening up of different, often competing, horizons of meaning. It is to highlight the translator and their craft as wavering in commitment – having to make choices, selections and as a consequence omissions, glosses or additions. It is an illustration of what was referred to above as the translator and *pedagogue as translator's* character as committed or wavering in selection of one word or phrase rather than another. Thus, when Benjamin is translated in a different way in different languages, the point is not necessarily to arrive at the conclusion that one of the translations is correct and another incorrect and by implication false, but that his work is enriched in the ensuing discussion about the allocation of meaning and meanings. If meanings are multiplied, so too is our understanding of experience – and this is surely a goal for *the pedagogue as translator* who is seeking to communicate to new readers and generations. That is, to highlight the infinite expansion and enrichment of our language games and forms of life.

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