



v. 10, n. 2: EDIÇÃO ESPECIAL "South-Northern Mirror. Cultural Heritage and democratic challenges" – 2021 – ISSN 2316-395X

Democracy Lyotarded – A Postmodernist Take on Culture and Education

Democracia lyotardiana – uma visão pós-modernista sobre cultura e educação

Pia Diergarten¹

Abstract: The article aims at introducing a new way of reading french philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in pedagogical contexts. Before doing so, in the first part, a broad outline of the contemporary debate on postmodernism and postmodern philosophy, both in academia and in pop cultural and journalistic contexts is discussed, to highlight some relevant implications of the topic. While - not alone - Lyotard's postmodern position is blamed for corrupting and endangering democracy today by paving the way for the so-called 'post-truth-era', this article argues the opposite: Lyotard's position describes a distinct possibility of how democracy is viable today, against the backdrop of globalization, plurality, and diversity. The third part of the paper presents the prevailing Lyotard reception in German-speaking educational sciences, which in a certain sense promotes the post-truth tendency by focusing on incommensurability and heterogeneity. Against this, a proposal is substantiated to focus on another important aspect of Lyotard's philosophy: Namely, his attempts to outline a political philosophy following Kant's aesthetic of the sublime. Thus, together with Lyotard, an attempt could be made to establish bindingness and engagement in the midst of isolation and individualization – democracy Lyotarded.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Postmodernity, Democracy, Post-Truth, Lyotard

¹ Diergarten, Pia, M.A. (University of Jena) researches and teaches at the Institute for Bildung and Culture. Her work focuses on the philosophy of postmodernism as well as questions in the philosophy of education with regard to media and digitalization. The connection between democracy and the postfactual plays a crucial role here.

Resumo: O artigo objetiva introduzir uma nova forma de ler o filósofo francês Jean-François Lyotard em contextos pedagógicos. Antes disso, na primeira parte, linhas gerais do debate contemporâneo sobre a filosofia pós-modernista e o pós-moderno tanto na academia como nos contextos da cultura *pop* e jornalístico são trazidas para a discussão, salientando algumas relevantes implicações em relação ao tema. Enquanto – não sozinho – o posicionamento pós-moderno de Lyotard é culpado por corromper e colocar em perigo a democracia hoje em dia por pavimentar um caminho para a chamada era da pós-verdade, este artigo discute o oposto: o posicionamento de Lyotard descreve uma possibilidade distinta de como a democracia é viável atualmente em contraposição ao pano de fundo da globalização, pluralidade e diversidade. A terceira parte do texto apresenta a ampla recepção de Lyotard pelas ciências sociais alemãs, que, de certa maneira, promovem a tendência da pós-verdade por focar no incomensurável e na heterogeneidade. Contra isso, uma proposta é substanciada a fim de enfatizar outro importante aspecto da filosofia de Lyotard: nomeadamente, suas tentativas de delinear uma filosofia política seguindo a estética kantiana do sublime. Então, juntamente com Lyotard, uma tentativa de estabelecer união e engajamento durante o isolamento e a individualização – a democracia lyotardiana – poderia ser feita.

Palavras-chave: pedagogia, pós-modernidade, democracia, pós-verdade, Lyotard.

INTRODUCTION: VIEWS OF THE POSTMODERN

The subject matter of this article is the reception-history of French philosopher *Jean-François Lyotard's* writing on the Postmodern in German-speaking pedagogical theory. The context of that subject is the more and more vivid, public discussion on the relation between postmodernism and the increasingly recognized era of post-truth and fake news. The common thesis in contemporary journalistic as well as academic output is that postmodernism has paved the way for a philosophical and moral relativism that has led to a global state of arbitrariness and indifference in public and especially political communication. Today thus, it seems necessary to counter this postmodern stance with a certain degree of stability and certainty to regain a new faith in recognizability and changeability.

In an attempt to oppose this highly frequented view of the postmodern in popular discussion nowadays, this article sets out to outline a different prospect of the Postmodern. A view of the Postmodern shall be suggested which acquits the postmodern of having single-handedly caused the so-called post-truth era. The thesis to be substantiated is thus: A great part of postmodern philosophy and most notably Lyotard's take on the Postmodern did not and does not cause post-truth politics, the distribution of fake news or the circulation of alternative facts, nor does it cause an increased appeal to the latter. Instead, the Postmodern, particularly Lyotard's postmodern philosophy, can help analyze and thus defy the triumph of post-truth and fake news.

This thesis refers to the title and concern of the article: the importance of Lyotard's philosophical position, when speaking about politics, in this case democracy. The article sets out to firstly examine and secondly comment on the connection between democracy, truth, and post-truth respectively, and the impact of Lyotard's philosophy on this nexus. The first part of the paper seeks to give a brief overview of mostly popular scientific but also journalistic and academic discussion on the relation between postmodernism and "post-truth" in the Anglo-American, English-speaking part of the world. This is to illustrate the relevant context of the following analysis. The second part of this article contains preliminary considerations on democracy and on Lyotard's take on democracy and Education. This serves as preparation for the later explanation of the proposed interpretation of Lyotard for future reference in pedagogical thought. The third part will focus on the

reception history of Lyotard's philosophical writing in pedagogical theory. Lyotard is not a commonly revisited reference for pedagogical thought. Amongst the so-called "pedagogical classics" (Zierer/Saalfrank 2010; Tenorth 2003) – authors frequently cited and called upon for philosophical advice on questions concerning education, learning and teaching – Lyotard is nowhere to be found. Nonetheless, there is some pedagogical secondary literature on Lyotard. It will not be possible to display the full variety of the reception history of Lyotard's philosophy in all its nuances. Yet this article sets out to give an overview of the main tendencies of perception in German-speaking educational theory. It will thus show that there is one main strategy of interpretation and that large part of pedagogical consideration of postmodernity took place in the late 80s and early 90s of the past century.

Finally, the third part will tie in with the first part of the article, when proposing an alternate interpretation of Lyotard's philosophy concerning pedagogy. The article will end on an outlook, on a different way of reading Lyotard, when considering the impact of his philosophy in pedagogical research nowadays. This interpretation implies a productive extension for future pedagogical reference. The proposed view of the Postmodern culminates in an anthropological perspective that will allow a universal theory of education based on Lyotard's conception of the Postmodern.

1 DIFFERENT TAKES ON "THE POSTMODERN": ASSUMED IMPLICATIONS OF THE POSTMODERN ON POLITICS AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

In an early assessment of postmodern philosophy, Wolfgang Ivers (1988) remarks – in his overall optimistic review – that, although there is keen interest in the Postmodern at the time, there are specific concerns about it as well. These concerns involve different aspects. Most importantly, with respect to the following examination, are accusations of advocating relativism and thus paving the way for arbitrariness and irrationality both in academia and everyday life (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 19-21; *ibid.*, pp. 65f). Similar considerations are being repeated in most recent discussion in journalistic output (Hanlon 2018, Kakutani 2018), popular science (Neiman 2017, Ball 2017, McIntyre 2018), and philosophical academia (McLennan 2018, Boghossian 2013, Butler 2002, pp. 110f). Altogether and broadly speaking, these critics connect postmodern philosophy to an in their opinion troublesome socio-political climate that has become well known as the so-called era of "post-truth".

Since the first period of publications of postmodern theory and review in the late 70s through to the early 90s of the last century these concerns about postmodernism have built up to what has most famously been coined a current "Fear of Knowledge" (Boghossian 2013) in philosophical departments of universities and the sheer "Death of Truth" (Kakutani 2018) in politics, media and journalistic writing. This article proceeds from the intention to differentiate carefully between different philosophical approaches to "the Postmodern". It is hardly possible to generalize different postmodern author's positions to form a homogenous outline or consistent, encompassing terminology. Rather the intention of this article is to renounce bluntly blaming postmodern philosophy for the current symptoms and maladies of democracies. According to critics, postmodernism does not only play an explanatory but also causal part in the emergence and expansion of post-truth and fake news. "Truth is a cornerstone of our democracy", writes Michiko Kakutani (2018, p.19) and explains that public and political debates "must be based on common facts rather than raw appeals to emotion" (*ibid.*). Shared reality as a base for communication is also Susan Neiman's proposition for coping with and defying "bald lies" (Neiman 2017, p. 7), as she asserts in her *Manifesto in a Post-Truth Era*, written and published in response to the election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States in 2016.

The linkage between postmodernist philosophy and politics lies in the notion of truth that seems to be central in both areas (cf. Farkas/Schou 2020, esp. pp. 1-41). In their original analysis Farkas and Schou (2020) deliver a critical interrogation of present-day discourse

on *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy*. They identify a dominant narrative of our time, which consists in two parts: firstly, democracy is in a state of emergency caused by social media, changes to journalism, and misinformed masses and secondly, “this crisis needs to be resolved by reinstating truth at the heart of democracy” (ibid., back page). The authors argue that contemporary voices in politics and media presuppose an implicit, even “hidden political premise: that without reason, without truth, there is no real democracy because democracy is about true choices and rational decisions” (ibid. p. 5). This tacit presumption, according to Farkas and Schou, is “both politically charged and normatively risky. What it essentially does is equate the idea of democracy with the ideas of reason, rationality and truth in an a priori fashion. This link remains an unquestioned assumption of post-truth worlds. In this narrative, what is threatening democracy worldwide is falsehood – pure and simple. Re-establishing the former (i.e. democracy) means eliminating the latter (i.e. falsehoods)” (ibid.). Falling in line with this narration comprises presupposing a model of how proper democracies ought to function (cf. ibid.).

At this point Farkas’ and Schou’s considerations interconnect with the concern of this article. The article seeks to give an answer to two questions: How does Truth (with a capital T) relate to democracy and is democracy lost or “in decline” (ibid., p. 4) when we withdraw truth as a corrective or guiding principle? Lyotard’s philosophy offers an important answer to these questions, which shall be displayed in section three of this article.

2 A POLICY OF DIFFERENCE: LYOTARD’S TAKE ON DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

2.1 Democracy and Education: Preliminary Considerations

Prior to talking about Lyotard’s take on democracy, it is important to clarify what we are talking about. In the context of this article, democracy shall be designated as a form of organization. Democracy, thus, “concerns collective decision making in groups” which is “characterized by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the collective decision making” (Christiano, 2018). Wolfgang Welsch, as one of the most important German-speaking authors on postmodernity, encourages this approach in the abovementioned article on “Plurality as Ethical Value” in postmodernity (Welsch 1988), concentrating especially on Lyotard’s contribution to this matter. According to Welsch, following Lyotard, the purpose of a democracy is to provide a form of organization for legitimate disagreement concerning one’s fundamental convictions (ibid., p. 54). This understanding comprises what Francis Cheneval (2015, p. 20) calls one “main idea” of democracy. Namely, the accumulation of all individual voices to a collective decision, usually with the aid of a decision making rule like the principle of majority rule or the consent principle (cf., ibid.). This might sound like a contradiction to the whole of Lyotard’s postmodern philosophy, which also drew on one of the most influential intellectual debates of the 80s and 90s: the dispute between Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard, thus between consensus (Habermas ¹¹2014) and dissent (Lyotard ¹⁰2017) in public discourse. Welsch is well aware of this debate and assumingly he sees the twist in the dispute when he clarifies: Democracy in particular is a form of organization not so much for consensus as for dissent of convictions, claims and rights (cf. Welsch 1988, p. 54).

In opposition to Habermas (cf. Lyotard ⁴2003), Lyotard’s ethics do not aim at an overall consensus. Lyotard’s main aim is to point out dissent as the usual structure of conversation (cf. Welsch 2008, pp. 227-230). As Lyotard puts it: “[T]he principle of consensus as a criterion of validation seems to be inadequate”, instead “it is now dissension that must be emphasized” (Lyotard 1984, p. 60f). Nevertheless, communication takes place and thus for Lyotard the question of justice arises: How can communication be organized in a way that ensures equality. His solution is not to install Truth as the directive of all decision

rules, i.e. as one “grand narrative” (ibid., xxiii), but instead to allow various different “little narratives” (ibid., p. 60) and thus to allow for heterogeneous discourses to exist side by side - in parallel. Democracy, according to Lyotard, is the best possible way of organizing communication when different convictions meet, because it facilitates what Lyotard calls “Legitimation by Paralogy” (ibid., pp. 60-67). With Cheneval’s (2015) remark in mind that “democratic” essentially means including members with equal status in collective decision-making procedures (cf. ibid., p. 19), it can be said that Lyotard’s philosophy advocates both: equality of status and inclusion of all members of a community.

2.2 Back to the Debate: Postmodernism and Post-Truth

This is precisely where the contemporary discussion on post-truth and the Postmodern sets in. In the first part of this article, the contemporary discourse on postmodern philosophy and its relation to post-truth and fake news was curtly displayed. Summarizing and thus simplifying the debate, it seems like an ever-growing fear of the decline of truth has evolved in democratic societies. This fear is based on two beliefs: First, that political communication (i.e. both communication in general and democracy in particular) is or ought to be based on truth, understood as a form of consensus, of shared reality. Second, the fear of a decline - or even death - of truth is based on the belief that democracy is in decline, *because* truth is in decline. In other words, the abandonment or loss of truth in communication is understood as the main reason for the assumed decline of democracy.

The link between this growing fear of the death of truth and postmodern philosophy is plurality. This term indicates the connection of post-truth discourses with postmodern philosophy in general and with Lyotard’s position in particular. This becomes apparent when examining closely Lyotard’s Philosophy. Above, Lyotard’s method of legitimation was derived from his work on *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). For Lyotard the method of “Paralogy” (ibid., pp. 60-67), serves as a characteristic, which distinguishes modernity from postmodernity (cf. Lyotard 2017). He points out that postmodernity - and modernity respectively - is rather an attitude than so much as an epoch or era (ibid., p. 81; cf. as well as Lyotard 1986, p. 97). In his usual linguistic-philosophical style, Lyotard goes on to explain that the postmodern attitude is best described as the performance of “Parataxe” (ibid.). Parataxe, as opposed to “Syntax”, implies a non-hierarchical thinking (cf. ibid.) - as well as speaking, thus communication. Paralogy as a method originates from the core of Lyotard’s Philosophy of Language succeeding Ludwig Wittgenstein (for the following cf. Diergarten 2020).

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard borrows Wittgenstein’s metaphor of language games to explain and reason the postmodern plurality of different kinds of discourse that legitimate different kinds of knowledge. Lyotard introduces the metaphor of language games, following Wittgenstein, as the “Method” (cf. Lyotard 1984, p. 9-11) of *his own* investigations, thereby emphasizing their pragmatic implications. “Wittgenstein [...] focuses his attention on the effects of different modes of discourse; he calls the various types of utterances he identifies along the way [...] language games” (ibid., p.10). Language games differ from each other based on their different effects. Lyotard differentiates between denotative utterances, performative utterances, and prescriptive utterances. This analogy is vivid: “each of the various categories of utterances can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties, and the uses to which they can be put - in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them” (ibid.). The metaphor of language as an agonistic game allows for two main principles underlying Lyotard’s method. The first one being, the motive of “general agonistics”: “to speak is to fight in the sense of playing” (ibid.). The second principle constitutes “that the observable social bond is composed of language `moves`” (ibid.), or, as Lyotard avers elsewhere: “The social bond is language” (Lyotard ²2007, p. 79, own translation).

Lyotard expands and particularizes the method of differentiating language games in *The Differend*. He focuses on phrase regimens and genres of discourse and emphasizes their pragmatic orientation: “A phrase, even the most ordinary one, is constituted by a set of rules (its regimen). There are a number of phrase regimens: reasoning, knowing, describing, recounting, questioning, showing, ordering, etc. Phrases from heterogeneous regimens cannot be translated from one into the other. They can be linked one onto the other in accordance with an end fixed by a genre of discourse. [...] Genres of discourse supply rules for linking together heterogeneous phrases, rules that are proper for attaining certain goals: to know, to teach, to be just, to seduce, to justify, to evaluate” and others (Lyotard ¹⁰2017, p. xii). The “problem”, according to Lyotard (cf. *ibid.*, p. xii), is „the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them [...]: to find, if not what can regulate judgement (the ‘good’ linkage), then at least how to save the honor of thinking.” (*ibid.*). After the ending of grand narratives and the impossibility of a metadiscourse, Lyotard poses the question of justice anew. Proceeding from the question of “how to save the honor of thinking”, Lyotard tries to detect and reveal the suppression of one genre of discourse by another. According to Lyotard, this suppression is structurally embedded in the grand narratives of modernity (cf. Pries/Welsch 2007, p. 407 f.).

“As distinguished from a litigation, a differend [différend] would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments” (Lyotard ¹⁰2017, p. xi). Treating a differend as merely a litigation - which may well be judged according to a set of meta-rules - causes a kind of injustice, which Lyotard calls a wrong: “A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genres of discourse” (*ibid.*). By adding that “a universal rule of judgement between heterogenous genres is lacking in general” (*ibid.*, p. xi), Lyotard implies that the differend is inevitable. Thus, with reference to Kant and Wittgenstein, he directs attention to radical plurality, heterogeneity. Lyotard thereby concentrates on language and the incommensurability of individual genres of discourse. Each follows its own rules, and thus has an inherent right that ought to be respected.

2.3 The Postmodern Method: Plurality Through Paralogy

Implementing this linguistic-philosophical awareness in everyday life means expressing plurality through paralogy. To do so, Lyotard suggests using a “minimal conjunction” (Lyotard 2017, p. 79), precisely a coordinating conjunction, as opposed to a subordinating one. Simply put, Lyotard recommends using the word “and” more often and taking its philosophical implications more seriously. It situates phrases, discourses or ways of living next to each other, rather than one above the other. This explains what was said above, about convictions and discourses being organized *in parallel* in democracies. Paralogy creates a non-hierarchical communication, which culminates in coexistence side by side, also termed plurality.

Welsch (1988) extrapolates plurality as the main or core theme of postmodern philosophy. For Welsch, Lyotard is the most important author of postmodern philosophy. No other, Welsch points out, came up as early as Lyotard with a postmodern position as consistent and as precise (cf. Welsch ⁸2017, S. 91). The situation of the postmodern i.e. the postmodern condition, is characterized by an increase of plurality concerning different lifestyles and orientations. Further, the postmodern condition is characterized by an increase of awareness of this plurality and - more importantly - by an increase of acknowledgement and approval of plurality (cf. Welsch 1988, p. 23).

3 TO RESUME A DISCUSSION: DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION LYOTARDED

3.1 On the Reception History of Lyotard's Philosophy in Pedagogy

This article is set out to end on Lyotard's advice on how to act responsibly in a contemporary democratic society. Lyotard's suggestion for a way of living, or as he terms it, an "attitude" towards society and one's own decisions under postmodern conditions, can be transformed into pedagogical theory and agenda. In the next part of the paper a new way of seeing and reading Lyotard shall be outlined. This, finally, is the suggestion of a renewed take on the theory of education considering Lyotard's take on democracy as described above. A new reading of Lyotard's philosophy can help contemporary educational theory to put up with practical as well as theoretical challenges it is facing today. As mentioned above, the suggested shift in interpreting Lyotard can serve as a productive extension for future reference. Before, it is important to reference most influential past interpretations and main tendencies in the reception history of Lyotard considering contemporary educational theory.

German-speaking secondary literature on Lyotard's postmodern philosophy emerges in the 1980s. Most pedagogical interpretations fall in line with main tendencies of philosophical readings of his work. The main difference between the two seems to be the area of theoretical as well as practical application. The subject of pedagogy is education in the practice of learning, teaching, training or consulting, as well as the science of this practice and its theoretical legitimacy.

Lyotard's philosophy mainly influenced pedagogy's fundamental theoretical conceptions. Thereby two points of focus evolved (for the following cf. Koller ²2006, pp. 188f). The first emphasize is the systematic reconsideration of the transcendental status of pedagogy. In other words, at the time, Lyotard, as well as other important philosophers of the field, such as Thomas S. Kuhn (2012) or Karl R. Popper (2008), imposed a theory of science, urging the question of the conditions of the possibility of science. This aspect of the philosophy of science concerns humanities as much as the sciences, and thus it concerns pedagogy as well. The reception of postmodern philosophy in pedagogy coincided with a discussion about the continued existence of general pedagogy, which was called into question both by the progressing differentiation of educational science into specialized subdisciplines, and by the expansion of pedagogical questions to more and more areas of society. Postmodern thinking has led to a sharpening of the view of the problem, insofar as it suggests that processes of differentiation and dissolution of boundaries should be taken as processes of radical pluralization. A postmodern answer to the question of whether and to what extent one can still speak of a general matter of educational science consists in the proposal, following Lyotard, to regard precisely the conflict of forms of knowledge, i.e. the differend, as the shape that the general of educational science assumes under postmodern conditions. In addition, the question arises as to what new models can contribute to articulating this conflict (see below).

The second emphasize following the pedagogical reception of Lyotard's philosophy is a discussion, which is often viewed as originally German, as it evolved as an area of research in the German-speaking European philosophy around 1800, namely the discussion on *Bildung*. Inspired by the humanistic tradition, rooted in ancient Greek philosophy and renewed in German idealism, philosophical reflection on *Bildung* produced mostly anthropocentric theories. Within German philosophy in the late 18th and early 19th century, by authors like Herder, Schlegel, Schleiermacher and most influential by Wilhelm von Humboldt (cf. Ruhloff 1997, p. 23), the term obtains a characterization, which has ever since been subjected to criticism - not only by Lyotard. The theory of *Bildung*, which since the end of the 1970s has attracted increased interest in educational science as an area of debate about the justification, legitimation, and critique of pedagogical action. Here, the reception of postmodern thought in educational science coincided with a debate about the redefinition of the classical concept of *Bildung* in the face of changed social conditions. It brought

about an intensification of the formulation of the problem, insofar as Lyotard's thesis of the loss of credulity of the "grand narratives" (cf. Lyotard 1984) also calls into question the concept of *Bildung* in its function as a generally binding orientation of pedagogical action. Most postmodern-inspired contributions to the theory of *Bildung* are characterized by an attempt to reformulate the concept of *Bildung*, following postmodern thought, in a way that does justice to the postmodern condition of contemporary societies (cf. Koller ²2006, p. 189). This second emphasis in Lyotard-reception, i.e. the focus on the theory of *Bildung*, is the concern of the following part of this article. As mentioned above, a slight change in perspective shall be undertaken.

3.2 New Ways of Reading Lyotard

This article is preceded by a reception history that is fundamentally important for the following chain of thought. Important contributions to pedagogical implications of Lyotard's philosophy were pointed out and discussed by renowned philosophers and scholars of education, especially at the beginning and in the course of the 1990s. Among them are contributions from the circle of skeptical-transcendental-critical pedagogy surrounding Wolfgang Fischer (Fischer/Ruhloff 1993, Poenitsch 1992), a thematic issue of the *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* in 1987, an anthology on the connection between critical educational science and postmodernism (Marotzki/Sünker 1992) as well as an anthology from the perspective of media theory (Baacke 1985) and the significant study by Hans-Christoph Koller (1999) on the topic of "*Bildung und Widerstreit*", which he still refers to today for the conception of his educational theory (Koller ²2018). Mention should also be made of the incisive texts on the topic by Olaf Sanders, whose suggestion that the German-speaking reception of Lyotard in educational science represents a good example of a self-consolidating misconception of postmodern Philosophy (cf. Sanders 2013, p. 85) contributed significantly to finding the topic for this article and to daring a change in perspective.

Lyotard has entered the history of philosophy as the author who coined the term "postmodern" (Lyotard 1984) and as an influential French thinker of the 20th century and thus as one of the most important representatives of a philosophical "heterogeneity thesis" (Röd/Essler 2019, p. 76). As such, he has also been read and perceived in pedagogy to date. Contrary to this valuable interpretation of Lyotard as an author of diversity and difference, the thesis will be put forward here that Lyotard also tries to substantiate universality and can thus be seen as an author of a universality thesis – in an anthropological perspective.

The thesis of heterogeneity or difference, for which Lyotard is widely known and which he authored primarily in his writings on the Postmodern and eventually in his main work, *The Differend* (¹⁰2017), was made accessible to pedagogy primarily in the early 1990s. Summarizing, this thesis states the following: The number of conceptions of knowledge, modes of orientation, and lifestyles increases over time, and so does the acceptance and appreciation of this increasing diversity. (cf. Welsch 1988). In short, postmodernism as a *zeitgeist*, or as an attitude, is characterized by "radical plurality" (ibid., p. 23). This paraphrase of Lyotard's postmodern philosophy already hints at the universality in anthropological terms that essentially makes up the proposed shift in perspective. Lyotard describes the ability to feel, articulate, and recognize difference as a "quasi- or 'as-if' capacity" of humans (Lyotard ²2009, p. 13). Following Kant, he formulates this as a general human possibility whose realization is pending.

Therein consists, as it were, Lyotard's pedagogical potency. This anthropological view of Lyotard's philosophy is pedagogically significant because what Lyotard calls an "as-if-capability", following Kant "enthusiasm" (Lyotard ²2009), can be related to a pedagogical assumption. Namely, to the assumption that humans learn and that therein consists an anthropological constant from which pedagogical theory and practice can proceed.

The anthropological perspective of the article consists first of all in the cautious assumption that Lyotard's philosophy - the philosophy of language following Wittgenstein

and the aesthetics following Kant - states something about human beings; precisely about humans in general, about what it means to be human. The common feature of the two described aspects of Lyotard's philosophy that meet here is, in Lyotard's words, "signaled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling" (Lyotard ¹⁰2017, p. 13). Feeling plays an important role in Lyotard's conception in *The Differend* as well as in his later philosophy of the sublime. A differend is first indicated by a feeling, before it can be articulated in sentences: "In the differend, something 'asks' to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom), that they are summoned by language [...] to recognized, that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist" (ibid.). Lyotard, closely following Kant, calls "enthusiasm" a sublime feeling that, as a "quasi- or 'as-if' faculty" (Lyotard ²2009, p. 13), at least indicates the possibility of transitions between language games and modes of discourse. And if, what Lyotard once expresses in an interview, is right, namely that he is interested in accurately following Kant (cf. Pries/Lyotard 1989, p. 321), it is likely to assume that this "quasi-faculty" in Lyotard's conception has the same anthropological status as that of Kant's faculty of judgment, namely a universal one. Lyotard's "as-if faculty," the ability to distinguish and transfer idiosyncrasies, seems to be universally human.

This article seeks to show that there has been one main direction of Lyotard interpretation in German-speaking pedagogy, i.e. the interpretation of Lyotard's work towards a difference thesis. This was and is the dominant pedagogical Lyotard-reception, consistent with most philosophical readings of Lyotard. Here, however, an alternative way of reading and interpreting Lyotard is introduced. Sanders (2013, p. 85) suggests a "misconception" of Lyotard that has defined the German-speaking secondary literature to date. So it might be possible, even apparent, to interpret Lyotard differently, namely in the direction of universality. Traces of such an interpretation can already be found in the philosophical reception. Peter Engelmann calls Lyotard's postmodern deployment a "philosophy of difference" (Engelmann 2013, p. 33) but warns at the same time that Postmodernism was never properly described as an exclusive accentuation of the fragment (cf. ibid., p. 204). As an antithesis to the singularization of the heterogeneous, Engelmann argues, "context", connection, is also thought of in postmodern philosophy: What postmodernism turned against was precisely not context per se, but certain forms of thinking and shaping it (cf. ibid.). Postmodern philosophy is admittedly the commitment against any form of totalizing context, against the "system constraint" (Zima ⁴2016, p. 209) which for Lyotard emanates from "grand narratives" (Lyotard 1984, p. 16) such as Christianity or the Enlightenment, even from Marxism. These are generalizing models of thought in which the individual receives its legitimacy solely from its determination as a moment of the universal (cf. Engelmann 2013, p. 15). Nevertheless, it seems to be a one-sided reduction of postmodern philosophy if it is interpreted as a pure "heterogeneity thesis" (Röd/Essler 2019, p. 76) in the course of the history of philosophy. Even within postmodernism, the universal plays an important role as a corrective. Further substantiation of this thesis must be left to broader investigation in future research.

3.3 Post-Truth and Postmodernity According to Lyotard – a Pedagogical Perspective

Sharing the above-explained view of Lyotard's philosophy can help animate and thus pursue the discussion on the relation of postmodernism and the so-called post-truth era. Against the prevailing accentuation of difference and heterogeneity, which was and is derived from postmodern thinking, the accusation of ethical relativism is articulated repeatedly. This is also the thrust of the post-truth debate recited at the beginning of this article: By

abandoning truth as a rule of judgment or point of orientation in social interaction and communication, the way is open for ethical relativism.

This article opposes that position. Sanders (2013) sees the almost exclusive focus on *The Postmodern Condition* and *The Differend* as its linguistic-philosophical foundation as today's consolidated misreception of Lyotard in German-speaking educational science (ibid., p.85) and urges an intensive reading the early work preparing *The Differend* (cf. ibid., pp. 92-98). The intention here is to follow up on Sanders' intention to bring Lyotard's reception in educational theory back into contention – to articulate a differend. However, attention is drawn to the discussion of fake news and post-truth. Here too, according to the thesis of this article, persists a far-reaching misreading. The error consists in the allegation against postmodern philosophy to having theoretically prepared the era of post-truth. For this accusation presupposes the assumption that politics and communication is generally oriented towards truth. According to Lyotard this presupposition is a fallacy. Precisely on this implicit presupposition that informs modernist thought Lyotard is elaborating. He directs his work at the question of how it can still be possible to design a theory of justice in a world characterized by radical plurality. This effort arises in *The Postmodern Condition*. Here, Lyotard confronts the disintegration of socio-cultural coherence in post-industrial societies, through the differentiation of heterogeneous forms of knowledge, which lead to different results, according to their own disciplinary paradigms (cf. Hütter/Hug/Perger 1992). Lyotard's aim is to arrive at a minimum of liability, engagement or bindingness, and that means to arrive at an ethics that does not amount to arbitrariness.

What postmodern philosophy is accused of, the preparation and philosophical-theoretical, argumentative justification of an ethical relativism, does not follow from this philosophical position. On the contrary, Lyotard recognizes this difficulty as the central problem of modern philosophy and tries to solve it - even before its extensive popularization. Consequently, Lyotard's solution does not consist in the resolution of this problem, but rather in the attempt of a constructive approach to this problem; namely, in the encouragement of paralogy. The differend is happening. The question arising is not, how to resolve it, but how to do justice to it through action in everyday-life. Thus, Lyotard's take on post-truth resembles what Farkas and Schou (2020) aver at the very beginning of their above-mentioned book. It is a contestable assumption to state truth as a precondition of functioning political communication in democracies (ibid., pp. 1-8).

Taking Lyotard seriously means coping with the condition that truth is not the core fundament of democracy. Following Lyotard and thus postmodern thought, truth only plays a part as an orienting category in one amongst other discourses: As shown above, Lyotard explains that speech, depending on situational use, shows different effects. These effects, in Lyotard's explicitly pragmatic perspective, can also be called the "purpose" of the particular language game. In *The Postmodern Condition* - and subsequently also in *The Differend* - Lyotard avers that the "language game of knowledge" is precisely only one among other language games (cf. Lyotard 1984, p. 25). He shows that its purpose is to seek truth. Thus, in *The Postmodern Condition*, he writes that science is in conflict with narratives ever since. The difficulty of legitimation arises from the fact that science "does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities, but seeks the truth" (ibid., p. xxiii). The scientific language game is called the "cognitive mode of discourse" in *The Differend*: Here, Lyotard speaks of "phrases under the logical regimen and the cognitive regimen. Their formation and linking are subject to the stake of speaking true" (Lyotard 2017, p. 65). Moreover, just as the plurality of language games increases with the transition from *The Postmodern Condition* to *The Differend* and results in a multiplicity of different kinds of discourse, so does the status of truth as a guiding idea decrease: "But phrases can obey regimens other than the logical and the cognitive. They can have stakes other than the true" (ibid.). For Lyotard, Truth is merely one among countless other stakes or purposes of conversation. With Lyotard, it can be said that the truth of statements plays a role only in one part, possibly a small part, of human communication, namely in scientific communication.

Today's pedagogical task according to Lyotard must therefore rather be to recognize, i.e. to distinguish and articulate, the different uses of speech, the different language games, the purpose of the respective communication; much rather than to search for truth in every instance. For pedagogical theory, this is a far-reaching demand that calls for further reflection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baacke, Dieter (Ed.) (1985): *Am Ende - postmodern? Next wave in der Pädagogik*. Weinheim: Juventa.

Ball, James (2017): *Post-truth. How bullshit conquered the world*. London: Biteback Publishing.

Boghossian, Paul Artin (2013): *Fear of knowledge. Against relativism and constructivism*. Reprint. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cheneval, Francis (2015): *Demokratietheorien zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius.

Christiano, Tom (2018): *Democracy*. In Edward N. Zalta (Ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/democracy/>.

Diergarten, Pia (2020): *Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998): The Provocation of the Differend*. In Ralf Koerrenz, Friederike von Horn (Eds.): *The Lost Mirror. Thinking about education in the Hebrew tradition*. Paderborn: Brill | Ferdinand Schöningh (Culture and education, volume 3), pp. 131-144.

Engelmann, Peter (2013): *Dekonstruktion. Jacques Derridas semiotische Wende der Philosophie*. Wien: Passagen Verlag.

Engelmann, Peter (Ed.) (2017): *Stören! Das Passagen-Buch*. Passagen-Verlag. Deutsche Erstausgabe. Wien: Passagen Verlag.

Farkas, Johan; Schou, Jannick (2020): *Post-truth, fake news and democracy. Mapping the politics of falsehood* (Routledge studies in global information, politics and society). New York and London: Rotledge

Fischer, Wolfgang; Ruhloff, Jörg (1993): *Skepsis und Widerstreit. Neue Beiträge zur skeptisch-transzendental-kritischen Pädagogik*. 1. Aufl. Sankt Augustin: Academia-Verlag.

Habermas, Jürgen (2014): *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln*. 11. Aufl. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hanlon, Aaron (2018): *Postmodernism didn't cause Trump. It explains him*. The Washington Post. Available online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/postmodernism-didnt-cause-trump-it-explains-him/2018/08/30/0939f7c4-9b12-11e8-843b-36e177f3081c_story.html.

Hütter, Anton; Hug, Theo; Perger, Josef (1992): *Paradigmenvielfalt und Wissensintegration. Beiträge zur Postmoderne im Umkreis von Jean-François Lyotard*. Dt. Erstausg. Wien: Passagen-Verlag.

Kakutani, Michiko (2018): *The death of truth. Notes on falsehood in the age of Trump*. First edition.

Koerrenz, Ralf; Horn, Friederike von (Eds.) (2020): *The Lost Mirror. Thinking about education in the Hebrew tradition*. Paderborn: Brill | Ferdinand Schöningh (Culture and education, volume 3).

Koller, Hans-Christoph (1999): *Bildung und Widerstreit. Zur Struktur biographischer Bildungsprozesse in der (Post-)Moderne*. Zugl.: Hamburg, Univ., FB Erziehungswiss., Habil.-Schr., 1997. München: Fink.

Koller, Hans-Christoph (2006): *Erziehungswissenschaft und Postmoderne*. In Heinz-Hermann Krüger, Cathleen Grunert (Eds.): *Wörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft*. 2., durchges. Aufl. Opladen: Budrich, pp. 186–190.

Koller, Hans-Christoph (2018): *Bildung anders denken. Einführung in die Theorie transformatorischer Bildungsprozesse*. 2., aktualisierte Auflage. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag.

Krüger, Heinz-Hermann; Grunert, Cathleen (Eds.) (2006): *Wörterbuch Erziehungswissenschaft*. 2., durchges. Aufl. Opladen: Budrich.

Kuhn, Thomas S.; Hacking, Ian (2012): *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Fourth edition. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1986): *Philosophie und Malerei im Zeitalter ihres Experimentierens*. Berlin: Merve Verlag (Internationaler Merve-Diskurs, 129).

Lyotard, Jean-François (2003): *An Answer to the Question, What is the Postmodern? In: The postmodern explained. Correspondence 1982 - 1985*. North American ed., 4. printing, pp.1–16.

Lyotard, Jean-François (2003): *The postmodern explained. Correspondence 1982 - 1985*. North American ed., 4. printing. Edited by Jean-François Lyotard. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Lyotard, Jean-François (Ed.) (2007): *Grabmal des Intellektuellen*. Dt. Erstausg., 2., überarb. Aufl. Wien: Passagen Verlag.

Lyotard, Jean-François (2007): *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*. 10. printing. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press (Theory and history of literature, 46).

Lyotard, Jean-François (Ed.) (2009): *Der Enthusiasmus. Kants Kritik der Geschichte*. 2., überarb. Aufl. Wien: Passagen-Verlag.

Lyotard, Jean-François (2017): *Modern - Postmodern*. In Peter Engelmann (Ed.): *Stören! Das Passagen-Buch*. Deutsche Erstausgabe. Wien: Passagen Verlag, pp. 79–87.

Lyotard, Jean-François; Bennington, Geoff (1984): *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*. Reprint. Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

Marotzki, Winfried; Sünder, Heinz (1992): *Kritische Erziehungswissenschaft - Moderne - Postmoderne*. Weinheim: Dt. Studien Verlag.

McIntyre, Lee (2018): *Post-Truth*. Cambridge: MIT Press (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Ser).

McLennan, Matthew (2018): *Differend and “Post-Truth”*. *French Journal For Media Research* (9). Available online at <https://frenchjournalformediaresearch.com/443/lodel-1.0/main/index.php?id=1437>, checked on 7/8/2020.

- Neiman, Susan (2017): *Widerstand der Vernunft. Ein Manifest in postfaktischen Zeiten*. 1. Auflage. Salzburg, München: Ecowin.
- Nida-Rümelin, Julian; Özmen, Elif (Eds.) (2012): *Philosophie der Gegenwart. In Einzeldarstellungen von Agamben bis v. Wright*. 3rd ed. s.l.: Alfred Kröner Verlag.
- Poenitsch, Andreas; Humboldt, Alexander von; Nietzsche, Friedrich; Ballauff, Theodor; Lyotard, Jean-François (1992): *Bildung und Sprache zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne*. Humboldt, Nietzsche, Ballauff, Lyotard. Zugl.: Wuppertal, Univ., Diss., 1992. Essen: Verl. Die Blaue Eule.
- Popper, Karl R. (2008): *The Logic of scientific discovery*. Reprint. London: Routledge (Routledge classics).
- Pries, Christine (Ed.) ((c)1989): *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Pries, Christine; Lyotard, Jean-François: *Das Undarstellbare - wider das Vergessen. Ein Gespräch zwischen Christine Pries und Jean-François Lyotard*. In Christine Pries (Ed.): *Das Erhabene. Zwischen Grenzerfahrung und Größenwahn*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, pp. 319–347.
- Röd, Wolfgang; Essler, Wilhelm K.; Preyer, Gerhard (2019): *Die Philosophie der neuesten Zeit. Hermeneutik, Frankfurter Schule, Strukturalismus, Analytische Philosophie (Geschichte der Philosophie)*.
- Ruhloff, Jörg (1997): *Bildung heute*. In *Pädagogische Korrespondenz* (21), pp. 23–31.
- Sanders, Olaf (2013): *Philosophie pädagogisieren, Lyotard zum Beispiel – und: Wozu Bildungsphilosophie?* In Alfred Schäfer, Christiane Thompson (Eds.): *Pädagogisierung*. Halle: Martin-Luther-Univ, pp. 85–102.
- Schäfer, Alfred; Thompson, Christiane (Eds.) (2013): *Pädagogisierung*. Wittenberger Gespräche. Halle: Martin-Luther-Univ.
- Stegemann, Bernd (2016): *Lob des Realismus*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Verlag Theater der Zeit.
- Tenorth, Heinz-Elmar (Ed.) (2003): *Klassiker der Pädagogik*. 2 volumes. München: Beck.
- Welsch, Wolfgang (1988): *Postmoderne - Pluralität als ethischer und politischer Wert*. Köln: Wirtschaftsverl. Bachem.
- Welsch, Wolfgang (2008): *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*. 7. Aufl. Berlin: Akad.-Verlag. (Acta humaniora).
- Welsch, Wolfgang (2017): *Ästhetisches Denken*. 8., durchgesehene und ergänzte Auflage. Ditzingen: Reclam.
- Welsch, Wolfgang; Pries Christine (2012): *Jean-François Lyotard*. In Julian Nida-Rümelin, Elif Özmen (Eds.): *Philosophie der Gegenwart. In Einzeldarstellungen von Agamben bis v. Wright*. 3rd ed. s.l.: Alfred Kröner Verlag, pp. 405–410.
- Zalta, Edward N. (Ed.) (2018): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Zierer, Klaus; Saalfrank, Wolf-Thorsten (Eds.) (2010): *Zeitgemäße Klassiker der Pädagogik. Leben - Werk - Wirken*. Paderborn u.a: Schöningh.
- Zima, Peter V. (2016): *Moderne / Postmoderne. Gesellschaft, Philosophie, Literatur*. 4., korrigierte Auflage. Tübingen, Stuttgart: A. Francke Verlag; UTB.