SELFHOOD AND SELF-ESTEEM.
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF AN EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPT

Eva Schwarz

Centre for Studies in Practical Knowledge, Södertörn University, Sweden
E-mail: eva.schwarz@sh.se

The concept of "self-esteem" plays a crucial but at the same time ambivalent role in contemporary educational discourse. On the one hand high self-esteem is put forward as a solution for educational problems. On the other hand philosophers of education argued that the concept of "self-esteem" is not doing justice to educational situations and thus an unjustified transfer of a psychological concept to the sphere of education. The paper at hand asks for the concept of "selfhood" that lies behind the different approaches to "self-esteem". What is the "self" we are esteeming? The paper formulates a philosophical reflection on the presuppositions inherent in both the "standard view" on self-esteem as well as in the criticism on it. Both proceed, as I want to show, from a one-sided and thus simplified concept of what it means to be a "self". I will argue that a phenomenological approach to "selfhood" can be helpful in order to gain a better understanding of the role of the "self" in education.

Introduction

In everyday-life we often use the concept of "self-esteem" in order to qualify the implicit or explicit attitudes of a person towards herself. One might suffer from "low self-esteem" when preparing for an important occasion or from the unbearably "high self esteem" of a colleague. We also tend to assume a correlation between our thinking good or bad about ourselves and the effect this has on our actions. I.e. we speak of someone failing for the reason of not "believing enough in herself", we recommend friends to show self-confidence at a meeting and want to "boost" the self-esteem of a student. But what is it exactly we refer to when speaking of self-esteem?

At present time both within psychology and education one can find a certain ambivalence with regard to the concept of "self-esteem". On the one hand it is put forward as a "remedy" for almost everything. Students, patients, even whole states should increase their self-esteem in order to improve their achievements or at least their "feeling" of well-being[1]. On the other hand, the standard concept of self-esteem and

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[1] In 1986, the State of California funded a "Task Force on Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility". It was claimed that raising self-esteem in the field of education would reduce crime and delinquency, decrease teen pregnancy and underachievement, lower drug abuse and crime, cut pollution, and even help balance the state's budget because people with high self-esteem would earn more money and thus pay higher taxes. The program was terminated in 1995. None of the hoped-for outcomes was attained. Cf. Baumeister et al. (2003: 3-4).

their proponents have been exposed to criticism by philosophers of education. It is argued that the concept is not doing justice to educational situations (Smith 2002; Cigman 2004). To focus on self-esteem is said to be an unjustified transfer of a psychological concept to the sphere of education (Kristjánsson 2007).

The increasing debate about the hopes and failures with regard to "self-esteem" is a reason to be suspicious. What is this concept all about? Do I really only have to think positive about myself in order to succeed in school and in life in general? What is the difference between a psychological and an educational view on self-esteem and consequently the self`? And, furthermore: How to understand the "self" we are esteeming? What is the "self" of education? I will start out with a brief characterization of the concept of "self-esteem" as it is used in psychology (I) and then turn to the criticism that has been formulated within the philosophy of education (II). Third, I will formulate a philosophical reflection of the presuppositions inherent in both the "standard view" on self-esteem as well as in the criticism on it. Both proceed, as I want to show, from a one-sided and thus too simple concept of the "self" (III). Finally, I will argue that a phenomenological approach to "selfhood" can be helpful in order to gain a better *understanding* of the role of the "self" in education (IV).

I. The standard concept

The "standard conception" of self-esteem draws on William James' formulation of self-esteem as determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities, as "a fraction of which our pretensions are the dominator and the numerator our success" (James 1890: 310). Thus, James takes self-esteem to be a concept of self-evaluation. It is tied to an idea of "success": "One may say […] that the normal provocative of self-feeling is one's actual success or failure, and the good or bad actual position one holds in the world" (ibid. 306). At a certain time in my life I had certain pretensions about my future

"self". I evaluate myself according to my own standards but also my supposed potentialities (cf. ibid. 310). To what extent, I can ask, do I see myself as having met my own standards and aspirations? Since I can be more or less positive about this question, self-esteem can be high or low. Low self-esteem is characterized as a result of not having achieved those standards that are of importance for oneself[2]. High self-esteem, on the other hand, is a feeling of success with regard to one's pretensions.

The standard type of measurement of the degree of self-esteem within psychological research is the so called "Rosenberg scale" (1965). It builds upon James' formulations and has also become the standard test in educational research (cf. Emler 2001: 5). The scale consists of ten statements with which one is asked to 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. Those statements indicate pleasant and unpleasant feelings about one's perceptions of one's qualities and achievements[3]. Persons scaling high on the Rosenberg scale are said to have high self-esteem. The Rosenberg scale and some versions of it are still used within contemporary psychological research to argue for correlates between the degree of self-esteem and achievements of the subjects. High self-esteem is claimed to be beneficial for a person's development and is often related to educational success and learning whereas low self-esteem involves social and psychological problems (cf. Mruk 1995). Hence, most teachers, educa-

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[2] Thus, for James it is not problematic if one has not achieved pretensions that have not been of importance for herself: "I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all. Had I 'pretensions' to be a linguist, it would have been just the reverse" (James 1890: 310).

[3] In contrast to James' original formulation, the Rosenberg's scale and other measures of the same kind assume that self-esteem has a tripartite structure: it involves one's overall life goals, one's estimate of the achievement of those goals, and one's attitude toward this estimated achievement.

tionalists and therapists agree that the issue of self-esteem is highly important[4]. Thus, the goal of self-esteem research in both psychology and educational studies is often seen as finding an answer to the question of how to increase the self-esteem of their clients. Or as Matt Ferkany has recently formulated it: "[S]elf esteem is importantly connected to the confidence and motivation children need in order to engage in and achieve educational goals and can and should be facilitated" (Ferkany 2008: 120). There is a large agreement that education should aim at improving the student's attitudes towards themselves. However, there exists no agreement on how to do that. In the literature on the role of self-esteem in education one can find a wide range of methods from Buddhist meditation (e.g. Hyland 2009) to specific exercises in physical education or art (Ferkany 2008) or to the simple advice that teachers shall tell their students more often how well they are doing.

II. Situated and justified self-esteem

Let me now turn to the criticism that has been formulated against the standard approach on self-esteem. We can mainly find three lines of criticism: The first one is an empirical argument. As Baumeister *et al.* have shown in a large meta-survey there is no real empirical evidence that people scoring high on the Rosenberg scale are better achievers (cf. Baumeister *et al.* 2003). What is more, the sociologist Nicholas Emler argues that high self-esteem is probably even a risk factor for drug abuse or racism (cf. Emler 2001). What can we gain from these results? Do they indicate that self-esteem does not matter at all (cf. Smith 2001)? Or does it mean that the

Rosenberg-scale is not an appropriate measurement? Or is there something wrong with the concept itself?

The second line of criticism is a conceptual one. I will call it the "situated approach". Proponents of this approach argue that the "standard concept", as it is expressed in the Rosenberg scale, only refers to our *feelings* about ourselves. Yet, it is not doing justice to the social dimension of selfhood (cf. Smith 2002; Cigman 2004). Its results are conceived detached from the person's actions in the world. Thus, for the philosopher of education Ruth Cigman, the standard concept takes self-esteem to be an ethical neutral, measurable "inner" property of a person. The Rosenberg scale does not ask why and under which presuppositions people "strongly agree" that they are confident with themselves. Conceiving self-esteem as expressed "feelings about oneself" does not take into account the person's social situation. The client, for example, who sets off into the world with freshly boosted self-esteem, might be soon or later confronted with a situation that will face her with her inadequacies (cf. ibid). Cigman also criticizes the application of the standard account to educational practice. For her the "standard concept" is not doing justice to the nuances of pedagogical interactions, it oversimplifies them and creates an artificial construct. In education, she argues, it is important to understand *how* people's feelings about themselves appear within particular contexts (ibid. 94). The proponents of the standard concept do not ask whether individuals who "strongly agree" on a questionnaire that they have "a number of good qualities" may, for example, do this precisely in order to (intentional or not) hide their low self-esteem. Cigman argues that the standard concept entails a solipsistic concept of what it means to be a "self" or to possess "selfhood". The self, one shall esteem, is conceived as an inner space only the subject itself can enter via introspection (cf. ibid. 96). Alternatively to the idea of the self as a private sphere, Cigman argues for a concept of the self as *socially constituted*. She points out that our attitudes towards ourselves do not exist in isolation from the situations we

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4 Thus, Baumeister et al have argued in a big study evaluating numerous empirical studies on the issue at stake that this is by no means empirical evidence. Moreover they come to an ambivalent result: "With the exception of the link to happiness, most of the effects are weak to modest. Self-esteem is thus not a major predictor or cause of almost everything (again with the possible exception of happiness)" (Baumeister *et al.* 2003: 37)

are in. A self is necessarily situated and cannot be conceived apart from her body, the social situation etc. "Although it is likely to know itself reasonable well, this is by no mean guaranteed" (ibid.). Thus, given the embodiment of the self, it is possible that third parties know us better than we know us. They may detect inconsistencies in our behavior; they may observe self-deceptions. According to the "situated approach" the subject itself possesses only one perspective upon itself amongst others. There is no primacy of access. Individuals are subject to error both with regard to themselves as they can be wrong with regard to the world (cf. ibid. 95). "The self", as Cigman writes, is a "person amongst other person" (ibid.). But what does that mean? Cigman's formulations are very sketchy at this point. How can we understand the relation between self and others within her account? In which sense is it plausible to say that others know us better than we know us?

We will come back to these questions in while. Let us first turn to the third line of argument against the standard view which is closely linked to Cigman's critique. It is a pragmatic one. The Icelandic philosopher of education Kristján Kristjánsson argues for a concept of *justified self-esteem*. For him the key question is what conditions the self must satisfy in order to esteem itself *correctly* (Kristjánsson 2007: 250). If all that is aimed for in education is psychological effectiveness and subjective satisfaction, Kristjánsson asks, why should I care whether I assess my achievements accurately or not? If the goal of education simply is to increase students' satisfaction with their achievements, the easiest way to do this is to lower their aspirations systematically. Another strategy would be to reward a student more than she really deserves. This leads, as Kristjánsson argues, to an abandonment of veracity and truth (ibid. 249). From this perspective, deceptions and self-deceptions may even become preferable to an engagement with truths that genuinely reflect the person's educational development[5]. Kristjánsson concludes that

that the type of self-esteem, for which we should aim, is one that accurately reflects capabilities and interpersonal characteristics and that would, for instance, help students to know on which basis they should actually set themselves goals. He opts, as he calls it, for a *realistic picture of the self*[6]. For Kristjánsson, justified self-esteem matters in education "for the simple, practical reason that students who overestimate or underestimate their achievements or who feel overly or deficiently satisfied with those achievements do not make good learners" (ibid. 258f.). It is better for students' future learning to know where they stand, "than to live in a fool's paradise" (ibid.).

III. Self-esteem and Selfhood:
A phenomenological account

What can we gain from this discussion? First of all it is obvious that the problem of self-esteem touches upon some very crucial issues both within psychological and educational practices. Yet, it also leads to questions transcending the sphere of positive scientific research. These are questions of truly philosophical nature: What is a self? How can I know about myself? The discussion on self-esteem shows that different psychological and educational approaches already entail certain presuppositions about the very concept of a "self". A philosophical investigation of these presuppositions can, as I want to show, help us to shed more light on

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achievement and low self-esteem (usually less than 0.2). Neither is high self-esteem connected to long-term educational success. Most of the evidence suggests that self-esteem has no impact on subsequent educational performance, and that attempts to 'boost' it can even be counter-productive. Rather, both factors may be influenced by a prior shared variable, such as family background; and in some cases, improved school performance has been shown to enhance self-esteem, as one might expect. (Kristjánsson 2007: 256)

[6] Here Kristjánsson is very close to James who writes that it is very important to adjust ones pretensions to ones capabilities: "How pleasant is the day when we give up striving to be young, - or slender! Thank god! We say, those illusions are gone." (James 1890: 312)

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[5] Using the Rosenberg scale only weak or modest correlations have been found between low educational

the problem of self-esteem. Let us take a look at the different concepts of "selfhood" that are implied by the discussed approaches. As I see it, there are at least three different aspect of the problem that can be further developed, in order to gain a better understanding of the discussion at hand: The first one concerns the constitution of self-hood. The second aspect addresses the relation between self and other: In which sense arises self-esteem in the interaction with others? The third aspect is a meta-theoretical question about the limits and possibilities of empirical research regarding self-esteem. It concerns the problem of self-knowledge, both Cigman and Kristjánsson are addressing.

Let us start with the first aspect: What is the "self" we are esteeming? In which sense is a "self" a phenomenon in the world? The "standard approach" takes the self to be a psychological phenomenon, i.e. the "self" is something *internal* to a subjects mind. It can be disclosed by means of reflection, in the form of introspection. Proponents of the „standard approach" proceed from the idea, that there is a self that has certain properties that can be evaluated. The problem with this approach is, and here we follow Cigman's critique, that it entails a purely theoretical construction of an "internal self". The „inner self" (cf. Hyland 2009) is theoretical in the sense that we can never empirically disclose it. It is a mere construct of psychological theories. In fact, reflecting on ourselves, we can distinguish between our acts of (self-)reflection and the object of our reflections, an intentional content: experiences, past actions, specific situations etc. However, we can never reach a third element, an "inner self" we could ascribe all these acts, experiences or feelings. We cannot detect a "self", that would unify all these acts (cf. Schwarz 2007). Given that there is no *inner* self, does that mean that the self, I am esteeming, is *out there* in the world?

Cigman argues that a self is a *social phenomenon* (cf. Cigman 2004: 95). Yet, what does that mean? Cigman puts emphasize on the self to be socially *constituted*. However there are different ways we can understand this process

of constitution. Cigman does not develop her argumentation any further. Yet, there is a discrepancy in claiming that the constitution of selfhood *presupposes* the presence, interventions or recognition of others or that "selfhood" or the "self" is *nothing else* but a social phenomenon, an entity in the social world. If the self is nothing but a phenomenon in the social world, e.g. the outcome of a social discourse, a construction of language, culture and interaction, how is it possible that one of the selves, I encounter in the social world, is me?

Following the weaker understanding of "social constitution", to be a self means that I have a body, speak a language, posses certain capacities. Without the presence of other selves I could never get an insight in these dimensions of selfhood. I express myself in the social world: I get an understanding of myself as a participant in certain practices. Thus, I gain an understanding of myself via entering the social world: I understand myself, e.g., as being able to write, sing or dance by participating – more or less successful – in the practice of writing, singing or dancing. Yet, the problem of self-esteem is, as it seems, not only a problem of interaction. It is also in fundamental way a problem of *self-relation*. But what kind of relation is this? If the self esteems itself, who is esteeming whom? To say that the "self" of self-esteem is a *social* phenomenon is doing justice to the *subjective* dimension of selfhood. If the self I am esteeming, is nothing but a self *out there*, I am not able to understand myself as *the way the world is disclosed by me*. But how do I gain access to the subjective pole of self-reference?

The standard account would suggest that reflection is the key approach to the self I am: If I want to know about myself, I have to turn *inwards*. Cigman, on the other hand, seems to indicate that it is mainly another subject that has "access" to the self I am. I have to turn *outwards*. It is via encountering other people I get an inside in who I am. Yet, who is this "other self", this other person, who knows about me, who understands my actions, my doubts and discloses my self-deceptions? How can she

have access to the self I am? This leads us to the second aspect of the "self" in the self-esteem-debate: The relation between self and others. Cigman argues that a subject possesses only *one perspective* upon itself amongst others, there is no primacy of access. A self is a "person amongst" others. Individuals are subject to error both with regard to themselves as they can be wrong with regard to the world (cf. Cigman 2004: 95). But what is it I can be wrong about? I can be wrong about my successful participation in a practice. I only think that I am a good dancer. In the eyes of others, I am not. But what about my feeling good while dancing? Am I wrong about that too? Taking a reflective, outer perspective on me, I can detect my deficits with regard to my dancing. Yet, if the other's perspective on me, as a "person amongst other persons", is as good, or even more adequate, as my own (reflective) perspective on me, the problem of the "self" nevertheless remains. If the "self" is *nothing else* but a social phenomenon, an entity in the social world, I can never distinguish between different selves: between the self of experience (the dancing) and the self of perception or reflection (the dancer). If the self I am, is constituted by another self, looking at me, how is she constituted etc.? It seems that we end up with an infinite regress of mutual self-constitution: There is always a self that constitutes, and another that is constituted.

Let us take a closer look at the phenomenon of intersubjective encounter from the perspective of the self I am, from a first-person-perspective. From this perspective, the picture looks the following: I encounter another self. But what does that mean? What is the difference in encountering another "self" vis a vis an object? I take the other to be a self means that I understand her as having a perspective on the world. I experience her having a perspective on *me*. She watches me dancing. The way she looks at me, makes me, e.g., feel insecure about myself. In this case, it makes indeed sense to say that it is the other's look that motivated my insecurity. In a way, the perspective of the other *on me* constituted it. Nevertheless, there would

be no "insecurity" at all, if I would not be there, looking at her. There is indeed a reciprocity of perspectives that co-constitutes the "self" I am[7]. An *inter*subjective-encounter entails at least two perspectives: the first-person-perspective of a subject on the other and the other's perspective on me. Nevertheless, one has to proceed from an asymmetry with regard to the different perspectives. Whereas the other has only indirect access to my perspective by listen to me, observing me etc., I do not gain *access* to my perspective at the first place, I *am* this perspective, I am *embodying it*. To be perceived by another always presupposes that I have a conscious perspective on the world. A *phenomenological approach to the self* proceeds from a primacy of self-consciousness in a non-cognitive, non-reflective sense. It means that any act of consciousness is in a minimal sense self-consciousness[8]. To be conscious is not the same as having a first-person-perspective on one's thoughts or feelings. It is not a specific experience of internal or external entities. If I am esteeming myself, I always precede from *my* conscious relation to the world[9]. It is not my own reflection or the perspective on another that makes my experiences mine. This "conscious self" is primarily not a matter of believes, feelings etc. I could detect reflecting upon me via e.g. introspection. It is always expressed in my actions, in my being with others, in my feelings about certain things etc. In this

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[7] Or, as Edmund Husserl writes: „Es genügt nicht zur Personalität, dass das Subjekt seiner selbst innewird als Pol seiner Akte, sie konstituiert sich erst, indem das Subjekt in soziale Beziehung tritt zu anderen Subjekten [...] Dadurch wird es Subjekt, das in Gemeinschaften eintreten kann und eintritt, das aber auch in gelegentliche personale Beziehungen zu Anderen tritt und nun in seinem Leben und Streben nicht nur Selbsterhaltung der Sachenwelt gegenüber übt, sondern auch als Person in der Personenwelt." (Hua XIV, 176)

[8] For a more detailed analysis of the phenomenology of self-consciousness cf. Zahavi (2006).

[9] This notion of self-awareness is a very minimalist notion. But it is a very fundamental notion. It is fundamental in the sense that, as Dan Zahavi formulated it, "nothing that lacks this dimension deserves to be called a self." (cf. Zahavi 2006: 106)

sense the "self" is a highly social phenomenon. My actions express also my history: the history of what I have learned and read, the fears I have experienced etc. The phenomenological account argues for a foundational relation between the "social self" and the "experiential self". It is only on the basis of conscious (self-) experiences it is possible that one can form a conception of who I am: In this sense a "self" is indeed *also* "a person amongst other persons". Self and world are not to be separated. The "experiential self" is nothing I can perceive *in the world*, it is the very *relation to the world*. In this sense, the "self" is primarily not an inner or social entity, it is primarily no entity at all. Acting in a certain way is not the outward manifestation of an inner world, but is the way I relate to the world and others. Thus, we cannot change our attitudes towards ourselves at will (e.g. by working on oneself" or changing our attitudes) without changing our relation to the world.

This leads us to the third aspect of the problem at hand: the meta-theoretical problem. Both Cigman and Kristjánsson criticize the Rosenberg scale for not doing justice to the possibility of self-deceptions. One never *knows* whether a person showing "behavior" that we would interpret as self-confident is not only hiding her insecurity. Yet, one can asks weather this critique is specific with regard to the problem if self-esteem. Can't we formulate the critique of possible self-deception against any quantitative psychological method? Can we really criticize the outcome of a survey on self-esteem with the help of questionnaires for not taking into account the "social dimension" of self-hood? Cigman's critique presupposes that it is "possible" that a person shows "outer" manifestations, i.e. "behavior" that is not adequate with regard to her "inner state". Doing this, is she not tacitly presupposing a certain split of "inner self" and outer "world"? What is a "realistic perspective" on a person? Preceding from the abovementioned phenomenological concept of the self one can argue that the possibility of self-deception shows that there are different perspectives on a self: I might be able

to change perspective on myself and see, that I was not that "happy" or "cool", as I thought I was, but that I only did "as if" I was like that. Thus, the Rosenberg-Scale is not "wrong" in not being able to detect the "true self" behind the "self-presentation" by answering the questions. It only shows one possible perspective. Thus, the Rosenberg-Scale is only problematic if we would claim that it is the only possible perspective, the only possible view on human self-relation. The answers a person gives on a questionnaire on one's self-relation are only one manifestation of a person reflecting on herself. Not more, but not less either.

This leads us to Kristjánsson's idea of justification. For Kristjánsson the concept of the self, one has, needs to be "realistic" and "justified": If I or others think bad about me, than these believes are justified if and only if it is true that I am bad at whatever is at stake. One important aim of education is to help people to find out about this truth. This idea of a "justified" picture of oneself holds only true for the "social self", i.e. the self I and others can relate to, when speaking about *me*, reflecting on *me* etc. Every practice indeed entails a certain normativity I cannot escape without changing the practice. But what about the "constituting" self, the experiential self as the living-through of my experiences? If I feel good in a situation, e.g. when being at a job interview, *I* feel good. I cannot doubt about this feeling and simultaneously live through it. This is not a question of epistemic truth or not, it is an experiential fact. Of course I can detect, after the interview, that this feeling good was unjust. Another person tells me, e.g. that I looked strange and insecure and I suddenly understand that I had betrayed myself. Nevertheless, there is no sort of introspection that makes me aware of my first-person-perspective; it rather reveals itself in my perceiving, experiencing, encountering the world. We cannot transform the pre-reflective level into propositional form without losing a fundamental aspect of what it means to be a self. There is always a possibility of self-deception. I cannot *know* whether my feeling good in this situation is adequate or not.

In this sense the world as the counterpart of my actions and thoughts is indeed the only corrective. Nevertheless the whole idea of education builds on the idea that we can change ourselves. We are not only transformed by the world we live in, and by the perspectives of others. Who we are is not entirely "constituted" by the social world, but we can actively change our perspective on the world and ourselves. In this sense we are both the subject and object of education. In the last part of the paper I will take a closer look at the idea of education as self-formation.

IV. Being and Becoming – What is the "self" of education?

What is relationship between the perspectives of education, psychology and philosophy on the issue at stake? What is the difference between a psychological view on self-esteem and self-esteem as a problem of education? Taking a closer look at the relation between selfhood and self-esteem it seems that to speak of esteeming oneself in the abovementioned sense presupposes *different perspectives* on the self. In my view, the "self" of self-esteem has to be twofold: there is, on the one hand the *experiencing self* that cannot be reduced to objective concepts, cannot be measured etc. On the other hand, there is the self I can esteem by taking a reflective stance towards myself. It is the "self" of the social world. But these two different understandings of what it means to be a self, are not two distinct selves. They are rather the correlates to two different perspectives on the self. There is no social self without the experiencing self, the very relation I have to the world. Yet, the way I relate to the world, is always determined by its situatedness, mediated via others, via the evaluation of others, the perspective of others on me and the world, via traditions, institutions. To be a self means to be able to conceptualize one's own perspective, to possibly form *an idea of oneself*. This means, that it makes sense to say that I "possess" a self, that I am a "person amongst other person". What we mean with "self-esteem"

has to be understood in terms of taking both the first-person-perspective as well as second and third-person perspectives into account. Or as William James has already formulated it, the subject has the capacity to objectify itself, to take a reflective, evaluative stance towards itself (James 1890: 307). Doing this I can conceive myself as a medium, an instrument, in order to achieve certain goals in life. My "self", who I am with all my knowledge, my competences and skills are relevant for being successful with regard to the pretensions in my live. As a social and embodied self I am already in the world: my social and bodily being limits not only the possibilities in the world, but also my perspective on the world. Born blind, I might not be able to become a pilot. It won't help to believe in my capacities. I need to know about myself as an instrument to achieve certain goals; I need to know about my "qualities" in order to set adequate and achievable goals and to be satisfied with the possible. Education in this perspective means to help a person to have a realistic view on the relation between her "self's" capacities and her possible goals. James formulation of "self-esteem" may describe this relation very well. It makes no sense to set myself a goal I cannot achieve. But it can become a goal in my life to become the person who is able to achieve this former unrealistic goal.

It is exactly at this point that a psychological and an educational view on self-esteem differ from each other. Educational success is not tantamount to the fulfillment of tasks first in school and finally in the job life etc. as Kristjánsson concludes (cf. Kristjánsson 2007: 259). It is not only tied to an idea of success, as the psychological concept suggests, but also to self-fulfillment. One premise of education is that one is not only able to change with respect to outer criteria, but also able to set standards for oneself and to change them. This involves a minimal idea of self-determination in the sense of the ability to transcend a situation, to take a reflective stance towards myself and the situation I am in. The concept of education as self-"formation", as it is promoted in education since

Humboldt, does not mean to adjust to social or cultural practices, as Kristjánsson implicitly argues, but also the ability to criticize them, to transcend one's social, cultural, natural presuppositions. This means also that I am able to form second-order preferences about myself and the world. In this sense it presupposes a certain self-objectification and idealization. An "idea" of a self I am not or not yet. How can I become this person? The idea of "self-fulfillment" cannot be independent form the situation but it nevertheless entails an inside in the situation and its constituents. What looks impossible now might be possible later. In this sense education indeed refers to the (im-)possibility of entering the "Fool's Paradise".

Taking a look at the experiential dimension of self-hood, we may see that the self is not only a medium and instrument but the very sphere of my life. That is, I do not only esteem myself in order to reach certain goals. In a way my goals, and probably my suffering from not reaching them, implicitly refer to an idea of the "good life". I might not necessarily be aware of this dimension of self-hood as self-fulfillment. In everyday life I might never encounter this dimension. Yet, it is exactly in the process of education, that the dimension of self-hood becomes opaque. I am not any longer only directed to the world and the "self" in this world: the "person" I am for others. I might become aware of the "self" as the condition of the possibility to understand myself and others as "worldly" phenomena at all. Education means that the everyday engagement in my life becomes disturbed; the "self" becomes opaque. It is exactly when I feel, for instance, insecure about a situation the "self" becomes thematic: Will I succeed? In this moment of doubt, my "self" stands between me and the world. I "posses" a self rather than be a self. I cannot go on as usual. I become aware of a certain correlation between my perspective on the world and the world as it appears to me. If I start to think, how I look like, when dancing, I stumble and fall on the floor. In educational contexts it is exactly the future self that becomes opaque. Here it is, as it

seems, a matter of learning to "overcome" one self in order to become oneself. This sounds like a paradox. But when we relate to our capacity to do something, we relate to our future self, based on our past achievements or failures. Thus, "self-esteem" can be seen as a concept of *crisis*. We do not know that we have low or high self-esteem until we encounter a situation in which our "self" becomes problematic. I might not *be aware of* any "low self-esteem" at all until the moment I doubt whether I can achieve a certain goal. Here one can find a common ground of educational and psychological questions. Yet, the pragmatic answer of psychologists: "It works" or "it does not work" to improve self-esteem does not claim more than that someone has been made feel good/bad about herself. She might me able to engage again in the practices she has been involved. Whereas it is the aim of a therapeutic intervention to overcome a critical moment, it might me the aim of education to exactly produce such critical moments, to provoke a "crisis of the self". The educationalist view questions the very idea of limiting our self-relation to "well-being". The pedagogical approach, as I see it, would not only aim for the "well-being" of a person for her own sake, but would question the criterion of well-being. Whereas the psychological main paradigm is achievement and problem solving from a third-person-perspective, the educational interest is concerned with the conditions under which a subject is organizing her life as *meaningful*.

To sum up the argumentation: From a phenomenological point of view one has to understand the self as both constituting and constituted. When I am acting, I am directed towards the world without being aware of myself as a phenomenon in the world. This directedness entails a "sense of self". It is *my* perspective on the world. It is this pre-reflective self-consciousness that precedes any other concepts of the self. This pre-reflective level of self-hood is not "disposable" via reflection, but is operative in every act of reflection. Even though I agree with Cigman that a self is not an inner sphere but a socially constituted phenom-

enon it makes nevertheless sense to speak of a certain asymmetry with regard to the relation between self and others. There is a primacy of self-awareness that is not a primacy of "access", as the "standard approach" would suggest, but a primacy of perspectives. It is only on the basis of my first-person-perspective that I can have gain an understanding of myself in the social world. That is, the momentary experience is always already meaningfully constituted with regard to an idea of a horizon that transcends the perspective of one single self. In this sense, selfhood is a highly social phenomenon. Secondly, this being the case the instrumentalist view on the self, as it is expressed in the discussion on self-esteem, is only doing justice to one dimension of our understanding of what it means to be a self. There are situations in which we can understand ourselves as a mean in order to achieve something. Yet, these situations refer to the limits of selfhood. "Self-esteem" can be taken to be a crisis-concept. In a situation of crisis the "self" becomes opaque for itself. It thereby reveals the different dimensions of what it means to be a self. The "self" one esteems remains empty if there are no worldly, social, emotional contents I can fill it with, if there is nobody who recognizes me as this depressed, happy etc. self. Taking the pedagogical situation serious one is going to see that low self-esteem is not something to be cured and high self-esteem cannot be achieved directly; to be a self is rather an ongoing task we have to solve without dissolving it.

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SAVASTIS IR SAVIGARBA. EDUKOLOGINĖS IR PSICHOLOGINĖS SĄVOKOS FENOMENOLOGINĖ KRITIKA

Eva Schwarz

Savigarbos sąvoka, būdama ambivalentinė, vaidina lemiamą vaidmenį šiuolaikiniame edukologiniame diskurse. Viena, savigarba iškyla kaip edukologinių problemų sprendimas. Kita, ugdymo filosofų teigimu, savigarbos sąvoka neteisėta ugdant: tai yra psichologinė sąvoka, nepagrįstai perkelta į ugdymo sferą. Straipsnyje nagrinėjama savasties samprata, kuria paremtos įvairios „savigarbos" prieigos. Keliamas klausimas, kas yra patybė, kurią gerbiame. Straipsnyje filosofiškai reflektuojamos tiek „standartinio požiūrio", tiek jos kritikos prielaidos. Abi išplaukia iš vienpusės, supaprastintos patybės sampratos. Teigiama, kad savasties fenomenologinė prieiga padeda suprasti patybės vaidmenį ugdant.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: savastis, savigarba, fenomenologija, ugdymo filosofija.