Chapter 3
The Master

INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth century Martin Luther wrote the following about teachers:

a diligent, devoted schoolteacher . . . who faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never receive an adequate reward, and no money is sufficient to pay the debt you owe him . . . Yet we treat them with contempt, as if they were of no account whatever . . . nowhere on earth could you find a higher virtue than is displayed by the stranger, who takes your children and gives them a faithful training—a labour which parents very seldom perform, even for their own offspring (Monroe, 1905, p. 414).

Let us imagine, first that you are someone who is thinking about becoming a teacher? If so, perhaps you have already felt something of the nobility of the job of a teacher? Perhaps you have experienced for yourself the lasting impact that a truly devoted teacher can have on your life and you feel inspired to try and be that kind of influence for others? Perhaps also you have looked at the employment market and seen that the really high salaries are not to be found in teaching, yet you still feel called to a form of work that will engage you in the development of people, and especially perhaps young people? And maybe in teaching you see just such a profession, or at least the possibility of such? Let us hope so. Perhaps then you have been drawn to this book, and specifically to this section of the book, because you want to think about what it is to be a teacher, perhaps to find its inner significance and meaning, and to reflect upon its importance in the world—in the life of a student, and for you, the teacher, in your own life. If so, our project in this book is to follow a line of thinking about precisely what it means to be a teacher so that, in time, we might begin to understand, with Luther, the virtues of such work.

Or again, let us suppose a different reader. Perhaps you are already a teacher and, reading Luther’s words, know that you have lost that optimism and faith in the job that you once had back when you started teaching? Now you are drawn more to his statement that teachers are held in contempt and undervalued. Or, perhaps you are a teacher who feels weighed down by the need for conformity and compliance to government requirements. Perhaps you despair of any longer being able to make a difference in students’ lives? We know that retention of teachers is a huge problem. We have to ask: how is it that, in England at least, within four years of embarking on training for this career something between a third and a quarter of new teachers leave, or are seeking to leave, the profession? How is it that the experience of being a teacher so quickly and effectively undermines the desire to be a teacher?
There are of course many reasons, but there is one in particular that this book seeks to address. Whilst salary, status, conditions, health, paperwork and compliance all play their part in demoralising teachers, of much greater significance in the long run is that teaching has lost its sense of purpose, its **telos**, indeed, its own soul. It has lost any sense of virtue and nobility as an activity in the world. Bluntly, teaching has lost all meaning about its contribution to humanity.

I want to try and address this issue head on. What is the point of teaching? What is it for? What does it gain anyone to become a teacher? Is it still possible in this age of compliance and testing to find a meaning and significance to teaching that transcends the mundane and speaks to higher ideals? I think so, and that is what I now want to try and show. I intend for us to move swiftly through a number of different perspectives on the teacher towards an intriguing and difficult conclusion—difficult not in the sense of how easily it can be understood, but in terms of how far it can be lived up to. If you feel drawn, now, to thinking hard about some of the contradictions that characterise being a teacher, and to learning some remarkable things from these contradictions, then we can begin together to investigate Luther’s contention that there is no more virtuous occupation.

* What I mean by the term **philosophy of the teacher** is argued in more detail in Parts I and III of the book. However, at this stage what can be said is that such a philosophy certainly does not promise a solution to all of the difficulties and challenges that face teachers. I recognise how frustrating this repeated refusal to offer solutions can be. Let me recount something I heard whilst I was a PGCE student.

_Tutor_: (summing up his lecture) And so, those are the perspectives that can be applied to understanding the classroom. Are there any questions?

_Student_: I have one. How does any of this help me with the struggles I am having on my teaching practice?

_Tutor_: That wasn’t the point of the lecture.

_Student_: It never is.²

For now, it will suffice to say that the kind of philosophy that lies at the heart of Part II of this book is phenomenological. This means that it is grounded in real experiences that teachers have in their dealings with students every day, and at all levels of education from the primary age right up to PhD level. A phenomenology allows us to think about the structure and the content of our experiences in ways that teach us much about ourselves. The complication of such an approach is that a phenomenology asks us to experience one thing at the same time as experiencing its opposite or its negation. Thinking two things at once that do not, at first view, seem compatible, is one of the characteristics of the philosophy of the teacher—but then juggling with more than one thought at a time is something teachers are routinely expected to cope with. But
whether or not you are a teacher, you do not have to learn how to do phenomenology. It is not so much a method that can be employed as it is a way of understanding the experiences we are already having.

One experience in particular that lends itself to this kind of analysis is that of freedom. Freedom in education is inescapably bound up with power. Indeed, probably the most frequently cited dialectic or relationship between something and its opposite in education is that found in the teacher–student relationship: namely, should the teacher use their power and authority to make students learn, or should the students be left free to discover things for themselves? In educational writing and training this dilemma is often referred to as the conflict between didactic teacher-centred pedagogy and experiential student-centred pedagogy. But seldom are these two pedagogies experienced in practice in anything like such a strict separation from each other.

Like it or not, in all aspects of their practice, teachers are embroiled in relationships of power. As such, teachers are inextricably involved in the business of freedom. Every decision one makes as a teacher is in some way related to freedom, authority and power. Indeed, as I hope to show in what follows, teaching is the very stuff of freedom’s own difficulties and ambiguities. If you experience power in all its ambiguities, one might say dialectically, you are experiencing power as something that you cannot control, something that ebbs and flows with alarming alacrity. Some days with some students you have it; other days with the same students you seem to have lost it. In such experiences power is not a thing; it is a balance of relations. The effective teacher knows how to manage the balance in different situations. But all teachers at some time feel their vulnerability in relation to its vagaries and its capricious nature. Yet, and let us state this at the very beginning of our exploration, it is by taking the risks that freedom demands that teachers serve the emerging freedom of their students by becoming students to themselves, and doing so by thinking philosophically.

The structure of Part II of this book is very simple. For reasons that will quickly become apparent it is divided into three chapters. This shorter first chapter, Chapter 3, looks at examples of teachers who use power for mastery over their students. Chapter 4 explores examples of teachers who try to re-negotiate this power by endeavouring to serve the needs of their students’ development and their freedom. The final chapter in Part II, Chapter 5, looks at three spiritual models of the teaching relationship and shows how, in some ways, these models begin to see the teacher as playing both of these roles, of master and servant. At the end of Part II I will return to themes raised at the beginning and ask what, if anything, we have learned along the way about the teacher in particular and education in general. Then, in Part III, I will return to philosophy to pursue the ambivalence within this contradictory relationship of the teacher as master and servant, not just in Hegel’s own description of the relationship, but in its re-presentation, also, in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. If you are a practising teacher, you may find resonances here, it is hoped, with some of the aspirations and dilemmas that underpin everyday decisions, practices.
and relationships. If you are intending to teach, you may perhaps find in what follows some reflection of the teacher you hope to be.

This first chapter of Part II explores a number of examples of ways in which teachers have used, some might say abused, their power as masters over their students. It takes a broad and rather fast historical sweep, but the message that comes across is clear. The Western tradition of education has held to a notion of education that sees teachers as justified in having domination over their students both in terms of what will be learned and how it will be taught. In large part the teachers considered here believed that their power over the students was ultimately for the students’ own good. At the heart of this assumption lie various versions of a notion of education as enlightenment. It is here, with the classical model of education as enlightenment, that we will begin.

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Plato famously wrote *The Republic* some 2,400 years ago in Ancient Athens. In that book he described the process of education as one of enlightenment. His allegory of the Cave is perhaps the most famous articulation of how education happens and what it is for. Plato describes the Cave in the following terms. Men and women sit chained in a Cave with their backs to the entrance and to the light outside in the upper world. They are unable to turn around. A fire burns behind them, the light from which projects shadows of objects onto a wall in front of them. Knowing only what appears before them, the prisoners believe the shadows to be reality, to be real objects. The shadows are the only things they know and thus they believe them to be the truth. Indeed, they measure each other’s intellectual capacity by the degree to which they can memorise the sequence in which the shadows appear. In fact, the shadows are of objects carried by people between the fire and the prisoners, objects that are unknown to the prisoners.

Plato suggests that if one of the prisoners were released and ‘forced suddenly to stand up and turn his head, and look towards the light’ (Plato, 1992, p. 204) at the back of the Cave, he would undoubtedly feel pain and not a little confusion. Contrary to the wishes of the prisoner, and despite the pain, Plato suggests that this prisoner might then be dragged up ‘the steep and rugged assent’ (ibid.) towards the entrance and held on to until ‘he had been dragged up to the light of the sun’ (ibid.) outside the Cave in the upper world. The person doing the dragging—the ‘teaching’—is, it is assumed, a ‘philosopher king’, one of a small élite who govern the state. The upper world represents the realm of philosophical thinking and knowledge.

The released prisoner, who has been used only to the darkness of the Cave, will at first be blinded by the light of the upper world. In time, however, his eyes will grow accustomed to this new world and he will gradually be able to see again. This prisoner is undergoing what, for Plato, constitutes enlightenment. At first this person sees only the shadows in the
Cave. When he is turned round, however, his world is turned upside down as he is suddenly faced with things that he has never previously thought possible. He sees how the shadows are produced and realises, of course, that he has never before questioned their appearance. This reveals to him that the truth of the Cave is only an illusion. The illusion is maintained because no one has been able to see that what the prisoners take to be real are in fact only shadows of something else. At the same time, the prisoner sees another world, the upper world of which he has so far been in complete ignorance. As he emerges into this upper world, the light from the sun outside the Cave blinds him, and momentarily he sees again only shadows . . . then reflections, then the objects themselves, and finally the sun that is providing the light that makes these perspectives possible. Now he is enlightened, for now he knows not only that the Cave world has been merely an illusion maintained through ignorance, but also that the truth of the world lies not in the Cave at all but outside in the upper world, in thinking philosophically.

We will return to the Cave, to explore a further aspect of the allegory, in the conclusion to Part II below. This same educational process can, however, be understood in more familiar terms. Consider the following example. A mature undergraduate student begins a course of study at degree level studying the 1944 Education Act, the act that established the selection process for secondary schooling in the decades following the Second World War. As it happens, she is someone who attended a secondary modern school in the 1970s, having ‘failed’ the Eleven Plus examination. She found school boring and never relevant to her own imagination and thinking, and left with few qualifications. Neither her home circumstances nor her teachers encouraged to think about further education and certainly not about university. So after leaving school, she worked her way through a number of jobs. She eventually married and had children, and saw them grow up and become independent. Now she feels the need to do something more with her life, so she returns to education, gains an Access qualification and finally achieves a place at University. As she reads about the 1944 Education Act, and as its philosophical and ideological underpinnings are called into question, she begins to see her own educational history, and indeed her life as a whole, quite differently. The Eleven Plus, so it now seems, in effect determined that she and a large proportion of students like her would not get to the grammar school. It meant that she would never have expectations beyond her working-class station in life. Her teachers labelled her a ‘failure’ by the very fact that she attended their school. There was no need to stretch her or to raise her expectations, for it was decided in advance, as it were, that she would leave school at fifteen or sixteen and soon start a family.

Now, in thinking about this for the first time, this student begins to see that her world has been designed for her. Things that she accepted as naturally true, now appear as contingent—that is, things have been designed by someone else deliberately to engineer a specific outcome. The way she has understood herself and her life now changes. She had been made to feel stupid and an educational no-hoper, but it had been designed...
this way! She becomes angry, for now what she had taken to be the truth of her life becomes mere shadows cast by those in power, those who had made decisions about her and about those like her without telling her. Now, as the prisoner turns round, she sees another way of understanding the world open up before her. Now she sees shadows everywhere: she sees the ideology; she sees the ‘spin’. Now she begins to think for herself rather than simply to accept the version of the world that is presented to her. She has moved from the world of appearances to the intelligible world, the world of thinking for herself. She is embarked upon a personal voyage of discovery, or enlightenment, out of the Cave.

But this questioning is unsettling, even dangerous to her and her life. As Plato said, she will be blinded by the new light and will not be able to see clearly. Her newly discovered independent thinking for herself will most likely change what she thinks about life and about herself. It will affect her relationships, and her work. It will change what she wants from life, what she wants to talk about and think about. It will threaten existing relationships as new ones are formed that are more in tune with the newly emerging person. In sum, such enlightenment is painful, difficult, and disruptive. So, one must wonder, is it worth it? Or, is ignorance bliss? Should she be left alone to live her life in the Cave, believing in the shadows? Or, on the other hand, is it simply immoral to hide things from someone and, in turn to obstruct their own self-determination and freedom?

There is a wonderful response to this dilemma in Aldous Huxley’s book *Brave New World*. In it, he describes a world controlled at every turn by an élite who take it upon themselves to ensure social stability. They keep everything that is unpleasant from the population by means of genetics, drugs and consumerism so that people are ‘happy’ with their lives, and never seek to disrupt the social order. But this ‘happiness’ is problematic. It is not genuinely their happiness; it is a happiness engineered for them by the élite. When, towards the end of the book, the Savage, a representative of a more natural and autonomous way of life, meets the Controller, the latter boasts,

> The world’s stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can’t get. They’re well off; they’re safe; they’re never ill; they’re not afraid of death; they’re blissfully ignorant of passion and old age (Huxley, 1977, pp. 218–219).

> You’re so conditioned that you can’t help doing what you ought to do. And what you ought to do is on the whole so pleasant . . . that there really aren’t any temptations to resist (p. 235).

The Savage replies that this has all been achieved at the cost of liberty. Everything has been so easy that the experience of learning through suffering has been removed. He says to the Controller, ‘I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom,
I want goodness. I want sin . . . I’m claiming the right to be unhappy’ (p. 237). ‘You’re welcome’ (ibid.) replies the Controller.

The nub of the discussion concerns the right of people to learn for themselves and not to have self-appointed guardians protect them from unpleasant or difficult things on their behalf. This makes life more unsettled, but it ensures that life is genuine and experienced by each of us freely, in our own ways.

The philosophy of the teacher lies at the very heart of this dilemma. If education is enlightening, unsettling and potentially destructive, is it right to teach for this? Is it right to teach for the shadows or to prepare the path out of the Cave? Freedom is compromised, however the story is considered. If you leave people in the Cave, you deny them their freedom. If you force them out of the Cave, you impose a model of truth upon them that they have not freely chosen and that they may even reject. Many have interpreted Plato’s model of enlightenment in *The Republic* as the first Western example of the power of the teacher as master over the will, the mind and the bodies of the students. Karl Popper’s critique is famously clear and unremitting, concluding that ‘Plato’s political programme, far from being morally superior to totalitarianism, is fundamentally identical with it’ (Popper, 1962, p. 87).

Making a similar observation, Isaiah Berlin sums up very clearly the problem with the enlightenment model of education. Is there, he asks, a higher self within me ‘which I can attain to only by a process of education or understanding, a process that can be managed only by those who are wiser than myself, who make me aware of my true, “real,” deepest self?’ (1999, pp. 62–63). If there is then one may experience these ‘teachers’ as oppressors. ‘I may feel hemmed in—indeed, crushed—by these authorities, but that is an illusion: when I have grown up and have attained to a fully mature, “real” self, I shall understand that I would have done for myself what has been done for me if I had been as wise, when I was in an inferior condition, as they are now’ (p. 63). In short he says, ‘they are acting on my behalf, in the interests of my higher self’ (ibid.). But—and it is a considerable ‘but’—he adds, ‘there is no despot in the world who cannot use this method of argument for the vilest oppression’ (p. 64). The conclusion that we can draw from this, then, is that this kind of argument for enlightenment rests on the assumption that there is only one true answer to every question: if I know the true answer and you do not, and you disagree with me, it is because you are ignorant; if you knew the truth, you would necessarily believe what I believe; if you seek to disobey me, this can be so only because you are wrong, because the truth has not been revealed to you as it has been to me. This justifies some of the most frightful forms of oppression and enslavement in human history (pp. 65–66).

Here, then, is the *Catch 22* of the enlightenment model for the teacher. You can teach for the shadows, but that denies freedom, or you can teach against the shadows, but that imposes freedom. You are damned if you do
and damned if you do not. In either case, you assume the position of the master over the student, knowing what is best for them, on their behalf.

THE EDUCATION OF MEMORY

In 1887, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote a wonderfully provocative philosophical essay about the relationship between cruelty and morality entitled *On the Genealogy of Morals*. We do not need to rehearse the whole of his argument here. However, one aspect of it is pertinent to thinking about some of the examples of the teacher as master that follow below. Nietzsche suggests that what counts as right and wrong throughout history is decided by the strong. In other words, what is ‘right’ is what the lives of those who are powerful can and wish to enforce! In teacher- or parent-speak, it is the ‘because I say so’ school of morality. One form of morality that Nietzsche concentrates on is the Jewish/Christian conception. Here, he notes, it is seen as ‘right’ for people to develop a conscience so that they can take responsibility for their own actions, and overcome their instinct for exercising power over others. Power over the self thereby replaces the desire for power over others. The way to induce this conscience is through the development of memory. This is because without memory conscience cannot be held accountable. If we have no record of what we promised to be like, or what we promised to do, then it will be impossible to feel guilty about not living up to our promises.

By extending Nietzsche’s argument to teaching, we can note that something very interesting happens here. We can observe the irony that when teachers have tried to instil a conscience into their students in order to overcome their desire for power over others—or as it is more usually described, to learn to treat others with respect—then the teachers themselves have done so by using their power over others, perhaps even by the employment of incredibly harsh and cruel strategies. This becomes apparent in those instances when, to punish a child for bullying, the teacher in effect bullies the child. “If something is to stay in the memory,” notes Nietzsche, “it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory”—this is the main clause of the oldest (unhappily the most enduring) psychology on earth’ (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 497). Thus, for Nietzsche, cruelty and ‘moral education’ are inextricably linked. This goes some way to explaining why the history of Western education over the last 2000 years reads like a history of the changing relationship between memorisation and punishment. Indeed, the relationship of mastery over the physical bodies of the students is one of the most fundamental characteristics of the history of the Western teacher.

There are some remarkable examples of this over the last two thousand years. It is rare to find a current view of teaching that explicitly advocates this tyranny of the master, yet there are few of us who have not seen it and felt it first hand at some time in our educational histories. We all have memories of teachers who behaved like tyrants and dictators. Such
teachers can often permanently scar one’s experiences of school, indeed of education itself. The most lasting damage is done when such experiences destroy a person’s confidence about their ability to succeed in education. These scars can be carried all through one’s life, and certainly can put them off returning to education—for fear of being made to look stupid again by teachers who enjoy humiliating their students. Many mature students, who have left school years before with no qualifications, return bravely to higher education years, finally trying to overcome the fear that has been instilled into them regarding learning and its ever-present shadow—failure. It is not surprising that such students are often on the defensive, assuming that their teachers will be bullying and dismissive.

The seventeenth-century educationalist and teacher Jon Amos Comenius provides a very well-known example of the disciplining and training the memory (mnemonics), and this displays many of the characteristics of a pedagogy of the teacher who is master over the students through memory. It portrays the teacher as the master having complete control over the production of the student and the student as a ‘blank slate’ on which knowledge must somehow be impressed and then recalled through memory. Comenius writes this of his new method:

The art of printing involves certain materials and processes. The materials consist of the paper, the type, the ink, and the press. The processes consist of the preparation of the paper, the setting up and inking of the type, the correction of the proof, and the impression and drying of the copies. All this must be carried out in accordance with certain definite rules, the observance of which will ensure a successful result.

In didachography the same elements are present. Instead of paper, we have pupils whose minds have to be impressed with the symbols of knowledge. Instead of type, we have the class-books and the rest of the apparatus devised to facilitate the operation of teaching. The ink is replaced by the voice of the master, since this it is that conveys information from the books to the mind of the listener; while the press is school-discipline, which keeps the pupils up to their work and compels them to learn (Comenius, 1910, p. 289).

To our modern ears, this kind of dehumanising mechanisation, treating students merely as equivalent objects that are to be pressed into a uniform shape, is offensive. It pays no heed to individual student need, to student-centred activity or to creativity and imagination, preferring instead a uniform procedure that demands conformity and compliance. Moreover, it clearly demonstrates a view of education as teacher-centred. The master is in control of the process. He knows on the student’s behalf what she must learn and how it must be learned. In addition, he sees the student as a blank slate on which knowledge must be impressed, for only if knowledge sticks in the memory can it be said to be known, and only then can the student thereafter be held to be morally accountable. To this end the teacher can also discipline the student, should she in some way reject his authority. Comenius notes that students must be continuously supervised...
for they cannot be trusted to be diligent in their work. They must be
blamed if they ‘leave the beaten path’ (p. 291).

Let me introduce now some other historical examples—some rather
extreme!—from within the Western tradition of the teacher as master.

EDUCATION AND PUNISHMENT

From Ancient Greece, the Western curriculum has passed down a
characteristic and indeed dominant form of learning that has ensured the
continuing relationship between cruelty and memory. An educated, and
indeed a moral person, knew Latin and Greek. Training in these languages
therefore became training in memorisation of grammar and poetry. As
long as there were (are) grammar schools, the relationship between
education and mnemonics (has) continued. Quintilian (c.35AD–c.95AD), a
remarkably progressive Roman educator who cared that learning should
be pleasurable, nevertheless saw that the surest indication of the ability
and character of a child ‘is his power of memory’ (Quintilian, 1921, p. 55;
Book I. iii. 1.) Literary training is ‘solely a question of memory, which not
only exists even in small children, but is specially retentive at that age’ (p.
29; Book I. i. 19). Indeed, says Quintilian, ‘at the tender age of which we
are now speaking . . . memory is almost the only faculty that can be
developed by the teacher’ (p. 39; Book I. i. 36). The job of the master
therefore became that of training pupils in the art of rhetoric, which in turn
required memorisation through imitation or repetition. The teacher’s job
became to ensure this memorisation and repetition. If harsh punishments
were required to keep a student on task, then this was for the long-term
benefit of the student. Thus the master had the responsibility to ensure
conditions most conducive to the rigour demanded for memorisation and
repetition—that is, long hours of exercise backed up by the threat of force
for those who slackened.

From Socrates’ dialogue with Protagoras we learn that parents and
teachers in Ancient Athens decided what was just, honourable and holy for
their students. Then, ‘if he is obedient,’ says Protagoras,

well and good. If not, they straighten him with threats and beatings like a
warped and twisted plank. Later on when they send the children to school,
their instructions to the masters lay much more emphasis on good
behaviour than on letters or music (Plato, 1956, para. 325d).

Keeping in mind the fact that the purpose of education was memorisation
and repetition, and the relation of this to cruelty, it is appropriate to look
briefly at a number of examples of ways in which this has been manifested
in the work of teachers in the Western tradition over the past 2000 years.
Although what follows is obviously selective, it is clear that Western
education has in large measure sustained the idea of the teacher as master
over the bodies of the students so that the minds of the students might be
correctly formed and shaped. The repetition of prose and poetry that
characterised so much Greek and Roman education was transferred to the
Europe of the Middle Ages through Cathedral Schools. We find records, for example, in the twelfth century from Cathedral Schools of exercises in reading, in composition and in verse that had to be chanted without the aid of a book. One extant record of life in a Cathedral School in the twelfth century notes that

since the memory is strengthened by exercise and the wits are sharpened by imitating what is heard, [the master] urged some by warnings, and some by floggings and punishments [to the constant practice of memorisation and imitation]. They were individually required on the following day to reproduce some part of what they had heard the day before (Binder, 1970, p. 98).

Grammar was practised in evening drill and students ‘repeatedly wrote prose and poetry every day’ (ibid.).

There were opponents of this connection between learning (repetition and imitation) and punishment. For example, Erasmus (c.1467–1536) announces: ‘I have no patience with the stupidity of the average teacher of grammar who wastes precious years in hammering rules into children’s heads’ (Binder, 1970, p. 142). And Montaigne, (1533–1592) in 1580, complained of schools as

gaols in which imprisoned youth loses all discipline by being punished before it has done anything wrong. Visit one of these colleges when the lessons are in progress; you hear nothing but the cries of children being beaten and of masters drunk with anger (Montaigne, 1958, p. 73).

Nevertheless, despite such protests, the relationship between learning and punishment continued unabated. At Eton in the sixteenth century ‘Latin was almost the only subject of study ... the lower boys had to decline and conjugate words and their seniors had to repeat rules of grammar for the illustration of which short phrases called “Vulgaria” were composed and committed to memory’ (Binder, 1970, p. 152). Some two hundred years later we learn from the same school of its most renowned ‘flogger’, one Dr. Keate, who was Headmaster from 1809–1834. It was said that ‘in his sixtieth year [he] still found the energy to flog 80 boys in one day’ (Evans, 1975, p. 47). This, however, pales into insignificance against one German schoolmaster in a latin Grammar School from the 1750s, of whom it is said,

in the course of his fifty one years and seven months as a teacher ... had, by moderate computation, given 911,527 blows with a cane, 124,010 blows with a rod, 20,989 blows and raps with a ruler, 136,715 blows with the hand, 10,235 blows over the mouth, 7,905 notabenes with the Bible ... He had 777 times made boys kneel on peas, 613 times on a triangular piece of wood, had made 3001 wear the jackass, and 1707 hold the rod up, not to mention various more unusual punishments he had continued on the spur of the moment (Cubberley, 1920, pp. 455–456).
Who knows how much of this is true? The point is that it adds to our picture of teachers as masters who saw learning as the external imposition of internal discipline. Students were beaten for their own good, and there was indeed virtue in it, for it helped, so it was supposed, to point their lives in the right direction and to make them moral.

The benefit of this punishment, as a means of ensuring moral lives, was not always restricted to the élite who attended the grammar schools. After the revolution in France in 1789, ruling classes across Europe feared that the masses might revolt and overthrow the existing order of things. To have to protect themselves through the militia might involve the unwelcome recognition that there was indeed a crisis. More effective would be to ‘educate’ the masses out of any rebellious aspirations. Schools could be established specifically for these lower classes in which they could be taught morality, devotion to God, hard work, and above all obedience and respect for the natural authority of their masters. Adam Smith commended the education of the trades people out of the public purse in no small part because the state, he says, ‘derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders’ (Smith, 1958, p. 269).

But this concern for the teacher as the master’s representative who must instil into the lower classes respect for the masters in general, is even more clearly spelled out through the elementary school system in nineteenth-century England. From Kennington Oval Elementary School we learn that

the Object in forming Establishments of this nature . . . is, to train the Infant Poor to good and orderly habits,—to instil into their minds an early knowledge of their civil and religious duties,—to guard them, as far as possible, from the seductions of vice,—and to afford them the means of becoming good Christians, as well as useful and industrious Members of Society (Silver and Silver, 1974, p. 1).

More infamously still, in 1867 the President of the Board of Education, Robert Lowe, told the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh that ‘the lower classes ought to be educated to discharge the duties cast upon them. They should also be educated that they may appreciate and defer to a higher cultivation when they meet it’ (Sylvester, 1974, p. 35). If the grammar schools saw teachers or masters punishing in order to stimulate the discipline necessary to achieve enlightenment, the elementary schools used teachers as masters to enforce the discipline necessary to respect the enlightenment of others and to ‘bow down and defer’ (ibid.) to it when they met it. But although the methods of punishment increased in ingenuity, the relationship between punishing and learning continued uninterrupted. Now the body of the lower-class student had to be externally controlled so that it might learn conformity, a quality that was itself imbued with moral worth. It becomes clear that the punishing elementary school master was not using his authority to lead his students...
out of the Cave, but rather to control any dissatisfaction they might have with their lives within the Cave. This master was charged with disciplining the students to lead good ‘Cave lives’ and be compliant ‘Cave citizens’ who would not seek any changes in its structures and its hierarchies, and would not question its shadows.

Charles Dickens, in *Hard Times*, paints a vivid picture of the stultifying form of education that was practised in these Elementary Schools, whilst other sources record the kinds of punishments at the masters’ disposal. In the early Monitorial Schools one of the founders, Robert Lancaster, worked out an elaborate code of rewards and punishments, among which was ‘the log’, a piece of wood weighing four to six pounds, which was fixed to the neck of the child guilty of his (or her) first talking offence . . . More serious offenders found their appropriate punishment in the Lancastrian code; handcuffs, the ‘caravan’, pillory and stocks, and ‘the cage’. The latter was a sack or basket in which serious offenders were suspended from the ceiling (Craig, 1969, pp. 23–24).

As Dickens himself shows, the key to the mastery of the teacher, even some 2000 years after the Greek and Roman grammar schools, lay in the model of learning as imitation, repetition and memorisation. The famous example from *Hard Times* is worth repeating here. The teacher, Thomas Gradgrind, ‘is a man of facts and calculations’ (Dickens, 1969, p. 48). ‘You can only form the minds of reasoning animals from facts’ (p. 47), and students are to be brought into acquaintance with these facts by definitions. Girl number 20 in the classroom, Sissy Jupe, is unable to define a horse despite of, or because of, the fact that her father works with horses. Bitzer, on the other hand, is a student who knows and understands exactly what a horse is. It is a

‘Quadruped. Grammivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too.’

‘Now girl number twenty’, said Mr. Gradgrind, ‘You know what a horse is’ (p. 50).

Recent changes in European law have now made it illegal for teachers to hit their students. The master’s freedom to rule by physical force has been removed. Michel Foucault (1926–1984) has demonstrated ways in which control over the body, and thereby the student, has continued without the need for the imposition of external physical coercion.

In his early work Foucault pointed out that at the end of the eighteenth century enlightenment came to mean ‘a way of bringing to light’ (Foucault, 1973, p. 64). In hospitals and schools, as elsewhere, pedagogical practices were introduced around this new discourse. In particular, that which was to be brought to light needed to be observed, and as such had to be made visible and available to the ‘gaze’ (p. xiii). However, Foucault argues that what is made visible is no longer under the power of a master. He differentiates between pre-enlightenment times,
when power could be possessed by a sovereign individual and post-enlightenment, when power became a network of relations that no one individual could control according to his own will. This network of relations is what he means by the term *discourse*. Hence, he argues that it is no longer human subjects who determine how power is to be used. Rather, it is the way that power is distributed in pedagogies that determine if and how human subjects are to appear. This is a very dramatic argument and one that is strange to many of our accustomed ways of thinking. We tend to think that the human being is an incontrovertible fact. Foucault is asking us to believe that the human being is really only a function of the arrangement of power in a particular discourse. Power is therefore no longer possessed; it is 'exercised' (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). This fundamentally changes the way we understand the relationship between the teacher and his power over the students. Foucault says that

one doesn’t have here a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over the others. It’s a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised . . . Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns (1980, p. 156).

In an influential book called *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault showed how this applied to the formation and organisation of schools. It is no longer the case that the teacher can exercise sovereign power over the students. There is, he says, a new kind of power that shapes the relationships between teachers and students—disciplinary power. Power is no longer possessed; now it is exercised through the bodies of the participants. Thus, teachers and students are only effects of power and ‘the element of its articulation. The individual that power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

In line with the discourse of enlightenment, discipline now requires the making of bodies visible, their being placed under the gaze. Thus classrooms were designed so that everyone could be seen; timetables were drawn up so that it could be known where every body was at any time throughout the school day; testing took the form of ‘examinations’ so that each body could be watched, judged, measured and allotted their deserved place in the hierarchy. The most interesting change, as far as punishment was concerned, was that now it was no longer possible or necessary for a teacher to wield sovereign power. Now discipline meant precisely that a student—or their body—would regulate itself. To be disciplined meant to have gained control over one’s actions so that they conformed to the expectations that were carried by the discourse known as education. Bluntly, because students and teachers were constantly under surveillance as a result of being kept visible, disciplinary power became the sole controlling factor in schools. Pedagogy was now contained in the way the bodies were arranged rather than in any confrontation between them caused by inequalities in power. As such, for Foucault, punishment is no
longer the personal prerogative of the teacher. It is rather the very structure and organisation—the pedagogy—of the school itself.

NATURE

It is not strictly accurate, however, to suggest that the history of Western education has been solely based in the idea of teacher as master and learning as memorisation through discipline and punishment. Eighteenth-century European thinking brought about attempts at a fundamental shift in the relationship between teacher and student and, in particular, away from the idea of the teacher as master. The idea that a child could, for example, be likened to a young tree that, in order to grow straight and true, required a gardener who would intervene at all points to ensure rigid and foreseeable progress, came in for much criticism. It began to be argued that in fact it was precisely the intervention in the development of the student that stultified his growth. There was, went the argument, innate in everyone a path of individual development that, if left alone, would allow each child and each student to develop naturally. Trying to better nature came to be seen as a crime against nature.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) is perhaps the best known example of a thinker who synthesised this law of natural development into a fully reasoned educational philosophy. For Rousseau, the most significant problem facing European society was its own sense of itself as civilised. It had become so dominated by social convention—the right way to do this, the wrong thing to say here, the correct form of dress, the importance of status, etc.—that mankind’s true and genuine human nature had been completely lost. Thus, in civil(ised) society, says Rousseau, it became in the interests of men to appear to be something other than they truly were. The result was that people led lives that were fraudulent, none daring to show what or who they really were and preferring instead always to wear masks of social acceptability. Education, for its part, was a training in and for this deceit. Rousseau laments that ‘sincere friendship, real esteem and perfect confidence are banished from among men. Jealousy, suspicion, fear, coldness, reserve, hate and fraud lie constantly concealed under that uniform and deceitful veil of politeness’ (Rousseau, 1973, p. 6).

It was time then for a different kind of education to release the true person trapped within this social appearance, and better, for a new kind of education to prevent his being trapped in the first place. This could only be achieved through an education in which one’s true nature could emerge and flourish without being suppressed by the hypocrisies and masks of civil society. In some ways, this resembles the point of view seen above in Brave New World. Rousseau is arguing for an education in which nature is the master, and in which the teacher would only serve this master, never dominating or interfering with it. As he famously begins his book Emile that describes such a natural education,

God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil

... he destroys and defaces all things; he loves all that is deformed and
monstrous; he will have nothing as nature made it, not even man himself, who must learn his paces like a saddle-horse, and be shaped to his master’s taste like the trees in his garden (Rousseau, 1993, p. 5).

As the Savage in Brave New World demands not to be unprotected from life’s evils and difficulties, so Rousseau commends just such a natural life for all children, exemplified by his fictitious student, Emile. To be left alone will be their education. His philosophy of the teacher is do nothing. The most important thing a teacher can do is ‘to prevent anything being done’ (p. 9) that will in any way hinder nature’s own plans. Indeed, to teachers he says: ‘reverse the usual practice and you will almost always do right’ (p. 68). This conjures up the picture of a wild child growing up unconstrained and out of control. Rousseau acknowledges that such a pupil is more likely to injure himself because this teacher ‘shall not take pains to prevent Emile hurting himself; far from it’ (p. 49):

Instead of keeping him mewed up in a stuffy room, take him out in to a meadow every day; let him run about, let him struggle and fall again and again, the oftener the better; he will learn all the sooner to pick himself up. The delights of liberty will make up for many bruises (ibid.).

There is a teacher here, but it is not the tutor: it is the child’s own natural abilities. The whole secret to a natural education for Rousseau is not that the child will grow up to be wild, uncontrolled and unconstrained. On the contrary he will, through the hard natural lessons of pain and frustration, learn to adapt his desires to his abilities. He will learn to curb his appetites to that which he can, through his own efforts, meet for himself. The man is truly free, says Rousseau, ‘who desires what he is able to perform, and does what he desires’ (p. 56) and has put these two in mutual equilibrium through his own natural education. Nature is the master here, and the tutor only its by-standing servant.

Rousseau’s philosophy of the teacher has been very influential, particularly in Europe. It gave birth to a number of so-called child-centred pedagogies that emphasised allowing the student to develop naturally. Such philosophies provided a counter to the mnemonic pedagogies seen above and indeed reversed such thinking. No force was necessary now for there was no pre-determined plan to which a student should be made to comply. There was no pre-ordained person they were supposed to become, and thus the ‘moral’ authority of the master to inflict punishment for the child’s good was undermined. This progressive education has taken many forms and, in different ways, can be seen in educational work as varied as that of Pestalozzi (1966), Montessori (1964, 1965), A. S. Neill (1962) and Carl Rogers (1969). It is not overstating the case to say that some of the thinking in Emile was replicated in the child-centred Plowden Report of 1967, and that it lay behind a great deal of the controversy regarding progressivism that characterised educational debate in England in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, it could be argued that the
backlash against such progressivism led directly to the National Curriculum and testing in the 1988 Education Reform Act.\textsuperscript{10}

However, there is a problem with the idea that the teacher as master can be replaced by nature as master. It is a problem that Rousseau himself understood. He acknowledges a paradox, at best, and a deception at worst, admitting that in order for the teacher not to intervene and to let the student learn naturally, the art of teaching still ‘consists in controlling events’ (Rousseau, 1993, p. 251). The student must believe he is learning naturally, but the teacher needs to arrange these natural experiences very carefully. In short, Rousseau says, ‘let him always think he is master while you are really master’ (p. 100).\textsuperscript{11} What Rousseau’s insight makes clear is that even when child-centred pedagogies try to overturn the domination of the teacher’s role as the master, they can, it appears, only do so as masters themselves. This contradiction haunts progressive philosophies of the teacher that seek to replace the shadows of the Cave with the autonomy of the students to learn for themselves. Inevitably, for or against the Cave and its illusions, the teacher must always assert a vision of what a student ought to be learning. As Berlin noted above, it seems that all visions of how others are to become enlightened are charged with a moral value in terms of what teachers think is good and right for their students. This presents a contradiction for the teacher who sees himself as servant to God or to nature. To be the servant, he must also be the master. This is a contradiction that as yet we are not in a position fully to comprehend, but it is one we will return to again.\textsuperscript{12}

**KANT AND THE RELEASE FROM TUTELAGE**

Why do these stories of imposition, punishment, memorisation and so on produce in us feelings at the very least of unease and perhaps of outrage and disgust? It is easy to say that it is wrong for teachers to have the right to abuse students physically (and the law prevents this), but, as teachers, or potential teachers, can we clearly and articulately defend why we should not interpret the world on their behalf? Politically we might do so in terms of the individual human rights of students; educationally we perhaps feel that students’ learning is something that comes from within, and cannot be imposed from without; philosophically it is also the case that this treatment of students offends our notions of equality, autonomy, self-determination and freedom.

A thinker who can help us better to understand our opposition to the idea of the teacher as master is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Kant is one of the philosophers who shaped our modern understanding of the concept of freedom. He argued that freedom could not be separated from the will of the person. An action can be called free if it is solely your decision. It must be un-coerced by anything external, including a teacher, and must be grounded in your own reasoning and your own thinking. Freedom thus requires us to make our own minds up. When the teacher makes up our
minds for us, this, for Kant, cannot be freedom. In trying to link the ideas of enlightenment and freedom, Kant writes:

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of this understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! ‘Have courage to use your own reason’—that is the motto of the enlightenment (Kant, 1990, p. 83).

The teacher who is master clearly opposes this vision and concept of enlightenment for he ensures that students do not think for themselves. The master enjoys the power of tutelage. He prevents the students from thinking and acting autonomously. He demands that they learn what he wants them to learn. Indeed, very often the idea of the students’ freedom or thinking independently for themselves is seen as a threat to the power and authority of the teacher. Such a master holds the student’s will in subservience to his own. Thus, rather than acting autonomously, the student is forced to act heteronomously, that is, always according to the will of another, and never according to his own will. This student is not free, nor is he learning to be free. He is rather learning to become dependent, and this, for Kant, can never lead to universal equality and freedom but only to a perpetuation of an unequal relationship.

What we can take from this is that, on Kant’s view, freedom is fundamentally an educational concern. The teacher who is master perhaps stands opposed to freedom, to enlightenment, to the use of one’s own reason, to action grounded in one’s own will and, ultimately, to the nurturing of the student into a person brave enough and rational enough to know that freedom requires him to take responsibility for his own decisions. On occasions the master will defend his tyranny by saying that the will of the student must be broken. This is necessary for the student because if he is to be an integrated member of society he must learn to co-operate with others and suppress his selfish desires. That may be so, but if the education about the relation between the self and others is forced, physically or mentally, by the will of another, then the very relation it is supposed to produce is already corrupted. Respect for the other has to be freely given, or it is not freedom.

For Kant, then, education must be for the enlightenment of each individual and must take seriously the idea, the vocation, of producing responsible people and enlightened citizens who think for themselves, freely and autonomously. Respect from fear is not self-respect, and a lack of self-respect devolves into abusive relationships. It is, as Kant argues, only our trust in the risk of freedom that can break the repetition of the cycle of abuse. This is why the kind of teacher as master that we have looked at above has perhaps had his day, Modern freedom, as defined by Kant, demands a different kind of teacher, one that respects the freedom of all individuals to grow and develop into autonomous persons, able to think for themselves.

In Chapter 4 we will explore some of the forms that this new kind of teacher can take. We will see that the teacher who believes in freedom seeks to be neither master over the students nor surrogate master on behalf of God or nature. Rather, the critical teacher aims to be servant to the emancipation of students from all forms of tutelage, self-incurred or externally imposed, and to their free and un-coerced development. From teachers in the Cave who shaped their students to pre-conceived models of development, we now move to teachers who not only are critical of the Cave’s illusions but also seek to emancipate their students from the hold that the shadows have over them.

NOTES

1. This lends the need for a particular kind of approach in Part II. I am concerned to employ educational perspectives and theorists only to the extent that they contribute to our understanding of the philosophical significance of these experiences. This will, I am sure, offend some readers who find the treatment of perspectives and theorists a little too one-sided. I am not interested here in different interpretations of these perspectives or theorists—there are many books available that do just that, and far better than I could—but rather in the way their contributions can be seen within the bigger picture of philosophical experience that is being re-presented here in the book overall. Of course, some readers, new to some of this material, might seek out for themselves just such alternative conceptions and interpretations of these perspectives.

2. It is natural, of course, at times of greatest difficulty for teachers to think and to hope that there are techniques that will ‘work’ in the classroom—and there are things that can usefully be said to trainee teachers to help them in this respect. However, even these techniques rely on teachers establishing good working relationships with their students. The desire for answers to challenges and difficulties comes directly from teachers feeling vulnerable and exposed in front of students who will not ‘behave’ or co-operate. Sometimes these vulnerabilities lead to teachers in schools pushing the ‘problem child’ upwards through the hierarchy of the school, on the principle: ‘You deal with them. You’re paid more than me’. Another more general reaction to vulnerability is to blame school managers for not being strict enough: ‘They’re too soft, and the kids know it’. I am not suggesting that school managers are never to blame. However, what the philosophy of the teacher asks us to think about are different ways of understanding the vulnerability that teachers can feel in their relationships with students. It is possible to think about this vulnerability as something positive—indeed, as something educational for the teacher. It is possible to find a meaning in it that speaks quietly yet powerfully of the ways in which teachers can understand their continuing education about freedom and authority on the strength of the relationships they have with their students. I will say more about this later.

3. The example is taken from a course in education studies, but similar cases could easily be found across the range of higher education.

4. The term carries cultural baggage now that was unrecognised even in Huxley’s time.

5. The term ‘blank slate’ in education is more usually associated with John Locke (1632–1704). In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding he states that we can suppose the mind ‘to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas’ (1975, Book 2, Chapter 1, para. 2).

6. We should try to understand, however, the excitement that such mechanisation produced for its contemporaries and how they saw in the new processes a means of extending the opportunities for education quickly and efficiently.

7. Quintilian asks that the teacher must be of good character in order that he will ‘govern the behaviour of his pupils by the strictness of his discipline’ without austerity, temper, sarcasm or, ‘above all abuse’ (1921, p. 213, book II. ii. 4–7).

8. He says that a discourse is a ‘group of statements that belong to a single system of formation’ (1972, p. 107).

9. Foucault, 1980, p. 156. We will look at this idea of the non-subject again in Chapter 4.
10. For example, in tracing the ideological roots of the 1988 Education Reform Act, Denis Lawton has argued that ‘child-centred teaching methods’ were blamed for a fall in ‘standards’. ‘The remedy’ for the Conservative Party, he says, was ‘to give more power to parents . . . But just in case, a national curriculum was set up which would enforce standards’ (Lawton, 1992, p. 47).

11. See also here Hansen, 2001, p. 65.

12. In some ways, of course, I have presented a rather one-sided picture of some of these thinkers. Many of the educational philosophies wherein teachers become masters defend the actions of the master in the classroom on religious grounds. As we have seen, for some it is a moral mission to enlighten the souls of the young so that, through imposed discipline, they might come to learn self-discipline. For others, mastery is necessary to save the souls of those who will be distracted from God by the temptations of the world. Comenius is one such example. It is very easy to quote the famous passage about the practice of teaching resembling the technology of the printing press and to make a dramatic point about the impoverished vision this conveys of the creativity and independence of the student. But behind this Comenius sees himself not just as a master but, more importantly, as a servant of God. Indeed, not only can Comenius be seen as a servant of God, but also, like Rousseau, as a servant of nature. Even though Comenius sees the mind of the child as a blank slate that needs to be written on, he does not believe in giving priority to memorisation over direct experience. Only if the child sees and experiences things for himself will he be said to have truly learned them. ‘Man must proceed from sense experience (physical knowledge) to the knowledge disclosed through reason’ (Murphy, 1995, p. 86), he says. He opposes the scholastic notion that a child can learn from being told, and champions the student’s own discovery. ‘The schools have not taught their pupils to develop their minds like young trees from their own roots, but rather to deck themselves with branches plucked from other trees, and, like Aesop’s crow, to adorn themselves with feathers of other birds’ (Comenius, 1910, p. 147). The somewhat one-sided picture is justified on the grounds that it helps to clarify and streamline the broader story that needs to unfold.