[N]o human thinking can escape from contradiction. Contradiction itself, far from always being a criterion of error, is sometimes a sign of truth (Weil, 1988, p. 173).

Marianne Weber said of her husband Max Weber that he was ‘moved, above all, by the fact that on its earthly course an idea always and everywhere operates in opposition to its original meaning and thereby destroys itself’ (Bottomore and Nisbet, 1978, p. 362).

It is necessary, to begin with, to say a little about the structure and style of this study of the teacher. Its three parts are very carefully and deliberately demarcated. Originally the whole project consisted only of Part II, The Experience of the Teacher. It was to be a short, provocative text designed for existing teachers and student teachers. It limited its objective to making available to them a variety of political and philosophical material that would speak directly to some of the dilemmas and contradictions that teachers face in their practice and in their thinking about that practice. It was structured in particular around the difficult relation between authority and freedom, and played out between the characters of the master and the servant as they appear famously within Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit. This part of the now, newly enlarged volume remains intact. It is still written for teachers and can stand being read without reference to the rest of the book. It is, in effect, a book within a book and its tone is more conversational than Parts I and III. As a result I hope that teacher educators may direct their students to Part II with the confidence that no prior reading or knowledge is required. Part II also encourages teacher educators and other tutors in universities and colleges to see their own dilemmas reflected in the same text. In view of the fact that this book is being published as a special issue of the Journal of Philosophy of Education, I think it safe to assume that its readers are mostly teachers or students in one way or another.

The book has, however, developed much further than its original rather limited objective. Part II is now sandwiched between a full philosophical assault upon many current perspectives within the philosophy of education and educational theory in general. This critique is launched by invoking the concept of the ‘broken middle’ against abstract and sceptical forms of reasoning that refuse to recognise the experience of abstraction or scepticism as a substantial philosophical education. In Part I the question of the broken middle is raised in terms of the relationship between education and philosophy, and, in particular, in and around the
suppression of education and philosophy as a *culture* of modern abstract experience. Part III offers a speculative (educational and philosophical) interpretation of three philosophers who are most commonly assumed to be opposed to each other in one way or another: Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.

The argument presented here is that these three thinkers, in their different ways, understand the culture, the re-formation, of philosophy and education by each other within modern social and political relations—or, what amounts to the same thing, within the domination of abstraction. As a result, they are examples of how the modern and broken experience of philosophy and education is both educational and philosophical. In Part III, then, the logic and substance of modern experience introduced in Part I, and observed in Part II, is retrieved from within the different ways that Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard comprehend the formation and re-formation of this experience. Part II becomes here the work of the broken middle—that is, the experience of the broken middle; this is work that is re-presented more abstractly in Parts I and III.

What marks out the work of Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in particular against postmodern and post-structuralist interpretations is that, first, they recognise and work within the limits that abstraction, in all its domination, imposes; second, they recognise this domination within the aporia of reasoning that re-presents it; third, they do not posit the overcoming or non-overcoming of such domination; but fourth, they do not disavow their philosophical education within these difficult and contradictory experiences. What is meant by ‘contradictory experiences’ is crucial here. It might be thought that it refers, for example, to the conflict between two educational perspectives, say, that between R. S. Peters and Lyotard. However, contradiction obtains not just between positions but also within the standpoint of positions, within what we shall call natural consciousness. This contradiction is of an altogether different order of philosophical and educational significance. This significance lies in the fact that, on the one hand there is no avoiding the presenting of positions and that, on the other, each such positing suppresses the experience of it that one has, and so in that respect is illusory. In short, Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard know they must work with the re-presentation of the modern political form of natural consciousness, for that is who they are, and who we are. As we will see, attempts to reconcile, overcome, not-overcome or aestheticise contradictory experiences do not take the domination of our abstract natural consciousness over our philosophical experiences seriously enough and in effect elide current political conditions. This natural consciousness can be educated regarding itself and its deformations; but it cannot be assumed either as having been overcome and replaced by something new, for example, some new ethical relation, nor, in cultural terms, as remaining untouched by its critical work and as merely an empty reproduction. Part II lets these contradictory experiences for the teacher speak for themselves, whilst Parts I and III explore different ways in which natural consciousness both dominates and is dominated. This exploration requires that the latter are written at a more
difficult level than Part II and are directed more immediately to an academic audience.¹

But let me ask finally: who will want a philosophy of the teacher as it is presented here? The answer, I hope, is any teacher who feels, deep down, that there are educational truths in what they are doing that remain unrecognised not only within their schools, colleges or universities, but also within the theoretical perspectives that are designed to serve such work. I know now that, when I was training to be a teacher, I needed a philosophy of the teacher that could speak from within my own difficulties with theory and practice, with control and authority, and with the teacher–student relationship—the kinds of anxieties that, at some time, are common to all teachers. But in educational work on the teacher I found no real philosophy (that is, no real speculative philosophy, as I shall come to explain), and in philosophy there was very little interest in education in general or in the teacher in particular. Perhaps this book will find others now who are searching for the same thing, even if, as yet, they do not know it quite in this way.

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In addressing this book, also, to the academic audience of philosophers of education and educational theorists, I note in advance that educational theory in general, and philosophy of education in particular, have developed a variety of different camps from which intellectual skirmishes are fought with each other. Seldom, however, do I think they stray far enough from these shored positions ever to learn about themselves from within their relation to each other. If a philosophy of the teacher is to be presented, it would, I am sure, be a safer strategy to join one of these camps: perhaps the analytic camp of the founding fathers of the modern incarnation of the philosophy of education; perhaps the post-foundational thinkers who collectively eschew the possibility of the identity of such camps; perhaps the critical pedagogues with their interest in collective emancipation; or perhaps the academic journalists who merely comment on the state of the campaigns.

At the risk of biting the hand that feeds and for reasons that will slowly be revealed, however, the philosophy of the teacher that I am presenting here can join none of these camps. For the philosophy of the teacher as it is pursued here, these alternatives represent at most half-told stories that have more in common with each other than they do with the no-mans land between them, a land that is after all their casus belli. It is into this no-man’s land that the following account now strays, aware of being shot at by all sides. But, even at this early stage, let it be made clear that the philosophy of the teacher being presented is not a philosophy found growing like grass between the warring factions, in some Deleuzian sense; rather, it is the representation in philosophy and education of the broken relation between them.

There is an altogether different form and content of philosophy to those listed above, one that refuses to acknowledge politely the differences between these perspectives. It is what might be called the speculative
tradition. There are reasons why this has had little impact within educational theorising, and some of these will be explored in due course in terms of culture and experience. It is in this tradition, I shall argue, that a different form of the relation between philosophy and education can be retrieved. In essence, what I want to show is how philosophy and education share a telos that does not replace analytic or critical traditions, or postmodern and post-structuralist visions, but actually is the truth of their collective illusions. As such, speculative philosophy is not an alternative to any of the perspectives within education, for it is to be found within their forms of reasoning and in particular the illusions carried therein. This claim, no doubt, already turns many against it, for it seems to offer a kind of meta-critique over and above the whole of educational theorising. This, however, is not the case. What the speculative experience can provide, which other perspectives do not, is a re-presentation of the conditions of the possibility of each of these philosophical representations. Because speculative philosophy knows abstraction, with all its dominant force, to be the pre-condition of any thinking at all, it is more deeply entwined within contingency even than those perspectives that claim contingency or historicism as their starting point. Indeed, there is a dependency here that must be acknowledged. Speculative philosophy arises out of and against the inevitable abstractions of these other perspectives. It is the philosophical experience of their opposition to each other and to themselves.

Yet the speculative reaches even further into the heart of philosophising. The abstract forms of analytical philosophy and the anti-foundationalist forms of post-Enlightenment philosophy do not count within the speculative as genuinely philosophical at all. This is because their ways of working are seen to suppress philosophical experiences by refusing to allow these experiences to become their own content, to think about themselves as their own (obviously compromised) condition of possibility. The experience of this suppression is at its clearest when theorising seems to circulate between opposing positions (that is, between different positings), each used to undermine the other, and each giving the appearance that a comprehensive perspective can never be reached. The ‘debate’ between these camps becomes interminable, each pointing out contradictions in the others’ arguments but few making the experience of these oppositions the subject and substance of educational and philosophical enquiry. The experience of this ritual that passes for philosophising has its own substance, and if thinking is ever to do justice to itself and to its own misrecognitions, it is this that needs to be explored in its own right. Therefore, in what follows, the philosophy of the teacher seeks to expose and take seriously this suppression of philosophical experience in some of its many forms. This will not win friends among those who find themselves accused of such suppression and who reside in one of the many camps that seek ways of overcoming the domination of modern abstract consciousness (unaware how they remain complicit with it). But perhaps, in a sense, the philosophy of the teacher can speak directly to their experiences as teachers or
students of one kind or another. The overall design of the book aims to achieve this.

NOTES

1. But that is not to say that Parts I and III cannot be read by students and teachers alike. I have over thirteen years worth of essays that show that undergraduates can deal with, indeed often demand, such difficult material.

2. Clearly the Idealist tradition has had an impact in education. However, this has largely been the kind of right-wing Hegelianism that offers only a one-sided approach to Hegel. Equally, Hegelian-inspired left-wing critical theory has been and continues to be a major player in educational theorising. What has not made an impact is speculative reasoning, defined here as the relation between, and the identity and non-identity of, philosophy as education and education as philosophy. For those interested in a more detailed account of this speculative relation and its representation of philosophy's higher education, I have explored this in Philosophy's Higher Education (Tubbs, 2004). In many ways, the current volume on the philosophy of the teacher is a companion piece to this slightly earlier book, which explains in greater philosophical detail the kind of argument I am making here.