Introduction

Part III returns now to the more academic voice that was suspended at the end of Part I. There we introduced ways of viewing modernity and modern experience aporetically rather than deterministically. The challenge here lies in learning to comprehend the formation and re-formation of subjectivity in ways that recognise the social and political conditions of possibility but do not therein create new terrors or barbarisms or forms of domination. Such learning, we have argued, is the relation of subject and substance in speculative (philosophical) experience. Understood in this way, speculative experience is the actuality of contingency, actual in being neither overcome nor not-overcome by being known too well or too little.

Knowing too much \textit{and} too little can also serve as a definition of the philosophical teacher who will emerge now in Part III. Yet—we have to ask here—which perspective within educational theorising has preserved for itself the philosophical resources that can articulate such an opposition? Which perspective is sufficiently grounded in the actuality of political experience to be able to re-present this opposition without positing its identity or non-identity? We saw above in Part I that major players in educational theorising do not leave themselves open to any philosophical understanding of their contradictions and oppositions. At times of greatest difficulty, their resolve leads them to new heights of ingenuity. But such ingenuity is the suppression, again, of the experiences in which consciousness can learn of itself as a learning consciousness.

Equally we saw, in Part II, how emancipatory perspectives know too much about the conditions of possibility, or about contingency. They posit the overcoming of these conditions as the overcoming of ideology by a consciousness that transforms them in knowing them. Postmodern perspectives know too little about these conditions, or about contingency. They posit the impossibility of a consciousness that can know its own determination in and for itself. In other words, they posit the totality of non-closure, yet eschew the possibility of that totality as being known in and by our own experiences. As we shall now see, in both cases the abstract forms of consciousness that they set themselves against are never recognised as determinative of, and repeated in, such positing. It is to the truth, and not just to the falsity, of abstract natural consciousness that we have now to look, in order to understand the domination of education within our own domination by the culture of modern abstract reason.

It may have been noticed that up to this point in our study the term ‘philosophy of the teacher’ has been aligned very sparingly with the educational perspectives on the teacher that have been examined. This is because, in failing to recognise the re-formation of their concepts and ideas by the consciousness that suggests them, these perspectives have generally failed also to make this experience of re-formation the substance
of their philosophical work. This changed to a limited extent in Chapter 5 where Buber, Weil and Heidegger, in their different ways, preserve difficulty as the content of thinking and identity. The ideas of communion in Buber, of attention in Weil, and of Being in Heidegger all move towards the idea of spirit as the true, either transcendentally or ontologically. Yet even here these spiritual educators do not realise a philosophy of the teacher because they do not put spirit into relation with itself. When, in contrast, the experience of difficulty is allowed to become its own philosophical content, or where natural consciousness can learn about itself, from itself, without presuppositions being posited as resolutions to its contradictions, the aporia of spirit is made subject and substance. It is this education of natural consciousness by and through its negative experiences that forms the substance of the critique of educational theorising in Parts I and II. What is missing in Part II is an account of the ways in which these negations are educative and philosophical. Rose describes the relation of the speculative to the natural consciousness, in which it is both known and not known, as follows:

a negative experience for natural consciousness is a positive result for us, for natural consciousness has been presented as phenomenal knowledge. Natural consciousness does not know itself to be knowledge, but it experiences the contradiction between its definition and its real existence. It thus contains its own criterion of awareness, the precondition of immanent change. But this change is only a change in perspective and results in further contradictions. Natural consciousness changes its definition of itself and of its existence, but this change is itself determined. It does not abolish the determination of consciousness by substance as such, a consciousness which persists as a natural consciousness in relation to the substance which determines it (Rose, 1981, p. 150).

This is the ‘change of perspective’ that non-speculative forms of theorising misrecognise either as an overcoming of natural consciousness (praxis), or as the impossibility of its being overcome (pluralism), or as the contradiction that can be avoided by refusing the totality of the domination of natural consciousness as such (post-structuralism).

Against such misrecognitions and further dominations, the re-presentation of this domination of modern, abstract reason as our experience, as our philosophical and educational experience, is now undertaken through the difficult and aporetic work of Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Here we shall explore ways in which these three philosophers, facing the representations of freedom within unfreedom, do not retreat into mourning for the loss of freedoms but remain with philosophy as the working through of these inherently modern problems. At a time when many are seduced by the ‘end of philosophy’ into the search for new forms of ethical relations, Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard continue the struggle to know philosophy according to its own form and content—and, therein, in the relation of spirit to itself, as philosophy and education. It is here, within philosophies of the aporetic, that philosophies of the teacher can emerge through their own contradictions and oppositions.