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END PIECE

To be in the garden or not to be in the garden—that is the question here: some aspects of the educational chances that are inherent in tamed and untamed nature

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Keywords: Rousseau; the romantic child; gardening and education; kindergarten; wilderness; sensual awareness

I

In June 2010 a study was published in Berlin (Brämer, 2010) whose results led to quite a sensation in the media. Who would have thought that in a random check of 3000 pupils who had attended school for six to nine years—so we are talking about 12–15 year olds—only one-half knew that the sun rises in the east? The other half made the sun begin its day's journey in the north, the south or even in the west. Who would have imagined that some put a whole year between two full moons and only 40% got the time period of four weeks right? Two-thirds wanted to put the forests into order, only 28% thought that letting the forest turn into wilderness was a good idea. Where do ideas that say technically processed, homogenised (long-life milk) milk comes from long-life cows, from domesticated cows, from black-and-white cows, even from bulls, come from? One-half of the pupils gave—for whatever reason—no answer at all. It may also be amusing to learn of opinions that the roe deer is the wife of the deer, walnuts grow on bushes, hens lay three eggs a day, roses have no fruit and roe deer fawns are called Bambi. By the way, for this last belief we have to thank the North American producer of nature kitsch Walt Disney, who in 1942 turned the sentimental story of Bambi, the fawn, and his friends hare and tawny owl, written by the Austrian writer Felix Salten, into an animated film. This film is still the most-viewed film worldwide today and has probably had a much more powerful effect on how people see nature than any teaching in schools or other institutions has ever been able to have.

I will break off the report of further results of this study here, which will only be more of the same. But which message do these results contain? Why should we take an interest in such a load of nonsense and ignorance, since none of these opinions are life-threatening? Not knowing that the fruit of the rose is called rose hip and that the udder of a cow has not 11 teats but only four, will pose no threat to people's future careers. Could we therefore not just dismiss these answers as unimportant nonsense or amusing ignorance, or should we, on the other hand, actually take a serious look at the causes and possible consequences? If it is true that—and there seems to be a lot of evidence it is—engaging with nature promotes the educational process of children, the answer is obvious. For pedagogues generally, and in particular for outdoor pedagogues, who

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have, after all, chosen nature as the leading medium in their educational efforts, it is of urgent necessity to examine the recognisable situation deriving from the answers of the pupils. It remains, however, for me to explain why I have chosen to confront you here in Singapore, of all places, right at the other end of the world, with the ignorance of German school pupils. There is some evidence—for example, the works of Richard Louv (2008)—that there are similar results in other modern industrialised nations. Furthermore, your choice of the theme for this congress, with its allusion to Peter Brown's (2009) children's book *The Curious Garden*, is a clear indication that the young generation's relation to nature and the perception of it is not something that leaves any of us cold.

What the children's lack of knowledge shows first of all is their enormous distance from the phenomena and processes of nature. If they do not know that walnuts grow on trees, they obviously never saw their fingers turn brown when collecting them. If they do not know that roses have fruit, they have probably never felt the itch caused by the fine hairs of the furry seeds when opening the hips in autumn. This means that the cognitive distance is often accompanied by the absence of direct physical and sensory touch. This is also borne out by the above-mentioned study. One in five children has never walked over a stubble field, a good 30% have never touched a live beetle (Weber, 2010, p. 107). But, on the other hand, 77% have a games console. Does this not immediately conjure up the picture of a modern children's room with its media infrastructure?

Television sets, PCs, HD monitors, computer games, iPods, Facebook, DVDs, Internet access, Playstation 3 and XBox 360, mobile phones, blu-ray players, camcorders, browsers, navigators, controllers and whatever the names of the gadgets and applications, children's rooms are ruled by mouse and joystick. They navigate children through a reflection of reality that is continuously improving its display resolution and thus suggests authenticity, but which always remains only the reflection of reality despite all the technical expenditure. The world that enters the rooms of children and young people via the screen does not need to be explored and understood through the senses of touch, smell, hearing and taste. Neither autumn storms nor spring breeze, neither rain nor sun nor snow, will leave any impression on the skin. Nobody climbs a tree, balances along a tree trunk, jumps over a brook or falls into it.

If the basic anthropological assumption is correct that exposure to collisions, frictions, confrontations, encounters—whichever way you want to describe the active contact with the manifold obstructive forms of the world—is necessary to advance the human being's developmental and educational processes, it appears that in modern children's rooms these sensory physical encounters with the world are more or less reduced to a cognitive visual one.

But the pupils interviewed seemed to want to escape from the lack of real-world encounters, because they retain the wish and longing for direct access to obstructive nature. Seventy-four per cent of them want to follow their exploratory urges and discover unknown landscapes; 53% want to ride through the forest on a mountain bike; the same number want to leave the paths and walk right through the trees. And as much as 49% want to observe animals in their natural habitat, a wish that involves long phases of waiting and which demands great patience and cautious application to the matter in hand, all quite contrary to the quickly changing focus of attention of the rapid-fire culture of the electronic entertainment industry.

II

But how does pedagogics deal with this urge to go out, to experience more nature; that is, to gain more sensory experiences of natural phenomena? There is a long pedagogical tradition to enrich the learning processes of a child with natural encounters or even allow them to take place in a natural environment, but the continuous modernisation processes in society have produced a kind of school in which nature only exists in the form of an image that is getting more and more abstract. This is why it is worthwhile to have a look at this forgotten tradition, because it can show us how important nature, landscape and gardens can be in the education and upbringing of children.

Part of this tradition is, no doubt, Rousseau, who, with Emile, not only presented us with the most famous pupil pedagogics has ever known, but is still today providing outdoor pedagogics with its strongest arguments, whether we are aware of this or not. Rousseau had no doubt at all that nature was an important, if not the most important, educator. Right at the beginning of his philosophical outline of education, he names it as one of the three masters of education, beside material things and human beings:

> Observe nature and follow the way she traces. She gives children constant practice . . . Why contradict her? Do you not see that in your efforts to improve upon her handiwork you are destroying it, you are frustrating her efforts? (Rousseau, 1997, p. 14)

This trust of Rousseau in nature still had an effect 150 years later in the German movement of educational progressivism. Willy Steiger, a teacher of this movement, writes:

> The most talented teacher in the classroom is a miserable bungler compared to the mastership of nature. When we had found 23 fire salamanders in the valley of Zschand before the sun had risen on the dew-wet ground and we touched the slimy cold-blooded animals, marvelled at their serenity and gained detailed insights into the way they live, I thought of how the fire salamander would be discussed in the stay-at-home school, where nature is presented in the form of a miserable terrarium, a corpse preserved in spirit or a poor picture—a long way away from experiencing nature. (Steiger, n.d., p. 17)

To the same degree that trust in the educational effectiveness of nature grows, mistrust of letters, books and libraries, on the other hand, also grows. What has been written and printed devalues and distorts the originality of direct experience. Knowledge that has been acquired already is acquired a second time, and that is boring and tiresome. Thus, natural education—see Rousseau (1997, p. 221)—is education without books. Experience from books is acquired by sitting down, it makes students idle, ruins their eyes and leads to indigestion. Experience of nature, however, gives students plenty of fresh air, makes their lungs breathe freely, makes them active and sharpens their senses. In the case of Emile, Rousseau brings this very old dispute between the world of books and the book of the world (Blumenberg, 1981) to an end by transferring his bookless education into the environment of the village and the garden. First of all, Rousseau considers the garden to be a suitable place in agreement with his theoretical educational reflections, because the work that has to be done there corresponds to the needs of a child, who wants to 'create, imitate, produce':

> Before a child has seen for the second time how the soil in a garden is turned and how vegetables sprout and grow from seed, he will want to be a gardener himself. (Rousseau, 1997, p. 95)

III

But what is it on top of this that is making the garden so attractive that Rousseau, and many pedagogues following in his footsteps, adhere so willingly to the assumption, which has never really been tested and proven, that children, as a matter of course, will want to do a gardener's work? Gardens are contained spaces that are clearly set off against their surroundings. The borders are visibly marked by a fence, a wall or a hedge. They help to create an inside and outside space. Even where English landscape gardens try to present the impression to the visitor that he is in a landscape without confines, the borders are just skilfully hidden. They may be lowered into a ditch and are thus out of sight. The fence protects the order established by the gardener on the inside against the disorder on the outside that he has no control over and that poses a constant threat to his work.

As a gardener working my allotment I know all about this constant threat, and plenty. My garden is completely surrounded by a fence, bordering on an enormous meadow. Although the concrete base of the fence prevents couch grass and field bindweed from intruding into my vegetable and flower beds, moles, voles and slugs, and in spring also the invasion of the airborne troops of the faded dandelions that lushly populate the fields outside the garden, commit border violations *en masse*, showing their disregard of my painstakingly planned vegetable order by burrowing into the soil, uprooting everything and setting up their colonies. They could not care less about the bolted and padlocked garden gate, where any border and customs control of the trans-border traffic would normally take place. There are of course intruders into the garden one forgives readily for their uncontrolled border crossing, like the colourful butterflies, song birds such as tits and redstarts, ladybirds and the assiduous bees and bumble bees. However, the law that Fröbel put into a rhyme remains valid:

> The gate must be closed tight, so that nothing will disturb my delicate little flowers. (Fröbel, 1984, p. 88)

IV

For Rousseau it was neither the airborne seeds nor the burrowing activities of subterranean rodents that were the problem. His order, which he had designed to promote the natural development of his still innocent Emile, is threatened by corrupted society, the origin of which is especially the town. From this point of view, it practically follows conclusively that spaces are designed or visited which can be protected against those influences that are perceived to be negative of a world that is undergoing continuous modernisation. The gardens surrounded by hedges and walls, but also islands surrounded by water or villages, guarded by the principles of simple living constitute moral areas, in which people attempt to eclipse the labyrinthian, jungle-like large cities. They hope to save the ambience of a nature-based educational process from the fragmented soullessness of conveyer belts and workshops, the noise and traffic of the streets, the anonymity of urban life and the coldness of purpose-oriented reality. These examples are all an expression of how much nature, community and holistic living have been lost or forgotten. Kurt Hahn, the founder of schools and spiritual founder of the outward-bound movement, also transferred the foundation of his many schools and his educational approaches (schools on the town peripheries) into rural educational backwaters, after diagnosing the physiognomy of civilisation as ruined.

This contrast between asphalt, brown walls and smoke-spitting chimneys, on the one hand, and colourfully blossoming and green nature, on the other hand, is also what has

inspired the picture story of the little gardener Liam, who turned the town into a curious garden, which then gave the name to your congress of several days. Smart little Liam is a trickster and childish saviour in one person. As cunning trickster he crosses barriers, presumes town-planning competences and ignores existing laws and ownership rights, but he successfully mediates between the oppositional pair of town and nature by connecting neglected parts of the town with greening gardens. He exerts an influence on his environment and creates a bridge between what seems irreconcilable.

The way mischievous Liam outwits the town's administration, which remains anonymous in the story, makes him a representative of guerrilla gardening, a social movement originating in New York in the early 1960s, from where it spread and has by now reached large cities all over the world. They cultivate, clandestinely and without permission, land that does not belong to them (Reynolds, 2009, p. 12). The weapons Liam and his compagneros use are spades, watering cans and hedge clippers; their ammunition is flowers, box trees and cabbage heads. In their subversive actions they aim their floral barrage at tree stumps, road edges, central nature strips and roundabouts. Their chronicler Reynolds reports about these operations at the front. Sean 2350 covers a telephone pole with creeping plants, David 1168 and Michael 1169 sow black radish in tree edgings, Peter 509 gives pleasure to the eyes of motorists waiting at a traffic light by planting daffodils and Mara 889 plants cannabis among the flower decorations of the town nursery. Five years ago a green guerrillo started work in Singapore. Ryan 190 worked on the triangular mound in front of the Victoria Junior College and made the site bloom as never before.

But little Liam, who transforms the town into a flowering garden, also embodies the romantic idea of the child as saviour. Due to his young age and therefore closeness to his origin and thus to nature, his gardening activity symbolises the power of new life that is emanating from a child. In contrast to adults, who have forgotten about their original closeness to nature and where they came from, Liam, being still an innocent, can discern the decay of the town. His ingenuous imagination, which can show a way out from the wrong developments, releases the adults from their blindness. Those who want to can recognise their own past wrong development and their own estrangement from themselves in the counter-picture that Liam offers them. From the point of view of the adult, this redemption does not come from a plan for a better future, but from turning back to childish spontaneity and pure sensitivity to nature as power resource and saviour. Liam and his curious garden embody Schiller's idea that children 'are what we were; they are what we should become again' (Schiller, quoted in Ullrich, 2002, p. 53).

V

If this image of a child is endowed with so many positive characteristics, such as spontaneity, unadulterated closeness to nature, an explorative drive to gain understanding and curiosity, playfulness and keenness to experiment, and creative inquisitiveness—as the Romantic period does—the question almost automatically arises of how one can maintain and promote as best as possible such valuable characteristics for the benefit of the child, but also for the benefit of society. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Fröbel, who was a vicar's son and influenced by Romanticism, gave an institutional answer. He established an enclosed garden, which served as a protective space in order to promote the already existing abilities of children without disturbance and in the best possible way. This institution that Fröbel called kindergarten can be found in many countries of this world.

The very act of setting apart such a special enclosed space increases the importance that is attached to the early education and upbringing of children. Fröbel's comparison of his kindergarten with the Garden of Eden, which must be given back to the children (Baader, 2002; Bilstein, 1997), even gives it a religious reference. Biblical mythical genesis of humankind and Fröbel's education of children both take place in Paradise (Heiland, 1967). The time that children spend in his garden is called their spring or lily time. Using the symbolic power of the white Madonna Lily as a sign of purity, innocence, clarity and hope, and that of spring as the time of beginning, of preparing the soil, of sowing and of planting, he strengthens his educational efforts by evoking natural myths. Pointing to the garden of Eden at the same time addresses the role of the educator, who in the biblical connotation becomes the creator and in the terminology of gardening becomes the gardener, who is the instrument implementing the divine commission to civilise the world and who will be responsible for making the 'human seedlings' thrive.

In Fröbel's kindergarten, every child will be allotted his own bed, bearing his name, to cultivate alone. In this Fröbel is led by the idea that when children handle plants and nurse them they will begin to understand nature and will 'reach an agreement' with it—as he puts it. This agreement that Fröbel writes about was not only interpreted as an early form of environmental education but also as an attempt to instruct children that nature and its phenomena are part of the world they share. The intention is to overcome their separation from nature, which was beginning to show as a result of industrialisation. For Fröbel, gardening activities offer ideal conditions in showing how things thrive that would serve as a mirror in which children might recognise their own growing up process and reflect upon it. The garden thus becomes an instrument of self-knowledge.

Although Fröbel regards children to be as virtuous as lilies, he cannot completely dispense with pressure and discipline. However, just like the great Rousseau, he is a genius at hiding them. In his article 'Die Gärten der Kinder in Kindergärten' (Children's Gardens in Kindergartens), written in 1850, kindergarten teachers ask children to visit using the following rhyme:

> Let us go to the little gardens
> To sow our seeds.
> The air is warm,
> Green and blossoms are springing up everywhere. (Fröbel, 1982, p. 179)

He writes about the effect the name signs have that mark every bed:

> Every child can immediately spot the bed of a friend; through the name in front of the beds, every child immediately receives the silent praise it deserves or the just reprimand, depending on how carelessly or carefully it has looked after it. (Fröbel, 1982, p. 178)

Surreptitiously, the garden here becomes an instrument through which neglect, laziness or forgetfulness, which also undermine self-discipline, can be made public. This mechanism that makes children feel ashamed through exposure regulates the expulsion of such children from the community of children who look after their little garden properly. The eyes of the others are a control mechanism that unfolds its disciplinary effect in all allotments in the world in an extremely potent way.

VI

But by allowing itself to be used in this way, the garden itself does not seem to be altogether innocent. Its material properties quite obviously lend themselves to promoting certain actions and to discouraging others.

Every garden has its order, quite independent from whether it was set up to provide useful food or serve to give pleasure and be a feast for one's eyes. This is also true for the English landscape garden, which is designed to give the impression that it has no organised form at all, but which is subject to well-planned order. This order cannot reproduce itself by itself. If left alone, order dissolves and returns to disorder, which it was originally meant to counteract. If you want order in your garden then you must also accept that the gardener, who cares for it, upholds it and designs it. Once legislative reason has established garden rules, not only one's view of nature changes but there arises also a demand for certain actions that reproduce the order.

Governed by garden rules, nature is suddenly split into two, which is strictly controlled by the conjunction of 'either . . . or'. Plants are declared as useful plants or weeds, animals as useful ones or pests, soil as fertile or infertile; one makes a difference between controlled growth and wild growth, between indigenous plants and invasive species. Since order carries a moral burden, one thing is declared good and the other bad. This split into good and bad legitimises—even demands—intervention in nature. What is negative is fought by something negative, and what is positive is encouraged.

Weeds are pulled out, if possible with their roots, in order to afford the useful plants free growth and the best possible conditions to develop. What is considered harmful is attacked with insecticides and herbicides or traps, what grows wild and unrestrained is cut back or off. Thus, logically, the garden turns into an immunological system that protects its own order and keeps what is strange, different and unwanted at bay.

However, the order of the garden also demands a boosting system that follows the logic of increase. Ever more plentiful, bigger, more beautiful, but always of the same. In order to increase the size of fruit, for example, the number of fruit buds is reduced, the soil is carefully prepared, broken up, fertilised and ameliorated—with manure, sand, lime, potash compounds, horn chippings, cow-pats, ash, peat, compost, and so forth—trees are grafted, regular water supply must be assured. Last year, every day I lugged hundreds of litres of water for my thirsty tomatoes, beans, phlox, Michaelmas daisies and carrots so that I could harvest aromatic flowers, thick green cucumbers and giant pumpkins. It is also important that all of these measures are carried out at the right time. The garden order makes demands on the gardener in all seasons: preparing hotbeds, pruning trees, preparing the soil, refining the soil, sowing in springtime, weeding, fertilising, mulching in the summer, harvesting, cleaning nesting boxes, storing and processing fruit and vegetables in the autumn, piling up leaves and brushwood for hibernating animals, harvesting kale and brussels sprouts, planting seeds that only germinate in cold conditions in the winter.

So the garden teaches us that there is the right hour for everything and there is the right time for every matter under the sky, as the Preacher's (Ecclesiastes 3:1) rules of living say, and the work in the garden repeats itself year after year. What the gardener does is not determined by the wrist watch, but by the natural cycle of the seasons, or, if one likes a slightly esoteric expression, by the phases of the moon. The constant repetition year after year gives time a different structure from the plans of hours, months and years of the linear conception of time, where time progresses relentlessly. It is especially this cyclical regime of time determining gardening work which makes the garden so attractive that some people seem to be under the impression they are in a timeless paradise once

they have closed the garden gate behind them. The mentality of acceleration that determines the style of modern everyday life, and which creates the pressure of acceleration that makes people feel rushed all the time, remains outside the garden fence. Even if cold frames and fertiliser can be interpreted as forms of acceleration of growth processes and of gaining time, plants grow in their own time, which follows the seasons, climate changes and weather conditions, but not the ticking of the clock. The garden orchestrates experiences that are based on the unshakeable course of natural laws.

The garden not only provides the experience that caring and tending require patience and attention, but also that all things obey their own times that one has to respect. Where I live, for example, potatoes are planted in the middle of April and are harvested at the end of September. In between, their growth has to be tended. Those who miss the right time for planting may not get a harvest or have poor crops; those who miss the right time of harvesting will find that the fruit may be not ripe yet or not edible any more. In the next year the gardener can try again.

While outside the fence people impatiently try to condense this intrinsic sense of timing of things through acceleration, which can be read from names of behaviour that seem to have a somewhat anecdotal touch, such as 'fast food, speed dating, power nap, quality time (with kids) or drive-through-funeral' (Rosa, 2009, p. 28f.), the garden resists acceleration. It suspends the historical time mentality temporarily for those who are in it. From this point of view it becomes a place of counter-experiences, which opposes the accelerated disappearance of the present.

VII

Regarding what has been said so far, the garden is an attractive practice field especially for pedagogues, whose educational programme is modelled on the example of the diligent, useful, conscientious and productive member of the economy. In the model school of the early bourgeois education movement in Schnepfenthal, there was the school emblem mounted over the entrance door showing in its centre a spade in front of a rising sun (Niedermeier, 2001, p. 189). Under this symbolic rule the garden and working in the garden became essential parts of school life. This also followed the example of Rousseau, who brought the two together by comparing them: '*On faconne les plantes par la culture, et les hommes par l'éducation*' (plants are formed through cultivation, people through education) (quoted in Tabarasi, 2007, p. 402).

Sixteen large kitchen gardens were situated right around Schnepfenthal. Almost all teachers used the garden in their lessons; horticulture was a regular subject on the school curriculum. For every pupil who was accepted at the school, a cherry tree was planted that bore the pupil's name. Every year at the time of harvesting there was a cherry fête in the constantly growing cherry orchard (Niedermeier, 2001).

The order that had been chosen for the gardens prevented any exposure to intensive sensory impressions that might have disturbed the educational programme. They planted only what was useful. There is no burbling water or fragrant bushes in these gardens. Between the beds of red, green and white cabbages, which were sold to the kitchen of the school, there is no room for the lancets of the delphinium or the sweet-smelling carnations; between prune trees, cherry and apple trees the aromatic jasmine or the voluptuous blossoms of the magnolia would be unfitting.

The early bourgeois pedagogues who wanted to bring up industrious citizens tried to avoid the seduction of aesthetic sensuality, even though their powerful model Rousseau liked to seek out the sounds of water and the movement of the waves to delight in dreams

and the bliss of solitude. These urges that are difficult to control, the vivid imagination and indulgent enjoyment, appear far too threatening for the utilitarian programme and they should not be egged on any further by giving gardens an alluring design. The following extract from a travel report of an educational journey through Germany is quite revealing about the educational use of the garden:

> One particular focus is to keep the boys busy in the garden.—Everyone of them has his own plot to cultivate and care for.—On fine spring and summer days gardening will usually be done from 6 to 7 o'clock.—Besides practically playfully acquiring useful knowledge about plants, vegetables and arboriculture, the pupils get plenty of exercise outdoors, breathe the freshest of airs, and gain strength visibly almost every day. (Rödel, quoted in Walder, 2002, p. 12)

By doing all the necessarily repetitive work of digging, hoeing, weeding, watering, fertilising, cutting and harvesting, which are all caring activities that make sure that plants can thrive, pupils get used to the discipline of regular physical work, to diligence and perseverance, which will later bring the reward of a rich harvest.

By working in the garden, children acquire the ways of civic society they will have to interact with after school. By learning the physical work skills during the course of the gardening year, they realise the central virtues of an individual taking methodical, systematic action, who also arranges nature in a calculating way for sensible purposes and not sentimental ones, and at the same time they become an integrated part of it. On the one hand, gardening is the embodiment of the bourgeois catalogue of virtues that is visible to everybody and, on the other, pupils absorb them by carrying out the work. They are doing culture.

VIII

But where in all this repetition do new things come from? Where are the mystery and the surprises, which captivate the individual's attention and fire his astonishment and curiosity? What will happen to a reality that ignores this category of possibility, as the garden rules do? How can one learn to handle what is strange and different if it is excluded by order? How can you get lost in an ordered world, how can it cause confusion?

The garden does not answer these questions. To encounter the unknown, gain new and surprising experiences we need to leave the garden and its order or go into the neglected parts of a garden. This other region seems to offer so many attractive features that children find it easy to give up the flat, rectangular design of order. Let us listen to authentic childhood memories of this by a German writer:

> And what was true for the yard was also true, if possible even more so, for the garden, which had been designed at a right angle, that is, it went round a corner, and which, because of this corner, had two parts of equal size. The first half, the one with mignonette and delphinium beds, with borders and circular flower beds and not least of all with quite a number of different kinds of fruit trees trained on trellises, was a proper garden, while the second half looked like wilderness. But, of course, like a very picturesque one. There were rampant masses of raspberry and current bushes growing along a few slanting fences that the winds had bent and which followed the most bizarre lines all the way to the far corner, where the branches of our neighbour's berberis bush, almost the size of a tree and laden with the most splendid red fruit, reached over onto our side. This second half of the garden was our realm. That was where we played half the day on end and constructed castles or performed on the horizontal bar or broke off planks from the fence and went off to raid the gardens of the

> neighbourhood. Better than this even, at least for me, was the rather rickety swing that was mounted between two wooden posts. The beam accross the posts had started rotting and the hooks holding the seat had become somewhat loose. But no matter, I could not keep away from this particular place and made it an issue of honour to build up such momentum by alternately bending my knees back and forward again energetically that the side bars of the swing reached a horizontal position at the highest point. This was accompanied by the screeching of the rusty hooks and the whole contraption was threatening to collapse. But this exactly was what gave me pleasure, because it filled me with the delightful feeling which alone signifies life: fortune carries you. (Fontane, 1963, p. 41f.)

The reality children are confronted with here consists of 'the most bizarre lines', 'rampant masses', 'branches reaching across the border'; it is a reality that is not easy to preside over, a reality that invites them to build and go on raids, challenges them to take risks and demands their full attention. This reality generates an ambivalent attraction. On the one hand, there is fascination, the urge of curiosity to find out what it is like to swing to the highest point; and on the other, there is awe and apprehension, because the rotten beams and the hooks holding the seat might not be able to withstand the audacity of the swinging movement.

I think we all know this interplay between curiosity and fear; that is, between fascination and tremendum. On the one hand, cellars and attics in old houses generate curiosity, but, on the other, darkness and weak light make one feel uneasy; some quarters of a town may promise surprising experiences, but their dark corners and alleys may have a threatening effect; it may be extremely tempting to jump over a stream that is in flood, but is there enough space for the run-up and do I have enough strength to reach the other side safely? There is no way round it: in order to experience the fascination of the strange, which may come from the wide ocean just as well as from high snow-covered mountain peaks, dark forests, a turbulent wild water, we must leave order and routines. The threshold that emerges between what is always the same and what is unknown is the zone where the individual experiences a sense of loss and fear, but also of expectation and the desire for something different. The act of stepping over the threshold is not all that easy because we also have to give up security.

In this context it may be interesting to consider this from a mythological perspective. It was the infringement of exactly this garden order that is the reason why we have to lead a life full of work and worry today. If Eve had not violated the rule that forbade her to eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden, we would still be living in paradise today. But, as it is, we have to struggle through life, working hard. However, this expulsion was not all bad. It took the violation of order and the resulting expulsion from the unreflected security of being looked after to force man to become autonomous. Autonomy is achieved through the educational process of tackling the world. If one turns mythology into something concrete and tangible, one can say that education can only take place when the individual leaves routines behind.

Since there is no punishing God anymore, who will expel us from the security of our routines, it is curiosity and the urge to gain knowledge that drives us to leave the familiar and seek the unfamiliar. Those who leave the routine of the garden world behind and exchange the gardener's apron, watering can, hedge clippers and spade for walking boots, rucksack, compass and paddle will be confronted by a reality; that is, nature which is full of obstructive surprises. Weather conditions may change suddenly, a storm or thunderstorm may draw up, fog descends, equipment is lost, paths do not correspond to those on the map, passages are blocked, the rock is more brittle than expected, the stream has swollen, feet are aching, the path just peters out in the middle of the forest, and so on and

so forth. One can never tell beforehand when such events might occur that dramatically interrupt the action: in contrast to the garden, the reality of nature, which tends to be wilder, is ruled by the mode of perhaps, or rather of possibility.

Possibilities are still hidden parts of reality. They are invisible and thus make reality uncertain and unstable. The fact that there are hidden possibilities, on the one hand, enhances the mystery of this reality and, on the other, increases the individual's curiosity to solve the mystery. While the order of the garden arises from a rationality that has no mystery, the disorder of untamed nature drives the individual to seek the unknown.

Quite similar to the way that the order of the garden offers its users the opportunity to undergo a certain range of experience, the uncertainty of untamed nature also offers a frame, or rather a space, where the individual can undergo certain experiences. Finally, I would like to take a closer look at three of these areas of experience.

VIII.1. Confronting the challenges of the world with curiosity and optimism

Those who have to deal with the incidences described above that mostly come as a surprise or disappoint previous expectations must not cling to what feels safe. The obstacles caused by the events show that the usual routine actions do not serve any more. This opens up the chance to find new solutions and test them out. Those who do not fearfully avoid the situation, but accept it as a challenge and investigate it with curiosity, are sustained by the conviction that they can handle the situation successfully even if prospects do not look good. This self-strengthening attitude, which can also be described by the maxim of 'in case of doubt, it will turn out well', has been called structural optimism by the German sociologist Ulrich Oevermann (2001). This conviction in uncertain situations that they will turn out well is one of the most important inner resources that drives the educational process of the individual. Those who are convinced that 'they can put their trust in this world, in life, people and not least in themselves' (Bischof, n.d., p. 545), will not react to uncertain, strange and unknown situations with an immunological response, but with curiosity and openness.

Venturing out into untamed nature means encountering a chain of such critical situations where routine actions suddenly become useless and new solutions must be found. This means that confrontation with the strange, uncertain situation cannot be avoided and it is only in this confrontation with what is strange and unfamiliar that something new can be created. While in the garden, if we look at it from this point of view, the dominant course of action is to apply already existing routines and knowledge, nature, which is far wilder, is a place that generates experiences by forcing the individual constantly to cope with crises. The excursion into untamed nature refers to the image of the human being as a creature that must be able to cope with coincidence and with failure in a surprising reality, and that therefore has to become a problem-solving individual who cannot rely on any other authority but his own intelligent efforts (Habermas, 2001, p. 158).

VIII.2. Taking in nature through all senses

Since obstacles occur surprisingly and may have considerable consequences, the situation requires heightened attention. The body reacts by increasing its physical activation and thus supports the function of attention, which scans the environment for relevant signs that may indicate the emergence of an obstacle.

In contrast to the logical, conceptual approach to the world, attention creates a sensory closeness to natural phenomena. Touching, realising, feeling are more intense. The individual looks around more sharply, with ears and nose open, feels his way more carefully and puts his feet forward more consciously, tastes the air more critically. The roar of the wild stream announces the approach of a difficult passage, cloud formations and the changing colours of the sky or the behaviour of animals and plants become harbingers of changing weather.

Through this intensive physical and sensory attention to smelling, hearing, seeing and touching, the natural phenomena quite literally get under our skin. They clearly show us on our bodies what significance they have for our actions in various situations. There is, for example, the wind, which howls, whispers, sweeps, freshens or calms down, which we perceive especially through our sense of touch, but which we can, for example, also hear when we roam the forests, when it gives the fir trees a soft voice, the oak trees a deeply rustling one and the birch trees a light, whirring one. There is the breeze that will dry our sweat after climbing a steep passage and which increases our feeling of relief; there is the humid Zephyr, which brings the violets and announces the beginning of spring time; there is the wind that kindles the campfire and thus speeds up the coffee-making; there is the rise of wind before a storm front that tells us we should look for shelter urgently; there are headwind and tail wind, which make our movements easier or more difficult; there are the winds that are driven by the storm or that announce the approaching storm and make us reef the mainsail; there is the wind that pushes the clouds so that the sky is bright or dull, and thus also helps to determine the visual impression of the landscape; there is the wind that turns a corn field into a sea of surging waves; there is the wind that carries the cry of the cranes or the smell of the linden tree to us even before we can see them; and there is the wind that plays on the branches of a tree and makes it sound like the music played by an Aeolian harp, sometimes melancholy and sometimes cosy. All winds out there that howl, whistle, spit, lisp and murmur also create atmospheres that elate, challenge, frighten, calm, spur, alarm, relax, and so on and so forth, the wanderer, canoeist or sailor who immerses himself in them.

Those who can hear, feel and tell all this apart not only enrich their own subjective perceptive capacity and the capacity for making precise distinctions, but also enrich the objective outside world, whose complexity can now become more distinct. Expression and impression enter into a relationship of mutual enhancement. Those who can use their senses to make precise distinctions will discover a complex outside world, the complexity of which will in turn further enhance the individual's capacity for sensory distinction.

VIII.3. Leaving the garden as a form of self-enlightenment

Like the order of everyday life, the order of the garden aims to preserve structures. This does not really come as a surprise, because its purpose is to make everyday life easier. The better it fulfils this function, the more routines take control of everyday life. This success is also the problem. To the extent to which routines determine everyday life, it will begin to stagnate and lose its liveliness. What is true for everyday life is also true for individuals. Those who are dominated by routines or rather those who fearfully cling to routines lose their spontaneity and liveliness. In this context, an excursion into untamed, unknown nature, may be able to break through the routine-governed order of everyday life, which presents itself as the natural way. But why should one bother to do this?

The confrontation with the unknown and unfamiliar—unfamiliar time, unfamiliar space, unfamiliar ways of life, unfamiliar plants and animals—generates contrasting

experiences that allow us to put the matter-of-courseness of everyday life at a distance. Because we are familiar with it does not at all mean that we actually understand what we are familiar with and what we take for granted (see Dürr, 1978; Haubl, 1999). The German anthropologist and philosopher Helmuth Plessner has perceived this very clearly:

> One needs to have become a stranger in the zone of familiarity to be able to see it again . . . we only take notice of what is unfamiliar. In order to be able to see, one needs distance . . . It is only what seems incomprehensible we seek to understand. (Plessner, 2003, p. 92)

In order not to be at the mercy of matter-of-course routines, we must subject ourselves to their opposite. Untamed, strange, mysterious and unfamiliar nature offers us this opportunity. The degree to which we divest ourselves of them corresponds to the extent to which we can relax our everyday rationality of action and thus increase our sensitivity for the unfamiliar. We generate a stock of experiences that will offer help for reflection when we try to gain a better and deeper understanding of our own way of life. By confronting the unfamiliar we might experience what our own way of life has forgotten, suppressed or excluded, or what might increase the range of our knowledge or might add to it.

IX

Please allow me to express one more thought at the end. If we correlate both places—the tamed garden and the untamed nature—with each other, we can perceive in retrospect that neither of the two is dispensable. We need the tamed nature of the garden, where knowledge can be applied beneficially, and we need places where new knowledge is created, where the old order is challenged in order to renew it or to amend it. To connect the two places, or rather to practice moving from one to the other, may be the task of outdoor pedagogics—because sometimes we need pedagogical assistance to leave the comforting security of the garden and sometimes we need pedagogical assistance to part again from the roar of the ocean, from the wuthering heights of the mountains and from the steaming valleys after the rain. Departure and return have always belonged together if the excursion into the unfamiliar is not to escape but is education.

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