

Masters thesis Humanistic Studies

DIALOGUE, THE HOLY GRAIL?

*Dialogue in humanistic education through the critical
looking glass of privilege and power*

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***“What do we live for,
if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?”***

– George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

PREFACE

How can we live together, as such diverse people, in a world that seems so increasingly violent, with discrimination and segregation, where far-right politicians are gaining votes with their xenophobic and racist words? This is a question that stayed with me the last years, and during the process of writing this thesis. At my core, I am hopeful, I believe in the power of community and empathy. I became a teacher inspired by a hope to contribute to a 'better world', to share and hear stories, to help students in their process of navigating themselves in this complex world. However, at times, being strongly aware of discrimination, privilege, and the immense inequalities in all layers of society, I lost hope. I felt cynical. Even writing about dialogue, impossible with a desire to abandon the project completely... sometimes I did lose faith.

However, abandoning all hope in dialogue and human beings did not seem like the answer. So I kept working. Moreover, I kept asking myself the question, how can I apply all my knowledge about power and privilege to dialogues in my classrooms? How can I use what I read, what I feel, what I know about teaching, to move forward – to create hope in a world that appears to be on fire. Moving beyond cynicism. After all, quoting my favourite novel, what do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for each other? I could not have done this without a few very important people, who have made my life easier, who have given me hope.

Therefore I would first like to thank my supervisor, Hanne, who kept calm and asked critical questions, was able to give me so much feedback even with the time-pressure. She helped me with structure, especially when I felt overwhelmed, not in the least because of the emotions I felt concerning the topic. Next there is my second supervisor, Gaby, thank you for your clear comments, your insights, especially regarding education and critical perspectives. Then of course my parents and my friends, for always listening to my stories and ideas, for supporting me in everything I do. A special, huge, thanks to Kaitlin, for proofreading my thesis. Lastly, Yoa, thank you for keeping me sane, for your love and support, I am so glad we met.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the possibilities of applying the humanistic ideal of dialogue in a classroom be can assessed in light of the problems posed by the critical discourse about privilege and power. Idealistic views of dialogue in humanistic education focus on dialogue as a panacea for all problems leading to consensus and connection. Hereby they insufficiently take into account the reality of power imbalances and unearned advantages – privileges. The literature research presented different ways in which power manifests itself: through the ability to define the agenda, to define what is seen as normal and acceptable, controlling resources, exclusion, language, and through what is seen as self-evident. Consequently, dialogue ought to explicitly address structural power inequalities and privileges. The practical aim of this study was to construct the framework for a teacher professional development module. Focusing on the development of the teacher identity the module has two goals: the first is creating awareness amongst the teacher participants, the second to move beyond inertia and reflecting upon ways to put the critical perspective into practice. The meetings would be focused on intervision and reflection, taking cases from the teachers' own professional experience to make it relevant and the concepts directly applicable. Ultimately, the framework hopes to set up a module that improves the quality of confrontations, respecting the humanity of each and every participant.

PART 1

1. Introduction

Humanistic education and globalisation

It is the job of humanistic education, and education in general, to prepare young people for life in a society that has witnessed important developments in recent years, and that is increasingly characterised by globalisation, individualism and diversity. Humanism is commonly understood as a “cosmopolitan world-view and ethical code that posits the enhancement of human development, well-being, and dignity as the ultimate end of all human thought and action” (Aloni, 2013, p. 1068). Education as defined in terms of the development of human beings, is an important part of this world-view. Based in humanistic principles, humanistic education values a broad education and personal development focusing on traits like curiosity, concentration, dedication, an open mind and receptivity. It focuses on the entire human being, not merely gaining knowledge (HVO¹, 2012). In addition, globalisation is about increasing demographic, economic, ecological, political and military connections.

Although these developments can bring a lot of opportunities, the confrontation with so many differences can also bring up questions of how to constructively deal with this diversity. For one, dealing with the other means wondering who you are yourself. As Hermans and Dimaggio stated, although the process of globalisation opens up “new opportunities and broadens our horizons, it also brings social insecurities with it and raises questions about identity, which can result in shutting oneself off from what is alien or different, or a loss of direction and postponement of choices” (cited in Jacobs, 2010, p. 11). One of these results is the increasing polarisation and other tensions between different ethnic groups, tensions that do not pass by the classrooms (Grinsven et al., 2017; Jacobs, 2010; Kleijwegt, 2016). Hence students, and teachers, need tools in order to handle this complex world outside but also within their learning community.

1 Institute of “Humanistisch VormingsOnderwijs” - Humanist Development/Formation Education

The role of dialogue

Dialogue can play an important role in dealing with diversity. As Burbules points out, “it is widely assumed that the aim of teaching with and through dialogue promotes communication across difference, and enables the active co-construction of new knowledge and understandings” (2000, §1). Humanistic education takes a similar perspective on the crucial role of dialogue. The Dutch humanistic centre for education (HVO) states that what is specifically humanistic about their classes is the dialogue between students, in spaces described as open and safe (2012). Veugelers and Oostdijk (2013), amongst others, also highlight the importance of dialogue in humanistic education, as they claim this is how students construct their own world-view and identity. Therefore, unsurprisingly, in humanistic education, striving towards the development and coexistence of people in this pluralist society, dialogue is considered of vital importance. Dialogue is referred to, in the words of Jezierska and Koczanowicz, as a “precondition of democratic coexistence” (2016, p. 12).

The goal of this current research is to critically assess this dialogue and its underlying assumptions, both in general and specifically related to humanistic education. The reason is that the use of dialogue, and its prerequisites in education, become problematic when the world is fundamentally unequal (see for example Ellsworth, 1989; Wekker, 2016). The key factor in this is privilege. Privilege is the idea that various social identities (sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, socio-economic class, religion, and ability, among others) influence the way people see the world, and the opportunities or power they have (Wekker, 2016). In order to show why this makes the acceptance of dialogue as a tool to deal with diversity difficult, it is important to ascertain a starting definition of dialogue.

Reading several sources (Burbules, 1993; Kessels and Boers, 2002; Parker, 2003; Schuitema, 2008; Smits, 2005; Veugelers, 2006), the following characteristics of dialogue arose:

- an open character, open in the way participants share and listen

- multiplicity and diversity, space for a diversity in perspectives
- reciprocal interest, being willing not merely to listen but to truly understand the other
- cooperation, working together in the dialogue to enlarge insight and knowledge
- exploratory attitude, involving the critical perspective towards one's own opinions and attempt to understand the other
- equal rights
- active and equally divided participation from all participants
- the process is more important than the result

The accompanying prerequisites in the classroom would have to be safety, clear rules, good preparation and attitude (Koops, 2011). However, the very definition of dialogue is under discussion and will be an important part of this research. Therefore these elements presented above should merely be seen as a starting point. As well as, in true dialogical sense, a process and invitation to future meetings, without a definite conclusion.

Diversity and pluralism

If humanistic education aims to prepare students to live in an increasingly globalised and diverse world, by means of dialogue, what is meant by this diversity? There are two important notes to be made about diversity as a concept:

1) The first is that diversity often has, in many ways like dialogue, positive connotations (Berrey, 2015). Although often in academics it is used merely as a descriptive term, outside that it tends to conjure hope, and in that sense has just as much of a normative use as dialogue. However, Berrey (2015) warns, diversity is a word often used when people do not want to talk about race. It is a safe but watered down word that allows – in the case of race – white people to ignore culpability and responsibility, to avoid facing their privileges and making real changes. Diversity, or real racial (or other intersectional) politics, is not about the token black person, or the word diversity in a

school or company folder to feel good about oneself. Berrey (2015) claims it is dangerous when diversity is merely positioned as beneficial for the (white) company, a promise of being helpful for learning in schools.

2) The second important idea about diversity connects it to pluralism. In this view, difference and diversity are merely observations. Hence they employ an academic descriptive perspective where the word diversity describes a situation of people living together in increasingly diverse populations because of an increasing globalisation. While diversity is descriptive, pluralism contains a normative goal – something to strive for. Pluralism is seen as a way of dealing with this diversity. It is not, as the Harvard program of pluralism² emphasises, just living together. According to Connolly (1991), pluralism involves democratic contestation and positive engagement of political conflict. It is an active engagement with diversity, and often dialogue is mentioned as crucial for this process. For example UNESCO links dialogue and pluralism, stating that dialogue is indispensable for an “authentically pluralist cosmopolitanism”, by means of promoting diversity and reflection (2011, p. 2).

Consequently, concepts like diversity and pluralism point not merely towards dialogue, but also already towards some of the complications. These are linked, as was stated before, to privilege. To clarify: I will use diversity as a descriptive term, and pluralism as constructively dealing with this diversity (through dialogue). Pluralism in my eyes acknowledges privilege and inequality within diversity. Therefore dialogue is not a tool for 'diversity' – bringing people closer in harmony, assuming egalitarian relations – but rather for pluralism: an active engagement with power and conflict. My view conflicts with the earlier provided definition of dialogue where equality³ is generally presumed. Yet assuming (and desiring) equality between all human beings does not make it so (Suransky & Alma, 2017). Equality requires conscious effort and conflict (Mouffe, 2013;

2 See: <http://www.pluralism.org/>

3 In this research most often the word equality is used, and not equity – as most authors use this concept instead of the other one. However, although equity and equality are often used interchangeably, official there is an important difference. While equality means giving every person the same things, equity means fairness in every situation. For example, access ramps for people in wheelchairs so that a place is equally accessible for everyone.

Wekker, 2016). Instead of readily inferring dialogue is able to bridge gaps and bring people together, proponents of critical (sometimes called democratic) dialogue point out that inclusion is not that easy. Any inclusion involves exclusion (Gustavsen & Engelstad, 1986, cited in Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2016). If some segments of society are always excluded, and society itself, according to Foucault, has ever-present power structures (Gutting, 2014), a picture arises of a world in which certain groups of people (systematically) have more power, and more advantages (more privilege) than others. In this context, can dialogue be done the way it is at times idealistically portrayed? Does our globalised diverse society not ask for something more? Ellsworth (1989) is one of the researchers, and teachers, who figured out that dialogue is not easy. Moreover, she states that to successfully use dialogue in the classroom, more is needed than awareness of privilege and power structures – although it is a good starting point. This is why the critical lens of privilege (and power) explored in this research is vital.

Privilege

The concept of privilege ought to be further explained to see why it challenges the concept and presuppositions of dialogue. To illustrate privilege Nzume (2017) describes a classroom where every student, sitting down wherever they are positioned in the class, is invited to throw a paper ball into the bin in the front. Obviously, it is easiest for the students in front, and harder for the ones towards the back, obstructed by distance and other students. This is how privilege works in society: being white, straight, able-bodied, male, etc. means having unearned advantages. Although especially white privilege has become a popular term⁴, the concept itself is not new. Nearly thirty years ago McIntosh wrote about white privilege, and the pattern of assumptions that were passed on to her as a white person (1989). She identifies her privileges, powerful advantages that were not earned but instead conferred systematically. She writes:

I could think of myself as belonging in major ways and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be

⁴ See for example Nzume's (2017) popular "Hallo witte mensen" - Hello white people (2017)

oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely. (1989, p. 3)

In addition, McIntosh is quick to mention that her work, like my research, is not about blame, shame, guilt, or whether someone is a nice person. It is about analysing and thinking personally and systematically. The systemic dynamics that, taking the Netherlands as an example, have white people simultaneously deny racism – claim tolerance -, even deny that skin-colour has an influence on your position in society, while being racist and xenophobic (Hondius, 2014; Wekker, 2016). White privilege is the luxury of having a collection of unearned advantages (Wekker, 2016). Again it ought to be stated that although this example focuses on white privilege, privilege exists on the basis of our other social identities as well, and they often intersect. Gina Crosley-Corcoran (2016), a white person who when told she was privileged did not understand at first, gives an example of why these intersections are important. She grew up poor, without heat or running water, often without enough food. Begging the question, how could she be privileged? Only upon learning about intersectionality did it become clear, because it allows for a more dimensional and nuanced view on the different systems of oppression. Corcoran's privileges come with her skin-colour, being able-bodied, cis-gender, although she was definitely discriminated against for her class and lack of money. Similarly, one might be a POC (person of colour), but still have male privilege, yet also be gay and experience oppression in this sense. This research will focus on exactly these kind of intersections, because it better allows for the complexity of privilege to shine through.⁵

Critiques on dialogue

The starting definition of dialogue in this introduction demands and assumes equality, the ability of and freedom for everyone to speak. Awareness of power and privilege complicated this idea. If there are so many kinds of privilege, and the world is

⁵ It should be remembered that disadvantages based on skin colour cause a different situation in society than difference for example in sexuality because of historic contexts but also the kind of systematic oppression people experience.

characterized by several inequalities that compromise fair treatment and opportunities, how can one constructively engage in dialogue? Perhaps one does not feel safe, even if given the opportunity to speak, to talk about their experiences as a black person, or a gay person, or to mention that they have been struggling with their gender identity.

The striving for inclusion, and an awareness of exclusion and unearned privilege, is the basis for many critiques on dialogue, where questions are raised about for example consensus, reason and emotion, and equality (Jacobs, 2010; Suransky & Alma, 2017). For example in Suransky and Alma there is the critical note that

people who engage in dialogue bring along their own baggage of personal and systemic privileges and hindrances. It means that, although we may strive to ensure the dialogue is fair and safe for all, it often cannot actually be so. People enter dialogues in social contexts that are imbued with inequalities and injustices. These kinds of differences may deeply affect them and cannot be addressed by simply proclaiming that “we are all equal” in a dialogical setting. (2017, p. 11)

It would be naive to assume privilege does not play a role in educational settings, it is in this sense like any other place in society. Therefore the challenge is for teachers and students to deal with this constructively because of the pervasive ideas about equality and safe spaces in educational theories of dialogue. These ideas are present in the humanistic ideal of dialogue as well, with its high hopes: of dialogue, but also of human beings. Kunneman and Suransky (2011) phrase this the humanist myopia, or near-sightedness, concerning its denial of the violent human potential. In these kind of theories dialogue is seen as exactly the tool to deal with tensions, but many times it forgets to look at the systematic privileges and hindrances. Under these circumstances it is important for each participant to listen, to see their privileges, and to understand that their “knowledge of the other, the world, and 'the Right thing to do', will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 324).

In conclusion

In conclusion, these problems and restrictions of dialogue ask for further research. Perhaps ultimately some of the ideals of humanistic education and dialogue can be preserved in a different form, or adjusted, in order to constructively deal with diversity. Although some people are working on more critical perspectives on dialogue (for example Burbules, 2000; Jacobs, 2010, Suransky & Alma, 2017) – some have been mentioned and all will be further explored – these critiques lack concrete translation to practice and thereby remain abstract. Questions remain: How can these criticisms be translated to the context of the classroom in which teachers are confronted with issues aligned with privilege when they try to apply dialogue in practice? How can they incorporate the knowledge about critical dialogue? It is not easy, the more attempts made to figure out the intricacies of inequality, struggle, power, of being truly critical, vulnerable and human, the more questions come up as to how teachers can apply the humanistic ideal of dialogue while being aware of issues of privilege.

1.1 Research goals

Knowledge goal:

- › Critically assessing dialogue and the underlying assumptions about it, in general and specifically directed towards (humanistic) education.
- › Gaining understanding about the use of dialogue and its prerequisites in education while being confronted with issues of privilege.

Practical goal:

- › Developing the outlines for a teacher professional development module, incorporating critical literature on privilege and dialogue

1.2 Research question

How can the possibilities of applying the humanistic ideal of dialogue in a classroom be assessed in light of the problems posed by the critical discourse about privilege and power?

The following sub-questions guide the way to answering the research question:

- *What is the positive humanistic understanding of dialogue and its merits?*
- *Why is such dialogue considered an important ideal for humanistic education?*
- *What challenges do the critical discourses about privilege, power, and dialogue pose when it comes to applying the humanistic ideal of dialogue in classroom?*
- *What could be a viable teacher development instrument to help educational professionals in confronting these challenges?*

1.3 Chapter division

Chapter 1 focuses on humanism, humanistic education and dialogue. After exploring the first two, and why they value dialogue, different issues with the definition of dialogue are explored. After discussing several views on dialogue, the chapter circles back to the meaning of all of this for dialogue within humanistic education.

Chapter 2 explores the clash between the ideals of dialogue in education and current social tensions concerning privilege and power. It becomes clear how power manifests itself, for example through what is considered self-evident, normal, language, and who has the power to define and establish. These aspects are related to privilege and dialogue, and in the end lead to an analysis of the implications of these key concepts, power and privilege, for dialogue in humanistic education.

Chapter 3. From the previous chapters themes and pointers are distilled in order to develop the framework for a professional development module for teachers. In this module, that because of the extent of this study is merely designed, teachers would hopefully develop an awareness and tools in order to be better equipped to deal with a complex reality, and even more complex human beings. This chapter contains both a justification for the set-up of the course and a description of the content.

2. Methods

2.1 The theoretical background – a literature research

The main question has been answered through an interdisciplinary theoretical literature research, firstly reviewing dialogue in humanistic education, secondly the critical perspectives, and ultimately composing a professional development module for teachers. This approach allowed for an integration of several scientific domains, such as education, globalisation/decolonisation and feminist studies. This interdisciplinary approach is characteristic for Humanistic Studies as a new human-science.

This study analysed literature on (critical) dialogue within the field of humanistic education. The starting point for my literature consisted of the sources from my education and globalisation courses, the rest of the literature was assembled through searches in Google Scholar and Web of Science. Search terms that were used are *dialogue, power, critical dialogue, (white) privilege, diversity, pluralism*, usually in combination with *education*. Based on this search a first selection of articles was made. Moreover, next to using key authors in the field by means of searching who is referenced often, a snowball method was used. This meant finding new scientific articles and sources via references from the collected data. All academic articles were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- The academic articles must be published in peer reviewed journals.
- Each article must explicitly mention at least one of the key words '(critical) dialogue', 'privilege', or 'education', preferably more than one.
- The articles must be published in English or Dutch.
- The articles must be accessible.
- Articles with theoretical, qualitative and quantitative methodology are included.

Next to the academic articles I used (popular) books, media articles, websites and interviews. They were chosen to illustrate the current public debate, all emotions and

questions, surrounding dialogue and privilege.

2.2 The educational design

The ultimate goal, and societal relevance, of the professional development module would be to stimulate awareness of the criticisms of dialogue. Additionally, to develop ways within the course to incorporate these critiques in the classroom.

First of all, the content for the educational design has been derived from the literature study discussed in the first two chapters of this research. These chapters led to a distillation of themes and a direction for the course that is described in chapter three. Considered the scope of this research there is no room to put this course into practice nor to test its assumptions. Therefore, the educational design has to be seen as formulating design principles, containing themes, topics, exercises and directions from the literature about teacher development training.

For the pedagogical and didactic justification the literature for my education courses on humanistic education is the point of departure. They provide a broad insight into humanistic ideas on teacher *identity* and *development*. These last two words are cursive because they are key words in an additional literature search conducted with the use of Google Scholar and Web of Science. The selection method and criteria were the same as with the previous literature research.

These sources together provide a framework for the content of the course, a direction into who it is for, and more other details about the how and especially why.

2.3 Objectivity vs. subjectivity and morality

As is clear from my preface, and the research question, I am personally connected to the topic of dialogue and privilege and there is a clear moral position at the base of this research. What consequences does this have for my presence as a writer in this text and for the methodological objectivity of the research? To what extent can and should I strive for a neutral position that is, as much as possible, free of subjectivity related to truth claims and morality?

Gloria Wekker has a very pronounced stance on this subject when asked about objectivity as a scientist. She does not believe in the idea of an objective position and states how in many critical sciences, like gender and cultural studies, the ideal of objectivity has long been rejected (Vrij Nederland, 2016). One can say, related to the title of Wekker's book, that there is no white innocence, and one should not pretend there is. It is better to explicitly state your position, than to pretend some objective position. Maso and Smaling (1998) claim that the personal involvement can even be used as a strength: striving for objectivity does not mean the exclusion of subjectivity, but encompasses a reflected, intelligent, positive use of one's own subjectivity. The researcher has to be open about their own position, but also to be able to be open to place themselves in the position and perspective of someone else (Maso & Smaling, 1998). In order to do this and connect, it is important to be able to potentially set aside their own conscious or unconscious bias. In the end it is about a balance between involvement and distance, openness, an insight into and understanding of the self and the other according to Maso and Smaling (1998).

Hyland stresses the inter-subjective and dialogical dimension of academic writing (2005). Academic writing in this sense is not objective, faceless and distant, but more a striving towards convincing the reader in which an interaction, and to use the word so present in this thesis 'dialogue', is created. A dialogue with an explicit position from the writer, where the reader is acknowledged and other authors are recognised. From this one can conclude the following things: it is important for me as a writer to explicitly state my position, and given the topic, also my privileges. Moreover, I need to consider which (unconscious) biases I carry on into this research, who I am as the writer, who the reader is to me, and what I want from this reader.

Therefore, first of all, my own position and privileges. I am a white person, located in Europe with a Dutch passport, I am cis (my gender identity corresponds with my assigned gender at birth), able-bodied, educated, young, not poor, and all of these characteristics have given me certain unearned advantages in life. They have made it easy for me, for example, to study and travel, not to worry too much about passport

checks, about money, about people misgendering me or picking me out for random checks on the street because I am of a certain race or have a specific skin colour. At the same time, I experience disadvantages tied into my other identities, as a woman, and as a person under the LGBTQ umbrella (a gay woman). I have been catcalled, discriminated against because of my sexuality, experienced a certain discomfort and awareness of my identities where others might have moved through easily simply because they were straight, (and/)or male.

Second of all, my position. Even from the above stated list, but also in my research question, it can be seen that I firmly believe, and have personally experienced, that privilege is real and that people have certain unfair (dis)advantages based on their social identities or struggles. My main research question implies the presupposition that the concept of dialogue is idealistic in some sense, and that this idealism is contested by the critical perspective. Moreover, it assumes a moral and political stance: there is a need to re-evaluate dialogue and critically look at our own perspectives, our own privileges, and to decolonise our thoughts and system. This means that you – the reader, most likely situated in the wealthy West, most likely white – are supposed to somehow be open to this idea, or even agree. If you disagree, feel there is no racism in the Netherlands for example, or that one should in fact be colour-blind (that this does not presuppose white privilege) we have a tricky start. I also notice a strong desire writing this research for the reader to become (more) critical, to get motivated to change the system, even if it is by little steps.

This research asks for a strong self-critical involvement where I also attempt to place myself into other positions and perspectives I do not immediately recognise myself and keep some distance. These are all reasons why I consciously make the decision to show myself in the preface and this introduction, to be transparent about my own world view and moral positions. I will avoid superlatives and descriptive judgement about privilege and dialogue, and always, also going onwards, make my own position clear and attempt to question it just as much as I critically assess the other authors.

PART 2

Chapter 1 – Dialogue in humanistic education

1.1 Humanism & humanistic education

This chapter will centre around Humanism, humanistic education, and dialogue, because it is exactly their complexity and assumptions that may cause confusion and conflict. Before discussing dialogue in humanistic education it has to be discussed in more detail what the world-view Humanism entails. To start, Derkx (2011) describes four characteristics of Humanism: 1. every world-view position, also religious ones, are context-bound human artefacts, 2. all human beings should see and treat each other as equals, 3. people should employ their freedom to give shape to their lives, and 4. every single person in their uniqueness and vulnerability matters. Overall, Humanism focuses on the human being, leaving the question whether God exists outside of the equation. Similar themes are reflected in Aloni's description of Humanism, who defines it as a

cosmopolitan world-view and ethical code that posits the enhancement of human development, well-being, and dignity as the ultimate end of all human thought and action; ... a commitment to form a pluralist and just democratic social order [...]: providing every individual with a fair opportunity to enjoy a full and autonomous life, characterized by personal welfare, broad education, cultural richness, self-actualization, and involved democratic citizenship. (2013, p. 1068)

His definition is notable for multiple reasons, many key words and concepts from the introduction return here, as for example cosmopolitan, pluralism, and democracy. Aloni (2013) describes a Humanism that departed from four different themes or trends, and that is slowly developing. According to him, the more current Humanism includes elements from all four trends. This development consists, generally speaking, of attempts to incorporate cosmopolitanism, a more diverse world, to become less Eurocentric and more diverse (Aloni, 2013). In my opinion, a development of a more

critical dialogue, looking from a perspective of privilege and power, is and should be part of this movement. Yet it should not merely be theoretical, change is needed.

To come back to the trends: below are the four different themes or trends, each encompassing a distinct pedagogical approach, classifying the different developments of Humanism as a world-view. They will be discussed, analysed, and compared with the definition described by Derkx. As each trend has a different pedagogical approach, it is safe to say they also look at dialogue in humanistic education differently. There is a separate paragraph on different views of dialogue but listed below is a preview of each section.

- The first trend, the classical cultural trend, focuses on autonomy, personal perfection, high culture and critical (rational) thinking. Their view on dialogue would in my opinion to focus on dialogue as a skill, and very much stress the view of rational dialogue. Dialogue as entailing calm rational arguments, and perhaps striving towards consensus. The liberal and Platonic views of dialogue (see 1.3) have elements of this trend.
- The second trend is the romantic naturalistic one, focusing on the development of a human core, authentic self-realization and education designed to the needs of the student. Here the positive view of human beings and their potential can be recognised that is also visible in the other definitions of Humanism (and by extension in humanistic education – education based on humanistic principles). Specifically the fourth characteristic that Derkx mentions, about the uniqueness and vulnerability of every person, shows that both he and Aloni see some great potential in human beings.
- The existential trend believes in an absolute freedom and responsibility for sense-making and self-definition – I see Derkx' third characteristic reflected in this. There is no basic human core that can be developed as in the romantic trend, instead, human beings are ultimately on their own. Perhaps Derkx' third characteristic is reflected in the second trend as well, but it is unclear if Derkx

believes in a common human core that can be developed or rather an existential nothing that requires people to give shape to a blank slate. I would still relate the third characteristic more strongly to the existential trend, because it contains a more substantial urgency for sense-making.

- Lastly, the fourth trend is the radical-critical one, where education is seen as a tool to develop empowerment, dialogue, moral sensitivity, social justice and critical awareness aiming at social justice and democratic citizenship (Aloni, 2007). I notice a relation to Derkx' second characteristic about principal equality, referring to social justice in a way as well. Equality seems of a similar general concern to Aloni looking at his general definition of Humanism: the importance of equality shines through in every sentence.

Overall, these definitions and trends show a focus in Humanism on the value of all unique human beings, their responsibility to build their own life (and the ultimate goal of humanistic education to help with this). Moreover, a desire for, and ideal of, equality – in designing your own life, in living together with other human beings. The first aspect of Humanism that Derkx mentions is not explicitly mentioned by Aloni when he narrates these different trends. However, in his general definition of Humanism he more or less implies that every world-view is ultimately human.

The next part focuses on the definition of humanistic education and even more which position dialogue takes within this framework, using the above mentioned aspects of the humanistic world-view. Humanistic education is education that centres around the values of this world-view. It is described by Aloni, in his article *Empowering dialogues in humanistic education*, as the “general and multifaceted cultivation of humans—in a social atmosphere that manifests human dignity and intellectual freedom—towards the best and highest life of which they are capable” (2013, p. 1069). Within this framework of humanistic education dialogue takes an important role. Veugelers and Oostdijk (2013) describe dialogue as an important tool central to learning and developing within a democratic framework. Beyond learning within or about a religion

or world-view, they state, humanist ethical education should be about developing a personal view – in collaboration with others. In this sense it is much more about personal development than fact learning. In a social constructionist framework⁶, learning is most effective together with others in dialogue. As one might note, this brings an important question to mind: what exactly is meant by dialogue? The introduction summed up some preliminary concepts about dialogue (in humanistic education), but further exploration is needed.

1.2 Clarifying the definition of dialogue

Dialogue is often pitted against discussion (see for example Bohm, 1996). One – discussion – would focus on participants against each other, the other – dialogue – on working together, so everybody wins. However, is the distinction as clear-cut? In both, it is important to listen to each other, to ask questions, to be able to take on different positions and perspectives. There is no competition in the class discussion as described by Hess (2009).

The reason the distinction often made between a discussion and dialogue is mentioned here is because it emphasises the common associations with the word dialogue: together, co-creation, respect, listening, a quiet get-together, an exchange of ideas in an organised rational manner. Dialogue is commonly portrayed as a way of communicating that is 'better'. Jezierska and Koczanowicz (2016) explain that, especially in, for example, political or educational theory, this normative concept of dialogue is important. They distinguish a normative and a descriptive use of the term. This double use of the word is a problem because the concept of dialogue itself is used too easily, and the distinction between the two uses, or which one is meant, is not always clear. The descriptive use signifies using the word dialogue to describe existing relations between human beings. It is entirely different – and dangerous if it is not explicit – if it is used as a word to explain a “desired state of affairs” which has a normative connotation. Jezierska and Koczanowicz say it is used so intuitively, as it

⁶ See chapter 3, paragraph 4, for an explanation of the relevant didactic educational theories

seems more compelling “to solve personal and social problems through dialogue than in a monological way” (2016, p. 2). Within the normative use of the word dialogue in educational theory, they state, the advantages of dialogue compared to other forms of communication (such as discussion, debate, a monologue) are emphasised (p. 9). What is usually invoked is a feeling of equity, openness, and “readiness to take into account all sides' points of views in controversy” (pp. 8-9) Therefore it is paramount to always unravel the underlying assumptions, intuitions, and associations when using any conception of dialogue, especially if a normative superiority is implied.

1.3 Different views of dialogue

It has become apparent that the word dialogue is often used in a normative way, signifying desired circumstances, insinuating an ideal state of equity and openness. However, within this general idea there are still many different views on dialogue. These views have different ideas about its goal, its main focus, and emphases. Moreover, they are to a bigger or lesser extent idealistic in their ideas and expectations of dialogue. Burbules (2000) gives an overview of six different views that together provide a more nuanced view on dialogue. These views are presented below, as they provide one of the frameworks through which to look at the critiques on dialogue later in chapter two. Some critiques are referred to in the following description, in order to get an idea about the kind of criticisms that can be posed from the critical perspective of privilege. This is important even for views of dialogue that already in and by themselves claim to be critical.

- 1) The first view of dialogue is ***liberal***, a view taken for example by Dewey as Burbules (2000) points out. In this view the target is for students to learn the capabilities and dispositions to participate in democratic dialogue. This focus on skills, but also on learning to compose arguments, may remind the reader of the classical trend in Humanism that Aloni (2013) describes. Although this focus does not mean that “those who do not, who cannot, or who choose not to” develop them are not as involved or excluded, Burbules points out a general

lack of sensitivity in liberal thought (2000). A sensitivity of understanding that certain aspects or expectations may still be damaging to people who are not traditional actors in the public space of liberalism — like women, non-white peoples, and sometimes non-propertied males. Therefore one of the focal points of the criticisms on dialogue in chapter two will be about the importance of continuing to ask questions about inclusion and exclusion. As was seen before, any dialogue excludes. The real question is who, how, and what rules or demands are set to participate?

- 2) The second view Burbules expands on is one of (some versions of) *feminism*, focusing on a “more receptive, caring stance in the dialogical relation” (§7). Although they are careful to insist that their view does not exclude disagreement, according to more confrontational views on feminism this statement is not enough to ensure all voices are heard – especially if they are against the dominant opinion. The more confrontational views value confrontation and agonism as important aspects of dialogue. One might say the receptive (more traditionally feminine) idea of dialogue avoids conflict – in response, in chapter two the value of conflict will be further explored, amongst others by the ideas of Mouffe (2013). It is not as clear as with the classical trend, but these more receptive stances on dialogue have a similar tone as the romantic naturalistic trend of Humanism described by Aloni: both focus on the human being and their needs (see paragraph 1.1).
- 3) The third view is the *Platonic* one, focusing on dialogue as an inquiry into truth – the truth can be found through arguments and counter-arguments, slowly moving towards some ultimate, absolute, and unchangeable platonic truth. As Burbules states, few would now adhere to this epistemological stance (2000). Although Aloni (2013) does not indicate an unchangeable truth in the classical-cultural trend, he does state how it strives towards a certain perfection. Moreover, their focus on critical rational arguments echoes the search Plato envisioned, involving arguments and counter-arguments. Perhaps it is even

possible, in my opinion, to find a similar level of and focus on an assumed objectivity: the idea that there might be a 'right' answer.

- 4) The fourth view, the *hermeneutic* one, emphasises dialogue “as a condition of intersubjective understanding” (§9). Gadamer (cited in Burbules, 2000) calls this hermeneutic intersubjective understanding within dialogue the “fusing of horizons”, originating in ideas like Buber's I-Thou relation⁷. The unique human beings and their connection are centred for both, the relational and back-and-forth movement towards understanding is the focus of hermeneutic dialogue. Whereas Plato believes in an objective truth, here intersubjective convergence is key. Critics however have questioned the neutral ground of fusing, wondering if the proponents are truly critical enough and take contextual difference and inequality into account.
- 5) The fifth view is more critical and linked to *Freire*, and his critical pedagogy. Ideas of dialogue in educational research embody attempts to theorize and operationalize “pedagogical challenges to oppressive social formations” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 298). Yet, Ellsworth argues, the key assumptions like dialogue and empowerment have themselves become oppressive myths and vehicles of oppression. What exactly her criticism exists of will become clear in the next chapter.
- 6) Lastly there are the *post-liberal* views of dialogue, including Habermas' work, which say that “communicative claims rest upon implicit norms that can be, and should be, critically questioned and redeemed” (Burbules, 2000, §11). Nonetheless, this too seems to take consensus as its goal. Seeking consensus can be problematic in itself, seeking a universal claim within intricate power networks and privilege. The problem of seeking consensus is yet another criticism on ideals about dialogue that will be further explored in chapter two.

Several critiques arise in these views. The point is not that these critiques wish to

⁷ Buber's main idea is that everyone is unique and valuable – a sentiment that sounds humanistic – and therefore humans should not be categorised. The risk would be prejudice and making the other into an object when they ought to be seen as another subject (Thou). It is in the meeting with the other that one gets a taste of the divine in the concrete other. (Zank & Braiterman, 2014)

disregard dialogue entirely. They do however urge another critical look at the concept. Before looking at these criticisms in depth in chapter two, below the characteristics of dialogue from the introduction are repeated. They contain more practically oriented ideas about dialogue in humanistic education that ought to be linked to the different views discussed in this chapter. The characteristics of dialogue are:

- an open character, open in the way participants share and listen
- multiplicity and diversity, space for a diversity in perspectives
- reciprocal interest, willing not merely to listen but to truly understand the other
- cooperation, working together in the dialogue to enlarge insight and knowledge
- exploratory attitude, involving the critical perspective towards one's own opinions and attempt to understand the other
- equal rights
- active and equally divided participation from all participants
- the process is more important than the result

Elements of all of the different views stated above appear in this list. For example the liberal focus on developing capabilities and dispositions to participate in democratic dialogue, or the equality evident in all views. The focus on reciprocity reminds me of more feminist views on dialogue, though also of the hermeneutic intersubjective understanding in its focus on cooperation, the self and the other. However, truly critical elements and perspectives on privilege, power, and systematic imbalances are missing. As these are all theoretical concepts, though inspired by research and teaching, it is worth looking at an example of a concrete education programme. Castelijns and Verhoeven (2013) for example, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, who suggest using a method that values difference. Nevertheless, their goal is co-creation as their explicit goal is reaching a communal opinion - consensus. Even if they discuss constructive conflict, they do not problematise it and assume a situation where students can speak freely. Their method supposes a dialogue based on mutual care and with an expectation, not of conflict, but of connection. Therefore it is time to further unfold the layers of critical dialogue that explain why these ideals are problematic.

Chapter 2 – Critiques of dialogue

2.1 Power and privilege

Although we may strive to ensure the dialogue is fair and safe for all, it often cannot actually be so. People enter dialogues in social contexts that are imbued with inequalities and injustices [that] may deeply affect them and cannot be addressed by simply proclaiming that “we are all equal” in a dialogical setting.
(Suransky & Alma, 2017, p. 11)

This quote exemplifies the perspective of power and privilege that is lacking from the visions on dialogue in the previous chapter. It is clearer now what dialogue is and what views on it exist. However, with this exploration it became apparent that dialogue is not problematised enough. Therefore, this chapter will focus on some of the critiques on dialogue from the perspective of power and privilege.

I agree with Mouffe (2013) when she says that although we have been led to believe that we live in a post-political world without conflict, this is untrue. Similarly, Aloni argues that issues of power imbalances “pervade many aspects of our everyday lives” (2013, p. 1069). It is within this struggle, he adds, that human-beings attempt to develop and achieve a complete human life. In a world where “many individuals and communities are shunted into a reality of life devoid of power, which denies them any possibility of impacting society and achieving a life of dignity” this does not seem like an easy task. Aloni argues that education plays a role in fostering “processes of humanization through individual and community empowerment” (2013, p. 1069). Yet while humanistic education attempts to stimulate this process, its classrooms are also part of the conflicts and power struggles within society. After all, education does not happen in a vacuum, a bubble away from society. Kleijwegt (2016) shows the present situation where segregation, discrimination, and privilege have very real influences on the students (and their teachers).

Seeing that power penetrates many or even every aspect of society and education, this

chapter explores the many ways in which power displays itself. At each step, these ideas will be related to privilege and dialogue in order to see more clearly how these concepts interact. Many of the ways power exists are silently accepted by at least the majority of people, as they are simply accepted as normal, 'the norm'. However, I feel there is a need to continue to question and critically look at the systems in place. Therefore the following paragraphs focus on, in sequential order, a specification of different categories of power manifestations, exclusion and inclusion, the power of the self-evident, the power of language, and conflict and consensus. Finally, the second part of this chapter will focus on the implications of these ideas for dialogue in humanistic education.

2.1.a – manifestations of power

According to Berrey's categorization there are three different manifestations, she calls them phases, of power (2015). The first one is the ability to define what is normal and acceptable, this is the ability to define the world; the second is having power through the control of resources, and the last one is the power to define the agenda. In each one, the people in control are the ones with privilege. For example, white people are more likely to have control of resources, white men even more so. In addition, especially the first and the last phase immediately call to mind conditions for dialogue: who gets to define what is acceptable (in a classroom, in the dialogue), and who defines what is being talked about, or when? The concept of power in general may conjure negative connotations, but I see it as neutral. The main point of this study is to say in regard to this: power is always there and it is important to take note, at first, and to even-out power imbalances for as far as possible accordingly.

Defining what is good and normal: reason and emotion

One example of how to relate the first power manifestation and (a view on) dialogue is by discussing what is normal or, in other words, what is valued? In the views on dialogue explored in the previous chapter one element seemed imperative: reason, rationality. In the humanistic definition of dialogue ample focus is on a calm rational

argument, especially in the liberal and platonic views on dialogue. This is no surprise, as reason is often seen as crucial in order to “deal with the tensions and opportunities that emerge while learning in a culturally plural dialogical environment” (Suransky & Alma, 2017, p. 11). Suransky and Alma connect this to cosmopolitanism, which they link back to the Stoics. However, they explicitly state that reasonable dialogue is not enough, and that non-rational, or even non-verbal, ways of communicating can be very valuable in dialogue (2017). It is an aspect that seems to be missing from Aloni's humanism, that links the moral and the rational, devaluing emotion by claiming that education should focus on stimulating man's rational and free spirit (2007).

There are three elements about the relation between dialogue and reason/emotion that need to be separated in my argument: the *first* is the idea of what is normal, namely reason (vs. emotion). Related to this is an even more important moral aspect of: what is good? The *second* element is how in the Dutch cultural archive, Wekker (2016) argues, an image has been created over 400 years of colonial rule where the white Dutch rulers are seen as rational, objective, closer to the mind, whereas black people are inferior and associated with the body, emotions, sexuality. Ellsworth (1989) paints a similar picture when she explains how historically and socially Others have been constructed as irrational. By Others she means mainly women and people of colour (looking at intersectional privilege, one may see the double burden on female identified people of colour). The *third* element consist of the critique that says, the moral superiority of reason, or even the idea that there are rational human-beings, is based on a false assumption, a myth. Although she values the rational, Ellsworth addresses the evidence that classroom practices like dialogue dependent on analytic critical judgement “can no longer regard the enforcement of rationalism as a self-evident political act against relations of domination” (1989, p. 304). There is overwhelming proof that the “myths of the ideal rational person” and the universal nature of (so called rational) propositions have been and are “oppressive to those who are not European, White, male, middle class, Christian, able-bodied, thin, and heterosexual” (p. 304).

These three elements all lead towards the critiques concerning ideal portrayals of dialogue (and by extension of human beings). Combined they argue that both reason and emotion need to be part of dialogue, as both are human, and valuable (see for example Burbules, 2000; Ellsworth, 1989; Mouffe, 2013; Suransky & Alma, 2017). In short, in dialogue there ought to be space for the emotions, or, as Mouffe calls them, the passions. Mouffe criticises rationalist individualist frameworks for ignoring the role of collective identities and affect (passions). For her, the goal should not be to arrive at a rational consensus (2013). In the end, these ideas about emotions are all about what Berrey calls 'symbolic politics', which is the exercise of power through ideas (2015).

The phrase symbolic politics brings this paragraph back to the manifestations of power because the discourse surrounding emotion and reason is an example of the ability to define what is normal and acceptable. In a perspective where emotions are unwelcome, irrational (and hence undesirable, not to be trusted), it is telling that it is exactly the Other that is squared in this box – they cannot be trusted with power. Women for example are often portrayed as emotional, and therefore unfit for certain positions. However, who says women are more emotional, and even if they would be, why do emotions make someone unfit for a job? All of this is based on conceptions about what is acceptable, but in the end they are just that: ideas. They are constructions, not objective truth. This example is about one of the underlying assumptions concerning gender, but naturally they also exist about other social identities. The main point of this paragraph is that both emotion and reason should have a part in educational dialogues, and that educators should critically question their situated position on what is good, normal, and acceptable.

2.1.b – exclusion and inclusion

One important critique, that has been touched upon repeatedly and is strongly related to privilege and power, is exclusion. Or in other words: who is invited to the dialogue, and who decides? Furthermore, who has the power/privilege to define the topics on the agenda? This last point directly relates back to the third phase of power.

Who are included and excluded from the dialogue? In the liberal view on dialogue anyone who cannot develop the required skills, for whatever reason, economic, social, political, runs the risk of being left out. Notice that this is strongly related to privilege, to the opportunities one has. Power is not only connected to deciding what is (the) norm(al), but also in deciding the agenda (Berrey, 2015). Taylor (2004) discusses one crucial concept related to this: recognition. Recognition is a basic need in order to feel self-esteem. Someone who does not have a voice, without power, will start to think they are not worthy of recognition. Voice, Taylor argues, is an expression of agency. Consequently it is meaningful to ask the question: what voice do people get? In the current refugee situation, are the refugees heard? Hardly. And when they get a voice, what is done with this voice? Additionally, there is power in the words that are used to describe people. The decision, conscious or not, to label someone a refugee, migrant, or expat, brings up completely different associations and images – this is strongly related to the power of language, a topic further explored in paragraph 2.1.e. The ones in power have the 'power to define' (Taylor, 2004), which entails a huge amount of power. Butler says, in line with this, that the dominant norm tends to define the acceptable forms of communication (in Burbules, 2001). The invitation to dialogue might seem welcoming, but is in fact riddled with power imbalances, especially if the invitee is only accepted on very specific terms and diversity is not truly embraced.

The danger of assimilation is very real, as can be seen in the current debate about refugees – you are welcome, but only if you live in accordance with our norms, our values, our rules, our culture. If the dominant privileged group invites and demands, they have the power. This focus on assimilation is discussed by Wekker in her book *White Innocence* (2016). She explains how in recent years the discourse surrounding immigration has increasingly focused on adaptation and assimilation. Newcomers, but even people who have lived in the Netherlands for generations but are simply not white, are expected to adopt all habits, ideas and values of the white Dutch population. However, as they are not white, they continue to be seen as different and 'not Dutch' (2016). It is a painful and sobering conclusion she draws about the country that prides

itself on its tolerance. According to Wekker (2004) and Hondius (2014), the tale that Dutch people like to tell themselves, about their tolerance, acceptance and hospitality, is too self-flattering, too positive, and needs to be revised and questioned. It may be a multi-ethnic society, but, at times, refuses to be pluralist. It is time, according to them, that everyone acknowledges their privilege and becomes more self-critical.

2.1.c – the power of the self-evident

Power and privilege manifest themselves through the ability to decide what is considered normal or good and defining the agenda. Besides, they show themselves through exclusion and inclusion. The next manifestation is about a phenomenon that Komter (1990) calls the power of the self-evident (original: 'de vanzelfsprekendheid'). This paragraph will show how considering something self-evident, not questioning implicit discourses, or even thinking or talking about objective and neutral grounds are additional ways in which power and privilege manifest themselves.

Komter (1990) refers to power inequalities concerning gender. According to her, one explanation for the persistence of this power imbalance is the 'invisible' power that gives rise to both latent and manifest power. This invisible power, she writes, is not necessarily a case of deliberate and intentional influencing of each other. Rather, it is about what is considered self-evident. The invisible power contains a compound of notions, norms and judgements about how women and men are and how they should be. People perceive reality in a biased way, in a way that is least threatening and most conforming to their own (normative) ideals. This is a process that happens below the surface, and therefore it is very effective in preventing change to existing systems of power. The power of the self-evident, she argues, is reflected in speech, feelings, behaviour, perceptions, and beliefs. It is easy to see how similar processes are at work with other social identities, in ideas about race, sexuality, class, etc.

Wekker (2016) has a more intersectional approach, and uses a different phrase, but I would argue it is very similar to Komter's analysis in its attempt to unearth power structures and social mechanisms. Wekker introduces the concept 'cultural archive' – a

term she borrowed from Said – that is, in her words

located in many things, in the way we think, do things, and look at the world, in what we find (sexually) attractive, in how our affective and rational economies are organised and intertwined. Most important, it is between our ears and in our hearts and souls. (2016, p. 19)

It is not something physical, located in a certain city. Still, Wekker explains, “its content is also silently cemented in policies, in organizational rules, in popular and sexual cultures, and in common-sense everyday knowledge, and all of this [in the Netherlands] is based on four hundred years of imperial rule” (p. 19). Wekker stresses that the “cultural archive to be passed on should be transnational, intersectional, interdisciplinary, relational and reflexive” (2004, p. 487). This ideal cultural archive contrasts with the – often implicit – current dominant discourse that is Eurocentric and white. A dominant discourse that values the liberal, capitalist, rational, verbal, the male and the individual. All of these are not coincidentally examples of privileged positions, and the intersectional aspect means acknowledging that these privileges coexist and influence each other. One might position dialogue as counteracting this through connection and community, yet there is always the danger of playing into hegemonic power structures. Naturally, if these structures have existed for centuries, it takes great conscious effort in order to expose and deal with systematic inequalities and power struggles. In its desire for equality, humanistic education – and dialogue within it – potentially erases emotions, conflict and the messy parts of undoing centuries of colonialism.

Neutral grounds?

Attempting to change the self-evident, the cultural archive, means changing the norm, changing whatever is accepted as neutral and objective. Wekker (2016) claims that white people are taught to see themselves not only as rational (see 2.1.a) but also as neutral, objective, as the norm. White in this perspective is not a colour, it is the common ground. She vehemently argues for seeing the dominant position as coloured

(subjective) as well. Only when every position is questioned is there a possibility of changing what is considered to be self-evident. Otherwise the power automatically goes to the more dominant position: to the white person, to men, to straight, able-bodied people. The default position will always be in favour of the ones in power, which gives them many unearned advantages (privileges).

This is a good place to connect the discussion about the rational, and ideas surrounding dialogue and objectivity. Although the humanistic vision on dialogue does not necessarily speak of objectivity (only in the platonic view), in many views there is still an implication of a neutral ground, a safe space, equal positions, which do suggest a neutral objective. Wekker (2016) proposes that assuming an objective ground is dangerous, and oppresses minority groups. In regard to the issue of race, it is problematic to say 'I do not see colour, I am colour-blind'. With this statement people ignore the systematic oppression of groups in society (McIntosh, 1989; Wekker, 2016). For example Bergman in her documentary 'Wit is ook een kleur' (White is a colour too, 2016), clearly directed at white people attempting to deal with the racism discussion in the Netherlands, shows how white cannot mean neutral. White is a colour too. Or, in Wekker's terms, there is no such thing as white innocence (2016). White privilege is illustrated in the documentary by children, of any colour, who prefer playing with the white doll. Moreover, when asked which doll is smarter, these children (of 'left progressive parents') generally point to the white one. At a basic level, children are taught about differences between races, and bias is reflected in, for example, police behaviour or job searches. A recent article showed that in the Netherlands someone with a criminal record (the type of crime was negligible) is more likely to be invited for a job interview than someone with a non-Western background (NOS, 2017).

In contrast, as became apparent with the dolls, white people are often treated better, get more chances, in short, there are strong arguments for the existence of white privilege. Whites are taught to "think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow "them" to be more like "us." (McIntosh, 1989). This echoes the

sentiment regarding assimilation in the Netherlands, where essentially the other is demanded to be more like the dominant population.

Lastly: for centuries white people have been the ones in power, the incorrect conclusion often drawn from this, is that this privilege is somehow earned. This is the “myth of meritocracy” (McIntosh, 1989). The myth claims that something, it may be education, a certain job, house, or something else, is in one's possession because they earned it. Moreover, especially in the cultural idea in the United States of the American dream, anyone could achieve similar results by putting in the same effort. The error in this train of thought consists in the denial (or inability to see or acknowledge) the fact that all of these aspects in life are also influenced by power. Power, as has become clear, that influences freedom, possibilities, the ability to speak, to decide, and to define. It seems to McIntosh that

obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power and serves to keep power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already. (1989, p. 12)

2.1.d – the power of language

In some ways the power of language does not need its own paragraph: the power to define, exclusion, what is considered normal, neutral, or self-evident, everything already mentioned is related to and based on language. What words are used to describe the self and the other are important indicators of power. It is visible in examples about gender – the less powerful, the woman, is more often called a girl than a man is called a boy – or in labels to describe people who leave their own country to live in another part of the world, for work, or love – are they called expats or immigrants? And what associations come with these words?

An important name in regard to power and language – to how human-beings perceive the world – is French philosopher Michel Foucault. He deliberated the relationship between knowledge and power, and how knowledge and concepts are used by institutions to exercise power for social control (Gutting, 2014). Language plays an important part in this. Foucault would be in agreement with Wekker about the non-existence of objectivity. His philosophy has more details than I am able discuss here within the limited scope of this study. Yet there is one element specifically that is important to mention, and relevant to this research about dialogue in humanistic education. Foucault's argument is that language does not have a ground in physical reality itself. Therefore, it is not real in any objective sense (Gutting, 2014). His examples about the concepts of madness and homosexuality are famous. According to Foucault they do not describe a person as much as they are inventions by people – used for social control. For this reason these words have power even if they are not real. These constructions influence how people see the world, which brings the argument back to the power of the self-evident, and the cultural archive. The words that are used within and about dialogue have power, and it is imperative to create an awareness about language and how it can exclude or oppressive groups of people.

2.1.e – conflict and consensus

Part of the resistance against the systems of power presented in the previous sections entails allowing space for counter forces and voices. The argument in this section will be that allowing conflict in dialogue and education, instead of aiming for consensus, can lead to more equality. Having a voice means having power and agency, therefore, dialogue needs voices, and disagreement is likely unavoidable.

This chapter started by identifying the lack of a perspective from privilege in ideals about dialogue, and the overarching presence of power inequalities in everyday society, for example according to Mouffe (2013). Now, Mouffe goes further than merely stating that power is everywhere, she positively values conflict. She prefers constructive conflict over what she implies to be almost lazy, Habermasian consensual

dialogue. There is no harmonious and non-conflictual ensemble possible (Mouffe, 2013). Despite any possible temporary consensus, ultimately she makes a point for non-closure, and a constant state of struggle. Every hegemonic order is temporary and fragile and there ought to be space for counter-hegemonic forces. These forces are all practices against the status-quo. If this is not the case, passions cannot have a democratic outlet. She does not however propose an ordinary fight: dialogue requires that others are not seen as “enemies to be destroyed, but as adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned” (p. 7). This view of opponents as adversaries she calls agonism. It is this agonism that inspired Suransky and Alma to develop their agonistic model of dialogue, a model in which “the structural power inequalities and privileges people bring into dialogical spaces are explicitly addressed” (2017, p. 1).

If power and conflict are so important, and consensus is regarded highly questionable, what about conflict and consensus in dialogue? The views on dialogue in chapter one each have a different vision on the goal of dialogue, but, in general (with one exception, discussed on the next page) they contain a preference for consensus, a coming together on neutral grounds. The first view on dialogue is liberal, its goal being to stimulate democratic engagements, and for education to “foster in learners the capabilities and dispositions to participate in such deliberations” (Burbules, 2000). The second view, in accordance with some versions of feminism, advocates a more caring receptive stance. Even if this view is “always careful to insist that this more receptive stance does not preclude vigorous disagreement and self-assertion”, there is still an emphasis on receptivity and caring (Burbules, 2000, §7). Therefore it is not difficult to see, according to Burbules, why these views “have come to be labelled by other feminists as “good girl” feminism” that do not sufficiently fight against oppression (§7). The third platonic view definitely strives for consensus, and even some objective truth. Furthermore, both the 'fusing' of the hermeneutic view and the post-liberal idea of dialogue have some leaning towards a goal of consensus, of people agreeing with each other. I would argue that it is not excluded that dialogue may come to some kind of

consensus, but from a perspective of privilege and power I take issue with the idea that this should be the prime goal of dialogue (in or outside education).

The view on dialogue that was not discussed in the previous part is the one based in critical pedagogy. This view has a goal of empowerment, of fighting against socially oppressive systems through the development of agency for subjects. However, it has its own problems, signifying that merely having a goal that emphasises a fight against oppression does not mean a classroom with an inclusive pluralist dialogue. The reason why can be found with Ellsworth (1989) who claims that concepts of empowerment, diversity, etc., can themselves act as oppressors. From personal experience she illustrates that “efforts to put discourses of critical pedagogy into practice [led to reproductions of] relations of domination in [the] classroom” (p. 298). It appeared more fruitful to move “out of the literature's highly abstract language ('myths') of who we 'should' be and what 'should be happening in [their] classroom' and instead focus more on context specific classroom practices (p. 299). Yet in my view it still remains unclear what these practices ought to be, probably partially because Ellsworth (1989) herself asserts there is no easy five step plan for the implementation of these principles. Everything is context dependent. Her experience does however present an important warning: using abstract language and concepts about privilege and power in the teacher module I intend to design is potentially oppressive.

2.2 Implications for dialogue in humanistic education

This final paragraph of chapter two concludes the first two chapters and lays the groundwork for chapter three about the teacher development module. After shortly linking back to chapter one, it gives a synopsis of the manifestations of power and privilege from paragraph 2.1. From here the implications of this perspective for dialogue in humanistic education are deliberated. The paragraph concludes by answering whether there is inspiration to be found in the humanistic ideals to help dialogue in the classroom in these complex circumstances.

Humanistic education strives to prepare young people for a society that is increasingly

characterised by globalisation and diversity, raising the question: how can these people live together and constructively deal with difference and conflict? An essential answer is dialogue as a tool for active pluralism. However, an exploration showed idealistic views on dialogue that insufficiently take into account the perspective of power and privilege. In order to understand this perspective it has been explored how power manifests itself and what its relations to privilege and dialogue are.

Chapter two thus revealed how power is visible in the ability to define what is seen as normal and acceptable, to control resources, and in the ability to define the agenda. In addition, that power manifests itself through exclusion. As a consequence, it might seem that power is fairly visible, but there is also a strong current of an invisible power that moves through all manifestations. It is a power that gives (unearned) advantages – privilege – to dominant groups in society, because they are esteemed most positively. These estimations, values, and perceptions, are considered self-evident and are not questioned.⁸ Wekker (2016) uses a noteworthy phrase to describe this invisible power (that at the same time is highly visible in behaviour, social institutions, etc.), namely the cultural archive. What people see as normal, acceptable, what they exclude, or do not even question, the language they use, it is all tied into the cultural archive that is located in people's speech, feelings, behaviour, perceptions, beliefs, in their ears, and in their hearts and souls. Working as a counter-force against a system that is like water, everywhere, in between, strong, means first identifying the water – the power, the privileges, everything that is taken as self-evident and the norm – and why would one question, especially if this person is benefiting from the privileges granted by this power? The next step would be to change the cultural archive, to build one that is “transnational, intersectional, interdisciplinary, relational and reflexive” (Wekker, 2004, p. 487). In doing so, one cannot assume a neutral or objective standpoint, everything

⁸ Usually, this is not about a conscious feeling of superiority or hating other people, rather, it has to be emphasised that these are systematic inequalities. Systems are oppressive to people of colour, or otherwise marginalized individuals. If my reader struggles, many other sources exist attempting to explain privilege in different ways. As a source from and for teachers, for example consult the following link: <https://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/truth-for-teachers-podcast/10-things-every-white-teacher-know-talking-race/>

and everyone is situated and biased.

The manifestation of power and privilege beg the question what this implies for dialogue in humanistic education. The following section will partially outline what has been said about dialogue in this chapter, and partially explore the implications for this dialogue specifically in humanistic education.

One of the first suggestions about dialogue concerned ideas about reason and emotion, deeply embedded in the cultural archive. The dominant discourse values reason, but that dialogue ought to incorporate both emotions and reason. The focus should not just be on forming rational soundproof arguments, but rather, in a humanistic spirit, to see the entire human being – including emotions. Moreover, the power in exclusion led to questions about agency and recognition. Extending this argument to dialogue in humanistic education it needs to be considered and questioned who is invited to the dialogue, who has the power, and what the goal is. It is imperative that within education these kind of questions are asked, and the teacher's position of power is not forgotten (Ellsworth, 1989). Seeing as many times it is still the case that non-white children are deemed less intelligent, teachers (the author included) need to not only look at their classroom and how privileges play a role here but also ultimately change the system. Socio-economic backgrounds have a big influence, so do other social identities, and they cannot be considered left behind outside the classroom.

A good example of this appears in Ellsworth's reflection on what happened in her university course when students from diverse cultural backgrounds engaged in dialogue. She was inspired by the pedagogical approach to dialogue, with the ideal of making the classroom into a “public sphere” in which

students and teachers can engage with the process of deliberation and discussion aimed at advancing the public welfare in accordance with fundamental moral judgements and principles.... Dialogue is offered as a pedagogical strategy for constructing these learning conditions, and

consists of ground rules for classroom interactions using language.
(Ellsworth, 1989, p. 314)

She based her assumptions and expectations on for example Giroux, who stated that for dialogue participants “must exhibit trust, sharing, and commitment to improving the quality of human life” (cited in Ellsworth, 1989, p. 314). There is a wish to overcome suffering, and the expectation that, being aware of privilege, of power structures, this might happen. However, reality turned out differently than the expectation for a safe place and equal opportunities to speak, for “acting as if our classroom were a safe space in which democratic dialogue was possible and happening did not make it so” (p. 315). Everyday situations have asymmetrical relations regarding privilege and power, and the class was not a safe place because it did not and could not “confront dynamics of subordination present among classroom participants in the form of multiple and contradictory subject positions” (p. 315). It is this sobering conclusion that I take into account constructing the teacher development course.

Power makes the idea of dialogue towards consensus a debated concept, and rather favours constructive conflict. Yet are there ways to employ a dialogue in education that is truly plural and critical, challenges power differences, and acknowledges privilege? If so, how? If the literature shows one point clearly, and this will be explored further in chapter three, it is that there is no five step implementation plan, no easy fix, in order to incorporate all of these aspects and have an equal dialogue. Part of the point is exactly that power is and always will be present. The teacher module will therefore consist of two different elements: 1, the learning of teachers about these ways that power and privilege work and are ingrained in our system. It is about creating an awareness, and attempting from there to move beyond possible feelings of guilt (Wekker, 2016) to action. 2, in order to construct a dialogue that is truly plural and critical, that challenges power differences, and acknowledges privilege, to work on teacher identity. The reason is that pluralism, dialogue, are about the self and the other, about issues of identity. As it is harder to control the other, my proposal is to start with the self of the teacher.

Akin to Kunneman and Suransky (2011), and Said (2004, cited in Kunneman & Suransky, 2011), I think it is possible to be critical of Humanism in the name of Humanism itself. Moreover, that there are some movements within Humanism that can help to move forward from within, in order not to be paralysed by the ever-present power structures and privileges in systems that are difficult to change. Some inspiration can come for example from the concept of slow questions (Kunneman & Suransky, 2011). Slow questions are called this way because they cannot be quickly answered, and they centre around the fragility and vulnerability of people, but also experiences of indifference or violence. These questions show that human beings do not have full control as they have and encounter limits. They are fallible and fragile, and capable of many things, on all sides of the spectrum. Accepting the vulnerability of human beings – their potential for empathy but also for violence – and the fact that there are questions that are hard, that take a long time, and that might involve situations that feel muddy and uncomfortable, is something I would like to keep at the back of my mind going into the next chapter about the framework for the professional development module.

Chapter 3 – professional development module

This chapter contains the outline and the pedagogical and didactic justification for a professional development module for teachers, based on critiques of idealistic comprehensions of dialogue. The goal of the module would be for participants to develop an awareness of power and privilege, and tools in order to be better equipped to deal with a complex reality, and even complex human beings. It starts with the building blocks for this module, derived from the previous chapters.

3.1 Building blocks

Below are the important building blocks for the teacher development module that were found so far. They provide a start from which to construct the module, pointers, and things to look out for.

- First of all, explicitly mentioning privileges and social constructs, and dealing with them, is an important aspect of dialogue in humanistic education following the critiques
- Dialogue can not merely be about the actual content but needs to take the process into account – the system
- One needs to realise that individual actions do not yet change the oppressive system
- There needs to be space for emotions, and a re-evaluation of ideas about rationality and (moral) objectivity
- On some level there needs to be an active dialogue about the goal of dialogue, the power struggles, who participates and who decides the agenda.
- An awareness of the teacher of their own bias and values, for example about human beings. What general idea of people do you have? Are they innately good, with the potential to strive towards goodness? Can they be violent?
- The acknowledgement of conflict, and not to shy away from difficult moments without relief or consensus

3.2 Goal of the module

To repeat the goal of this teacher development module in two words: awareness and action. Awareness of power and intersectional privilege, and action meaning to apply this awareness in their classroom dialogues. It is one thing to have the conscious ideal of education aiming towards free, rational and objective students, it is another not to be aware of one's values. More than anything the teacher development module will attempt to stimulate educators to become aware of their own values, biases, and intentions. As has been stated, the approach of a five step plan seems ill-advised, if not impossible. Therefore, there will be other ways explored in order to achieve these goals, including self-reflection. The start is for a discussion surrounding identity, as indicated at the end of chapter two.

3.3 Theories around (teacher) identity

Why would one focus on teacher identity when the question at first sight appears to be one of 'how' and 'what works'? This is the question that will be answered in this paragraph.

First of all, identity (and the broad development of students, see the introduction) is an essential element of humanistic education. This implicates not only student identity but equally a focus on teacher identity. In my own process towards becoming a teacher along humanistic principles, my identity as a teacher was a fundamental aspect. Therefore it makes sense to take a similar approach in this framework. Humanistic education values *Bildung* over measuring and numbers, over standardised tests (HVO, 2012; Veugelers & Oostdijk, 2013). Developed in German philosophical and educational thought, the concept of *Bildung* means, in its most literal sense formation, but here it refers “more specifically to formation or cultivation, in education or otherwise, of human moral virtues and other capacities” (Herder 2002, Humboldt 1791-1792/1993, Gadamer 1960/1989, cited in Bohlin, 2008, p.1). Subsequently, the core idea of *Bildung* is not a set of ideals but a process of “(i) realising *alternatives* to one’s habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, thereby (ii) becoming able to identify the *presuppositions*

or assumptions underlying those ways of thinking, etc., which in turn leads to (iii) critical assessment of these presuppositions—and, we may add here, to (iv) critical assessment of the alternatives” (Bohlin, 2008, pp. 8-9). Bildung is a dialogical term: “In contrast to teaching and learning a set of certain competencies, Bildung is a holistic term that targets and changes the whole person with regard to who he or she *is*. It is a lifelong teleological process of becoming” (Schellhammer, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, focusing on identity is more fitting, especially when the main theme is dialogue. It is equipped to deal with the process of creating a critical awareness of power and privilege and ultimately to deconstruct systems of power from a strong sense of self.

Secondly, according to Hermans and Dimaggio, globalisation raises questions about identity (cited in Jacobs, 2010, p. 11). Revisiting related concepts like diversity, pluralism, and dialogue, one observes how they all focus on the relation between the self and the other. They raise the question of how to relate to each other. Schellhammer (2017) and Suransky and Alma (2017) all indicate a possible value of Dialogical Self Theory (DST) in this respect. Although there is no room within the scope of this study to zoom into this theory, it is beneficial to shortly see why they make this claim. According to them, DST demonstrates why it is crucial to see education as a continuous dialogue not only with the outside world, but just as much with oneself. Schellhammer asserts that only

if we have a strong sense of self—only if we are not afraid of losing our internal web of meaning during an intercultural encounter—can we openly enter into dialogue with someone coming from a different sociocultural or religious background. If we feel torn, uncertain, frail, and insecure within, we are tempted to withdraw or to retreat behind our cultural or religious walls and defend our traditions and belief systems, even using violence if necessary. (2017, p. 5)

Dialogical Self Theory contains a strong argument in favour of starting a process with teachers that accommodates both elements: looking outside and inside. A process that

focuses on the conflicts and voices within and works on a strong identity – sense of self. This organically leads to the following statement: within this module identity would be seen, not as a stable concept, but as moving, consisting of different elements, that can be in conflict with each other. In this way, similar to a dialogue between people, within this sense of self there ought to be room for emotion *and* reason, for conflict, for questioning the self-evident, for allowing oneself to be vulnerable and imperfect. This idea echoes the final conclusion of chapter two where criticism, but also hope, from within and concerning Humanism was brought forward.

Accordingly, this module would ideally focus heavily on the development and process of teacher identity. Mockler (2011) argues against the “technical-rational understandings of teachers’ work and ‘role’ [that] are privileged in policy and public discourse” (2011, p. 517). Instead, she favours a view that reminds me of *Bildung*, focusing on formation and a way of being, on dimensions that are not easily quantifiable. The framework she presents seeks to

represent the processes whereby teachers are ‘formed’ and come to understand themselves as teachers, the interplay between their motivations for entering the profession and their experiences as teachers and the interaction between their sense of moral purpose or desire to ‘do good’ and professional practice. (2011, p. 518)

On the next page is her visual representation of the framework, that encapsulates an idea of teacher identity that is forever moving, changing, developing, not necessarily in one direction. On pages 520-521 of Mockler's article a more extensive explanation of each of the factors can be found, for this research it is mostly valuable right now to apply each element to the topic of dialogue through a lens of privilege and power. In my design principles, the suggested exercises mostly base themselves on personal experiences of the participants – the bottom left circle. Professional learning happens where professional context and personal experience intersect. The professional context is referenced in the individual cases participants bring forward for the intervention part

of the meetings. These cases would be about their own professional struggles with dialogue, surrounding the theme of privilege and power, in order to make the course professionally relevant for them.⁹ Lastly, the focus on privilege and power indicates the third circle of Mockler's framework – the external political environment – has a crucial role in this module. Where the political and personal intersect, in experiences with privilege, is where there might be discomfort and conflict. Nonetheless, it is also where the capacity for reflection and enhanced self knowledge exist in the framework below.

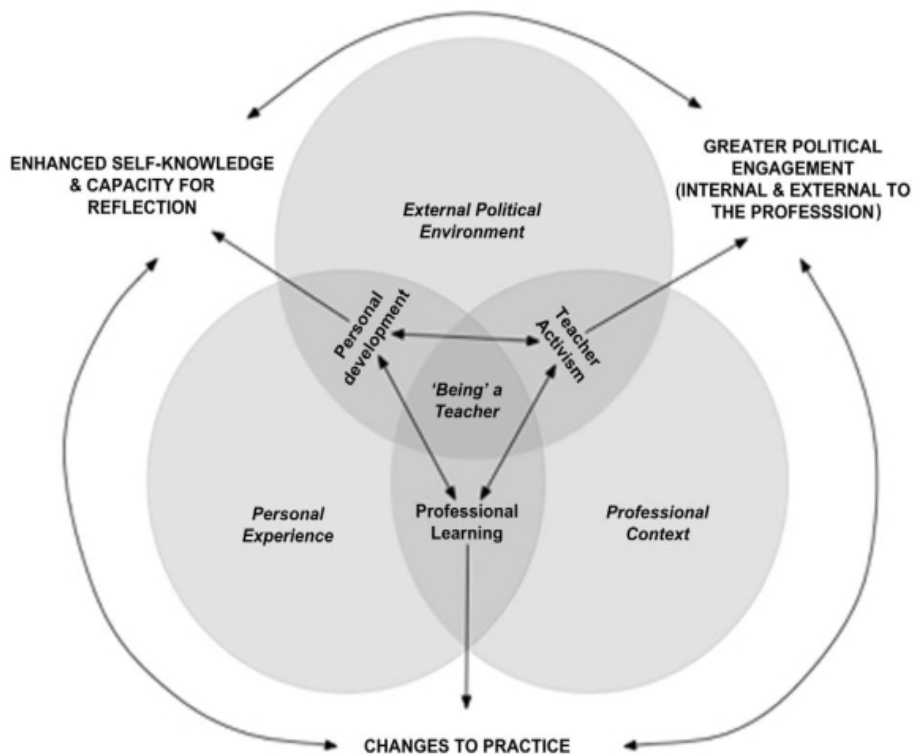


Figure 1. The formation and mediation of teacher professional identity 146 × 112 mm (72 × 72 DPI).

As a result, this module incorporates all intersections, except perhaps teacher activism, though this might be stimulated within the profession if the participants feel greater political engagement through this course. All things considered, the question is not 'how to' regarding dialogue and privilege, but rather following Mockler in going beyond what works, and focussing on awareness and teacher identity. Relevant questions therefore would be, from the perspective of the teacher: who am I, what do I want to

⁹ In paragraph 3.5 one can find a more detailed description of the different elements in the framework for this professional development module

do as a teacher? If I focus on equality, I want to do dialogue, how can I be aware of power and privilege, in order to do a better job?

Intermission: hope and intention

In this section I reflect upon a broader framework and direction I have chosen in designing my module, focusing on two elements: moral obligation and hope, and intention and learning. The first explores the moral obligation many teachers feel as part of their identity as a teacher – to do good for society – and the hope for change that accompanies this feeling. The second is about acknowledging that everyone is learning and therefore will make mistakes, allowing for failure and moving on from it.

First of all, It is common to assume that teachers find a “positive driving force” for their profession in their moral purpose, however, Mockler (2011) asks, does a desire to 'do good' automatically mean better teaching? Moreover, referencing Freire, “my hope is necessary, but it is not enough”, she claims the intention to do good and affect change is not sufficient. Even more so, “the expression of moral purpose can become a ‘blocker’ to rigorous and robust debate and discussion, insofar as it can represent the ‘moral high ground’ against which there can be little or no rebuttal” (Mockler, 2011, p. 523). Therefore, although this drive is valuable, it might get in the way of the radical change and criticism I would like to see – although not everyone might agree with me. It is something that would especially, looking at the urgency for the Netherlands expressed by Wekker (2016), Hondius (2014), and Nzume (2017), need to make sure it takes race into account. In another way feeling a moral obligation might get in the way as well. What if wanting to do right, and learning about power and privilege in this way, makes the participants of the module feel guilty and abandon all effort to discuss racism and other inequalities? It is a common response according to Wekker (2016), and the focus of the next section.

One approach to counteracting the moral obligation and resulting guilt can be by the realisation that everyone is learning. If I say something that I later discover is offensive or oppressive, but I was not aware, I do not have to berate myself, or get stranded in

feeling I cannot do it right – rather, I apologise, do not excuse my ignorance, and do not make the mistake against. The discourse surrounding social justice, especially online, on social media, is fierce. Something I struggle with, and that Lee (2017) eloquently describes in an online article, is being hesitant to contribute, or say anything, for fear of not being critical enough, for continuing to use words that are oppressive. She describes an almost “evangelical strife towards purity”, that does not allow for learning, mistakes, and, on the other hand, for activists to run the risk of being on the other side and start to preach. The goal should be, I agree with her, to create communities, to continue to see individuals and not merely systems – to honour everyone's humanity.

To recapitulate: teachers do have a moral responsibility, but are also human and allowed mistakes. Their hope for a better world is not enough by itself, but this drive might just stimulate the effort to take action and battle racism and other inequalities.

3.4 Educational theories

There are a few didactic educational theories relevant for the framework of this module. First of all constructivism, a more general philosophy of science that encompasses a way of looking at the world and doing research believing reality cannot be objectively perceived. Instead, people are the source of knowledge and perception is always biased, both by the subject as the historical context. Nobody can be detached from society or history (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). Moreover, I adhere to the ideas of social constructivism. In education this theory implies that people learn in relation to others. According to Vygotsky social context and social interaction play a big role: knowledge may first be individually acquired, but it becomes intra-individual through interaction – the best way, in other words, to 'make it stick' (in Kallenberg, 2009). In this module, this influences the structure by means of starting in the preparation by individually reading and researching ideas about privilege and power. Subsequently, they work in the group and smaller groups. In between the meetings the aim is to internalise practices, and every time the knowledge comes back to the group in the meetings – solidifying the knowledge through interaction.

The focus on social interaction is also reflected in another theory worth discussing here: working collaboratively (*samenwerkend leren*) – Ebbens and Ettekoen write about this extensively in their book 'Effectief Leren' (Effective Learning) (2013). In this module this method would be used by letting the teachers explain ideas to each other, let them help each other, also by sharing their class experiences with dialogue. There are five keywords of effective learning: positive mutual dependency, individual accountability, direct supportive interaction (the reason for doing intervision style meetings), social skills and attention for the group process. The latter implies that each meeting should have at least one moment in which the process is discussed on a more meta level. What is happening, how is everyone doing? This group reflection is also valuable for the individual reflection and identity development process. Moreover, individual reflection can be stimulated by letting the participants write a journal.

3.5 Set-up for the course

Practical details and the target group

The basic set-up, though this might change if the framework is used for an actual module, would involve one school-year, and a meeting about every two months. This means more or less five meetings, and a group of teachers who work together and support each other during one year of their careers.

The focus in this thesis on my own situatedness – a dependence on my socio-historical, geographical, and cultural position – suggests this course ought not to be imagined in an abstract reality. Rather, for this reason, I suggest it would be offered from the applied university for teacher education in the Netherlands I will be working at after the summer. They are specialised in teachers educating teachers. In addition, they have actualised knowledge on different theories about teacher learning and development.

The target group is teachers who are interested in dialogue, and either teach secondary school or in higher education. A diverse group might help the learning process. However, considering the level asked also of their students (in the first years one might want to focus on more skill based classes with dialogue), it may be prudent to focus on

teachers who teach the higher years in secondary schools. It would make sense that they teach the social subjects, civics, religion/world-view, philosophy, but because of the theme and its applicability in all fields – power is everywhere – I would like to see a module open to all interested teachers.

Preparation

The preparation, I suggest, inspired by educational theories discussed earlier, consists of the participants either watching a documentary (for example 'White is a colour too') or reading a non-fiction story or essay of someone experiencing disadvantages through power and privilege. The choice will be made by the facilitator. The goal is to sensitise participants towards the issues, additionally, it might stimulate what Nussbaum (2002) refers to as their 'narrative imagination'. This is necessary because nobody “can think well on factual knowledge alone”, they need

the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 299).

The narrative imagination will also be stimulated in the exercises put forward later in this chapter. Nonetheless, one needs to be aware that this does not equal acceptance or agreement with anyone's position. Nussbaum continues:

The narrative imagination is not uncritical: for we always bring ourselves and our own judgements to the encounter with another, and when we identify with a character in a novel, or a distant person whose life story we imagine, we inevitably will not merely identify, we will also judge that story in the light of our own goals and aspirations. (2002, p. 299)

I would like to add two considerations. First, the idea put forward earlier by Mouffe (2013), considering the other person an adversary, accepting their humanity and right to express themselves. Second, Parker's three strategies (2006) discussed on pages 55-

57 to help with the realisation that one's understanding is not complete, still outside the other's experience and that the other has a better understanding of their own experience. As a straight person, for example, it will be impossible to ever truly grasp what it is like existing like a gay person. A white person will not be able to experience a black person's life. What one can do, is listen.

In addition to preparation in the shape of a documentary or a personal essay, I suggest the participants to think about their issues with dialogue in a classroom and to formulate a question for themselves that they would like to answer during this school year. They do not need to have everything figured out when they start, just to have thought about their question.

Exercises

There are a couple of exercises, found in the literature, that could help shape this module and work especially on experiencing and becoming aware of privilege in a way that might be more effective than reading complicated and abstract theories. McIntosh (1989) stresses the importance of drawing on participants' own personal experiences, and not their opinions. Where opinions can lead to a debate, experience, according to her, invites listening and empathy. It is not my intention to suggest all exercises are employed in one module. They are rather options for the facilitator to choose from, whether that is one or a few, depending on what the group needs.

exercise 1. privilege & uninterrupted testimony

In this exercise it is important to balance between personal experiences and being aware that they are in fact systematic powers – privileges that exist because one is part of a certain group. An extensive description, with tips, can be found in McIntosh (2015). Here I will give a summary of the assignment, that is a group process focused on personal testimony. The goal of this activity is to help participants recognise their own privileges and disadvantages in order to become more self-aware, and it has “been used by over 40,000 individuals from various disciplines and professions” (McIntosh, 2015, p. 232). McIntosh writes that

although [it is] intensely personal and “political,” [it] was constructed to avoid eliciting any feelings of blame, shame and guilt. It was designed to reduce the fear of talking about how power relations affect one’s daily experience, and to increase the [participant]’s ability to talk about privilege and oppression. (p. 233)

The activity takes about an hour, and starts with the participants reading the article she wrote in 1989 about white privilege (it is attached as an appendix to her 2015 article and is freely available online). The directions are for groups of two, they are divided in groups after the reading. They are supposed to wait before starting to discuss, first the first speaker is designating by means of who has the earlier birthday. McIntosh then directs: The facilitator’s instructions to the first speaker should go as follows:

Speaker #1, please tell your talking partner for one minute, uninterrupted, about one or more ways in which you have had unearned disadvantage in your life. You did not ask for it. It was circumstantial. But in some ways it has made your life harder. It is not a matter for blame, shame and guilt. You didn’t invent the systems you were born into. You did not invent your disadvantages. They are not your fault but in some ways they have given you difficulty. Your disadvantage may have to do with your place in the birth order in your family, or whether you were the sex of child your parents wanted. Your disadvantage may come from your parents’ relation to money or to education; what language you spoke at home; your neighbourhood; Your gender, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, stereotypes about your family; your physical coordination; your handedness—were you left handed? What else is there that gave you some unearned disadvantage? Please tell your partner about one or more of these things that have arbitrarily set you back and made your life harder, through no fault of your own. Whatever you say is for your partner alone, not to be repeated to anyone else. (p. 235)

The other instructions and guidelines are this extensive as well, but will not be written

down here. The idea is that after speaker #1, who gets one minute, speaker #2 gets one minute as well. Additionally, the same process repeats itself, but with advantages / privileges each speaker has. For the debriefing McIntosh has guidelines as well: in fact, she does not recommend it, “since debriefing can be seen as a filtering mechanism that leaves out some of what has been said and tends to overgeneralize” (p. 238). A shared conversation afterwards can still be beneficial, but asking specifically what the participants have learned, avoiding any comments about what their partner has said.

exercise 2. using the space

The following exercise also uses personal experience but in a bigger group, and in a more spatial way. It works best with a diverse group. An example of the exercise can be seen in the documentary '*White is also a colour*' (Bergman, 2016). The main idea is as follows: every participant stands in one line in the middle of the room. There has to be space to walk forwards and backwards. The facilitator brings forward a statement concerning privilege and power, for example, “I am sure that if I apply for a job I will not be disregarded because of my name”, and if a participant can answer yes, they step forward, otherwise backwards. After a while, there can be a pause where everyone is asked to look around the room. If not, at least afterwards it is useful to talk about the exercise and what happened. This exercise could take, depending on the amount of statements and the length of the reflection afterwards, anywhere between twenty to forty-five minutes.

exercise 3. prejudice

This exercise again is most effective when done with a diverse group, and it can be done rather quickly – it also depends on the size of the group how long it will take. The facilitator asks the group to split up, and has to think about the possibilities before: it could be about race, the type of school you went to or teach at, anything that warrants some prejudice about the other group – from each side. There could be more than two groups. The question is asked: what prejudices do you have about the other group? (people from this country, with this background, etc.). The next step is sharing these

prejudices with each other. Suransky and Alma (2017) describe a similar exercise from their summer school, and how it always causes some laughter. After all, “it is clear these stereotypes do not apply”. However, it does force questions about the origins of the prejudice, and how they are sustained. “By introducing humour as a mediating force, it is possible to start a dialogue about politicized conceptions of us and them in a way that makes them approachable and purposefully grounded in real experience and perception (p. 14). As a side comment, and a thought to keep in mind for the possible facilitator of this teacher module, they stress the importance and strength of laughter in these kind of (learning) situations:

Classes where students are being taught to confront dominator culture and its concomitant racism, sexism, class elitism, religious fundamentalism, homophobia, etc. can both depress the spirit and awaken feelings of powerlessness. [...] tension and conflict can and do erupt in the classroom. Humour can provide a needed break from serious, intense material and discussion. (p. 14)

exercise 4. voices

This is an exercise that reminds me of Dialogical Self Theory, and that is inspired by one that I did myself in a reflection class at the University of Humanistic Studies. It took around an hour in that situation, but I can imagine one could either take more or less time as well. The exercise specifically uses the question participants set up at the beginning of the course (see preparation). Ideally, this question is directly related to dialogue, privilege, and their professional struggles. As one of the steps to answering the question a simple mind experiment is done. Everyone has different voices inside themselves, loud ones, quiet ones, hidden ones. The facilitator sets up a list of questions like, which voice do you always hear? What is their role? Which is very soft? Which is there but is never heard? How do these voices interact inside you? Together the participants ask each other questions, in groups of max. three people, and help each other to figure out the whole array of voices inside. Especially for visual people it might

be practical to draw or write down these voices on a piece of paper, with their role and perhaps certain catch phrases. The question at the end is: what did you learn from this? Did you find new voices? How can this exercise help you answer your question? Ultimately, the main idea is to make space for a dialogue (and possible conflict) within the participants.

Exercise 5. imagining a new life

The last (short) exercise suggested here is inspired by Hooks (cited in, Suransky & Alma, 2017). It is constructed by the idea that “learning in tension means exploring those tensions not only on a personal or emotional level but also in terms of reasoned analyses of the consequences of structural inequalities and social injustices that affect our everyday lives” (Suransky & Alma, 2017, p. 13). Participants are asked to “imagine a new life, in which they have the opportunity to return to Earth and be someone else. Who do they want to be in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physically, and so on?” (p. 13). In the dialogue that follows the participants' reasons, and the ways inequalities and privileges impact one's life, are explored. It depends on this dialogue how long the exercise takes, the first part might only take ten minutes. The result of the exercise is described as follows:

It becomes clear that being born a man in Nairobi or in Jakarta, being Muslim in Germany or in Delhi, being homosexual in Amsterdam or in Kampala, or being black in Chicago or on Papua makes a difference. *Such an exercise can help make people aware that through pluricultural dialogue it is possible to critically examine one's own situated self and the structural conditions that play a role in making (or not making) things happen in life.* (Suransky & Alma, 2017, p.13, own italics)

Three strategies: humility, caution, and reciprocity

Parker acknowledges that “facilitating or leading discussions is one of the “great difficult things” of classroom teaching, as any teacher knows who has tried and is honest” (2006, p. 11). He discusses critiques on dialogue as well, where this study

would fall into the 'cultural left' that according to him voices the concern that it is “another form of domination, another arena in which entrenched inequalities proceed as usual” (p, 15). “Some critics have become so discouraged about the progressive possibilities of discussion that they advise abandoning the dialogic project altogether” (p. 15). Although I recognise the discouragement, I agree with Parker that withdrawing cannot be the answer. Even if the presupposition of equality [in dialogue] faces a wall of inequalities of class, gender, religion, and race [and] the constraints are intimidating (p. 15). In order to avoid a standstill, he suggests three strategies – *ways of being* - “each is a stance that a listener might take in discussions, both in school and out. They are practices, not promises (reciprocity may be impossible, anyway; e.g., see Gadamer, 1982)” (p. 15). The three strategies are described below:

Humility is the stance that undermines the listener’s arrogance. If I am humble while listening, I listen from the point of view [and realise] that my understanding is incomplete. I remind myself that I am an outsider to the speaker’s [...] experience.

Caution is the stance that undermines the listener’s discursive speed and recklessness. If I am cautious when listening, I move slowly, [and I] engage carefully so that I am not denying or dismissing the validity of the speaker’s point of view or manner of talking.

Reciprocity is the stance that ventilates the listener’s ego. [It] involves the effort to take the perspective of another. If I engage in this practice, I intentionally privilege the speaker’s vantage-point and listen knowing that the speaker understands better than I do his or her social position, emotions, beliefs, and interpretations. (Parker, 2006, p. 16)

I feel they are a valuable contribution to the project this module entails, and would discuss these stances explicitly. The reflection regarding the strategies amongst the teachers could involve discussing the way they potentially inspire their own position, awareness, or specific lesson plans. Personally, I think they reflect an attitude that is helpful in acknowledging the struggle of facilitating discussions, the gravity of privilege,

and the complexity of both practising empathy and realising one cannot experience themselves the other's situated reality. Considering again the concept of slow questions and the fragility and complexity of the topic and human-beings, in my view Parker does not necessarily give an ultimate answer, but he suggests an attitude that may certainly help the process moving forward.

Intervision

This last section focuses on how the cases that the participants bring (see preparation) would be used in the sessions of this module. Besides the different exercises creating awareness of privilege and power, and a focus on the three different 'ways of being' that Parker (2006) proposes, I suggest an intervision style set up for the meetings. The meetings would, see the next page for an overview of the entire module, partially consist of intervision that focuses directly on their own professional practice.

My reasoning consists of the wish for the module to connect closely to problems teachers experience day to day in their classrooms in order for them to feel the surplus value of the module and an immediate applicability of the results. After all, the context of being a teacher, at any level, is extremely demanding. Leeman (2013) for example talks about the restricted professional space of teachers. They have difficult and demanding working conditions, with little space for the normative dimension. She stresses the importance of a reflexive attitude – the reason for focusing on intervision and reflection often in this module – but also points out there is little space and time for reflection, to think about what really matters. This module aims to provide a space for this kind of reflection, as it is important for the continuous development of the teacher identity to reflect on their practices (Mockler, 2011; Leeman, 2013). Additionally, in light of the content of this thesis, to specifically focus on a systematic reflection regarding power and privilege in these practices.

According to the teachers Leeman (2013) interviewed their working conditions make good teaching hard: they would like more space to properly prepare their classes. In the discussion, she suggests a course should pay attention to daily moral dilemmas in

order to support teachers. Furthermore, for the superiors in the school to be well aware of the goals of a module like this and to be asked explicitly to participate and be involved. In addition, I would suggest the facilitator chooses the type of supervision that fits them and the group best in dealing with daily moral dilemmas. It is difficult to set up every detail in advance, especially when one does not know the group. Moreover, Mockler indicates the

need to understand professional learning not as a one-size-fits-all phenomenon exemplified in ‘spray-on’ or ‘drive by’ professional development. Contextualised, differentiated professional learning that supports teachers in developing their authentic understanding of their practice, classrooms and students, both individually and collaboratively, is more likely to be *inquiry-based, open-ended, and connected to teachers’ prior learning*. (2011, p. 526, own italics)

An overview of the module

Taking into account the sheer volume of suggestions and design principles regarding the framework for this professional development module, I will provide a schematic overview below presenting the main findings.

<i>Before</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching a documentary or reading a personal essay - Thinking about a question from their own practice concerning dialogue to reflect upon during the module
<i>General</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parker's three strategies (2006): humility, caution, and reciprocity - Creating an awareness of power and privilege, and a systematic reflection on its implications for dialogue in humanistic education
Meeting 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers discussing the prepared questions, expectations/hopes for the course, their views on dialogue - At least one of the awareness exercises
Meeting 2-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intervision (one to two cases each time), each time separately reflecting on the broader framework of systematic power and privilege too.

	- Potentially introduce extra online sources (see for example footnote 8, p. 38), videos, or one of the exercises
Meeting 5	Similar to meeting 2-4, except with a final dialogue that involves their findings, and what they take away from this module.
<i>In between meetings</i>	Teachers work on their practices, take their experiences with them – both into the classroom and from the classroom back into the course. Their professional experiences are used as content for the intervention.
Additional suggestion	<p>If there is the wish, the time (and money) to make this module more intensive my suggestion is to employ the format used by Radstake and Leeman in their research on facilitating conversations in the classroom concerning living together ethnically mixed societies (2008).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers are interviewed regarding their goals and how they intend to facilitate the dialogue in their classroom – this might also be done within the meetings I already designed, instead of in formal interviews. 2. During one of their classes the teachers are filmed, with the option of having a researcher present to observe the participation of the students. 3. Two weeks after, another interview (or reflection within the course meeting) is held to reflect upon the process. <p>→ this entire process could either be done for one or two teachers in between each meeting (bringing the total number of the group to ideally 5 to max 8 teachers), or twice for each teacher. However, in that case it would probably also involve more individual coaching and reflection, or splitting up the group in two sub-groups for the purposes of reflecting on these fragments together without over-tasking the group. The suggestion for subgroups would also require two facilitators.</p>

Discussion and conclusion

This study examined how the possibilities of applying the humanistic ideal of dialogue in a classroom can be assessed in light of the problems posed by the critical discourse about privilege and power. The two main theoretical aims of the study were 1) to generate a critical assessment of dialogue and its underlying assumptions, in general and specifically directed towards humanistic education; 2) to gain an understanding about the use of dialogue and its prerequisites in education while being confronted with issues of privilege. In order to achieve these aims and answer the research question a literature review was conducted on the notions of education, privilege, power, and dialogue. This resulted in suggestions and design principles laying the groundwork to reach the practical aim of this study, which was to develop the outlines for a teacher professional development module, incorporating critical literature on privilege and dialogue. In this section the findings and conclusions of the thesis are summarised, followed by a discussion of the limitations of this study and a suggestion for future research.

Dialogue can convey the impression of an ideal solution to our conflicted plural world. It bottles the hope for connection, building bridges, and working on a better world together. In humanistic education it is often presented as the panacea for all problems – the holy grail – directed at empathy and mutual care. Dialogue is how we can confront diversity and conflicts, how to reach mutual consensus. However, this thesis showed that ideal views on dialogue insufficiently take into account the perspective of power and privilege. The world is fundamentally unequal in its distribution of power, and claiming or hoping everyone is equal in a dialogical setting does not make it so.

Power and privilege manifest themselves in many ways, visible and invisible, through language, control of resources and definitions, exclusion, but all of them grounded in the ears, hearts, and souls of people through stories, values, perceptions. People are biased in the way they perceive the world, teachers are not exempt, and critical dialogue in humanistic education can only exist on the basis of strong reflexive

practices. Reflection in this sense is not a philosophical luxury but an essential skill one should strive to master, in order to try to transcend hegemonic power relations into a true plural global society. This reflection requires an awareness of the invisible power that gives (unearned) advantages – privilege – to dominant groups in society. Yet also the resilience to stay and keep up the effort when dialogue involves conflict and painful complexities. When it requires the subject to give up long-held beliefs, or admit to being a part of an oppressive system. It is all necessary in order to change the cultural archive from within education, to be critical, intersectional, interdisciplinary, relational and reflexive.

Finally, the framework that was presented has idealistic aims itself, about the possibilities of critical reflection and the development of a teacher identity that incorporates an awareness of power and privilege. An identity that is inspired for action to facilitate dialogues that aim to be more inclusive, critical, intersectional. At the same time it has to acknowledge there is always power. Moreover, there is always a necessary demarcation of us and them – it is how people function and make sense of the world – but it matters how the other is approached and labelled. There is an option to see the other, in Mouffe's words, as a valuable adversary, rather than an enemy to be won over. People might struggle with the other (different) person, or may not agree with them, but their right to exist, their value as a human being, nor their right to defend their ideas ought to be questioned (Mouffe, 2013).

The professional development module would attempt to reach these goals by employing exercises for awareness of power and privilege, intervention, providing a space and time for critical reflection, stimulating a way of being that is humble and realistic about their own knowledge and realising their fallibility and vulnerability as human-beings. This is where the humanistic world-view can excel: in its acceptance of the swap that is human life, and saying, I will sit here with you. In line with Suransky and Alma, I hope to have shown that “dialogue is not an “innocent” tool for creating harmony but a political activity that strives to improve the quality of confrontations” (2017, p. 9).

Limitations and future research

- The first limitation of the research can be found in a risk of moral relativism. On what basis, and how, can people be held accountable for their actions? With a strong focus on allowing all voices, on conflict, one might forget that some words might not deserve a space. There has been a debate going on these last days about the freedom of speech for neo-Nazis that have been protesting in Charlottesville in the United States. I would argue that the limit for moral judgement, for unacceptable behaviour and words, starts with the earlier stated requirement to respect everyone's humanity. This has to include a right to live and other basic human rights.
- Secondly, what if people refuse to participate in the dialogue about power and privilege? This limitation I partially accounted for in my methods, but ought to be stated again: there are numerous assumptions at the base of this research, about the reader for example. Yet these could be mistaken. Perhaps the intended audience has a visceral response to reading about privilege, especially race, and refuses to engage. The response would not be surprising considering the dominant discourse in the Netherlands: the innocent small country that is, according to its cultural archive, welcoming and tolerant. This might be where dialogue stops, before it even begins.
- Thirdly, as this research is only theoretical, it cannot account for teaching practices beyond the literature. Teachers might already employ (part of) this knowledge about power and privilege as teaching is by definition situated and concrete. I suggest future research observes classes and interviews teachers, using the framework I presented, in order to explore to what extent it is represented in classrooms.
- Finally, future research might also further formulate, and ultimately apply, the module I developed the design principles for. My hope and expectation is that the results could be used to advise other teachers about potential ways in which to constructively deal with diversity through dialogue. Case studies could provide a framework to eventually improve the quality of confrontations, acknowledging power and privilege, and respecting the humanity of each and every participant.

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