In my response, I will not go into the manifesto as such, or as a whole. I will limit myself to responding to the authors’ claim that “[w]hen we truly love the world, our world, we must be willing to pass it on to the new generation,” which is a reference to (a short transcription of) Hannah Arendt’s (by now, I guess) famous passage where she brings together education and love for the world: “Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable.”

Having referenced this passage before myself, I must confess I never seem to have bothered to actually try to articulate what Arendt meant by “loving the world enough.” I guess the larger, overall argument she is developing in that text, “The Crisis in Education,” forms some kind of encompassing background in which this passage is embedded, such that one no longer feels necessitated to explain this any further, as if this passage logically follows from what she says before. But the stronger tone of

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assertion with which Hodgson, Vlieghe, and Zamojski use the expression “love for the world,” which is inherent to the kind of text they have written, does seem to necessitate such explanation. Or at least, it invites a series of reflections and questions that can, rather simply, be summarized by the following two questions: “What (kind) of love?” and “What world?”

I am not sure what to make of the connection Hodgson et al. are making in saying “When we..., we must...” (emphasis added). Their account of love for the world entails that we, as educators, should relinquish our hold on the world. What kind of claim are they making in relation to the love for the world they are arguing for? Put differently, what is the nature of the commitment (“must”) they attribute to this love? I read the sentence I singled out as suggesting, or implying, that it “naturally” follows from our love for the world that we pass it on to the next generation and leave it in their hands. But is that necessarily so? Is it somehow internal to love, naturally given in love, that when we love something we are then also willing to give it out of our hands? Phenomenologically, love comes (and goes) in many guises, and has many registers (of depths and shallows), as we all know.3

Love can be possessive (as in erotic love, for instance); it can be characterized by a longing to devour the object of one’s love, and so one may not be willing to share this object with others.

Love can be “mixed with resentment and intimidation,”4 and if it is such a mixture then the object of our love may not be something we love wholeheartedly, or with full devotion, for it...
may also, simultaneously, be something we are indignant about; it may also, simultaneously, be something we feel threatened by.

Love can be romantic. And when it is, it is blind, as the well-known saying goes. Here, I am reminded of what Nietzsche says about love when writing about Christianity in *The Anti-Christ*: “Love is the state in which people are most prone to see things the way they are *not*. The force of illusion reaches a high point here, and so do the forces that sweeten and *transfigure*. People in love will tolerate more than they usually do, they will put up with everything.” Most commonly, I take it, this is understood in negative terms, suggesting that lovers are in denial of reality, not “seeing” what outsiders, such as their friends, can “see” about the other person. Lovers typically do not see one another’s shortcomings. (A measure of friendship may well be the friend’s capability of delicately balancing the line between speech and silence on this matter. But that aside.)

Love can also be praiseworthy. There may be, that is, a register of the commendable or praiseworthy characteristic of love, as Nietzsche also seems to suggest in the passage just quoted. Lovers “put up” with many things, “tolerate more” than in relation to someone else, simply because they love the other. The blindness of love here, then, is not something that happens to the lover and brings her in to a state of denial, but may be something that bears the characteristics of an act of will. The lover’s blindness may be something she willingly submits to. Cavell seems to touch upon this when, in his discussion of skepticism, he says the following:

> To live in the face of doubt, eyes happily shut, would be to fall in love with the world. For if there is a correct blindness, only

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6 I take it something of this is captured in the saying “turning a blind eye to something.”
love has it. And if you find that you have fallen in love with the world, then you would be ill-advised to offer an argument of its worth by praising its Design. Because you are bound to fall out of love with your argument, and you may thereupon forget that the world is wonder enough, as it stands. Or not.7

The blindness of love may very well be something worthy of (in need of?) cherishing. There is a price, Cavell seems to say, for wanting to see, or wanting to see too much, or more generally, for wanting to argue (explain, give reasons) for one’s love for the world. The danger is that we no longer find ourselves enchanted by it, perhaps cannot even imagine any more what it was like to be enchanted by it. Looking at something in wonder, either silently or not, doesn’t seem to bear an inquisitive stance. The objectification the latter implies may make one intolerant. “Or not.”

Love can be many more things, I guess. I want to ask, therefore: In education, what kind of love are Hodgson et al. talking about? What is it, in love, that “makes us” want to pass the world on to the new generation? Or that naturally invites (or seems to naturally invite) a willingness to pass it on? And what is it, in love, that makes us want to pass the world on to the new generation without qualification?

This brings me to my second question: “What world?” The authors are quite upfront when they say that “[i]t is time to acknowledge and to affirm that there is good in the world that is worth preserving.” I also would like to believe there is good in the world that is worth preserving. But this is clearly begging the question. It doesn’t seem philosophically very sound to just say that “[i]t is time to etc…” without further qualification as to what that is. Is Star Wars something they would consider as something an educator can love (in whatever sense they take this)? Is it something they consider to be part of “the world” — the world we as educators are willing to affirm and pass on to the new generation? And what about South Park? Or football? Or reading? Or Macbeth? Or Rambo? Or friendship?

7 Cavell, The Claim of Reason, 431.
Or friendship as conceived by Facebook? Or mobile phones? Or Brexit? Or Trump’s election? Or maternity leave? Or… And, in any of these cases, if yes, then why? If no, then why not? What criteria are invoked then?

Maybe I’m being unfair here. Maybe I shouldn’t be asking for very concrete, specific things when the authors are speaking about “the world.” Maybe I should be talking about it in a more general sense. So, consider the following example. Recently, Gwendolyn Rutten, the chairperson of the Flemish Liberal Party (Open vld), when promoting her new book *Nieuwe Vrijheid* (*New Freedom*), fiercely defended “our way of life” — “our” meaning: “Western European.” She even called this way of life “superior.” Of concern to her are the fundamental values buttressing the liberal constitutional state: freedom, equal rights, separation of church and state, etc.\(^8\) Needless to say, this stirred up quite some reactions, from people criticizing her claim to superiority of “our” way of living (and the grounds of this claim), to people pointing out the many things going wrong in our Western way of life (suicide rates, medication abuse, burn-out, etc.). But I think it can be safely said that she truly loves the world she’s living in, and that she finds that we must (be willing to) pass it on to the next generation, and not allow, for example, the world espoused by radical Islam to displace “our world.” She clearly thinks something is under threat and is in need of preservation (to refer to words used by Hodgson et al. in their manifesto).

I’m wondering, therefore: is this an instance of the “good in the world” that Hodgson, Vlieghe, and Zamojski would like to acknowledge and affirm? Are they loving the same world as Rutten?

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