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Andrzej Wierciński & Andrej Božič (eds.):

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PHRONETIC EDUCATION TO INTEGRITY

CAPABILITY, COURAGE, AND PASSION FOR THINKING

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Living our lives means situating ourselves in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of that which has been thought, then expressed in the different ways taken up by human activities, all within the history of the world. It is not only a question of reading historical texts but trying to understand the totality of human experience. Since times immemorial, from Plato and Aristoteles, Augustine and Aquinas, Hegel and Kant, Dilthey and von Humboldt, Heidegger and Gadamer, Derrida and Ricoeur, our thinking is accompanied by the array of voices that help us to position ourselves in-between. In the in-between, the human and the divine, earth and sky, we experience the poetics of in-betweenness and not the division that would fain separate us from each other. It is the poetics of the flows. Thus, our reading of life is a never-fulfilled praxis that situates us, always, in-between suspicion and sympathy, critique and conviction (cf. Wierciński 2003). Hermeneutics allows us to see the resulting tension, not as something to be determined, resolved, and

overcome. Indeed, maintaining this tension and carrying it with courage and passion for life seems to be our existential mission and the main task for the hermeneutics of education. Reducing education to being the key to the job market and a stimulus for personal growth and development, which keeps societies in an upward motion, does not do any justice to the role it can play in a world that is becoming increasingly complex. Understanding education as an event (*Ereignis*), as something that is happening to us in life even beyond our conscious wanting and doing, is, thus, elevated to being the greatest existential and educational project around. The event-like character of education emphasizes that what is happening in this trans-formative process, does not only happen as the result of pedagogical action but through being together as essentially incommunicable individuals,¹ and yet dedicated and committed to sharing our lives.

Philosophy and education: the task of, and for, thinking

6

The central task of education is to understand the totality of our experience of the world in the pleasure and pain of thinking. The desire to know, to understand what is happening to us and in us, awakens and motivates us to undertake an indefatigable search for self-understanding. How do we arrive at this self-understanding?

In order to understand ourselves, we need the recognition that comes from the Other, and which is experienced by us through the Other.² The way to self-recognition, and thus to self-understanding, does not go through domination over the Other, but through the realization that we are able beings (*l'homme capable*). We can think something with ourselves and

1 Cf.: "Persona est intellectualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia." Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 4, 22.

2 "If I nevertheless had to name a category that corresponded to the categories of imputability and responsibility [...] involved in the return to the self, I would choose the term recognition, so dear to Hegel in the Jena period and throughout the subsequent course of his work. Recognition is a structure of the self, reflecting on the movement that carries self-esteem toward solicitude and solicitude to justice. Recognition introduces the dyad and plurality into the very constitution of the self. Reciprocity in friendship and proportional equality in justice, when they are reflected in self-consciousness, make self-esteem a figure of recognition." (Ricoeur 1992, 296)

also say something to ourselves *and* Others. We can listen to ourselves and Others, and thus learn from ourselves and Others. We can do something, take responsibility for the way we act, and we can rejoice in the presence of the Other and suffer with the Other. Thus, as acting beings, we are suffering beings (*l'homme agissant et souffrant*). The highest vocation of a teacher is to awaken the consciousness of being able to be somebody, in the students, and to do that can help the students to engage with somebody whom they can recognize as a partner in a conversation. Further, it encompasses the recognition of oneself in the Other, which opens up in a conversation. Thus, the awakening to this realization that we are able beings is the main task of education and also its greatest achievement. The discovery of what needs to be understood, the whole process of understanding, is an existential obligation and calls for responsibility, dedication, and commitment. Without this profound comprehension of the essential importance of the engagement with one another, there is no way of being formative. As educators, we accompany each other on our way to self-understanding in patience and serenity, taking our time for everything that is important, and without rushing into easily recognizable and measurable results. Education becomes an engagement toward overcoming the dichotomy of learning/teaching, toward mutual learning, within a hermeneutic horizon of sharing life.

7

On the way to self-understanding, we also have a chance of recognizing our own problems and mistakes, and to correct them accordingly. The need to acknowledge that we are in need of formation and trans-formation fundamentally changes us as human beings. We may indeed experience long periods of darkness on our way to self-understanding: the experience of *tenebrae* (*plurale tantum*) is much more than a simple absence of light. The emergence of darkness empowers us to see things differently and to search for self-understanding by comprehending that absence is, in fact, a mode of presence.³ Education assists us

³ “What has-been which, by refusing the present, lets that become present which is no longer present, and the coming towards us of what is to come which, by withholding the present, lets that be present which is not yet present—both made manifest the manner of an extending opening up which gives all presencing into the open.” (Heidegger 1972, 17)

in our discernment and leads us toward living life in trust and confidence.

The promise of education is the promise and passion of thinking. It is the passion to read everything that wants to be read and allowing others to read us, or even more, inviting them to enter into our lives. This invitation is the expression of our hospitality toward the Other and brings with itself the risks that are attached to being a vulnerable person. If education cannot help us to love ourselves and others, it is *not* education. And love means: to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is the very condition of knowledge since it makes us sensitive to all the details that are relevant to our engagement with life: awakening to ourselves. It encompasses transforming the inexplicable into the real fabric of life, a life that can be experienced by everybody who is able to do the necessary exegesis (ἐξήγησις—“reading from”) without falling prey to imposing one’s own pre-conceived ideas of the projected meaning (εἰσήγησις, *eisegesis*—“reading into”). This transformation is a long and laborious path to the discovery of meaning. It is an exercise in allowing that which needs to be interpreted to speak to the interpreter.

8 The accent in this interpretation lies not on arriving at the possession of meaning, but on the readiness for, and actuality of, being shaped by the meaning. Such an understanding reshapes the task of education in its decisive turn toward being the mode of being a human being within the horizon of finitude, while open to transcendence.

By exploring and experiencing the unpredictability of education,⁴ we will not find the formula for successful educational structures and processes, but we realize and appreciate the need for the continual development of our self-understanding to come nearer to or reach its maturity. The role of an educator goes far beyond the transmission of knowledge and embraces the successful awakening of oneself and others to self-understanding, to living one’s existence in openness toward the development and maturing as a human being. Education, in that respect, is a question of the recognition of one’s own vocation as a human being and, in consequence, the vocation toward the integration of one’s own life with the life of a *comm-unio* with the Other. Education is also a matter of understanding that the Other, too,

4 Cf. Kearney 2012, 177–196. Cf. also Wierciński 2019b, 292–294.

is searching for self-understanding, which can only be arrived at through the recognition that comes through the other person. The educators, by helping themselves to arrive at self-understanding through receiving the recognition from the Other, can help students to awaken to this need for recognition and can give them the recognition they need.

As human beings, we are not in-*dividua* in the sense of separation from the Other, but always in the community, together with the Others. Education, as self-education toward self-understanding, is not predominantly about what needs to be done for the community, but an awakening to being with others (*Mit-sein*), which leads toward the recognition of oneself and the Other and openness to each other. This openness must be seen and be recognizable. “Let your gentleness be evident to all: τὸ ἐπιεικὲς ὑμῶν γνωσθήτω πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις” (Phil 4:5). St. Paul speaks here of gentleness and kindness, ἐπιεικὲς, which is practically expressed in being considerate (ἐπί—“on,” and εἰκος—“equitable, fair,” thus ἐπιείκεια—equity and justice). He encourages the Philippians to make their attitude to become and be known to others: γνωσθήτω (γινώσκω—“to come to know, to recognize”). Being gentle and considerate is not a sentimental wish, but a call to live beyond what is required by ordinary justice.

9

Education encompasses imagining the world in which we live with a passion for the unknown, unfamiliar, and unpredictable. There is no rush in overcoming the difficulties we have with our comprehension, rather, we need to be patient with what is inconceivable, undecipherable, and incomprehensible. The power to imagine, foretaste, entertain, and make it possible, sensitizes us on the way to self-understanding. Tenderness of description and patience of discovery help us to treasure all aspects of being capable human beings, without silencing all those difficult experiences that are connected with our incapacity for being. It is essential to learn to understand ourselves from neither the perspective of ability nor of inability, but to embrace being a human being in its totality, interconnectedness, and diversity. It is also important to see the indisputable significance of sheer possibility, i.e., the immense power of the human mind to make something happen that seems virtually impossible. Here it is difficult not to refer to

the Heideggerian preference for possibility over reality.⁵

Education to narrating the world embraces narrating ourselves, and expresses the long way we must walk to our personal identity, which is a narrative identity.⁶ Telling the story of our life requires much more than receiving formal training in the ways we can use language and make the story comprehensible to ourselves and others. Education toward telling the story of our life is the education toward facing life. The *What?* of the story, and the *How?* of narration, build our access to self-understanding, through the privileged mediation of signs and symbols that accompany us in historical and fictional narrative. While reading a story, we do not only follow what is told but narrate, at the same time, our own story. The reading is never complete, never final. The same can be said about writing. The way of telling the story and the way of understanding the story are always interconnected.

Education toward story-telling helps us to understand that everything can always be said differently, because there is no perspective which can embrace the whole.⁷ We do not have the God's eye perspective; therefore, we must *learn* to appreciate our own effort to depict reality, which (basically) always escapes us. Moreover, we learn to treasure the effort of others since we understand that only together can we come nearer to reality.

The promise of education today does not predominantly regard the unhindered access to information, but the culture of interpretation.

5 "Higher than actuality stands a *possibility*. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing upon it as a possibility." (Heidegger 1962, 63)

6 "Narrative identity does not exhaust the question of the self-constancy of a subject, whether this be a particular individual or a community of individuals [...] The practice of narrative lies in a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us. In this sense, narrative exercises imagination more than the will, even though it remains a category of action [...] Reading also includes a moment of impetus. This is when reading becomes a provocation to be and to act differently. However, this impetus is transformed into action only through a decision whereby a person says: Here I stand! So narrative identity is not equivalent to true selfconstancy except through this decisive moment, which makes ethical responsibility the highest factor in self-constancy. It is at this point that the notion of narrative identity encounters its limit and has to link up with the nonnarrative components in the formation of an acting subject." (Ricoeur 1987, 249)

7 "It is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all." (Gadamer 2000, 296) Cf. also Wierciński 2019a, especially 7–56.

Wisdom comes through interpreting by uncovering the hidden dimensions of the unity between thinking and speaking. On top of all this, education as self-education is also concerned with the struggle experienced by the community concerning the diverse ways of living together in freedom. Great art assists us in our endeavor to understand ourselves since it reveals something important about life. The work of art does fascinate us and captivate us, and lets us arrive at our self-understanding in it. This discovery happens in-between all unconcealment and concealment, and it was Heidegger's significant contribution to make us think this in-betweenness in the first place.

Heidegger showed that the Greek concept of concealment (aletheia), only represented one side of man's fundamental experience of the world. Alongside and inseparable from this unconcealing, there also stands the shrouding and concealing that belongs to our human finitude. This philosophical insight, which sets limits to any idealism claiming a total recovery of meaning, implies that there is more to the work of art than a meaning that is experienced only in an indeterminate way. (Gadamer 1986, 34)

11

In the world of secularization and technologization, art plays a special role in awakening our being self-conscious to the recognition of transcendence as the essential experience of our being-in-the-world. Immanence cannot satisfy our human desire for self-understanding, which has to include our openness to the Beyond. Therefore, the task of education *has* to embrace our reflection on the fate of human beings as finite, lingual, and historical beings within the horizon of transcendence.

The passion of education is the passion for describing and interpreting life; it lies between description and interpretation. It is a passion of describing while taking time, without rushing or taking shortcuts, paying attention to all the details. Even to taking time to look at the work of art, painting, sculpture, architecture. To listen to music. Or to read a poem:

Czesław Miłosz: “A Poetic State”

As if I were given a reversed telescope instead of eyes, the world moves away and everything grows smaller, people, streets, trees, but they do not lose their distinctness, are condensed.

In the past I had such moments writing poems, so I know distance, disinterested contemplation, putting on a T, which is not T, but now it is like that constantly and I ask myself what it means, whether I have entered a permanent poetic state.

Things once difficult are easy, but I feel no strong need to communicate them in writing.

Now I am in good health, where before I was sick because time galloped and I was tortured by fear of what would happen next.

Every minute the spectacle of the world astonishes me; it is so comic that I cannot understand how literature could expect to cope with it.

Sensing every minute, in my flesh, by my touch, I tame misfortune and do not ask God to avert it, for why should He avert it from me if He does not avert it from others?

I dreamt that I found myself on a narrow ledge over the water where large sea fish were moving. I was afraid I would fall if I looked down, so I turned, gripped with my fingers at the roughness of the stone wall, and moving slowly, with my back to the sea, I reached a safe place.

I was impatient and easily irritated by time lost on trifles among which I ranked cleaning and cooking. Now, attentively, I cut onions, squeeze lemons and prepare various kinds of sauces.

Berkeley, 1977 (Miłosz 2003, 356)⁸

⁸ The poem—translated from the Polish language by its author and Robert Hass—stems from Miłosz’s *Hymn of The Pearl* (1981).

Sharing the beauty of description and interpretation with others helps to treasure the beauty of the world. Creativity and trans-formation open up new ways for encountering ourselves and others, who accompany us on the way to bringing ourselves into the open. This is the meaning of posing questions when we seriously and courageously entertain the possibilities that something can not only be understood differently but can *be* otherwise. Such an approach is a real risk: it is a phronetic risk. It is the willingness and the determination to widen our horizons.

Understanding, like action, always remains a risk and never leaves room for the simple application of general knowledge of rules to the statements or texts to be understood. Furthermore, where it is successful, understanding means a growth in inner awareness, which as a new experience enters into the texture of our own mental experience. Understanding is an adventure and, like any other adventure, is dangerous. Just because it is not satisfied with simply wanting to register what is there or said there but goes back to our guiding interests and questions, one has to concede that the hermeneutical experience has a far less degree of certainty than that attained by the methods of the natural sciences. But when one realizes that understanding is an adventure, this implies that it affords unique opportunities as well. It is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves. (Gadamer 1981, 110–111)

13

Education toward deliberating with oneself, in order to make a responsible judgment in a given existential situation, discloses the proximity of hermeneutics and ethics. A human being as *l'homme capable* is a φρόνιμος, a practically wise being, who can responsibly dwell in the world. However, as *l'homme capable*, a human being is also a δεινός, a being capable of moral knowledge and able to take advantage in and of every existential situation (cf. Gadamer 2000, 320). This unrestricted capacity makes a human being ἀνευ

αρετής, without virtues.⁹ As the name says, the δεινός,¹⁰ “dreadful, terrible,” is also capable of evil.¹¹

Thinking critically about our integrity is the task of education. The passion for our inquiry into the educational processes is and must be accompanied by our wish to mature, to develop as human beings. This passion generates a desire to grow and enthusiastically moves us toward meeting what we do not yet have. The name for this yearning and longing is hope, which comes from the future. It is the anticipation of the things to come. Education is an enduring exercise in the art of imagining and catching glimpses of the future. Imagination helps us to address what is possible, it expresses our passion for the possible, for what is not yet, but can happen. It is not important when it merely entertains what is possible: it plays an essential role in what happens. It opens up the horizon of possibility and widens our ways of understanding.

14 As the Editors of this issue, we are grateful to Dean Komel of the Editorial Board of *Phainomena* for his generous invitation and continuous support, and for making this journal into *the* forum for discussing philosophy and education toward the integrity of thinking, feeling, and acting. We would like to thank our contributors for their papers and their collegial cooperation. Through it, we have experienced a great deal of mutual inspiration and received that assistance, which makes any collaborative project into a passionate search for expressing not only what is genuinely ours but the matter itself (*die Sache*). We also appreciate the help we got from the reviewers and believe that careful consideration of their critical comments contributed to the quality of the published papers. We hope that the symphony of voices we are offering herewith will invite the international readership of *Phainomena* to re-address the phenomenon of education and its role for the contemporary society, and inspire everyone to re-think education as a mode of living our lives.

9 Cf.: Aristotle, *Politics* 1 1,1253a, 36.

10 Cf. Mt 26:18. Here, it means only a certain person, without using his name.

11 For Paul Ricoeur, a human being as *l'homme capable* is capable of the greatest and the worst. Cf. Ricoeur 1965; 1966; 1969.

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EDUCATION AS A PROBLEM VIS-À-VIS THE QUESTION ABOUT EDUCATION

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Abstract

The point of departure for our considerations is a well-established opinion that in the age of rapid global changes of the contemporary world, education does not meet people's expectations and despite the attempts to reform it, remains in crisis. We attempt to specify the foundations of the problematality of contemporary education and to put forward a methodological approach serving to enhance the understanding thereof. The authors distinguish between *the problem with education*

and the primary *problem of education*. It is demonstrated that what is responsible for *the problems with education* is to a large extent “problem reasoning,” which dominates the relation between contemporary man and his environment and is blind to the distinction between problem and question. Blurring this distinction and expelling important issues from the realm of education translates into focusing attention on standardized teaching and neglecting vital issues pertaining to upbringing, which results in the forming of “one-dimensional man,” who fails to deal with uncertainty of the contemporary world, while “forgetting” the non-problem-related, which means—positively speaking—question-related, modes of implementing his open existence.

Keywords: education, problem, question, expectations, uncertainty.

Izobraževanje kot problem z ozirom na vprašanje o izobraževanju

Povzetek

18 Izhodišče za naše razmišljanje je uveljavljeno prepričanje, da izobraževanje v času hitrih globalnih sprememb sodobnega sveta ne izpolnjuje pričakovanj človeštva in kljub poskusom reform ostaja v krizi. Skušamo natančneje določiti temelje za problematičnost sodobnega izobraževanja in predložiti metodološki pristop k njenemu boljšemu razumevanju. Avtorji razločujejo med *problemom glede izobraževanja* in primarnim *problemom izobraževanja*. Pokažejo, da je za *probleme glede izobraževanja* v veliki meri odgovorno »problemsko razmišljanje«, ki obvladuje razmerje med sodobnim človekom in njegovim okoljem in je slepo za razlikovanje med problemom in vprašanjem. Zamegljevanje te razlike in izrinjanje pomembnih tém iz območja izobraževanja povzroča osredotočanje pozornosti na standardizirano poučevanje in zapostavljanje pomembnih zadev glede vzgoje, kar ima za posledico oblikovanje »enodimenzionalnega človeka«, ki se ne zmore soočiti z negotovostjo sodobnega sveta, saj »pozablja« neproblemske, se pravi – izraženo pozitivno – na vprašanja navezane, načine udejanjanja svoje odprte eksistence.

Ključne besede: izobraževanje, problem, vprašanje, pričakovanja, negotovost.

Introduction

Education for all, provided in a systemic way, is undoubtedly a great achievement of modern states and societies. There is no doubt that extensive systems of schooling contributed to both the economic growth of the national states as well as to the citizens' position in them. At the same time, the majority of countries, including the ones most economically advanced, are afflicted with the problem of education, which is experienced as a discrepancy between the hopes accompanying it and the results obtained—the discrepancy which is growing even larger and becomes increasingly alarming despite numerous reforms in that area. It is enough to pass a glance at any of the numerous reports published by various international organizations to become convinced that education's "maladjustment" to the challenges posed by the contemporary world and its "not catching up" with the pace of civilizational changes are commonly experienced maladies not easy to overcome. Formal educational institutions, including higher education, in which young citizens of the "developed" and "developing" countries spend a lot of their respective time, are under growing doubt whether this very time invested actually makes young people ready to face the contingencies and uncertainties of the contemporary world once they have completed their formal education. And although in the light of these critical misgivings there emerged multifarious research programs, and subsequently also some corrective measures, it would be quite a stretch to say that the problem with education is about to be solved; rather, consecutive implemented reforms generate new problems.

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In short, until recently the catch-all mass education has been conceived of as an indicator of the modernity of contemporary societies, but nowadays it is failing to catch up with the pace of changes occurring in the surrounding world. In this paper we work out a research perspective that, starting from "the problem with education," discloses a too narrow and one-sided way of the understanding of this problem; this one-sided approach induces the mechanism of a vicious circle in tackling the problem by rather producing further problems than solutions. Then, we put forward a method of overcoming this obstacle of the vicious circle.

Let us first, however, clearly point out that the spreading of mass education, which basically occurred in the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century, was

regarded by many generations to come as a tangible instance of development and progress. Perceived either as a sign of the link between a citizen and the emerging modern state (as in, say, the approach of Wilhelm von Humboldt or Friedrich List) or as the individual development (e.g., in John Dewey's approach), education was a means to both efficient actions and to a gradual democratization of social relations, with a growing belief that there is a need for equalizing opportunities for the full participation in education and social life regardless of one's (stratum, class, or milieu) descent. The affirmation of education systems still prevailed in the sixties, and—to a lesser extent—in the seventies of the 20th century, when, despite numerous reservations, they were conceived of as well-organized places enabling a “step into a modern world of enlightened rationality” (Dahrendorf 1968, 24) as well as the basis for “institutional isomorphism,”¹ spreading the assumptions of the education systems of the economically developed countries over the whole world. However, the critical voices started to be more and more audible, with the criticism being especially launched against the low capability of the genuine equalization of opportunities (Pierre Bourdieu, Margaret Archer). As time went by, the critical voices prevailed over those of affirmation, with the former being formulated from various ideological positions which demonstrated the deficiencies in realizing the goals dictated by economic rationality (Michael Porter), or from the contrary positions which were especially critical towards globalization (Heinz-Dieter Meyer).

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Universal education, which used to prevail as a vital segment for building the modern state and laying foundations for the technological progress—especially in the era of the evolution of economic relations ranging from mere manufacture to mass production—, was over time subject to growing criticism when it became more and more apparent that the education system cannot catch up with the new wave of technological and economic transformations. The latter ones, since the seventies, have contributed both to the gradual shift from mass to flexible production, while searching for the methods to make also organizational structures more flexible, and to the withdrawal of the previous demand for standardized and narrow skills in narrowly understood

1 Cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992.

professions and jobs. At the same time, more and more research revealed the ultra-stability of education systems as well as their dependence on the previous paths of development.²

The observations adduced herein urge us to state a general claim that there is a growing problem with education, the solution of which by dint of “improving” the education system (including “improving” teachers’ competences or any other variations of “improvement” or “excellence” criteria adhered to by universities) along the lines of operative standards is becoming less and less probable.

Certainly, there are many definitions of education. Roughly speaking, it can be described as a process of formation of the human being by way of upbringing and teaching. These two processes, the former of which—generally speaking—is responsible for the world of values, sense, attitudes, and purposes, whereas the latter for knowledge and skills, used to be inextricably intertwined. The understanding of the course and function of the said processes derives from a certain conception of what human being is. After all, the point of departure for grasping education is always some sort of a philosophical—and at times also a theological—conception of human being which prevails at a given time and place. That is why it is no accident that recent—i.e., embracing the last two centuries—historical changes in the understanding of what human being is led to a clear crisis of the possibility of its self-determination by way of education. The most dramatic change, which is nowadays noticeable with respect to the original understanding of the notion of education and which remains compatible with the currently dominating conception of man (as *homo faber*), is the separation of upbringing and teaching, which has very far-reaching consequences indeed. Simply put, for some time, teaching has constituted the focal point of education.³

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2 Cf. Hajdar and Gross 2016, 11–31.

3 In the last two or three decades, this tendency was additionally strengthened by international research on cognitive abilities with reports based thereupon issued by such organizations as the IEA or OECD (cf. one of the first significant international reports: Martin, Mullis et al. 1997), as well as reports by other institutions referring to the data derived from international comparative studies. Their consequence, not

Since the state seized control over its citizens' education, this education is labelled as a system; namely, "the system of schooling," and also "the system of higher education;" or, in general, "the education system." The process of education was to a large extent designed and one keeps trying to implement it as a process reflecting a certain—influential especially in the period of forming the systems of universal education—understanding of scientific procedures, or even of scientific-technical ones, with the latter of which being characteristically marked by the problem-solving approach. However, by no means does this imply that in school education *en masse* one managed to apply the said pattern of the educational process which is oriented at posing and solving problems; quite the contrary, organizing education on the basis of problem-solving reasoning still remains utopian. However, this does not prevent one from complacently regarding education—and other systems of the modern state alike—as the scientifically-technically organized system of problem-solving. On the one hand, problem-solving reasoning entered the modern education system and the reflection thereupon, thus opening new theoretical and practical possibilities; and on the other hand the said problem-solving reasoning became a problem itself which—as it transpires—considerably hampers human development.

Namely, the main weakness thereof is the fact that gradually and imperceptibly—i.e., in a way that is not easily detectable in any particular decision—it reduces this openness to unidimensional openness of scientific-technical nature, which leaves little room for other ways of *experiencing reality*,

necessarily intended, was a growing focus on what is quantitatively measurable and comparable across various countries, and even cultures, which diverted attention from the issues not subject to the above measurement and lying mainly in the sphere of upbringing. Furthermore, in such countries as Poland, in which there was a change in the political regime putting a stop to the long term of government based on communist ideology coupled with its project of raising man of "the new type," schools themselves willingly dissociated themselves from upbringing-related tasks, while associating them, not without reason, with the excessive coercive pressure of the unified official ideology. However, the tendency to shift the focus—in comprehensively understood education—onto teaching particular subjects has its prior causes, with those causes having such aspects that are connected with the transformations in the Western culture within the last few centuries, which, as it seems, brought profound and more universal consequences to education. It is precisely this aspect that is going to be of interest to us in our forthcoming considerations.

including most of all—which is of utmost importance for education as such—the ones which were once responsible for the realm of human development. These other ways in question are still needed nowadays but are barely present in the education systems. Comprehensively speaking, the problem with education stems from the fact that an education system only partly solves what specifies its own challenges and obligations related to designing solutions in the realm of education, and partly generates particular problems itself, thus giving rise to a sort of a vicious circle. To break this circle, one should separate the problem *with* education from the primary problem *of* education, and pose the question about more rudimentary properties of education itself than the ones represented by the historically shaped—in terms of solutions and strategies—education systems.

The elaboration of a fundamental methodological approach

One cannot help having the impression that these days there exists an incessant increase in the number of requirements which are more and more frequently addresses at universal education. Sets of competencies grow but are not satisfied,⁴ and, as a result, this growth is directly proportional to the dissemination of the feeling of distrust and disappointment towards the manner in which education functions and in which direction and at which pace the changes therein proceed. The number of changes in question has grown in the recent decades to such a degree that it merits the label of permanent change.

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One should ask whence this distrust and the feeling of disappointment, as well as the need for incessant changes in the education system come. In the course of historical transformations of social, economic, political, and cultural life, people experience the phenomenon of education, while cherishing some

4 One of the numerous examples of the postulated extended scope of the skills taught may be *The e-Skills Manifesto* (Bergaud et al. 2012), promoted by such organizations as—among others—the UNESCO. Such studies rightly bring up the need to include in school curricula entirely new skills that would enable us to catch up with civilizational changes. Equally rightly, one expects from universal education to sharpen traditional skills such as mathematical reasoning or the ability to interpret texts of our culture, which can also be justified by civilizational transformations but is transferrable onto the realm of practical operations on the scale of the whole system only with difficulty.

commonplace beliefs (these are going to be referred to as “obviousness” in the forthcoming part of the paper) about it and—based on that—having some expectations towards it. The question is: to what extent are the socially—and thus also historically—shaped obviousness and expectations justified by what education *per se* is. For it can be the case that the commonly shared convictions about education at a given time and place, the feelings, experiences, and hopes related thereto, etc., concern something that—granted—is believed to be education but still diverges from the proper sense of education.⁵ After all, education is not only what people do with it. The notions of “degenerate education” or “apparent education”⁶ do not only refer to what people expect from education (and which does not meet their expectations), but most of all they refer to how much a given education system diverges from the *sense of education*. That is why, the problem with education is somehow connected with the problem of education itself, in which we ask about what education primarily is, while trying to “remain” in this state of questionness (M. Heidegger) towards education’s current mode of existence. Thinking about education is usually a response toward the transformations and challenges of the world that surrounds us. And it is precisely in this very context that one may consider the currently experienced crisis of education.

Education is a problem/question, and—so it must be added—it is one of the most fundamental ones. This neatly corresponds to the augmented problematality of the category of human being.⁷ There is a strict connection between this problematality of education itself coupled with the one of human being *and* the problem that we, contemporary people, have with education. The juxtaposition of these two problems, the one of education as such and the problem with education, urges us to assume as a research perspective the mixed approach; or, putting it even more sharply: a boundary-crossing approach. The problem with education can be depicted as the problem of tension between a given society expecting specific changes in universal education (materialized in an education system) coupled with

5 Cf. Przanowska 2015.

6 Cf. Filek 2001, 100–117.

7 Cf. Scheler 1987, 47.

an attempt to permanently implement the said changes *and* education's tendency to stick to what is obvious, to ultra-stability, as well as to its reluctance to undergo any process of transformation. First and foremost, the problem may be regarded as an issue of sociological nature, with the issue stemming from the observation of empirical reality. When we say that determination of what education is presupposes some understanding of the nature of the human being, human being is always understood as a social being. This holds true even when by the concept of education we mean self-learning (e.g., H.-G. Gadamer)—even then in this internal field of influence between the educating and the educated what we deal with are relations of social nature. For this reason, education is in fact deeply immersed in society irrespective of how—in a given period—the formal education system would like to settle this issue.

The sociological perspective enables us to approach the commonly experienced problem with education; however, what it leaves open, is the problem of education as such. At the same time, it seems that only a juxtaposition of these perspectives provides the solid ground for an understanding of the problem of education. While distinguishing the categories of *experience*, of *obviousness*, and of *expectation* within a sociological perspective, there simultaneously appears the justification for adopting a philosophical perspective; or more strictly speaking, for a phenomenological one which would allow us to shift from empirical research regarding education to the philosophical one. The incentive to do so is provided by the fact that it is precisely the concepts of experience, obviousness, and expectation that play a vital role in the phenomenological approach. They characterize the basic subject of phenomenology, which is intentionality. Intentionality, dating back to the works of the early phenomenologists (F. Brentano, E. Husserl), constitutes the most distinctive feature of main phenomenological threads such as experience and experiencing the world in all its richness of sense and possibilities. Phenomenology is primarily a kind of philosophy which emphasizes the role of experience, learning, and questioning.⁸

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8 Cf. Sobota 2017 (especially, part I).

Therefore, the problem that the contemporary world has with education directs our attention to a more fundamental question: the one about its essence. This essentially philosophical question is certainly not unobjectionable, especially from the perspective of social science. After all, what social science takes as the ultimate given fact is what people actually do themselves, not what they ought to do.

26 The question about the essence of education is, first, such a problematic issue, because contemporary philosophical discourse undermines the sense of speaking of essence or nature of anything, especially of the essence of human being and of its artifacts. Instead, one resorts more willingly to the categories applied in, e.g., cultural anthropology, with categories being responsible for the research of the different manifestations of human behavior. From this position, it is difficult to speak of universal essence or of the problem of education. What is labelled as an education system, is merely a certain form of organization of the development of human being in the last two centuries. Moreover, this form might as well be inapplicable in the centuries to come. However, if one, secondly, assumes that there exists something like the “essence” of education which somehow corresponds with the “essence” of human being as such, then there emerges the question of what its content is, how it can be established, and why—when confronted with the historical reality (of the last two or three generations)—the gap between its supposed ideological content and concrete reality is increasingly widening. Taking into account—while researching the problematics of education—the philosophical approach under the umbrella of phenomenology, with phenomenology already having boasted a rich tradition of exploring the social phenomena⁹ and confronting them with the above-stated objections, one should note what follows. Basically, phenomenology has two distinct faces. On the one hand, we have static phenomenology, which treats each phenomenon as being subsumable under its own genus or essence, with this genus (or essence) in turn constituting the distinctive properties of the phenomenon in question. There are several indictments (oftentimes valid) against this approach: idealization, substantialization, petrification, excessive universalization,

9 Cf., for instance, Schütz 2008.

totalization, overlooking subtle, albeit important, differences, or the lack of historical awareness, etc. On the other hand, we have genetic phenomenology, which, while not resigning from researching essences, approaches its subject matter “historically;” that is, it studies the genesis of sense departing from the accomplishments of transcendental consciousness. This approach is in turn criticized on the grounds of its idealist-transcendental attitude. Making use of the merits of these two approaches, while not committing ourselves fully to either of them, we treat phenomenology as an art of philosophical questioning. Phenomenology is a perfect incarnation of a research approach to the world, with the approach in question being free, open, and always ready to dissociate itself from its previous determinations, and thus always starting anew, and in this sense being primordial. This sort of a research approach—in accordance with the principle of intentional correlation—is not regarded as something settled once and for all, but rather as something characterized by “questionness” and the problematical.¹⁰ In accordance with this approach, while speaking of education as a problem, one can treat the supposed essence of education not as anything substantial which exists in some sort of a Platonic realm of ideas, but rather as a problem, as a question which can be more or less efficiently indicated, elucidated, and investigated but will never be ultimately answered. And in precisely this sense the posing of questions never ceases to be valid. Hence, perhaps, instead of speaking of essence, which inevitably brings up essentialist associations, it would be more to the point to speak of the *thing* of education. In analogy with Heidegger’s “thing of thinking,” (the thing of) education is here understood as an issue, a matter. However, the problem in question is not an arbitrary one or one being conceptualized as merely a means to a certain goal, but rather as a public thing (*res publicum*), a thing (an issue) to be discussed, a matter of public concern.¹¹

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In accordance with the above, the present considerations are of formal-erotic (Greek *erotesis*—question) character and are at least in their certain parts conducted from the phenomenological perspective. The formal-erotic

¹⁰ Cf. Sobota 2017.

¹¹ Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that in some Slavic languages the word “thing” (Polish: “rzecz”) refers to a proto-Slavic ancestor with meanings: “language,” “word,” “speech.”

28 nature of present considerations implies that—in opposition to the material approach, which, while starting from a given problem-related content, strives to find one solution or another—one studies a problem *qua* problem, and by the same token, a question *qua* question; that is, one studies what constitutes its problematality/questionness, what its genesis is, and what are the possibilities of solving or of answering it. The formal analysis of a problem/question does not directly lead to its solution or to an answer thereto. Hence, the investigations presented herein at present stage—the one of specifying a general method—resign from analyzing any detailed issues; the analysis is here conducted at a meta-level, relative to above-mentioned detailed in-depth issues. However, we are strongly convinced that the conclusions elaborated in the course of the present analysis related to the order of education theory and practice are neither abstract nor useless. The determinations adduced herein serve to specify a research perspective for disciplinary sciences, with the perspective in question having both theoretical and practical validity in comprehending the problem with education (as already sketched in the introductory part of the present paper), with „formal education,” with an education system, including its *practical* side—although considered from the vantage point of the problem of education as such.

This phenomenological, formal-eroteric approach to the issue of the core and sense (of education) corresponds with—as is well-known from tradition—the conception of human being as “an open question” (H. Plessner): conceived in this vein, the human being appears to be a being once and for all divested of any specific content, a being deprived of essence (P. della Mirandola), existence which always exceeds essence (M. Heidegger), open being (M. Scheler), which at once is what it is, and is not what it is (J.-P. Sartre), encountering—in what is going on around it and within itself, in historical reality imbued with—“indeterminate places” (R. Ingarden), a being indeterminate (J. Litwin). Thus understood human being fulfills its “essence” by way of a dialogue with reality, by answering the questions that life poses. In this manner cultural reality is woven, with this sort of reality being of thoroughly problematic nature. It is an interplay of questions and answers, problems and solutions thereto. One of such fundamental questions that one poses—with human being understood as an open question—is precisely the issue of education. To grasp its core,

viz., sense, is to delineate and illuminate the problem field within which there appear particular phenomena constituting what is traditionally labelled as education.

Since the categories of obviousness and expectation constitute the common framework for the human experience of reality, then one can validly ask about their share in this special field of experience which is education. Phenomenology of broadly understood forms of social life has already made some important insights in this respect.¹² What is specifically thereby meant is a phenomenology of teaching and learning, a phenomenological description of the situation of the acquisition of knowledge, in the course of which what happens is a peculiar interplay between previously held and acquired (in the course of learning) obviousness *and* expectations which one eventually satisfies or is disappointed with.¹³ Resorting to these categories, one is able to connect the empirical sociological analysis, being a suitable tool for elaborating the problem with education, with the phenomenological analysis, which excels in elucidating the problem of education. This connection is, obviously enough, not free of difficulties. Generally speaking, we hereby suggest that the research should proceed in a spiral movement: starting from commonsense observations and empirical findings, from a wide array of phenomena, the research should refer them to rudimentary formal determinations of philosophical nature only to steer them again towards sociological-empirical research, and then again to enter the level of phenomenological description, which, in the next step, gets in turn confronted with empirical material, etc. The first problem (the one with education) always presupposes a connection of given problematics with many other phenomena which occur in historical reality and are on this basis related to the problem under scrutiny, thus oftentimes constituting multifarious interdependencies. By contrast, the other problem (the one of education) is subject to an elaboration in the opening and determining a priori—albeit not free of historical dependencies—the conceptual content of the scrutinized issue. The just invoked metaphor of a spiral should not be treated too literally.

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12 Cf. Schütz and Luckmann 1979; Bombała 2014; Schütz 2012; Berger and Luckmann 2010; Lippitz 2005; Pelcová 2014; Manen 1990; Gara 2009.

13 Cf. Brinkmann 2010, 2015, 2017.

Granted, the metaphor in a sense orders the research procedure but at each stage thereof, the scrutinized phenomena are uncovered in a manner characteristic of social science only to become—after slight modification—subject to the phenomenological analysis. Both perspectives engage in an incessant dialogue with one another, while sticking to their respective methodological assumptions. It should be noted that this does not imply a shift from the empirical to theory, and the other way around, neither from theory to the empirical, and the other way around. The phenomenological perspective does not reduce to providing “a theory” and the sociological one not to verifying it. Rather, the philosophical approach itself takes up both theoretical challenges and is simultaneously marked with a practical approach. It is also the sociological approach that is both about theoretical reflection and the interpretations (based thereupon) of the ascertained social actions and about practical approach. Both perspectives never fail to take heed of the question: “What is to be done?” However, first and foremost, the connection between these two research perspectives allows us to pose the question pertaining to “the primary problem of education,” and at the same time, of the historicalness of such a problem, with the said historicalness projecting its pure content onto the interdependencies of historical transformations of a given culture and civilization. In this manner, one can answer the questions that cannot be posed from the perspective of an analysis of the pure conceptual content of the problem. For example, one can in this way ask, whether and how new technologies, which nowadays dominate reality, impact the primary problem of education (avoiding technological determinism). What is equally important, is the following: do the phenomenon of mass education (also with respect to higher education) and the following changes in peoples’ expectations towards this very important realm of social reality impact (and if so, then to what extent) the very problem of education. These sample and other similar questions, or so it seems, are of utmost importance for understanding what happened (and is still happening) with modern education; that is, education formalized in modern systems. Intertwining these two perspectives—the phenomenological and the sociological one—in the above-mentioned particular issues, allows the tapping into the phenomenon of the interplay of social reality *in sensu largo* and the formal education being framed within a system.

The analysis of the phenomenon of education taken up herein should commence with the indication of the basic phenomenological resources. The above-mentioned definition of education as the human being's forming process must first be captured at the level of experiencing its primordial sense. This means that—at a preliminary stage of our considerations—we should—if possible—refrain from analyzing the functioning of an education system, understood as a certain organization of a public sector of social life. In place of this, one should make all the effort to “touch upon” education first at the level of its daily functioning, within the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), and, therefore, at the level of obviousness and expectations, as they appear here. Therefore, it becomes clear that the tension between explaining changes through the influence exerted by outstanding individuals¹⁴ and the explanation in terms of social transformations engaging “ordinary people,”¹⁵ is preliminarily settled in favor of “ordinary people,” searching, in the expectations and obviousness cherished by them, for institutional micro-foundations, decisively determining whether the introduced changes succeed or fail.¹⁶ And then again, what comes handy at this point, is the phenomenological tradition, which opens and sustains the research perspective, sensitizes us (researchers), and allows for analyzing phenomena in their pre-discursive, pre-objective, pre-thematic mode of givenness.¹⁷

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Because life-world is essentially of historical nature, it is not immaterial for the research conducted herein which stage of history we have now reached and to what extent what happened in the last centuries affects our understanding of the human being and the world. That is why the phenomenological perspective adopted here cannot turn a blind eye on historical dependencies of the given situation. Still, what is considerably more important than historical facts, is what happened within the sense of the last few centuries shaping our spiritual

14 Cf. Fligstein and McAdam 2011.

15 Cf. Powell and Rerup 2017.

16 This direction of thinking, based upon extensive empirical studies, raising a conventionally concretized heuristic issue of “the rationality of the process of educating,” was also represented in the monograph which is a written record of a team project (cf. Milerski and Karwowski 2016).

17 Cf. Gara 2017a.

outlook. The phenomenological approach is not supposed to get lost in the maze of unreal divagations on “pure essences,” and for this very reason this approach is to heed the historical transformations of life-world; what is by no means at stake here, is to confuse the order of eidetic research with the order of the narration regarding past events. On a positive note, what is indeed at stake here, is to treat the scrutinized essences as historically variable and as being subject to the historical transformations of the question.

The problem of education as the education of problem

32 The encounters of pedagogy and philosophy, already boasting a long-lasting tradition, ceaselessly direct our attention towards an open mode of human's being. It looks as though it is precisely in the context of the problematics of education that the human being best exposes its existence full of possibilities or, to put it more sharply, the full array of the possibilities of being. This open being which, at the very outset, is not endowed with any specific content but only points to biological conditions conducive to its birth into living in a culture (*homo sapiens*), is filled with content in the course of its actualization. In other words, the core of human being is what s/he becomes in historical reality.¹⁸ As a person immersed in time, s/he is not only transient but also deliberately shapes his/her transience, thus creating the content of his/her idea. Their particular decisions and deeds change both their own life and the life of the collective. And this is precisely the way history emerges. If by the concept of “history” we understand the process of human's self-formation, that is, what human beings do with themselves, then we can perceive history as a ceaseless process of education *in sensu largo*. This perspective was first indicated by Johann Gottfried Herder. Education is the historical actualization of the idea of the human being. Or, as Eugen Fink put it: “in a broad sense, education encompasses the whole spectrum of the cultural activity of man” (Fink 2005, 21). Thus understood education is reflected by the old Greek idea of *paideia*, which is a spiritual formation of human being under the influence of the entire culture one was born into.¹⁹ In thus stated historical horizon of

18 Cf. Dilthey 1991, 224: “What man is, only his history tells.” (our translation)

19 Cf. Jaeger 2001. Cf. also: Tymieniecka 2000.

human's experience, specific moments of education-related experience are confirmed.

The above-mentioned open nature of the human being and its "actualization" is best heeded by education when the formation process protects and solidifies the said openness, that is, when the very problematic nature of the human being comes into the limelight most expressly and adequately. With such a situation we deal primarily during a dialogue, which constitutes an opportunity for mutual questioning and answering.²⁰ After all, there exists no similarly open and receptive cognitive perspective as the new and hitherto unknown perspective of the questioning-searching attitude. What is thereby meant, is not only education in the form of a dialogue which takes place between a teacher and his/her student. Rather, what is meant, is the formation of a questioning attitude towards reality itself,²¹ in which each daily situation becomes a peculiar "issue" and a maiuetic waking up of the consciousness of the subject of experience towards providing an adequate answer.²² In this model, which is—incidentally—not the only one feasible, but which, as we stated, corresponds best with the open nature of the human being (and thus it seems to fit human nature best), education becomes formation which not only departs from openness—which is after all presupposed by any model of education as its *Bedingung der Möglichkeit*—, but also aims at its protection as well as its extension. Within thus understood process, any answer emerging is—as Martin Heidegger used to say—only the last step of a question. Formation consists in shifts from ignorance to knowledge, and the other way around. It is precisely while referring to thus understood nature of the human being that John Dewey formulated his influential conception of education as the ability to deal with problems, to spot them, and to search for the solutions thereto by the trial-and-error method, that is, by an experimental method. In this sense, the

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20 Cf. Buber 1968 and 1993; Lévinas 2002. Cf. also: Gadacz 2015 and Gara 2008.

21 The category of "questionness" is an important heuristic category of the contemporary pedagogic thought and the appreciation thereof is related both to phenomenological and hermeneutic sources of inspiration, as well as to searching for such inspirations in the ancient Greek philosophy. Cf. Rutkowiak 1995, 34–35. Cf. also: Folkierska 1990; Wierciński 2015; Jodłowska 2012.

22 Cf. Böhler 1981, 88.

problem of education turns out to be the education of problem. At this point, we start facing the risk of misunderstanding, which stems from the possibility of the two-fold interpretation of what the problem as such is.

After all, there are many types of problems, related to different circumstances, which are in turn a function of time and place. A person who lived in the prehistoric era had different problems compared to the ones of an inhabitant of medieval France; and still other problems are experienced by contemporary people. Although, from a theoretical perspective, it is possible to describe the formal structure of a problem as such, on a daily basis one encounters, not problems as such, but rather problems qualified with a specific attributive adjective: life problems, love problems, health problems, financial problems, family problems, personal problems, business problems, as well as—much less frequently—theoretical problems, artistic problems, and religious problems. There are as many sorts of problems as there are situation-types. Furthermore, the problems can be categorized according to the complexity of their difficulty: there are hard problems, insuperable problems, trivial problems, and pseudo-problems, etc.²³ A problem situation requires the ability to define the problem, and to pose an adequate, right question, and to find a solution thereto. There are different methods helping to achieve that. Spotting, defining, and solving problems, as well as posing questions, is what people learn throughout their life. In this context, the condition of the contemporary human being and the awareness of inevitability and necessity (that both accompany them) of endless confrontation with the problematality of the surrounding world demonstrate the characteristically contemporary form of socio-cultural function of education, with this function being expressed by the idea of permanent education.²⁴

Educating by spotting problems and posing questions assumes that the basis of the education process is not the human being understood as a being who can say “no” (M. Scheler), but rather it is the human being who is ready to question. When we speak of problematizing and questioning, what we thereby

23 Cf. Cackowski 1964.

24 In this context, the well-known formula “learn to live well” is almost ranked as a symbol of the contemporary “extended” education function as a life-cycle process. Cf. Wojnar 2000, 30–32.

mean is a certain attitude; or, alternatively—an act in which the subject opens itself to “things in themselves.” The operative truth about them gets somehow suspended and things appear as if they are situated somewhere between reality and unreality.²⁵ Questioning triggers the process of variation in which what is certain becomes questionable, and what is real—merely possible. For the questioning subject, reality is not anything ready-made or determined once and for all. Instead, reality is indeed marked by the trace of questionness: it is indeterminate, unresolved, and it craves for being specified. Reality being called into question manifests itself in the horizon of certain possibilities, the majority of which stem from a given tradition, and thus has a historical character. In the course of socialization, this tradition becomes accepted and regarded as the medium of experiencing the world. The tradition is responsible for the feeling of familiarity when it comes to experiencing the world; this familiarity stems not only from the “certainty” that the world is as we know it, but also from the circumstance that the world was as is already earlier on and will remain thus in the foreseeable future.²⁶ This feeling protects our daily life, guarantees the meaningfulness of our plans, and contributes to our individual and collective identity. Practicing the art of questioning aims at urging this self-solidifying identity to transcend itself, to question the foundations and the directions of development it had scheduled for itself. Problem-related education is not exclusively oriented at knowledge. It also appreciates the element of ignorance which is contained in a problem/question, while it also teaches how to cope with this ignorance *qua* ignorance.²⁷ The purpose of thus understood education is not the mere transfer of ready-made knowledge into students’ minds so that they stop asking questions, but rather the enhancing of the strength and profundity of questions, the raising of erotic consciousness,

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25 A contemporary example of such problematizing and questioning cognitive attitudes, which are constituted in the relations between what is real and unreal, are the studies and analyses related to the phenomenon of fantasies. Cf. Piasecka 2018.

26 Cf. Schütz 2012; Gara 2016.

27 An element of ignorance as the necessary link to reach knowledge has been long neglected in school education. What gives a rather painful testimony to the above fact, are the analyses of treating school pupils’ blunders, which give reasons for condemnation rather than for overcoming the barriers of learning. Cf. Biedrzycki et al. 2013; Federowicz M. et al. 2015; Karpiński and Zambrowska 2015.

the broadening—as it is colloquially said—of horizons. The notion of a horizon, so enthusiastically applied within phenomenology, with phenomenology being the philosophy of a truly questioning character,²⁸ is a metaphor of openness, distance, searching, the unknown, and as such it tallies smoothly with an equally common metaphor of the human being's existence conceived of as being on the road.²⁹ On the one hand, questioning, which lays the foundation for the very process of education, as the striving for an answer tries to substitute knowledge for ignorance: after all, what is at stake, is neither a question in and of itself nor any free-floating questioning. On the other hand, what education is about, is not to make somebody omniscient but to strengthen their open questioning nature. Each acquired piece of knowledge, each problem solved, each acquired skill serves the purpose of opening the human being even further. Hence, this situation is rather paradoxical: the human being develops through acquiring experience, learning, cognizing, which is supposed to make them even more open, more questioning, and aware of their ignorance.³⁰ Thus understood education does not close the human being in some sort of better or worse tailored world of “eternal truths,” but instead, teaches it—as opposed to the economics of our “post-animal existence”—to live in openness.

Thus understood education, which tallies well with the open nature of the human being, is rightly contrasted with various forms of “education” involving (with the process not being free of violence and ideology) “inculcating” the rigid and ready-made formulas in the form of specific attitudes, beliefs, and goals into the student's mind. Abstracting from various ideas of education, which appeared in the distant history and which heeded the need to protect and develop the open nature of the human, we have already mentioned that the conception of education which best fits the above-stated pattern—as far as education of the last century goes—is John Dewey's philosophy of problem-oriented reasoning.³¹ Education based on problem-reasoning is

28 Cf. Sobota 2017.

29 Man construed as “a being on the road” is a rather common metaphor occurring in the earliest works of culture. In the context of philosophy of education, cf. Gara 2017b.

30 Cf. Ablewicz 2002; Wulf 2016.

31 Cf. Dewey 2004, 160: “To say that thinking occurs with reference to situations which are still going on, and incomplete, is to say that thinking occurs when things are

therein connected with democracy understood as a socio-political regime, which promotes freedom, mobility, tolerance, and openness of all the citizens. However, still one question remains: is what is understood—in the vein of Dewey—by the concept of a problem sufficient to adequately describe and properly develop the already-mentioned open nature of the human being? In other words, one might ask would the problem with education be ultimately resolved or at least adequately uncovered if one day one actually would manage to implement in the overall school education Dewey’s “problem teaching?” The doubt addressed by this question relates to the already-mentioned ambiguity of the category of a problem.

First of all, we often use the terms “problem” and “question,” while regarding them as being *equivalent*. However, in the course of the development and problematization of the idea of the human being and of education in the historical reality, what starts to be clear is a more and more conspicuous difference between problem-reasoning and the questioning attitude. “Problem-reasoning” is blind to this distinction. At the same time, there are different attitudes or styles of searching and openness, among which only *one* represents the Deweyan problem-reasoning. Clearly distinct, albeit often confused with the just-mentioned mode of reasoning, is reasoning as questioning. Let us try now to elucidate this difference since it specifies the research perspective from which the already-stated problem with education clearly stands out, including in particular school education and the historically shaped education system coupled with its inherent tendency towards ultra-stability and towards its distancing from the surrounding world—which is, from its position, perceived as being external.

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While not discussing details, one may safely say that a problem as such is wholly oriented at its solution and makes sense only insofar as it appears within a certain theoretical-practical framework of interdependencies. It presents a certain alternative which craves to be settled in accordance with the adopted goals. The desired end-state that *ought* to occur is already known; what is unknown, are the means leading up to solutions which, once discovered, annihilate the problem and thus make it invalid. A solution to a problem is

uncertain or doubtful or problematic.”

guided by certain—pre-assumed—directives; it must always be the proper and desired solution; that is the one in accordance with our expectations. The problematality of a problem is an obstacle lying in our way to the solution thereto. The solution in question normally involves discovering some method; it implies in turn that a problem is of rather technical nature.

Originally, “problems” appeared only in the language of mathematics.³² Thence, this parlance of problems was projected onto the other realms of culture. Nowadays, we live in an epoch of problems. The category of problems dominates almost all spheres of life—starting with personal experience and everyday practice, through politics, and up to science, philosophy, and religion. This state of affairs derives from swift development of science and technological progress. What is more, it seems that such concepts as progress, science, technology, the state, or labor were invoked in the first place for the sake of solving problems. And these problems—as is well-known today—to a large extent emerged due to the cultural supremacy of the said concepts. The grand transformations of social, political, and economic nature creeping
38 all across Europe for the last two centuries may be perceived as problems: social problems, labor problems, economic problems, national problems, class problems, religious problems, problems of power, schooling problems, problems of history, problems of minorities, of migration, women’s problems, as well as problems with poverty, etc. People perceive their lives as a concatenation of problems. The spectrum of problems ranges from the problems of personal character, business problems, health problems, the ones of psychological and emotional nature, etc., up to grand existential problems, world-view-related problems, and metaphysical ones. Social organizations and political institutions are dedicated to supporting people in their daily struggle with their respective problems. Modern states appointed education systems to fight the problem of illiteracy; and then went on to “improve” the said education systems so that they could overcome the problem of functional illiteracy, or the one of unequal opportunities, or of social exclusion. The relation between being (as the term is used in the common parlance, that is, in the sense of a tedious struggle for survival) and solving dozens of problems can be readily translated into the

32 Cf. Proklos 2003, 61–64.

language of metaphysics. And, so, one might validly say that Being as such has today become a Problem.

However, the question is of different nature altogether. Certainly, we do not thereby mean the grammatical form of an interrogative, because this in turn is a mere linguistic expression of certain psychological phenomena and of some issues to be resolved which may operate as questions, but they do not have to function as such. The questions one poses do not directly stem from the prior state of knowledge which in the course of questioning should get developed to such a degree that the next stage of cognition should be reached, which is in turn supposed to give rise to the next question, and so on and so forth ad infinitum. Questions are not aligned in the series of a signifying progress, as problems are. In the face of a question, the continuity of the tradition does not derive from the fact that questions, and problems alike, disappear once they are solved: that problems become invalid once one finds solutions thereto, with the solution in turn becoming another problem; and it is precisely in this manner that cognition assumes the character of progress. In case of questions, these are always the same questions as the ones posed by previous generations, and which will be posed by future generations. But this means that the above-mentioned continuity—however paradoxical this may sound—assumes here a disrupted form. The question—as derived from tradition—is always of preliminary character and it must be always posed anew—as if it had never existed before. In this sense, in the face of the question, everybody is a novice; there are no experts on questions. This means that each person in a sense consecutively starts from scratch, reenacts this beginning in their own peculiar way, thus creating history, which can be referred to as a community of questioning subjects. Furthermore, let us note that an answer to a question looks quite dissimilar to the case of a problem scrutinized above. An answer to a question may prove to be unfavorable to the questioning subject, although it can be true and valuable; the questioning subject takes it to be a temporary suspension or the postponement of the process of questioning.

39

While projecting the above distinction between problem and question onto the realm of education, what is most readily noticeable is the fact that the process of education, especially the one that resorts to the already-mentioned “problem-reasoning,” is—as its name suggests—oriented at problems at the

levels of theory, organization, and school practice. In the language of questioning, this means that what is of utmost importance for the process in question is an answer; however, not an answer to a specific question, but a confident, proper, and right answer, that is, such that solves the assigned problem. The education of problem is an education of answer, wherein the latter breaks off from the process of its emergence and thus becomes a “statement,” a “truth,” and “obviousness” independent of it. This is paradoxical at least for the reason that the recipients of an education offer are in principle the ones who do not know, and who are at liberty and have a right to ask. However, the purpose of the education apparatus—curbed within the rigid framework of an education system—is to make those who are ignorant “answer”—and answer correctly, which implies answering according to the expectations of the questioning person (or, strictly speaking: of an examiner). “Question,” on the other hand, is in this case a privilege bestowed upon teachers (which, certainly, confers certain powers on them). The privilege in question transforms questioning into examining, the subject matter of the latter is what is already known, and which suppresses the collective process of posing questions. School space does not constitute an intergenerational community of questioning subjects and is not receptive of new experiences. In place of thinking via questions, what is promoted, is at best “problem-reasoning,” which means reasoning by answering.

40

Education systems were designed in the period of a fascination with natural sciences and under a certain delusion that important problems can be solved by resorting to the pattern of rational thinking based upon the said sciences. A fitting instantiation of this movement is the already mentioned Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy³³ and its pedagogic implications. Without entering into details, let us merely state what follows. Dewey emphasizes the universality of the problem attitude and tries to project the causal scientific procedure onto the didactic process. However, this model of education does not permeate our universal education. The simplified pattern of education within our model of universal education assumes the form of (school) subjects as reservoirs of given knowledge which is verified, segregated, and

33 Cf. Reut 1992.

deemed unquestionable. Dewey states: “Science is a name for knowledge in its most characteristic form. It represents in its degree, the perfected outcome of learning, —its consummation. What is known, in a given case, is what is sure, certain, settled, disposed of [...]” (Dewey 2004, 204).³⁴ What is thereby meant, is the optimal method of reaching the scientific truth. However, this message, which is highly problematic from the vantage point of contemporary philosophical discussions, was rather disfigured within the confines of actual schools. Actually, the above message has been reduced to uncritical trust in the “apodictically true” knowledge; that is, the already discovered one and the one ready to be acquired, and thus in truth not requiring to be discovered anew and not urging consecutive generations to pose the very same questions all over again. It is the spirit of scientism that guides the content of curricula. Scientific thinking and problem-reasoning based thereupon became, on the one hand, an unsurpassable ideal that the school reality sadly cannot reach. On the other hand, scientific thinking—as a direction of thinking—marginalized all other types of experiencing the world, especially the experience by way of developing an intergenerational community of questioning subjects.

41

Conclusion: between the problem of education and the question about education

The considerations presented herein are of preliminary formal-eroteric nature, and focus on uncovering the philosophical problem-related and philosophical-historical assumptions of comprehending education as a problem. In line with the formal-eroteric perspective adopted, our task was not to provide a solution to this problem, but rather a reflection on what characterizes the very problem and what is lacking in the research perspective determining this problem. Why is education a problem?

The point of departure for our considerations was the commonly shared impression, confirmed by sociological research, that despite many civilizational and cultural accomplishments that the Western education has recorded thus far, education, as designed by (and for the sake of) modern

34 Cf. also: Reut 1992, 164–165.

states, gives rise to unrelenting express criticisms in all of the developed countries.³⁵ The criticisms in question express the disappointment with what education—which to a large extent is based on school education—managed and manages to achieve in the face of ever-growing transformations of the contemporary world. This very air of disappointment with the effects of education expresses what we labelled as *the problem with education*. After all, this is only one of the problems characterizing education. The other is represented by what we labelled as the problem of education—or the *education issue*, with the latter being possibly a more apt formulation. This last issue appears not so much in broad disputes over education as it does at the level of the insight into what education is as such, with the latter being much less present in public debates. As our preliminary definitional point, we took for granted the minimal conception of education as the historical and cultural process of the human being's formation within a coherent process of upbringing and teaching. As for our hypothesis, we assumed that the said problem with education is, first and foremost, connected with the

42 ever-widening split of the idea of education (as a kind of bipolar formation). A philosophical assumption of thus understood education understands the human being as an open question. The human being is not originally determined by any specific content which would necessarily settle the issue of what a particular person should be in the given historical reality. The human being is by nature open to various determinations of its existence which, on the one hand, restrict the primordial openness of existence, and, on the other hand, fill it with real content, thus rendering this existence thoroughly historical. Therefore, general history is a reflection of the human being's self-formation by way of acquiring old and creating new cultural patterns. That is why we might as well concur with Dilthey in that what determines the human being can be revealed only by history. What corresponds best with this open and (at the same time) historical nature of the human being is a model of education—constituted by the said bipolar formation—that, on the one hand, protects and sustains the innate openness, and, on the other hand,

35 Among numerous works, one can mention for example: Hajdar and Gross 2016; Szafraniec 2008.

does not content itself with this “emptiness,” but rather fills it with content-rich forms of the given culture. The education process is then originally marked by the paradoxical character which constitutes the problematality of the former. The slogan “education as a problem” expresses precisely this paradox related to the task of the human being’s formation, understood as the simultaneous opening and limiting of the constitutive openness of the human being.

We attempted to demonstrate conclusively that the most consistent and influential model of an attitude towards education considered herein is the education centered around the so-called problem-reasoning. Education as a problem is the education of problem. However, speaking in this manner, we noted that there is a certain ambiguity in the concept of a problem, which results in the circumstance that instead of doing justice to the open nature of the human being and to the task of its harmonious development, problem-reasoning only widens the gap between the promises and possibilities of the contemporary world and aggravates what we labelled as the problem with education. That is why we put forward the proposal to distinguish between problem and question. Briefly speaking, a problem is oriented at solving a task, with the latter being invalid once the method to overcome it has been discovered. A problem is founded upon various assumptions which point into the direction of a solution. A question, on the other hand, is neither of technical nor of theoretical nature. As the questioning attitude, a question is of inherently “preliminary” character, and in this sense—while reiterating Plato’s reasoning on the immortality of the soul (*Phaedrus* 245c)—one can say that a question never becomes inoperative. It is receptive to an answer which may be one or the other—regardless of whether somebody is therewith satisfied or not. Since the emergence of times of the domination of scientific-technical vision of life, thinking in terms of problems has almost totally ousted thinking in terms of questions. Also, public space and its particular sectors, including education, became the domain of managing problems. We live in an epoch of problems which is—as Heidegger put it—“the epoch of a total lack of questioning.”

43

The history of mass education in modern education systems, with mass education being responsible for the transformation of the notion of profession in the last two centuries, demonstrates in what way the originally construed

human being's formation, which helped introduce it into the world of values and prepared it for life in service of society, got narrowed down to craftsmanship, which is in turn construed as an axiologically neutral dominion over specified fragments of knowledge and skills.³⁶ It also shows the collapse of the harmonious idea of education as a bipolar formation of a "complete human being" and the replacement thereof with one-sided process of developing a professional-specialist. Despite grand civilizational achievements which fell on the said transformations, which were up to recently labelled as progress, the criticisms launched at contemporary education, that keep signaling the problem with education, evidence the need for taking into account in the process of education something over and above specialist skills. Paradoxically enough, this is ever more conspicuous, the higher the pace of technological progress becomes, while generating successive forms of specialization.

44 While juxtaposing problem and question, and highlighting the assumptions and limitations inherent in problem-reasoning, we suggest that only the presence of open questioning—which does not imply the hegemony and the reversal of orders—is able to do justice to the open nature of the human being and to its need for transcending its own limits. Such questioning does not easily yield itself to being structured or well-organized and controlled. Neither is it easily manageable. That is why in an education system operating in the vein of problem-reasoning and organized by the state such questioning has gone outside the area of interest. Questioning was replaced by codified procedures of posing and solving problems. Additionally, the way of solving them was settled in advance. And this is precisely the very fact that lies at the bottom of school education becoming ever shallower. However, what, along with questioning, found itself outside the scope of the system, was the issue of upbringing, which—albeit recurrent in the disputes over the system—normally appears in the form of a ready-made matrix "to be applied," and is usually tailored along the lines of some political ideology dominating at that time.

However, posing questions as a way of developing the skill of dialogical thinking constitutes an important completion of problem-oriented reasoning. Only these two—questioning and problem-solving interconnected in

36 Cf. Sobota 2016.

particular educational processes, with repeatedly the same questions tackled by consecutive generations—provide the chance to become receptive to the complexity and variability of the contemporary world. School as the space for creating “a community of questioning subjects,” understood as an intergenerational community, which enables us to face the growing volatility and uncertainty of the contemporary world—this is the starting point for a rethinking of the issue of contemporary education systems. Still, what is at stake, is to keep the balance between the openness of questions and the efficacy of solving problems. It would be in vain to pose questions and have a dialogue without developing the skills of pointing to and solving problems. On the other hand, excessively focusing attention on solving problems proves to be generating more problems than solving. This constant reminding of ourselves regarding questioning does not mean that the vision of the human formed in accordance with problem-reasoning, the equivalent of which in the future is some sort of “transhuman,” is contrasted, out of sentiment, to the well-known ideals of humanism, related to, e.g., Greek or Christian heritage, to personalism, or to Jewish philosophy of dialogue. The temptation to contrast the modern “barbarian” world with “traditional” ideals is plainly too easy, and normally leads to an ideological instability of the education system. All appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the understanding of “progress” as well as the understanding of the “traditional” ideas in the context of education are based upon the experiences of the last two centuries, which is exactly what modernity brought with itself. Contrasting the two, does not solve the issue. There is no point in questioning the unquestionable accomplishments of modern, universal reflection. The point is rather to reflect upon the principle which (running counter to the original assumptions) started favoring education’s one-sidedness—that is the one-sidedness of codified problem-reasoning. The connection between the problem attitude and the recurrent questioning is indispensable in the realms both of upbringing and learning, since it grants the possibility of efficiently dealing with the challenges of the contemporary world, while simultaneously maintaining a clear awareness of the broader context of emerging issues—an attitude, to which there seems to be no alternative in the face of, among others, such presently “pressing” issues as global warming or migration. It might be said that the herein suggested return to the integrity of

the human being's flourishing through the strengthening of the significance of questionness—being peculiar to the human as such—and to the human being as an open question does not derive from a nostalgia for the old world, but is rather a response to the growing complexity and pace of the transformations of the contemporary world. This, perhaps, may be the only response, which is in turn a question itself ...

46 However, this does not imply that when it comes to the explanation of the problem of education, we should concede *primacy* to questioning. Building such hierarchies, on the basis of which, in the next step, one generates easy remedial directives, is alien to the attitude of remaining in the state of questionness; the former normally leads to hampering the process of questioning and to imposing various ideological restrictions on the slowly unfolding space of reflection. It is impossible to reduce the problem of the historically shaped education to the said fundamental question about education. Both from the epistemological and the methodological point of view, distinguishing the problem with education and the problem—issue—of education, does not presuppose any hierarchical dependence between them. The fact that the primary problem of education is situated within the horizon of the idea of the human being does not imply that the problem with education is somehow subordinate to the former problem, with the latter problem taking into account its practical aspect and the requirement of efficacy. The phenomenological investigations that mainly focus on the problem of education can and must resort to the problem with education, the study of which takes empirical research. The fundamental questions about the human being and its experience of the world cannot after all abstract from people's immersion in the historically shaped world, including *this* (and not any other) specific education system. From the fact that this system neglects the issue of upbringing and shifts the emphasis almost exclusively on (oftentimes superficial) teaching we can rightly infer that the system in question performs its role as an educator only *partly*, and thus it does so inadequately in relation not only to the idea of education. Also, in the face of the requirements of the world we are trying to catch up with, there is little point in shifting proportions between upbringing and teaching. Dealing with one *or* with the other is a false disjunction. What is at stake here, is rather their integrity and discovering the interdependencies between them in particular

representations, including each school subject—the interdependency between the current, historically contingent problem with education and the problem of education, with the latter of which pointing to the idea of the human being as “an open question.” There exists a need for the reflection upon the question of how a natural tendency for each generation to pose the same questions *anew* may be integrated into and respected in the present, systemically organized *reality* of educating. This concerns especially the young people, their discovering of reality, the building of their own competencies, and their entering into adulthood under the conditions of oftentimes illusory proposals offered in the face of increasingly complex problems of the contemporary world.

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THE “INTRODUCTION OF THE SUBJECT”

ANTHROPOLOGY, MEDICINE, EDUCATION

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Abstract

The introduction of the subject in physics, by Werner Heisenberg, has led to a questioning of the Cartesian paradigm, based on the separation between subject and object. This introduction of the subject was followed by an attempt to carry out a similar operation in the fields of biology, ethology, and medicine. In particular, Viktor von Weizsäcker identified the importance of a new doctor/patient relationship. This active reconsideration of the subject, with the consequent revision of the asymmetrical

relationship, has brought with it, however, a series of undesirable effects that we could summarize with the expression “defensive medicine.” It seems to us that an “introduction of the subject” is also taking place in the field of teaching and education; it takes on the form of valorization of the learner and of open circular teaching, more suitable, according to Morin, to a global or planetary society. This positive innovation is, however, called upon to listen to the warning that comes from medicine. The protection of the “original scene,” which gives a sense to the action of the doctor and the educator, serves precisely as a methodological corrective to the risk of an errant pedagogy, which avoids taking charge of the subject and helps him to acquire a form.

Keywords: “introduction of the subject”, Cartesian dualism, defensive medicine, defensive education, medical anthropology, Weizsäcker, Morin.

»Vpeljava subjekta«. Antropologija, medicina, izobraževanje

Povzetek

- 54 Vpeljava subjekta v fiziki, kakršno predstavlja delo Wernerja Heisenberga, je pripeljala do prevetritve kartezijske paradigme, ki je temeljila na razločitvi med subjektom in objektom. Tej vpeljavi subjekta so sledili podobni poskusi na področjih biologije, etologije in medicine. Zlasti Viktor von Weizsäcker je prepoznal pomembnost novega razmerja med zdravnikom in pacientom. Toda takšna aktivna preosmislitev subjekta, ki je imela za posledico revizijo asimetričnega razmerja, je povzročila nekatere nezaželene učinke, ki jih lahko povzamemo z izrazom »defenzivna medicina«. Zdi se, da se »vpeljava subjekta« godi tudi na področju učenja in izobraževanja; privzema obliko prevrednotenja učenca in odprtega krožnega učenja, kakršno je, po Morinovem mnenju, primernejše za globalno oziroma planetarno družbo. Vendar mora tovrstna pozitivna inovacija prisluhniti svarilu, ki prihaja s področja medicine. Zavarovanje »izvornega prizorišča«, kakršno daje smisel delovanju zdravnika in učitelja, predstavlja metodološki korektiv grožnji blodeče pedagogike, ki se izogne obvladovanju subjekta in pripomore k temu, da si pridobi obliko.

Ključne besede: »vpeljava subjekta«, kartezijski dualizem, defenzivna medicina, defenzivno izobraževanje, medicinska antropologija, Weizsäcker, Morin.

Like every living being, man, as an autopoietic being, possesses a form and at the same time is called upon to give himself a form that allows him to maintain his own organization (Maturana and Varela 2001). Hence, the need for trans-formation. This autopoietic capacity—as asserted by Varela and Maturana—takes on completely original aspects in man; in particular, he has the possibility of acquiring new cultural structures, that is, of forming and transforming himself through an educational act (Portmann 1970, 282–299).¹ The concept of “formation,” as we understand it in the diction of “sciences of formation,”² reveals humanity’s capacity to give itself a form of its own, according to the epochs, that allows it to decline, time by time, the same human form.

Formation helps man to take shape, to prefigure an ideal image of himself, of humanity, in the light of which he can make his own choices, live his own life. Werner Jaeger stated about the Greek *paideia*: “The effort to consciously shape according to one’s own idea” takes place through education, which reflects a “living normative consciousness,” whose objective is identifiable in the will of transmission of the human type. *Paideia*, therefore, is an “eternal form” to which the Greeks “subordinated themselves” in order to achieve “the formation of a superior humanity” (Jaeger 1934–1947, I, 6). Among the main formative models identified in Western culture, besides the Greek *paideia*, stand out the Latin *humanitas*, the medieval Christian *perfectio*, the Renaissance *dignitas hominis*, and the German neo-humanistic *Bildung*—the traces of which are still evident in the philosophical approach, for example, of Martin Buber and Hans Georg Gadamer (Gadamer 2012, 227; Sola 2016).³ Each of these epochs

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1 As Gadamer claims, recovering Hegel: “Der Mensch ist durch den Bruch mit dem Unmittelbaren und Natürlichen gekennzeichnet, der durch die geistige, vernünftige Seite seines Wesens ihm zugemutet ist. ‘Nach dieser Seite ist er nicht von Natur, was er sein soll’ – und deshalb bedarf er der Bildung.” (Gadamer 1986, 17)

2 In English, for example, the term is used in the diction “sciences of the primary formation” or “formative assessment and science;” in Italian, however, precisely: “scienze della formazione.”

3 “If we think of our school years [...] we perceive how the idea of *Bildung* was the basis of the school system of the century in which we attended school: not a preparation for a specific profession, not an insertion into a functionalized society, not an adaptation exercise, which, as heaven knows, has become the destiny of the industrialized world everywhere today.” (Gadamer 2012, 227; my translation)

has had the strength to hypothesize an image of man—closely connected to the society of the time—, to which one should make one's own epoch faithful. Every educational action, whether school or university, had in mind what kind of man one wanted to contribute to form.

Before identifying, therefore, which subjects and disciplines should be taught, which competences privileged, it would make sense to ask oneself what *Bildung* today is, the formation to which one unconsciously tends, what is the form for the global, planetary age.

1. Which training for the global age?

56 The absence of a training model, in fact, simply risks maintaining as the only model that of training for the present society, of active and painless integration into the productive and social world, depriving the training act of its ideal momentum, aimed at the inner and deep training of the individual man. The distinction, introduced by Martha Nussbaum, between “traditional” and “liberal education” (Nussbaum 1997)⁴ can also be read from this point of view. The recurrent concern about the (true or presumed) dangerous detachment of a teaching by competence with contents⁵—for example, in the higher teaching of philosophy—hides a doubt: that this sliding in the

4 According to Martha Nussbaum, the process of school “corporatization” has long been evident in the United States. The introduction of the National Testing System (NCLB) has further worsened the situation: “Curricular content has shifted away from material that focuses on enlivening imagination and training the critical faculties toward material that is directly relevant to test preparation. Along with the shift in content has come an even more baneful shift in pedagogy: away from teaching that seeks to promote questioning and individual responsibility toward force-feeding for good exam results.” (Nussbaum 2010, 134)

5 The progressive shift from *content-centered* syllabuses to *skill- or ability-centered* syllabuses—such as those of the *European Computer Driving Licence* or the *European Certification of Informatics Professionals*—leaves open the problem of whether or not the two settings can be reconciled. This framework includes the eight key competences of European citizens (*key competences*), as set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 (2006/962/EC), *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. A European Reference Framework*. See also the European Commission's *New Skills Agenda for Europe* of 10 June 2016 (2016/381/F2/COM). Cf. *Key Competences* and *A New Skills*.

direction of “disengaged competence” covers the absence of an idea of man at the height of the epoch in which we live. The same imposition of analytical philosophy—or, more generally, of a philosophy conceived of exclusively as epistemology, methodology, learning logic, etc.—could be a symptom of the same weakness. It is indeed evident that the contents already give a direction to the competences, they target them in a preliminary way. According to Joseph Stiglitz, learning in itself is “future oriented. One has to make sacrifices today and undertake risks today for future benefits. But in the presence of instability, there is a risk that there will be no future.” (Stiglitz 2015, 87). In the absence of an idea that brings us closer to the future, we live for the immediate present, and all this at the expense of learning. Which training, then, for a global or planetary age?⁶

2. The “introduction of the subject in...”

In the course of the twentieth century we witnessed the questioning of the Cartesian paradigm—which marked modernity—and of the annexed training model. The separation between subject and object (Bachelard 1984), with its objectivating approach—the foundation of a scientific epistemology—began to lose its absolute character. The unconditional affirmation of the scientific method has thus been accompanied by the critical epistemological reflection. Starting primarily from the field of quantum mechanics—in particular with Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle—, we have witnessed the progressive attempt to “introduce the subject in...” The inert and quantifiable object of study has been replaced—especially in the areas of the living—by an active and interactive subject, with which the researcher finds himself in a relationship of circularity and mutual exchange from beginning onward (Weizsäcker 1997). The attempt to place a living being as his object of investigation forces the scientist to take note of an important fact: being faced with an “object with a

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⁶ Edgar Morin highlights the difference between “globalization” and “planetarization.” The latter takes on a broader and more complex meaning of globalization, since it does not limit itself to describing the global scope of the economic and technological processes; instead, it underlines the progressive process of man’s insertion on Earth in its physical/biological/anthropological dimension. See Morin et al. 2003, in particular the paragraph entitled “La naissance de l’ère planétaire.” Cf. also Morin 1999, 32 ff.

subject,” and therefore creative, unpredictable, with its countermeasures and reactions to the context creates a process, which comes dangerously closer to biography and history than to mechanistic determinism.⁷ So, if on the one hand we can speak of an “introduction of the subject in physics,” on the other hand—especially thanks to Jakob von Uexküll, Viktor von Weizsäcker, and later Gregory Bateson—we begin to speak of an “introduction of the subject in biology” (Bateson 1972; Bateson 1979; Uexküll 1956); the study of the living being is always an encounter between subjects, the outcome of which—like a game of chess or a dance step in two—is never entirely predictable. The development of ethology itself as a discipline in its own right, especially with Konrad Lorenz, Nikolaas Tinbergen, Karl von Frisch, Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Adolf Portmann, etc., presupposes a different interpretation of the animal (Lorenz 2002; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2008; Portmann 1961). An animal is no longer interpreted in a deterministic and mechanistic way, according to the reductive stimulus-response model, but as being capable of operating with a certain dose of freedom, as can be seen from the different ritual and imprinting modules (Morin 1974).⁸ This is even more evident when this “epistemological turn” is applied to the medical field. The “introduction of the subject in medicine,” supported by the doctor and philosopher Viktor von Weizsäcker, by Alexander Mitscherlich, etc., theorizes the need for a substantial transformation of the doctor-patient relationship, which has significant implications also at the therapeutic level (1986).⁹ The recent recovery of the role of the patient and of the dialogue advocated by the American medical anthropology of the Harvard

7 Viktor von Weizsäcker speaks expressly of this in his work *Gestaltkreis*, in which he states that “the object of biology is simply an object inhabited by a subject” (Weizsäcker 1997, 295). See Tolone 2016.

8 Edgar Morin speaks of a true “ethological revelation [*ethologische Offenbarung*],” which puts an end to an interpretation of animal behavior as a simple reactive automatism (Morin 1974, 33–35). Gregory Bateson himself, in his studies on dolphins and canids etc., recognizes the superior mammals as a true fourth level of “metacommunication” (Bateson 1972, 374–375).

9 The clash between Jaspers and Weizsäcker, regarding different ways of understanding the contribution of the “introduction of the subject” to a therapeutic change, at least confirms its heuristic and methodological validity. See in this regard Jaspers’ correspondence, in particular with Viktor and his nephew Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker; especially letters in Jaspers 2016, 551–554. Cf. 2002, 282–287; Mitscherlich 2010.

school, by narrative medicine, and by the medical humanities (Kleinemann 1988; Good 2006; Zannini 2008) find in the introduction of the subject in medicine their natural premise and condition of possibility.

This introduction of the subject in medicine has determined a real turning point, which has—variously evaluated—, in fact, led to the abandonment of the “paternalistic approach” between doctor and patient.¹⁰ This advancement, consequent to the valorization of the subject also from an epistemological point of view, has favored a more complex vision of the medical dimension. But, also a series of not insignificant consequences, which arise from the need to reset a new dialogical and tendentially not asymmetrical relationship, instead of the asymmetrical one that had been consolidated over the centuries (or even millennia). Defensive medicine, the use of “informed consent”—in its most precautionary version—, the risk of bureaucratization and standardization of communication procedures, the risk of the overturning of roles linked, for example, to the telematic consultation by patients, nevertheless highlight the dangers intrinsic to this process of integration of the subject.¹¹ A process that therefore requires a correction in function of a more balanced and fruitful relationship between subject and object “from an epistemological point of view.”

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3. The warning of medicine

The medical avant-garde, which has gone further in this direction, is a wake-up call, which must be taken into account and treasured also in the field of education sciences. A form of the “introduction of the subject” has in the recent decades, in fact, also occurred in the field of training, teaching, and didactics in order to correct the predominantly “paternalistic” approach, well rooted especially in Europe. The model of frontal teaching, of teaching by (rigid and defined) programs, of the clear separation between disciplinary fields—as little inclined to interdisciplinarity as to multidisciplinary—has been identified, not without reason, as the intermediary, the voluntary, or involuntary bearer

10 The emergence of a “*patient-centered*” approach should be read in this direction. See, for example, Pellegrino and Thomasma 1988. Cf. Engelhardt 2004, 611–618.

11 Cf. Broom 2005, Tolone 2019.

of an implicit ideology (Robinson 2010).¹² In addition to appearing less and less adequate to a society in perennial and vertiginous transformation and to the instinctive distrust towards all kinds of authorities, the “paternalistic-frontal” model has become in a certain way also the epistemological emblem of the Cartesian subject/object separation.¹³ That is, the emblem of a “modern,” dualistic approach, which takes as its model the classical Newtonian physics, the nineteenth-century industrial organization of work, and which the twentieth century tends in some way to resize. The same rethinking of didactic spaces, of the modular and open classrooms, is inserted in this framework of “didactic space” reorganization, understood in the sense that is not purely spatial.¹⁴ Didactic innovation therefore identifies Descartes and the Cartesian dualism as its targets in line with a more widespread approach (Damasio 1994, Bateson 1979). The objective is to overcome paternalism (mono-directional on the side of the teacher) and to put the subject (of the learner) at the center as an epistemological correction to modernity. This has sometimes led to the preliminary transformation of one’s polemical target into a caricature, which replaces “content” with “notions,” “didactic dialogue” with “stereotyped monologue,” “argumentation” with “mnemonic repetition,” etc.

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The danger that this correction, however, may run into the same problems that we have highlighted in the medical field is around the corner. Student-centered didactics, the “informed consent” contract, but also the increasingly

12 For example, with the so-called “Factory Model School” or “Factory Model Education” a nineteenth-century school model is outlined, also in rather rhetorical terms, in which there is a tendency to apply to education a form of Taylorism, of division of labor. If we overlook the correctness of this reading, we can see a growing tendency—especially since the 1970s—to underline the strict link between public education and *scientific management*. See in this regard Callahan 1962 and Tyack 1974.

13 The epistemology of the Cartesian, dualistic simplification must be followed by an epistemology of complexity, for which “it is necessary to reintroduce the role of the subject/observer/thinker/ideator/strategist in all knowledge”; “where in the same space and at the same time there is not only order but also disorder, where there are not only determinisms but also randomness, where uncertainty emerges, the strategic attitude of a subject is needed; in the face of ignorance and confusion its perplexity and lucidity are indispensable.” (Morin et al. 2003, 45, 25; my translation)

14 *Flipped classroom, cooperative learning, peer education*, laboratory didactics, etc., are all methodologies which are part of this turn in the direction of student-centered didactics. Cf. Bergmann and Sams 2012; Turner and Shepherd 1999.

widespread form of caution underline a form of “defensive school.”¹⁵ The introduction of the subject, if conceived in purely geometrical or, worse, trade-unionist terms, certainly determines a demolition of the asymmetrical relations, but favors a sort of legal, formal symmetry, which risks inaugurating a sort of “pedagogical defensiveness.” Moreover, and above all, the danger is that, in the name of a valorization of the subject—and therefore of the personal dimension, both of the teacher and of the learner—precisely that dialogic, creative, unpredictable dimension in the relationship between teacher and pupil will be lacking or will be contained in increasingly schematic procedures and protocols. As Martin Buber had correctly identified since the 1920s, the objective, Cartesian-Kantian evolution of contemporary science, applied through technology to world contexts, favors the extension of the “I-It” relationship to all kinds of relationships.¹⁶ Even to those between people and in particular to educational relations, which on principle should represent the place of the “I-You” dialogical thought. Indeed, the teacher-student encounter, if it is to be educational and aim at the formation of the individual, must be based on a relationship of reciprocal listening, on a programming that takes into account the interaction with the student step by step, which remains open to time, that is, to the novelty that comes from the response of the other, to the educational input.¹⁷ The didactic circularity, if it wants to be authentic, must necessarily remain “open,” under construction, only partially definable a priori—under penalty of bureaucratization of the educational act.

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15 In analogy with the model of “defensive medicine,” we could today talk about “defensive education.”

16 It is true that “ohne Es kann der Mensch nicht leben. Aber wer mit ihm allein lebt, ist nicht der Mensch”; this fatal fate is imbued with “erhabene Schwermut” and leads expeditiously to the tyranny of the “It” (Buber 1997, 44, 24).

17 In the dialogue meeting “ist die Beziehung Erwählterwerden und Erwählen, Passion und Aktion in einem. Wie denn eine Aktion des ganzen Wesens [...] der Passion ähnlich werden muß”; “Beziehung ist Gegenseitigkeit. Mein Du wirkt an mir, wie ich an ihm wirke.” (Buber 1997, 18, 23). See Milan 1994. Dialogical thought, applied to didactic activity, reaffirms the two theoretical cores of the “New Thought” and was welcomed at the medical level by Viktor von Weizsäcker: taking time seriously and needing the other. See Casper 2017, Fabris and Ciglia 2008.

4. The example of enactive didactics

62 A similar need, starting from different coordinates, is reiterated by the so-called “enactive didactics,” which is, not by chance, based on the theoretical assumptions outlined by Varela and Maturana (cf. 1992). Enactivism starts from the assumption that the human system does not simply react to changes in the environment that surrounds it—in an almost deterministic and automatic way—, but with its own action modifies itself in relation to the world, and at the same time shapes the world with which it interacts (Bateson 1979; Rossi 2011). Knowledge is not simply a cognitive act of the ego, it is not the knowledge of an external object by an ego; knowledge is rather the permanent transformation of the vital process that includes man and the environment; it is a circular mutual adaptation process between action and experience, in which my cognitive act is already a response to the world, and where the world is already always modified by man. This condition of permanent feedback, this new balance of the living being in the context is knowledge, an *embodied cognition* (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1993; Cusinato 2018), which depends as much on the conditions of the human body as on environmental inputs. Knowledge is the wisdom of the body in relation to the world, which is expressed in action and which through action modifies the world with which it interacts. It is a cognitive style that is acquired according to non-linear learning, and in which knowledge is a mode of bodily behavior in the world, an embodied cognition, the assimilation of bodily orientation.

This approach implies a recovery of the subject (pupil) in its circularity with the (scholastic) environment that has important implications, of which enactive didactics, for example, tries to take charge.¹⁸

5. The “original scene”

Compared to today, the previous *Bildungen* had the advantage of being a model with a clear and complete “form,” functional for an era, and based

18 Cf. Minogue and Gail Jones 2006; Hanna and Maiese 2009; Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1993; Andrade, Diaz-Rojas and Reyes-Santander 2018; Bocchi and Damiano 2013.

on a centrality, that of the master, who—even before the modern Cartesian codification—could “dispose of” the learner. Paternalism, however temperate or enlightened, was the sign of an approach that lasted for centuries; we actually had to wait for the modern divarication between subject and object for the need for an epistemological correction to be postulated also in the pedagogical key (Rousseau).

With the disappearance of paternalism and the introduction of the subject, this clear Cartesian individuation of roles, contents, times, and forms fades. Teaching activity is called upon to achieve a form in the circularity of interaction. The educational encounter seems to assume an elongated configuration (that of a dance),¹⁹ which is born from the flexibility and pathicity of the subject—both of the teacher and his culture, and of the learner; an intuition and transmission of the “objective” world is replaced by a “stipulated and negotiable” vision of the world. Surely, the risk that an educational act of this kind would allow itself to be caught up in an indefinite circular process, in a wandering that has as its objective wandering itself, is evident, even in the words of Edgar Morin.²⁰ And this would seem to be, in the final analysis, the mainly desired form for the global age: an open form, based on symmetry.

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In this perspective, the review of the role of the teacher and the doctor seems inevitable. All the more so in a society of “moral foreigners,”²¹ for which the high degree of freedom as a principal value detracts from the “arrogance”

19 The examples of dance and of the game of chess are used by Weizsäcker to indicate the dynamics of the *Gestaltkreis*, the pathic dimension of the subject and the indeterminacy of the countermeasures that govern the relationship between doctor and patient, teacher and student: “Keines der beiden Tanzenden kann zweifelsfrei als der durchweg führende Verursacher der resultierenden gemeinsamen Bewegungen bezeichnet werden; die schließliche Bewegungsform möge immerhin ein im Tanzsaal ausgezogener Kreis sein; aber jedes richtet sich auch nach dem anderen.” (Weizsäcker 1997, 250).

20 Morin’s pedagogy of wandering rightly rejects learning as a transmission of knowledge or as a cumulative collection of data; however, it is problematic “to understand how this reflexive feedback must translate into educational programs, how it can become a concrete field of educational action” (Spadolini 2018, 19; my translation).

21 This is the famous expression used by Hugo Tristram Engelhardt for the subjects of contemporary pluralistic societies, characterized by secularization and references of multiple and contrasting values; see Engelhardt 1996.

of knowledge—both of the doctor and of the teacher. Indeed, the goodness of the action seems to fall under the absolute scrutiny of the one to whom it is addressed, so that the criteria of rightness and opportunity risk dissolving in the presence of the will (of the patient and the learner, as well as of their families). This attention, which is increasingly focused on learning and care methods and on the doctor-patient relationship, however, denotes a deep crisis. As Paul Watzlawick already pointed out, “it seems that the more spontaneous and ‘healthy’ a relationship, the more the relational aspect of communication recedes into the background. Conversely, ‘sick’ relationships are characterized by a constant struggle about the nature of the relationship, with the content aspect of communication becoming less and less important.” (Watzlawick et al. 1997, 52). The freedom of the patient/learner (and their families) risks becoming the new polar star, on whose altar the original asymmetry is sacrificed; for a symmetry, vice versa, behind which is hidden the zeroing of the I-You relationship as a fundamental act and original scene.

64 As medicine has long shown, behind the rethinking of the asymmetrical relationship lies the need to overcome the Cartesian caesura, which has taken the form of one-way paternalism. It has also highlighted how this rethinking can dangerously slide towards a new form of asymmetry, which has as its main assumption the semi-unconditioned freedom of the patient. The fact that this can lead to the dissolution of the fundamental I-You relationship, putting at risk the original pact between doctor and patient, teacher and pupil, is testified by the defensive declinations of medicine and education. The educator cannot accept these, if he keeps alive the objective of responding to the appeal, to the original scene (*Urszene*),²² by which he is questioned, even in spite of himself.

22 At the basis of the educational act, we could say, there is, as in medicine, a “methodical original scene,” in which a person in need of “orientation in the world” turns to a man who could help them. There is an “original phenomenon” (*Urphänomen*) that is not imposed by the educator, but to which he, being asked, is called to respond, taking charge of the person facing him (Weizsäcker). The beginning of the biographical scene, however, is not, as in the case of the doctor, a creature’s “pain,” which divides the sick person from his neighbor and from the world, plunging him into a state of exclusion, but the original indigence of those who “come into the world,” of those who precede the subject/object separation and the transcendental philosophical model of intentionality.

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SCHOOLS WITHOUT QUALITY?

ELEMENTS FOR A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper is a phenomenological exploration to develop an alternative understanding of the concept of quality of school education. My claim is that the quality of education in schools depends fundamentally on the link between intersubjective relations at school and the self-shaping of students. The paper proposes phenomenological descriptions of pages in school notebooks and biographical stories. These descriptions, enriched by the notions of participation and exemplarity, make the

quality of the school emerge from a specific way in which intersubjective relationships make studies and school subjects meaningful, allowing students to experience leaps in quality with respect to self-shaping, aiding them in building a personal and new perspective about the world.

Keywords: quality, school, intersubjective relationships, students, self-shaping.

Šole brez kakovosti? Elementi za fenomenološko raziskavo koncepta kakovosti v izobraževanju

Povzetek

70 Pričujoči prispevek je fenomenološka raziskava, ki želi razviti alternativno razumevanje koncepta kakovosti šolskega izobraževanja. Zastopam trditev, da je kakovost izobraževanja v šolah v temelju odvisna od povezave med intersubjektivnimi odnosi v šoli in samo-oblikovanjem šolarjev. Prispevek predstavlja fenomenološke deskripcije posameznih strani v šolskih zvezkih in biografskih zgodb. Tovrstne deskripcije, obogatene z idejami sodelovanja in zgledovanja, omogočajo, da se kvaliteta šole prikaže glede na specifičen način, na katerega intersubjektivni odnosi osmišljajo učenje in šolske predmete, pri čemer šolarji z ozirom na njihovo samo-oblikovanje lahko izkusijo kakovostni preskok, kakršen pripomore k izgradnji osebnega in novega pogleda na svet.

Ključne besede: kakovost, šola, intersubjektivni odnosi, šolarji, samo-oblikovanje.

1. Introduction

What do policymakers mean when they use the concept of school quality? They usually refer to quality in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in relation to the performance and results of a school system, measured through standardized tests and controls (Ehren, Perryman and Shackleton 2015; Lingard, Martino, Rezai-Rashti and Sellar 2015). Some studies (Andersen, Dahler-Larsen and Pedersen 2009; Chapaman 2002; Croxford, Grek and Jeelani Shaik 2009) also use terms such as “quality,” “quality control,” “good education,” “improvement,” “efficacy,” using them mostly uncritically.

Academic literature has asked the question about the notion of quality in education and has begun to examine its meanings. Hart (1997) argues that the notion of quality refers to the practice of controlling the goodness of educational action in ways borrowed from industrial activity; consequently, quality is conceived on the basis of standards, indicators, and measurements: procedures that would certify the quality of a school. This quality assurance apparatus in the educational field, argues Hart, would be unrelated to value judgments on education. That element that allows us to verify the basis upon which we say that something is of quality is therefore missing.

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Alexander (2015), on the other hand, recalls that the concept of quality has been circulating for almost twenty years in international educational policies: since the year 2000, through the UNESCO “Education for All” program, quality is presented as the element that represents the heart of education. In these documents, quality refers to the increase in enrollments in compulsory education, learning outcomes, and the reduction of the school dropout rate. However, with regard to the process of teaching and learning itself, quality remains an elusive concept; Alexander concludes his analysis by claiming that the term “quality” is manifested as a mantra: it is repeated frequently, but paradoxically, we find ourselves disoriented and confused with respect to understanding what qualifies the school in terms of quality. That is to say, what makes it rich in values and what are the precise elements that compose its quality, a bit like the society described in Musil’s novel *Man without Quality*.

This problematic element is not only related to a semantic aspect of the concept employed. Simons and Masschelein (2006) showed, through a

philosophical exploration based on the Foucauldian approach of the ontology of the present,¹ the systemic and procedural implications of educational policies based on the concept of quality: they involve a conception of the work of educational institutions that leads to mere performance and production of results.

From these premises, a problem regarding the concept of quality in education emerges: on the one hand, the direct relationship with the phenomenon to which it refers is absent, and at the same time there is no reference to the value criteria that help to identify school quality; on the other hand, the pragmatic dimension of the concept of quality shows limits with respect to the complexity of the educational phenomenon (Biesta 2014). It is as if the concept of quality in school education would ultimately be empty.

A recent paper (Anagnostopulos, Lingard and Sellar 2016) claims that quality in education would be a notion in dispute with respect to the different *orders of value*² that emerge in the arguments that animate the debate on school policies. In this way, the authors help to bring the discussion around the

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concept of quality back to the normative dimension of educational policies. To focus on the dimension of this value it is worth addressing the issue of quality in schools by first asking “what is at stake in school education?” Biesta opens up a problematization of the concept of quality by way of provocation: “Do we value what we measure or measure what we value?” (Biesta 2010; 2014).

In the first part of the question—“Do we value what we measure?”—what is considered valuable is determined by the results of measurement. For example, when a score obtained by standardized tests is meant to account for the quality of education provided by each school. In such a case, the results of measuring seem to become the focus of what to expect from education. The second part of the question—“Do we measure what we value?”—refers to a way of

1 It is an approach that proposes not to proceed too hastily with a critique of the present on the basis of some assumptions or ideals. Rather, it directs attention to what is familiar in everyday practices and that becomes invisible because of its everyday occurrence. Cf. Simons and Masschelein 2006, in particular pages: 293–294.

2 The authors refer to a theoretical elaboration that provides a taxonomy of the various orders of value that may be at stake in argumentative disputes regarding public policies to be adopted.

conceiving the measurement of criteria in education which is subordinated to an act of valuation. In other words, it contemplates the possibility that what is judged, discussed, and agreed upon as valuable precedes its measurement. This does not de-authorize measurements, but it does put them in the perspective of being tools with the pretension of saying something about an eminently complex and intersubjective phenomenon.

This way of approaching the measurement of school quality can benefit from the phenomenological principle of going “to the things themselves.” In this case that would mean going towards the thing to which the term quality refers to in the context of this paper: education at school. The present article then develops arguments in favor of a shift from taking an approach based on the quantity of quality (tests, indicators, standards, and procedures) to a phenomenological approach to the quality of school education.

The purpose of the paper is to develop a beginning of a phenomenological description that better explains the meanings and values of the concept of quality which precede and transcend quality assurance policies at school. In particular, the thesis of this paper is that the quality of school education is fundamentally linked to intersubjective relationships that are lived at school and to their contribution to the self-shaping of students.

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I will develop this thesis in the following way: first, an account will be given detailing the type of phenomenological approach that supports exploration; I will indicate which are the methodological criteria that guide the phenomenological descriptions provided, and I will declare which primary and secondary phenomenological literature will help me to make explicit the meanings of the examined educational phenomena .

Secondly, a phenomenological description will be given of intersubjective relationships in scholastic situations that express specific aspects of the quality of school education: to do this, I will resort to a page of school notebooks and excerpts from the essay *Lora di lezione (The Lesson Time)* by Massimo Recalcati (2014).

Finally, I will show the ways in which intersubjective relationships at school contribute to the personal education of the student. Here, the phenomenological evidence will be a further excerpt from Massimo Recalcati’s essay. In light of the descriptions of school quality, I will propose a brief critical exploration of

school quality evaluation, using a text from the autobiographical novel *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt (2006).

This phenomenological exercise in the philosophy of education involves exploring the meanings of the concept of quality of education in schools that are not sufficiently taken into account by school policies, and that also want to contribute to the philosophical debate with respect to understanding what good education is (Biesta 2010; 2014; Ingold 2018; Masschelein and Simons 2013). It is then an exploration that begins to formulate the creative ontology of school (Simons and Masschelein 2006) which intends to propose other ways of conceiving school and its quality: a quality that has very little to do with the premises of policy highlighted in an article by Simons and Masschelein (2006), but which shows, starting from what can happen in the lived experience of school education, its ontological and normative aspects.

2. Methodological framework

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The development of this thesis involves a particular exercise of phenomenology as a philosophical discipline in at least two ways: on the one hand, it is an effort to describe the educational phenomenon, to stick to the thing itself of school education. On the other hand, I will use theoretical elaborations of phenomenological literature, both primary and secondary.

The epistemological attitude that feeds the descriptions that I will carry out can be expressed with the following sentence: “A subject is facing a real world, he refers to it in acts in which he captures this world, takes a position with respect to it, reflects on it, etc [...]” (Geiger 2000, 232; my translation). In facing something, the position that the subject assumes is an evaluative one—the quality shown allows us to say if something has value, to what degree it has value, or if it is worthless. Thus, phenomenology helps us to understand the notion of quality: it emerges from that position with respect to the phenomena that recognizes in them what is good, valorous, and valuable.³ The quality of a

3 Phenomenological literature addresses this question by developing the analysis of the state of affairs as “referents of propositional attitudes, such as assumptions and judgments [...] states of affairs are the referents or semantic values of declarative sentences.” (Salice 2015b) This implies an analytical attention to the “value instantiated

phenomenon to be described needs, *a parte objecti*, the appearance of things and, *a parte subjecti*, the subject's experience with the thing in question. To describe the quality of a phenomenon it is necessary to look at that specific phenomenon and its manifestation. In this way quality can be, not so much defined (as is done only through logic, or through a merely conceptual exercise), but described, remaining faithful to the phenomena themselves (De Monticelli 2018).

The first important point, then, is to clarify the descriptive character of the phenomenological exercise. What distinguishes this approach, its philosophical nature, is the will to describe the essential features of the phenomenon in such a way that they are valid both for those who describe it and at an intersubjective level.

I will take some methodological ideas from the reconstruction of the methodological position of Alexander Pfänder, carried out by Moritz Geiger.⁴ These ideas represent, for the exploration that will take place in this paper, real working tools, understood as ways of proceeding in the description of the phenomena that develops the central thesis of the article.

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The first aspect is the cognitive dedication to the thing itself; it is a matter of letting the thing and only the thing express itself, without any previous construction. In the case of the exploration that we intend to conduct, it means dedicating ourselves to the knowledge of the quality of school education by letting emerge what is more and more specific to school education. To argue the thesis of the paper, the thing that cognitive attention will be devoted to is intersubjective relations at school. This option is justified by what the literature has emphasized as one of its distinctive features: the relationality and dialogicity of educational acts in school (Biesta 2014; Ingold 2018), aspects that lead to a formulation like the one offered in the paper “It’s all about relationships” (Sellar 2012).

The second aspect of the phenomenological exercise is the rejection of the principle of *nothing more than*. To describe phenomenologically what is given or manifests itself, we must not resort to previously established reductions. To

by that unique combination of experiences or *Erlebnisse* which determined a given state of things.” (Salice 2015a, 260).

explain this aspect of Pfänder's methodical position, Geiger gives the example of the State to show the error of adopting the principle of *nothing more than* in the analysis of phenomena: "The State is nothing more than a legal organization" (Geiger 2000, 223; my translation), when, rather, the State is the bearer of a series of lively relationships, of a cultural and social nature, which are rooted in time. Similarly, the methodological intention is to start from a position that excludes reductions like those of the following proposition: quality is *nothing more than* a series of results that can be objectively measured, as well as certain indicators and standards established by a Ministry.

76 An attentive reader could use this methodological principle against the thesis that I want to argue, arguing that it identifies quality in *nothing more than* the way in which intersubjective relationships contribute to the personal self-shaping of the student. I reply that the exploration that I will begin later indicates that the link between intersubjective relationships and personal self-shaping is a fundamental component of the quality of education that must be explored and clarified in its richness and that this analysis opens up to further similar investigations regarding other fundamental components of the school; for example, the educational project, the curriculum, the relationship between directors and teaching staff, etc.

A third aspect is related to the indication that the concepts with which we are dealing reproduce the essential traits of something, but do not create them: "phenomenology is convinced of the fact that the essence can be given on the same level as the immediate concretion [...] the universal essences and the relationships of essence are found in the singularity and in a certain sense completely in the singularity." (Geiger 2000, 226; my translation) This means that the analysis of an aspect regarding educational phenomenon opens up a wealth of data that can illuminate the meaning of the quality of education at school. This implies that the quality, for example, of a lesson, an educational project, or informal activities carried out at school is shown through those essential traits of their quality or through what makes them good educational activities and proposals.

The way in which Pfänder specifically helps us to grasp the quality of the thing is his descriptive use of analogies. For example, he speaks of "clarity," "transparency," "splendor," "tenacity" to describe the acts of the human soul. It

should be noted that it is not a question of mere literary resources, as it might seem at first sight. To legitimately use an analogy, a link is needed between the phenomenal appearance of the thing being described and the terminological expression that comes from other types of experience, otherwise it falls into an empty homonymy (Geiger 2000). In accordance with this approach, some of our descriptions will use this procedure, using expressions such as attention, generosity, and presence with the other.

The realization of this phenomenological exercise therefore implies specific things that must be done. First of all, I will describe, based on the principles and criteria outlined above, some examples and cases related to the world of school life: analysis of specific school objects (notebooks and their content), and of secondary literature (i.e., non-phenomenological) which accounts for the experience at school. In particular, I will refer to school notebooks collected on the website *Quaderni Aperti* and excerpts from the book *L'ora di lezione* by Massimo Recalcati: this essay offers a look at the role of the school as an educational agency and a place of subject formation. This text has a peculiar feature that justifies the choice: it uses the author's scholastic experience, the experience that took place in a high school in a suburban district of Milan. It is therefore a scholastic experience that took place in socially complicated contexts, which has the added value of describing the educational phenomenon not in a romantic or idealized way. The examples chosen are an expression of a possible type of school quality in contexts considered difficult and have been selected precisely because of the connection they show between the intersubjective dimension and the self-shaping of students. Furthermore, I will resort to classical phenomenological literature (especially Scheler) and contemporary (secondary) literature on the subject of intersubjectivity and how it contributes to the formation of the person (Bellini 2017; 2018a; 2018b; Cusinato 2011; De Warren 2017).

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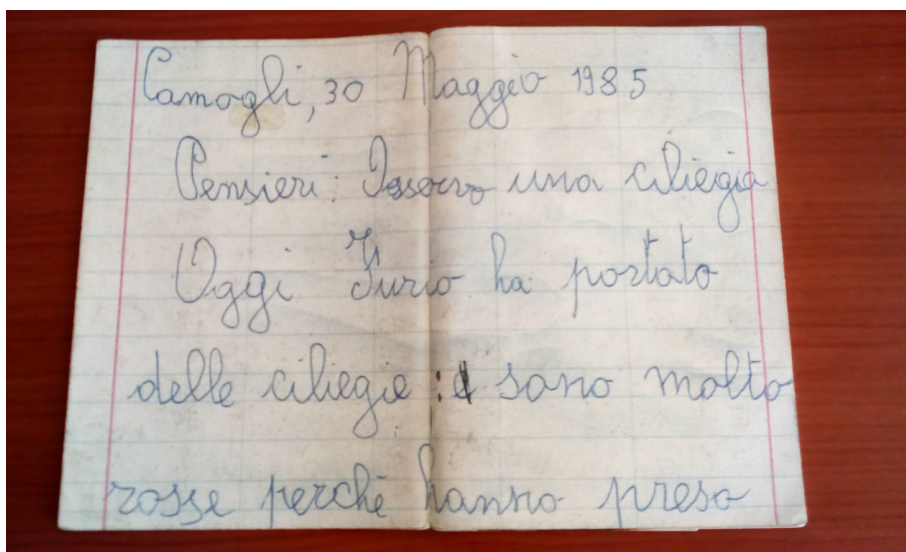
Scheler's analysis (2009, 2011) of the exemplary will also help to enrich the exploration of the quality of school education because the notion of exemplarity has been taken up in philosophy of education (Bruzzzone 2015; Puolimatka 2008). Finally, De Warren (2017) with his description of participation experiences, Cusinato's (2011) essay on the concept of exemplariness, and Bellini's studies on the link between intersubjectivity and

the concept of exemplariness will offer further phenomenological elements for the understanding of school quality as the link between intersubjectivity and the self-shaping of the student.

Through these instruments, the contribution I want to offer is not so much a theoretical deepening of the contributions of phenomenological thought to education, and of certain notions elaborated by it, but, rather, I propose to show cases that phenomenologically describe and illuminate in a particular and enriching way the understanding of the quality of education at school.

3. Intersubjective relationships at school

3.1. *Intersubjective relationships at school according to manners of participation*



A school pupil writes about his observation of a basket of cherries in a notebook. He shares with his teacher the fact that Furio had brought home many cherries; expresses his astonishment at the color of the fruit and attributes it to the fact that they have been exposed to a lot of sun. In this handwritten text, in which the date and the city when and where it was written can be seen, the entry is written in airy calligraphy with large letters. We can also note the corrections of the teacher who adds some points and deletes a

conjunction that is not necessary in writing the text. The teacher, as an adult, helps children express their story properly. In this short text the student tells about his experience of the world starting from their encounter with a cherry. We can also imagine that this text was read aloud to the whole class.

The phenomenon shown in this notebook page emerges as an opportunity for students to hear, think, tell, read, write. In the example shown, the student of this notebook has discovered, thanks to the task assigned to him by teacher, an ability to express and share a personal experience; the teacher's corrections help the child learn the appropriate expressive modalities, and require particular attention towards, not only the form of writing, but also to its content, to better help the student's expressive capacities. Furthermore, the subject of the description in the notebook lets in both the professors and the classmates who have heard it enter in the student's world.

This page of notebook shows, then, an intersubjective relationship between student and professor, but also between student, professor, and other pupils. A relationship that unfolds around an assigned task which concerns, on the one hand, an exercise in the Italian language, linked to the taught school subject; on the other hand, the intersubjective relationship and the task feed upon the student's vital experience. I call the intersubjective dynamics, following De Warren (2017) and Bellini (2018a; 2018b), with the term "participation." A part of recent phenomenological literature has developed an understanding of original and useful participation experiences to illuminate what happens at school through everyday intersubjective relationships.

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Bellini (2018b) offers us a description of participation based on the thesis that the formation of the person is a phenomenon that occurs in a co-constituted way with others. This thesis has an important impact on the understanding of quality in education, since it implies that education (understood as a process and phenomenon that in one way or another contributes to the formation of the person) is a phenomenon that emerges from a relational dimension; therefore, we do not educate ourselves, but are always educated with others starting from intersubjective relationships.

But how can intersubjective relations at school manifest an educational dimension? The phenomenological analysis of the experience of participation linked to what was written in the student's notebook and read aloud in front

of the class, opens a path towards this understanding and offers us a starting point to explore an aspect of the quality of the school. Participation is that phenomenon in which the subject recognizes the necessity of the others in his life. More precisely, in which “we need the Other in order to achieve our own proper self-constitution and the Other needs us to likewise achieve her own self-constitution” (De Warren 2017, 218, 222). Education that takes place at school finds in this description one of its fundamental pillars: here the intersubjective relationship of the educational type is played both between teachers and students, and between companions. At school, the teacher needs the student to make sense of his being an educator and the student needs the teacher as a figure that offers new ways of exploring the world; at the same time, in the relationship between classmates, perspectives are discovered that were not included in one’s own personal horizon.

80 Bellini comments on the passage from De Warren cited above: “Participation is the idea that other persons perform a reorchestration of myself and such a reorchestration gives me an *Ich kann* that I could not imagine as possible for myself.” (Bellini 2017, 84–85) This definition can be clarified and better understood in its educational meaning referring to the experience itself shown on the school notebook page. The growth of a person, the development of the ability to describe and share a personal experience with others, as well as other things that can happen at school. For example, the adoption of a new perspective on the world, or the discovery of pleasure or the difficulties of working in a group, happen not so much because this was a direct goal, but precisely through the relationality of the relationships between teachers and students, and between students themselves. In particular, the relationship between teacher and student, which develops around a disciplinary topic, such as the text of a description in one’s notebook, but also an equation, a musical score, the problem of global warming, requires the presence of the one with the other, and represents the beating heart of school education.

There is also another aspect that the notebook page written and read to the classmates shows us. The attention that the teacher places on the child’s text, but also the attention that the teacher requires from other pupils, leads us, in some way, into the life of the other. This experience can be described in the way De Warren does when he says that “wives, husbands, partners, children,

friends, and companions – these are various forms in which the Other lives in me, as participating in the constitution of my own being.” (De Warren 2017, 223–224). In light of the description offered we can imagine that the *companions* are just the schoolmates, but we could also add the teachers. At this level of description, we can say that at school one begins to experiment and learn that education of the subject is linked to concrete participation, actively recognized, welcoming, and judgmental, that one lives with other human beings.

Therefore, the experience of participation in school, in agreement with the analysis I have carried out, means the involvement in intersubjective relationships that lead to discoveries of new possibilities for the students and for the sharing of life.

3.2. The role of exemplariness in intersubjective relationships at school

You had made your entrance among us brutalized by a boring and stupidly severe School, like a celestial body that came from another universe. What were you doing there? I have asked myself many times. Here among us, in Quarto Oggiaro, in the extreme suburbs of Milan. I still remember your face lighting up in the reading of the poets in the classroom. During your lessons I did physical and mental experience of knowledge as nourishment for the first time. [...] You taught us that Desire without commitment is only a whim and that insecurity increases with knowledge and not vice versa, because there is no knowing that it can fully absorb life, because authentic research increases doubts without ever having the claim to solve them. You taught us that words carry with them an unknown power that exceeds any explanation and that we must learn to respect and learn to enjoy. With sweetness you introduced me—a rebellious young man as I was to every form of control—to the patient and severe discipline of the study. (Recalcati 2014, 135–136 and 139; my translation)

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The student remembers his teacher as the encounter between two worlds: that of a suburban school (which does not fascinate students, but rather treats

them with stupid severity) with this very special teacher. A meeting with the students of a class. Recalcati recounts the encounter using the “us:” the memory of the relationship with this teacher is his very personal memory, but Recalcati knows well that it was not a private experience but concerned an enlarged intersubjectivity. The first thing he describes about the teacher is her face that lights up when he reads poems. A teacher of literature, in high school, who strikes her students for how she treats her teaching subject. A trait of the intersubjective relationship that is realized in this scholastic experience emerges: its exemplariness. Max Scheler’s analysis of the concept of the exemplary can help the description of this type of intersubjective relationship at school.

82 Exemplariness concerns a way of being that can shape others; we are not dealing here with a question of moral example or leadership. “While the effectiveness of the command takes place in the wide and visible field of public life, in the tumultuous market of the so-called history, the efficacy of exemplarity is on the contrary obscure, mysterious: exemplarity moves and changes in the depths of the soul of every man and every human group.” (Scheler 2011, 20; my translation). Exemplariness, according to Scheler, is offered as experience, as a mixture of positive value elements and a specific empirical embodiment with which one enters into a relationship.

In this sense, the teacher described by Recalcati becomes “exemplar for me on the condition that the eidetic of possibilities that they might exemplify have an impact on my own process of self-shaping by making me aware of something crucial regarding my individuality” (Bellini 2018a, 222). This professor manifests herself to her students as a “dynamic center of personal and unrepeatable orientation” (Cusinato 2011, 24; my translation). Her enlightenment with respect to her subject is a sign of it, as well as what succeeds in bringing its lessons to life: it offers its knowledge as a food that nourishes, that supports students on the path of opening themselves to the world in an emotionally colored way according to perspectives hitherto unknown.

This is an intersubjective and exemplary relationship between the teacher and the subject that takes the form of an innovative force (Cusinato 2011). The teacher and the teacher at school have been able to say that the students have come to know about it: in this intersubjective experience, they experience school quality.

In fact, it is through this particular strength, charisma, or ability of fascination that the exemplary relationship teaches; it performs one of the educational tasks of the school: “exemplars’ strength embodies a space where I can maieutically shape and reshape my self” (Bellini 2018 b, 225). Indeed, the student Recalcati recognizes the effect of this strength his own self.⁵ We can think that the student comes to recognize the value of this experience, consciously, only many years later. But this is one of the traits of the exemplarity of educational action in general and of scholastic action in particular: it acts explicitly and at the same time makes a karstic action. The quality of this educational work shows itself many years later, moving on a long-term axis over time. Even the exemplary, according to Scheler’s analysis, does not act, unlike the figure of the leader or the model, in a conscious way, placing the explicit intention to exercise this type of charisma. Rather it is in the intersubjective relationship that someone recognizes the traits of the exemplary that speak to his ego, and it is this subject that interacts with the exemplarity and chooses to begin a journey that leads to changes in his own personality.

The author-student Recalcati then shows that the exemplary educational relationship is manifested in a concrete way through gestures and attitudes that are emotionally connoted: generosity in presenting the subject of teaching, gentleness, and discipline. These traits do not operate in a magical way, but challenge the individuality of the students, calling them to the study, the importance and taste of cultural preparation, in this case through the role of the literary word, but it could be through any other form of teaching: a musical exercise, a mathematical formula, a history investigation.

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5 Recalcati in his essay already offers accurate analysis of the quality of lesson time, which creates tension between the school as a place of formation and the institutionalized school that uses various evaluative procedures. His descriptions are mainly based on a psychoanalytic perspective. In this paper, I show an enrichment of Recalcati’s analysis in an explicitly phenomenological perspective.

4. Self-shaping emerging from intersubjective relationships at school

In this section I intend to explore the ways in which the notion of quality school education can be enriched and understood, making explicit the connection between intersubjective relations at school, described according to participation methods, particularly exemplarity, and the personal training of the student.

84 You came to see our theater show on a Saturday afternoon at Quarto Oggiaro. The principal had granted permission to keep the school open and there was a festive air. I had written an unlikely script in a visionary style and with strong political tension. At the time for me, writing was like shooting; it was called *The Baltic in the eye of the overseer*. Three quarters of an hour of monologues, fragments of dreams, quotations, fragments of life of the movement [...] But it was the first fruit of our meeting. You had just arrived among us. [...] I would no longer have been the idiot of the family, the different, abnormal, crooked child who threw his parents into distressed worry. I could sign something with my name that I had generated since our meeting. (Recalcati 2014, 140–141; my translation).

This scholastic scene describes well the effects of the encounter between the exemplary nature of the teacher and her student. Here, the exemplary shows its more precise educational and formative traits. The description given above, explicitly recognizes that the theatrical work that was about to be staged in that suburban school was a consequence of the encounter with the exemplary as described in the previous section. The exemplariness and the intersubjective relationship in which it lives is very different from the type of relationship between the leader and follower. In the exemplary case it is not a matter of copying the person who embodies the sample, but, rather: “the exemplar makes herself the concrete personal presence of the opportunity to reorchestrate myself” (Bellini 2018b, 225).

In this scene, Recalcati, the former student, describes a concrete form of the reorganization of his own person like an experience of a leap: from a severe

and negative judgment that others made about him to a new and positive evaluation of his being in the world. This leap was possible thanks to this intersubjective experience at school that in the forms of exemplariness acts as “forerunners who push us to listen to the call of our person” (Cusinato 2011, 18; my translation).

This process of change, and the concrete sign of the theatrical work written and staged in front of a school community, takes shape starting from an experience lived at school. The teacher’s way of addressing the freedom of the students he or she meets. In this capacity to provoke, in the etymological sense of the word, that is, to call towards something and in its favor, the intersubjective relationship with the exemplar unfolds its educational role even at school. In this case, the educational contribution consists of the abandonment of political positions that favored violent protest towards the channeling of those same concerns through cultural modes learned at school, into positive and constructive expressions; and for this very reason they represent a rediscovered subjectivity.

In the case of the school, then, the relationship is intersubjective, but it also includes a third element that is part of the educational relationship: the disciplinary topic. The disciplinary topic is that element around which the intersubjective relationships move, we could say that it constitutes the working tool of the intersubjective scholastic relationship. But school disciplines are not something inert, they are ways of accessing the world, ways to explore their meaning.

85

It is from this participatory dynamic that aspects arise which, as I have illustrated in the previous section, the person could not imagine possible for himself. Participation in this particular type of educational relationship is what reveals the personal “I can” of the student. The discovery of the “I can” shows the quality of the intersubjective relationship at school.

The discovery of the “I can” that characterizes the quality of school education could be described by the words of Gustave Thibon when he speaks of the educated man. “The educated man is one who establishes new and personal relationships between the data of the education.” (Thibon 1965, 170; my translation) The quality of school education is seen in the varying ways in which pupils’ personal responses to data are proportionate to school subjects,

for example in writing about a subject, conducting research, or participating in a school project. These responses express the culture that is being formed in students and can vary, not only based on personal skills, but also on the type of intersubjective relationships experienced at school, particularly with teachers.

It could be argued, then, that intersubjective relationships at school, traversed both by the exemplary, but also by the modality of participation, allow us to experiment with quality leaps. When an athlete improves their athletic abilities, or a musician improves their musical performance, it can be said that a “qualitative leap” takes place—the way in which something is done changes for the better. In educational terms we could say that the success of an exercise is not only something that is learned after having been studied, but is also an improvement in attitude: personal resources, heightened perspectives about the world that have been discovered and matured thanks to certain experiences at school configure quality leaps. It is a metaphor that captures well the *life-giving effect on the subjectivity* of an educational experience prolonged over time.

- 86 The approach to the quality of standards and quantitative measurement of results thinks of quality as being placed on a continuum that moves, gradually increasing or decreasing the levels of results. In the understanding of quality as a process that leads to quality leaps, such as, for example, the writing of a theatrical text to be presented at school, and the result of the intersubjective experience of exemplariness, the extent of the qualitative leap was not possible to predict and calculate in advance. What is possible to put in place is the unfolding of intersubjective relationships that lead to “an increase in qualitative differences [...] only through the strength of this exemplary, however small it may be, which can hope to perform some form of non-authoritarian formative function, capable of producing differentiation” (Cusinato 2011, 10–11; my translation). The quality of educational action is therefore properly seen in the subjects that embody it, through the intersubjective experiences made during the school years, each in a unique and particular way, rather than exclusively based on pre-established standards to be achieved.
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5. Implications for the assessment of school quality

The concept of quality school policies, as I reported in the introduction, is linked to procedures for evaluating and controlling school activities. In the light of the arguments presented in the previous sections, the following question arises: how can the previously described quality be assessed within the school (which is, in any case, an institutional apparatus)? And by what criteria is it possible to formulate an opinion on this type of quality?

Addressing these questions goes beyond the purposes of this paper. However, it is worth dwelling on some implications of this question, showing a possible way to weigh quality evaluation criteria. The phenomenological evidence I want to present regarding this aspect is offered by a novel by Frank McCourt, in which the Irish writer retraces his years of teaching in peripheral New York schools. I would like to describe this scene because it allows me to conclude the exploration carried out, on the one hand, taking up and reformulating the question with respect to the understanding of quality in school education, and, on the other hand, showing the complexity of the question of evaluation:

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The big puzzle at the end of the term is how does the teacher arrive at a grade?

I'll tell you how I arrive at a grade. First, how was your attendance? Even if you sat quietly in the back and thought about the discussions and the readings, you surely learned something. Second, did you participate? Did you get up there and read on Fridays? Anything. Stories, essays, poetry, plays. Third, did you comment on the work of your classmates? Fourth, and this is up to you, can you reflect on this experience and ask yourself what you learned? Fifth, did you just sit there and dream? If you did, give yourself credit.

This is when the teacher turns serious and asks the Big Question: What is education, anyway? What are we doing in this school? You can say you're trying to graduate so that you can go to college and prepare for a career. But, fellow students, it's more than that. I've had to ask myself what the hell I'm doing in the classroom. I've worked out an equation for myself. On the left side of the blackboard I print a capital F, on the

right side another capital F. I draw an arrow from left to right, from FEAR to FREEDOM.

I don't think anyone achieves complete freedom, but what I am trying to do with you is drive fear into a corner. (McCourt 2006, 253)

88 It would seem that the evaluation of the quality of school experiences is a question that the protagonists of the lessons and activities carried out at school can face with greater knowledge of the facts, compared to the standards established externally by both national and international governmental organizations. McCourt's literary description reminds us of the convenience of asking the student about the meaning of the lesson he attended. This formulation of the question poses a critical question to quality assurance policies: how do individual schools recognize and facilitate their internal capacity to evaluate their educational offers without oppressing them with bureaucratic and standardized procedures? How do they achieve a balance between the need for evaluation and the impossibility of giving an immediate and complete account of an educational action that, as such, operates in the long term? Asking these questions is one of the fruits of phenomenological exploration conducted on the concept of quality.

On the other hand, McCourt's words return a question of the genuine philosophy of education, about purposes and what is in play, after all, in the educational experience of a school. McCourt seems to tell us that maybe they can give technical-professional lessons, propose excellent curricula for the integral training of students, put emphasis on techniques and methodologies to achieve certain learning: they are important and necessary elements. However, the quality of the scholastic experience is measured in the discovery of one's freedom and uniqueness in the folds of intersubjective relationships; freedom and uniqueness that emerge with difficulty, in a tortuous and almost never linear way, that coincides with new possibilities of one's self and of living with others.

6. Conclusions

The phenomenological descriptions reported in this article show how intersubjective relationships are the field in which the quality of the school's

educational action unfolds. This field can be described through the experience of participation and exemplariness. Both play an important role in the experience of intersubjective relationships typical of the school environment and that bring out what the school can offer.

These experiences of intersubjective relationships help us to maintain that the school educates in a quality manner, so we can appreciate how good its actions are through the way they contribute to the education of students.

A further question also opens up, starting from the analysis of intersubjective relations at school: how do teachers learn from these relationships? How do teachers themselves draw new thoughts and questions, ideas and develop human, cultural and professional education based on the quality of intersubjective relationships that live at school?

In this paper, it was shown that, to take up the words of McCourt, the quality at school as a path from fear to freedom manifests itself through self-shaping of the student that is realized as a cultural education, understood as the ability to discover relationships, personal and new, starting from the knowledge of school subjects and the relationships that are lived at school.

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PHENOMENOLOGY OF ONLINE EDUCATION

THE OTHER'S LOOK (J.-P. SARTRE) AND INTERSUBJECTIVE
PERCEPTUAL PHANTASY (E. HUSSERL)

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Abstract

This article applies classical phenomenological notions for new modes of communication, namely, online learning. It is stated that empirical communication of online learning presupposes a multilayered transcendental intersubjective structure which might be fruitfully approached via phenomenological projects of affection by the Other's look and perceptual imagination. While a number of phenomenologists have contributed to the thesis of the article, Husserl and Sartre are of special importance for

the author. Hence, part of this article focuses on theoretical analysis of some more (the Other's look in *Being and Nothingness*) and less (intersubjective perceptual phantasy in *Husserliana XXIII*) known phenomenological concepts, while the other presents an attempt of actual phenomenology of online education and the unpredictable nature of the internet.

Keywords: phenomenology, online education, the Other, imagination, intersubjectivity.

Fenomenologija spletnega izobraževanja. Pogled Drugega (J.-P. Sartre) in intersubjektivna perceptivna domišljija (E. Husserl)

Povzetek

94 Članek klasične fenomenološke ideje aplicira na nove načine komuniciranja, in sicer na spletno izobraževanje. Zagovarja mnenje, da empirično komuniciranje znotraj spletnega učenja predpostavlja večplastno transcendentalno intersubjektivno strukturo, ki se ji plodno lahko približamo s pomočjo fenomenoloških razmišljanj glede afekcije s pogledom Drugega in perceptivne imaginacije. Medtem ko so k tezi, ki jo zastopa članek, prispevali številni fenomenologi, sta za avtorja posebnega pomena zlasti Husserl in Sartre. Zato se prispevek, na eni strani, deloma posveča teoretski analizi nekaterih bolj (pogled Drugega v knjigi *Bit in nič*) ali manj (intersubjektivna perceptivna domišljija v zvezku *Husserliana XXIII*) znanih fenomenoloških konceptov, medtem ko, na drugi strani, predstavlja poskus dejanske fenomenologije spletnega izobraževanja in nepredvidljive narave svetovnega spleta.

Ključne besede: fenomenologija, spletno izobraževanje, Drugi, imaginacija, intersubjektivnost.

“Every look directed toward me is manifested in connection with the appearance of a sensible form in our perceptive field, but contrary to what might be expected, it is not connected with any determinate form.”

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness*

Introduction

It is well known that during the 20th century phenomenology established itself as one of the most wide-spread and adaptive methodologies, thus fulfilling the academic dream of its founder Edmund Husserl. On the other hand, the last decades saw a massive sprawl of technological innovations, which eventually transformed virtually every aspect of civilized human existence. Hence, it is not only theoretically tempting but also socially vital to rethink several more or less prominent phenomenological projects in the face of these new horizons of human praxis and interactions.

In the time just after the “existential turn” of phenomenology, the exploration of the Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) really began to take over almost entire continental philosophy. Initiated by such thinkers as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others, it broke with the solipsistic tone of early phenomenology and began to denote the primordial experience in terms of paraphernalia and engagement with tools and purposes (Heidegger) or finding oneself in the instrument-world shaped by the Other’s look (Sartre). Despite this shift of paradigm, Husserl’s legacy and the initial project of the phenomenological investigation of consciousness as *Wissenschaft* must not be underestimated. On the contrary, today scholars from various disciplines are urging to review and extrapolate some of the most important of Husserl’s phenomenological projects such as the constitution of the Other, bodility, memory, imagination, categorial intuition, etc.¹ Hence, these projects gain a new meaning in the light of latest social and technological *phainomena*. On the other hand, technologically conditioned specific givenness of the Other,

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¹ The significance of the finishing volumes of Husserl’s writings (*Husserliana*) is also worth noticing in this regard.

fundamental role of images, new forms of coping with paraphernalia, existential spatiality and temporality shaped a wholly new way of communicative being online. Thus, the question is how we are to understand these transformations and what phenomenology has to do with them? In the search for an answer to this question we will analyze and conjoin several phenomenological projects initiated by Sartre and Husserl, which will also reveal the possibility of a fruitful correlation between egologic and existential phenomenology.

The Other's look as basic affection: on the positive side

96 In his late text *The Phenomenology of a Communicative Community* (1932), Husserl encompasses a wide range of human activities (spoken language, writing, gesture) and states that such an activity founds community and serves as a basic condition for introducing changes and something new into world.² In short, without the communicative connection I could not identify the world of another human being, and hence her intentions which otherwise could become the ground for changes and/or learned experiences in my own world. Thus, besides turning to the living world as the ground for phenomenological research, Husserl's late philosophy breaks with the idealist monadic worldview and stresses the positive constitutional role played by the Other.

Despite this widely accepted turn in phenomenology, later developments varied greatly from Husserl's approach, in general, as well as concerning the positive outcomes of the encounter with the Other, in particular. For example, M. Heidegger's existential hermeneutics always oscillated between rather cozy and unavoidable coexistence with others (*Mitsein*) and its threat to one's authenticity (*das Man*); this is also the case with Sartre's Being-for-others (*l'être-pour-autrui*). According to Edith Stein, we are able to reveal the universal properties of the objects given to us by *empathy* (*Einfühlung*).³ In this way, empathy appears as the necessary condition for experiencing the external (reality) and certain kinds of self-knowledge,

2 See in this regard: Husserl 2008.

3 In this context, note that Stein observed that empathetic experiences are founded on direct perceptions of physical bodies *or* imagination. See in this regard: Stein 1989.

including one's bodily nature. Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, and others also stated that though being extremely challenging and affective, the Other serves as the necessary condition for the truth of the self. But no one dedicated more attention to the philosopheme "the Other" as Jean-Paul Sartre, French phenomenologist, novelist, and one of the founding fathers of existentialism, did. Needless to say, despite the certain academic and even cultural fame, his account remains somewhat ambivalent.

Though later thinkers, especially postmodern ones, often accused Sartre of creating just another self-centered idealistic philosophy of presence or even being a metaphysical humanist,⁴ he himself always believed in the constitutive power of that which we might (very carefully) call "the external reality," manifesting itself in the conditioning by facticity, entanglement with affections, experience of scarcity, pressure of social circumstances, or ... other fellow human beings. Actually, this kind of approach became the core of his late philosophy.⁵ However, already in his programmatic opus that introduced existential phenomenology, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre presents the view on how we live our lives (which includes also how we change and/or learn in the broadest sense of the word), according to which it is impossible to reflect upon my-self, the world, or the Other separately.⁶ Consequently, I argue that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre presents the view that *the Other's look is one of the basic affections* which empirically manifests itself as the experience of shame, and this kind of affectivity for Sartre has a fundamental phenomenological-constitutive meaning. On the other hand, this means that Sartre's notion of the Other's impact on one's reality (and *irreality* in the Husserlian sense) was too seldom oversimplified as being negative and destructive (Zahavi 2010, 211). In the same way we might approach anxiety and accidental nature of being exposed to the Other in virtual reality from the psychological point of view, hence reducing it as an ontic-empirical mark of particular

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4 See, for instance: Derrida 1972, 137.

5 At the end, Sartre argues that philosophy must be practical and by this he means political. See in this regard: Anderson 1993.

6 See: Zahavi 2001.

transcendental structures. Though it is true that Sartre (following Hegel) stresses the connotation of conflict or confrontation in the experience of the Other, there is more to that. Let's take a closer *look*.

One way of presenting the Other's gaze in Sartre's philosophy is to view it as the limiting force of one's transcendence, i.e. freedom. As for yourself, you can drift in the world almost as amorphous and de-substantial as heroes dwelling in the early Sartre's literature, but in the eyes of others you always become solidified into one or another self, which is finalized by being forced into self-reflection. Others become vehicles of self-reflection, and this constitutive moment conflicts with the urge for individuality on both phenomenological and existential levels (a paradox already approached by Husserl in his celebrated fifth meditation). This conflict is accelerated by the empirical nature of the process—usually (empirically) the Other is giving-you-a-self basing her judgments only on a few unrelated cases of your factual behavior, which adds even more depth to the classic existential notion of the absurd. Though Husserl's answer to the existential primacy of
98 Sartre's phenomenology is that “every indeterminacy in the factual domain is determinable before all determining experience, *therefore* determinable *a priori*. This implies that the cognizing subject can decide it only *a posteriori*, on the basis of actual experiences.” (Husserl 2005, 624)

The Other, for Sartre, is not just an empirically given other person or self. It is not an object, but a *look*, its being appears as “looking-at-me” (Sartre 1992, 345). According to the phenomenological perspective, Sartre talks, not about inference, but about full-blown experience, hence all knowledge (of the self and/or the Other) comes as a whole (*Gestalt*). For example, the empirical situation of “being almost caught” phenomenologically reconstitutes the whole of your self-interpretation. This is a phenomenologically revealed structural part of existential experience called “being thrown” (Heidegger), which according to Sartre's account presupposes the vital need to decide—will I take the label presented by the Other's look? That is how affection by the Other's look followed by the ontic emotion (shame) provokes the choice which determines my existence. We cannot be alone; we need to compromise. Intersubjectively shared world (Husserl) here becomes the world taken from me and turned

into some kind of object, which presupposes me as a part of it in the eyes of the other. What for me is just an occasion for the Other, becomes my essence.⁷ Many thinkers of this kind (Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, and even the postmodernists in a way) thought that it's just a matter of time when "I" will learn to catch myself, i.e. to participate in the objectification of myself according to vast paraphernalia of labels. Hence, "shame manifests our exposure, vulnerability, and visibility and is importantly linked to such issues as concealment and disclosure, sociality and alienation, separation and interdependence, difference and connectedness" (Zahavi 2010, 224). This quote captures well the whole constitutional complexity presupposed by the affection of the Other's look and its empirical counterparts manifested in particular emotions.

In *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939), Sartre describes emotional experience as the manifestation of a "magical strategy," whose aim is to transform a difficult situation. What Sartre is trying to show here is that that the maxim "no excuses" is relevant to the affective experience as to any other. It is true that shame experience brings up the ontological modification which affects the wholeness of my being—I *am* this kind of being and I am ashamed of it. But, according to Sartre, even in the face (and because) of this basic affection, we still can choose how to react. In this sense, emotions are series of decisions in correlation with affections. Contra psychic determinism emotion appears as a way of constructing the world.⁸ The great insight of Sartre is the emphasis on the Other as the trigger of the most fundamental constitutional points, which rather motivates than causes the world.⁹ Because emotions are about the world they also express the existential modality "I can." I *choose* emotion to achieve purpose or, as Sartre usually puts it, to escape (restructure the

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7 There is an interesting paradox here. It looks like that for Sartre the Other precedes me in giving me a self—a kind of an essence—, though his famous saying states that "existence precedes essence."

8 The postulate that you can act freely even pre-reflectively is one way to see where Sartre opposes Freud.

9 Husserl understands "motivation" as a special structural relation between intentional acts called *Fundierung* avoiding connotations of psychological physical causality.

intentional flow).¹⁰ Sometimes emotional transformation motivated by the Other substitutes action (excuse), but sometimes also initiates it (choice).¹¹

Though under the Other's look my original establishment of the relation between things is shattered and, as Sartre puts it, "the appearance of the other is disintegration as decentralization of the whole universe which undermines centralization which I am simultaneously effecting" (Sartre 1992, 343), this also means that seeing the Other amounts to being seen. "Being-seen-by the Other" is the truth of "seeing the other" (Sartre 1992, 257). In the look of the Other my freedom is being taken, but restored by the interpretation, one of which could be decision to agree upon some kind objectivation. Gradually, our expectations embrace the possibility of being-seen, and this possibility affects us in a peculiar way. Refusing to break through these "surveillance" situations, to affirm our ability to choose we transform ourselves from Being-for-itself (*être-pour-soi*) to Being-in-itself (*être-en-soi*; empirically manifested as pride, arrogance, etc.). This turning-of-your-self into a changeless object is the classic example of bad faith, but it is not only for reasons of self-deception, or we should rather say it also manifests itself in the face of the Other's look. Objectivation often was seen as a threat to my personal freedom, but here self-objectivation, deconstruction of the difference between me and a thing, is a major self-defense step. Accepting other's decision to freeze us into facticity as the ground for our choice to stay inert, we are trying to make use from the other perspective. Here again, the other appears as the perspective of self-understanding. In a sense, for itself it finds some comfort in being-taken to be in-itself. Besides being pushed into the in-itself, I also choose to be taken like this; I become someone through those who are looking at me, but I still choose it. Put differently, the affective response to the Other's objectifying gaze makes oneself learn what does it mean to be amongst humans, what kind of possible connections are there, and whether the Others' look is really absolutely uncontrollable. Hence, the affection by the Other's look might turn

10 For Sartre, emotions have this "escape mode." I choose joy or something else as a means to escape from unpleasant actuality. The degree of this affection may oscillate from slight changes in the mood up till the most brutal mental disorders (see Murakami 2013).

11 Even body is in the context of emotions/affections not about sensations—it is about getting ready for some action.

towards two directions—conformist self-objectivation or freedom of choice, introducing learning as openness to new experiences.

Transcendental structure of online learning: intersubjective perceptual phantasy

In the previous part we defined the Other's look in Sartre's existential phenomenology as *the constitutive affection*, which transcends relations given by direct perception thus making the notion relevant to the sphere of virtual relations. Now, it is time to explore how empiric online relations presuppose transcendental correlation between the affection by the Other's look and the acts of *intersubjective perceptual phantasy* (Husserl 2005, 616).

It was Husserl's understanding of empathy that was taken to be the classic account of the constitution of the Other (the 5th of *Cartesian Meditations*, 1931). Although Husserl battled the analogy argument by stating that precisely because the other I is given to me as person not as merely a moving physical body, I don't infer its subjective existence, but sort of have it in one blow or *in propria persona*, the problem with the notion is that it is still insufficient in those cases when the Other's body as the condition for pairing (*Paarung*) is absent, which is precisely the case of virtual communication.¹² In his study on the transcendental motivation and structural differences of various mental disorders, where the Other's presence is crucial, Yasuhiko Murakami doesn't mention Sartre, but comes close to our analysis when he states that "affection of contact is not limited to eye contact. It is an affection of dynamism that comes from another and aims at my body." (Murakami 2013, 180) Apparently, we are not talking about the physical presence of some persons in online relations as well as physical bodies in phenomenological analysis. On the other hand, shame as the culmination of the affection by the Other's look, strikes even when the affection-experiencing subject stands alone physically, i.e. is not in the direct presence of others, because the perspective presented by the Other is already internalized: Sartre talks a lot about the experiences of being "almost caught"—door creeping, etc.—, despite the physical absence of another human being: "a lot of things support the look" (Sartre 1992, 346). Hence, in order

¹² See in this regard: Ricœur 2007.

to understand the givenness of a directly absent Other in online learning process we must turn to the very peculiar and multilayered phenomenological project launched by Husserl, that is the consciousness of imagination.

It is true that up to some point we need perceptual *things or contents* to constitute and share any possible experience including online learning environment, but the kind of perception involved here Husserl calls *quasi-perception* and is rather an instance of *imagination*.¹³ However, Husserl clearly distinguished between several structures which compose consciousness of imagination as an intentional act. On the one hand, we have *phantasy* or *imagination proper*, which differs from *image-consciousness* (*Bildbewusstsein*) in that it is not rooted in any form of physical substrate, i.e. picture of any kind. Moreover, when we look at the picture, we are “using” image-consciousness to relate two levels of apprehension—*image-object* (image which we perceive) and *image-sujet* (that which serves as the true referent of a picture). Now, it is clear that *phantasy* does not exhibit the structure of double apprehension (Husserl 2005, 25). It is not motivated by a particular image and is thus characterized as free play.¹⁴

102 This is the more or less generally accepted typology of the consciousness of imagination as presented by Husserl, which was followed by Sartre, R. Ingarden, and many others. But if we take a closer look at some later published manuscripts, for example, from the *Husserliana XXIII* volume, we find that Husserl speaks about some rather intermediate acts of imagination which oscillate between those poles of pictorial and free imagination. Hence, we have the third element of the whole intentionality of imagination—the *perceptual phantasy*, which uses perceptual things to refer to the imaginative environment, but this imaginary environment is not rooted in the physical substratum of particular images. Eventually, we share not the referent of an image and not the image, but the same existential space or setting of a learning

13 In his writings on imagination, memory, and perception, Husserl uses the prefix *quasi* many times (quasi-actual, quasi-seeing, quasi-truths, quasi-facts, quasi-experience, etc.) mostly meaning the “as-if” character that is posited by re-presentational positing of the phantasized Ego (Husserl 2005, 124).

14 Note that the ability to deny the object of perception and to posit in its place an irreality belongs to the essence of consciousness. This denial, for Sartre, is constitutive of our freedom (see in this regard: Sartre 2004).

environment. Users can share a scene from a movie, a music piece, symbol, or even a sentence presented in some unusual circumstances to co-constitute the area for the game to happen.

This “kind” of imagination takes perceptual things as vehicles to constitute the imagined space which in turn founds communication (usually, a playful one). It is important that objects of perception do not function as *analogons*¹⁵ here (for example, like abstract chess figures), and images which are constituted by this imaginative consciousness don’t necessarily involve sameness for each imaginative ego (player). This means that there is some intersubjective ground for communication even before the empirical transmission of information. Online environment includes many objects for perceiving and/or handling which we “see” as *something other*, some plot or narrative which defines means and goals of this particular class, for example, tour dedicated to Sartre’s beloved places at the left bank of the river Seine. Hence, the multilayered structure of online communication-learning process might be presented as follows:

1) intersubjective perceptual phantasy—“transparent” perceptual objects (figments), shared meanings of common activity (game, seminar, quest, etc.) without fixed pictorial identity of the referent, which displace the self in such a manner that brings it into intersubjective imaginary environment;

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2) image-consciousness (*Bildbewusstsein*)—images based upon a physical substratum (screen, interface, multimedia, etc.);

3) *Phantasieleib* participation—*Leib* here constitutes and sustains the role according to the particular learning task, hence presupposing certain integration of skills, goals, values, and affections;

4) concepts reflected and propositional knowledge defined.

According to Husserl, “art is the realm of phantasy that has been given form, of perceptual or reproductive phantasy presenting as depicting” (Husserl 2005, 616), though it is very important to capture the difference between perceptual phantasy and pictorial consciousness: “In the case of a theatrical performance, we live in a world of perceptual phantasy; we have ‘images’ within the cohesive unity of one image, but we do not for that reason

15 This is a real physiological or psychological element that is a constituent of the imaginative state.

have depictions.” (ibid., 616). The so-called “images” here are produced by the whole range of means (movements, expressions, reactions, etc.), and although Husserl could not apply it to online communication, it is tempting to connect it with the constitutive accomplishments of the affection by the Other’s look online. Hence, the first level of online communication does not involve image consciousness:

When a play is presented, no consciousness of depiction whatsoever needs to be excited, and what then appears is a pure perceptual figment. (Husserl 2005, 617)

The following is the *difference between figment and image*: the genuine figment (the wax figure) directly appears in the unity of reality, while the image does not genuinely “appear” in that unity but in its own space, which in itself has no direct relation to real space. The genuine figment, or let us rather say the genuine *illusion*, such as the wax figure in the wax museum or the panorama image that “disappoints” us, is the appearance of a thing; specifically, the appearance of reality. (Husserl 2005, 570)¹⁶

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This analogy of ours might be validated only and only if interaction with computer related paraphernalia (“mouse,” screen, etc.) rests on the apprehension of a figment not an image in the proper sense, which in turn creates the space of a shared world or rather intersubjectively constituted quest for knowledge. As with the theatrical performance where “the real things called ‘scenes,’ actual curtains, etc., ‘present’; they serve to transplant us into the artistic illusion” (Husserl 2005, 516), the real hardware, furniture, and any other coping is transformed into some scene by the virtual experience. This coping or, as Husserl states, *capabilities* is a unique feature of a physical thing in the realm of imaginations, because, differently as in the case of an image, a sound, or a written text, I instantly

16 It looks like hardware as the vehicle of virtual reality perfectly fits the criteria for intersubjective perceptual phantasy, i.e. it “directly appears in the unity of reality,” has a “direct relation to real space,” and “is the appearance of a thing.” On the other hand, it perfectly unites signitive, pictorial, and perceptual ways of intending an object.

represent the horizon of possibilities according to these capabilities. Hence, my *bodility* becomes displaced into the imaginary coping.

Every technology, particularly those designed for communication, becomes an extension of our bodies (McLuhan). Even on the level of “motority” (Merleau-Ponty), every new technology demands a mastering of the appropriate system of reflexes, for example, mouse and screen conventions. On the other hand, not only the constitution of perceptual reality is dependent on the experience of bodily movements (kinesthetic experience), but also the unity between the acts which constitute perceptual phantasy are founded (*Fundierung*) in a specific “I can” (Fenige 1991, 78), i.e. on a non-thematic knowledge about the potentiality of bodily movement. Murakami, following M. Richir (who in turn followed Husserl’s notion of *Phantasie-Ich*; cf. 2000, 137), suggests to call the body-awareness in the context of imagination the *Phantasieleib*: “Phantasieleib constitutes the core or ‘center’ of the world of phantasy; it can be regarded as the living body in the world of consciousness which is nonfigurable and non-representable.” (Murakami 2013, 184)

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In phantasying, I often project myself into the phantasy world in such a way that I phantasy myself as *someone else*. If I call to mind my childhood, I see myself as a child; some image of my corporeal existence as a child plays a part, thrusts itself forward, and becomes the bearer of my experiences. But along with this, of course, I also have a direct Ego-consciousness to which my corporeal existence belongs in direct and familiar form, in which I presently find myself in living reality as having a body. (Husserl 2005, 557)

This is an incarnation of some role or quest identity reviewed by the Other and adapted for coping with specific paraphernalia and space-time of online possibilities. It integrates heterogeneous elements of body postures, motority, interface requirements in order to move (play) in this intersubjectively constituted environment no matter what imaginary form (fantasy world, road story, mysterious palace, sacred book, existential quest, etc.) it follows. *Phantasieleib* presupposes the transcendental possibility of the affection by the Other’s look, which exceeds actuality (eye contact, body contact, or

voice) and operates at the level of *perceptual phantasy*. This enables us to creatively conjoin phantasy and perception, otherwise “it remains only a pure Imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) without social context” (Murakami 2013, 193).

106 Finally, being-for-the-other has another aspect which is very relevant in online relations—one never knows if it is him or his role that is under the gaze of the Other. Only on the fourth level of our structural hierarchy it is possible to evaluate how do the user and his role work together. Hence, the first three levels also exhibit this structure of pure *passivity* of unity, identity towards me, and my online appearance, while the fourth enables to deconstruct and evaluate it. Finally, the fourth level presupposes higher *doxic* forms such as “explication, syntactical judgment and ideation” (Cairns 2013). In short, these forms single out relevant moments out of complex objective sense constituted in pure passivity, confer a formal logical structure upon an it, and grasp the essence on the basis of intending an individual object, “which thereby gains the sense of being an instance of the universal” (Cairns 2013, xv). Active syntactical judgment and ideation “follow” the passively pre-constituted structure of objectivity. Here, all the propositional judgments, mistakes, and eventual evaluations appear. This fourth level brings us back to the actuality as the background of any phantasy: “what we call *judgment pure and simple* is here a distinctive case; namely, the case in which the explication, relation, predication is directed toward what is characterized as ‘actual’” (Husserl 2005, 537), moreover: “judgments concerning what is essential are not changed by fiction, as we have already said” (Husserl 2005, 624).

Intersubjective e-topia: interruption, annulation, and authority

According to Gaston Bachelard, individual existence is always encountering what he called “matter,” meaning first of all the existentially lived space.¹⁷ Our experience of that space rests on various systems of representation, for example, rows of specific furniture in the libraries, new traffic designs, Google maps, etc. This experience in turn affects our ways of communication, hence

17 Bachelard’s materiality is very close to Merleau-Ponty’s corporeality or “the carnal.” See in this regard: Bachelard 1994.

the designer or just the co-active user of (virtual) space could reveal to our imagination new experiences and reinterpret our relations with reality.

As we learned from the great works of literature, such as the *Bible* or Tolkien's epic tales, in order to learn you must get the whole world to be prepared for you as the context of understanding, hence virtual space is so notorious for the attention to details, everything exists in the state of lovely enchantment, which affects physical surroundings and movements. Reading, browsing, watching, or listening merge with the shared play on the screen; symbols, signs, pathways, and fonts design a certain mood of academic beauty where mystery and challenge dwell, where redundancy is filled with the expectations about what lies behind those names, doors, or audio-visual riddles.¹⁸ It is also the question of comfort, because in virtual reality intimacy and hyper-textual autonomy, speed and variety of informational channels level the static authorities represented by traditional institutions and/or media. Nevertheless, it is still basically the affection by the Other, her presence given by the "look" constitutes the breakthrough with my unreflective and repetitive coping with things (gadgets) towards the intersubjectively constituted quest for knowledge.

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The above outlined structure of the online learning process shows that communication begins with the communion with the Other not from concepts that I or she are initiating. Good internalization of the affection of the Other's look grants *Phantasieleib* well, hence the possibility of the new (*pour-autrui* or communion with others) rather than repetition (*en-soi* or communion with things). Now it is time to examine how the affection by the Other via perceptual imagery and distant gadgetry also rests on the transcendental moments of interruption, annulation, and authority.¹⁹

According to Aron Gurwitsch's *field theory*,²⁰ a lot of things, but first of all my lived body (*Leib*), have the character of balancing on the margin of

18 Concerning the relation between imagination, emotions, and new knowledge Husserl writes: "In my *quasi*-being-in-a-mood, I am conscious of the mood of the landscape (as of a *quasi*-mood); and my *quasi*-being-in-a-mood exhibits to me the mood of the landscape." (Husserl 2005, 566)

19 Reading and writing today has lost its Aristotelian linear form, now it is rather interruptive and inter-textual.

20 If all components of the field of consciousness were experienced as equally salient, we would indeed not be able to think and behave appropriately.

consciousness which means that different modes of bodility, i.e. kinesthetic and kinetic experiences, can enter the thematic field (how the main preoccupation of a given moment is presented) and eventually influence or even supplement the apprehension of the initial theme. Being in the midst of one's everyday activities at the same time engaging in online learning while coping with relative media exposes, in comparison with the liturgical order of a real classroom, the body to unorthodox postures (sitting, lying, walking, etc.), spilling coffee, adjusting chair in the park, or noticing the waiter. This could affect the appropriation of the material in many ways as well as totally shut the process down in order to get back to it at the right time. Here class content, such as learning material, units, deadlines, etc., are being affected by initially marginal environment—kinesthetic experiences as well as social and physical realities of the “external” world (flue, time of the day, shopping mall buzz, etc.). Hence, the entering of the body into the online experiential field encompasses wide range of modalities spreading from the innate internal model of the body as the horizon of motor skills (Merleau-Ponty) and the ground zero reference (Husserl), or the narration of the body as the representation of the body stored in long-term memory (Ricoeur), to the actual body as visuo-spatial representation of the body, and the conceptual and linguistic representations of the body and its evaluation by a specific culture.

On the other hand, being online makes the subordination between theme, thematic field, and margin very mobile. Your attention (or rather *turning toward*, according to Husserlian terms) is provoked to attend to the theme via various kinds of ways—images, language, movies, sounds, and notifications from colleagues and/or teacher.²¹ At the same time, social media notifications can enter the thematic field arising from the margin and reshape the initially given material. The problem online is that the same media moderate the thematic field as well as big portion of the margin. All this suggests that online we gradually become aware of a rich “humane plane” of oneself as well as the Other.

21 Husserl makes a distinction between *attention* and *turning toward*: “Although attention is interwoven with every turning toward, attention is simple grasping and turning toward is the more universal. For we are turned toward not only in objectivating but also in *feeling and willing*, in every sort of spontaneity (position taking).” (Husserl 2005, 552).

The issue of being interrupted and re-focused by the multi-material authority of a screen²² presupposes another moment (and modification) in the life of consciousness by which some perceptual *phainomena* (for example, hardware as well as physical surroundings) are annulled. Husserl calls it *the annulling of conflict between perceiving and phantasy* when the perceptual world does not actually disappear, but I “live” in the phantasy world, not in the perceptual world (cf. Husserl 2005, 540). The resolution of such conflict is a transcendental condition for any phantastic experience. Perhaps this is the place to mention that virtual experiences often are taken to be illusory. But structural analysis shows that, in contrast to the form of illusory experience, in the case of the virtual presentation we do not begin with the thesis of the reality of what appears perceptually. On the other hand, conflict exists here, too; however, only the conflict that is there from the beginning and does not become constituted through new experiences later on.

According to one of the most beloved Husserl’s pupils, D. Cairns, “phantasy is positing as a fiction against a fictive world background, but with the real world still intended as a background of this fictive one. The full sense of an object is a function of its background (inactual, retained, protended)” (Cairns 2013, xiv). So, the teacher and classmates are given to me “as if” they were real, although this constitutes togetherness of the classroom without the particular image and perception of the classroom. This, in turn, neutralizes (*Neutralität Modifikation*) the physical surroundings, social relations, spatiality, and temporality while coping with gadgets remains transparent.

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These kind of phantasies are not freely produced by us, but, rather, have their objectivity, they are prescribed for us, forced upon us in a way analogous to that in which the things belonging to reality are forced upon us by the succession of perceptions emerging in continuous conflict with actual experience or by the succession of spoken or written *words*. For example, various computer fonts presuppose “experiential” apperception of words as material substrate, but *at the same time* this apperception is cancelled, for in the world of actual experience they are printed black figures (on paper or screen) denoting significations that

22 Investigations on the “authority” of images and possibilities to manipulate them already have a long and rich tradition; see, for example, *the Kuleshov effect*.

naturally carry that cancellation of actual perceptual experience, hence resting in phantastic experiences; and even the “daily use of language generally presupposes communication in phantasia” (Murakami 2010, 183).

Thus, there are intersubjective quasi-actual experiences that each of the subjects involved produces in such a way that each experiences the others as co-authors or co-players within the frame of its own actual experience: “At the same time each subject then posits something else that is experienced as identical by the experienced other, but vice versa also posits the other as someone who can and perhaps must behave in the same way.” (Husserl 2005, 686) This co-phantasied motivation does not point to an identical referent, but rather means that the sameness of the referent (at the first ground level) is very important and specific, because it is shared without specifying its identity. Hence, various paraphernalia of online learning software might create the conditions of participation in the common practice without one definite referent of those objects. If there is some “alfa reference” (expression is mine) made by the authority of a teacher, it occurs only later in the discussion and serves for the purposes of teaching and evaluating (fourth level).²³ But at the start there is no such dominating reference, so the function of this layer is to “agree” or meet or co-constitute the learning environment, using pieces of online paraphernalia without any definite imagery (second level):

When subjects engage in phantasy but do not phantasy intersubjectively (establish “objective” phantasies in their freedom), their phantasy objects are then restricted to their isolated individual subjectivity. But surely it is agreed that positing a value means the same as simultaneously positing subjects who, in valuing, constitute the value—presupposing only that the value is not itself a subject: Otherwise we have posited a subject anyway. (Husserl 2005, 655)

23 There is an interesting structural similarity between several types of otherness, that of the teacher online and the terrifying Other that psychotherapy speaks about. Both are beyond concreteness, although they are distinguished by the powers of surveillance and control. On the other hand, the affection by the Other’s look in virtual space may grow into an almost Kafkian anonymous and constant threat to your privacy, etc.

That being said, we must not forget that these processes are inseparable from the interruptions of identity by the power of the Other, later taking the form of online communities rather than institutionalized unities. Today, formal learning is blended with activities, which traditionally were thought to be a part of leisure time, like listening to music, etc. Online technologies thus create a space where you can study the relation to yourself. The later shows contexts that you dwell in, the importance and the preferences that you make and how you express it. Of course, choices are hierarchical and our preferences in turn depend on external classifications. That is how the dialectics between the Other's look and *intersubjective perceptual phantasy* from being an existential one turns into social dialectics.

Conclusions

Phenomenological analysis of online learning environment reveals that it is constituted by the affection of the Other's look (Sartre), coping with paraphernalia (schematized perception), and two intentional structures of imagination—image-consciousness (physical imaging) and intersubjective perceptual phantasy (figment based shared free play of imagination). There is a dialectical relation between perceptual phantasy and the Other's look—while the Other's look constitutes the affection and initiates contact, perceptual phantasy online (contra face to face relations in a classroom) is necessary to create a bond, space, and quest as intersubjective experiences. This represents a transcendental structure behind empirical communication. While proper learning happens on the (fourth) level of reflection, those initial stages show that intersubjective imaginative communication is there even before its expression via propositional forms. The affection by the Other's look constitutes the breakthrough with one's unreflective and repetitive coping with things (*être-en-soi*) towards the intersubjectively constituted quest for knowledge (*l'être-pour-autrui*). On the other hand, intersubjective perceptual phantasy encompasses the infinite horizon of conflicting authorities, moments of interruption and annulation, mixes experience, and thus humanizes the learning material and presupposes an autonomous and responsible student.

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THE IMPERATIVE OF PHRONETIC EDUCATION FOR PRACTICING FREEDOM IN LIGHT OF THE BIBLE'S LITERARY DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The article intends to investigate the relationship between the gift of pondering and human freedom. We aim to prove that phronetic education is a prerequisite for the practicing of freedom in reflective thinking, and thus helps the human subject to establish itself as fully free. Phronetic teaching, which reflects on one's actions and gains from one's experiences, is oriented towards the increase and improvement in exercising freedom. Hermeneutic sensibility enhances the recognition of freedom as

the virtue which is born in the mindful process of phronetic teaching. Investigating the notion of *phronesis* according to Aristotle, we affirm phronetic education's decisive impact on reflectivity and the use of one's free will. We explore the reality of phronetic pedagogy as a dialogic encounter and profess the challenge of the unanticipated as its crux. The centrality of the unexpected which happens in phronetic teaching leads to a conclusion that it is an education of hope, open to the exercising of freedom and to granting it.

Keywords: phronetic education, freedom, Aristotle, H.-G. Gadamer, hermeneutic sensibility.

Imperativ fronetičnega izobraževanja za udejanjanje svobode v luči bibličnega literarnega diskurza

Povzetek

116 Članek namerava raziskati razmerje med darom razmišljanja in človeško svobodo. Želimo dokazati, da je fronetično izobraževanje predpogoj za udejanjanje svobode v reflektivnem mišljenju in potemtakem pomaga, da se človeški subjekt vzpostavi kot popolnoma svoboden. Fronetično poučevanje, ki reflektira posameznikova dejanja in ki ga plemeniti njegovo lastno izkustvo, se osredotoča na povečevanje in izboljševanje udejanjanja svobode. Hermenevitična občutljivost stopnjuje pripoznavanje svobode kot tiste vrline, ki se rojeva s čuječnim procesom fronetičnega poučevanja. Sledeč Aristotelovi ideji *phronesis*, želimo poudariti odločilen vpliv fronetičnega izobraževanja na reflektivnost in uporabo svobodne volje. Resničnost fronetične pedagogike se razgrinja kot dialoško srečanje, njeno jedro predstavlja izziv nepričakovanega. Osrednjost nepričakovanega, kakor se godi znotraj fronetičnega izobraževanja, vodi k sklepu, da gre za izobraževanje upanja, ki je odprto za udejanjanje in zagotavljanje svobode.

Ključne besede: fronetično izobraževanje, svoboda, Aristotel, H.-G. Gadamer, hermenevitična občutljivost.

Introduction

The article claims that phronetic education is a process which originates and facilitates free reflective thinking, as well as leads to establish oneself as a free, individual human being. We investigate the imperative of phronetic education for the practicing of freedom in light of hermeneutic acuity, employing Gadamer's reflection on temporality, provisionality, and historicity of human existence. In its orientation towards freedom, phronetic education is a dialogic encounter, in which the unexpected plays the crucial role in uncovering reality, and the reality of an individual human being as they are. It takes hermeneutics to comprehend reality as it presents itself. Thus, in the first part, we examine phronetic education and the question of freedom in light of hermeneutics, asserting that phronetic teaching acknowledges the temporal, conditional, and historical aspects of human experience. We can say that hermeneutic insight and phronetic perspicacity are both born in the lived experience of a human being. Hermeneutics recognizes the practice of phronetic wisdom as its inseparable reality: "Hermeneutic existence is a phronetic existence aiming at nurturing practical wisdom in human life: it originates with life, affects life, and transforms life. Hermeneutic truth is the world-disclosive truth of understanding." (Wierciński 2015, 204) Phronetic education is life-oriented. It profoundly shapes life and is life-transformative.

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In the second part, we draw on Aristotle's definition of *phronesis* in "Book VI" of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he describes it as a virtue of practical knowledge allowing to differentiate between what is good for a human being and what is not (cf. Aristotle 1999, 89). Tracing phronetic teaching back to Aristotle, we reflect also on the import of two other qualities which he mentions, *phantasia* and *proairesis*, as inextricably connected with *phronesis*. We accentuate that those two qualities significantly impact phronetic education in its focus on practicing freedom.

In the third section, we identify unexpectedness as the crux of phronetic education, demonstrating that phronetic teaching is a dialogic encounter, in which the respect for the unknown and the unforeseeable constitutes its core, and invites to practice freedom as the only viable response. In this way we demonstrate that phronetic education is an education of hope, whose concern

with the exercising of freedom originates and fosters not only free reflective thinking, but also meaningfully inspires and enhances a human being's development as a fully free agent.

Phronetic education, hermeneutic acuity, and the question of freedom

Governed by the very nature of human existence, which is always temporal and conditioned by historical context, phronetic education opens itself to that which in Gadamerian sense is fitting in particular circumstances. The fittingness goes beyond the sociological level of understanding of what suits a given situation. Hans-Herbert Kögler highlights the significance of Gadamer's thought in this respect by pointing to the uniqueness of circumstances, as well as subjectivity involved in experience as evaluative factors that constitute the very basis for understanding (cf. Kögler 2010, 353). To follow *phronesis* in education means to be oriented towards the awareness of a situation in its entirety, which is illuminative in the particular circumstances the educated and the educator are involved. Therefore, phronetic education rests on the hermeneutic sensibility which informs its ways and possibilities of actualization.

With the gift of hermeneutic acuity at its side, phronetic education is an inconclusive process. It cannot be said to ever come to an end. However, as a lifelong enterprise, it relies not on amassing new experiences, but on the openness to that which presents itself in front of us according to Gadamer's idea of what it means to be an experienced human being (cf. Gadamer 2013, 364). Gadamer's explication of the crux of what it means to be an experienced man draws our attention to the ever new and the unexpected as constitutive of phronetic teaching. Education in its very foundation aims at improvement, or/and perfection. The two important qualities of human agency, to improve and to perfect, are not separated from the lived experience. On the contrary, they are wholly immersed in what we can call after Gadamer "the consummation of experience," which leads to openness, to learning anew, to absorbing the unpredicted, or even the inverse. These are not lofty and unattainable ideals, but they are achievable in the process of education. Gadamer asserts:

The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward a new experience. That is why a person who is called experienced has become so not only *through* experiences but is open *to* new experiences. The consummation of his experience, the perfection that we call “being experienced,” does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. (Gadamer 2013, 364)

The many, or even incessant improvements proclaim an increase both in wisdom and freedom, which are phronetic teaching’s ultimate gains. The processual nature of phronetic education mirrors the reflective character of wisdom, which is not miraculously bestowed on us, but is gained via a thoughtful recognition of what happens when one performs certain actions, and when one chooses.

According to Gadamer, understanding is always conditioned by “[...] the historical being that we are” (Gadamer 2013, 313). His notion of the historically-effected consciousness (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*) embraces both the historicity and finality of our being as human beings, but also the incompleteness of the knowledge we possess about ourselves: “*To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.*” (Gadamer 2013, 313) The temporality of our experience affects the way we are, the way we understand, and followingly, the way we teach and learn. If phronetic education draws on the hermeneutic conditionality and temporality of human experience, its premise, which is also its strength, is an awareness that exterior knowledge is not decisive for our understanding. Phronetic education does not focus on the acquisition of objectified knowledge, or the blind abiding by norms. Van Niekierk and Nortjé put it very vividly:

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[...] phronesis (or prudence) is a kind of knowledge wherein I try to act in accordance with the precepts or action guides that I acknowledge, and which are prudently applied to the situation in which I find myself, and where I must act in such a way that I can live with the consequences. This application requires deliberation—a rational interchange that moves to and fro between the requirement of the norm and the requirements of the situation” (Van Niekierk and Nortjé 2013, 30).

Phronetic education reaches the nucleus of an accessible human experience and enables to discover what presents itself when confronted with the norm and outside requirements.

120 In its focus on situatedness, phronetic education reflects the situatedness of human existence, thus it is not the kind of teaching that is detached from life, but it adheres to its very heart. The use of *phronesis* in education, by contrast to the *techne*-oriented teaching, means to concentrate on the discovery of what needs to be unveiled, not through the instrumental accomplishment of an external goal, but through an insight into what happens to the educated in all her uniqueness and diversity. Phronetic education embraces objectives that are intrinsic to acting. Van Niekierk and Nortjé elucidate further the relationship between the outside norm and the particularity of a given situation, and define phronesis thus: “[...] it is knowing how to act in the practical situations of everyday life where the norms and rules need to be applied. Such situations should influence policy formation rather than serve as firm rules.” (Van Niekierk and Nortjé 2013, 30) Phronetic education seeks to meet the internal aims of the action itself, therefore it attempts to avoid instrumental thinking and uncritical adherence to norms. This approach is highlighted by the believers in the contemporary revival of Aristotle’s *phronesis* and *phronimos* (Faure 2012, 197)

Gadamer speaks of the specificity of our being aware of the hermeneutic situation and the challenge it constitutes:

To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished.” (Gadamer 2013, 312)

The standing within a situation, and not outside of it, beckons the search for solutions. Metaphorically, the “standing-within” can be depicted as the staying within the stream of light against the backdrop of darkness, the light which is peremptory in our use of freedom. Gadamer’s reflection on the situatedness of our being as human beings reminds us that as discrete individuals we have at

our disposal one particular way of seeing things at a time and not another. This, however, is a continuous invitation to enter a horizon, while already having a horizon. Gadamer explicates the reality of the horizon as follows:

[...] to have a horizon means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. (Gadamer 2013, 313)

His connecting of the two notions, that of horizon with the situatedness of human experience, leads to an important conclusion that pertains to phronetic education. He observes that:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of “situation” by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of “horizon.” The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. (Gadamer 2013, 313)

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Entering a horizon, having a horizon, and an awareness of the difference of horizons, contributes to the wisdom of fullness that phronetic education upholds, and helps overcome the rigidity of compartmentalized thinking. This means that we are capable of understanding things, not in their enclosed limitedness, but more openly, with the mind attuned to the situational complexity and versatility, and hence we are more adjusted to exercising freedom.

The situatedness of human experience relates to what Gadamer discovers while scrutinizing what it means to be an experienced human being. Crucially, Gadamer sees human experience through the prism of its poignancy or disagreeability. It is through the unfulfillment of one’s expectations that one comes to an insight. This, however, is not just an insight into the particularity of a given situation, but, much more importantly, it is an insight which embraces our finitude as human beings. Gadamer discloses the import of obstructing our expectations as the wellspring of our understanding:

Experience [...] involves many disappointments of one's expectations and only thus is experience acquired. That experience refers chiefly to painful and disagreeable experiences does not mean that we are being exceptionally pessimistic, but can be seen directly from its nature [...] Every experience worthy of the name thwarts an expectation. Thus the historical nature of a man essentially implies a fundamental negativity that emerges in the relation between experience and insight. (Gadamer 2013, 364)

122 It is exactly the intuition of one's finiteness afforded by experience that becomes the space for practicing freedom. Our finitude signposts the way in which we approach life and choose what is good for us, and thus are capable of expressing fully our potential as human beings. One can venture an assertion that to learn via negativity is the touchstone of all efficient learning. At the utmost level, it is irony and derision, and the pain they involve, that partakes in construing what one learns through negative experiences. However, if the imbalance of the negative and the positive is exorbitant, the negative creates a predicament which can block effective learning, as it both preconditions and obstructs an embracement of the good solutions which arise intuitively.

The import of disappointment and disagreeability that we suffer in the process of learning leads us to another level of phronetic education's relationship with the practicing of freedom. Reflective thinking entails an increase in free thinking, whose pathway leads from ambiguity to disambiguation of what needs to be understood. The indispensability of freedom is constitutive of an increase in being (*Zuwachs an Sein*). By paying close attention to the situation we are placed in, phronetic education grants us a true possibility to hold to that which is within it, and to choose adequately, thus the choice which is confusing for us is less likely to occur. However, as Comte-Sponville clarifies, since practical wisdom relates to the contingent nature of human experience, it involves:

[...] uncertainty, risk, chance, and the unknown. A god would have no need of it, but how could a man do without it? [...] One deliberates only when one has a choice to make, in other words, when no proof is possible

or adequate—that's when one must want not only good ends, but also good means, in order to achieve them. (Comte-Sponville 2002, 32–33)

Phronesis reminds us of the centrality of the exercising of freedom because each situation is never the same as the other, and it requires a fresh and new insight, which results from a free, unrestricted, and uninhibited approach. As a result, we do not feel entrapped in the external system of norms, but rather are invited to use our freedom to choose in accord with what the situation “says.” This, however, has nothing to do with the disregard for norms and convictions, but rather inspires to transform and synchronize the outside norms with the hermeneutic mental intuition.

To be phronetically educated means to use *phronesis* as an aid in modeling, or/and stretching one's capacity to choose freely. The choice of the right thing to do does not fall with categorical ethics, and, obviously, the very question of what we understand by the right thing to do can produce potentially versatile and contradictory answers. This does not mean, however, that we are to feel at a loss, or to relinquish our moral capacity to some disorderly ethical position, which would base our ethical response solely on good motives, or demean the consequences of an action. Comte-Sponville makes a strong claim in this respect:

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Good motives aren't enough, and it would be wrong to act as though they were: hence an ethic of responsibility requires that we answer not just for our intentions or principles but also for the consequences of our acts, to the extent that they can be foreseen. It is an ethic of prudence, and the only valid ethic. (Comte-Sponville 2002, 31)

If the formative task of phronetic education is inseparably connected to establishing oneself as a free, fully-grown individual, and if to deliberate means to be enlightened to the effect of obtaining an ever-widening perception, we need to bear in mind that the conditionality of our being, at the same time, delimits our self-knowledge. This also means that practicing freedom undergoes modifications and happens in various degrees of realization.

Phronetic education adheres to the union of desire, reason, and choice. Knowing what is good for myself, motivating myself, and practicing virtue

require an incessant exercising of my autonomy. The art of understanding is not a mere possession of rules to be applied. Phronetic teaching does not succumb to the rigor of the so-called universally right application. It also is not concerned with the reproduction of objective knowledge, but the productivity of the always new understanding. To be phronetically educated means to be willing to understand, and this willingness to understand is an unwavering employment of my free will. My eagerness to understand, desire, and reasoning are not outside of my experience, but they pertain to my inherent call to practice autonomous approach each time anew. The unrepeatability of each situation in a Gadamerian sense of our standing within the situation precipitates the use of independent thinking and acting to come to terms with the situation each time in a potentially novel or different fashion. Acting then calls for considering varied standpoints and alternative ways in which human freedom is pronounceable.

124 Significantly, *phronesis* is not only essential for the virtue of character in a moral sense, but it is a lifelong prerequisite for exercising autonomous thinking. The inextricability of the bond between *phronesis* and freedom orients reasoning towards what is fitting in a particular educational milieu. The phronetic educator embodies thus not just ethical values, but a free, unadulterated reasoning, which ensues from the identification of appropriate action. Entering education in the phronetic sense of it, means to search continuously for solutions not in terms of measurable ends. Murray Faure illuminates the basic distinction between *techne* and *phronesis*, and its consequence for the understanding of action's ends thus:

Techne and *phronesis* also differ from each other in terms of the relation posited between means and ends. In the former, the end produced by art or craft is separated from the craftsman's technique, irrespective of both being predetermined. In the latter, the ethical action in pursuit of the good performed by the *Phronimos* is its own end [...]. (Faure 2013, 200)

Phronetic education embraces both an understanding of the educator's and the student's ethical positions, as well as an understanding of the teaching context as such. We are invited to participate in practicing freedom, in which

the choice of the most appropriate means and ends involves a specific attuning to what is needed, and not to what is expected due to some outside requirements of the often very unrealistic policy in an educational institution.

Education which uses *phronesis* is a pedagogical model that promotes developing moral dispositions so that the reasoning of the educated would not be distorted by bad habits, and in this very sense phronetic education is both a challenge and a necessary guide for exercising human freedom. The unity of education and ethics is inescapable. The concomitance of the ethical stance that is taken as the educative process happens has been deftly expressed by Burns and Rathbone:

By engaging in a cooperative process of reflection and action, both the teacher and the student can flourish within the practice of moral education itself. The good being realized in a moral life—here and now—not solely the promise of reaching a particular level of character or disposition in the future. (Burns and Rathbone 2010, 125)

The part of a teacher to advance reflection rather than to inhibit it calls for a virtuous thinking backed up by the invaluable performance of autonomy. The part of the student to learn reflective thinking in the unrepeatability and diversity of contexts means to show the virtue of persistence, but, equally importantly, it encompasses the use and manifestation of freedom. 125

Phronetic education fosters the inseparability of the abstract, theoretical principles and the moral qualities of character, and this can thrive only in the environment of freedom. The moral intricacies encountered in education require phronetic wisdom to ensure human success and development, while the use of *phronesis* is always interwoven with the necessity of practicing one's free will to decide in the best possible way and at the best possible time. Taking that into account, phronetic teaching not only acknowledges the conditional and temporal character of human existence, but also endorses the pedagogy of human freedom. It takes *phronesis* to know how to use one's freedom to a righteous effect, and how not to miss one's potential.

Aristotle, phronetic thinking, and the free will

According to Aristotle, human acting grants a person with her own possibility of pondering on the right decision to take, as well as on the right time and way. Phronetically, the virtue towards which human acting is directed is not regulated by the universal framework imposed on her, but always takes the form of concrete acting, in which the singularity and unrepeatability of a situation discloses the decision that can be taken. The practical wisdom of reflecting on various possibilities determines one's way to position oneself with respect to the universal norm. However, it is me, and only me who chooses an action. The norm is subservient, it cannot be said to control or settle the action that is chosen. The phronetic propulsion to a continuous exercising of virtue is simultaneously an urge to practice freedom. Dietrich von Hildebrand's succinct assertion: "The sphere of virtue is the very core of reality" (*Hildebrand Project*), reminds us of the inseparability of virtue and the lived experience. Practicing virtue inescapably coalesces with the exercising of human free will as human existence always involves some choice of an action. We are always in the position to choose.

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For Aristotle, prudence is the key virtue, all other do not exist without it: "We cannot be fully good without prudence or prudent without virtue of character." (Aristotle 1999, 99) The interlocking nature of practical wisdom and virtuous character says something important both about the true locus of prudence, which is one's striving for a more conscious and effective discernment of what it means to be wise, and about moral virtue itself, which cannot thrive without wisdom. Aristotle says: "For one has all the virtues if and only if one has prudence, which is a single state." (Aristotle 1999, 99) This is a weighty message, inasmuch promising as demanding. For educators who follow practical intelligence, the centrality of prudence is evident in opening the space for developing all other virtues and even skills, as a prudent person knows, as well as discovers how and when she can develop her full potential. Aristotle also affirms: "The decision will not be correct without prudence or without virtue—for [virtue] makes us achieve the end, whereas [prudence] makes us achieve the things that promote the end." (Aristotle 1999, 99). Carrie Birmingham reminds us that Aristotle sees *phantasia* (imagination) as a significant factor contributing to *phronesis*. As a

matter of fact, the two are viewed by the thinker as interlocking (cf. Birmingham 2004, 315). To teach with wisdom and imagination, to deploy Aristotelian *phronesis* and *phantasia*, would always mean to follow the engaging path of autonomy, the autonomy which embraces the teaching and learning positions alike. It is imagination that enables us to discern and decide about the right course of action, as it transgresses the rigidity of thinking, its pigeonholing and compartmentalization.

Prudence preconditions an ethical choice, it equips us with the right judgement, with the accuracy of moral discernment. The inextricable bond of practical wisdom and freedom shows itself in the constant necessity to differentiate between what is the right thing to do and what is not. It also shows itself in the decision to act in accord with our choice of the right thing. Freedom presupposes the possibility of the choice of the thing which is not right. Among seven kinds of freedom, Susanne Bobzien distinguishes “freedom to do otherwise” (Bobzien 1998, 133). This type, in fact, intermingles with the freedom of decision, and of the will. One is free not to follow something. One can always choose a negative alternative. If, however, we do not choose the right thing, we break our inner conviction that the choice of the virtuous act serves us good. This breaking of our firm belief, enrooted in the moral code of being, brings also an educatively meaningful result, if only we reflect on what happens to us in case of the unrighteous choice, and how we can introduce a change and choose rightly in the future.

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Practicing prudence that takes place in phronetic education involves, in fact, a continuous practicing of freedom. One can and should choose the right conduct according to practical wisdom for one's own good, however, what we choose has a bearing on the Other and on the communal life, even if it has not a direct effect. Community life requires the prudent behavior of individuals. Choosing the right thing to do, means not delimiting the Other's freedom, not imposing one's own views, not affecting the Other's conscience, thinking, or doing in a bad way. Anne Kinsella avers the inseparability of *phronesis* and ethics in professional environment thus:

If one is to take *phronesis* as professional knowledge seriously, then ethics is of central concern. When considering the criteria by which

practitioners might make phronetic judgements in practice, consideration of ethical concerns appears to lie at the centre. (Kinsella 2012, 49)

We can take the above assertion as expressive of the milieu of phronetic education, with its constant care for the ethically good. Being phronetically educated, or rather sustaining and following the need for phronetic education and phronetic self-education, as these are inconclusive processes, calls for an unwavering effort to recognize what is good for me, and what is good for the Other, in my care for the Other, and an awareness that the results of my actions are not indifferent to what the Other thinks and feels.

128 Aristotle's *phronesis* involves also the notion of choice (*proairesis*). If one chooses a virtuous action, it must be for the sake of virtue itself. If someone else persuades or forces you to choose a virtuous act, you are not acting virtuously, but only "as if" you were virtuous (cf. Aristotle 1999, 27–33). It is central to discern the difference between the seeming and the genuine virtuousness in light of Aristotelian thinking (cf. Miller 1983, 29). Phronetic education encompasses the frail but significant boundary between the suggestion of the righteous act and forcing it artificially. In its orientation towards freedom, its enhancement of freedom, phronetic education is a response to the need of a genuine virtue as the free choice that makes a human being free. It aims to create the space for practicing freedom. We can even talk about the spaciousness of phronetic teaching. This spaciousness is the narrative of inclusivity, as phronetic teaching offers a whole panoply of solutions, always fresh and attuned to a given teaching situation *per se*. The teacher searches for an answer which would invite a dialogue with the wholeness of the pupil's situation. The answer is thus both conditioned by and immersed in the whole of the pupil's reality. This reality is not silenced, on the contrary, it is thoughtfully considered and reconsidered by the teacher. This mindful cognition and recognition include all that serves the preparation and execution of the student's exercising of her faculty of freedom in reflective thinking, and in life on the whole. Riccardo Dottori helps us encapsulate the choice/decision/good paradigm that *phronesis* involves thus:

Practical knowledge is this unitary phenomenon of reason and behavior: the choice of action or the decision to follow the purpose

of the glance turned towards good. This choice, the *proairesis*, is both reason, *dianoia*, and desire, *orexis*: the concrete practical knowledge, *phronesis* is both knowing what is good for myself and motivation to action and practice of virtue. (Dottori 2009, 7–8)

The interlacing of reason, desire of the good, and self-motivation is also a profound expression of what phronetic pedagogy aims at.

We should like to finalize this part with a closer look at the idea of deliberation, which is central to *phronesis*, and is encrypted in the notion of choice that pertains to phronetic teaching. Even a quick glance at the structure of *de-liberation* (italics mine) allows us to see liberation as an important part of deliberation. In the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, we read:

deliberation (n.)

late 14c., *deliberacioun*, “act of weighing and examining,” [...] noun of action from past-participle stem of *deliberare* “consider carefully, consult,” literally “weigh well,” from *de*, here probably “entirely” (see *de-*) + *-liberare*, altered (probably by influence of *liberare* “to free, liberate”) from *librare* “to balance, make level,” from *libra* “pair of scales, a balance” [...]

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The interplay of *liberare* (“to free”) and *librare* (“to weigh well”) expresses the crux of “to deliberate”—a balanced action that both predicates itself on freedom and calls for it. Thus, phronetic education, which uses deliberation as its primary tool presupposes free human action in weighing well the right course of action, as well as enhances the practicing of the virtue of freedom. Deliberation includes a great degree of carefulness. Its strength rests not on a hasty, bravado decision, but on a mindful consideration of things, in which the self-dependent movement of no urgency originates autonomous and successful action. It is *phronesis* that enables us to decide on the degree of care, independence, and autonomy that we are to display to be truly preserving, self-sufficient and free (cf. Zagzebski 1996, 221; Birmingham 2004, 319).

To apply *phronesis* in one’s action, to deliberate, also means not to succumb to one’s initial impulses, which is meaningfully interconnected with the

practicing of freedom. Phronetic education aims at teaching a sensible approach to what needs to be done, thus a careful recognition of the time something must be done, and, in the first place, a decision to follow an initial idea, or forsake its prospect completely. *Phronesis* provides space for a thoughtful use of one's freedom in the face of the outside pressure, if one discerns that what is pressurized is not good for oneself. It also helps oppose one's inner censor, or the voice of the habit, e.g., excessive dutifulness, overprotectiveness, or submissiveness, if such an attitude does not serve one's good. One can draw here on William James' salient words regarding the decisive impact of the habits we cherish and the personalities we have on our destinies: "Sow an action, and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny." ("William James Quotes"). One of the targets of phronetic education is to break free within the established ways of thinking. And this concerns also the fossilized ways of behavior, through which we reap, according to James, our destiny. Most crucially, phronetic education is the education of hope as it—via the implementation of a meticulous and accurate cognition of what
130 is, of the outside reality, and of the self's reality—facilitates the break with the disagreeable and unbeneficial for one's developmental features of character, or even with one's destiny. In this way, phronetic teaching is a powerful teaching of hope that begets and fosters the freedom of an individual human being.

Phronetic education as a dialogic encounter: the challenge of the unanticipated

What happens in educational situations is more often than not unpredictable, and to capture the complexities which may arise remains within the domain of *phronesis*. If the primary aim of a phronetic teacher is to induce and enhance reflective thinking in students, it requires virtues such as openness, devotion, and responsibility. We see these as crucial in the development of reflectivity after Dewey's identification of wholeheartedness, open-mindedness, and responsibility as the fundamental moral values predicating and enhancing free reflective thinking (cf. Dewey 1932, 112–114). In equal measure, however, reflectivity requires the practicing of freedom as there are no prescribed ways to act within the uniqueness of a given set of conditions and circumstances. On the side of the student, the process of accommodating reflection via inferences,

judgments, evaluations requests to comply with a continuous practicing of freedom, which becomes a habit, a virtue. Both sides of the educational situation are bound together into a conduct which, on the one hand, necessitates reciprocity, but, on the other hand, is oriented towards my free choice of co-perception and cooperation. If one party resigns, the conduct is broken and the meticulous building of a possibility to truly teach and learn gets shattered. This, however, is the risk of entering an educational situation.

To follow the imperative of phronetic education for practicing freedom means to let oneself be led by the completely unanticipated and the new. As an exercising of practical wisdom, it involves neither mere reconstruction of knowledge nor delving into ideas for their own sake. The educative process that we deem phronetic embraces the kind of reasoning that applies the formerly unexplored ways of thinking to the fullest extent. Thinking in terms of the previously unknown, or what has not been taken into account, demonstrates phronetic education's openness to free reflection and criticism, and thus enhances the freedom of an individual, of a group, or a community. Phronetic education addresses the singularities of our experience, and, in this way, it opens itself to freedom as an expression of individuality and uniqueness. It places itself at the interstices of human experience, knowledge, language, and freedom, and partakes in constant negotiating of our being-in-the-world and everything that this being involves in the interweaving of experiential, lingual, epistemological, and existential planes.

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According to Gadamer, meaning and understanding, and truth in general, cannot be found otherwise than in the process of communication. This, however, is not about transmitting information, but it is the kind of communication, in which "[...] subject matter becomes mutually accessible for two or more people, while the medium which gives us this access withdraws from its prominence (Gadamer 2013, xiv). The dialogical encounter, in which Gadamer sees the locus of understanding, happens between individuals, but also between the text and its reader. Education as a process that aims at seeking and uncovering truth must be conscious of the ways in which it can fulfill its main objective. Phronetic education predicates itself on the potentially unimpeded, and also inconclusive dialogue between the educator and the educated. It is the unrestricted nature of the dialogic encounter in which truth

emerges. The educated is not viewed as intruding upon the authority of the educator, but rather as one who co-participates in and co-creates what is to be discovered via learning. Phronetic education is thus a continuous invitation to co-respond, co-interpret, co-create, and above all to con-verse, as the ultimate goal of education is a meaningful change that happens while the educator and the educated are involved in a conversational exchange. The educator's inviting gesture is the gesture that enables the practice of freedom, as none of the possible responses, interpretations, reflections is *a priori* considered as being less important, or simply incorrect.

132 The manifold and intriguing nature of the dialogic encounter which takes place in phronetic education can be well explicated through an excerpt from the Gospel—the encounter between a young man and the Good Master. The young man in the Gospel recognizes his deficiency, and thus he wants to learn. He recognizes his need of the gift of education (cf. Wierciński 2017, 70). On the face value, he lacks nothing. Abiding by God's law since his early youth, he almost sets a perfect example. And yet, the human heart is quite complex. It takes *phronesis* to understand it. The incongruity between the call to fulfill one's innermost potential and the outside view of one's self generates an urgent need to exercise one's freedom. The young man is free in the question he asks the Good Master, and is led by a firm belief that it is the right person to address his query to. It is practical wisdom that governs the intentionality and actuality of what happens. We can talk here of the hermeneutic *Bewegung* which affords the space for *phronesis* in which the dialectics of the question and answer takes place.

The dialogic hermeneutics of the Gospel episode shifts our attention from the young man to the Good Master and what he says. The young man's question is answered with a question: "Why callest thou me good?" (Matthew 19:17) This question and its follow-up ("[...] there is none good but one, that is, God [...]") (Matthew 19:17) not only direct the young man's mind to seek truth and its wellspring in the Highest Good, that is God, but remind us of the fundamental source of human capacity to do well—*Homo Capax Dei*. The Gospel highlights the import of good by mentioning it three times: "Good Master," "Why callest thou me *good*?" "[...] here is none *good* but one, that is, God [...]" (italics mine). The young man places trust in the teaching. One does

not expect a good teacher to allure you with a facile solution. Not only does the “good” imply a qualitative value in terms of morality, but it draws attention to the heart of phronetic teaching—which is not deceptive or manipulative, as it opens itself to the practice of freedom. Both the educated and the educator are invited to exercise freedom in order to follow the ideal of phronetic intelligence that presupposes an openness to what presents itself, to what emerges as the outcome of the dialogic encounter between the two parties.

The Good Master focuses on the practicality of the solution that the situatedness, provisionality, and contingency of the context requires: “[...] go and sell [...]” (Matthew 19:21). The radicalness of the vow is inasmuch shocking as unbearable. It seems to be important that the Teacher says first “go,” and then “sell.” The “go” implies the loss of the introspective clinging to oneself, to one’s inner life. “Go” among those who are very much like you in their humanness, minor insufficiencies, or acute lacks, and weaknesses. “Sell” means “let it go,” not so much deprive yourself, but rather lose the rigid grip you display on what you have. There is no other way to learn how to live well unless you let go. Let go all you claim as yours, the precious possessions of your mind and heart. The Gospel episode bears witnesses to a possibility of a remarkable exchange, which does not come to realization. Let it go, and I will give it all to you. It is the practical wisdom that informs the Good Master’s conduct, and it is the practical wisdom in which the young man fails. The encounter between the two, which is a hermeneutic conversation, is always, in its very essence, open to the exercising of one’s free will. Furthermore, it teaches one to practice free will in questioning, dialoguing, disbelieving, approving, accepting, translating to one’s own language, adopting as one’s own. Freedom is both the rudimentary basis of the encounter and ensues from it as its most invaluable goal.

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Phronetic education is antidogmatic. It orients itself towards freedom, it respects human free action, endorses it, and teaches it. The climax of the story of the young man is the moment of his exercising of freedom. Although he chooses to go away, to forsake the teaching he so ardently desires, to use the Greek term, his behavior is an expression of *akrasia*, he is in the position to practice free will. The Gospel is silent about what happens to him next. We can only speculate. What is more important, however, is the phronetic educative

process which takes place here. The Good Master challenges the young man, but this is the kind of challenge which embraces the genuine possibility of an enactment of what seems to be the best choice in the particularity and uniqueness of the young man's situation. One can say that it is hardly possible to find a young man of such high level of virtuousness, and yet this righteous man seeks even a higher, or different dimension of what it means to live well. The Good Master adjusts his teaching to the individuality and unrepeatability of the situation that unfolds in front of him. He does not follow a ready-made solution, or a certain matrix, but rather selects this unique, one-of-a-kind advice which is the best suited one in the entirety of the young man's life position and disposition. Following the example of this biblical story, we can see clearly that it is the situatedness of the encounter between the teacher and the pupil, and what ensues from the pupil's personal history, that govern the phronetic educative process, and not the realization of a prescribed answer.

134 The undogmatic character of phronetic education takes us back again to Gadamer's notion of the experienced human being. Gadamer's reflection highlights the dialectic of experience which lies not in fulfillment, but in openness:

[...] the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definite knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (Gadamer 2013, 364)

From this, we can draw a conclusion that the situatedness of the dialogic encounter that happens in phronetic education interlocks with the newness and openness of human experience for which it provides space, and of which it takes full cognizance. Phronetic education embraces both a retainment and an abandonment of one's former convictions. It includes a verification of one's presuppositions. When they are corroborated, one sees the bias, or the unhealthy judgments one issued. Taking care of practical wisdom strengthens the sense of one's integrity, it enroots one in the hermeneutic thinking. Practical wisdom

enhances thinking that is unadulterated, that is not infused with the dogmatic, the obligatory, or what is proclaimed to be correct. Phronetic education both invites and enables to exercise freedom as it shows care for a human being to make it possible for her to become fully developed. It draws on the ancient Greek ideal of the care of the soul. Phronetic pedagogy follows the need to state what one could be, and does accordingly, with the self's immersion in the given situation, it listens to what it says.

It needs to be accentuated that phronetic education as a dialogic encounter is a dynamic event that has a transformative power. Not only does the educated party change, but it is the educator who undergoes a meaningful change, too. As temporal, finite, and historical aspects of human experience preclude any absolute or objective truth, phronetically guarded education does not strive for securing an ultimate truth, but is rather in itself a model of a hermeneutic conversation with its openness to the freedom of reflective thinking and the freedom of a human being in the fusion of the apparently often very divergent horizons of understanding.

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Conclusion

Our aim was to demonstrate that phronetic education is a process which enhances free reflective thinking, and through being the locus of exercising freedom it leads to establish oneself as a fully free, individual human being. As it relies on the deepened examination of one's actions and gaining from one's experiences, phronetic teaching orients itself towards an increase and improvement in exercising human freedom. We have drawn on Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* and its impact on the foundations of phronetic education. And we have expounded on Gadamer's hermeneutics of finitude and historicity, and its impact on phronetic pedagogy.

Reflection on education in light of Aristotle's practical intelligence allows us to conclude that phronetic teaching opens itself to a full acknowledgement of human free will, and benefits from exercising it. Practical wisdom, as the core of phronetic education, not only originates and facilitates the possibility of the exercising of human freedom, but brings it to full fruition. In this way, the imperative of phronetic education for practicing freedom bespeaks the ideal of education *per se* as freedom

looms over the horizon of the human being's existence as the most fundamental and most desirable value which can be discovered and cared for in the process of education. Gadamer's explication of the situatedness and provisionality of human experience leads us to see that the temporality, conditionality, and historicity of human life embrace the situation of teaching. Teaching, therefore, is not something that is detached from human life. Just on the contrary, it needs to take into account the provisional, final, and historical aspects of human existence.

Phronetic education which breeds itself on Gadamer's hermeneutic sensibility is capable of identifying the exercising of human freedom as its most irreducible value. The hermeneutic insight, therefore, affords the practice of freedom in phronetic teaching, which helps center on students' purposeful behavior as wholly enmeshed in reality as it is. Phronetic pedagogy cares for the reality of the given situation, and this reality informs it about the right action that should be taken. Meaningfully, phronetic education seeks to align theoretical knowledge with students' lives. A particular, practical stand an individual is taught to take bespeaks phronetic teaching's strength, or even
136 its superiority over other forms of teaching. As taking the challenge of the unanticipated, phronetic education is a true dialogic encounter, in which human freedom is its ultimate gain.

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IN WHOSE NAME?

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTION OF VOICE IN PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper addresses the problem of voice in the contemporary reflection on politics and education. The first part examines the notions of contemporary thinkers who devoted their works to this question. The second part is an analysis of Freire's project of liberatory education. The aim of the second part is to disclose the hidden dimensions of the project and to examine the main weaknesses of such an approach.

Keywords: Agamben, Rancière, voice, the oppressed, emancipation.

V čigavem imenu? Nekaj refleksij o pojmu glasu v filozofiji in pedagogiki

Povzetek

Pričujoči prispevek obravnava problem glasu znotraj sodobne refleksije glede politike in izobraževanja. Prvi del raziskuje pojmovanja sodobnih mislecev, ki so svoja dela posvetili temu vprašanju. Drugi del je analiza Freirejevega projekta osvoboditvenega izobraževanja. Namen drugega dela je prikaz skritih razsežnosti projekta in obravnava pglavitnih slabosti takšnega pristopa.

Ključne besede: Agamben, Rancière, glas, zatirani, emancipacija.

To speak with our voice, to manifest our unique perspective has become one of the major themes and goals of recent reflection. Questions concerning the repressed voices or the forgotten history re-emerging in the philosophical thought of the 20th century influence its general attitude and determine its aims. But what is this voice that should be heard? What truth does it bring? Are we able to hear it and to some point make it our own? All these questions haunt contemporary philosophy but are rarely posed in the field of education. More precisely, the problem of voice is recognized by theoreticians of education, however, only as a widely accepted, but at the same time very vague project of a more open education. In other words, it seems that the question of voice has been reduced to a practical problem concerning the means of the expression of different points of view. Although a redefinition of the learning process in terms of exchanging perspectives rather than imposing only one of them can hardly be questioned, the manner in which the problem of voice is being posed could be criticized as not being sufficiently grounded. In short, from a solely philosophical perspective, the contemporary discourse on education, especially the discourse emphasizing the emancipatory function of the learning process, lacks a deeper reflection on these questions. 141

The first part of this paper will address philosophical perspectives regarding the problems of voice and the specific political meaning of the latter, as well as focus on a peculiar anthropology permeating Western thought. The last part of the paper will examine certain premises and consequences of the projects of education interested in a democratization of the process of learning. These latent premises animating progressive educational thought may be brought to the surface and consequently adjusted by taking into account the philosophical reflection regarding language, its origins, and the role of language in the process of becoming an individual.

The voice of politics and the politics of voice

In his essay *The Ends of Man*, Derrida claims that philosophy and politics are bound by an essential relation (Derrida 1982, 111), and this paper will disclose the presence of such an inherent link not only between philosophy and politics, but also between education and philosophy, as well as between education and

politics. In sum, the problem of voice is situated at the intersection of three realms: philosophy, politics, and education.

The question of voice and, more precisely, the question of the of silenced, unheard voices occupies a central place in the discourse of contemporary thought.¹ The metaphor of repressed voices reappears regularly in the philosophical as well as in the political debates. The task of recognizing these forgotten voices is connected with the ethical task of restoring these voices and doing justice to the repressed groups and cultures.²

142 One could argue that voice is by nature political and that, therefore, the discovery of a thus far omitted problem of voice and speech, in fact, means nothing more than giving a new form to an old idea. Man, according to the Aristotelian definition, is *zoon logon echon*, the creature belonging to the biological sphere, and differing from the realm of the living creatures by its ability to speak and to reason (Aristotle 1998, 4). At first glance, there is nothing problematic in this description which reflects the general rule governing every definition. And yet, recent debates show that this apparently uncontroversial definition turns to be one of the most challenging elements of political philosophy.

Recent discussions concerning the Aristotelian heritage focus on the pivotal element of the definition, that is, on the separation of animal and man, which, in fact, is the difference between meaningless sound and speech. For many contemporary thinkers the Aristotelian definition is much more than an inauguration of politics, it becomes a decision casting a shadow on the whole history of the West. According to this type of interpretation, which can be found in Agamben's and Rancière's works, Aristotle sets by defining man a

1 It seems legitimate to speak about a philosophical imaginary, rather than a line of arguments, due to the fundamental nature of change in the philosophical dictionary, which impacts the mode in which we represent constitutive elements of our experience.

2 The writings of Gianni Vattimo provide an example of thought conflating the critique of Western rationality and politics with practical and ethical tasks of restoring the repressed cultures. It is worth mentioning that Vattimo uses his philosophical perspective to examine the present-day political situation. Hence, it is very clear that he does not separate his purely philosophical work from its empirical application. His radical hermeneutics is directly interested and involved in resolving practical problems.

specific topology that determines the destiny of European culture. Thus, the task of understanding the nature and consequences of this gesture turns to be a vital question for philosophical reflection.

Regardless of all the discrepancies between them, the standpoints of Agamben and Rancière show profound similarities when it comes to the general approach to the history of the West and, in particular, to the fundamental dynamics between anthropology and politics. For both, Aristotelian philosophy initiates—or, perhaps, expresses in a most decisive manner³—the disposition of Western thought, which represents the nature of man only through a constant reference to the realm of the non-human.⁴ This tension not only constitutes a specific ontology⁵ upon which Western culture is based but, more importantly, influences the elementary mechanisms of politics.

In Agamben's and Rancière's view, the Aristotelian definition differentiating voice from speech and thus determining the nature of man, but also the realm of the non-human, becomes a threshold in the history of the West. The threshold initiating the emergence of politics. What is the nature of the division and what are the consequences of it? Apparently, from the outset on, anthropology could not exist without the necessary reference to the various forms of the inhuman, whether comprehended as animality or as divinity. Man, as we remember from the founding myths of philosophy, is a being situated between two worlds: the divine and the animal.

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Agamben's and Rancière's analysis leaves aside the traditional reference to the gods' world, instead they focus on the line separating man from animal.

3 With regard to Agamben's and Rancière's stances it is impossible to decide whether Aristotle established the logic of Western politics and we are, thus, able to transgress it, or only expressed the nature of politics as such.

4 Agamben addresses this problem in his essay "Without Rank," where he examines the very surprising tradition of comprehending man as a creature bereft of nature. In other words, man differs from other things or from the rest of creatures by the fact of not having its proper nature (Agamben 2004, 29).

5 Speaking about ontology in this context might appear as lacking legitimization, however, Jean-Philippe Deranty points out in reference to Agamben's philosophy of language that: "The originality of Agamben's take on the question of enunciation, with profound implications in many other areas of his thinking, is that he interprets the shift from language to speech in a nonpsychological, indeed, an ontological, way." (Deranty 2008, 169)

The animal, however, is more than just a neutral term of a taxonomy, it quickly transforms into a symbol referring to the inhuman as such. The inhuman that not only exists outside, but may also signify the inhuman inhabiting the man. With this second meaning we see emerging a possibility of the most horrific politics: the quest for the non-human forms of life within the human race.

Hence, the most important questions concern the relation between politics and this relational anthropology. Is politics as such coextensive with this type of anthropology or, perhaps, another type of politics is possible? There is also the question concerning the results of politics based on an anthropology defined by its relation to the inhuman: does politics based on this type of an anthropology always lead to the disturbing strategy of exclusion?

According to Agamben, an anthropological machine, despite transformations it has undergone, still underlies Western politics and produces its terrifying effects.

144 The machine of earlier times works in an exactly symmetrical way. If, in the machine of the moderns, the outside is produced through the exclusion of an inside and the inhuman produced by animalizing the human, here the inside is obtained through the inclusion of the outside, and the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape, the *enfant sauvage* or *Homo ferus*, but also and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form. (Agamben 2004, 37)

Even though politics we know is being actualized as a quest for the inhuman accompanied by the strategy of an exclusion of the latter, the question is, whether we can avoid such results. Agamben claims that metaphysics, despite various attempts to overpass it, “reigns in its most absolute form” (Agamben 1991, 53). However, this stance should not be read as pessimistic or quietist, but rather as a suggestion that only by loosening the knot of metaphysics and philosophy of language the anthropological machine can be overcome.

A very similar point of view is deployed by Rancière, who, like Agamben, anchors the concept of the political as well as the interpretation of the Western history in the founding myth of the institution of political order illustrated by the Aristotelian definition of man as a speaking and political creature:

Man, said Aristotle, is political because he possesses speech, a capacity to place the just and the unjust in common, whereas all the animal has is a voice to signal pleasure and pain. But the whole question, then, is to know who possesses the speech and who merely possesses the voice. For all time, the refusal to consider certain categories of people as political beings has proceeded by means of refusal to hear the words exiting their mouth as discourse. (Rancière 2009, 24)

Politics, hence, becomes a struggle for recognition.⁶ The question is, what type of recognition does Rancière speak of here? In his interpretation, recognition equals the rearrangement of the specific space established by the initial division:

Because if recognition is not merely a response to something already existing, if it is an original configuration of the common world, this means that individuals and groups are always, in some way, recognized with a place and a competence so that the struggle is not “for recognition,” but for *another form* of recognition: a redistribution of the places, the identities, and the parts. (Rancière 2016, 90)

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Hence, politics, or, rather, the language of politics, reveals a deeply literary character. Rancière, by referring to the Aristotelian definition of man as a speaking and by that very fact political creature, accentuates not just the linguistic, but also the literary nature of this political identity. He remarks: “[...] man is a political animal because he has the power of logos [...]. I translated this statement by saying that man is a political animal because he is a literary animal.” (Rancière 2016, 143)

Whilst in Agamben’s account of Aristoteles the central role is attributed to the necessary division and exclusion resulting from it, Rancière, along the lines of an initial division, emphasizes the symbolic and interpretative nature of this original division. The acknowledgement of somebody’s enunciation as

⁶ However, it should be stressed that this is the recognition operating on the most elementary level, i.e., as a struggle for being seen (in the literal sense) as equal.

meaningful refers to a certain symbolic realm which regulates all activity of speaking subjects. As it is clearly indicated by Aristotle, speech is essentially related to the very specific normative frames, that is, to the notions of the just and unjust (Aristotle 1998, 4). Speech is essentially connected with a specific normative or, in other words, it is always related to some interpretation of reality. Rancière emphasizes the interconnectedness of the “natural” dimension with the normative, cultural one:

A distribution of the sensible is a set of relations between sense and sense, that is, between a form of sensory experience and an interpretation that makes sense of it. It is a matrix that defines a whole organization of the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable. (Rancière 2016, 136)

146 Politics is the activity of establishing such a symbolic universe underlying the social and institutional order. But for Rancière’s point of view is vital that politics also means a constant struggle to modify the established symbolic frames. He underlines that politics “is about the construction of the stage and the construction of the position of the speakers. So, it is about *who* is able to give an interpretation. The problem of interpretation concerns *who* is able to interpret, and *in what respect* he, or she, is able to interpret.” (Rancière 2016, 117) From this perspective, the main danger resulting from the natural dominion over an interpretation of the world is the exclusion of the right to speak, the refusal of recognition of certain words as meaningful. Thus, the fundamental conflict takes place on the borders of politics and concerns participation in the space of visibility. In consequence, we should not speak here about the war of interpretations, but, rather, the struggle concerning the space of politics as such.⁷

This shift in the comprehension of politics significantly alters the widespread understanding of politics and the types of conflicts taking place in its sphere. Moreover, the stress put on the literary character of all political

7 In the discussion with Honneth, Rancière contradistinguishes his aesthetics relating to the original decision establishing the space of meaningful speech from hermeneutics which, according to Rancière, presumes an aesthetics.

conflicts enables Rancière to disclose problems usually concealed by the more traditional approach, i.e., the importance of the proper use of language for the dynamics of political struggle. However, this quest for the appropriate means of expression is not, at least for Rancière, understood as the search for an original language reflecting a form of life or experience. For it is highly questionable to assume that every group, even the ones excluded from the sphere of recognition, has its own vernacular which may be added or somehow placed within the dominant language.

Along with the issue of a possible enlarging of the political and linguistic sphere emerges another problem referring to the appropriate means of such an enlargement, which, as mentioned above, is an attempt to modify the existing division of places. The problem concerning the foundation of political disagreements is one of specific traits of Rancière's thought which, at the same time, distinguishes his aesthetics of disagreements from other contemporary philosophers who also redefine politics in terms of repressed languages, that is, from Lyotard and Derrida.

Despite Rancière's criticism of Lyotard's⁸ and Derrida's ethical radicalism, 147 in his discourse, the reader can find a similar radicalism founding his concept of politics. Suffice it to say that Rancière describes politics, or the ideal of politics, in terms of "handling of a wrong" (Rancière 1992, 59), which is typical of Lyotard politics of justice presented in *The Differend*. In both cases, the wrong designates the type of demand which cannot be expressed within existing language. So, it is apparent that by doing so Rancière accepts Lyotard's perspective regarding the linguistical ethical orientation of politics. Hence, for both thinkers, the act of reparation of the differend should take the form of linguistical recognition. More precisely, this justice equals the invention of linguistical means expressing thus far disregarded demands.

If the wrong cannot find its place within a particular language due to its radical heterogeneity, if a specific language is by nature insensitive to some form of experience, it appears impossible to find the means of expression of

8 Rancière, on numerous occasions, expressed his objections regarding the type of ethics founded by Lyotard and distanced himself from the radicality of late Lyotard's writings (cf. Rancière 2011b, 9).

the wrong within this language. And Lyotard seems to presume the almost infinite flexibility of language, as he writes: “This requires new rules for the formation and linking of phrases. No one doubts that language is capable of admitting these new phrase families or new genres of discourse. Every wrong ought to be able to be put into phrases. A new competence (or ‘prudence’) must be found.” (Lyotard 1988, 13) However, in the other passage of the same text Lyotard emphasizes the difficult character of this main ethical task, i.e., the recognition and attestation of the differends, by writing about the “impossible idiom” (Lyotard 1988, 142). But how could we recognize the differend which, by definition, escapes the rules of our language? And how can we incorporate an element which exceeds the limits of this language?

Although Lyotard did not answer these questions, he nonetheless indicated some of the critical issues concerning our ability to enlarge and transform the language we use, but also our imagination.

148 Contrary to Lyotard, Rancière, due to his specific approach combining reflection on the very nature of language with the history of literature and art, seems to solve the questions concerning the possibility of transgressing the boundaries of language and imagination. He claims:

Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct “fictions,” that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done. [...] Man is a political animal because he is a literary animal who lets himself be diverted from his “natural” purpose by the power of words. This literary is at once the condition and the effect of the circulation of “actual” literary locutions. (Rancière 2004, 39)

By this specific status of the literacy of man, Rancière introduces art, and literature in particular, as the privileged medium of a transformation of language or—as in this case—of the symbolic order. What seems to be most original in Rancière’s contribution to the reflection on language, is his concept of misnomers as the proper way of expressing the forgotten or repressed political identities and demands. The concept of misnomers, at first sight, resembles Lyotard’s idea of the impossible idiom, but while for Lyotard the politics of idioms is a strategy

that needs to be implemented, Rancière argues that improper names are the element of already existing language.⁹ As he affirms in his essay on the problem of identity, that “politics is about ‘wrong’ names-misnomers that articulate a gap and connect with a wrong” (Rancière 1992, 62). But, what are misnomers? Rancière explains that, although the essential function of these wrong names is to articulate a wrong and manifest an identity, the wrong name, in fact, indicates a gap separating two identities. On this issue he writes:

It is a crossing of identities, relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being. This network has a noticeable property: it always involves an impossible identification, an identification that cannot be embodied by he or she who utters it. (Rancière 1992, 61)

Political identity constructed in the impossibility to fill the fracture between already existing subjective positions has the undeniable merit of a relational identity that is related to the outside. Nevertheless, the way a misnomer is presented can raise doubts concerning the logic of recognizing and attesting the yet non-existing identity. After all, the practice of inventing improper names can hardly be comprehended as the movement of self-affirmation of the so far omitted groups. Rather, it represents the usual logic of emancipation or, in other words, the speaking in someone’s name. Therefore, the question emerges whether emancipation as self-determination is even possible or we are doomed to the various forms of emancipation which, nonetheless, belong to the tradition of speaking and acting in the name of the oppressed? 149

⁹ To some extent, his standpoint is similar to hermeneutical concept of natural tendency to create new meanings by innovative metaphors described by Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor*, where the metaphors are apprehended as the transgression of the rules of language, but only by the breach of the regular use the semantic innovation can appear. It seems significant that both philosophers present the ability of language to create new meanings in terms of contravention of the regularity of language, which in the instance, is the necessary trait of the latter.

Fortunately, Rancière does not limit his reflection on possible forms of taking the rule over language by the strategy of misnomers; he describes another form of bringing thus far omitted groups, their identity, and specific experience into the realm of visibility. In his works on the dawn of the proletarian movement, another practice of creating this “impossible idiom” is described. Contrary to misnomers, the practice of aesthetic reinvention of language is carried out by those who struggle to express their unique experience. In fact, Rancière’s works on the history of the French workers’ movement from 19th century onwards, are a history of such series of aesthetic revolutions effectuated by workers themselves. As Jean-Phillipe Deranty underlines, Rancière has always emphasized the significance of non-material elements of the workers’ movement that he calls, citing Rancière, the “question of proletarian dignity” which, in turn, cannot be separated from the ability to be viewed as a speaking subject. In this context, recognition manifests itself as the ability to speak about oneself or, as Deranty emphasizes, the ability to give oneself a name (Deranty 2016, 38). In sum, the core of political action lies in the ability to speak for oneself and, more importantly, in being recognized as someone being able to determine its own position within the given social or political structure.

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We see, thus, that Rancière apparently supports the traditional concept of political struggle as the fight for autonomy. However, the concept of autonomy understood as freedom to speak for oneself is one of the more problematic notions in Rancière’s thought. Contrary to what could be presumed, although Rancière supports the idea of having one’s own voice, one’s own language as the core element of political activity, it is nonetheless true that his analysis of the workers’ archives challenges the simplistic view regarding the dynamics between experience and its expression through language. While the widespread concept of emancipation is focused on the idea of the “voice from below” struggling to find its legitimate place, Rancière reveals the quite complicated relation between experience aiming at being manifested and the language which by its nature incarnates the worldview of dominating groups. In the “Introduction” to the English edition of his early works he explains:

To the activists with their haste to distinguish voices from below from voices from above, or forms of power from forms of resistance,

Les Révoltes Logiques replied more generally that there are only ever indistinct barriers, at which shifts in the relationship of words to the “real” that they represent define fragile productions of meaning and movable plays of identification. (Rancière 2011a, 6)

This passage suggests that the emergence of a new language reflects new experiences or new subjective positions themselves only through a complicated game involving the existing means of expression. What seems to be at the same time the main advantage and the biggest weakness of this approach, is the problematic line of division between different discourses. Moreover, as the French philosopher remarks, there is no one voice of the people (Rancière 2011a, 5), i.e., we cannot identify a specific language or subjective position as a representation of the fate of a group. In consequence, there is no method to discriminate the “pure” types of expression from those entangled in the existing language.

The genealogy of the workers’ archive carried out by Rancière effectively dissipates the illusions underlying the emancipatory discourse and challenges its metaphors. Moreover, he attacks the fantasies upon which most emancipatory discourses created by intellectuals are founded. As he states with bitterness:

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The intellectuals’ fantasy is that of a discourse of those below with a positivity that would be at the same time pure negativity: the discourse of the dispossessed, the wretched of the earth, those excluded from power, those who have nothing to lose but their chains, and who are moved solely by the desire to be no longer oppressed. (Rancière 2012, 109)

What is “the voice of the oppressed?” Who should be acknowledged as their *porte-parole*? And the most importantly: do the oppressed need such a *porte-parole* at all? In fact, it is highly questionable that one can be a true advocate of the suffering or injustice done to other people. Although adopting this critical position towards the very possibility of a language which would be a pure expression of suffering and a manifestation of the emancipatory aim may be at least problematic, due to its possible negative outcomes, it may be beneficial

as a counterbalance to the naivety present in the majority of the discourses on emancipation and oppression.

It seems that reflection on language has become one of the focal points of contemporary reflection regarding ethics and politics. It seems that language plays a complex, at least a double role: it is a source of metaphors determining our perception of politics (e.g., the quest for this impossible idiom described by Lyotard which in fact supports the classical concept of political emancipation), but also provides us with the instruments for a critical analysis of the latter. Nonetheless, one may wonder if these two functions are coherent or rather disclose a severe fracture which also marks its presence in the way we comprehend and problematize politics. The search for an emancipatory politics understood as the quest for a system of representation without exclusion is present in the idea of radical democracy developed by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt.¹⁰ On the other hand, the idea of politics as hegemony present in the writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe may be read as philosophy recognizing the fact that such a project is impossible and admitting that representation as such is always a partial representation. In other words, politics inevitably is the sphere in which we always speak in the name of the other.

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The impossible pedagogy of the oppressed?

The idea of combining theoretical or even esoteric problems of contemporary reflection with a practical program aiming at a transformation of education may appear at least peculiar. Nonetheless, such a program always requires a sort of normativity, needs to determine an ideal, and in doing so quite often refers (even if the reference is tacit) to a tradition. As it will be argued in this part, such use of tradition, although being necessary, may result in unresolvable difficulties. The following paragraphs will address Freire's project of emancipatory education and will disclose the internal tension permeating his program. It is possible to interpret these internal difficulties as consequences of philosophical assumptions

¹⁰ In their last book, Negri and Hardt use very strong linguistic metaphors to explain the main goal of their political projects. Moreover, they accentuate that every political action requires a redefinition of the world, its redescription (cf. Negri and Hardt 2017, 152).

founding the Freirian project. As it will be argued, some of tacit premises explain the visible and inevitable incoherencies of his thought.

Freire, his liberatory, democratic education, is one of the rare examples of thought combining a very traditional approach towards emancipation with the aims or declarations that are apparently incompatible with it. The aim of the analysis developed in this part of the paper is to disclose some of the discrepancies present in Freire's concept of education and to examine the possible sources of these contrarities.

As stated earlier, contemporary reflection on language may be treated as the focal point reflecting the main challenges of present-day political philosophy, and, to some extent, a similar thing might be said about the thought of Paulo Freire. Indeed, when regarded from a theoretical point of view (a discussion regarding practical effects of his educational project exceeds the limits of the paper), the Freirian emancipatory education embodies almost all traditional elements of an emancipatory thought: the dialectics between universality and particularity, the ambivalent place of the subject of emancipation, etc. Not to mention the latent anthropology, which gives his project a very specific dimension, and the fundamental comprehension of education and also politics as the struggle to have a voice.

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The idea of emancipation through education seems to be typical of philosophy, where the truth and concept of man's auto-transformation are complementary elements of the same process. For that reason, Freire's concept of political emancipation operating through teaching illiterates provides an excellent object for such a critical analysis. What seems to give Freire's oeuvre its character, is the fundamental conviction that emancipation can be attained only through working on the educational level. The latter should be understood both as the transmission of knowledge and skills and as the process of unveiling the identity of those who thus far were mute participants in history. Thus, literacy means here much more than an acquisition of a particular skill, it equals the ability to communicate the world we live in. Here, literacy is understood as the only path to a wider community and constitutes the only way to bring into discussion a particular worldview. So, it may be said that the manner in which literacy is apprehended by Freire is

similar to Rancière's perspective. As he writes in *Literacy*, the language has a productive character (Freire and Macedo 2005, 105). The latter means that language is a space and an instrument of cultural and social conflicts.

The ethical and political stake of the Freirean enterprise is clear: give to the oppressed their voice, so they can express and fight for their cause. We see there two major themes conflating into one project: on the one hand, the core element being the transformation of existing society, and, on the other, the justice defined as the right to have an own language. Moreover, Freire emphasizes the inherently political character of education, which cannot be separated from its social-political milieu. As he underlines: "Besides being an act of knowing, education is also a political act. That is why no pedagogy is neutral." (Freire 1987, 13)

Freire's project of education leading to a more democratic politics and a fundamental transformation of the social structure may be comprehended as the epitome of the Western concept of the place and vocation of man as well as of the nature of politics. As it will be argued in the following pages, Freire's radical democratic education not only inherits the core values and goals typical of Western thought, but also shares its weaknesses.

The first important theme providing the necessary background for Freire's idea of education is an anthropology, which is definitely assumed, but very often tacitly. In the first part of the paper philosophy was interpreted as a set of theoretical gestures among which the most important ones concern the nature of man. As already mentioned, the division through which this nature was determined, reappears in the various philosophical currents regardless of their relationship toward the tradition of Western thought. Freire is no exception in that regard. He introduces his ideas on politics and education viewed as a means through which the vocation of man is realized by contrasting man and the animal.¹¹ Similarly, Freire claims that only human beings have the ability to transcend their condition, while animals remain immured in their instinct.

11 Freire refers to that concept of man even in his later works. One may find a similar reflection on the division between the natural life of animals and human existence in his *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Freire 2001, 52). Freire uncritically follows the philosophical tradition in that respect. His anthropology contains all the elements: the conviction that animals are not self-conscious, that they do not communicate, and that human form of communication and type of relation to the world are essentially ethical.

Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity. (Freire 2005, 84)

Freire emphasizes the consciousness of the historical character of human being which makes him a creature that needs to learn, and by doing so, needs to transgress historical conditions of his existence. What we see here, is a very interesting interconnection between the unfinished character of reality and man having the ability to reflect this trait, and to transgress particular conditions by his actions. What merits to be noticed, apart from the bond between the natural changeability of the world and the unfinished human nature, is the fact that Freire views education as a natural vocation of man. But what makes his perspective particularly interesting, is the interconnection between “educational” and political natures of man. Freire’s perspective regarding the necessary relation between the political and the educational should not be read as a trivial thesis on the ineluctably biased character of education, but rather as a thesis referring to the inevitable bond between politics and education.

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Education as a specifically human action has a “directive” vocation, that is, it addresses itself to dreams, ideals, utopias, objectives, to what I have been calling the “political” nature of education. In other words, the quality of being political is inherent in its essence. (Freire 2001, 100)

Freire does not limit his anthropological reflection to the theme of consciousness regarding the changeability of the world, but also speaks of a dialogical or communicational essence of man. By doing that, he joins the Marxist but also hermeneutical and phenomenological tradition of comprehending the human being as being anchored in his natural milieu of the material world, but above all, in the social and cultural sphere. These claims

should not be dismissed or undervalued due to the specific role they play in Freire's concept of education, i.e., they provide normative frames for the latter.

A reading of the Brazilian thinker's works gives an impression that, although Freire declares his openness and the non-oppressive character of his stance, there is a latent normativity permeating his oeuvre. Moreover, the reference to traditional philosophical ideas, the presence of anthropology, gives orientation to Freire's works. The interrelation between anthropology and specific politics has never disappeared from Freire's works, yet its presence is explicitly visible in his first book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where Freire seems to revive the Marxist anthropology along with the dialectics between universal vocation of man and particular struggle of the oppressed.

156 This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. (Freire 2001, 44)

We see, thus, that despite the unfinished and undetermined character of man, Freire tends to assume a normative ideal which gives impetus and direction to his project of critical, liberatory education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he speaks about "authentic humanism" or "genuine humanism" which seems to be something more than an attempt to provide a space for the expression of different identities and demands.¹² Apart from the openness of man, Freire indicates another elementary dimension of human being, i.e., its dialogical character. As Freire stresses in the passage devoted to the dynamic of the revolutionary process:

12 It merits to be noticed that in his later works Freire speaks about a type of universal human ethics, which stems directly from the ontological condition typical of man. This claim may, at first glance, not be very problematic, especially when read as a moderate statement that human being needs to give its life a direction and therefore "naturally" shows its ethical character. But Freire goes much further by suggesting that this ethic is based upon "fundamental archetypes" (Freire 2001, 25).

The dialogue which is radically necessary to revolution corresponds to another radical need: that of women and men as beings who cannot be truly human apart from communication, for they are essentially communicative creatures. (Freire 2001, 128)

The manner of comprehending the nature of man manifesting itself¹³ through certain historical events, as well as the way of understanding the desirable political order presented by Freire, can be very appealing, however there are elements of this vision of radical democratic politics which may be, at least, disturbing.

Freire, as most of emancipatory thinkers, assumes that his project of democratic education is able to realize its goals without repeating the mistakes of traditional education, that is, avoids the imposition of knowledge or, in other words, effectively suppresses all power relations within the process of learning. Freire on various occasions claims that only through his concept of education the voice of the oppressed can be heard and recognized. However, a closer analysis of his writings suggests the opposite conclusion. It seems that Freire's project can function similarly to the traditional ("banking") type of education and serves as the privileged method of shaping the individuals' minds.

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The main issue that should be addressed concerns the eradication of power relations from radical democratic education. Freire too rashly assumes that transformation of the teacher's attitude towards students is a sufficient condition to erase power from teacher-student relation.¹⁴ Nonetheless, despite his efforts, it seems that the asymmetry of teacher-student relation is inevitable,

13 Nonetheless, it should be noticed that human nature can be distorted by specific historical conditions. In this regard, Freire remains faithful to the heritage of the early works of Marx and to the idea of alienation of the human nature.

14 This tendency to think of certain models of relations as bereft of domination marks its presence in the manner of problematizing the future political and social relations. Freire is convinced that it is possible to establish a new political order which would abolish the antagonism of the oppressor and the oppressed. He says: "It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation. [...] Resolution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction indeed implies the disappearance of the oppressors as a dominant class." (Freire 2001, 56)

and, consequently, the power shaping the latter cannot be abolished. Although even in his early works Freire notices issues generated by the teacher-student dynamic, he shows a tendency to underestimate the consequences of the latter as well as the very possibility of a transmission of power by the relation itself. A reading of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* proves Freire's tendency to underestimate certain elements, to interpret them as purely neutral, and to ascribe all the negative ramifications of these elements to the socio-political context in which they function.¹⁵ Consequently, Freire assumes that by shifting the attitude of the teacher toward the student we are able to avoid the negative effects associated with the formation of an individual through the transfer of knowledge.

Perhaps this conviction inclines him to say that education based on problem-posing, contrary to the traditional ("banking" in Freire's vocabulary) model of education, is bereft of any type of domination. However, the following question arises: whether dialogical, modest attitude of the teacher necessarily leads to the suppression of domination?

158 *Pedagogy of Oppressed* sketches a new perspective on education in which tension or, as Freire says, contradiction between the teacher and the student is "resolved." Regardless of all restrictions made by Freire, one can still legitimately ask, if the dialogue underlying the problem-posing education, i.e., the democratic type of teaching-learning, would suffice to prevent any form of domination slipping in the process of learning.

In the passages devoted to the democratic, dialogue-based education, Freire stresses the absence of a horizontal relation which is constitutive for traditional education where the teacher occupies the privileged place. As he claims:

The role of the problem-posing educator is to create; together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos*. (Freire 2001, 86)

15 In that regard, Freire uncritically follows Marx's attitude towards science, which was for the latter a neutral tool that produces negative, destructive results only in certain social and political frames. As Marx, Freire does not see that there is a possibility of domination hidden in science as such or in the teacher-student relation.

The problem somehow omitted by Freire marks its presence and allows to ask: who decides when and under which conditions the unclear judgments are replaced with truth? The dialogue-based and problem-focused education should, according to Freire, follow rather the problems stemming from the world, than the goals set by the teacher, but in the last instance, it is the latter who rules over all the stages of the process of learning. Even if in the dialogical education the teacher is supposed to be also a learner, he keeps his position of someone who exercises control over the whole process. Unfortunately, the metaphors applied by Freire only mask the problem of necessary domination which must appear in the teacher-student relation.

This issue returns in various forms in Freire's body of work. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it reemerges as the problem concerning the position of science and its relation to the worldview of the oppressed and as the problem of the political leader, who, in many respects, is similar to the figure of teacher. But before addressing the problem of political leadership and the function of science, I would like to return to the issue of domination inherent in the teacher's position.

While in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire consistently argues that the dialogical education leads to the abolishment of the dissymmetry in the teacher-student relation, his other works shed a different light on this subject. In his *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Freedom*, he very clearly states that every human action must be directive, and directiveness is understood as the inevitable reference to a normative background. In addition, he points out that even the material conditions of education reflect the teacher's perspective, which cannot be viewed as equal to the student's point of view:

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The teacher begins different and ends different. The teacher gives grades and assigns papers to write. The students do not grade the teacher or give the teacher homework assignments! The teacher also must have a critical competence in her or his subject that is different from the students and which the students should insist on. (Freire and Shor 1987, 172)

In another passage of the same book, Freire explains this situation as particularly disturbing for the democratic, liberating education and even calls

this issue “a contradiction,” which consists in the double task of convincing the students, but in such way so as not to impose upon them one’s own point of view (cf. Freire and Shor 1987, 33). The awareness of irreconcilable principles permeating democratic education is worth to be mentioned, but the solution proposed by Freire is problematic. In short, he tries, not to solve, but rather to dissolve this contradiction by emphasizing the attitude of the teacher. Although the latter has a vital role, this should not be treated as a universal answer for the structural problems. Quite interestingly, a similar problem arises regarding the more political question, i.e., the question of political leadership. Like the teacher, the political leader occupies a privileged position, but, as Freire constantly reminds us, the latter works on the basis of “a permanent relationship with the oppressed” (Freire 2001, 68). The stress put on the necessity of collaboration with the oppressed signifies, at least for Freire, a decisive shift in the group dynamics and results in the constitution of an open, democratic community. As Freire stresses: “The revolutionary’s role is to liberate and be liberated, with the people—not to win them over.” (Freire 2001, 95) Once again, Freire attempts to show that another type of interacting with individuals both in the classroom as well as in political action is possible. And although his efforts are understandable, and perfectly justified from the ethical point of view, there are doubts concerning the latent forms of power which Freire tends to underestimate.

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Regardless of the work invested by Freire to persuade us that a democratic teacher and a democratic leader represent a different order founded upon the idea of cooperation, stemming from sympathy and solidarity, it is possible that certain relations are vehicles of domination by their nature.

Objections against Freire’s concept of the teacher-student and the leader-group relations are reinforced by the idea of decoding, playing a vital role in Freire’s original project of education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, decoding is presented as a specific operation allowing the teacher/political activist to recreate the worldview of a group and remodify it subsequently. The logic of this process is of great importance for the understanding of Freire’s thought limitations because it reflects all significant weaknesses of his approach.

In brief, the process of codification is a key practice giving the educators an access to the world of a particular group. It is an incontestable merit of Freire’s

approach that his view on education reflects the diversity of the cultural and economic universe and attributes to it a pivotal function in the education. However, apart from this fundamental assumption, other dimensions of the decoding might be at least disconcerting.

What seems to be the most problematic part in the whole dynamics of codification, is the place occupied by science. Freire, as already shown in reference to the function of the teacher, accepts the leading role of truth and science. According to his program, the education of the people should be preceded by the effort to understand the worldview of the people who are to be taught. So, this education assumes that educators do not impose from the very beginning a particular content, but rather must include and transform the knowledge received from the students. What merits to be stressed, is the general dynamic of this process. As Freire underlines, the people are not reduced to mere objects of scientific examination, but are an integral part of the research (cf. Freire 2001, 106).

The question, thus, arises if the participation of individuals in the process of decoding eliminates the risk of an objectifying and paternalistic attitude. Although descriptions of decoding concerning the active, co-creative role of individuals whose world is being examined are not problematic, the general goal of this process, nonetheless, may be questioned. Freire states:

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The task of the dialogical teacher in an interdisciplinary team working on the thematic universe revealed by their investigation is to “re-present” that universe to the people from whom she or he first received it—and “re-present” it not as a lecture, but as a problem. (Freire 2001, 109)

Freire does not see this exchange as being problematic. However, one may rightfully ask if the operation of recreating a world-view does not imply a certain form of an imposition of the perspective. Nobody, including the revolutionary leaders and democratic teachers, carries the interpretation of reality, why should we, thus, assume that the “re-presentation” of the world effectuated by democratic teachers is not a form of manipulation? The sympathetic attitude of the latter cannot be considered as a decisive argument.

Moreover, there is another, more serious argument against the Freirean model of decoding relating to the cognitive capacities attributed to people.

As previously mentioned, in various fragments, Freire highlights the equal, active role of individuals being the “objects” of scientific investigation, but the fragments concerning the problem of self-consciousness of the people shed a different light on the issue.

According to Freire’s observation, liberation of the people faces a significant obstacle, i.e., a false identification stemming from an interiorization of norms and ideals of the dominant culture. He says:

But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or “sub-oppressors.” The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. (Freire 2001, 45)

162 In the result, what must be challenged, is the false self-consciousness of the oppressed. But if the initial structure of the oppressed, i.e., the groups to which Freire addresses his educational program, is a misinterpretation of their place, how is it possible to treat their opinions as equally important in the process of decoding. Unfortunately, Freire seems to follow the old pattern of the Marxist diagnosis, where the oppressed were able to express their suffering but were incapable of giving it a meaning exceeding the horizon of their lot. Consequently, the role of political leaders and educators is to provide an accurate frame to gather and give the meaning to all individual suffering.¹⁶ But what status should be given to those interpretative frames? Can they be seen as an expression of the “people’s voice?” Or, rather, once again the structure of speaking in someone’s name reemerges?

Freire’s concept of liberatory education and politics tries to unite contradictory themes. When the education and the cognitive skills of the oppressed are at stake, Freire claims that the ignorance of the people is a myth and that every political

16 “Their vision of the new man or woman is individualistic; because of their identification with the oppressor, they have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class.” (Freire 2001, 46)

activist, and supposedly every teacher, must take this popular knowledge into consideration. But, at the same time, he stresses the different position occupied by the leader (cf. Freire 2001, 134). Once again, we see the same contradiction returning: the need for a leader who knows more, who creates the interpretative frames, and the obligation to treat the oppressed as equal partners in this cultural exchange. This problem takes more acute form in the passage, where Che Guevara's mistrust of the people is mentioned. Quite unexpectedly, Freire agrees with Guevara's point of view and calls it the realist approach. In the result, one can ask if the oppressed are truly recognized and treated as partners in the dialogical process of education and political struggle or, rather, they remain the objects of liberatory, emancipatory activity of the others?

Another problematic question concerns the latent normativity of Freire's approach, which occupies a central place, but remains very vague. He often refers to the above-mentioned universal ethics, which sometimes is connected with the idea of solidarity. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find a deeper reflection on the status of these notions. One may argue that all discrepancies haunting his project are the consequences of a lack of a serious reflection. For example, he very often speaks about solidarity, but never examines the philosophical roots of that notion. In very similar way, he speaks about sympathy which is a vital element in his analysis of revolutionary leadership in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Although it is hard to reject both notions, it is equally hard to accept them without reservations and analysis. It seems that solidarity and sympathy are brought to the Freirean project in their very naïve understanding, as a sort of a natural openness which is a guarantee of mutual understanding.

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In sum, one may argue that the proclivity to introduce philosophically questionable notions is a consequence of Freire's involvement with a quite traditional perspective on humanity and its inherent goals. In that respect, his thought remains rooted in the metaphysical tradition. So, the question is, if Freirean ethics and politics are radical enough?

Conclusions

The recent reflection on the philosophical presumptions inherent to the Western culture focuses on at first glance secondary questions concerning the

nature of voice and its interrelation with a peculiar anthropology. Nonetheless, the problematization of these latent presumptions allows us to grasp the regularities of emancipatory discourses. The latter were concentrated on the realization of social and moral justice, which included the task of revealing the point of view, the voice of those who so far were neglected. In short, the historical role of emancipatory politics could be presented as a task of finding and giving the right place to the inaudible voice of the oppressed. But how this process of the discovery is carried out, by whom, and who, in the last instance, has the right to recognize the rightfulness of such a voice?

The other problem, which appears as critical in Freire's work, is the very possibility of such a voice coming from below. Freire, due to his philosophical readings, attempts to incorporate into his idea of education the Gramscian idea of cultural hegemony. And, as a consequence, tends to interpret the world-view created as a result of a decoding of the original popular perspective as a sort of counter-hegemonic discourse, which is the main instrument to express the identity of the oppressed, their political demands, and the incarnation of the idea of justice.

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Although the project is very compelling, the mechanism of decoding seems to obliterate the traditional superiority of those who teach, which is unacceptable from the dialogical perspective. Freire, on the one hand, admits this fact, but on the other, tends to diminish its significance by describing it as a different position and by covering it with a rhetoric of cooperation and equality. And yet, the basic mechanism combined with this "realistic" approach to self-consciousness of the oppressed inclines us to ask, whether the democratic and liberatory education does not recreate the well-known model of emancipation effectuated for the people, but not with the people.

Perhaps, we should, in order to eliminate these discrepancies, reject the idea of a pure voice of the oppressed. And perhaps there is no "idiom" of the oppressed but an incessant practice of mediation, of translation. But, contrary to what Freire suggests, in such a process there are no guidelines and its goal is uncertain.

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THE FOUCAULDIAN ART OF THE SELF AND THE PEDAGOGIC PROBLEM

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Abstract

In the paper, I analyze relations between power, freedom, and formation of the self in reference to Foucault's works since this triangle is central not only to philosophy of education, but also goes to the heart of the problem with Foucault's late intellectual enterprise. Furthermore, I argue that Foucault's last will can be found, not in the ancient care of the self, but in his limit-attitude aimed at losing one's identity which might be also understood as an exercise of being nobody and de-subjectivation. Yet,

this task appears to be a serious problem for educational practice which does not exist without subjects and is based on the model of Althusser's interpellation wherein a teacher takes the role of a policeman.

Keywords: Foucault, aesthetics of existence, the subject, education.

Foucaultovska umetnost sebstva in pedagoški problem

Povzetek

168 V članku analiziram razmerja med oblastjo, svobodo in oblikovanjem sebstva s sklicevanjem na Foucaultova dela, saj je takšen trikotnik osrednjega pomena ne samo za filozofijo izobraževanja, temveč se dotika tudi jedra problema Foucaultovega poznega intelektualnega dela. Nadalje, zagovarjam trditev, da je Foucaultovo poslednjo voljo mogoče najti, ne v antični skrbi za sebstvo, temveč v mejni drži, cilj katere je izguba lastne identitete, kar lahko razumemo tudi kot vajo v biti-nihče in de-subjektivaciji. Toda tovrstna naloga se zdi resen problem za izobraževalno prakso, ki ne obstaja brez subjektov in temelji na modelu Althusserjeve interpelacije, znotraj katerega učitelj privzema vlogo policaja.

Ključne besede: Foucault, estetika eksistence, subjekt, izobraževanje.

I have decided to choose, as a starting point for my contribution, Gert Biesta's and Carl Anders Säfström's claim, from their "A Manifesto for Education," that freedom is the core of educational interest (cf. Biesta and Säfström 2011). Trying to analyze the issue of freedom, I refer to Michel Foucault's works since he gives us one of the most accurate, intriguing, but also disturbing descriptions of a post-modern world. In my research, I also reach much beyond the educational context in order to examine first of all the mechanism of freedom, not only its realization. In Foucault's philosophy, the problem of freedom goes hand in hand with issues of power and formation of the subject. This triangle consisting of three fundamental issues, from a pedagogical point of view, simultaneously refers us to difficulties in reading the philosopher's late thought, difficulties which suggest a break within his thought. However, the effort to understand reasons for these difficulties allows us to reveal a new, unexplored field of reflection. Thus, firstly, I intend to throw some light on the problem with Foucault's late thought. Then, I present his concept of power as a relationship of forces arguing that this concept is present not only in his genealogical period of writing, but also in his late works, which allows us to argue that there are no contradictions in his philosophy and that the issue of self-formation remains connected with power. In the third section, I deal with the art of the self of the ancient type of subject, positing that this part of Foucault's works has mainly a descriptive character and therefore we cannot stop our research at this point. The fourth section is devoted to an analysis of the inner connection between power and freedom and the distinction between power and domination. This allow us to claim, first, that formation of the self, regardless of the way it is constituted, results from an interplay between power and freedom, and that in each case the subject remains the product of something initially external to itself. Second, it is possible to say that what is dangerous is not power, but the state of domination. Subsequently, I argue that the Foucauldian idea of the aesthetics of existence cannot be identified with the ancient attitude and is, in fact is at odds with its normative and therapeutic orientation. It can be found, not in the formation of the self, but in losing the self, in the art of being nobody, which means that the question about the individual cannot be formulated in terms of freedom and power, but beyond them. This raises the question: how to conceive of education aimed at losing

one's face? For it seems that there are not only *institutional obstacles*, but also more serious hurdles referring to what is educational itself.

I. The problem with Foucault's late works

170 The problem with late Foucault "is probably one of the most widely discussed topics in research published on Foucault" (Harrer 2005, 76). Let me recall briefly the main difficulties that emerge when one deals with Foucault's late writings. The issue of the aesthetics of existence, focused on self-formation, belongs to the last period of Foucault's activity called the period of problematization. In the 1980's, the philosopher displaces the axis of his analysis from power to the issue of subjectivity, to the issue of the "different modes by which [...] human beings are made subjects" (Foucault 2002, 326). In this way, the subject, regarded as being able to free itself from power and "to make their life into an *oeuvre*" (Foucault 1990, 10), becomes central to his thought. The subject is no longer perceived as a passive effect of power, "as a marionette, a subservient and silent body" (Huijter 1999, 64), but an active creator of the self. What also needs to be said is that this type of a free subject is a result of the philosopher's research into ancient thought. Taking the above-mentioned into account, some of the researchers have talked about the "return of the subject" (cf. Dews 1989), about the "ethical turn" in Foucault's philosophy, about the conversion from the poststructuralist into a humanistic position (cf. Smith 2015, 39), about the philosopher's transformation from a libertine into a liberal (Komendant 1995, 8). Yet, one needs to bear in mind that at the same time, Foucault maintains his previous claims about power, declaring that his last writings do not represent a break with the earlier ones dominated by the perspective of *the death of man* (cf. Deleuze 1990, 130-136; Flynn 1994, 28; Veyne 1997; Harrer 2005, 75-76). In other words, in Foucault's late thought the issue of a free subject appears, while the definition of power, in light of which the subject is an epiphenomenon of blind forces, is still retained.

II. Power

To identify the issue, let me begin with the problem of Foucauldian power. Foucault draws his concept from Nietzsche's idea of "power without enclosing it within a political theory" (Rajchman 1997, 96). The "hazard of battle becomes a better metaphor for the exercise of power than the establishment of Law" (ibid., 97), and such power, as he proves, is much more difficult to recognize. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, the French philosopher contrasts his concept of power, which he calls strategic, with the juridico-discursive model of power. The main difference between them consists in the mechanism of how they function. Power, in the juridico-discursive conception, possessing only the rule of prohibition, is reduced to a requirement of obedience. According to Foucault, in that ossified type of analysis, the law is the only form of power, which means that the juridico-discursive conception is not able to see modern forms of power which exceed the law. Therefore, he considers that type of analysis to be inadequate for analyzing our present, where the methods of power are not ensured "by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (Foucault 1978, 89). In other words, although the king lost his head a long time ago, the juridico-discursive conception does not see this change. That is why it gives importance to "the problem of right and violence, law and illegality, freedom and will, and especially the state and sovereignty" (ibid.). The old type of analysis is not able to move on from the symptoms of the power of feudal sovereign to the code of modern power, even though—as Foucault proves in his *Society Must Be Defended*—there is a wide gulf between them. Power, in the course of its history, trying to pretend to be non-power, increasingly abandons what defined the king's power, namely the rules of transcendence, visibility, and transparency, and, first of all, leaves its connection with the law. It stops announcing itself, merges deeper and deeper with the social body, realizing itself through immanence, invisibility, and secretiveness. And what is interesting, Foucault's hypothesis, exactly at this point, is analogous to Carl Schmitt's reflection, as it was Schmitt who wrote about the intrusion of power, escaping the emblem of power, into the nineteenth-century political scene. That change raises the need for a genealogical analysis of power

which, reaching to the *nature* of power, is able to trace its masks and sidesteps. Thus, the Foucauldian model of analysis emphasizes the productive effectiveness of power, its strategic resourcefulness, and its positivity. It does not reduce power to “a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state” (ibid., 92). The French philosopher chooses an ontological perspective, conceiving of power:

in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (ibid., 92–93)

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Therefore, power is not something that can be acquired, seized, shared, or held, but it is the network of relations, the bloodstream of an individual body, as well as the social one. To think of human freedom within such a vision of power seems to be difficult. For it seems that there is no escape from the tentacles of power and the individual is doomed to be a passive product of blind power forces, all the more so as Foucault in one of his last interviews (entitled “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom”) inscribes power in human relations. He declares:

when ones speaks of *power*, people immediately think of a political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master and the slave, and so on. I am not thinking of this at all when I speak of *relations of power*. I mean that in human relationships, whether they involve verbal communication such as we are engaged in at this moment, or amorous, institutional, or economic relationships, power is always present: I mean a relationship in which one person tries to control the conduct of the other. (Foucault 2000d, 292–292)

Although Foucault changes the level of his analyses, that is, shifts from an impersonal to personal level, the definition of power is maintained. Within this framework, the issue of self-formation appears, which allows us to reason that this problem remains connected with power.

III. How to make a free subject?

The issue of self-formation and the issue of the aesthetics of existence—that is a question about how the subject, in a free act, can form itself—are inextricably intertwined with Foucault's scrutiny of ancient philosophy to which he devoted his last years. The ancient type of subject, and the way in which it is produced, which emerge in this examination, stand in opposition with the modern type of the subject, present in the middle period of his works, who is perceived to be a passive product of power. However, rather than a simple change of the object, it is a shift within the existing body of thought. In order to grasp this shift, one should trace the steps that led towards it.

In Foucault's works, the issue of subjectivity and the subject's freedom is preceded by the question of the mode by which a modern subject has been produced, as the subject of desire, that is, the subject who defines its identity by necessary reference to its sexuality. The issue of sexuality appears at the end of the 1970's and is closely intertwined with the mechanism of knowledge and power. At the beginning of the eighties, Foucault includes that theme in the analysis of the games of truth, which means that the character of the main question changes, since it does not refer any more to the mechanism of coercion, but to the relation between truth and the subject. Therefore, the question is: how the subject is formed in the face of truth? What is the price which I must pay to be really me? What should I remove from myself, what should I do to be able to recognize myself as myself? The ancient kind of subjectivity was guided by the motto of *the arts of existence*, and this slogan was realized in the imperative of the care of the self and was linked with the requirement of knowledge of the self. Foucault explains that the arts of existence meant "intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and

meets certain stylistic criteria” (Foucault 1990, 10–11). He spotlights the fact that ancient ethics was a matter of moral conduct, a matter of relation to the self and to others. In that way ethics, as a task of making one’s life into a work of art, was linked with the aesthetics of existence. This task was accomplished through “technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 2000c, 225). Ancient ethics, in contrast to Christian morality, did not focus on prohibition or obedience to one law, but placed emphasis on the individual’s freedom. Such freedom consisted in choosing suitable ways in which “one would be able to give one’s conduct the form that would assure one of a name meriting remembrance” (ibid., 93). It stemmed from the fact that moral reflection in antiquity was based not on the codification of acts, but on stylization of conduct, on an aesthetics of existence. That kind of requirement was open-ended, in the sense of being bereft of precise settlements. The proper task of ancient ethics could be found in practicing moderation which, like practicing freedom, was understood as an exercise of self-mastery. The self-control manifested itself in human behavior, in the way in which a man related to himself, and to others. At the same time, governing the self was conceived of as a sort of an art. For that reason, what was liable to value judgements was much more one’s attitude towards sexual pleasures than sexual pleasures themselves. To put it in other words, what was judged was the art of using pleasures, not the types of them. Moreover, in examining differences between ancient and modern types of subjectivity, a different relation connecting truth and the subject who constitutes itself in the face of this truth, needs to be highlighted. The ancient type of the subject seems to be more autonomous because between it and truth there was no institution with its requirement of objectification, unlike in the case of the modern subject, as a successor of the Christian tradition, where both the process of attaining one’s identity and the verification of it have been mediated by an authority external and superior to the subject. In other words, along with the appearance of the institution of confession, truth leaves the intimate room of human interior and moves to the public common space. Therefore, what has been changed is the

way of the functioning of truth, its problematization, and as a result, the way of producing the subject.

In order to draw a conclusion from Foucault's analyses of the formation of the subject, we have two options: either *we return to the Greeks*, that is, we assume that Foucault, in presenting Epicurean and Stoic ethics, provided us with a blueprint of how to escape the oppression of power, or we bemoan the fact that we do not know any positive aspect of Foucault's last will. The first choice, although modified, is very willingly employed by pedagogical theory since the postulate of ancient care of the self is, indeed, an educational postulate of self-cultivation in which the individual makes his way towards himself. Consequently, a world of power is no longer challenging, since we know the way how to elude it. Namely, "passive subjection (*assujettissement*)" needs to be replaced with "active subjectivization (*subjectivation*)" (cf. Leask 2012, 64). In this way, Foucault's educational suggestions could be easily placed in the framework of the concept of *Bildung*, understood "as a critical and emancipatory enterprise, i.e. as a process in which human beings became truly free and in which they emancipated themselves from all kinds of power including the power of the actual given State" (Masschelein and Ricken 2003, 140). And, as a matter of fact, at this conclusion we could stop our examination of the late Foucault. Yet, is this a comprehensive interpretation of his last works? Did the great exposé actually leave, as his philosophical testament, an appeal: "defend yourselves against power by practicing stoicism"? It seems that we can get much more from his thought. Furthermore, I argue that we not only *can* draw more conclusions from his thought, but we *should*. For in our demanding post-modern world we cannot satisfy ourselves with easy answers. And, in post-Platonic thought, we cannot rely on responses that tend to enclose the world in a binary opposition between good and evil, freedom and power, truth and lie. Moreover, bearing in mind the Foucauldian world of power relations, one has to agree with the idea that all educational concepts regarded as emancipatory projects "actually can be understood as a privileged medium through which a certain power apparatus ('un dispositif de pouvoir') has been invested" (ibid., 139). What, then, has been left to learn from the Foucauldian lesson?

IV. Power-freedom

First of all, we need to make Foucault's portrayal of power complete. According to Foucault, the essential attributes of power are its instability and mobility resulting in a reversibility of roles, which, in turn, annihilates the permanent division into master and slave. The second feature, central to power, connected to the changeability of relations, is freedom. As he puts it: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power." (Foucault 1978, 95) The points of resistance, spread in the network of power, are not merely the counterbalance of power, they are—he claims—"the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite" (ibid., 96). Therefore, the thinking of power also must think about freedom. And Foucault does not leave this conviction in the last period of his writings. In "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," he declares that "power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free" (Foucault 2000d, 292), even if that freedom is limited and exists only as the option of killing oneself, or the other person. In consequence, "in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance [...], there would be no power relations at all" (ibid.). In this attitude to power, there is a noticeable echo of the establishment of power relations that might be found in Hobbes' thought, whom Foucault recalls in his *Society Must Be Defended*, and from whom he simultaneously distances himself. For this relation is never set up as a result of a resolution of the strongest, but always as a result of the decision of the individual who surrenders; even if his choice is limited to an alternative: to give up or to die.

Thus, in examining Foucault's power relations, one should think about the concepts of freedom and power taken together, since in the Foucauldian perspective, in contrast to the traditional, freedom is not conceptualized as an opposite of power or as the absence of it. In the same way, power is not understood as something that "is bad in itself" (ibid., 298) and of which we must break free as, according to Foucault: "Power is not evil. Power is games of strategy." (ibid.) What is dangerous, are states of domination in which power relations remain blocked and frozen. Domination is something dangerous

for the reason that it annihilates the essential feature of power which is the reversibility of relations. In this way, domination destroys power because it destroys the freedom inherent in power. It is therefore crucial to keep in mind that Foucault distinguishes “between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties [...] and the states of domination that people ordinarily call ‘power’” (ibid., 299). Analogically, we can also differentiate between freedom and liberation. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault postulates an end to thinking about power, among other things, in terms of “liberty and sovereignty” (Foucault 1978, 90), and at the same time maintains that resistance is an irreducible part of power. These statements, considered together, appear to be contradictory. Yet, they become comprehensible when the difference between freedom and liberation is taken into account. In other words, one must leave the conception of power as a yoke from which a human being must liberate itself towards an authentic and free self, since liberation can take place only in the case of domination.¹ Thus, on the ontological level, as well as the personal, freedom and the practice of freedom belong to power, not to liberation.

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Foucault does not change his concept of the subject but makes a shift on the power-freedom line. Moreover, it might be said that “Foucault’s earlier and later thinking on subjectivity are compatible and continuous” (Harrer 2005, 83), as the mechanism of fabrication of subjects through disciplinary power and the mechanism of ancient ethical self-constitution are the same. They work according to the same scheme. The freedom of the ancient subject—especially in comparison with a criminal or a madman as subjects—sounds so clear because violence linked with domination is not present there. What needs to be emphasized, is that the subject, in each case, is not autonomous

1 In the interview “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault says that he always was suspicious of the concept of liberation, since “if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanism of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and positive relationship with himself.” (Foucault 2000d, 282)

and independent. Although to a different extent, both the modern subject and the ancient remain products of something external to them. The aim of the ancients, as Foucault points out, was “the subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself” (Foucault 2005, 333), making the truth one’s own, not “the objectification of the self in a true discourse” (ibid). The fact that the subject was assigned the role of a producer of the self made the relation between the subject and truth much more individualized, since the implementation of this relation consisted in individual decisions. However, and this needs to be emphasized, those decisions remained within the framework of *a true discourse*. And the techniques of the self, through which an ancient subject constituted its subjectivity, came from outside, from culture and society. As Foucault says: the techniques of the self are not what the individual invents, but they are “models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group” (Foucault 2000d, 291).

178 Let me add that the possibility of making shifts on the power-freedom line, where every kind of such a shift would mean a new starting point for Foucauldian analyses, could explain the transformations in Foucault’s works, depending on whether the mechanism of repression or the mechanism of self-management was that starting point (cf. Foucault 2000d, 281–282). The second perspective could appear only after the crystallization of the thought that prohibition is not the only tool of power.

V. How to elude being a subject?

Foucault’s study of the ancient type of subject is complemented by the call for a new philosophical ethos. In “What is Enlightenment?” from 1984, Foucault delineates “a historical ontology of ourselves” (Foucault 2000e, 315) with its ethos defined as “a historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond,” “as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings” (ibid., 316). However, in attaching importance to this idea, one needs to make an assumption that the ancients are not the model of the new ethos, but only its tenuous inspiration as the work on the self. Otherwise, the interpretation would suffer from contradiction with the Foucauldian nominalist approach

to history. Therefore, it is doubtful that the ancient techniques of the self imitatively return in Foucault's thought as a model which can be separated from its historical context and applied to different circumstances. It refers also to the issue of *parrhesia*, described in *The Government of the Self and Others*, which should not be welcomed as an ethics of truthful speech or at least not without an attempt at a problematization of it. For, as Zachary Simpson points out: "Foucault appears to advocate a practice of truthful speech, while also being committed, as many commentators have shown, to the project of showing truth to be produced, intermeshed with power relations, and situated." (Simpson 2012, 100) Another argument why we should not treat Foucault's history of the ancient subject as prescriptive—but as a part of his work on "a historical theory of knowledge" (Detel 2005, 10)—is that he definitely does not yield to the temptation of the myth of Greece. In his last interview "The Return of Morality," he says: "All of antiquity seems to me to have been a 'profound error.'" (Foucault 1988b, 244) He also adds that he finds the Greeks "neither exemplary nor admirable" (ibid.). If, then, a demand for an aesthetics of existence is present in Foucault's late philosophy, it contains a different content

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than the ancient aesthetics.

In both cases, one deals with the art of life which transforms human life, and which combines notions of ethics and aesthetics. In one of his interviews from 1982, Foucault says, explaining why he is not a good academic:

For me, intellectual work is related to what you called "aestheticism," meaning transforming yourself. [...] You see, that's why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation. [...] This transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting? (Foucault 2000a, 130–131)

In a way, "writing became for Foucault a kind of ascesis, a technique of the self" (Dean 1994, 200). Yet, the two modes of the art of the self do not share the same goal and they are guided by different rules. The aim of ancient aesthetics

was the shaping of one's own life, shaping "the self" to deserve remembrance of the descendants. And moderation was its rule, whereas the aim of Foucault's aesthetics is rather to escape from oneself as "the self," to elude subjectivation.² The perfect illustration of this aim can be found in Foucault's many statements. For example, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he acknowledges: "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write." (Foucault 1972, 17) In *The Use of Pleasure*, he explains that his research was encouraged by curiosity "which enables one to get free of oneself" (Foucault 1990, 8). The philosopher says:

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After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeable-ness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (ibid.)

And in "The Concern for Truth" one can read: "What can the ethics of an intellectual be—I claim this title of intellectual, though, at the present time, it seems to make certain people sick—if not this: to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself (which is the opposite of the attitude

2 Let me recall here a significant remark, made by Frédéric Gros about scepticism that is not even mentioned in Foucault's lectures about the ancients: "The Sceptics are not mentioned; there is nothing on Pyrrhon and nothing on Sextus Empiricus. Now the Skeptical school is actually as important for ancient culture as the Stoic or Epicurean schools, not to mention the Cynics. Study of the Sceptics would certainly have introduced some corrections to Foucault's thesis in its generality. It is not, however, the exercises that are lacking in the Sceptics, nor reflection on the *logoi*, but these are entirely devoted to an undertaking of precisely de-subjectivation, of the dissolution of the subject. They go in a direction that is exactly the opposite of Foucault's demonstration [...]. This silence is, it is true, rather striking. Without engaging in a too lengthy debate, we can merely recall that Foucault took himself for...a skeptical thinker." (Gros 2005, 548, note 21)

of conversion)?" (Foucault 1988a, 263) It all brings into clear view the fact that Foucault's model of the work on the self, "which makes a virtue of constantly seeking to become other to oneself" (Ure 2007, 51), is not only different from the ancient model, but in fact is at odds with its fundamental normative and therapeutic orientation.

The principle which rules Foucauldian aesthetics is related to the issue of limits the same way his entire philosophical enterprise is concerned with testing limits, pushing against them, and transgressing them. Therefore, Foucault's thought would not be a moderate attitude, but an extreme approach, even if we agree with the claim that Foucault's transgression does not involve overcoming limits, but merely illuminating them (Simons 1995, 69). The problem of limits can be found in almost every dimension of his philosophy, on the theoretical level and on the practical level which are, indeed, one. The illustrative example of this unity would be the body. And Shusterman is right when he says that Foucault's works exemplify the idea of somaesthetics, that is, "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman 1999, 302). Yet, he is wrong when he recognizes the searching for pleasure as the only aim of Foucauldian somaesthetics neglecting the issue of the exploration of limits. In a previously mentioned interview, the French philosopher claims that his dream is to "die of an overdose of pleasure of any kind," since "the real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming" that he could not survive it (Foucault 2000a, 129). He also mentions—as one of his most beautiful memories—the memory of the day when he was struck by a car in the street and he was sure he was dying. A drug experience may be added, as well, to the experiences of exploration of limits. Certainly, Foucault's stories might be treated as a sort of provocation or a part of his private life that does not need any comments. However, if they are seen from the perspective of limits, they reveal another fragment of the Foucauldian puzzle, where the body links with mind, and theory with practice. The issue of limits is present also in the philosophical ethos of the historical ontology of ourselves which Foucault characterizes *explicite* as "a limit-attitude." In "What is Enlightenment?" he explains:

We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge must renounce exceeding, it seems to me that the critical question today must be turned back into a positive one: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing-over. (Foucault 2000e, 315)

The historical ontology of ourselves is, indeed, a limit-examination, an effort to think in a different way than we have thought until now, an attempt to transgress the constraints that determine our thinking and our being, since Foucault's message is not how to constitute ourselves, but how to lose our identity. Thus, paradoxically, his art of the self is not an art of perpetuating but forgetting.

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VI. Educational implications of Foucault's thought

There are at least two crucial educational conclusions to be drawn from Foucault's philosophy. Firstly, to articulate the aims for education one needs to take into account that formation of the self takes place between power and freedom, within the field of their interplay, and the educational task cannot be conceived of as an emancipation towards the autonomous and authentic self. Secondly, education should be sensitive not to the power relations present in each educational process, but to the states of domination, since it is not power that is dangerous, but the state of the coagulation of power relations meaning the state where instability and mobility of relations disappear. Consequently, the essential interest of education can be found not in freedom, but in a ceaseless watchfulness being able to recognize the threat of domination.³

Yet, there is another conclusion stemming from Foucault's thought that

3 Ian Leask, drawing from Foucault's concept of subjectivity and power, depicts a portrait of "pedagogy reconfigured," that is, of pedagogy that assumes the role of a

seems to be more interesting and at the same time more challenging. Namely, education should be thought of neither in terms of formation of a specific mode of the subject according to given social and cultural requirements nor in opposition to them, but in terms of the evasion of being a subject. For if we take Foucault's claim seriously, that everything is dangerous (cf. Foucault 2000b, 256), that everything has the potential to turn out to be its opposite, we can simultaneously assume that every form of subjectivation is at a constant risk of becoming its degenerative form. And the subject's identity can easily become the individual's prison. Thus, the educational process, throughout centuries understood as a voyage towards oneself, can no longer lead to recognition or formation of one's identity. Instead, it should give a human being the tools for the deconstruction of its already established identity. What is important is that the human identity can be understood not only in terms of nature or essence of the subject, but also as the social roles and labels that are imposed upon us. Thus, the question "Who am I?" must be replaced with the question: "What can I do not to be enclosed in my identity?"

To put it in other, and maybe more provocative, words, if education learns 183 Foucault's lesson, it will consist in preparing a human being to be nobody. In order to discard the usual connotations of "nobody," and to introduce new aspects of the meaning of the word, I want to refer to Emily Dickinson's poem. She writes:

particular point of resistance based on the critical attitude and suitable for post-modern governmentality: "[...] pedagogy can no longer be taken *solely* as the oppressive, vertical, imposition of Power. Instead, the possibility now emerges that it can also be the theatre of subjects' creation of new 'practices of self', new kinds of relations—especially *via* continued resistance to domination. As we have seen, discursive self-production and self-creation does not equate with the processes of institutional fabrication; accordingly, the description of schools as being fundamentally carceral, as being concerned with the 'external' production of docile bodies, can be supplemented, even rethought, in a fairly radical fashion. Teachers and students alike can now be regarded as creative agents, capable of voluntary and intentional counter-practices, and always able, in principle, to resist aspects of the kinds of managerialism, instrumentalization, and commodification they face daily." (Leask, 2012, 67)

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog! (Dickinson 2003, 23)

184 At the first level of interpretation, this poem appears to be an uncomplicated encomium of privacy, anonymity, and modesty, that has no need for the splendor of fame and admiration of others. However, at a deeper level, it reveals a more intriguing issue, namely the threat that is hidden in speech and naming. The message introduced in the second stanza is easy to identify: when you want to be somebody, you have to constantly talk about it, you have to keep repeating your name, finally becoming just one of many frogs in a bog. Another danger emerges in the first strophe: speaking about being nobody will result in banishment. Yet, does such a banishment mean anything when you are nobody, and you are already outside? I believe that this threat should be interpreted rather as an exile from the state of being nobody, that is, from the state of suspension in which, for a while, one can live without a name and identity. I am nobody and free, but when you recognize me as such, when you label and call me nobody, I stop being nobody. This thought sounds stronger in another version of this poem in which the peril of exile is replaced with a different threat: "Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!" (Dickinson 1976, 133)

Dickinson does not distance herself from the body, although the word nobody strongly evokes in our minds such associations. Her *nobody* does not mean the body that does not exist nor the body that denies itself, but the body without a name, without a face of identity. It is the body described by Sloterdijk as *yesbody*. He states: "[...] no life has a name. The self-conscious nobody in us—who acquires names and identities only through its 'social birth'—remains the living source of freedom. The living Nobody, in spite of

the horror of socialization, remembers the energetic paradises beneath the personalities. Its life soil is the mentally alert body, which we should call not *nobody* but *yesbody*.” (Sloterdijk 2001, 73) To be nobody may be pictured as Odysseus’ rescue from Althusser’s interpellation which means recruiting “subjects among individuals (it recruits them all) or ‘transforms’ individuals into subjects (it transforms them all)” (Althusser 2014, 190). In an example given by Althusser when a policeman hails “Hey, you there!” the individual turns around because he recognizes that “the hail ‘really’ was addressed to him and that ‘it really was he who was hailed’ (not someone else)” (ibid., 191), and it is through this physical conversion he becomes the subject. Being without a name means to be without a disposition to react, to turn around. And the Foucauldian limit-attitude holds out the possibility of the transgression of being somebody, the possibility of losing one’s face and being without a name. The limit-attitude as being “at the frontiers” (Foucault 2000e, 315) means also that, for a short moment, we are beyond power, but also beyond freedom since we cannot think of them separately. We are neither free nor subjected.

Yet, is an education aimed at losing one’s identity possible? The fact that education takes place in the institutional framework is the first obstacle. The administrative obligation of producing and accumulating formal documentation such as attendance lists, reports, or diplomas causes teachers to be like “our bureaucrats and our police” (Foucault 1972, 17) who keep attaching our body to our identity. The system of documentation is based on the model of Althusser’s interpellation and the teacher takes the role of a policeman who makes us subjects subjected to an educational regime, as if an educational system could not exist without its subjects. Accordingly, the individual whose attendance is not reported, by acknowledging his identity, does not exist as a subject of education. In that way, we are, first, subjected to schooling, then we smoothly become subjected to other orders of society like the law, the state, or morality. Thus, it can be said that we do not merely go to school; we emerge from school (cf. Leask 2012, 60), we emerge as subjects who, being set into motion by school training, keep marching by ourselves. In other words, institutional education, being closely linked with other social orders, cannot be focused on losing our identity and teaching us how to be nobody, but on cultivating the self since being nobody means being out of any

social order. Do not parents inculcate a fear of being nobody in their children perceiving education as a protection against this fall? Within this educational machine the function of memory is not how to forget and lose, but how to remember and collect. We collect not only knowledge, but also our names, achievements, and failures, all of them have to be catalogued and remembered to bear witness of who we are. We educate in order to shape and cultivate ourselves. Furthermore, from the historic point of view, the school with its disciplinary system, as a reflection and representation of social demands, is a crucial part of the painful process of giving “a memory to the animal, man” (Nietzsche 2007, 38).⁴ The human animal, who initially is only in the present, is shaped in order to be between the past and the future since education to the same extent is a process based on remembering and “a process that will deliver its promises at some point in the future” (Biesta and Säfström 2011, 541). In consequence, the present becomes a moment in which we need to remember what has happened in the past and to hope to be more a self than we are at the moment. Therefore, placing Foucault’s limit-attitude within a paradigm of learning in order to make a connection between his philosophy and interest of educational research, as Thompson does, might be questionable. We can easily agree that: “Learning means change and transformation in that it implies an experience that is singular, determinative and irrevocable for the learner” (Thompson 2010, 362), but we need to add that learning inevitably involves remembering as an action of a conscious subject.

However, it seems that there is another, more serious, obstacle. Even if we differentiate between education in its institutional form and education itself, and even if we assume that institutional education ignores what is educational, we cannot neglect to ask whether the concept of being nobody is educational. According to Masschelein, by all means, the Foucauldian work

4 Nietzsche writes: “How do you give a memory to the animal, man? How do you impress something upon this partly dull, partly idiotic, inattentive mind, this personification of forgetfulness, so that it will stick?” ... This age-old question was not resolved with gentle solutions and methods, as can be imagined; perhaps there is nothing more terrible and strange in man’s prehistory than his *technique of mnemonics*. ‘A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues to hurt stays in the memory’ – that is a proposition from the oldest (and unfortunately the longest-lived) psychology on earth.” (Nietzsche 2007, 38)

on the self, designed to lose ourselves, can be described in educational terms “as an e-ducative practice” (Masschelein 2006, 563), providing that the word “e-ducative” is derived not from *educare* (that is to train or to mold), but *educere* (which means to lead out) (cf. Bass and Good 2004, 162). In this sense “an e-ducative practice is not (or not in the first place) about gaining knowledge or competence which resolves ignorance and incompetence” (Masschelein 2006, 563). It is, as he holds, a practice in which the subject loses himself and liberates his outlook, obtaining “the possibility to have a gaze on the world, without being captured by a regime” (ibid., 569). Yet, this position raises some doubts. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault uses the term *educere* to describe the educational action of a philosopher with the result that the individual could “finally arrive at himself, exercise his sovereignty over himself and find his entire happiness in this relationship” (Foucault 2005, 135). This action was “necessary for the constitution of the subject by himself” (ibid., 134) and aimed at leading out the individual from a condition Foucault calls, following Seneca, *stultitia*. In other words, education originating from *educere* was understood as a “certain action carried out on the individual” (ibid.) whom an educator-philosopher offers a hand in order to extricate him from *stultitia*, from a state of stultification. In the same lecture, Foucault depicts *stultus* as the individual who “constantly changes his life” (ibid., 132), “who is dispersed over time” (ibid., 131). As he points out: *stultus* is “not only open to the plurality of the external world but also broken up in time. The *stultus* is someone who remembers nothing.” (ibid.) And the state of being without a face is definitely closer to the state of *stultitia*, that is, the state of dispersion of the self, than to a condition of *sapientia*, the condition of being educated. Thus, being nobody rather than belonging to what is educational, is opposed to what is educational. *Stultus* is a fool, he is not educated. He is beyond demands of society and time. Furthermore, since he is without a face, he cannot be recognized through the prism of the concepts of anthropological description, upon which education is based, like subjectivity, freedom, responsibility, and consciousness. Like Francis Bacon’s faces he remains un-faced.

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This conclusion needs to be completed by remembering that Foucault’s philosophy bears a strong poststructuralist hallmark that undermines and challenges educational thought (cf. Hodgson and Standish 2009, 311–312).

This dangerous and challenging trait, too many times, has been omitted and his philosophy has smoothly become a part of educational reflection. Following Foucault, one could say that, in a way, educational thought, through absorbing threatening poststructuralism, took it over and at the same time made it defenseless. But perhaps this situation is unavoidable; does not, exactly in that way, every discipline as power-knowledge crack down on guerrilla thought?

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DILEMMAS OF EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVES AND GOOD CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

Despite the numerous crises of contemporary democracy, there still exists a widespread conviction that democracy is the best approach to ensure harmonious relationships among individuals and social groups. However, in the time of the growing disappointment over our social relationship and the radical decrease of trust within society, we face the question of how to educate for democracy. It is necessary to present to young people the classic disputes of democracy that are still valid and simultaneously

go beyond the traditional thinking about democracy and civic engagement. The understanding of democratic participation and civil activity is currently changing. We experience new, alternative, more individualized, and emotional forms of civic activity among the young. Therefore, we should face the questions concerning contemporary education for good citizenship, for active participation in democracy and in pursuing the goals of democratic societies.

Keywords: democracy, good citizenship, education for democracy, civic engagement, cultural change.

Dileme izobraževanja za demokratične imperitive in zgledno državljanstvo

Povzetek

194 Kljub številnim krizam sodobne demokracije obstaja široko razširjeno prepričanje, da je demokracija najboljši pristop k zagotavljanju složnih odnosov med posamezniki in družbenimi skupinami. Vendar se v času naraščajočega razočaranja and družbenimi razmerji in radikalnega pojemanja zaupanja znotraj družbe soočamo z vprašanjem, kako izobraževati za demokracijo. Mladim ljudem je potrebno predstaviti klasične razprave glede demokracije, ki ostajajo v veljavi in obenem presegajo tradicionalno razmišljanje o demokraciji in civilnem udejstvovanju. V današnjih časih se razumevanje demokratične udeležbe in civilne aktivnosti spreminja. Med mladimi lahko zasledimo nove, alternativne, bolj individualizirane in čustvene oblike civilne aktivnosti. Zato se moramo spoprijeti z vprašanji, ki zadevajo sodobno izobraževanje za zgledno državljanstvo, za aktivno udeleževanje v demokraciji in zasledovanju ciljev demokratičnih družb.

Ključne besede: demokracija, zgledno državljanstvo, izobraževanje za demokracijo, civilno udejstvovanje, kulturna sprememba.

In today's world, despite the numerous crises of contemporary democracy, there still exists a widespread conviction that democracy is the most supportive for the fulfillment of human rights, for harmonious relationships among individuals and social groups, and that it allows the organization of political relations under the principles of freedom and equality. It is frequently said that classical democracy has in the present time of radical inequalities, globalization, and development of new technologies lost its sense and should be redefined. Moreover, one can observe a decline in confidence in it and a disappointment in it. Interpersonal trust within society is increasingly weaker. The belief that our engagement in the public sphere is important and serves the development of *the common good* is fading. Under these circumstances, teachers have to face the challenge of how to prepare the youth for an active participation in democracy and to pursue goals of democratic societies.

Democracy is a widely accepted concept, and yet it remains unclear. Its semantic scope is difficult to specify, leads to controversies and issues with definition—and the discussion on how to educate young people for democracy should begin from determining what democracy is and what its demands are.

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The dispute on democracy

The classical understanding of the term “democracy” assumed a certain ideal, a set of values that should be made real. The term *democracy*, to which Giovanni Sartori draws attention, fulfills not only a descriptive, but also the normative and persuasive functions: “[...] democracy results from, and is shaped by, the interactions between its ideals and its reality: the pull of an *ought* and the resistance of an *is*.” (Sartori 1994, 22) Although the concept of democracy as a form of rule dates back to ancient Greece, its contemporary understanding was born in the times of the revolutions at the end of the 18th century.

The Greeks associated democracy with such features as the rule of the majority, the right to hold an office, the equality of votes, the equality of rights, the respect for the law, and the participation of citizens in joint decisions. The classical theory of democracy was a normative one, referring to values and based on the assumption that the dignity of a free man depends on the

opportunity to participate in the shaping of decisions, which actually applied to him; it assumed that people actively participate in political life and are involved in public matters. The existence of democracy depended upon the existence of a community of free citizens—*polites*, who accept a similar concept of the common good.

196 The liberal tradition overtook the development of democracy in the 19th century and led to its different understanding. The fundamental elements of liberal thought on democracy included guaranteeing the rights and freedoms tied to the life of individuals in the society and their participation in the development of the capitalist economy. Liberalism, whose development commenced in the form of liberal democracy, guaranteed the individual freedom from the bonds of old institutions and customs. It guaranteed personal liberty, freedom of speech and association, freedom of private property, offered protection from arbitrary actions by the authorities, but omitted the communal dimension of societal life. In a country of liberal democracy, understood in such a manner, the citizens were individuals who defended their freedoms and rights, and strove for their interests, but they were not united by *the common good*—the latter did not include participation in the political life of the community, because all groups were treated as sets of individuals having specific rights and protecting their interests. Such a concept of democracy can be drawn on the basis of the individualist and instrumental approach to social institutions, based on the natural law of John Locke. The concept of democracy presented in the writings of John Stuart Mill is contrary to that position. Mill's approach could be defined as ethical and communitarian, referring to the traditions of the republican understanding of the state, which in turn refers to Aristotle. For Mill, participation in political life is important, and its goal is equality and a more perfect society. The rights of citizens, including franchise, are supposed to serve that goal. People should develop through their participation in the life of a democratic society, which in this perspective becomes an important value, and not just a means to fulfill the individual goals of citizens.

This legacy determines contemporary thinking about democracy and leads to a differentiation between contemporary theories of democracy—from those assuming only its formal, procedural understanding to theories which support,

or even expand, its understanding as participatory democracy, frequently resulting in blurring the difference between democracy and civil society. Between these two poles lies the substantive understanding of democracy as a political system which guarantees certain values and goods, such as justice and equality.

According to its supporters (who include Joseph Alois Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, and Samuel Huntington), procedural democracy is an adequate response to the complexity and the cultural, ethnic, religious, and all other types of diversity in modern societies. In contemporary, complex state organisms, it is impossible and impractical for people to be directly involved in political life. The representative system appears to be the best response to this situation, as it limits the participation of citizens in public life to attendance at elections, during which those who actually make political decisions are chosen. However, for numerous authors, democracy which is only procedural, without positive values and “cold,” is insufficient. The “true democracy” is completed by honesty and openness in politics, by responsible, knowledge-based governance, by rational debates on the most pressing problems, and by equal participation of citizens in social life.

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The narrow, procedural understanding of democracy is less useful in the discussion on the shape of education for democracy. For the purpose of school and non-school forms of education, it appears necessary to consider what is important for the proper functioning of democracy and concerns the values on which it should be based. Theories of democracy based on the common good (substantive theories) seem therefore more useful for teachers. The concept that common good is the goal of a democratic rule seems easy to accept and is understandable in an intuitive manner. Problems arise when we attempt to “translate” this concept into specific notions. The first to arise are problems tied to defining the common good and how we can recognize it (Grabowska and Szawiel 2003, 75). Schumpeter goes furthest in criticizing such an understanding of democracy—he states that there is no such thing as *the common good* which could be accepted by all citizens (Schumpeter 1942), while Dahl believes that *common good* comprises only those institutions, practices, and procedures that we share with others and that support the well-being of numerous citizens and communities (Dahl 1989).

Despite this criticism, the normative concept of democracy retains its attractiveness and its motivational nature for citizens, despite the difficulty with a precise definition of *the common good* and how it could be recognized. Many contemporary authors do not agree to scaling the idea of democracy down to forms and procedures, to reducing it to methods of rule—although they simultaneously admit that these procedures can be the most effective means for protecting citizens against the abuse of power (Pietrzyk-Reeves 2004). The postulate for understanding democracy as going beyond the mechanisms of decision-making, law-making, electing and legitimizing governments, provokes us to search for an alternative concept of democracy, one that would assume a certain model of relationships among people—members of a certain community.

This leads us to the substantive perception of democracy—but then we can consider it as a democracy which guarantees values characteristic for individualism and liberalism—that is to say, liberal democracy or a more community-based democracy, where the focus is to protect the common good.

198 The proponents of *liberal democracy* are characterized by a mistrust towards the state, and their main goal is to protect the freedoms and human rights. The state should be limited, so as not to allow its excessive intervention into the life of individuals and the destruction of social fabric. The crucial attributes of liberal democracy include free elections and the rule of law. Liberal democracy also assumes leaving a broad area for individual and social activity and entrepreneurship. In liberal democracy, the authorities do not intervene in moral or religious disputes among the citizens. A state of liberal democracy cannot impose a system of values; it also cannot allow for a religion, a philosophy, or an ideology to assume the hegemonic position. Some representatives of this concept of democracy emphasize not only the principle of respect for those who think otherwise, but also propose to avoid violent disputes regarding issues on which members of the democratic society differ (Rawls 1993).

On the opposite extreme of the concept of democracy are the supporters of *communitarianism*, which is a special variety of participatory democracy. The basic assumption of participatory democracy is the belief that the dignity of human beings is the basis for their right to have a say in the making of

decisions that affect them, and that an individual is interested not only in the outcomes of political decisions, but also in their very process.

Communitarians go further, without limiting their consideration to the concept of democracy. They are interested in the relationship between the individual and the society, and the essence of social life. They opt for direct democracy—they want to hold elections and referenda more frequently to introduce democratic procedures in various areas of life. Democracy should be characterized by citizens taking part more strongly in the decisions regarding public matters. The communitarian offer goes beyond the sphere of politics and touches upon such important areas of social life as the attempts at achieving higher economic equality, enabling equal conditions for democratic participation to various groups and individuals and manner of the organization of social life which would ensure that members of a given community take actual part in solving its problems. Communitarians raise a number of demands on the pre-political level, concerning the family, school, and the upbringing of young people. They emphasize the importance of community and the need to strengthen the ties between individuals and the community, which would encourage people to become more involved in public life. They also stress the significance of civic obligations and virtues. Under the communitarian approach to democracy, there is less emphasis on the rights of the individual, on their freedom and autonomy, and more on the ties with the community and on civic duties. Without questioning the rights of the individual in general or the political institutions of liberal democracy, communitarians stress their limitations. The individual nature of liberal democracy weakens, in their opinion, civic virtues and responsibility, resulting in excessive concentration on oneself and one's own matters. Liberal democracy turns into a bureaucratic, formalized structure in which the actual power is exercised by the elites—in other words, it becomes a *democracy of the elites*. People are focused on their private matters and on rivalry, they become indifferent to public matters, do not get involved in *the common good*. Such a democracy results in the passive masses, and not in a set of autonomous individuals.

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Communitarians criticize liberal individualism also for its negative influence on ties between the individual and the community, depriving people of a sense of rootedness by weakening the ties between the individual and

the family, the neighborhood group, the religious community, and the local community. In the opinion of communitarians, individualism characterizing liberal democracy gives people freedom—but at the same time brings about solitude and anomie. Only a reconstruction of social ties can give a moral sense to democracy. In comparison to the representatives of other approaches to democracy, supporters of communitarianism place a stronger emphasis on civic education and preparing people to take part in political life (Pietrzyk-Reeves 2004).

The communitarian approach to democracy has also raised criticism. Most importantly, critics indicate that it threatens privacy and freedom of individuals, as well as the rational nature of politics. Such an understanding of democracy also assumes strong ties between the form of political order and the traits and virtues of citizens—something that remains uncertain and is not obvious (Dahl 1989).

200 It is, however, worth noting that the supporters of both of these approaches share a common attitude to the various forms of the organization of civic society, which fill the gap between activity on the micro scale—within family and close neighborhood—and actions in the field of politics. Proponents of liberal democracy believe that it is beneficial if there exist numerous associations, social organizations, and networks of exchange among citizens—characteristic for civic society, enabling citizens to defend their rights and fulfill their interests. Despite the fact that they base their views on other premises, communitarians are definitely in favor of the widest possible participation of citizens in the life of their community—in the local and professional self-governments, in social movements and associations. This perspective of thinking about democracy, as a system creating conditions for the self-organization of society, is widely accepted and should be used in civic education both at school and outside it.

Challenges for civic education at school

With all the differences in approaches to democracy represented by various authors, the different manners of defining democracy can be placed on two axes, whose extremes are: the procedural-only definition of democracy versus the normative definition; and the individual-liberal definition versus the

participation and community definition. The debate on democracy, conducted between liberals and communitarians, led to the formation of various concepts of democracy, containing elements typical for these fundamental positions. It is, however, necessary to remember that civic education must present democracy as having a complex, multi-faceted nature. The various understandings of democracy overlap, share some common fields.

The disputes on democracy are important to understand the contemporary world, they should be presented during school education and submitted to reflection during the teaching process. The syllabus of civic education on democracy is usually similar in various countries, whereas the teachers make choices in their work and place emphasis on various issues which determine the way in which the students perceive democracy (Zielińska 2008).

Empirical research shows that during adolescence some students, especially those with higher educational achievements, form consistent ways of thinking about democracy (Zielińska 2008, 175–206). When analyzing the responses of young people who indicated the traits and behaviors which in their opinion are either good or bad for democracy, it can be observed that a relatively small part of teenagers selected the liberal concept of democracy—more respondents opted for the community concept. It seems interesting that the choice of the liberal concept was usually linked to a high SES (socio-economic status) index of the family, while the selection of the community concept, regardless of family status, depended on the school socialization factors, such as: the open climate of school discussions, the sense of empowerment, and the students' possibility to influence and change the school life.

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Among most of the young respondents no coherent thinking on democracy was noticed, the responses were frequently internally contradictory and presented mutually exclusive values. An analysis of civic education conducted at schools shows (Zielińska 2008, 213–222) that teachers willingly deal with democratic institutions and procedures, but feel uncertain in those areas where disputes and conflicts of values appear. The presentation and discussion of the consequences of implementing various concepts of democracy and various forms of the organization of social life is an important—and neglected—area in school education.

Experience and empirical research shows that procedural democracy is not very attractive for young people. They learn, if they have to, about elections

and related procedures, about the constitution, political institutions, and their competences—but all this does not encourage them to civic involvement. An analysis of the results of research conducted in Poland under the international program ICCS IEA 2009 (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) can lead to the conclusion that civic knowledge is connected with the acceptance of fundamental, procedural principles of democracy and the readiness to participate in elections in the future; however, it does not determine civic involvement, with the exception of readiness for certain activities at school (this is characteristic for the “good students”). A similar dependency was also observed in other countries covered by the study. Good learning achievements clearly do not translate into a readiness for civic involvement to the benefit of one’s community (Wiłkomirska and Zielińska 2015, 305–316). This absence of connection requires reflection and poses a challenge for teachers and heads responsible for the civic education conducted at schools.

202 The readiness for action in a democratic society also means the ability to protest when *the common good* or (under the liberal concept) values and interests important for individuals and groups are threatened. For the protest to be effective, it should be organized within a framework accepted in the given community. The choice of the type of protest is strongly connected with the educational achievements of students. Good and very good students are more frequently ready to engage in legal protests; those with worse learning outcomes and coming from poorer family backgrounds are more often ready to accept illegal actions. Therefore, we can suppose that their actions would be less effective, and can in some situations even marginalize them.

In the contemporary literature on youth, the issues of *citizenship deficit* and the crisis of democracy have been raised. The youth have often been treated as a problem—for being “passive,” uninvolved in public affairs, not caring for the common good and ignoring political or civic engagement (Ostrowicka 2012; Bessant, Farthing, and Watts 2016). However, some events in recent years have undermined such a judgment (e.g., the ACTA or climate protests).

It is also worth stressing that authors pointing out *the deficit of citizenship* within youth have treated citizenship as a status, as a certain set of knowledge,

skills, values, and dispositions required for the proper fulfilment of civic roles that young people should obtain (mainly through formal education) to a proper degree. However, there are many arguments in favor of the assertion that in contemporary society young people who give their meanings to terms, create a new language to describe the social world and are not—despite apparent similarities—“carbon copies” of the adult world. One can predict that a similar situation can be encountered in the area of practicing citizenship and constructing the terms related thereto. The forms of participation and practicing citizenship (e.g., e-democracy) may pose a challenge for the traditionally recognized forms of civic involvement. Perhaps we should speak of transformations rather than *the deficit of citizenship*. Literature points to individualization processes, that weaken the power of collective identities and representations, transform the public sphere (Hudzik and Woźniak 2006) and increase the role of identities related to lifestyles (Kluczyńska 2010; Melosik 2013), as being a challenge—and a new context—for civic actions of the young people. Equally critical is also the assessment of formal civic education defining the young as being “not yet citizens” (Biesta and Lawy 2006; Harris 2006). New, alternative forms of civic activities emerge among the young people—more individualized and emotional, of aesthetic and/or expressive nature (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 2010), e.g., *culture jamming* (Zańko 2012), consumer boycott, or art (Niziołek 2009).

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The basis for understanding citizenship and the readiness for civic action among the young people comprises both individual and sociocultural factors. The significance of school and the inadequacy of school socialization is often stressed (Siellawa-Kolbowska 2008; Dudzikowa and Wawrzyniak-Beszterda 2010; Szafranec 2012); the same concerns the importance of informal education and social systems where an individual develops (e.g., the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner or the Situated Learning Theory of Lave and Wenger). These theories address environments determining the political socialization of the youth as a construct of cooperating sub-systems. Greatly relevant is also social awareness and collective mentality of the communities where adolescents live (Koralewicz and Ziółkowski 2003). The notion of citizenship and civic participation may function in the collective mentality of various youth groups differently to what is taught in formal education

(national curriculum, textbooks, etc.). Therefore, it is important to understand the process through which these terms are constructed, the factors of major importance for this process, and to understand the ways citizenship is practiced by various social environments that go beyond school education, such as the family or the media. What is most important for educators and teachers, is to understand the meanings and sense given by the youth to citizenship and their actions in the public sphere.

It seems that many countries witness the exhaustion of the citizenship model promoted through formal education, so the youth—faced with new social and cultural phenomena—need to define what it means to be a citizen for them. The problem goes beyond the dispute on whether *the citizenship deficit* exists or not, because not just traditional and new forms of participation—or the absence thereof—, but also new contents of citizenship are at stake here. The literature also recommends addressing citizenship as something people do every day—i.e., *citizenship as practice*, practice of identification with the affairs of the community, always set in the context where the youth live and to which they lend defined meanings (Biesta and Lawy 2006).

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Trying to understand everyday and ordinary citizenship enables us “to uncover an alternative landscape of citizenship participation” (Wood 2014, 228), a sense of belonging, rights and responsibilities, complex and often mutually competing ways of understanding the notion. This perspective is particularly inspiring and enables an insight into how young people construct their citizenship in the contemporary world. The idea of *citizenship as practice* and *everyday experience*, allows us to go beyond the dominant perspective regarding citizenship discourse and define this category differently, adequately for the youth and from their everyday experiences.

The old dilemmas and the new challenges indicated above set the framework for a dispute on civic education at school. The primary task for civic education in contemporary school would be to conduct a debate on democracy and citizenship, and not only to provide knowledge. The school frequently limits its activity only to offering the students the democratic principles and procedures, but does not explain the implications that various understandings of democracy have for the organization of social life and the situation of individuals and social groups; it offers no basis for creative and

critical thinking on how to improve the quality of democracy. The school does not sufficiently use the everyday life of young people as a civic experience.

Inequality of access to civic education is another significant challenge for schools. Research shows that some students are excluded from public life already at the school level. Those students do not enjoy educational achievements, they do not value democracy, and do not associate hope for an improvement of their situation with political involvement. Already at school, they learn to be socially passive, helpless in the face of difficulties and challenges, which can lead to their social exclusion. This threat is particularly pronounced in the group of the poorest students (Wilkomirska and Zielińska 2015, 305–316). It appears that the school does not have an appropriate educational and social offer for this group of adolescents.

Research conducted by psychologists shows that the way in which we perceive people and reasons for their actions, in other words, our fixed patterns of perceiving the world, support cooperative and pro-social behaviors, facilitate relationships with other people, maintenance of friendships—while other beliefs about people and their motivations lead to conflict, violence, and abuse of others (Skarżyńska and Radkiewicz 2007; Putnam 2000). 205

It can also be indicated that the consequences of a vision of the world assuming an antagonistic and not synergic nature of interpersonal relations are negative for individuals, groups, and societies. Antagonistic patterns of the social world can result in the conviction that life is a zero-sum game, in which we fight with others for some limited goods and our success is tied to the failure of others—our failure means their victory. Under such a vision of the world, there is no “common good” and we can receive no benefits from cooperation (Grzelak 2007).

The antagonistic vision of the world is connected with the belief that most people are immoral, egoistic, and tend to abuse others. Thus, people cannot be trusted (Adorno et al. 1950; Skarżyńska 2005; Putnam 2000). Such a vision of the world is tied to the conviction that threats are everywhere. All these elements constitute an important element of the “culture of conflict” (Ross 1993), block social activity and cooperation, threaten the public debate, and harm the development of democracy.

The development of differential life patterns can depend on macro-systemic conditions (such as: authoritarian regimes, the absence of the rule

of law, violent system changes which deprive people of a sense of security) and on personal and family factors (personality traits, individual experience, family life climate, relationship with parents, the model of relationship with other significant people, etc.). The model of school socialization, significantly exceeding education passed on intentionally by teachers, can have a crucial influence on such a vision of the world. Important factors include the organization of school life and the overall climate at the school, relations among all participants in the school life, possibility of cooperating on solving problems related to school and important school matters. Therefore, apart from the syllabus content, the organization of the teaching process, and the teaching methods, we also need to tackle other issues, in order to improve the quality of education for democracy and to deal with its challenges.

The most significant of them are included in the following questions:

– To what extent should the school be democratic to fulfill its tasks of preparing students for life in a democratic society? And the related question: what ways of practicing democracy should be introduced at various levels of school education?

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– How should the debate on democracy be conducted at schools? How to run the debate without excluding weaker students or strengthening the dominance of the stronger ones?

– To what extent should democracy apply to the teaching process or to other issues as well, and to what extent should it lead to empowerment and independence of students (at various levels of education)?

– How to teach about citizenship today? To what extent is the traditional concept of citizenship (understanding citizenship in terms of *the model of a good citizen, of citizens' rights and obligations*) still valid, and within what scope should it be extended with new concepts of citizenship emerging today?

Questions also arise regarding the wider, systemic context of civic education and the equal chances for students to better understand the challenges of democracy and be better prepared for life in the civic society. The most important of these include:

– Is it better to decentralize the educational institutions (offer more power to school boards, local authorities, NGO's) or to maintain the state control, exercised by the democratically elected authorities?

– Is it better for a fulfillment of democratic perspectives to individualize education, adapt it according to the preferences of students and parents? Or to unify education in adherence to the standards set by the society?

Answering these questions is difficult. This difficulty is linked to the fact that the issues discussed concern not only the syllabus but also the debates on the level of an openness of the school to democracy, school organization, and the climate of school teaching. Equally important, are macro-level solutions which are deeply rooted both in the history of a particular society and the discussion on democracy, as well as the mutual relations between democracy and civil society deliberated upon in the opening sections of this paper. It is worth mentioning that the concept of civic education is also difficult to negotiate because of various emotions connected with it and different ways of experiencing citizenship. In spite of all these difficulties, such a debate ought to be continued.

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DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND PATRIOTISM

THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

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Abstract

The author of the article argues that educational narratives about democracy and patriotism cannot be simplistic. A more developed reflection on democracy is needed to settle its importance for the education question—can democratic ideas and the concept of patriotism go together? A discussion of various definitions of democracy and patriotism, and the characteristics of the chosen approaches is included in the article to show the complexity of the issues. The great challenge for civic education is to show

connections and gaps between democracy and patriotism. Patriotism and democracy are complex issues with many variants, among them some threatening ones, and they should be discussed deeply. Otherwise, education will create unreflective, narrow-minded people, who may be desired by autocratic politicians in order to manipulate them, but not by contemporary human beings and civil societies.

Key words: democracy, patriotism, nationalism, civic education.

Demokratske vrednote in patriotizem. Izobraževalni izziv

Povzetek

212 Avtorica članka zagovarja mnenje, da izobraževalni narativi glede demokracije in patriotizma ne smejo biti poenostavljajoči. Razviti je potrebno poglobljeno refleksijo o demokraciji, da bi se izkazala njena pomembnost za izobraževalno vprašanje o tem, ali demokratske ideje in koncept patriotizma lahko sovpadajo. Z namenom prikaza problemske kompleksnosti članek razpravlja o različnih definicijah demokracije ter patriotizma in o značilnostih izbranih pristopov. Za državljansko vzgojo je velik izziv, kako predstaviti povezanost in razhajanje med demokracijo in patriotizmom. Patriotizem in demokracija sta kompleksna problema z mnogimi različicami, med katerimi so nekatere celo ogrožajoče, zato je o njiju potrebno temeljito razpravljati. V nasprotnem primeru bo izobraževanje ustvarjalo nerefleksivne, ozkoglede ljudi, kakršnih si nemara želijo avtorski politiki zato, da lahko manipulirajo z njimi, ne pa sodobna človeška bitja in civilne družbe.

Ključne besede: demokracija, patriotizem, nacionalizem, državljanska vzgoja.

Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy—this is the title of the Freedom House Report edited in 2017. The authors, Arch Puddington and Tyler Roylance, alert that dramatic 10-Year Score declines in freedom have been observed in every region of the world, the largest ever. Key findings of the cyclical study conducted by Freedom House show that:

With populist and nationalist forces making significant gains in democratic states, 2016 marked the 11th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. There were setbacks in political rights, civil liberties, or both, in a number of countries rated “Free” by the report, including Brazil, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Tunisia, and the United States. (Puddington and Roylance 2017, 1)

The crises of democracy in its various forms, especially the liberal one, have been announced many times from its origin onward. However, in recent years we could observe in some countries a real turn from the liberal forms of democracy to the illiberal ones. This turn is accompanied by a development of 213 nationalistic ideas and movements along with the limiting of the public sphere and the centralization of power. In some countries, autocrats, as described by Puddington and Roylance, also forced changes in the content of education, making it an instrument of the new, illiberal vision of national ideology, often calling it “democracy.” The Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán stated that an illiberal country can be democratic and respect civil liberties. Whereas liberal democracy does not protect the national interest, illiberal democracy is better than liberal democracy because it values freedom but does not treat it as a preference; the highest priority is the prosperity of the national community. Most likely, civic societies do not provide a good solution because they only serve the elites, and not the national interests (cf. Orbán, “Full text”) Is the illiberal democracy still a democracy?

The national interest is very often connected with the mild term *patriotism*. The main goal of this article is to analyze the relationship between ideas of democracy and chosen concepts of patriotism. It is important to settle what image of democracy is addressed to pupils during the educational process. The content

of civic education in many countries is usually limited to its general definition, forms, and political institutions. The importance of formal social and political participation (e.g., voting in elections) is also underlined (cf. Schulz 2017).

As most students and adults are aware, the concept of *democracy* was coined five hundred years B.C. in ancient Greece. Less people know that nowadays, in the third millennium, there are numerous concepts, theories, definitions, variations, and classifications of democracy. The core binding them all together is the manner of an exercising of power—democracy is a system of government in which the power stems from the will of the majority. The primary criterion for division is, usually, the manner in which the will is being implemented. Students are taught that in the classic division into direct and indirect democracy, the main criterion is the entity which makes the key political decisions. In direct democracy, the citizens themselves actively participate in the process of political decision-making, while indirect democracy is of a representative nature—power is exercised by representatives elected in general elections.

214 We need a more developed reflection on democracy to try to settle this question that is so important for education—can democratic ideas and the concept of patriotism go together? For many years a frequently seen variant of representative democracy has been the liberal democracy, characterized by political pluralism (multi-partite system), equality under the law, ensuring appeal procedures, respect for human and civil rights, and the civil society. According to Larry Diamond, these three key elements build democracy as a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections: the active participation of citizens, in politics and civic life; protection of human rights; rules of law, equally applied to all citizens (cf. Diamond 2004). Democracy, as Karl Popper and many other thinkers and researchers have stressed, opposes tyranny and dictatorship.

Independently of many concepts of democracy, according to the main contemporary criteria, democracy requires:

- universal access of citizens to the sphere of politics (the right to vote and to be elected), irrespective of social status, race, religion, wealth, being a part of a minority, with the delegation of rights to representatives elected in the course of elections (principle of representation);

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- the sovereignty of the state, that is, power is exercised by members of a social community living within the boundaries of a state;
 - considering the elections as the main source of validity of power, and the need to regularly confirm mandate of the authorities through general elections;
 - the possibility to form political parties and to select among alternative political programs;
 - the accountability of those governing before those who are being governed, ensuring the functioning of specialized institutions for control of the authorities, meant to prevent the abuse of power and to ensure control, through the public domain, and the functioning of political opposition;
 - the division of power supporting the control of the government and state institutions;
 - formal protection of civil rights, limiting the interventions of the authorities into the lives of citizens (cf. Gulczyński 2010).

The two dominating systems of contemporary representative democracy (the most popular form) include parliamentary and presidential democracy. Under parliamentary democracy, the government, established by elected representatives, exercises executive authority under constant control by the parliament. Under presidential democracy, society through general elections appoints the president, who is the head of the state and also the head of the cabinet that he/she appoints. Legislative authority is vested in the parliament. Mixed systems also exist. There are certain hybrid democracies (mixed systems), which combine representative forms with direct activity; such is the case in Switzerland and in the United States, for example. In Switzerland, the central legislative authority is vested in the Federal Assembly, but legislative initiative is permitted, as are also referenda, of a binding nature, organized on the local and federal level. In the USA, many states have certain forms for citizens' initiatives (*ballot initiatives, ballot measures, ballot questions or propositions*).

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Nowadays, there even exist democratic constitutional monarchies, for instance in Great Britain, the Netherlands, or the Scandinavian countries, where the power of the monarch is limited, and is actually exercised by the democratic institutions.

As I mentioned, many theories of democracy have been developed over the centuries. They define the theory of democracy and its desired forms

and institutions, as well as possible directions for development. Among the contemporary theories, three dominate: the aggregative, the deliberative, and various radical concepts.

The aggregative theory of democracy claims that the rights of citizens to collectively express their political will is the purpose of democratic processes. An important element of this theory are voting (the domain of politics), the procedures governing it, and the care to ensure the fulfillment of will expressed through it. Representatives of the aggregative theory have been discussing the advantage and forms of direct and indirect (minimalist) democracy.

Enthusiasts of direct democracy, on the other hand, support the concept of citizens creating the legislation directly, and not through their representatives. Political activity is considered as an inclusive and cognitive value, and the universal participation of citizens in political activities prevents elites from usurping the power.

216 In the opinion of Robert Dahl, the fundamental principle of democracy proclaims that under collective decisions, the interests of each member of the political community are taken into consideration to the same extent—which does not necessarily mean that these interests are satisfied to the same extent. He uses the term “polyarchy” with respect to societies in which a certain collection of institutions and procedures (related primarily to elections) operates that are seen as striving for such democracy (cf. Dahl 1995).

The second group of fundamental theories promotes deliberative democracy—its essence is deliberation, in other words, the analysis, consideration of various views and positions. It is not the elections, not the voting, but the deliberation process which enables the individuals to determine their needs and preferences, to solve conflicts and to reach consensus. Deliberation should be free from political and economic pressure.

The third concept is radical democracy, whose representatives focus on highlighting oppression by authorities. The role of democracy is to reveal oppressive relations between authorities and society, and to strive for their change.

The globalization process, which accelerated at the turn of the century, focused the attention of scientists to forms of democracy of global character. An increasing number of decisions which are key for the functioning of

individuals and countries in various areas originated outside them. Under the concept of global (cosmopolitan) democracy, the need is stressed to develop a model that would ensure some kind of participation in the global, supranational policy for all people. The concept indicates that certain solutions, adopted in the national countries, could be somehow transposed to the level of global society. Fundamental values include law and order, absence of violence, and the peaceful solving of conflicts, as well as the equality of citizens in supranational communities. To make this goal real, it is necessary to develop appropriate international, parliamentary solutions, and social control.

One of the most important features of democracy is the civil society. In Western thinking, it is assumed that civil society can function only under conditions of democracy. Various forms have been identified, which determine the nature of citizens' participation (cf. Dahrendorf 1994).

Charles Taylor indicates two major sources of origin of the thoughts on civil society—the works of John Locke (the community, the society stem from the rights of nature and are, therefore, primary with respect to government, which is defined as trusteeship) and of Montesquieu (an extensive network of citizens' rights). Both concepts were continued and elaborated upon by successors of various historical and political backgrounds and orientations. Taylor, referring to *Montesquieu*, claims: "[...] civil society [...] is not so much a sphere outside political power; rather, it penetrates deeply into this power, fragments and decentralizes it [...]" (Taylor 1991, 134).

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Irrespective of the philosophical roots and the numerous theoretical differences in the understanding and assessment of the phenomenon itself, the essence of civil society means a certain degree (differences are found here) of the society's sovereignty in its relations with the state, giving the civil society a clear subjectivity and some principles for organization. The state itself should develop a legislative and social framework for the existence and development of civil society.

For this goal, Thomas Paine fought already at the end of the 18th century, writing in the famous pamphlet—originally published anonymously in 1776—*Common Sense: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America*: "Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one." (Paine 1776, 1).

The political dependence of America from the British crown, which Paine fought, is history nowadays, but Paine's works, with the most important one being *Rights of Man*, have been ingrained in the origins of the concept for the separation of society from the state, preceding the musings by Hegel (whose attitude toward the state was, of course, fundamentally different from Paine's) and by Marx.

In modern times, Ralf Dahrendorf wrote expressly on this matter, in his search for the right space for social ties that would remain non-destructive for freedom: "We need to be able to think of civil society—and to make it true—without dedicating even a single wasteful thought to the state." (Dahrendorf 1996, 16; my translation)

218 There is a clear opposition here. For the classic republican tradition, the characteristic notion of civil society was in the context of community and its welfare; in modern times, in liberal democracies, the essence of the concept refers to the individual, his rights and powers. This could result in the disappearance of the normative factor—citizenship. This postulate is visible in the works of Edward Shils, who considers civil society to be a special type of a society; its primary feature is the cognitive and normative, collective self-awareness shared by its members, different from their individual self-awareness (cf. Shils 1994). The institutions of civil society operate in the public sphere and perform the regulatory, normative function toward the economic system and the state. Civil society can function thanks to the citizenship attitude of its members—their participation in the community (which sometimes reduces individualism) for the purpose of acting for the common good of a given territory and the group inhabiting it. Primary ties—genealogical or ethnic ones—are irrelevant here.

The issue of the relationship between the nation and the civil society appears as a more difficult one, not only for theoreticians, but also in social practice. The notion of nation and the notion of civil society belong to two different orders, they express two different manners for the conceptualization of the social sphere. The nation is a type of a primal group. Under the European tradition, societies usually organized themselves based on national community. Strong national ties can be linked with the lack of acceptance for civil society.

The history of 19th- and 20th-century nationalisms caused the proponents of civil society to be reluctant toward the concepts of nation and nationality. The

fear of “ethnic nationalism” meant that these two manners for the functioning of individuals were seen as opposing. David Miller, however, has a different opinion:

Without a common national identity there is nothing to hold citizens together [...]. Nationality gives people the common identity that make it possible for them to conceive of shaping their world together. The citizenship gives them the practical means of doing so. (Miller 1989, 245)

Ernest Gellner uses the concept of *civic spirit*, which he defines as a moral requirement, an inner imperative for participation in the social life, which does not require any additional stimuli or orders; this is a certain internalized sense of duty. Habermas and many others share similar thoughts about the citizens’ sense of community and identity. Gellner clearly stresses the individual’s freedom of choice, defining the civil society as: “[...] a cluster of institutions and associations strong enough to prevent tyranny, but which are, none the less, entered and left freely, rather than imposed by birth or sustained by awesome ritual.” (Gellner 1994, 103)

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In Poland, Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński wrote of the sense of citizenship as the condition for the development of civil attitudes combined with a number of “civic virtues.” Citizenship is defined as the belief in the importance of certain values, in other words the “civic virtues,” such as brotherhood, solidarity, acceptance for the equality of rights, respecting the common good, cooperation, observance of jointly defined rules, and subjective treatment of fellow citizens. The cultivation of civic virtues builds a community from the loosely bound group of people (cf. Wnuk-Lipiński 2005, 105).

Maria Magoska identifies three primary approaches to civil society: the sociological, the procedural, and the axiological (cf. Magoska 2001, 96–98). The sociological approach is based on de Tocqueville’s reflections, focusing on spontaneous civil activity, free from institutions of the state, and on the potential for self-organization. The procedural approach stresses the democratic entitlement of citizens to participate in social life using methods of dialogue, such as debates, agreements, mediations. The last, axiological approach refers

to values and standards present in the civil society. Values such as pluralism, tolerance, trust, or social solidarity are emphasized.

Inka Słodkowska (2006) identifies three societal organizational forms: functional, revolutionary, and ethical civil society. The first kind of organization is typical for societies in durable, developed democracies. The key role is played by organizations from the so-called “mezzo” level, independent of the society and economy, acting to promote their social group interests, accepting the legal and political order. Citizenship is expressed through self-organization, assertion of needs, and involvement in their fulfillment. The revolutionary civil society is frequently a form of social movement. Most frequently, its ideological basis is the protest against state oppression, which gives a mandate for civil disobedience and revolutionary actions. According to Słodkowska, this type of civil society is typical for the times of political transformation, the shift from a totalitarian to a democratic system. At such time, transfer to the third type—the ethical civil society—is needed, in order to build a new structure, based on political values different from the previous ones—the democratic order.

220 The liberal model of citizenship and democracy has been contested as one that promotes the individualistic concept of a citizen, thus resulting in a weakening of community ideas and values, which in turn leads to the demise of social relations, the sense of responsibility for the community, and the motivation to get involved for the common good. The state itself is being accused of supporting principles which reduce citizens’ participation to the formality ensured by representative democracy in exchange for economic privileges or some scope of welfare.

Amitai Etzioni is the founder of the communitarian movement—an idealistic trend which results from the observation of development directions of contemporary societies. The communitarians attempt to restore the proper meaning of the community, referring to the old Puritan principles and traditional, ethical American values. They oppose liberal individualism by calling for involvement, for the sense of moral responsibility for the common good. The community is built by individuals who have a common history, who share moral and symbolic values. In Etzioni’s opinion, the state should directly serve society (and not individuals). At the same time, Etzioni is in favor of a strong state authority, but not subordinated only to the market. The authority

should ensure an adequate balance between the autonomy of individuals and the need to yield to interests important for the wider community (cf. Etzioni 1994).

Liberals, on the other hand, reject “community” concepts, claiming that individuals, both in their private and social life, are guided by individual goals and moral principles, including the vision of good. The principles developed by John Rawls (cf. 1995), based on egalitarian legalism formulated in a situation of *the veil of ignorance*, namely the absolute right to freedom and the right to fair treatment, as well as Nozick’s libertarian concept of the minimal state and the different variations of rights-based liberalism (Hayek, Friedman) primarily underscore the right to freedom and the right to protection against being “appropriated” by the outside world. The minimum requirement of the state is supposed to ensure safety for its citizens, protect private property, protect the functioning of various social groups in which the individual participates voluntarily. Nozick (cf. 1999) proposes the concept of *self-ownership*: individuals belong to themselves alone, thus their affiliation to a community, state or God is questioned. He rejects the system of *the socialized ownership of people*, typical for approaches which believe other values to be more important than freedom. The individual has the right to select paths for individual development and for achievement of its goals, which includes also the scope of participation and forms of civil involvement—from a broad range of activity to an attitude which rejects political and social engagement. The communitarians respond that individuals live in a community which is older from them and, therefore, freedom—not being defined by the cultural and political rights of the community—is highly abstract and contrary to the socialization idea.

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A different concept of the contemporary civil society has been developed by Jürgen Habermas. The philosopher indicated two dimensions for the functioning of society: the substantive and the community. The first refers to the purpose and strategy for survival in the biological and economic sense. The second dimension is personal, based on interaction and communication. The duty of the community includes education, providing support, and solving problems. Communication is crucial for the community. It allows us to interpret a situation, to achieve understanding, and to engage in activity

leading to a purpose. Consensus is achieved through the so-called perfect communication situation, which assumes the inclusion of all people, their equal right to speak their mind, to criticize and to discuss, their verity, and the absence of any coercion.

222 Habermas assumes the dual nature of social existence. He identifies the system (the state and the economy) and the *life world* (translated also as “world experienced”), but the line of division is not as straight as in many contemporary approaches, i.e., the state versus the society. The development of corporate capitalism, the democratic social state, technology, and mass consumption cause the borders between the public and the private, the individual and society, the world of systems and the world of life to overlap, disappear, or to form in a new manner (in traditional communities, the world of life and the system were unified, and became separated through the process of modernization). The concept of the *life world*, based on Husserl’s work, refers to the area which is common for all members of a given communication community. This is the everyday world, the one we experience. Elements of the world of life include the following: culture (the available, shared resources of knowledge), society (affiliation with social groups and solidarity), and personality, enabling communication. These elements construct both the private and the public domain and set the borders for communication activity. In the sociological sense, the system is a structure composed of the state and the economy. During the modernization process, the system colonized the world of life, damaging social integration and public awareness (cf. Habermas 2002). *The public* means the openness of the political life; the public opinion is the society’s voice in discussions with the state. Dialogue is possible only if the institutions which reproduce and create culture, such as science, education, and art, are autonomous. Habermas’ idealism has become the subject of criticism and numerous polemics.

However, his approach to deliberative democracy is also frequently criticized by supporters of radical democracy. Deliberation and consensus with the authorities supporting the model of (neo)liberal democracy (in its representative and liberal—also with regards to participation—variety) preserve the order in which the citizens are “political consumers,” as Chantal Mouffe (cf. 2005) named them, and lose their ability of political thinking.

Equality and freedom are the democratic prerogatives of individuals and a common resource, possible only in a pluralist society in which the area of politics can be shaped through discourse. Mouffe (cf. 2000) stresses also the paradox of liberal democracy, which always involves a tension between the freedom of an individual and the rule of the majority.

The last decades of the 20th century have shown a weakening trust in democracy, which is frequently perceived amongst the society as being elitist and not offering even a bare public security. A certain revival of democratic thought was seen in the 1990s, even certain new terms appeared in the language, such as *e-democracy*, *digital democracy*, *cyberdemocracy*, or *virtual democracy*, and even *virtual polis* (cf. Ogden 1994; Poster 1995). The birth of these new terms was preceded by the concept of *tele-democracy*, developed back in the 1970s. The power sometimes accorded to the tools of mediated communication appears to be exaggerated, although the use of new communication technologies opens new pathways for education, building motivation for involvement, and enables the simultaneous (although unequal, as suggested by the data on the so-called digital inequality) participation of millions of individuals and social groups in the virtual community. At the same time, it generates numerous new threats, such as manipulation of information, manipulation of people, and the lack of parallelization between the virtual and the real community. For the potential of electronic media to be used properly—ensuring benefits for both individuals and common good, for which the uneasy consensus is needed—, there must exist a certain level of “public enlightenment” and a recognized axiological order.

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Anthony McGrew (cf. 1999) proposes to organize the various streams of discussion on supranational democracy and citizenship, defining three normative approaches: the liberal-internationalist, the republican, and the cosmopolitan.

An example of the first one, in his opinion, is a document developed by an international group of experts *Our Global Neighborhood* (1995). The authors have decided it is time to build a vision of global governance,¹ based

¹ Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński (cf. 2005) proposes another translation of the English term “governance”—direction, which includes also informal, goal-oriented control.

on global civil ethics expressed through the conviction that humanity can cultivate a common set of core values, such as: respect for life, freedom, justice and equality, mutual respect, care and integrity. The proposition would be supported by formal global management institutions, at various levels (national and supranational), which would take into account both the integrity of the nation and the state, and the identification with the indicated values. Citizens would be entitled to submit petitions to the United Nations Organization, which, aside from the General Assembly, would comprise of two additional institutions—the Assembly of Nations and the Civil Society Forum. The adoption of the core values would be tied to such an understanding of the global neighborhood which assumes the observance of eight fundamental rights, and the acknowledgement of a number of duties. Global citizens have the right to a secure life, equitable treatment, an opportunity to earn a fair living and provide for their own welfare, to define and preserve their differences through peaceful means, to participate in governance at all levels, to freely and fairly petition against injustice, to have equal access to information and equal
224 access to the global commons. At the same time, citizens should acknowledge their obligation to contribute to the common good, to consider the impact of their actions on the security and welfare of others, to promote equity, including gender equity, to protect the interests of future generations by pursuing sustainable development and safeguarding the global commons, to preserve the humanity's cultural and intellectual heritage, to actively participate in governance, and work to eliminate corruption (*Our Global Neighborhood* 1995, 54). The rights and obligations of individuals in global societies, proposed under the mentioned document, reach significantly beyond the narrow political and legal entitlements. Responsibility is understood in a very broad manner—it encompasses the recommendation to care for the present achievements of humanity and the protection of future generations, as well as being active in the global decision-making process. Its range would be determined not only by individuals themselves, as activity of formal state institutions would also be required, and that of expert groups or various pressure groups.

The second approach described by McGrew—the republican one—is clearly different. The existing socio-political order is rejected as being unfair, serving the economic elites—and therefore any attempts at its reconstruction are considered

aimless. Instead of transforming the national institutions of liberal democracy into supranational ones, they should be replaced by forms of participative democracy. This would enable the appearance of communities based on communitarian ideas, unlimited in territory, varied in terms of ethnicity, religion, or specific goals. The citizens should have guaranteed participation in the making of decisions applicable to them, and authority could be exercised by committees, constructed even through probabilistic selection. The committees would be accountable for their decisions directly before the citizens.

The third, cosmopolitan approach, is also the result of attempts to overcome the process of reducing the powers of national state institutions under conditions of globalization. An increasing number of decisions regarding significant issues of economy or security are transferred to the supranational level, which threatens democracy in its current forms. David Held (cf. 1992) proposes a new formula—cosmopolitan democracy, based on new institutions, new forms of communication with the society, and new methods for social participation. He proposes to build strong regional parliaments, such as the European Parliament, to create the institution of universal referendum for all those affected by the solution being voted on, to subject to social control the democratic institutions of global policy, and to develop rights that would allow entities and organizations to participate in governance (cf. Held 1997).

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The authors of *Our Global Neighborhood* were right when they stressed the need for the “global neighbors” to share common, core values. The collective identity, required as basis for action, cannot be created without shared goals, based on collectively recognized values.

And this is the crucial problem for the supranational or global civil society—is it at all possible, in a world so varied and torn by ethnical, political, religious, and economic conflicts, to reach an agreement upon the axiological minimum that would allow us to build supranational citizenship? Would individuals and national groups not want to escape from the relativized, chaotic, unstable, and anomic post-modern world? This could lead to the appearance of separatist identities, searching for stable ground. Such ground can be provided by religious fundamentalism, ethnicity, various kinds of chauvinistic ideologies.

The above-mentioned challenges of democracy have resulted in democracy being criticized from its birth onward until contemporary

times. The weaknesses of democracy include the lack of competences of the majority to make decisions (“the dictatorship of the ignorant”) and political opportunism (canvassing votes). Particularly, liberal democracies are accused of being covertly subordinate to market interests and of imposing the culture of consumerism, buying the passive attitude of citizens and abusing democratically elected governments. Nowadays, democracy is blamed for the helplessness against economic crises, massive migrations, and dependence upon financial institutions.

226 The weaknesses of democracy are a fuel for populist or autocratic ideas, and for the victories of political forces which, in the name of democracy, aim to focus on the nation’s interest. Consequently, some national leaders try to replace civil society with a national community concentrated on itself. The value which is often used by undemocratic politicians is patriotism understood and defined in a simple and emotional way as the love of the homeland. This is the kind of love which the majority appreciates. Politicians or teachers, as most people, have rarely questioned patriotism as a coveted value; however, similarly to democracy, patriotism has its opponents (the most famous ones include: L. Tolstoy, E. Goldman, G. Herve, S. Veil, M. Violi, H. Arendt). All of them analyzed the negative consequences of specific interpretations of patriotism, although in various ways. Patriotism is most frequently defined as the love for one’s homeland. Both terms—love and homeland—are not explicit. If we define love as a special emotional relationship which comprises dedication, care, sacrifice, pride, loyalty, and obligation, the question regarding behavioral manifestations of these emotions becomes significant. It appears that difficulties with the definition and research of patriotism result largely from the emotional load associated with the referent of this term and its political significance. Patriotic attitudes, contrary to the concept itself, can be morally ambiguous, differently assessed by various groups (e.g.: national or religious terrorism is condemned by some, while for others it is a method of fighting for their supreme values).

Followers and adversaries of patriotism, as well as researchers and thinkers, have been grappling for years with the homeland concept. Polish philosophers, writing of homeland, frequently make reference to Karol Libelt, a student of Hegel, who in his famous work *Miłość ojczyzny* (*The Love for the Homeland*;

1844) analyzed nine factors which are key to determine the meaning of this term, arranging them in three dimensions (triads). The first dimension is material, comprised of the land (territory), the nation, and the law; the second is spiritual and includes national customs, language, and literature. The last, the most important triad, consists of the state, the church, and history. The homeland, combining all these factors, obtains an additive unity (cf. Stróżewski 2009).

However, it is not meaningless whether, in our definition of patriotism, we use as the primary category of identity territory, origin, history, elements of culture such as language and symbols, or the state and the law. Operational definitions of patriotism will differ depending on the selected criteria.

Henryk Hermann bases his classification of patriotism not on emotional criteria, but on molecular ones, identifying:

- national patriotism: a sense of special ties with one's nation to which one belongs by force of birth;
- state patriotism: a sense of an organic bond with the state, even a multinational one;
- civilization patriotism: a bond with a type of civilization, e.g., the European's bond with the Latin civilization (cf. Hermann 2012, 74).

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The author himself considers this catalogue as incomplete and inseparable. Using these categories, it is possible also to define a regional patriotism, amongst other kinds. In Hermann's thought, the important factor is the right to choose one's bonds, to self-identify.

The musings on definition also include work by psychologists. Emotional attitudes toward selected groups, including one's own nation, result from a specific condition of group awareness and group identity, and from the need for identification, built both on the sense of community and on the need to stress the distinction and uniqueness of one's group and territory.

Irrespective of the differences in definition, for the psychologists, the key element of patriotism is the sense of attachment to the group with which the individual identifies. In the broadest understanding, this can be any group (e.g., local patriotism, even professional patriotism), in the narrower understanding—a sense of identification with the nation. Our understanding of the nation—whether in ethnic categories, as a community of culture, or as the

state—is not immaterial (cf. Skarżyńska 2008). The affinity and identification gives the group members a sense of safety and strength, which is especially important in a situation of threat. The sense of nationality appears already in children of kindergarten age.

Researchers of the phenomenon stress that positive aspects of patriotism (care for the welfare of the group) are accompanied by the easy co-presence of negative feelings toward others and readiness to aggression, acting to harm those who are considered strangers, and thus, as being worse. Many dissertations have been written on the threatening versions of patriotism, such as ethnocentrism, nationalism, and chauvinism.

228 That is why contemporary dictionaries, defining patriotism, point out that this is “a social and political attitude, a form of ideology combining devotion to one’s homeland, the sense of social ties and sacrifice for one’s nation with respect for others and for their sovereign rights.” This is a clear attempt to combine conflicting elements, sometimes even considered mutually exclusive by some of the already mentioned authors, such as affinity and readiness to sacrifice for one’s own nation with respect to the rights of others who do not belong to the group.

Igor Primoratz synthesizes the literature on the analyzed issue and defines five types of patriotism by applying non-uniform criteria:

1. Extreme patriotism: ideological ties to Machiavellianism, attitudes of the “our country, right or wrong” type (today, it is rather rejected in moral terms, although revived by extremist groups).

2. Strong patriotism: life of the individual is immersed in the group—the country, the nation, its history, tradition, values, symbols, rights, and position. The group offers all these features to the individual who should feel a part of it. This, however, does not mean the full acceptance of all attributes of the social group, e.g., all decisions of the political authorities. Patriotism was described in these terms by MacIntyre, for whom universal justice and solidarity of all people are more important than absolute loyalty.

3. Moderate patriotism, closer to the liberal approach, combines love for the homeland with the conviction of the need to observe humanistic principles, human rights, and universal good. A sensible feeling, which embraces both criticism and rejection; it is not an unconditional, egocentric patriotism.

Its concept and ideas are described, among others, by Marcia Baron, who believes that we should appreciate the national cultural achievements in the same manner as we value the moral standing of our country, which means the right to criticize and to reject loyalty, including political loyalty when the moral principles are being broken. Moderate patriotism is not exclusive—the welfare of one's own country is important, but equally important is the welfare of other countries and of humanity as a whole. Stephen Natanson can be cited here, who attempts to soothe both republican and communitarian ideas by proposing reasonable, liberal universalism focused on the society.

4. Limited patriotism: love for one's homeland is not a moral obligation resulting from birth and it should also not be linked with the imperative of gratitude. What we receive from the state, we frequently pay back, e.g., through taxes. Patriotism in this approach includes the care for the prosperity of one's country and fellow citizens.

5. Ethical patriotism differs from the other types. It is not tied to the love for history and culture of the country or the nation, nor for its natural beauty, its international position, military, or sports strength, but stems from the belief in the moral strength of society, seen in the international and intercultural relations. The attitude to history of one's group is also based on moral principles—all the dark pages require analysis and justice as well as efforts to ensure that the evil does not repeat itself. Moral values, on which this kind of patriotism is based, and which it wants to instill, include social justice combined with respect for human rights, humanitarianism, human solidarity, and accountability for the course of events. The patriotic attitude will therefore be expressed in the fight to uphold these values and in the protest against their rejection (cf. Primoratz 2013).

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This list shows just how complex the issue of patriotism is. In order to simplify this complexity and clarify the most important differences, many researchers have built dichotomous classifications. Jarosław Makowski, the Polish sociologist, contrasts open patriotism (liberal, defined through civic involvement, respect toward democracy, and the conviction that the citizen's obligation is to care for one's country as a place for all citizens) with closed patriotism (possessive and exclusionary with limited tolerance for everything that is strange or non-national; cf. Makowski 2013,15).

Similar views are shared by authors from other countries, such as Ervin Staub who in the early 1990s proposed the dualist, frequently cited, division into blind and constructive patriotism. The basis of both kinds is the positive emotional approach, fondness for one's nation and country, and positive identification. However, blind patriotism is exclusionary—it is built on the belief in the superiority of one's own group, on the conviction that one should cherish, nurture, and support only one's own values, history, morals, rights, and the readiness to impose one's own rules on others (as they are better). Criticism toward one's group is seen as absence of loyalty. Meanwhile, constructive patriotism assumes that the sense of community and affinity with the group is expressed in acting to its benefit. It rejects the belief of superiority with respect to others, the development-supporting values are important, and they are served by social criticism (cf. Staub 1997).

230 In a like vein, Joel Westheimer proposed his definition of two types of patriotism: authoritarian and democratic. Authoritarian patriotism is chauvinistic, ethical, totalitarian in the political sense; it assumes society is conformist and accepts social shortages. Democratic patriotism is indifferent toward genealogy, refers to democratic values such as respect for variety, critical and deliberative loyalty, as well as civic concern in the social dimension (cf. Westheimer 2009). It seems that under a generalized comparison, authoritarian patriotism would correspond to the blind, and the democratic is similar to constructive patriotism, as defined by Staub.

The musings on the concept of patriotism cannot omit constitutional patriotism. The term was created in post-war Germany, undoubtedly as an attempt to overcome the threat associated with nationalistic attitudes, arising in strong ethnic states or in cultural communities prone to consider themselves superior to other cultures. The idea of constitutional patriotism was formulated in the 1970s by Dolf Sternberger, a student of Hannah Arendt. In his opinion, the Roman Republic can be seen as the source of this idea—there, patriotism was expressed in civic attitude, and similar forms of patriotism, characterized with respect for civil rights, dominated (in Europe) until the end of the 18th century. The author contrasts the martyrdom vision of homeland with the concept of “homeland alive,” alive with the activity of its citizens who participate in the creation and implementation of democratic laws. He proposes that

the civic state should take the place of the national, ethnic one. Sternberger was a proponent of citizenship that would be responsible, involved, based on provisions of constitutional law, and consistent with liberal and democratic values. He did not abandon patriotism related to the territory—but he saw it rather as a friendship with the state, whose institutions have a civic nature. The state and its institutions were to act as a stern guardian of the law, and its breaches would be punished (cf. Müller 2006).

The concept became popular in the second half of the 1980s, when a new interpretation was accorded to it by Jürgen Habermas during a famous historical debate. Similarly, Habermas bypassed the categories of nation and ethnicity. He believed that the law—including constitutional acts which are the source of values and principles—can serve as a platform facilitating communication, cooperation, and integration of the pluralist, multi-national, and multi-cultural European states, without the need for a unifying of cultural differences. Habermas opts for the development of the public sphere in which citizens live and cooperate as free, equal individuals building a democratic discourse (in line with his theory of communicative action). Thus, the concept is inclusive—everyone can participate in the discourse and creation of the law, irrespective of the racial or cultural differences, and the political and social integration depends on the will to determine its principles through the process of communication (cf. Müller 2006).

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This concept, especially after it was revived by Habermas, was and still is lively discussed and criticized in Europe. The European integration policy raises numerous controversies, as it is seen as a threat to national identity and identification. The shift of patriotism linked with the nation toward the non-emotional, pragmatic forms such as democratically recognized legal order, assuming more civic obligations than sentimental or moral ties—which was justified in post-war Germany—is hard to accept as the exclusive or fundamental type of patriotism in other parts of Europe and the Western world. The devotion to the homeland and its attributes, and the perception of its interests in the exclusive terms is strongly ingrained, and the events of the recent years, such as economic crises, the threat of terrorism, and mass migrations rather strengthen the comeback to closed national states.

Civic patriotism seems to be the most important issue for the definition problems analyzed here. It is expressed through the activity of a social group, working for the benefit of its community usually outside the structures of the state—which it requires only to determine the legal and organizational framework, although sometimes civic activity can reach beyond this framework. Civic patriotism requires dedication to the welfare of others, solidarity, a certain degree of social cohesion, and in special cases—civil disobedience. Traces of civic patriotism can be seen in the concepts already referred to, including open patriotism as defined by Makowski, the constructive one by Staub, the democratic one by Joel Westheimer, and the constructive one by Habermas, especially with respect to negotiating the law.

232 The same types of patriotism are found both in the democratic countries as well as in the non-democratic ones. Democracy and the open principles of civic society support the manifestation of patriotic emotions, expressed equally by supporters of the multi-cultural approach and by xenophobes. Nowadays, the national state is the fundamental political unit—even if it brings together representatives of many cultures. The dominant, majority-based cultures, especially when confronted with a threat, turn to the selected democratic principles (political sovereignty, the right to manifest one's views, protection of social interests) and disregard other, such as civil rights of minorities, civil rights in general, human rights, respect for variety.

The aggregative theory of democracy recognizes as fundamental the right of citizens to collectively express their political will—not only through general elections. On the other hand, deliberative democracy enables individuals to determine their needs and preferences, to solve conflicts, and to reach consensus in a communication process free of political and economic influences. Can, however, individuals free themselves from such influences? Social practice demonstrates that this is very difficult—also due to the fact that everyone strives to protect their own economic interests.

The model of global, cosmopolitan democracy recognizes as fundamental the values of law and order (in light of supranational laws), the absence of violence, and peaceful solving of conflicts, as well as the equality of citizens in supranational communities. The migration crisis in Europe has demonstrated that certain countries clearly reject these values in order to protect their own

interests. An explicit example here is the so-called “Brexit.” The rejection of the concept of global democracy in social practice is accompanied by an intensification of patriotic attitudes in their nationalist and chauvinist variety.

The principles of democracy—self-determination, freedom of expression, the sense of having a social mandate among the rulers in national states—could become a tool used to nurture closed patriotism. It seems that in most countries the development of democratic ideas was and still is accompanied by anti-democratic ideas (clearly visible also in historical events, including wars). Paradoxically, they are ingrained in democracy. I would include here the national myths, the support of hierarchy-based traditions, the vision of a nation’s history as a stream of victories and failures, or the stressing of a civilizational mission of the Western culture.

The great challenge for civic education which includes the issues of democracy, citizenship, and patriotism, is to show their connections and gaps. It is necessary to change the contents of education from its current oversimplistic and limited form to a more developed, complex set of concepts.

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study conducted in 2016 233 shows that civic education for teenagers concentrates on understanding key civic and citizenship concepts, mostly the principles of voting and elections. The citizenship values like participating in community-based activities or understanding how to resolve conflicts are less explored issues. However, teachers mentioned the importance of such goals of civic education as: promoting the capacity to defend one’s own point of view; developing students’ skills and competencies in conflict resolutions; students’ participation in the local community or promoting students’ critical and independent thinking. Yet, the knowing of facts and key concepts dominates in the all school curricula (cf. Schulz 2017).

During lessons, neither younger nor older pupils usually have the chance to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of democracy, its various forms (beside direct and indirect), its connections with civil society, its threats, its political alternatives, and the consequences of its lack.

Similarly, patriotism is defined only in an underdeveloped way as a highly positive love for the homeland. The homeland is very often understood as a nation’s place. Even in such a homogenous country like Poland in the recent

years almost everything is “national.” For example, the anthem and flag are not “state” but “national.” The anniversaries of events important for the state, like Independence Day, are appropriated by nationalistic organizations (considering themselves as true patriots) to manifest their symbols and ideas including hatred and contempt for others. The difference between nationalistic and other closed forms of patriotism and democracy is huge, and educators have to settle how to interpret this chasm.

Patriotism and democracy are complex issues with many variants, among them some threatening ones, and they cannot be defined in a simple, single meaningful way. This results in creating unreflective, narrow-minded people, which may be desired by autocratic politicians in order to manipulate them, but not by contemporary human beings and societies.

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TRAGEDY, SOLIDARITY, AND IMPARTIALITY

THE MEANING OF HANNAH ARENDT'S THINKING FOR OUR NARRATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to outline the meaning of the tragic component of action in Hannah Arendt's theory of politics, and to relate it to the problem of modern storytelling and historiography by means of the concepts of solidarity and impartiality. Tragedy, inalienably connected with suffering, is the inherent, although not always conspicuous, feature of action in Arendt's thought. It comes to the fore more often through the quotations of poetry or poetic historiography than in the conceptual

framework of Arendt's oeuvre. Therefore, the interpretation of the tragic component of action in Arendt requires tracing these citations and linking them to the Arendtian conceptual framework. But there is more to it: such an interpretation is fulfilled only if it informs and inspires our critical consciousness concerning our own narrations and identities.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, tragedy, solidarity, impartiality, history.

Tragedija, solidarnost in nepristranskost. Pomen misli Hannah Arendt za našo narativno identiteto

Povzetek

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Namen članka je oris pomena tragične sestavine delovanja v politični teoriji Hannah Arendt in njegoa povezava s problemom modernega pripovedovalstva in historiografije s pomočjo konceptov solidarnosti in nepristranskosti. Tragedija, neodtujljivo povezana s trpljenjem, je notranja, čeprav ne vselej očitna poteza delovanja v misli Arendtove. Pogostejše prihaja v ospredje skoz navedke iz pesništva ali pesniške historiografije kakor znotraj konceptualnega okvira njenega dela. Interpretacija tragične sestavine delovanja pri Arendtovi zato zahteva zasledovanje takšnih navedkov in njihove povezavo s konceptualnim okvirom. Toda pri tem gre za več: takšna interpretacija se lahko spopolni samo, če informira in navdihuje kritično zavest glede naših lastnih pripovedi in identitet.

Ključne besede: Hannah Arendt, tragedija, solidarnost, nepristranskost, zgodovina.

To understand the promise of Arendt's mode of tragic storytelling to foster kinds of heroism compatible with democratic community, attention should be given to the other dimension of the tragic hero, his or her role as doomed sufferer.
Robert C. Pirro¹

In this article, I endeavor to present the bi-dimensional structure of Hannah Arendt's conception of action and connect it with the key concepts of political spectatorship and storytelling: solidarity and impartiality. Usually, when we speak of the category of action in Arendt's thought, what becomes evident is a certain promise for human beings: action, although difficult and conditioned, brings fulfillment and happiness for human beings and glory to the public sphere. When we speak of the inalienable fragility of the human world of action, the suffering and pain inherent to it, their appearance in Arendt's thought seem to be more elusive. It is no accident that, when the latter are at stake, Arendt more often than in other cases resorts to citations. And it is mostly citations of poetry or *poietic*, metaphoric philosophy or historiography, rather than the conceptual structure of her political thought.

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When addressing *suffering* in Arendt's thinking, one cannot avoid the reference to the tragic component of human action. A systematic analysis of tragedy as a matrix for Arendt's political theory has been undertaken by Robert Pirro. His book provides both a thorough reconstruction of Arendt's understanding of the Greek tragedy as well as a systematic analysis of the meaning of the tragic for Arendt's conception of politics (Pirro 2000). The aim of this essay is far more modest. Firstly, to let the ambiguity of action come to light: the ambiguity of suffering and fulfillment, or, of tragedy and happiness. This means also looking on action from another, non-heroic point of view, to read Arendt through these poetic citations, in the hope that action's inherent fragility will become more graspable. Secondly, to relate this reinterpretation of action through suffering and tragedy to the problem of storytelling in the hope that it sheds light on certain very current aspects of contemporary action: solidarity, impartiality, and the meaning of history.

¹ Pirro 2000, 182.

Happiness, tragedy, and despair

Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* is known mostly for her admiration of the possibilities given in human action. Unlike other activities, action bears a promise of purely human ways of being. The significance of "words and deeds," the main activities of humans among other humans, and the meaning of politics, is perseverance and renewal of the world. It is a prerequisite of humanity, which in Arendt expresses itself in the human ability of "appearance," i.e., being among others, talking to them, and persuading them of something, attempting to see the world from a different perspective. The sense of the world is the multispectrality of its inhabitants. This multispectrality exactly constitutes the basic ontological feature of the world; thus, acting people, "actors," as Arendt sometimes says, bestow the world of artifacts with worldliness, and human life with fulfillment. "Because of its inherent tendency to disclose the agent together with the act, action needs for its full appearance the shining brightness we once called glory, and which is possible only in the public realm." (Arendt 1998, 180)

This means that action bears not only a promise of humanity, but also of a flourishing of greatness and glory, impossible outside the public sphere, the stage of action. *The Human Condition* is infused with statements corroborating this optimistic, even heroic account of politics: "Action can be judged only by the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary" (Arendt 1998, 205); "The art of politics teaches men how to bring forth what is great and radiant" (Arendt 1998, 206). Action is bestowed with greatness and fulfillment because it is the only aspect of the human condition that enables people to be free.

In this place, it is crucial to note that the pivotal term in Arendt's thought, the concept of freedom, quite contrary to the tradition that started as early as the Stoics, is not an attribute of will. Freedom is by no means simply the freedom of choice. The primordial experience of will, described by St. Paul and Augustine, contains rather impotence than power. Although will has an imperative character and is connected with commands, it is simultaneously hampered by an inherent blocking mechanism: each "I will" is accompanied by "I will not," which makes the passage from will to action, from "I will" to

“I can” doubtful. Thus, while on the one hand will is impotent, on the other it generates a sort of inherent resistance. This explains why, in spite of such powerlessness, it was associated with strength and power, and in modern times dominated the problem of freedom in political thought, where freedom was associated with a type of sovereignty. The typical representatives of this kind of thinking would be Rousseau with his concept of general will, and, to find a more contemporary example, Carl Schmitt. Nevertheless, for Arendt, will can be phenomenologically associated more with oppression and tyranny than with freedom:

The fact that I-will has become so power-thirsty, that will and will-to-power have become practically identical, is perhaps due to its having been first experienced in its impotence. Tyranny at any rate, the only form of government which arises directly out of the I-will, owes its greedy cruelty to an egotism. (Arendt 2006a, 161)

Rather, for Arendt, freedom means the ability to begin something new, which is characteristic for action. Of fundamental importance here is her phenomenological observation that “we first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves” (Arendt 2006a, 147). Upon freedom, as the beginning of something new, Arendt puts a difficult theoretical stipulation: action, to be free, needs to be free from both a motive and from a goal. This condition, however bizarre it might sound to our ears, was necessary to avoid the instrumentality we usually connect with human action. Pre-given goals would strip our action of freedom and reshape it into fabrication, which is never free. 243

Astonishingly for those who consider Arendt to be a nostalgic thinker of antiquity, it is in modernity in which Arendt seeks earlier unknown glimmers of freedom and the public world. New experiences of action, modern revolutions, “are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning” (Arendt 2006b, 11). At the same time, since revolutions were connected with the ability of persons to begin something new, they “brought to the fore the experience of being free” (Arendt 2006b, 24). Thus, *On Revolution* can be read as a book that intensifies Arendt’s description of

action. A poetic support for the intensive happiness of revolutionary action present in Arendt's account can be found in Wordsworth's poem *The Prelude* (book 10, v. 693–697):

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.

Nevertheless, one would be mistaken to think that Arendt's conception of action accepts this optimistic attitude fully. It is exactly this poetic upheaval of happiness of action that refers us to its tragic component: instability and vulnerability. And, also, to the fact that suffering is inalienable from happiness. When reading *On Revolution*, one has the feeling that something hidden behind the scenes of *The Human Condition* now comes to the fore. For instance, 244 Arendt refers to Theseus, who "let us know what it was that enabled ordinary men [...] to bear life's burden: it was the polis, the space of men's free deeds and living words, which could endow life with splendor" (Arendt 2006b, 273).

This quotation indicates two important things: firstly, obviously, that action, i.e., words and deeds, create freedom, the most important phenomenon of human life, and, secondly, less obviously, that freedom of action is a sort of consolation for the suffering inherent in human life. In *The Human Condition* Arendt renders it succinctly: "Because the actor always moves among and in reaction to other acting beings, he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer." (Arendt 1998, 190) Public happiness, or in another word, freedom, is then inalienably doomed with pain. "One pays dearly for freedom," Arendt said in 1964 during an interview with Günter Gauss (Arendt 2005a, 17).

In her *Lectures on Kant's Philosophy* and in *On Revolution*, she cites *Oedipus in Colonus* by Sophocles (1224–26):

Not to be born
 is far best scenario; but if a man appears,
 next best to go swiftly as he may
 back down the path from whence he came.²

Although Arendt refers here to the “Greek pessimism,” it is clear for the reader that her reference to tragedy is not of purely historical interest. Her own conception of action is infused with a tragic note. The first who noticed that was Karl Jaspers (to whom the book on revolution was dedicated), who wrote in his letter immediately after publication: “In the course of your presentation, the greatness to which you give expression is a source of encouragement. Ultimately, the whole is your vision of a tragedy that does not leave you despairing: an element of a tragedy of humankind.”³ Arendt responded: “A tragedy that warms and lightens the heart, because such great and simple things were at stake.”⁴

It seems that tragedy for Arendt has nothing to do with hopelessness, it is rather an attempt to come to terms with the conditions of human existence. As in Robert Pirro’s words: “Arendt’s use of the term, tragedy, is consistent with her long-held idea that the defeat of human aspirations to political freedom, if it is made an appropriate object of historical or poetic remembrance, may yet inspire future attempts to be free.” (Pirro 2011, 39)

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The problem with very important political experiences of modern man is that freedom, which appears on the stage and is shared by the participants of an event, tends to disappear as soon as the event fulfills its task and comes to an end. This was the fate of both the French and American revolutions, as well as the French Resistance during the Second World War (or, one wants to add, with the revolution of the Polish “Solidarity” movement). It is no accident that *On Revolution* ends with the same quotation that begins *Between Past and Future*, namely with one of René Char’s aphorisms: “Our inheritance was left

²As cited in Hannah Arendt (1992, 23): “Not to be born prevails over all meaning uttered in words; by far the second-best thing is for life, once it has appeared, to go back as quickly as possible whence it came.”

³ Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, May 16, 1963 (Arendt and Jaspers 1992).

⁴ Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, May 29, 1963 (Arendt and Jaspers 1992).

to us by no testament.” And the latter is continued by: “If I survive, I know that I shall have to break with the aroma of these essential years, silently reject (not repress) my treasure.” For Arendt’s readers it is no secret that the treasure René Char speaks of is freedom, indeed the most essential and at the same time fragile of human experiences. Freedom “appears abruptly, unexpectedly, and disappears again [...] as though it were a *fata morgana*” (Arendt 2006a, 4).

Why is the treasure of revolution lost, or, why has freedom the inevitable tendency to disappear? The problem with unexpected events, such as Resistance or revolutions, that bear the treasure of freedom, is that they are not inherited from any testament or, to leave the metaphor, not foreseen by any tradition. And it is tradition that secures continuity and remembrance. For tradition is not simply the past, but a narration of the past. Without this narration “which selects and names, which hands down and preserves [...] there seems to be no willed continuity in time and hence, humanly speaking, neither past nor future, only sempiternal change of the world and the biological cycle of living creatures in it” (Arendt 2006a, 5).

246 When tradition cannot foresee and conceptualize the appearance of freedom (which is the case of all unprecedented historical events), it is as if a “failure of memory” happens on a historical, collective level. There is “no mind to inherit and to question, to think about and to remember [...], no story left that could be told” (Arendt 2006a, 6). Freedom needs its own narration, otherwise a historical amnesia brings about the loss of identity of a group or generation that tastes it. That is why in René Char we hear not tragedy anymore but a premonition of despair: one knows to have experienced something new and still can feel the aftertaste of the events, but it is too elusive to be grasped in language. Historical and personal identity are doomed with the danger of being lost. That is why the enormous effort of understanding “without banisters” is necessary. But this effort is unthinkable without the question of individual identity.

Paul Ricoeur grasped this nicely: “To answer the question ‘Who?’ as Hannah Arendt has so forcefully put it, is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells about the action of the ‘who.’ And the identity of this ‘who’ therefore itself must be a narrative identity.” (Ricoeur 1998, 246) Arendt’s questioning is beyond a shadow of a doubt inspired by Heidegger’s *Who of Dasein*. As we know, Heidegger did

not raise the traditional question of *what* man is. Instead, he asked *who* is *Dasein*. Such is the direction of the analyses of *Being and Time*: they are not an answer to the question *what* man is, rather: what it actually *means* that man *is*.

Arendt, like Heidegger, quests for a phenomenological description of humanity directed against metaphysics, but, unlike Heidegger, has a different goal in mind: she does not want to give a foundation for ontology. She does not so much want to remind us of being as such, she instead strives at remembering the specifically *human* ways of being. Her phenomenology is anthropology. The account of the human condition is an account of being human in human terms only; in other words: an account of the fragile circumstances in which man appears human. This fundamental difference between both thinkers might be grasped conceptually. But one quote from Heidegger sheds light on it. It is the passage when he justifies the bizarre language of his ontological analyses:

It is one thing to report narratively about beings and another to grasp beings in their being. [...] If we may allude to earlier and in their own right altogether incomparable researches on the analysis of being, then we should compare the ontological sections in Plato's *Parmenides* or the fourth chapter of the seventh book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with a narrative passage from Thucydides. (Heidegger 1996, 34)

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For Arendt, the narrative passage from Thucydides is by no means inferior to Plato. Both sources are testimonies of two different attitudes to life and two different streams of the Western tradition. While philosophers glorify the *vita contemplativa*, which can be seen as a remedy for the fragility of unstable human affairs, historians and poets cherish and perpetuate vestiges of action. From the perspective of timeless and impersonal ontology, human words and deeds *per se* are irrelevant (they are only beings). From the perspective of a narrative, they constitute the identity of the doer, the only identity he or she has a chance to get. The non-philosophical narration binds together scattered events, and, by presenting them as a biography, saves them from falling into oblivion. Philosophical tradition, since it favors contemplation, is unable to preserve the original content of action. Human experience is by nature not stable enough to be preserved without a narration and stories to be told and retold.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that a remedy for the forgetfulness of action in philosophy is only a unique, unrepeatable, individual story. A narrative, being the necessary initial step of memory, is not enough. Elusive events need un-empty shells of concepts to be saved for generations. “All thought begins with remembrance [...] no remembrance remains secure unless it is condensed and distilled into a framework of conceptual notions” (Arendt 2006b, 212). Even more: “the human mind stands in need of concepts if it is to function at all” (Arendt 2006b, 212). The trouble with unexpected events generating freedom is that they are new, and the risk of losing their sense is greater than in the case of tradition continuing to function. This is because there is no language of description, no concepts to capture the elusive experience of freedom. The tragic note in Char’s aphorisms refers to the situation when someone is aware of losing something he is unable to save. The taste is still there but already disappearing, and, as Tocqueville said: “the mind of man wanders in obscurity” (Arendt 2006a, 6; Tocqueville 2012, Book IV, ch. 8).

248 That is why Arendt’s oeuvre can be considered as a constant battle for new concepts for the events unpredicted by tradition. Writing is based on stories, but it strives at a new conceptual framework for what is unprecedented in personal life and history. The very example of such a type of writing is *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, where Arendt masterfully combined the discreteness of historical, individual narration with forging a new, non-traditional conceptual framework for her later mature anthropology (see Arendt 1985).

Solidarity and impartiality

“In making suffering the flip side of acting, Arendt established the basis for recognizing another dimension of the politics of tragedy: the promotion of solidarity.” (Pirro 2011, 187) But the phenomenon of solidarity refers us to its even more important correlate: impartiality.

The very concept of solidarity is not pertinent to Arendt’s political writings. In *The Human Condition*, *The Promise of Politics*, *Responsibility and Judgment*, as well as in the monumental *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, it is missing in the indexes. The exception is, again, *On Revolution*, where *solidarity* appears as

an opposite concept to *pity*. While the latter is a sentiment and a modification (or, in Arendt's word, a perversion) of compassion, solidarity does not belong to the emotional sphere. Solidarity is rather an intellectual insight that strives at establishing "deliberately and [...] dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited" (Arendt 2006b, 79). Solidarity, then, refers to the common interest of humanity as a whole and its medium is reason, which provides us with the understanding of generality and "is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually" (Arendt 2006b, 79).

Solidarity, if we continue exploring these scarce remarks, as any relevant concept in Arendt, has a worldly, political quality that needs to be practiced. It demands imagination and insight rather than feeling and sentiment. While its incentive is the suffering of others, as tangible as it may be, it is (unlike pity) not dependent on it and is never nourished by it to the point of glorification. It is both more abstract and more concrete. It is more abstract because it is based on a community of people, of whom everyone can become the oppressed, so it refers to a certain potentiality of the human condition. At the same time, it is more concrete, because it does not define and separate the sufferers as an external and abstract group (the poor, the workers, etc.), but refers to the condition of any member of the community. It may refer to a particular group at a given time, but its interest is general and based on the plural and multispectral character of the human world. Its proper political medium is primarily not charity, but a just law that secures the rights of the (potentially) weak or minorities, and action that compels us to protect this law once it is violated, even at the cost of becoming the sufferer (like in cases of civil disobedience). But thus understood solidarity, it seems, can also be expressed in historical or poetic narration, when the weak is appreciated and a due place in the story is given to him.

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The phrase indicating this kind of solidarity can be found in Lucan, a Roman poet of the 1st century, whom Arendt quotes twice: once in *The Promise of Politics* with a clear reference to impartiality (Arendt 2005b, 174), once, in *The Life of the Mind*, in the context of a "reclamation" of human dignity from the modern, Hegelian concept of history (Arendt 1981, 216): "Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni" ["if the victor had the gods on his side, the defeated had Cato"] (*Phersalia*, I, 128). The quotation from Lucan is significant, because it shows how solidarity is intertwined with, or, how it can

be a concretization of another key-concept of the tragic component of action in Arendt, impartiality. In non-Christian faiths it is godlike to appreciate the strong, but it can be human to feel for the sufferers. The ambiguity hidden in human action, happiness and the suffering inalienable to it make, Cato and us sensitive for solidarity with the defeated, even if only in an intellectual sense. In parallel, within the Hegelian conception of history, where history and its Reason appears as the god-like super-judge, Success becomes the final criterion of human action. But it is the task of a non-Hegelian historian, the one who tells and re-tells the story, to reclaim human judgment and to judge according to different criteria. These criteria, being individual, by no means have to be “subjective.” For sure, solidarity is not so in the above-mentioned sense, since it coexists only with impartiality.

250 Arendt found this impartiality and solidarity as early as Homer, in the poetic prefiguration of Western historiography. It was Homer who, when describing the events of the Trojan War, showed how “one and the same event can have two sides” (Arendt 2005b, 174). Arendt stressed the utmost importance of this model of impartiality for the often ideologized and manipulated history of the 20th century. That is why, in this context, the words of another poet, Friedrich Schiller (*Das Siegesfest*), appear in the interview with Günter Gauss in the context of Bolshevism, Leo Trotsky, and the manipulated narrations of WWI:

Wenn des Liedes Stimmen schweigen
Von dem überwundnen Mann,
So will ich für Hectorn zeugen [...]

[If the voices of the song are silent
For him who has been vanquished
I myself will testify for Hector ...] (Arendt 2005a, 19–20)

This testimony of solidarity is followed by the reference to impartiality of Herodotus who starts his *Histories* in a significant way, putting on equal footing fame of strangers and enemies and his own people:

THESE are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes, in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory. (Herodotus *The Histories*, 1.1)

Taken together, solidarity and impartiality should be the most important keywords for modern post-9/11 global politics, which seems to suffer from a lack of both. Both terms rely on the Kantian enlarged mentality, i.e., the ability to imagine as if one was looking at the world from the position of another. Arendt extrapolated the aesthetic faculty of judgment into the sphere of morality and connected it with critical thinking (the public use of reason): the judgment of taste can help us not only to distinguish beauty from ugliness (like in Kant), but also good from evil. Indeed, the judgment “this is wrong” has for Arendt something of an aesthetic element. For instance, betrayal is wrong not only in the individual perspective, since it makes me live with a traitor, but also because, irrespective of this individual perspective, it disfigures the common world. Judgment, not being based on private individual feeling, but engaging the enlarged mentality, the ability to see the world from another’s perspective, can claim universal validity, or, to put it in Arendt’s language, could be related to the common world. 251

Impartiality and solidarity are challenged worldwide by contemporary historical policies, information bubbles, and new-old political mythologies, constructed according to the rules of modern advertising. They all need to be taken seriously because they answer a very deep psychological need of identification and rootedness which neutrality and distance undermine. But we need to remember that identification and belonging, natural as they are, are akin to the biological, un-political realm. Their principle is not action and freedom with inherent vulnerability, but they result in a tendency to homogenize and exclude, and, ultimately, in a complete one-sidedness of the stories told.⁵

5 In this context, it is at the same time understandable and alarming that the modern search for a national homogeneous identity is often supported with a (more or less explicit) resurrection of the ideas of Carl Schmitt (which is, of course, not the same as academic critical interest). He attempted to endow identification and partiality with

Such partiality loses the inherent ambiguity of action and polarizes people in two general types of petrified groups: those who are violent with words and deeds, and those who suffer from this violence. A succinct passage from Thucydides quoted in *Responsibility and Judgment* illustrates this best: “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” (*The Peloponnesian War*, 1; Arendt 2003, 183) It is worth mentioning because of the contemporary tendency to connect this type of partiality with “national identity” or “patriotism.” Although a thorough discussion of the meaning of patriotism and its connotational difference to such concepts as “nationalism” or “fascism” is impossible here, it needs to be addressed very briefly in the context of solidarity and impartiality.

252 It seems to be a strong tendency of the first decades of the 21st century, in opposition to the more global and liberal education of the second half of the 20th century in the Western world, to pursue a “patriotic” education by means of biased, partial historiography. The augmentation of this tendency can be seen both in the USA as well as in Central Europe, where Poland and Hungary are infamous leaders. Patriotic education, which can be understood in many different ways, seems to be distorted into a heroic (monumental) story, where the glory, endurance, and heroism of one nation (or even a national group) is stressed to the point of the distortion of academic historiography. This can be done in two modes that are often combined: on the one hand the glorious victories of the nation are extracted from history, decontextualized, and elaborated, and on the other the moments of being conquered and suffering of one’s nation are distilled, their causes attributed to others and cherished. Public

political, public significance, which was a failed attempt insofar as it finally supported the biological degeneration of politics. At first, Schmitt referred to the opposition between enemy and friend, which he understood as the fundamental structure of politics. Enmity has a purely political significance and has nothing to do with aversion. Originally, it is a prerogative of the sovereign (king) to define political enemies (Schmitt 2005). Later, sovereignty was ceded from one person (of the king) on the political body of the people, and the category of the internal enemy appeared, whom the people exclude in the name of national homogeneity (Schmitt 2008). Although in Schmitt it is still conceptualized in political terms, it is clear that from then on only a very small step is needed to translate this political category of enemy into biopolitical terms and, as a result, to introduce “a brake into the domain of life,” as Michel Foucault puts it (Foucault 2003, 254).

memory is not to be distracted and confused by suffering and domination caused by one's own nation or by un-heroic, self-inflicted pain. Suffering is always caused by others; heroism is always our merit.

In order to avoid any airiness of this argumentation, I will illustrate it by referring briefly to contemporary Polish "historical policies." In the public discourse, operating with the concept of "patriotism" automatically refers to the concept of "nation." But if we consider the understanding of "nation," present in the public sphere and opinion, it becomes obvious that the concept is unanimously and unconsciously grasped within the perspective of a philosophical conceptual realism. Nation is pre-conceived as a substance, a being of different ontological status than its members, past or present. Such an understanding of nation presupposes the unification and homogenization of the whole: the omission of what is individual and unique, but also almost automatic exclusion of what differs from one idea infusing the unity. The normative ideas of authenticity and truth adhere to this concept of nation and are followed by the whole sequence of further historical exclusions. The "true" Poles are the ones who are "patriots," but an understanding of "patriotism" is limited to those who are ready to defend the "reputation" and "dignity" of the nation, which always means uncritical reference to military triumphs and concealing what was less politically glorious in them.⁶ On the other hand, the "true Pole" always suffers and dies for his fatherland, which appears in inculcating the cult of all national uprisings, which, apart from one,⁷ were military and political catastrophes.⁸ The suffering of the nation is always the strangers' guilt. It was always others who attacked, conquered, and assailed our fatherland and spilled our "innocent blood."⁹ The "innocence" of the Polish

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6 The military triumph over the Crusaders in 1410, not worth much from a political perspective; the victory of Sobieski at Vienna, which squandered the chance of avoiding the danger of Moscow and subordinated Poland to the interest of the papacy. Nowadays, it is succinctly rendered in the slogan *Polak-Katolik* (Pole the Catholic).

7 The Wielkopolska Uprising 1918–1919, not really apparent in public memory.

8 In the Warsaw Uprising more civilians died than soldiers and the capital city was razed to the ground.

9 For instance, the Massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in the years 1943–1945 were stripped of historical context, which from a political point of view has been harmful for Polish-Ukrainian relations, annihilating the endeavors to reconcile,

nation sometimes requires the negation of historical facts.¹⁰ Furthermore, Poland is depicted as a country of tolerance: in Polish-Jewish relations the support for Jews during WWII is exhibited and stressed, acts of betrayal and informing concealed. If a historical fact is so obtrusive that it cannot be denied anymore, the realistic and substantialistic understanding of the nation comes to the fore and a special logic switches on: if someone behaved dishonorably or outrageously (e.g., “shmalzovniks”), he or she automatically excluded himself or herself from the nation, and in this way the nation, by means of tautology, can always remain noble, heroic, and morally impeccable.

254 This understanding of patriotism and patriotic education is obviously harmful not only for international dialogue and mutual tolerance of nations. It is also harmful for the identity of the said nation. Arendt on many occasions expressed clearly her attitude towards such patriotism, many times in contexts clearly referring to the two nations that were dearest to her heart, the Jews and the Germans: “If someone is not capable of this impartiality because he pretends to love his people so much that he pays flattering homage to them all the time—well, then there’s nothing to be done. I do not believe that people like that are patriots.” (Arendt 2005a, 20) Why not? It seems that the role of tragedy returns here with an even stronger impact.¹¹ In her speech on the occasion of receiving the Lessing prize of the Free City of Hamburg in 1959, Arendt referred to the then still existing problem of concealments in German history, or, better said, in the German perception of the German history, since German history had been an object of utmost international interest for years. In this context, Arendt makes a very interesting distinction in our relationship with the past, between *mastering* and *reconciling*.

The situation where a nation is unable to come to terms with its past, either through concealment or through distortion, is often commented on as an

undertaken on both sides.

10 Like the Jedwabne pogrom in 1941 or Kielce in 1946. Instead of facing and reworking this past, in public discourse, skillfully designed by politicians, we encounter the glorification and victimization of so called “cursed soldiers,” the anti-communist guerilla troops in Polish post-war history.

11 I owe the turning of my attention to this track to the analysis of Robert Pirro, both systematic and insightful (see Pirro 2000, 134–136).

inability to “master” its past. For Arendt, such an expression is a cliché which leads to missing the point. Such a past like German history 1933–1945, the horrors of the First World War for Europe in general, the Soviet legacy for Eastern Europeans, or the anti-Jewish pogroms, to name just a few examples, cannot be *mastered*. But this does not mean they should not be *faced*: “The best that can be achieved is to know precisely what it was, and to endure this knowledge, and to wait and see what comes from knowing and enduring.” (Arendt 1995, 20) In a true story told about the past, nothing is mastered, but the past can be *recognized* as what it was. The events that recur in a story as a tragedy let the spectator (the reader) partake in “the tragic effect, or the tragic pleasure, the shattering emotion which makes one able to accept the fact that something like this could have happened at all” (Arendt 1995, 20). Such partaking in a tragedy enables the process of recognition.

In classic tragedy, this sort of recognition was reserved for the individual hero, who, at one point of the story, turned into a sufferer. The archetype of this recognition is the moment when Oedipus, the tragic hero *per se*, finds out what he had done in the past and re-experiences the genuine events for the second time, now being able to assess their full meaning. But we can extrapolate this figure of tragic hero and connect it with the enlarged mentality. While the Kantian enlarged mentality refers mostly to the synchronic potential community of citizens, to the actual multispectrality of the public world, and while for Arendt it predominantly has this meaning, it can be as well reinterpreted as being diachronic: the reader of a tragic story is a spectator of past events. When it comes to the recognition of the meaning of the events how they were, the reader becomes the actor and the sufferer at the same time. He can recognize the past deeds of his own nation as his own deeds, as his own past, even if this past is something one would desire to forget. This recognition, if it is not individual, but extended towards public consciousness or public use of reason, can be liberating, although it never leads to the “mastering” of this past. It causes pain which in Greek tragedy is expressed with lamentation, but it also protects the agent (the nation, the society) from suppressing its past and, as a result of this suppression, from losing its meaning for future generations, and forgetfulness leading to despair. “Even non-tragic plots become genuine events only when they are experienced a second time in the form of suffering

by memory operating retrospectively and perceptively.” (Arendt 1995, 21)

This means that historical events, in order not to become mystified or distorted, have to be retold once and again by every generation, sometimes from a different angle, but with the same passion, and also with the same dose of impartiality and solidarity. Just as “we can no more master the past than we can undo it” (Arendt 1995, 21), we can never deal with it once and for all. Events require the “ever-recurrent narration” for the sake of living remembrance and also for the sake of our own identity as spectators and sufferers at the same time.

In order to avoid losing our past and our identity we need to pay closer attention to the impartiality in our modern, national historiographies, since they sometimes seems to have lost the greatness of Greek historical and tragic narrations and Kantian multispectrality for the sake of ideology and political national myths.

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EDUCATION AND ACTIVE IGNORANCE

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Abstract

While traditional pedagogy presupposed that subjects naturally desire to know, some authors pointed out that “active ignorance” should be taken into account when pondering different educational strategies. Indeed, it often happens that skepticism, doubt, inaction, or refusal to change is not a consequence of a lack of knowledge but of avoidance of it. Active ignorance can be detected in diverse fields, which points to the fact that the phenomenon is widespread. As the paper shows, active ignorance

can further be understood as an umbrella term that covers several categories of phenomena: avoidance of truth, doubting the obvious, and repression. The cause of active ignorance can be detected in conservative function, since it serves to provide the subject with coherence by filtering out information that could dissolve or fragment the individual. In educational sciences, Plato's insight from the allegory of the cave should be taken into account, pointing out that prisoners will not be willing to accept the liberated messenger's news if it turns out to be unsettling with deconstruction of their established value-systems. The safe return to the cave is sooner to be found in the educator's effort of providing adequate contexts for "souls" to uncover the truth for themselves, thus understanding education as "an art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul."

Keywords: active ignorance, education, pedagogy, the allegory of the cave.

Izobraževanje in hotena nevednost

Povzetek

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Medtem ko tradicionalna pedagogika predpostavlja, da ljudje po naravi stremijo k vednosti, nekateri avtorji izpostavljajo, da bi pri razmišljanju o različnih vzgojno-izobraževalnih strategijah morali upoštevati »hoteno nevednost«. Zdi se namreč, da so skepticizem, dvomi, nedejavnost in upor spremembam posledica izogibanja vednosti, ne pa nepoznavanja tematik. Hotena nevednost se lahko zazna na različnih področjih, kar nakazuje razširjenost pojava. Kot skuša pokazati članek, lahko hoteno nevednost nadalje razumemo kot družinski pojem, ki pokriva več kategorij pojavov: izogibanje resnici, dvomljenje v očitno in potlačenje. Vzrok hotene nevednosti lahko označimo kot konzervativno funkcijo, saj služi temu, da pomaga subjektu ohranjati koherenco s filtriranjem tistih informacij, ki bi lahko razrušile posameznika. V edukacijskih vedah bi zato morali slediti Platonovemu uvidu iz prispodobe o votlini, ki izpostavlja, da jetniki ne bodo hoteli sprejeti novic osvobojenca, če se bo zanje izkazalo, da so vznemirjujoče zaradi dekonstrukcije utečenih vrednostih sistemov. Varen povratek v votlino gre prej iskati v učiteljevem naporu zagotavljanja ustreznega konteksta za duše, ki potem same zase odkrivajo resnico, kar pomeni, da moramo razumeti vzgojo oziroma izobraževanje kot »veščino zaobrtnitve«.

Ključne besede: hotena nevednost, izobraževanje, vzgoja, pedagogika, prispodoba o votlini.

Instead of an introduction: to see, or not to see, that is the question...

Πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει. – “All men naturally desire to know.” The famous first sentence of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* [980a22] declares what remains a widely shared tacit assumption in pedagogy and educational sciences. For Aristotle, our natural propensity for knowing stems from the delight we take in our senses, which are the basis out of which our knowledge stems, a starting point for its generation through memory and later experience. Indeed, Aristotle claims that the love and attachment we show towards the sense of sight most vividly underlines this point, since for him our ability to see overshadows all the remaining perceptive faculties in its contribution to the production of knowledge. This exclusive emphasis on sight and its consequent epistemological domination in the Western philosophical canon is perhaps something that could be successfully and interestingly deconstructed with the help of Jacques Derrida’s philosophy. Here, however, I want to pursue a different line of thought, and show why the assumption that human beings are spontaneously inclined to gain knowledge can be regarded as only one side of the pedagogical coin. Indeed, I want to claim that our attitude towards knowledge is much more ambivalent than what pedagogy and educational science often suppose with their almost exclusive emphasis on our inclination to know. That this emphasis is indeed widespread in pedagogy can be, for instance, detected in a paper by Michalinos Zembylas on Deleuzo-Guattarian pedagogy of desire that refers to Erica McWilliam: “The forces of *desire*—both the desire to teach and the desire to learn—are central in teaching and learning and can lead to rewarding or malevolent pedagogical encounters.” (Zembylas 2007, 331) To put it briefly: in the present paper, I will claim that emphasis on desire to know in pedagogy neglects another important factor in education that I will together with Shoshana Felman call “active ignorance” (Felman 1982). Indeed, my main line of argument is that in practically every pedagogical or educational endeavor active ignorance is an equally—or at least similarly—important factor as the desire to know.

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This idea has important consequences for our understanding of the process and aim of education: it shows us that the lack of knowledge is not a “simple

lack,” an ignorance that is characterized only by an absence of something positive, namely knowledge. On the contrary, the seeming “lack” of knowledge has, so to speak, its own agency and thus becomes a player in its own right, or *active* ignorance. Ignorance is thus not simple darkness, the absence of light (knowledge), but an element with its own agenda. Still in other words: the desire to know has to be paired with an equally potent and powerful desire, namely the desire not to know, to remain ignorant in the face of (most commonly threatening) knowledge. Lastly, our propensity to avoid knowledge poses serious issues for all “enlightenment” oriented educational efforts that aim at dispelling ignorance by spreading knowledge. Namely, the main defect of theories like Information Deficit Model (IDM; cf. Norgaard 2011, 67–68), claiming that lack of adequate information is the main cause for our ignorance and lack of appropriate action, is that they neglect the autonomous activity of ignorance and thus direct their educational efforts at wrong issues, as I will briefly try to demonstrate below.

262 In what follows, I will first try to expose some blatant examples of active ignorance, trying to categorize them into three groups, and then turn to the explanation of possible causes or base for this phenomenon or group of phenomena. At the end of the paper, I will try to underline some consequences of active ignorance for education, drawing from Plato’s illuminating insights from the allegory of the cave. There, I will also point to some paradoxes of the very concept of “active ignorance” and try to hint at the solutions of these aporias. First, however, I want to return to the Aristotle’s point that “we take delight” in our senses, foremost the sense of sight, and that this underlines his idea that we naturally desire to know. Here, namely, one can easily point to the other obvious side of our attitude towards the senses, especially the sight—the closing or covering of our eyes when we precisely *do not enjoy* what we see. Indeed, it does often happen that we do not take delight in what our senses want to convey to us thus shunning them either partially or entirely. The famous Japanese composition of three wise monkeys—Mizaru, Kikazaru, and Iwazaru—, or at least the European interpretation of them as the “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” is perhaps the most widely known expression of this fact. Derrida, again, seems to be a promising avenue in further researching this point from a hermeneutical-deconstructionist point of view. As he tries

to show in his *Memoirs of the Blind*, the “destiny of the eye” is not at all seeing but weeping. The veiling of sight is namely unveiling for a deeper essence of the eye:

For at the very moment they veil sight, tears would unveil what is proper to the eye. And what they cause to surge out of forgetfulness, there where the gaze or look looks after it, keeps it in reserve, would be nothing less than aletheia, the truth of the eyes, whose ultimate destination they would thereby reveal: to have imploration rather than vision in sight, to address prayer, love, joy, or sadness rather than a look or gaze. Even before it illuminates, revelation is the moment of the “tears of joy.” (Derrida 1993, 125)

Leaving this point aside for potential later inquiries, I do want to point out at the end of this introductory passage that the prime epistemological or alethiological problem—to paraphrase Hamlet—is not only to see, but also (what) not to see. That is, if we take seriously the problem of avoiding the truth as a factor in epistemology, then the question of active ignorance becomes practically as important as the more traditional gnoseological problems. 263

Active ignorance in practice

My attention was first drawn to active ignorance or “denialism” (as I was prone to call the phenomenon earlier) when I was working in the field of environmental ethics. The phenomenon that started to occupy my mind in the late first decade of our millennium was actually quite simple: why are we so prone to be skeptical about anthropogenic degradation of the environment if empirical evidence is not only so overwhelmingly clear but also readily available, generally not more than two clicks away? Gradually, as I became acquainted with social, psychological, and anthropological research in the field, I found enough evidence to dismiss what is known as the “Information Deficit Model” (IDM). The latter, according to Kari Norgaard, holds that lack of information is a limiting factor in public nonresponse to the climate change issues. In short, the IDM holds that “if people only knew the facts,” they would

act differently.” (Norgaard 2011, 64) However, a key problem with this and related models is that “they do not account for the behavior of significant number of people who *do* know about global warming, believe it is happening, and express concern about it.” (Norgaard 2011, 67; italics in original) Indeed, as researchers from other fields have noticed, psychological mechanisms such as cognitive dissonance (as proposed by Leon Festinger in 1957) have to be taken into account when pondering the gap between attitudes and behavior in climate change mitigation (Stoll-Kleemann, O’Riordan and Jaeger 2001). As it turned out, my research (Grušovnik 2012) showed that we are often prone to avoid the truth and unwilling to accept the facts about anthropogenic environmental degradation because doing so would endanger our selves, our identities constructed around our activities that are damaging for the natural world. Thus, in order to protect our current existence, we rather choose to avoid the truth than to engage in painful, fragile, and disorienting process of assuming new identities. The main point about environmental education that can be drawn from this analysis was the idea that scaring people with apocalyptic scenarios if they do not change their habits will simply lead to more denial and less action. Indeed, the only viable environmental educational design seemed to be the one that is based on gradual switching of identities by substituting personally important activities that have significant impact on the environment for greener ones.

A similar idea in relation to denialism and education was recently proposed by me and my colleague in connection with animal ethics and meat eating (cf. Spannring and Grušovnik 2018). As a number of authors has shown, industrial meat production is enabled by systematic denial of harsh realities of the slaughtering process and is protected by psychological mechanisms of “denial, avoidance, routinization, justification, objectification, de-individualization, dichotomization, rationalization, and dissociation” (Joy 2010, 19). It thus seems that skepticism regarding the existence of animal pain is not a genuine doubt about the existence of a certain “thing,” but sooner a version of “other minds skepticism” which can, through the lenses of Stanley Cavell’s reading of philosophical and literary classics, be seen as the avoidance of (moral) responsibility. To put it simply: instead of accepting the moral burden of causing animals pain and suffering, people are inclined to doubt the very

existence of these “mental phenomena” in animals (cf. Grušovnik 2018), or simply disregard and deny harsh realities of the slaughtering process.

There are, of course, numerous other cases of avoidance of truth besides issues related with environmental and animal ethics. One such is the phenomenon of forgetting traumatic events, e.g., in sexual assault victims. Yet another one is connected with concentration camps and harsh realities of survival in these dehumanizing conditions. As Varlam Shalamov often points out in his short stories about concentration camps in Soviet Union’s Kolyma region, it was vital to “forget” in order to survive those camps. Indeed, one surgeon was able to remember all the names of his patients as well as colleagues except for the most gruesome event in his career—the steamboat KIM with three thousand frozen prisoners and their rotting bodies. Referring to Anatole France’s *The Procurator of Judea*, Shalamov is quick to point out how Pontius Pilatus is unable to remember Christ. Much like Shalamov, Karl Steiner in his monumental *7000 Days in Siberia* speaks about the inability of concentration camp prisoners to acknowledge that Stalin knew about the horrific conditions they had to put up with. Indeed, several of them were convinced that the horrible conditions in concentration camps were the consequence of the Leader’s ignorance, of his not knowing what was going on “behind his back,” and thus some even asked the guards for pen and paper in order to send the dictator a letter about the reality he purportedly missed. Again, it seems that avoiding the truth or the obvious was easier than face the absolutely inhumane reality one had to face.

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I will stop here in listing all the examples of active ignorance where avoidance of truth in one or the other way plays an important role. Instead, I would like to briefly classify these phenomena and propose a heuristic categorization of the different cases of active ignorance. First, I think we can identify active ignorance in the sense of “*the avoidance of truth*.” The cases I have in mind here are the ones where a person anticipates (either consciously or unconsciously) that the truth might be unpleasant and thus avoids it. What is specific for this case, is that the person here *sensu stricto* does not know the truth but only anticipates it. One case of this could be one’s refusal to look at the consequences of an accident or—to offer a simpler example—to avoid reading the contents of a ready-made fast food meal. Here, the person does not know the truth; the only thing the person knows is that the truth will not be pleasant and thus tries

to avoid it. The second group of cases could perhaps be called “*doubting the obvious*.” In these cases, the person does know the truth but finds it unpleasant, and thus tries to become skeptical about it and doubt what is in front of their eyes. The most famous case of doubting the obvious is perhaps the fox and the sour grapes fable. Skepticism regarding other minds or the existence of animal pain could be another similar example, but more mundane examples include a variety of renaming strategies or euphemizations. One such example are Slovenian politicians that renamed the barbed wire as “a technical obstacle” (Miheljak 2015). The third set of cases of active ignorance could be “*repression*.” Such cases would include the above-mentioned surgeon from Shalamov’s short story “The Procurator of Judaea” (resembling France’s narrative) that forgets about the incident. Other such examples could include various traumas, from sexual abuse to warfare incidents. In such cases, it is not uncommon that a person develops a bodily symptom, as exposed by Robert S. Scaer in his *The Body Bears the Burden* (2001). Indeed, those examples are commonly called “dissociative amnesias” in psychological literature and describe the process of a person’s dissociation from the sense impressions that are so disturbing that threaten the breakdown of personality (for an interesting passage on memory and dissociations, linked to traumatic events, especially child abuse, see Scaer 2001, 100–102). There might, of course, be more phenomena related to active or willful ignorance, although it is sometimes difficult to treat certain kinds of ignorance as “willful:” for instance, some people might not know that they are perfectly familiar with Satie’s *Trois Gymnopédies* because they are missing the crucial information, namely the title of the tune that they often murmur; but this, however, is hardly an *active* ignorance, a willful ignoring of the piece of truth (for a detailed exploration of these and other cases of ignorance I would recommend reading Daniel DeNicola’s *Understanding Ignorance*, 2017).

With this much being said about some hopefully quite vivid examples of active ignorance, I will now turn to the exploration of the possible causes of our avoidance of knowledge, our doubting of the obvious, and our repression—the three main groups of the phenomena I tried to provisionally define above.

Causes of active ignorance

As we have already seen in the case of dissociative amnesia, the cause of the active ignoring of sense impressions and memories is, quite literally, the survival of the subject, in the sense of her not “falling apart.” Indeed, we have seen in Shalamov’s stories that forgetfulness was the only way to survive the harsh reality. In a similar vein Margaret Heffernan starts her book on *Willful Blindness* by reporting the experience of Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist from New York:

When the psychologist Philip Zimbardo was five years old, double pneumonia and whooping cough landed him in New York’s Willard Parker Hospital.

“Kids,” he said, “were dying all over. And every morning you’d wake up and ask, ‘Where did Charlie go?’ And the nurses would all say, ‘He went home.’ And we’d say, ‘Oh, that’s great, he went home!’ But we all knew the kids who ‘went home’ were dead. But there’s the thing: the only way to be hopeful was to deny the reality.” (Heffernan 2011, 1) 267

It thus seems that active ignorance is in fact a survival mechanism and that its main function is *conservative*, namely retaining the *status quo* (not changing the individual or the circumstances, or surviving the circumstances and not succumbing to them) as long as possible. In certain cases, this, of course, can be beneficial; in others (like in climate change denial) it can be catastrophic. But the main point to be reiterated here is the fact that active ignorance helps us retain our own congruity. Indeed, this is also one of the first principles of the aforementioned theory of cognitive dissonance developed by Leon Festinger in the 1950s. As Festinger succinctly noted, individuals are always motivated to eliminate cognitive conflict, namely conflicting thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors, and if changing the behavior is too complicated, costly, or impossible (if, for instance, it happened in the past), the person will be motivated to change the perception of that behavior. Thus, someone who believes that a/ “long life is desirable” and b/ “smoking causes cancer,” and c/ smokes, might indeed not quit smoking in order to bring about consonance,

but change one of the other two convictions (e.g., denying b/: “My grand dad was eighty five and he smoked two packs a day!” or a/: “YOLO – you only live once!”), or add another one that brings about congruity (e.g., inserting d/: “It would be too complicated to quit now since I have a lot of deadlines to catch and smoking helps me stay concentrated and get things done.”). The main cause of active ignorance can thus be detected in preserving the individual’s consistency and even helping us to survive amidst impossible conditions that call for dissociations.

268 A compelling illustration of this point in connection with intellectual elites and their social and political life comes from the Polish writer Czeslaw Milosz. In his essay on “The Pill of Murti-Bing,” which is a part of the collection *The Captive Mind*, Milosz comments on Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz’s novel *Insatiability*, featuring brutal descriptions of decadence and a looming threat of an invasion by an “eastern” army. In the novel, which to a certain extent foretells later Soviet domination of Poland, occupied intellectuals are offered the so-called “Murti-Bing pills,” which make them “impervious to any metaphysical concerns.” (Milosz 1981, 5–6) The pill helps to ignore harsh realities faced by the intellectual elites and Milosz’s main point is that:

People in the West are often inclined to consider the lot of converted countries in terms of might and coercion. That is wrong. There is an internal longing for harmony and happiness that lies deeper than ordinary fear or the desire to escape misery or physical destruction [...] And Murti-Bing is more tempting to an intellectual than to a peasant or laborer. For the intellectual, the New Faith is a candle that he circles like a moth. In the end, he throws himself into the flame for the glory of mankind. We must not treat this desire for self-immolation lightly. Blood flowed freely in Europe during the religious wars, and he who joins the New Faith today is paying off debt to that European tradition. We are concerned here with questions more significant than mere force. (Milosz 1981, 6)

To sum up, it is precisely our longing for harmony, for consistence, for consonance that compels us to ignore those bits and pieces of reality that do

not fit into our neat picture of ourselves and threaten to disclose the harsh contradictions of life. Indeed, it seems that this is what lies behind the so-called “just world hypothesis,” according to which people interpret social injustice as a consequence of someone’s own fault and not, for example, accident or unfortunate circumstance (for more about this see Melvin J. Lerner’s instructive book *The Belief in a Just World – A Fundamental Delusion*, 1980). Furthermore, it seems that for Milosz it is precisely the intellectual that is at greatest risk since for her it is vital that she feels herself included into a “greater picture.” Similar to Erich Fromm’s ideas expressed in *Escape from Freedom*, Milosz thus claims that “to belong to the masses is the great longing of the ‘alienated’ intellectual” (Milosz 1981, 8).

However, maybe the main cause of active ignorance, which I found in our drive to preserve coherence in an otherwise non-coherent world, can be further broken down or at least be illustrated with additional, even more nuanced examples. Thus, for Stanley Cavell, for instance, avoidance of knowledge—or skepticism—usually comes about because of our premonitions of finitude and contingency that we want to avoid. Skepticism thus turns out to be a transposition of existential anxiety onto an epistemological level, since this is what Cavell has “throughout kept arriving at as the cause of skepticism—the attempt to convert the human condition, the condition of humanity, into an intellectual difficulty, a riddle” (Cavell 1979, 493). The idea is actually the expounded and expanded insight of Nietzsche, from his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where the German philosopher says that we have invented “life as a riddle, life as an epistemological problem” (Nietzsche 2006, 44), in order to cope with the senselessness of suffering. Indeed, the idea that skepticism is active ignorance of an unpleasant truth can already be found in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel remarks in the “Introduction” to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely in the idea that our skepticism in the sense of fear of error might turn out to be the error itself (Hegel 1977, 47). That our denial of burdensome reality can be paired with the primal denial of death—of our finitude—is also of course widely present in Freud and psychoanalysis in general: “The need to deny death or at least to blunt consciousness of it is shared by everyone. We could not live with a persistent awareness of death. To do so would prevent all future-directed action.” (Wangh 1989, 7)

Before concluding with this section that wanted to analyze the primary cause(s) of active ignorance in (mainly) conservative function of preserving the subject's coherence and identity (of which avoidance of premonitions of finitude and contingency are a special case), I have to point to an interesting hypothesis proposed by Robert Trivers in his book *The Folly of Fools* (Trivers 2011) about the main function of self-deception. Trivers as an evolutionary biologist that tries to explain human social behavior as a consequence of natural selection claims that the function of self-deception has to be found in our ability to better deceive others. Namely, for Trivers "self-deception evolves in the service of deception—the better to fool others." (Trivers 2011, 4). According to this theory, deception is constant in the natural world: viruses want to "trick" immune systems, moths want to hide with the help of mimicry and melt with the background, etc. Thus, co-evolutionary struggle emerges between the deceiver and the deceived, since the deceived are getting better and better at detecting deception, thus forcing the deceivers to improve on their techniques. Since humans are cognitive beings, deception in our species moves on to an intellectual level. Lying thus becomes the prevalent type of deception and humans consequently specialize in detecting liars (therefore it is, for instance, quite easy to detect a lying child) *and* in lying more efficiently. Since one of the greatest dangers of being detected whilst lying is giving up cues (focusing too hard on what you will say, raising the pitch of one's voice, etc.) it is, of course, best not to give them up. This, however, is easier to achieve if one *believes* one's own lie—thus self-deception helps us avoid giving up lying cues and perform better at deceiving others. Active ignorance in the form of self-deception in this case is thus in service of deception. While Trivers' story might sound quite exotic to a humanist or philosopher, it is perhaps worth noting that a somewhat similar case of active ignorance—the Stockholm syndrome in which a victim forces herself to believe in the good cause of her abductor—also got an evolutionary explanation. Indeed, being loyal to one's primary group, if that group is under attack, can turn out to be devastating for survival: the best strategy is simply to adapt and to accept new conquerors as new, and better rulers (cf. Cantor and Price 2007). To put it simply: victims of an abusive or kidnapping figure either in society or in family had greater chances of survival if they sided with the bully than if they—being physically

weaker and dependent—wanted to stand their ground (and thus being most likely killed or at least injured).

Instead of a conclusion: towards a safe return into the cave

When pondering the first mention and analysis of active ignorance one should perhaps look to Plato. Indeed, his *allegory of the cave* is perhaps the first and the most illustrious example of active ignorance. The phenomenon can be detected at the point of the return of the liberated individual back into the cave. While one would presume that the prisoners in the cave will be happy to hear that there is another, richer world out there to be experienced, the contrary is the case: if they could get their hands on the messenger, they would kill him:

And consider this also, said I. If such a one should go down again and take his old place would he not get his eyes full of darkness, thus suddenly coming out of the sunlight?

He would indeed.

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Now if he should be required to contend with these perpetual prisoners in ‘evaluating’ these shadows while his vision was still dim and before his eyes were accustomed to the dark—and this time required for habituation would not be very short—would he not provoke laughter, and would it not be said of him that he had returned from his journey aloft with his eyes ruined and that it was not worth while even to attempt the ascent? And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them and lead them up, would they not kill him?

They certainly would, he said. [Rep. 516e-517a]

Now, of course, one can ask why exactly this would be the case? The answer is, at least indirectly, provided by Plato himself: the messenger with his message threatens to undermine the value-system of the inhabitants of the cave, he most definitively questions their ability in judging the reality and thus also diminishes the worth of their “honors and commendations” for “the man who is quickest to make out the shadows as they pass” [Rep. 516e]. In other words, the liberated individual with his message about another, truer world brings

dissonance and incongruence in the world of prisoners and thus—if we bear in mind that preservation of the coherence was in previous section determined as the prime cause for active ignorance—it is only natural that avoidance of truth will surge among the cave-dwellers.

This Plato's point of prisoners' lynching the messenger wanting to bring enlightenment to the people or at least save them before the imminent trouble was memorably portrayed by Henrik Ibsen in his *The Enemy of The People*. There, Dr. Thomas Stockmann, a popular citizen of a coastal town in southern Norway, discovers that waste products from the town's tannery are polluting the water supply. However, the public is unwilling to lend an ear to Dr. Stockmann because the closure of the facilities would imply lesser economic progress. Finally, Thomas is proclaimed *folkefiende*, "enemy of the people." Here, then, we have another case of active ignorance, this time in an explicitly sociopolitical context, connected with the environment. But let us ask now, what are the pedagogical implications of this point—of active ignorance and the refusal to acknowledge the truth.

272 As I have already pointed out above while mentioning environmental education in the face of environmental denial, one lesson to be learned from the analysis of active ignorance is that only underlining facts will not suffice, since the facts are precisely what is *not missing*, but is instead actively ignored. More facts will only mean more ignorance and they are not likely to bring about change. Instead, the transformation—what every true education should be—can be brought about by gradual change, taking into account the existential dimensions—or causes—of ignorance. These, as we have seen, are connected with preserving the subject's integrity. In other words: before radically changing or transforming citizens, the educational praxis has to be able to offer them a relatively safe existentialist haven in which transformative process can be brought about. By this I mean that in the process of transformation the people—or "students"—should not be left alone in (re)constructing their identities while their older selves are being deconstructed and replaced. The process of education as transformation should help students to assume new, meaningful selves or identities. Indeed, perhaps the greatest task of the educator here—or the liberated messenger in Plato's allegory of the cave—is to help students in their search for the (re)subjectivation. Even though, of course, no one can tread

this path instead of somebody else—each person has to construct her or his own identity—, the hand can be extended and meaningful experience can be shared by the educator to the student that is—together with the educator—undergoing the transformation. This is, as a matter of fact, something that already Plato spotted in the *allegory of the cave* in the *Republic* when he said that the true business of education is not the transmission of knowledge (which the Sophists have assumed) but assisting students so that they can come to know the reality for themselves:

Then, if this is true, our view of these matters must be this, that education is not in reality what some people proclaim it to be in their professions. What they aver is that they can put true knowledge into a soul that does not possess it, as if they were inserting vision into blind eyes.

They do indeed, he said.

But our present argument indicates, said I, that the true analogy for this indwelling power in the soul and the instrument whereby each of us apprehends is that of an eye that could not be converted to the light from the darkness except by turning the whole body. Even so this organ of knowledge must be turned around from the world of becoming together with the entire soul, like the scene-shifting periactus in the theater, until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence and the brightest region of being. And this, we say, is the good, do we not? [Rep. 518b-c]

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One could thus say that for Plato knowing can only happen in the context to which “the soul” is habituated—and so the task of the educator becomes preparing this context and offering assistance to students when habituating to the framework that is necessary to bring about the transformation. Perhaps this is the only way how to return safely to the cave with some hopes of waking up our neighbor-prisoners. The education then ceases to be mere implantation of knowledge and becomes “an art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul, not an art of producing vision in it, but on the assumption that it possesses vision but does not rightly direct it and does not look where it should, an art of bringing this about.” [Rep. 518d]

This idea, however, differs greatly from many prevailing ideas in current educational sciences and pedagogy, where emphasis on desire to know and transmission model of teaching and learning is prevalent. As we have seen, these models and suppositions do not take into account the fact that subjects are primarily motivated to preserve their selves and cognitive constellations—what I want to call “psychostasis”—, and that they find it hard to implement transformative change because of the threat of facing the groundlessness of one’s existence. Indeed, individuals are not empty dishes, ready to be filled up with knowledge by their teachers, as perhaps Paolo Freire would say about the prevalent “banking model” of education, where students are considered to be mere containers for depositing knowledge. On the contrary, we are human beings that foremost want to preserve our identity, that are intrinsically motivated to avoid cognitive conflict and to avoid information that might expose contingency and finitude of our everyday lives.

274 This being said, there is still one issue that remains as of yet unaddressed in the present paper—namely, that of the paradoxical nature of “active ignorance.” As Alfred Mele points out in the context of self-deception, the puzzle is twofold: first, we have a “static puzzle” where it seems that a self-deceived person has to simultaneously believe that something is and isn’t true. For instance, if one is convinced that there is no God and yet thinks that religious belief is beneficial, then perhaps such a person could be inclined to convince herself that God exists. But this would entail that the person simultaneously believes that God does and does not exist, which is of course contradictory. The second puzzle is “dynamic”—convincing oneself that God exists would entail knowing in advance that you want to trick yourself into believing something you do not believe. However, it seems that this is equally impossible: knowing that you want to trick yourself into believing something you don’t believe destroys the trick. Mele thus says that “if self-deceivers intentionally deceive themselves, one wonders what prevents the guiding intention from undermining its own effective functioning.” (Mele 2001, 8) Very similar puzzles can, of course, be detected in the concept of “active ignorance”—namely, how can one try not to know what one knows? The answers to these puzzles were traditionally the following: a/ one could claim that the person does not, in fact, simultaneously believe that something is and isn’t true. Indeed, beliefs that p and $\sim p$ occur

at different times. Let's take the above example: if I decide to start believing in God, then it is not necessary that I simultaneously hold two contradictory beliefs that p and $\sim p$, namely that God exists and does not exist. On the contrary, I could have the belief that p (God does not exist) in January 2018 (at t_1) and the belief that $\sim p$ (God does exist) only later, when I successfully "deceived" myself at t_2 (in, let's say, January 2019). However, as it can be quickly seen, not all cases of self-deception have such time span at their disposal. If we take the beliefs of Soviet prisoners, the belief that Stalin is a good leader despite awful circumstances in the camps, then there is no such time delay between the beliefs that the revolutionary leadership is good and bad simultaneously. The same, of course, goes for all cases of dissociative amnesia. That's why some theoreticians proposed the strategy $b/$, claiming that the subject should be split into different psychic regions—now it would be perfectly possible to imagine that one psychic region (perhaps the conscious I) believes that p while the other (perhaps the unconscious Id) believes that $\sim p$. However, such explanation seemingly comes at a cost: it postulates what Mele calls "mental exotica" (Mele 2001, 4), namely, split selves and different regions of personality that do not know each other. There is, according to him, another more convenient way how to explain these phenomena, namely the "deflationary" view. According to this view, our attempt at explaining phenomena related to self-deception relies too heavily on the model of ordinary deception where one person deceives another. In order to better understand such phenomena, one should attempt to describe them not on the basis of interpersonal deception but as phenomena that are not necessarily voluntary and intentional in the way lying to another person is (Mele 2001, 10; 17). Let this illustration of different strategies of explaining seeming puzzles related to active ignorance suffice for the present purpose; hopefully it demonstrates that the puzzles that we anticipate when we hear the phrase "active ignorance" are not necessarily paradoxes at all, and that phenomena related to active ignorance remain potent factors that significantly determine the outcomes of educational efforts. Indeed, it seems hard to neglect these when pondering the aims and strategies of contemporary pedagogy.

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THE REJECTION OF TEACHING IN PHILOSOPHY

DELEUZE, NIETZSCHE, AND STIRNER

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Abstract

The problematic of education in philosophy is related to the question of reproduction, progression, and transfer of knowledge. In the paper, I examine the Deleuzian interpretation of Nietzschean philosophy. I argue that such philosophy in a certain sense radically rejects teaching in philosophy. The rejection is driven by the recognition that mediation of thought often presents the enforcement of a particular thought. Such thought represents itself as being universal, even if it is merely an

expression of particular interest, type or form of living. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche rejected such a dogmatic image of thought and established thought as a singular expression of a concrete living individuum, who resists the enforced universalism of thought (morality, common sense, universal truth). This can be compared with the philosophy of Stirner. Despite the similarities, I argue that the final aim of resistance to teaching is in Deleuze's version of Nietzsche exactly the opposite as in Stirner: the aim is not the establishment of a nihilistic, in itself enclosed self. On the contrary, the aim is a radical opening of the self towards the outside. This opening is in the conclusion of the paper described with Deleuze's understanding of the learning process.

Keywords: Deleuze, Nietzsche, Stirner, philosophical teaching, image of thought.

Zavračanje poučevanja v filozofiji. Deleuze, Nietzsche in Stirner

Povzetek

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Problematika poučevanja v filozofiji je povezana z vprašanjem reprodukcije, napredovanja in prenosa znanja. V članku obravnavam Deleuzovo interpretacijo Nietzschejeve filozofije. Zagovarjam mnenje, da takšna filozofija v določenem smislu radikalno zavrača poučevanje v filozofiji. Zavračanje povzroča pripoznanje, da posredovanje misli pogosto predstavlja vsiljevanje točno določene misli. Tovrstna misel se predstavlja kot univerzalna, čeprav je zgolj izraz partikularnega interesa, tipa ali oblike življenja. Po Deleuzu je Nietzsche zavračal takšno dogmatično podobo misli in vzpostavil misel kot singularen izraz konkretnega živečega individuuma, ki se upira vsiljenemu univerzalizmu misli (moralnost, zdrava pamet, univerzalna resnica). To je mogoče primerjati s Stirnerjevo filozofijo. Zagovarjam stališče, da je poslednji cilj upiranja poučevanju pri Deleuzovi različici Nietzscheja, kljub nekaterim podobnostim, natanko nasproten kakor pri Stirnerju: cilj ni vzpostavitev nihilističnega, vase zaprtega sebstva. Nasprotno, cilj je radikalno odprtje sebstva navzven. V zaključku članka takšno odprtje opišem z Deleuzovim razumevanjem procesa učenja.

Ključne besede: Deleuze, Nietzsche, Stirner, filozofsko poučevanje, podoba misli.

Introduction: the rejection of teaching in philosophy

Through all the diverse and heterogeneous traditions of the history of philosophy, we can find a repetitive problem regarding the role of education in philosophy.¹ The main question in this context is the question of reproduction, progression, and transfer of philosophical knowledge, which is, at the same time, also a paradoxical auto-referential question that in the act wherein it is being posed, that is, in a philosophical text, questions also that very same act, which is necessarily the act of reproduction, progression, and transfer of knowledge. What are we doing, therefore, when we are doing philosophy? What are we doing right now? What are we reproducing and transferring? Can we even think about what we are doing with thought, at least at this very same moment of thought?

It seems that the question of reproduction and transfer of knowledge always exposes the fundamental connection between a certain concrete philosophy and the certain specific environment in which it was produced. It exposes, what philosophers usually try to hide, as William James puts it at the beginning of his lectures on pragmatism, namely, that “[t]he history of philosophy is to a great extent that of certain clash of human temperaments” (James 1963, 6). Our question exposes the concrete and empirical origins of each and every system of philosophy. These origins can be hidden, but their influence remains present even in the most abstract philosophy. As James writes, the philosopher, “[w]anting a universe that suits [his temperament], [...] believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it” (James 1963, 7).

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Nietzsche may be the first who grounded his merciless critic precisely on the fact that philosophers, without knowing what they are doing, only reproduce their type: their temperament, affections, and way of life. Pierre Klossowski thus paraphrases Nietzsche's critique: “[philosophers] are not conscious that they are speaking of themselves—they claim it would be a question of ‘the truth’—when at bottom it is only a question of themselves” (Klossowski 1997, 2). Such a reversal is in Nietzsche's writing most explicitly present at

¹ The topic of philosophy and education has been addressed in many articles in the *Phainomena* journal (cf. Šimenc 2018; Barbarič 2012; Urbančič 1997).

the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he asks: “*Who* is it really that questions us here? *What* in us really wills the truth?” (Nietzsche 2001, 5) Deleuze’s line of thought, in his interpretation of Nietzsche (which is the main theoretical frame of the present paper), is based on the idea of the centrality of change of the main philosophical question: instead of “What is the truth?” one should ask: “who is seeking the truth? In other words: what does the one who seeks the truth want? What is his type, his will to power?” (Deleuze 1983, 94–95) That is why we, as a central question of this paper, propose the more precise question of philosophical education, the question which exposes the concrete philosophical practice: the practice of reproduction, progression, and transfer of philosophical knowledge.

282 Preliminarily, let us suppose that there are two ways of answering the question or two opposing ideas regarding the role of education in philosophy. On the one hand, we have the affirmation of education as the transfer of knowledge from teachers to pupils, from masters to apprentices, from past to present. On the other hand, we have the idea of philosophy, which has to break with the past, be polemical, critical. This corresponds to a certain extent with the two main representations of the world, one hierarchical, centralized, and rigidly structured, the other decentralized, conflictual, and more chaotic. On the one side, we have great philosophical masters such as Platon, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. On the other side, are those who oppose the idea that philosophy is a process of the transfer of knowledge, which remains the same from the past to the present. Nietzsche may be the most prominent example of such a position. He opens his essay “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life” with an eloquent quote from Goethe: “I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.” (Nietzsche 1997, 59) Furthermore, his thought as a whole could be read as a distrust towards “the masters of the past,” as a specific rejection of the history of philosophy and its educational value. Klossowski writes: “Nietzsche rejected, purely and simply, the attitude of the philosopher-teacher [...] if by that we mean a thinker who thinks and teaches out of a concern for the human condition.” (Klossowski 1997, 5)

What did Klossowski mean with this far-reaching statement? Could we extract some philosophical consistency in such a rejection of philosophical

teaching? Is this a rebellion without reason or even rebellion against reason? These are the key research questions of the present study. I try to sketch an answer to proposed questions mainly through Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche's philosophy in his works *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*. I also try to explicate the systematicity of such a strict philosophical disobedience and present the reasons for the rejection of a specific understanding of teaching in philosophy. I attempt to achieve this through a comparison of Deleuze's Nietzsche with a similar philosophical position, namely that of Max Stirner. Stirner's name plays a crucial strategic role in Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*: he was namely the first to "rediscover the path of the question: 'which one?'" (Deleuze 1983, 159) and, as I argue, in a manner similar to Nietzsche radically rejected teaching in philosophy. However, through the comparison the difference between Nietzsche and Stirner will prove as being crucial for the establishment of specific, non-dogmatic understanding of the concept of learning.

The article has been organized in the following way. In the first chapter, we introduce the Nietzschean rejection of the mediation of thought, which could be only to a certain degree compared with the Marxist rejection of the mediation of ideology. What is similar in both contexts, is the recognition of the function of an enforcing of supposedly universal thought, but, contrary to the thinkers from the Marxist tradition, Nietzsche rejects the mediation of thought as such (and not only the mediation of ideological thought). Hence, he does not use the (moral) separation between the good and the bad mediation of thought (in the Althusserian terms between ideological and scientific discourse). Just the opposite, every enforced thought is, by definition, moral thought, which is based on the supposed connection between (common) thought, common good, and conventional truth.

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In the second and the third chapters, we apply the idea of rejection of such a dogmatic image of thought to Deleuze's philosophical perspective. I argue that Deleuze's appropriation of Nietzsche exposes even more radically the anti-canonical nature of Nietzsche's work. Through Deleuze, I explicate why the rejection of enforced thought cannot become an imperative of some new major and canonical thought. This is directly connected with Klossowski's thesis, that Nietzsche not only rejects other philosophical teachers but

himself, in order to remain consistent with his thought, cannot become a philosophical teacher.

In the fourth chapter, we compare Deleuze's appropriation of Nietzsche with Max Stirner's rejection of obedience and leadership in thought. In Stirner, every mediation of thought from the outside is rejected by the all-mighty ego, which should not be bothered by anything external. On the contrary, Deleuze's rejection of philosophical teachers radically opens the individual to an outside influence, which, in the process of learning, radically transform and changes the individual inner structure.

In conclusion, we try to sketch the basic characteristics of such an understanding of the function of learning. We argue for an understanding of learning that is, at the same time, creative and self-transforming. Learning intensifies the process of thought, which should be the final aim of non-dogmatic thought rejecting the dogmatic function of thought as the transmission of a ready-made truth. Therefore, what brings together Deleuze and Nietzsche, is the idea that the critique of the dogmatic image of thought is at the same time also the act of creation, and, as I will argue, exactly this act must be repeated and reproduced through learning. Only such a repetition reproduces the difference, which is, according to Deleuze, one of the main points of Nietzsche's idea of eternal return.

Nietzsche's rejection of all forms of mediated thought

If we define education as the transfer of ready-made content (knowledge or a system of values) from one mind to another, we must presuppose certain sameness of the structure of universal thought. Otherwise, this transfer could be perceived as violence, as an enforcing of thought from the outside. Precisely this can be figuratively illustrated with Socrates teaching Meno's slave the universal mathematical laws. "I'm not teaching him anything, but just asking him questions," Socrates insists (Plato 2005, 116). The master can demand that the truth should be passed unchanged to the heads of his pupils because this is not master's own truth, but a universal truth that must be recognized by everyone. That is why such a gesture of the enforcing of thought is not perceived as an authoritarian one. However, Nietzsche questions such a self-

evident “truth” (upon which all other truths are based) without mercy: “[t]he will to truth that still seduces us into taking so many risks, this famous truthfulness that all philosophers so far have talked about with veneration [...] Is it any wonder if we finally become suspicious, lose patience, turn impatiently away?” (Nietzsche 2001, 5)

If we pose the problem of education in this way, we are close to the concept of ideology. Ideology is in Marx’ and Engels’s *The German Ideology* defined as thought that presents itself as being universal, even if it only presents the interests of those who possess the power to pass that thought to those who are powerless (and therefore subjected to ideology; cf. Marx and Engels 1974). In such a structure thought itself necessarily hides the truth about its own functioning. Ideological manipulation, therefore, in the wider sense, corresponds with a manipulation of a philosophical teacher, who presents his thought as universal, even if it only circularly affirms that particular form of thinking. This manipulation is the reason, why we are caught in a certain vertigo inside which it is difficult to distinguish ideology from the non-manipulative transfer of universal knowledge. Althusser describes this paradoxical topology in the essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in the following manner:

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[...] what thus seems to take place outside ideology [...] in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, “I am ideological.” (Althusser 1971, 175)

Althusser searches for an answer to the ambiguity in the distinction between ideology and science: “It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e. in scientific knowledge, to be able to say: [...] I was in ideology” (Althusser 1971, 175). However, Nietzsche’s style of resistance to the danger of enforcement in thought, which will be primarily discussed in this paper, is of a different kind and in a certain sense more radical. It does not only reject certain (ideological)

forms of forced ideas but rejects the form of the forced transfer of ideas as such, no matter what the content of the transferred thought is. If Althusser in a certain sense reproduces the ambiguity of ideology towards bad infinity (how can scientific discourse prove itself to be non-ideological?), Nietzsche rejects the very idea of mediation and transfer of thought.² As Klossowski writes, “[t]he very idea of a ‘consciousness for itself mediated by another consciousness’ remains foreign to Nietzsche” (Klossowski 1997, 12). He rejects any form of common knowledge, any form of thought that is good for all. “He made fun of himself for not being a philosopher [...], if by that we mean a thinker who thinks and teaches out of a *concern* for the human condition.” (Klossowski 1997, 5)

286 If there is no need for concern for the human condition, there is no need for the function of teaching in philosophy and no need for the transfer of “good” knowledge. The very link between thought and morality, the link which ensures that the gesture of a philosophical teacher is well-intended, is broken. Even more, for Nietzsche, thought is vital and healthy only if it is singular, only if it is the deviation from the common image of thought. Such thought is by definition immoral, not because it provides alternative morality, but because it rejects the very form of the transfer of thought, which is always based on supposed goodness or morality of thought. In that sense, one may say that Nietzsche is a rebel without reason, a rebel who is not resisting against the specific content of thought, but against the supposedly neutral form of the transfer of thought. The belief in “immediate certainties” that could be taught goes (for Nietzsche) hand in hand with “moral naiveté” (Nietzsche 2001, 34). Moralism is therefore often behind the supposedly neutral truth-seeking: “[i]t is no more than a moral prejudice that the truth is worth more than appearance” (Nietzsche 2001, 35).

The “anti-educational” aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy may have been most precisely and vigorously analyzed by Klossowski in his study *Nietzsche and the Vicious circle*. Already in the introduction, we can read that Nietzsche “destroyed not only his own identity” but “that of the authorities of speech” as

2 A similar interpretation of Nietzsche’s understanding of education is developed in: Ansgar 2017.

such (Klossowski 1997, xix). As Nietzsche wrote in the letter to his mother: “I do not seek ‘disciples’—believe me!—I enjoy my freedom and wish this joy to all those who have the right to spiritual freedom.” (Klossowski 1997, 20) However, what is the purpose of Nietzsche’s discourse, if he is not looking for followers and if his writing should not be perceived as teaching or preaching (although it sometimes seems precisely like that)?

It seems that his writing should be understood as an expression of a certain intensity of thought. Such an intensity must come out and be expressed, but not because it would involve something necessarily true, right, or something good for the humanity. Nietzsche introduces a different function of writing, which is almost a way of self-healing, through the expression of one’s singularity. The purpose of such a discourse is thus not moral. It does not try to order a behavior or to lead thought to its supposed final purpose. On the contrary, “it is extraordinarily dangerous to believe that mankind as a whole will progress and grow stronger if individuals become flabby, equal, average [...]” (Klossowski 1997, 153).

Every form of preaching and educating through discourse is, therefore, 287
structurally necessarily problematic. It produces sameness in the form of common sense, prevalent customs, general morality. As Klossowski writes: “we think it is necessary to have lived in a totally ‘antiphilosophical’ manner, according to hitherto received notions, and certainly not as a shy man of virtue—in order to judge the great problems from lived experiences” (Klossowski 1997, 1). Every experience and each life-path is singular, and such should also be everyone’s thought: not forced, not even oriented from the outside. Thought must express the inner intensive experience. Nietzsche’s great invention is, according to Klossowski, that he broke the connection between what is healthy and what is gregarious, common, and majoritarian. Every deviation is not necessarily sick; on the contrary, great health can only be something singular, something that cannot be prescribed, taught, or commanded. It is therefore quite understandable, that in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche connects “great sadness” with the formula: “Everything is empty, everything is the same, everything was!” (Nietzsche 2006a, 105)

Gilles Deleuze: Nietzsche's disciple?

288 Gilles Deleuze may be the one philosopher, who followed Nietzsche's rejection of philosophical teaching most strictly and dogmatically. One can already sense a paradox in what was just written: did he follow Nietzsche in a somehow similar way, as an apprentice follows his teacher? In order not to get caught in a trap, we have to explicate why this "following" is of a slightly different sort. What Deleuze namely inherited from Nietzsche, was maybe not so much the content of his thought, like a specific interpretation of the concept of will to power, eternal return, or *Übermensch*, but, as I will try to argue, more the whole philosophical gesture of rejection of the dogmatic image of philosophical thought. Such an act is the act of critique and a creative act at the same time. The basic idea of the dogmatic image of thought is, namely, that thought should be learned from the masters and reproduced without change, while the intention of Deleuze's whole work is exactly the opposite: to produce a (creative) difference. That is also one of the crucial points in his appropriation of Nietzsche, who is for Deleuze primarily the philosopher of pure affirmation of difference and differentiation, as I will explicate in this chapter.

The logic of creative differentiation is also embodied in Deleuze's own method of studying the history of philosophy. An interpretation of a work is, although it is on the one hand utterly loyal to the spirit of the original work, also different from it. As Deleuze explains, he understands "history of philosophy as a sort of buggery," in which he saw himself as "taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous" (Deleuze 1995, 6). The relationship is in this case, therefore, significantly different from the simple reproduction of a master's thought. Deleuze's work on Nietzsche may in this context be more than just an example of a different style of "doing" history of philosophy, which "rather than repeating what a philosopher says, has to say what he must have taken for granted, what he didn't say but is nonetheless present in what he did say" (Deleuze 1995, 136). With such a procedure the "zone of indiscernibility" is formed, in which "Deleuze's own project and that of the author at hand [Nietzsche, in our case] seem to become indiscernible" (Smith 2012, 20).

What Deleuze repeats most dogmatically after Nietzsche, is the form of relation to the past, to the history of philosophy. From Deleuze's perspective, we have to take a different relation toward the history of philosophy as mere

listening and obeying.³ What Deleuze affirms in the history of philosophy in general, is exactly a certain non-dogmatic tradition, represented in what he called minor philosophy: “[M]inor’ philosophers—not in the sense that they were secondary, but that they challenged the ‘major’ conception of the canon, and what Deleuze would come to call its ‘dogmatic’ image of thought” (Smith 2012, 22; cf. Deleuze 2001, 131). Deleuze’s minor philosophers (beside Nietzsche, the crucial names in this context are also Bergson and Spinoza) cannot form a new canon, which would replace the philosophical teachers of the dogmatic image of thought. On the contrary, their value is precisely in their challenging critique of thought, which is at the same time also a creation of difference in thought. Exactly this creative potential would be lost, if such thoughts would form a new, unchanged philosophical canon and if such thinkers would be perceived as new masters of thought.

The most apparent difference between Deleuze and Nietzsche may be explicated precisely from this point. It seems that Nietzsche sometimes still believed in the possibility of new masters, who could replace the current rule of slave morality. As Robert B. Pippin argues, “Nietzsche sometimes calls a ‘noble’ life, is still to be possible [...] and he clearly believes that the major element of this possibility is his own effect on his listeners” (Pippin 2006, xviii). Nietzsche, as Klossowski wrote, hence, at certain parts of his writings believed in the “aristocracy of the future” (Klossowski 1997, 152), who could present the new teachers: “[o]ne day, these isolated cases will come into possession of their own methods for ‘directing’ the future of humanity” (Klossowski 1997, 7). In contrast, Deleuze completely abandoned the tendency to reach the position of a master of thought. He did not sympathize with the idea that power should come into the hands of those who supposedly deserve it: “[t]hose whom Nietzsche calls masters are certainly powerful men, but not men of

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3 It seems that Deleuze was consistent in this context, even if we concentrate on his own philosophical “teaching,” which was his main preoccupation (“giving courses has been a major part of my life, in which I’ve been passionately involved”). However, he tried to avoid being a philosophical master: “[lectures] are like a research laboratory: you give courses on what you are investigating, not on what you know. [...] [W]e rejected the principle of ‘building up knowledge’ progressively: [...] everyone took what they needed or wanted, what they could use [...]” (Deleuze 1995, 139).

power since power is in the gift of the values of the day. A slave does not cease to be a slave by taking power, and it is even the way of the world, or the law of its surface, to be led by slaves” (Deleuze 2001, 54).

The idea that actual power in the world should represent the hierarchical relation between Nietzschean masters and slaves, therefore, the idea that there exists a natural hierarchy, which could be derived from a (too literal) reading of *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche 2006b), is one of the great dangers of interpretations of Nietzsche. Klossowski, rightly so, asked:

[d]id Nietzsche believe in the efficacy of these methods [for directing the future of humanity]? Or rather, did he simply want to *transmit the states of his own soul* in order to make sure others would have the *means* of reacting and acting under the worst conditions, thereby enabling them not only to *defend themselves* but also to *counter-attack*? (Klossowski 1997, 7)

290 While reading Nietzsche, one necessarily confronts the question: who are the others to whom Nietzsche’s discourse is addressed? Following Klossowski, they are not a unified group with a collective identity, which would become a prevailing identity in the future of humanity. “Nietzsche is not concerned with the fate of humanity,” on the contrary, the very concept of humanity is for Nietzsche (as also for Stirner, as will be showed in the chapter below) “a pure abstraction” (Klossowski 1997, 153). Humanity is worth something, not as a whole, but as an origin for something different. This difference cannot be a negation of current culture in the form of a new human culture, with its repressions, normalizations, and equalizations.

On the contrary, as Klossowski remarks, “future generations are and will only ever be valuable because of their rare successes, which are always individual” (Klossowski 1997, 153). In short: we cannot hope for a final solution and final equilibrium in which a majoritarian common sense would become amoral, non-gregarious, and free of resentment. Minor thought should be affirmed, not because it should become majoritarian, but precisely because it is worth something as being minor, deviant, and non-conformist. Instead of yearning for a final solution for the reactive forces, we must, at least in Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche, admit their eternal triumph:

The genealogist is well aware that there is a health which only exists as the presupposition of a becoming-sick. The active man is that young, strong, handsome man, whose face betrays the discreet signs of sickness to which he has not yet succumbed, of a contagion which will only affect him tomorrow. The strong must be defended against the weak, but we know the desperate character of this enterprise. The strong man can oppose the weak, but not his own becoming-weak, which is bound to him by a subtle attraction. (Deleuze 1983, 167)

There is no teacher, no preacher, and no leader, who could detour the course of human history. “*Ressentiment* and bad conscience are constitutive of the humanity of man, nihilism is the a priori concept of universal history. This is why conquering nihilism, liberating thought from bad conscience and *ressentiment* means the overcoming and destruction of even the best men.” (Deleuze 1983, 166) Nietzsche’s praise of Romans, Greeks, or Napoleon is praise intended for those, who were only able to temporarily stop the necessary direction of history, in which we can observe the development of human’s universal becoming to its reactive essence. 291

Nietzsche’s critique is, as Deleuze writes, “not directed against an accidental property of man, but against his very essence” (Deleuze 1983, 167). There is no hope, therefore, for the salvation of humankind as a whole. On the contrary, active force is always singular, always individual. It takes on the form of a deviation from the universal human culture; a deviation, which, in order to remain active, cannot become the new leading power in human history. The master, as described by Nietzsche, as “man of war, of division, as warrior” (Nietzsche 2006b, 15), cannot function as a positive ideal. Old masters cannot return in the future as a victorious group, nation, or race.

This same Nietzschean idea remains present through all of Deleuze’s work and could be implicitly found in many of his concepts. For example, the concept of the line of flight or line of escape (*ligne de fuite*) designates a leaking or escaping from the main culture’s norms, rules, and habits. Such an activity, which is a precondition for deterritorialization, is always individual and singular. Similar logic could be observed in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s use of the concept of minority. A minority can never become a majority. The opposition

between the two “is not simply quantitative.” A minority is a deviation from the majoritarian norm that is not defined by its self-identity but as a deviation from the reproducing static majoritarian self-identity. “It is important not to confuse ‘minoritarian’ as a becoming or process, with a ‘minority,’ as an aggregate or a state.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 291) The concept of minority does not signify identity, but certain crucial aspect of the concept of becoming, which is always minoritarian. The minoritarian is “a potential, creative and created, becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 106). The great task is not to establish a new majority, a new identity, and a new norm (a trap, in which the process of becoming is stopped), but to reproduce the minoritarian becoming. “The problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant. There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 106)

The dogmatic image of philosophical thought

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Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche is characterized by a rejection of the dogmatic image of thought, which relies upon the natural harmony between thinker, truth, and the activity of thought. This harmony plays a crucial role in the legitimization of the figure of the philosophical teacher: he knows the truth, therefore, he is good. He is good, because he knows the truth. There is no possibility of a rebellion here, since every resistance to the philosophical teaching is, by definition, immoral, irrational, and excluded from the field of universal truth. Just imagine that the slave would reject Socrates when he tries to explain to him the geometrical truths.

Geometrical laws embodied in different regular shapes such as a triangle or a square could serve us as a great example in this context. It is not a coincidence, namely, that in their immobility they often serve as an illustration of eternal ideas, essences, truths. Such truths are what they are in their essence. They are indifferent to thought that thinks them. They just have to be recognized by thought. All the lines and all the correct shapes were already drawn (by God himself). The eternal beauty, which is at the same time also the eternal good and the eternal truth, must only be recognized by everybody. Here is the point, where philosophical teaching comes to the stage, since it is needed for

the passing of that truth onward, which must, during the process of transition, remain the same, self-identical, regular, and “square.”

Nietzsche's and Deleuze's idea of the process of learning is quite different: truth cannot be something already given; it has to be produced. All the godly geometrical lines that define the structure of the world are not given but have to be drawn. So, new lines are drawn only by those who can draw while walking on the as yet not established lines. “It is therefore true,” writes Deleuze, while explaining the Nietzschean logic of differentiation, “that God makes the world by calculating, but his calculations never work out exactly,” they are never in peace with themselves in the static self-identity, “and this inexactitude or injustice in the result, this irreducible inequality, forms the condition of the world. The world ‘happens’ while God calculates; if the calculation were exact, there would be no world.” (Deleuze 2001, 222) Truth is nowhere to be found, neither outside nor inside thought.

“To think is to create: this is Nietzsche's greatest lesson [...]” (Tomlinson 1983, xiv). “Of all that is written I love only that which one writes with his blood [...]” writes Nietzsche (Nietzsche 2006a, 27). If thinking is itself creating (of truth), then thinking, by definition, cannot be transferred, ordered, or oriented, since also its purpose has not been created yet. Ordered thought is, namely, not even a thought: it is a mere repetition, following the authority of thought. There is something in thought, according to Deleuze's Nietzsche, that rejects the function of the teaching of thought, something that drives the critique of the dogmatic image of thought. This critique, which criticizes the idea that the truth should only be recognized since it is already there, is already an act of creation. It is in a conflict with the philosophical teacher since it creates the truth, which is not yet universally recognized, the truth, which is in accordance only with its own process of production. Deleuze writes:

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The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. (Deleuze 2001, 139)

This same series of ideas, which is within Deleuze's oeuvre already present in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, is further developed in the chapter "Image of Thought" in *Difference and Repetition*. The idea of universal knowledge, which could be transferred into anyone's head, is namely embodied in the statement "everybody knows." This statement itself functions as a pressure: "if there is something, what everybody knows, you have to know that too!" It seems self-evident that the method of the enforcing of a universal truth functions in such a way that it wants to exclude the possibility of any alternative truth, the possibility of any reasonable objection. Deleuze writes:

Everybody knows, no one can deny, is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. When philosophy rests its beginning upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back except, of course, the essential—namely, the form of this discourse. (Deleuze 2001, 130)

294 This discourse is formed as order: one should recognize the truth, which is not commanded from the outside, even if it is perceived as such. It is only a matter of time, effort, and good will when this same truth would be found in the most inner structure of everyone's mind. However, this commanding form of the discourse remains hidden, precisely because this discourse represents itself as being objective and merely descriptive:

[...] everybody knows what it means to think and to be. [...] As a result, when the philosopher says "I think therefore I am," he can assume that the universality of his premises—namely, what it means to be and to think [...]—will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think, and to think is to be. (Deleuze 2001, 130)

However, if this knowledge is already there in the thought, why do we even need philosophical education? Why do we even need someone, who explains what it means "to be" and "to think?" This is already a question of a rebellious pupil, who tries to expose the form of the discourse that can be authoritarian precisely because of the supposed universal structure of thought. To perceive

such a discourse as a discourse with good intentions, as a discourse, which would transfer only knowledge, which would reproduce the good, one has to believe, as we already observed, that the philosopher/teacher is good and that there is a natural alliance between thought and goodness. As Deleuze writes:

[w]hen Nietzsche questions the most general presuppositions of philosophy, he says that these are essentially moral, since Morality alone is capable of persuading us that thought has a good nature and the thinker a good will, and that only the good can ground the supposed affinity between thought and the True. (Deleuze 2001, 132)

This is the reason why we should understand Nietzsche's rejection of morality, not as a specific philosophical stance, which would try to enforce an alternative morality, but as a structurally necessary result of a rejection of the dogmatic image of philosophical thought as such. Nietzsche is primarily not excited about transgression of the law or about certain immoral lifestyles. On the contrary, in order to expose the dominant form of a dogmatic image of thought, which enforces the recognition of a certain thought, thought does not have any other possibility as to be immoral: "[t]he free human being is immoral because in all things he is determined to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition: in all the original conditions of mankind, 'evil' signifies the same as 'individual,' 'free,' 'capricious,' 'unusual,' 'unforeseen,' 'incalculable'" (Nietzsche, 2006b, 133). Immoral thought is therefore primarily thought without presuppositions, thought which tends to be independent of common sense as an expression of the prevailing morality in a certain environment. Deleuze states:

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The implicit presupposition of philosophy may be found in the idea of common sense [...] On this basis, philosophy is able to begin. [...] Postulates in philosophy are not propositions the acceptance of which the philosopher demands; but, on the contrary, propositional themes which remain implicit and are understood in a pre-philosophical manner. In this sense, conceptual philosophical thought has as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of

thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense. (Deleuze 2001, 131)

It is not a coincidence, therefore, that philosophers habitually tend to affirm the established moral system, to establish the state, beliefs, and customs. The crucial question is, which is the appropriate form of a rebellion against such a form of discourse? Discourse, which demands universal recognition of thought, is delegitimized if there is a thought that does not recognize itself in that discourse. The principled rebellion against the gregariousness of group thinking cannot take the form of a recognition of some alternative group thinking, the form of an alternative image of thought, which should become universal. On the contrary, such rebellion is always singular. Deleuze writes: “[b]ut here and there isolated and passionate cries are raised. How could they not be isolated when they deny what ‘everybody knows ...’? And passionate, since they deny that which, it is said, nobody can deny?” (Deleuze 2001, 130) Individuality and loneliness are hence directly written in the structure of a rebellion against the dogmatic image of thought. Such a rebellion cannot claim universal recognition; it is necessarily particular and minoritarian; the latter was, however, often, even by Nietzsche himself, mixed up with aristocratic mentality, which favored the chosen few. Yet, as Deleuze remarks,

[s]uch protest does not take place in the name of aristocratic prejudices: it is not a question of saying what few think and knowing what it means to think. On the contrary, it is a question of someone—if only one—with the necessary modesty not managing to know what everybody knows, and modestly denying what everybody is supposed to recognize. Someone who neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything. (Deleuze 2001, 130)

A rebellious thinker, who does not recognize the dogmatic image of thought, is, hence, not a new messiah, a teacher of alternative truth, or an aristocrat, who would laugh at the ideals of the masses. What may surprise us, is that a rebellious thinker, at least at the most fundamental level, follows the ideal, which is set up by the philosophical teacher in the dogmatic image of thought:

to establish philosophy without any presuppositions. As Deleuze notes, only the individual, who does not recognize the dogmatic image of thought, is “an individual without presuppositions. Only such an individual effectively begins and effectively repeats.” (Deleuze 2001, 130) The ideal beginning, which again and again fails, is the beginning without presuppositions, beginning in the zone free of morality, custom, and prejudices.

Max Stirner: the “ego” destroys everything

Everything written thus far brings us to a single formula that designates the new image of thought: singular individuality against the universality of established moral values and customs, against the established state. Deleuze writes: “[a] new image of thought means primarily that truth is not the element of thought” (Deleuze 1983, 104), which implies that “setting up a new image of thought” destroying the established truth also means “freeing thought from the burdens which are crushing it” (Deleuze 1983, 195). However, it seems that this liberating effect of thought from the truth is the only content of the new image of thought. Maybe that is why Deleuze later gave up the idea of a new image of thought. Nietzsche’s gesture namely primarily shows that thought cannot have an image, which could be learned or transferred from one thought to another.⁴

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The Deleuzian idea of rejection of the dogmatic image of thought is in a certain sense very close to the philosophical project of Max Stirner as developed in his book *The Ego and Its Own*. What is common in both contexts, is the idea of singularity and individuality of thought, which reject every form of universalism and every form of recognition. However, Stirner is even more explicit in his rejection of philosophical teachers. According to Stirner, “[m]en are sometimes divided into two classes: *cultured* and *uncultured*.” The former “demanded a servile respect for the thoughts recognized by them [...]. State,

4 In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze wrote: “[i]t is not a question of opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia, but rather of remembering that schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought—one, moreover, which can only be revealed as such through the abolition of that image.” (Deleuze 2001, 148)

emperor, church, God, morality, order, are such thoughts or spirits, that exists only for the mind.” (Stirner 2014, 65–66). The enforcing of ideas, which are ideas of certain (dominant) group and demand universal recognition, is the basis for inequality and hierarchy in the world. “Hierarchy is dominion of thoughts, dominion of mind!” (Stirner 2014, 67) To expose this, one has to expose not only the “change of form” of hierarchy (from the despotic ruler and religious authorities to the rational liberal state), but also what remains the same during that change, namely the structure of “obedience and possessedness” (Stirner 2014, 78). In liberalism, for example, “one is rid of orders indeed, and ‘no one has any business to give us orders,’ but one has become so much the more submissive to the—*law*. One is enthralled now in due legal form.” (Stirner 2014, 99) Stirner would like to find the thought which would be able to exit the structure of “ordering” and “possessing,” a thought which would not be intimately connected with the state, as it is the case in German idealism from Kant to Hegel: “[t]he state always has the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate, the individual—to make him subject to some generality or other; it lasts only so long as the individual is not all in all, and it is only the clearly-marked restriction of me, my limitation, my slavery.” (Stirner 2014, 211)

Only the individual can oppose the state, since any collective rebellion would end up in a new state, where new collective morality would suppress the individual: “[s]olely from the principle that all right and all authority belong to the collectivity of the people do all forms of government arise.” What Stirner means with the concept of state, is namely exactly the abstract principle in which “the collectivity is above the individual, and has a power which is called legitimate, which is law” (Stirner 2014, 183). Stirner does not, as Saul Newman shows, argue against a particular state, but declares war “against establishment itself” (Newman 2009, 4): “[l]ittle scruple was left about revolting against the existing State or overturning the existing laws, but to sin against the idea of the State, not to submit to the idea of law, who would have dared that?” (Stirner 2014, 78)

The initial problem for Stirner is that the structure of law itself most literally represents the functioning of the hierarchy of mind: we have to subordinate to it, no matter if we believe in it, no matter if it is in accordance with our thought. In opposition to that, Stirner counts on only one law, on the law of the

egoistic self and his property (the original title of his book is *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*). He tries to oppose the ideal of a liberal state or, better, to fulfill the ideals which are promised by a liberal state, which claims to take care for the individual and the individual's private property. Nevertheless, according to Stirner, in reality precisely the opposite happens: "[t]he state always has the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate, the individual—to make him subject to some generality or other; it lasts only so long as the individual is not all in all, [...] everyone who wants to be his own self is its [state] opponent and is nothing." (Stirner 2014, 211) Stirner, thus, opposes the state, the concept which represents the enforcing of a universally recognized thought, with the concept of *der Einzige*: individual, who is not an abstract individual, but a concrete and singular individual, with concrete and singular desires, which cannot be fulfilled by any state or protected by any law.

This individual is "you" (whoever you are, with your particular qualities), as Stirner often addresses his reader. Such egoists, unable to form a common state, are by definition against the state and society, since those structures, as Stirner writes, emerged

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[...] without our making them, are united without our uniting, are predestined and established, or have an independent standing of their own, are the indissolubly established against us egoists. The fight of the world to-day is, as it is said, directed against the "established." (Stirner 2014, 207–208)

The similarity between Deleuze's Nietzsche and Stirner is more than apparent. As Saul Newman exposes, Deleuze too (in his work with Guattari) treats the state as "an abstract machine rather than a concrete institution," capable of capturing individual desire and coupling it with established norms. Another common aspect among both thinkers arises from the idea, that "common sense" and "common morality" are "fixed ideas or spooks, [...] ideological abstractions that nevertheless have real political effects—they provide the State with a formal justification for its domination." (Newman 2009, 6) In order to resist such structures, we have to change the structure of thought, primarily, since authoritarianism in thought directly corresponds with authoritarianism

as manifested in the social order. “Only thought is capable of inventing the fiction of a State that it is universal by right, of elevating the State to *de jure* universality.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 375). “For Deleuze this model of thought is also the model for political power—the authoritarianism of one is inextricably linked with the authoritarianism of the other: ‘Power is always arborescent’ [...]” (Newman 2009, 7). In short, the main similarity between Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Stirner is already inscribed in one of the tasks of the new image of thought, namely in “turning thought into something aggressive, active and affirmative” and “[c]reating free men, that is to say men who do not confuse the aims of culture with the benefit of the State, morality or religion” (Deleuze 1983, 106).

300 However, beside similarities, we have to expose also the main differences between Deleuze and Stirner. As Deleuze, the self-described anti-dialectical thinker, himself emphasized, Stirner has “a place apart, the final, extreme place” in the history of dialectic: he tried to “reconcile the dialectic with the art of the sophists” and he was able “to rediscover the path of the question: ‘which one?’” (Deleuze 1983, 159). His attack on Hegel and dialectic was based on the conceptual question “Who is man?” which replaced the abstract question “What is man?” (cf. Deleuze 1983, 159). The question “who” instead of “what” is, as we argued, crucial also for the appearance of the Nietzschean image of thought. For example, to expose the role of philosophical teachers, we have to replace the question “What is truth?” with the question: “Who is this truthful man, what does he want?” (Deleuze 1983, 95)

Nevertheless, according to Deleuze, Stirner cannot reach the Nietzschean sphere of “going beyond” humanity as such. He is caught in the dialectic between the individual and the state. He rejected the state, but he remained trapped in the self, in the ego, in the “I.” As Deleuze writes, in Stirner not only “[s]tate and religion, but also human essence are denied in the EGO, which is not reconciled with anything because it annihilates everything, for its own ‘power,’ for its own ‘dealings,’ for its own ‘enjoyment.’” (Deleuze 1983, 161) As Stirner himself explains: “it is not that the ego *is* all, but the ego *destroys* all” (Deleuze 1983, 161). The end of dialectics, embodied in Stirner, is nihilism: his ego is nothing, the nothing that destroys everything. Such an EGO, denying any teaching and any other influence from the outside, remains an in itself

enclosed entity or a pure insideness, and cannot be anything else but this in itself returning nothingness. This is the reason, writes Deleuze, why Stirner “plays the revelatory role” in the history of dialectics. Nietzsche, on the other hand, “never stops attacking the theological and Christian character of German philosophy [...], the incapacity of this philosophy to end in anything but the ego, man or phantasms of the human” (Deleuze 1983, 162).

One of the most distinguishing features of Deleuze’s appropriation of Nietzsche is, quite contrary, its strict separation from the horizons of the self, subjectivity, and identity. Regarding Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal return, Deleuze writes: “How could the reader believe that Nietzsche, who was the greatest critic of these categories, implicated Everything, the Same, the Identical, the Similar, the Equal, the I and the Self in the eternal return?” (Deleuze 2001, 299) What returns, are not identities, argues Deleuze, but differences:

[w]e fail to understand the eternal return if we do not oppose it to identity in a particular way. The eternal return is not the permanence of the same, the equilibrium state or the resting place of the identical. It is not the “same” or the “one” which comes back in the eternal return but return is itself the one which ought to belong to diversity and to that which differs. (Deleuze 1983, 46) 301

The most significant task of thought for Deleuze is, therefore, not to preserve the Self and the Ego, as in Stirner. On the contrary, thinking means “discovering, inventing new possibilities of life” (Deleuze 1983, 101). It opposes established universalities, but not in order to defend the self, but to change it and overcome it, to reproduce the difference of the self. Moreover, Deleuze emphasizes certain continuity between subjection to the state and subjection to the self: “[t]he more you obey the statements of dominant reality, the more you command as speaking subject within mental reality, for finally you only obey yourself [...] a new form of slavery has been invented, that of being a slave to oneself.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 130; cf. Newman 2009, 10)

Conclusion: Deleuze's concept of learning

Throughout the present paper, we have been following the line of thought, which is driven by the idea of the rejection of philosophical teaching. However, this idea is not always based on the same motifs. As explicated, Deleuze's Nietzschean philosophy may have in a certain context exactly the opposite intentions as Stirner's philosophy, even if they may seem very close to one another. The crucial difference originates in the structure of the self: Deleuze's self is something that should be changed through the encounter with the outside and not something that should be defended from outside influences, which is the case in Stirner.

302 The difference between Deleuze and Stirner is directly connected with the function of learning. In Stirner, there seems to be no place for learning of the all-mighty self, who only cares about his desires, claims, and possession. In Deleuze, exactly the opposite is the case: the dogmatic image of thought has to be rejected, in order to release the possibilities of learning. Such thought is not closed in itself, as in the case of Stirner, but radically opened for different encounters that force us to think. Such encounters cannot be reduced to encounters with philosophical teaching. Deleuze writes: "do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think." (Deleuze 2001, 139)

According to Deleuze, thought comes from the outside, but it is impossible to predict its source. What forces us to think, if it is not philosophical teaching revealing a universal truth? This is the main problem of Antonin Artaud, as presented by Deleuze: how can we find something that stimulates thought? The answer is tricky. The link between thought and truth is namely broken; thought is not driven by truth, but by the creation of it. However, in order to create, the thought has to think what forces its thinking. "To think is to create—there is no other creation—but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought." (Deleuze 2001, 146) The re-birth of thinking in thought represents the never-ending process of learning. "Henceforth, thought is also forced to think its central collapse, its fracture, its own natural 'powerlessness'

which is indistinguishable from [its] greatest power.” (Deleuze 2001, 147) If Stirner rejected philosophical teaching and the mediation of thought because he believed in an isolated self, Deleuze rejected them because teaching should not be superior to the process of learning. If Stirner wanted to isolate the self, Deleuze tends to open it even more for the outside sources which radically transform it through the process of learning.

The rejection of the role of philosophical teaching, as well as the rejection of the dogmatic image of thought, in Deleuze’s philosophy corresponds with the idea of learning as a process, which cannot be understood solely as a process of the recognition of truth. On the contrary, the process of learning designates the activity of creative thought, activity, which is at the same time creative and contemplative, and radically different from the idea that the function of thought is the recognition of something already created. As Claire Colebrook argues: “[a]s long as we define mind as a closed being that may or may not encounter some external world, and as long as we see that world as being encountered through knowledge, or perception as a mode of ‘picturing,’ then we will never understand the life of thought.” (Colebrook 2011, 21)

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Thinking is, therefore, not a process of the internalization of an outside truth, but a process which is indistinguishable from learning as a process of creative modification. As Deleuze and Guattari explained in *What is Philosophy?*, to use our brains means to create new neural connections, new habits of thought (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 209). Learning is, for Deleuze, the subjective act “carried out when one is confronted with the objectivity of a problem (Idea)” (Deleuze 2001, 164), and it “always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind” (Deleuze 2001, 165). To go in search “of the place of vital ideas in the nonobjectifiable brain is to create” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 70).

Learning is, therefore, much more than the process of gaining knowledge, which, for Deleuze, designates “only the generality of concepts or the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions” (Deleuze 2001, 164).⁵ The rejection of the dogmatic image of thought thus coincides with the rejection of the idea that

5 Bibliography regarding Deleuze and education is quite extensive. Cf., for example, Beighton 2015; Semetsky and Masny 2013; Olsson 2009.

knowledge is superior to learning as Anna Cutler and Iain Mackenzie argue (cf. 2011, 54). Learning is the process, which cannot, by its very definition, be subordinated to any goals, because its goal is the reproduction of difference, the change of the learning self. This self is itself nothing else but a subject of change, a subject changed through learning, which corresponds with Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche's idea of the eternal return.

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BEFORE THE WORK OF ART

EDUCATION AS YIELDING TO ART'S ADDRESS

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Abstract

By exploring a number of resonances disclosed by using the language of yielding to the address the work of art issues forth, this essay attempts to show how (self)education is able to take place in conversations with eminent art. Aspects of what happens to us before we (under)stand before the work of art are also examined, suggesting they often impede the conversation we are seeking. Kitsch is also critiqued to set into relief how eminent works of art address us as a welcomed challenge and to demonstrate the

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educations we seek in our engagements with the work of art need to be wary of the ease with which kitsch art is taken into our understanding. This essay claims we have a chance—through yielding to the work of art—of overcoming the seductions of kitsch and what we are likely to have learned before we (under)stand before the work of art.

Keywords: yielding, work of art, education, conversation/understanding, kitsch.

Pred umetniškim delom. Izobraževanje kot predajanje nagovoru umetnosti

Povzetek

308 S premislekom nekaterih pomenskih razsežnosti, kakršne ponuja uporaba govornice predajanja (*yielding*) nagovoru umetniškega dela, skuša esej pokazati, kako lahko (sámo)izobraževanje nastopa znotraj razgovora z eminentno umetnostjo. Avtor tudi raziše poglobitve vidike tega, kaj se dogaja z nami, preden se razumevajoč postavimo pred umetniško delo, vidike, ki pogostokrat ovirajo razgovor, kakršnega iščemo. V skladu s tem zastavi kritiko kiča, da bi pokazal, kako nas eminentne umetnine nagovarjajo kot dobrodošel izziv in kako se mora izobraževanje, ki ga iščemo v naših srečevanjih z umetnostjo, varovati lahkotnosti, s katero umetnost kiča zastira naše razumevanje. Eseg zatrjuje, da lahko – s predajanjem umetniškemu delu – premagamo zapeljivost kiča, in razgrinja, česa se lahko naučimo, preden se razumevajoč postavimo pred umetnino.

Ključne besede: predajanje (*yielding*), umetniško delo, izobraževanje, razgovor/razumevanje, kič.

I. Before the painting

“Describing people as the (sole) authors of their own lives
is another way of punishing them.”
Adam Phillips: *Terror and Experts*

It is never quite as easy as it first appears. Although we are always already poised to encounter paintings, which is to say we are constituted ontologically to be ready to receive art's address, much has happened ontically by way of our initiation into a culture ruled by *Gestell* that has made us unready and unprepared for art. Nonetheless, something has brought us to this encounter. It strikes us that something is meant to matter here. Despite being before the artwork, we seem, surprisingly, at a loss to say what it is we are doing here or ready to say what the encounter means. As a result of our bad educations, let's say, we are kept at a distance from the painting even as we stand close to it. The question is how shall we get near to art given what has happened to us preceding our arrival before the work of art?

Few of us are artists by practice and social role. In spite of this, we are all artistic in the sense we are, no less than artists themselves, beings whose having-to-be arises from out of *poiesis* and *aletheia*. In this ontological sense, then, everyone always already belongs to art. In his late essay “Word and Picture,” the essay that summarizes and extends his work on aesthetics, Gadamer says his work in *Truth and Method*, where chapter two makes the sustained argument for the ontological condition of aesthetics and play, requires embracing the lingisticality of all art, including pictures (cf. Gadamer 2007, 196). Thus, hermeneutics, the philosophy fitting to disclosing the wonders of *Sprachlichkeit*, has art and aesthetics at its heart.

To this let's note another touchstone for thinking central to hermeneutics *viz.*, understanding that understanding itself belongs to tradition; consequently, we shall discover our being-together is revealed in the address of the work of art because *Mitsein* is a constitutive feature of being able to understand at all. I depart in this work intending a few words about art and education taking inspiration from the trajectory set by these various hermeneutic claims. I wish to think about painting by way of the address it makes to us so as to suggest painting gives us a way to understand how we might encounter the address of the other.

Furthermore, I shall explore in these brief reflections the idea that what keeps us from seeing paintings well likewise keeps us from being able to welcome the other. That is to say, were we able to learn to allow paintings to converse with us, then this would better our ability to meet the other, whose approach also addresses us. I shall ask if, rather than using the language of openness toward the artwork and the other, we might enhance our understanding by speaking of yielding so as better to encounter paintings and the other. To conclude, I outline a critique of kitsch as a way to set into relief eminent paintings showing the danger of the former and the liberating power of the latter. Without writing directly about them, three eminent paintings watch over my reflections; indeed when taken together a story they tell on my interpretation shapes my entire essay; they are: Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Children*, Turner's *Baying Hound (or Dog After Shipwreck)*, *Le Bonheur de Vivre* by Matisse.¹

II. Yielding to the drawing address of art

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“If I misunderstand art, then I misunderstand myself.
This dual misunderstanding, accordingly, does not bode well for me
nor, worse still, for others.”
Seth Balantine Johnson

Somehow it happens. We find ourselves before a painting. We say we are drawn to this one and not that one. We also say we are not, at least not right now, drawn to any of the scores of others that hang on the walls that round out the scene. The painting has something about it that called to us, summoned us to stand with it, made us want to place ourselves before it. Perhaps we may have crossed continents to be here with it. No doubt, in a vast number of cases, the allure belongs also to the painting's reputation, we are drawn by its title, its creator's name, or by our being instructed by the tradition we ought to see it. Thus, we see from these few observations much that has tutored us before we stand before the painting. All told, there is always more to be understood than we are aware before we get to this place before the painting. The something

¹ In a future work I shall employ with respect to these paintings the way of being before the work of art I am advocating here.

showing forth from the work of art that brings us close, its strange summoning, promises something beyond itself (something more than realist claims that the canvas means only to imitate reality or provide mere decoration, for example). The power of attraction issued forth in the showing forth is real; however, we understand it is not irresistible—as observations during any a museum visit will attest.

Educations cannot be given; they can only be allowed. If self-education begins before the work of art, then it is because the address of art draws us out of the habituations of quotidian utility and into the worlding of the world. This drawing is essential to the work of art. We are drawn out of the time of the day-to-day, out of ourselves in our everydayness—thus, out of the ways we are accustomed to making sense of things. By being drawn out of the time of the everyday, there is a chance to be drawn into something else—i.e., into the ongoing meaningfulness—in a manner that makes us aware of it and aware that our being there is the site of this disclosure.

Insofar as art move us this way, we are able to be drawn out by the work of art that is accompanied by a drawing in as well—drawn out as well as being drawn in. All eminent paintings in their address draw us out of ourselves while they also draw us into the world created on the canvas if we are responsive to their summons. We might think of it this way: no matter the subject of a canvas covered in color, line, texture, and form, painting as such is an opportunity for self-understanding; the chance for self-education and the prospect of bettering our relations with other people, is as much a possibility when we are drawn out of our everyday selves and drawn into a conversation. In the clearing so disclosed we might, for example, converse with a Cézanne still-life, a landscape view by El Greco, or a Kandinsky prophetic composition abstract—we do not need to see ourselves by analogy before the painting to be moved—I do not need to see myself as Kahlo's shorn-headed figure to see myself. Most telling here is this, prominent paintings are able to draw us into the world as such, because they draw us into the disclosure of the web of signification where we always already find ourselves in the marvel of understanding itself.

Our age is one, however, that thwarts our access to this self-understanding and furthermore, it blocks our access to this very means to achieve it (i.e., to art). Reflecting on this pervasive way of understanding in our epoch Dennis

Schmidt writes: “[...] a space of understanding our world has been shut down” (2013, 142). This understanding that is closing—and in many ways already all but shut down—leads, according to Schmidt, to “a peculiar and paradoxical distress [that] characterizes our present age, one that is typified by the strange alchemy of an increasing sense of what can be known coupled with a decrease in a sense of what is understood” (2013, 142). To get from mere knowing to true understanding means we move from the passive taking-in of mere information to learning how to yield to the drawing address of art.

312 The radical standing out in the world that defines human being as being-in-the-world is the condition for the possibility of yielding as I attempt to outline it here. An active comportment, which is ready to suffer the address, proceeds being able to tarry or stay with an artwork in a responsive way and describes one essential element of yielding. The work needs us to consummate it, and our yielding before the work of art is required for this to be accomplished. Yielding to the work of art acknowledges the inescapable simultaneity of passivity and activity before the painting. What we encounter is what the work puts into play and we are implicated here because the play of art is, Gadamer tells us, “a mirror that through the centuries constantly arises anew, and in which we catch a glimpse of what we are, what we might be, and what we are about.” (1986, 130) To catch this glimpse requires something of us, a readiness I am calling yielding, a pose that gives itself up to the work’s address, one significant consequence of which is giving up on what has happened before we get to the work of art (what we called metaphorically above our bad educations).

In place of the often-employed language of being open, yielding highlights the specificity of an effort, which remains active and efficacious in particular ways. To be able to meet the painting requires yielding. I am unequal to the painting before yielding to it because we do not meet, in the main, in the same world. Until I yield to the painting, I am all but certain to remain in the world of things understood merely as useful objects. My comportment is likely to be, often by exercising ingrained and well-rewarded habits, a bowing to the mean utility Schiller called the idol of our age (this is a deference that amounts to self-abnegation). In this habitual utilitarian comportment, I am predisposed to ask of each thing I encounter: to what use can I put this object? No one denies paintings can be challenged-forth as objects. Indeed, this is the point:

how we have learned to be is to think ourselves subjects standing over against objects there for our manipulation and use. When they appear summoned by this demand, however, paintings remain paintings in name only. This is how we miss paintings even when we are right next to them, by asking them to be something other than what they are. In a striking difference, yielding brings one into the world of painting on painting's favored terms: *poiesis* and *aletheia*.

Before the painting in the comportment of yielding, in contrast, I become ready to meet to the painting and the world it discloses as a result of foregoing the utilitarian framework and bypassing the presupposition that this utilitarian way of being is superior to all others. This understanding of yielding has a keen sense of surrender and giving up in it from which we ought not shy away but embrace. This surrender is not a loss of agency as such nor does it mark the end of the game. Indeed, the opposite is so, the play of art that frees the meaningful space between viewer and artwork commences with yielding. Yielding abandons the too-willful subject that seeks only objects. What gets surrendered and given up is a desire to control the work from the standpoint of crass calculation. When giving in to the attraction of a drawing address, when giving way to art's proper way of being, when giving up the desire to challenge-forth the artwork, the play of art is set free. These "givings" usher in a readiness for the to-and-fro of conversation fitting to the work of art and the being of the "there" that human being is. We do, however, in yielding, give up certain ways of standing before the painting. Foremost here perhaps are these: yielding prohibits searching for the exclusive meaning of the painting and in the wake of this and equally important, yielding does not attempt to impose an interpretation on the painting readymade.

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As essential as this comportment is, it is not easily achieved. The conversation with an artwork often takes place initially in a too harsh if all too familiar cacophony: "the noisy waves of the constant flow of information," as Gadamer says, need to be overcome (2007, 201). Yielding, then, has a quieting power, which seems necessary because, as Gadamer sees clearly, "much else will be speaking to us along with the statement made by the work of art" (2007, 201). Against what would amount to the loss of art to the chatter of everything around it, yielding lets the painting happen as a painting—it lets the painting accomplish its originating work by allowing its address to be heard. As the

giving way to the space and time created by the work, yielding is what allows the working of the artwork to get to us.

What at first might seem to be too passive a comportment, yielding does not leave us as an empty vessel before the painting to be filled by its meaning. Rather than being a hollowed out passive receptacle, we are required to be made of something such that we are able to meet the painting, to converse with it, to push against it, to question aspects of its address. To wit, without such resistance the conversation we seek would not have a significant part of its required structure. Yielding allows the response to the address of the work of art to come from somewhere vital. Far from being empty and farther still from quitting the field altogether, in the wake of surrendering and giving up, a thoughtful readiness and responsiveness comes to the fore in yielding.

As I noted from the start, art's address is something that can be blocked and warded off by our not being able to yield to it in many ways. We have been systematically made unprepared for art, unprepared to yield to the working of its transformative power, which is to say ultimately its self-educative power.

314 Appearing to us in our unpreparedness, the painting shows itself we might say like a broken hammer—we do not seem able to place this thing among other things in our web of significance. As a result, the question, what do I do with it, receives no immediate answer. Furthermore, the answers that work so well in the world of our interactions wedded to utility fall tragically short of what is required before the work of art. What gets lost here is both a chance at our self-education and the work of art.

In this sense, then, paintings appear to us as something worse, something more broken than the dysfunctional hammer, which we at least think we understand how to repair and then put back to use. The appearance of a painting as something more than broken remains a challenge and a discomfort that makes us want to walk away from even famous and renowned paintings, because we do not know what to do with them when they show themselves as mere objects. Related to this, even when we do not walk away, we too often seek to repair paintings, as it were, by turning to culturally ordained practices of classification. Often, we try to relieve this obliquely felt discomfort by exhausting our time with a painting by merely categorizing it by title, or date, or artist, by style, or movement. This misses, if this is all we do, what stands and

endures in a painting and what self-transformation we might have undergone. Cataloguing a painting by inventorying it, or locating them as if on a modern-day Grand Tour, or the mere record keeping and/or social media “sharing” of famous paintings seen, is the sure way to avoid having to withstand the work of art. Gadamer gives us a vivid image when he writes: “the artwork is not at all an object that one can approach with a measuring tape in one’s hand [...] a real artwork does not allow itself to be grasped by a process of measurement” (2007, 214). Where such means of measurement fail (and fail necessarily), yielding to the work has a chance to succeed.

Contrary to mismeasuring art, yielding participates in showing a way to the simple and subtle happening of painting. Admittedly, it does not hurt having some know-how of the game we are about to play—all the while recognizing that knowing the rules is necessary but not sufficient for the playing of the game. Of course, the game is able to begin with some assistance from the tradition as our initial orientation can benefit from the guidance one is able to receive by considering the categories listed above in addition to knowing a bit about genre, the relation of form/content, line, color, texture, etc., but as a contextualizing means and not an end in itself. As it is in the rule-bound yet not overly restrictive nature of good play, which guides but does act as mere mechanization, one follows the embodied fluidity of a conversation with an artwork the way one participates in the unfolding of an ever-evolving game. That ecstatic rush of being a committed participant who is neither leader nor led—or perhaps both at once or maybe it is each in turn—characterizes the play yielding sets free before the painting. Play, when understood well, shows to us our constant condition *viz.*, we are both (rule-)bound and free. This is a keen understanding of finitude in its hermeneutic truth. In a fashion resembling a good game, eminent art is inexhaustible. This eminence is due to the artwork always being able to stand-out from among the leveling of the everyday and the chance of we with it.

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If we learn from yielding something about being drawn, about play, and about twisting away from our habitual ways of understanding, then, in the English phrase “I yield the floor” we find another way to think what the word *yield* is able to disclose. This phrase is invoked in formal deliberations, for instance, to say that I have made a response and now stand ready for the response it may engender. Yielding the floor says I am finished with this turn

in the back-and-forth of a conversation that means to take us somewhere together (where even the phrase back-and-forth might be too restrictive). Before a painting, yielding the floor says although I am not speaking now, I am listening intently. Listening well to the response made by painting's constant address to what we have brought to it is an essential part of our responding. A response that does not yield in this way does not live up to being a genuine response. By yielding a space and time opened between artwork and viewer, and listening intently is a component of a genuine response *sine qua non*.

316 In closing this sketch, one last appeal to yet another sense of the word *yield* stands to further the understanding of what can happen before a painting. If *yield* as a verb has led us to see the fecundity of the to-and-fro between viewer and artwork, then we might ask what is created by the encounter. Here the noun *yield* is telling. As a sort of gathering that comes from the bringing-forth and letting come-forth from out of a cultivated conversation, yield names what I hesitate to call the outgrowth of our interaction. If permitted a playful turn of phrase, I would say: the yield of our yielding is what we and the painting become after our conversational stay before the work of art.² Withstanding the address of art opens a space of meaning between the viewer and the work of art and the yield is created there in that in-between, in the now fecund space opened by the act of yielding.

III. The tyrannical nature of kitsch: setting eminent art and ourselves into relief

“If the artwork is genuine [...],
it does not install itself peacefully into the world
but rather reorganizes it and puts it into question.”

Gianni Vattimo: *Art's Claim to Truth*

It is not pretty to demand that someone else like this or that—say Picasso over Matisse or the other way around, or Duchamp rather than either, Turner over Constable, Kahlo rather than O’Keefe, or Delacroix to Goya—yet, it

2 NB: this is not the adventure of going outside oneself and collecting “booty” with which one then returns to a subjective interiority, as Heidegger first critiques in *Being and Time* and from then ever onward.

seems forgivable, if not imperative, to demand we ought not like some things, and kitsch names those some things we ought not like and for which it would be dangerous to everyone were anyone to do so. A hermeneutic stance that means to be anti-hermeneutic in its very execution describes the essence of kitsch. Or said otherwise, kitsch is the violent cutting short of interpretation. Kitsch is the production of art so easily taken in one forgets one is undertaking an interpretation. At one and the same time kitsch is both the supposed object of interpretation and the interpretation itself. Kitsch leaves us nothing to do but be deceived, robbed, and from the standpoint of our active role in interpretation, forsaken. In “The Relevance of the Beautiful” Gadamer puts it more kindly saying in the encounter with kitsch all we see and experience is “a feeble confirmation of the familiar” (1986, 52).

If all interpretation is both patient and agent as the consideration of yielding has shown, then kitsch is understood as nearly wholly the former for the reason that its function is to strangle near-to-death our participation in suffering the work of art. The work that matters most, i.e., engaged and active interpretation, has already been undertaken for us in the kitsch artwork. Part of its active deception, which it wins by making us passive by its very design and execution, is that kitsch means to give this meaning to us as a gift. However, it is a gift that diminishes. Kitsch is a dangerous confidence game; its supposed giving takes away what art is meant to accomplish, and in its ruse absconds with our responsibility to interpret. As part of its cover, it furthers its deception by making us think in its aftermath that we have confronted a work of art. It matters not where along the political spectrum kitsch art arises, this bad art always has something tyrannical about it, even if, in seeming innocence, it drips in sweetness. Gadamer allows that kitsch can be well intentioned; although he does add, nonetheless, that in every instance “kitsch means the death of art” (1986, 52). I understand this loss to be a missed opportunity for education as well as the wounding of our ability to welcome the other. It tells us all encounters with something other should be this easy.

As we all understand, small things add up and the seemingly singular insignificance of some harmless piece of bad art turns deadly significant when

are forced to confront it continuously and *en masse*.³ As Gadamer says, kitsch art has designs on you, it means to deceive in just this way. In as much as an eminent work of art means to address us and may even intend from conception through to execution and display to move us, it does not have this cheap design on us. It addresses us with a sophisticated outgrowth in view. It desires we end up beyond ourselves without knowing beforehand where this is going to be exactly. This is every piece of great art's way of saying: "You must change your life."

318 This repetition and constant presence are but one danger of kitsch. It has other strategies as well. For those, like myself, who do not paint nor draw, who do not have nor have developed any talent in drawing and painting, in the face of certain kitsch paintings are forced to admit these works are more than we could accomplish. This is to say, a certain technical skill, indeed even a vast amount of such, is no guard against a work being kitsch. To the contrary, such skill—one that shames those who would could not produce such realism, detail, and composition—is one of kitsch's most dangerous disguises—a ruse with dire consequences for our self-understanding. Many who embody an inability with a brush ask with sincerity: "How could such a show of skill be bad?" Technically accomplished, to be sure, yet it is bad all the same because, as Gadamer contends, such kitsch art "manipulates us for a particular purpose" (1986, 52).

In the wake of such experiences, the reverence we need before art wanes—a reverence we need to stay within to achieve the solidarity of an ethical being-with. The promotion of kitsch—of bad art as art—renders unwelcomed the extravagant claims made for the power of art to transform us. No such claims could be seriously entertained by anyone for whom kitsch is what is understood by art. Easy art, another name for kitsch, leaves us untransformed and something worse: it leaves us by way of its manipulations less likely to think ourselves in need of transformation. It is as if kitsch says: "Don't give any thought to changing your life." This critique of kitsch allows me a way forward to my conclusion from what will appear at first blush as a contradiction.

3 Is it enough to say all around Puerta del Sol in Madrid there are for sale salt and pepper shakers in the form of characters from Picasso's *Guernica* to see what damage kitsch is able to accomplish?

IV. The decay of lying in a world of constant lying

Viewer before a Matisse portrait: "I have never seen a woman who looks like that."

Matisse: "Madam, that is not a woman, it is a picture."

(An anecdote)

The provocation sounds something such as this: great artists lie and we are the better for it, perhaps we only are as good as we shall ever become because of this. Yet, this is also true: scoundrels lie and do so in their own despicable way. The great and essential difference here is this: where the former leave conversations to be savored which are almost too beautiful to believe—the latter, with their ugly lies, do nothing but steal. Furthermore, they intend this robbery from the start. This theft—and it has its parallels in other realms of culture—is due to the private appropriation of the profits of deceit.

On the other hand, the lies of great artists are meant to be the giving and bringing-forth of a genuine truth against such scandalous larceny. Here we have it on the word of Nietzsche or Picasso, Oscar Wilde or William Morris, Heidegger or Gadamer, *viz.*, there is, by way of eminent art, a proper way to lie—the lying that is decaying to cite Wilde's famous essay. As we know, each of the passages we might adduce here says (from the above thinkers and more besides) something akin to this: art is the lie that tells the truth and discloses our having to yield to and remain in the truth of disclosure for art and we with it to be what each is. As we have just seen above, kitsch does not lie in this manner, it rather means to deceive and obscure our interpretive constitution while it compromises our ability to be responsible to others.

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Echoing insights from Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education* (which have motivated my hermeneutic work over the past many years), Schmidt declares Gadamer's aesthetics commits our thinking and teaching about our ethical being-in-the-world to be grounded in an understanding of the work of art. Gadamer's hermeneutics (and he is nowhere near alone in this) helps us understand we need art precisely because of how catastrophic things are today. The more debased things become, the uglier, the more indecent, the more pressing the need for (fine?) art. As Schmidt puts it, we need to see "the promise of the work of art because of, not despite, the desperate character of

our time” (2013, 143). Granted, the guideposts to our way to a sophisticated understating of collective being-with-one-another might be found other places where people seek intimations of transcendence (nature and religion, for example), yet they are especially prominent within the work of art.

In a time destined by calculation, pure administration, not to mention the daily spreading of falsehoods, it seems more than strange to turn to art. Yet, we turn to art because we need imagination to understand who we are. In coming back to art, in cultivating our imaginations, we shall come back to ourselves and in this we shall ready ourselves to go out and welcome the other. Paintings as works of art do the work of art by embodying a futurity that sets into relief our interpretive finitude. When acknowledged, this realization of finitude before the transcendence of art discloses to us that we stand here with many other viewers, even in a near-empty museum. I stand before this painting where others stood before me, where my contemporaries will soon also stand, and where another interpreter will yield to the address before this painting in a time when the possibility of my doing so will no longer be a possibility of mine.

320 Works of art belong to the historical moment of their creation as creations, and not as objects, which means they also belong to that moment by transcending it. This being lightly yet forever tethered to that moment allows them to come to us powerfully—filled with new possibilities. In their transcendence, they come to us alive and not as dead pieces of the past. They are, in Schmidt’s fine phrase, quick rather than dead.

The pull to do something now, the command to be politically pragmatic and realist, the demand to execute some plan, will be great. Of course, who would deny it? In view of this, it will take courage and a no little amount of faith to yield, to stay, and to tarry awhile before the work of art. In those moments when we are able to yield to it, art is always ready to undertake the work of art, ready to issue its address, and ready to be a tutor in our self-education, which means as well being the tutor of our being-with. Art’s education will lead us to see we shall, before the other as before the artwork, seek to understand rather than pretend our knowing could exhaust the meaning of either a person or a painting.

Art’s irreplaceable way of being ever ready to our yielding is evidenced by our being able to learn anew before a painting we love and before which we

may have stood many times previously. We see its power in its difference from, say, an empirical study that we have once read. We only reread such a study because we have forgotten something or need to confirm what we think we already know, to check the data one more time. Little, if anything, will have changed and we return to empirical studies to “make sure,” as we say.

The ever-shinning beauty of the work of art to which we desire to return and stand before has nothing of this forgetting about it. To the contrary, we remember quite well what the work did to us before in our previous with-standings, we recall how different we were after our encounter. Seen in this light, what we desire from art is not what it was before, rather our desire is for what is new in it this time. In this newness we are renewed. We understand a great painting has in its address something unique to offer to our self-education, something no number of visits could impoverish. Before the work of art our yielding asks the work to do yet again what it will never have done quite this way before.

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THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF LITERATURE IN OVERCOMING THE DENIALISM OF AGEING

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Abstract

Ageing affects the way we perceive the world; it is a part of our identity and a part of our social role. However, the denialism of ageing prevents us to openly discuss ageing, to project our own old age and direct our society into an inclusive, intergenerational future. Thus, it is necessary to identify how denialism presents itself within contemporary society and to identify pedagogical praxes with the potential to address denialism and to help us overcome it. We propose literature can offer us an

insight into the life-world we meet in and thus help us identify the denialism of ageing and the different forms it takes on. Furthermore, we propose quality literature can help us open an intergenerational dialog on ageing and provide an alternative to denialism. The identified forms of denialism of ageing and the opened intergenerational dialog on ageing can be employed as a footing for further philosophical consideration of the structures of the experience of ageing, as well as for the outline of a gerontological ethics that could direct our projection of a future society.

Keywords: ageing, denialism of ageing, literature, children's literature.

Potencialna vloga književnosti pri premagovanju zanikovanja staranja

Povzetek

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Staranje zadeva način, na katerega zaznavamo svet; je del naše identitete in naše družbene vloge. Vendar nam zanikovanje staranja preprečuje, da bi odkrito razpravljali o staranju, da bi načrtovali našo starost in usmerjali našo družbo proti inkluzivni, medgeneracijski prihodnosti. Zato je potrebno identificirati, kako se zanikovanje kaže znotraj sodobne družbe in kakšne pedagoške prakse imajo potencial, da nagovorijo zanikovanje in nam ga pomagajo premagati. Predlagamo, da nam književnost lahko ponudi uvid v življenjski svet, v katerem se srečujemo, in nam tako pomaga prepoznati zanikovanje staranja in različne oblike, ki jih privzema. Nadalje predlagamo, da kakovostna književnost lahko pripomore pri odpiranju medgeneracijskega dialoga o staranju in ponudi alternativo zanikovanju. Identificirane oblike zanikovanja staranja in odprti medgeneracijski dialog o staranju lahko uporabimo kot osnovo za nadaljnje filozofsko premišljanje struktur izkustva staranja in za načrtanje gerontološke etike, ki bi lahko usmerjala načrtovanje prihodnosti družbe.

Ključne besede: staranje, zanikovanje staranja, književnost, otroška književnost.

1. Introduction

Ageing can be considered one of the most fundamental phenomena of contemporary society. It co-defines our lives and our perception of the world around us. We all age, the ageing process affects our physiological and mental abilities; it affects the way we perceive the world and the way others perceive us. Furthermore, our perception of ageing itself is similarly complex, as Donovan writes in his essay on “Phenomenology of Aging”:

aging is a set of interior or subjective experiences, as well as a set of biological processes [...] Aging is also a relational process [...] We construct, and in some measure negotiate, the meaning of aging with others and with the world around us. (2015, 165)

Age is intrinsic to our personal identity (Bavidge 2016) and at the same time to some extent performative, as we attach culturally determined meaning to biological age and enact certain age roles (Joosen 2018).

Today, ageing does not only affect us on a personal level. Advances in science, public health, and rising standards of living, including better education, improved nutrition, and lifestyle changes, have caused a significant rise in life expectancy and therewith connected phenomenon of the ageing society. Faced with the depth of the forthcoming changes, it is becoming ever clearer that we have to actively guide them if we would like future generations to live in a well-functioning intergenerational and socially inclusive society.

One of the main obstacles to such a future is the denialism of ageing. As indicated by Thomas Kirkwood in his review of the science of human ageing *Time of Our Lives*, in our contemporary society, where ageing and death have become institutionalized, where real death and ageing, not “Hollywood fantasy death” (1999, 12), are rarely seen, fear of death and ageing is rising. We have deported death and ageing out of our lives and we feed our children the “they lived happily ever after” story (Kirkwood 1999). According to Eviatar Zerubavel, fear is one of the main causes of denialism. “Fear,” he writes, “is also one of the main reasons underlying the abundance of euphemisms used in reference to the terminally ill (‘when this is over’) and the dead (‘passed away,’ ‘gone’).” (2006, 6)

It seems that fear of death and fear of ageing go hand in hand. However, while fear of death has always been a part of human cultures, comprehensively reflected within different philosophical systems (e.g., Plato 2011; Freud 1920; Heidegger 1927; Camus 1955, Kierkegaard 1980), fear of ageing has only lately and still quite rarely become a subject of philosophical discussion.

326 While death is the event that demarcates the boundary between life and non-life, life and nothingness, or life and whatever we believe or hope comes after the life as we know it, ageing is essentially a part of life, though the part of life that brings us closer to death as its end. In his essay “Coming to Terms with Old Age—and Death,” Cristopher Cowley sees “the virtue of the immanence of death” as one of the factors that define old age (Cowley 2016, 191). However, there are some essential differences between fear of death and fear of ageing. Death is inconceivable, it is not an event in life (Wittgenstein 1961, § 6.4311) and we cannot even imagine our own death (Freud 2001, 304). We are faced with the fact that all men are mortal, however, as we accept this as an abstract logical proposition, we often live denying it on a personal level. The phenomena of ageing, on the other hand, is familiar to us, as Bavidge describes it: “Aging is a slow, familiar process—more of the same, only worse.” (2016, 208) We perceive symptoms of ageing as we meet the others and we get some sense of the changes to come as we experience the past and current changes. However, what we miss is the (first-person) experience of being older as such. Furthermore, while death is something that awaits all of us, ageing is not. It can be avoided by a premature death. However, while afraid of ageing, not many of us would like to avoid ageing in such (though apparently the only possible) way. Exact thematization of these differences between fear of death and fear of ageing, goes far beyond the scope of this text.

However, there is a further, historical difference between the two: while fear of death has been always present in human culture, fear of ageing is symptomatic of our contemporary society. It is connected, on the one hand, with significant rise in life expectancy (see for example: World Health Organization 2019; Our World in Data 2019) and an ageing society, and on the other hand, with the disintegration of extended families, which pushed ageing out of sight.

Denialism of ageing, the fact that we actively and all-pervasively avoid discussing the process of ageing and old age, does not, however, implicate

the unimportance of the subject matter. On the contrary, it denotes how important the phenomenon of ageing actually is. According to Zerubavel, conspiracies of silence do not revolve around “largely unnoticeable matters we simply overlook,” instead we crave to deny crucial aspects of our reality, which actually beg for our attention (2006, 9). These are the elephants in the living-room, which we pass every day and we walk carefully around them, avoiding the swinging trunks and the enormous feet (2006, 10).

In her 2007 monograph, Muriel R. Gillick illustrates the extent of denialism of ageing with the amount of money spent in USA to cover up the symptoms of ageing:

When we believe we will stay young forever, and when we purchase special vitamins, herbs, and other youth-enhancing chemicals to promote longevity, we are engaging in massive denial. [...] Americans spend an extraordinary \$ 6 billion each year on “anti-aging” nostrums [...]. We also spent an exorbitant amount of money covering up the stigmata of old age. The use of hair color is so ubiquitous that I could not find any estimates of the amount of money spent on vanquishing the gray. (Gillick 2007, 3)

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The more we deny it, the more our fear of ageing grows. We are afraid of the changes to come, which we perceive as the changes for the worse. We are afraid we will lose our physical abilities, our independence, our role within the society and within the family; we are afraid we will lose our colleagues, friends, and relatives (as Cowley argues, the death of our friends and family, e.g., our parents, is one of the factors that define old age; 2016, 191). We are afraid of pain that accompanies the process of ageing and therewith connected diseases. However, denying the fear, all these issues usually stay unaddressed.

Ageing, an indispensable part of our subjective and inter-subjective reality, is recognized as a burden. Thus, any comprehensive attempts to address our personal attitude towards ageing as part of our identity, of our perception of the world and the others, and any comprehensive attempts to project a well-functioning intergenerational and socially inclusive future society, has to address this denialism. Here, however, we are faced with two challenges.

The first challenge is to recognize denialism. How can we identify something, which is missing? This is, according to Zerubavel, one of the main reasons for the lack of academic attention to denialism: “After all, it is much easier to study what people do discuss than what they do not (not to mention the difficulty of telling the difference between simply not talking about something and specifically avoiding it).” (2006, 3)

The second challenge concerns the necessary pedagogical praxis built upon this basic research: how to overcome the denialism of ageing? In the case of a well-established denialism, “society provides ‘cognitive traditions’ which establish what to pay attention to and what to ignore.” Consequently, pedagogical interventions that aimed to address the denialism at the individual’s level in order to help individuals to overcome it and change their behavior practice, were often only partly successful (Spannring and Grušovnik 2018).

We propose that literature with its specific character (closely presented in chapter 2) can help us successfully address both challenges: the identification of denialism (a research, presented in chapter 3) and its overcoming (projects including workshops, presented in chapter 4).

2. Literature and its potential role in overcoming the denialism of ageing

Literature, with its complex character, not subordinated to one particular purpose, but intertwining ethical, aesthetic, and cognitive components, can, among others, provide us the most complex insight into the life-world,¹ we meet in. An art-work, in our case an art-work of literature, exposes the presented phenomenon for what it is, not solely as a means serving a particular purpose; it forces us to consider it from different perspectives, to exceed the self-evident (e.g., Heidegger 1950). The art-work confronts us with our own perception of the world around us—it can reveal the denied elephant in the living-room or, equally potent, a black spot with which we strive to cover the elephant.

The same goes for children’s literature. Its specific character, defined by its specific target public, however, makes it particularly appropriate for the identification of the denied elephants: although quality children’s literature is often multi-layered, the authors are generally more direct in their story-telling

and avoid exceedingly hermetical language. Furthermore, children's literature often combines different means of communication, e.g. text and illustrations. If the author succeeds to avoid the elephant at one level, it might reveal itself on another or in combination of the both.

There exists another very important aspect of children's literature: more or less in all cultural contexts, children's literature (or before the use of this term, any literature read to children) has been considered as a matrix that can influence the young, and through them, the future; e.g., see Plato (2008, 377b–383c) for the Ancient Greek perspective on storytelling; O'Dell (2010, 3–4) and Townsend (2003, 32) for the analysis of the Victorian understanding of children's literature and O'Dell (2010) and Svetina (2011) for the analysis of children's literature as an indoctrination tool of the main ideologies of the 20th century. In the 21st century, children's books, where other components are subordinated to the ethical perspective of the book, are considered low quality. However, as fierce public debates reveal, legal guardians, educators, and others involved in childcare are very concerned about potential influences children's literature might have on the well-being of children as well as on their perception of the world and projection of their own future (Pišek 2018; Rannard 2017). Children's literature exposes children to social values of their contemporary society (Crabb and Bielawski 1994; Weitzman et al. 1972; Ansello 1997), it molds “future adults who will accept it” or infuses children with values “that may help to reconstruct the society” (Council on Interracial Books for Children 1976). Quality literature presents different aspects of the phenomena in question, it provides children with a holistic view (McGuire 2016) and has the ability to determine the future of children's attitude towards the described phenomena (Hollis-Sawyer and Cuevas 2013; Gooden and Gooden 2001; Bandura 2001). “Literature both reflects and creates,” claims Edward F. Ansello in his 1997 article in which he analyzes the presentation of age and identifies ageism in children's literature (Ansello 1997, 256).

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We aim to show that due to these specific characteristics of literature it can also help us address the main challenges connected with the overcoming of the denialism of ageing. Based on a premise that the analysis of literature can provide us with an insight into our life-world and help us with the identification of the denialism of ageing and the form it has in contemporary society, we have

conducted an analysis of the presentation of ageing in children's literature. Furthermore, based on a premise that literature affects the way we perceive life-world and act within it, we have used quality literature that depicts ageing and age at workshops with which we aimed to open a dialog on ageing and provide an alternative to denialism.

3. Analysis of contemporary children's literature: the identification of the denialism of ageing

330 In 2014, we conducted a study on the contemporary presentation of ageing in picture books (for the more detailed description of the research, see Bilban 2014), with focus on books published since 1990 in the U.K. and in Slovenia, which enabled a further comparison between the two countries with a common European context, but some differences in the state of the science of ageing within the country (the U.K., on one hand, has been one of the leading forces in research regarding ageing and has established a culture of communication between scientists and the lay public; on the other hand, in Slovenia research of ageing and scientific communication is only beginning to get established) and the publishing market (the majority of picture books published in the U.K. are originally written in English, most of them by the U.K. writers, while the majority of picture books published in Slovenia are translated).

As our main resources we used the Booktrust collection at Newcastle University's Robinson Library and the archive of Pionirska, Centre for Youth Literature and Librarianship, City Library Ljubljana; both are considered the most complete collections of recent and contemporary children's books in their countries. First, we examined the picture books for any descriptions of ageing or older people, either as main or visible supporting characters.² In total, we identified 104 books about ageing or/and older people published in the U.K. and 73 published in Slovenia. This selection presents the core of our analysis

² We additionally complemented the selection with picture-books recommended by experts for children's literature from Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books in the U.K., and Pionirska, Center for Youth Literature and Librarianship. Due to our methodology, the selection might not be complete, however, it is probably the most thorough and extensive selection of contemporary U.K. and Slovenian picture books dealing with ageing.

with which we aim to identify the potential denialism of ageing and the form it has in contemporary society.

3.1. Analysis of selected titles

In the analysis, we focused on two aspects which we propose are significant for the identification of the denialism of ageing: the general emplacement of the elderly in the story and specifically the presentation of biological ageing³ (e.g., physiological symptoms of ageing or age related disease, etc.). The symptoms of biological ageing confront us with the unembellished reality of ageing and are the most difficult to deny. Thus, we proposed, denialism will be most obvious in relation to the presentation of the biological aspects of ageing.

The analysis revealed that, in general, in picture books published in Slovenia and the U.K., older people are presented as the main characters, e.g., in books about grandfathers and grandmothers or a remarkable older neighbor. They are very rarely presented as being part of a child's everyday life or included in the stories as an integral part of the described family or society, as someone who simply happens to be old.

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In original Slovenian picture books, grand parents often have the role of surrogate parents. They enjoy their time with grandchildren; they often cook or read together; however, they are responsible for the grandchildren's safety and well-being and behave accordingly mature. In picture books published in the U.K., however, younger and older people are often described in a similar manner, as the opposition to serious, realistic, hard-working, and busy middle-aged. Older people often step out of the world of work, career, and production, but gain access to the world of mystery and magic, (forbidden) adventures, or simply of free time, silence, and contemplation, which they often share with children. The semblance between children and the elderly and its presentation in popular media such as (children's) literature and film has been comprehensively analyzed by Joosen, who writes in her "Introduction" to the volume: "The equation of childhood and old age always has implications

³ According to Smith's definition, which is well accepted in the field of biology, ageing is "a progressive, generalized impairment of function resulting in a loss of adaptive response to stress and an increasing probability of death." (1962)

for the generations in between, which are often characterized in contrast to the young and the old.” (Joosen 2018, 7)

This aspect is introduced into Slovenian cultural space by translated picture books, e.g., the ones originally written in English, for example, Ian Whybrow’s series *Harry and His Bucket Full of Dinosaurs*.

Furthermore, in the Slovenian and U.K. picture books older people often have a special position within the society due to their specific wisdom, and sometimes a different, more rudimentary perspective, as for example in the Slovenian folk tale *Pšenica najlepši cvet / Wheat the Most Beautiful Flower* (1995).

332 The selected picture books from Slovenia and U.K. mostly share a common attitude towards the presentation of the biological aspects of ageing. In illustrations, the elderly usually show stereotypic characteristics of old age, which are directly connected with biological ageing: they have grey hair and wrinkles and might need a walking stick. However, biological ageing is very rarely brought into focus and these characteristics of old age (e.g., the loss of mobility) are rarely discussed. Only a few of all the selected picture books touch upon biological ageing. Among the selected 104 picture books published in the U.K., only three describe older people with a disease and a further three the process of dying. Among 73 Slovenian books, two describe older people with a disease and a further two the process of dying.⁴

Most of the books that present older people with a disease focus on the presentation of age-related diseases. We have, however, identified two exceptions: Ian Whybrow’s *Harry and the Robots* (2000) and Emica Antončič’s *Dedek ima gripo / Grampa Got the Flu* (1993). Both picture books manage to present the selected disease, a flu in one case and less specified, but more serious respiratory disease in another, accurately and realistically. Respiratory diseases are common with younger as well as with older people, which means that presentation of older character with respiratory disease is very accurate from the biological perspective and at the same time offers a good platform for the child’s understanding—they all had cough once, they already have a preconception about what is going on. However, it is not the disease, which

4 One of them, Nigel Gray’s *Little Bear’s Granddad* (1999) / *Medvedkov dedek* (1999), was translated into Slovenian from English and was present in both national selections.

is in the focus of the book, but the warm and caring relationship between grandparent and grandchild.

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is also in the focus of the three picture books presenting elderly with age-related diseases. All three books present a grandparent with dementia. It is one of the diseases that came into focus of social concern and scientific studies with the recent increased longevity of the world's population. Dementia is "defined as an acquired global impairment of cognitive function, sufficient to impinge on everyday activities, occurring in clear consciousness" (World Health Organization; American Psychiatric Association 1993), with memory impairment as an essential component of the diagnosis (Woods 2005). People with dementia often lose parts of their memory, such as the recognition of beloved ones, and the ability to express their feelings. These disturbing consequences of dementia can seriously affect children, thus, the focus on the changing relationship between a child and his/her grandparent with dementia, taken by the authors of the three picture books, is not surprising.

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In *My Little Grandmother Often Forgets* (2007), Reeve Lindbergh manages to create a touching and emotional story about the relationship between a boy and his ageing grandmother, combined with a very exact presentation of the physiological signs of dementia and its immediate consequences. However, the same does not hold for the other two picture books. In *Mile-High Apple Pie* (2005), Laura Langston bases her presentation of dementia on the wrong symptoms as the main character's grandmother starts mixing concepts within the same categories, e.g., apples with pears, which is not characteristic for any type of dementia. In *Recept za ljubezen / A Recipe for Love* (2012) of Mojiceja Podgoršek we follow a story of a little girl and her grandparents, who leave their home for a nursing home because of their illness. The grandfather is first hospitalized because of serious problems connected with dementia but shows no symptoms of dementia later in the story. The story thus implies that his condition improved, which is, in the case of dementia, unfortunately impossible. In both picture books, focused on social and emotional aspects of the relationship between a child and the elderly person, the scientific aspect is left behind, leaving young readers with an inaccurate image of dementia.

While death is not a particularly rare topic of children's picture books, authors often focus, not on death itself, but on the time after death (see Leavy 1996; Durant 2004) or present death metaphorically (see Puttock 2006). Four books from our selection presented the process of dying itself, including some elements of biological ageing: Margaret Wild's *Old Pig* (1995), David Macaulay's *Angelo* (2002), Nigel Gray's *Little Bear's Grandad* (1999) / *Medvedkov dedek* (1999) and Antonie Schneider's *Mislili bomo nate, babica* / *We Will Think of You, Grandma* (2010). In all four books, the elderly characters die "of old age," a term with which we describe the fact that people die "simply" because they are old.⁵ While Gray's, Schneider's, and Macaulay's picture books are all focused on the relationship between the dying and their loved-ones, as well as on the main character's perception of his/her upcoming death, the processes of dying and therewith connected impairment of functions are presented accurately and serve as a realistic background for the reconsideration of death as a farewell from the beloved and the memories and good deeds that stay behind. The same cannot be said for Wild's *Old Pig*. A remarkable feature in *Old Pig* is "the fast forward" of Old Pig's disease and death. The story begins with Old Pig in full health, glasses being the only sign of old age, until one morning she doesn't get up. Despite the suddenness, Old Pig and her granddaughter do not question what is going on, they don't call for a doctor and they don't communicate about the disease. They try to suppress all sad feelings and, as it is written on the back of the book, celebrate the world:

When she got home she tucked the rest of her money into Granddaughter's purse: "Keep it safe," she said, "and use it wisely." "I will," said Granddaughter. She tried to smile but her mouth wobbled, and Old Pig said, "There, there, no tears." "I promise," said Granddaughter, but it was the hardest promise she'd ever had to make. (Wild 1995, 15)

5 "The International Classification of Diseases does allow for old age—or, technically, senility without mention of psychosis—to be recorded [as the cause of death], but less than 1 percent of death certificates in the UK show this cause [...] Death from old age means, in effect, that a person's hold on life has become so precarious that, had it not been this particular cause of death today, it would have been another tomorrow." (Kirkwood 1999, 22)

Thus, a book discussing death, introduces suppression of sadness, of mentioning death, and of discussing illness.

3.2. Findings of the analysis

I propose that we can sense the denialism of ageing already at the level of an analysis of the general emplacement of the elderly in picture books. Older people are usually presented as main characters, but very rarely as a part of the child's context, as someone who just happens to be old. This can be interpreted as a reflection of how we perceive their position within society: the elderly are often perceived as outsiders, as a specific rather than an integral part of society. Such a perception of the elderly can be further observed as we analyze the presentation of the older people with a disease—here the majority of books is focused on age-related diseases. Although it is often the elderly that get ill, the authors, when possible, most often base their depiction of a disease on younger characters, which are, we propose, considered easier to identify with.

This is in accord with the point of view of age studies scholars, who stress that within our society, older people are commonly perceived as the others (Brand 2016; Stoller 2014; Gullette 2004; Woodward 1999; Beauvoir 1972). Gullette argues that age acts as a physically universal experience as well as a social category of otherness (2004). Elderly are legally equal to other grown-ups—they are responsible for their own actions, they can vote, participate in politics, etc.—, however, they are not treated as such. When they express feelings and wishes equal to that of younger people, such as lust, love, or jealousy, their behavior is considered absurd, comic, or even disgusting (Beauvoir 1972). Rubin argues that “the stereotype of the ‘sexless older years,’ [...] has placed its stamp upon our entire culture.” (1968) What the society expects of the elderly, is to act as springs of deeper wisdom, released of all carnal desires (Beauvoir 1972). These social expectations again resonate in the analyzed children's literature, where older people are often presented as those who possess special wisdom, an insight into the true nature of things, into the natural order.

The fact that the presentation of older people in picture books is closely connected to their role in society is further exemplified by the difference in the

presentation of the elderly in picture books published either in Slovenia or in the U.K.; as in Slovenian picture books the elderly are most often presented as surrogate parents, while in the U.K. picture books they are relieved of this duty and depicted as being similar to children. Such a presentation reflects the role of grandparents in Slovenia, where, until recently, the elderly after retirement very often took care of their grandchildren, while in the U.K. the daily-care for preschool children was either institutionalized or taken care of by stay-home or partly-working mothers, a phenomenon quite uncommon in the Slovenian environment (see, for example, Republika Slovenija – Statistični urad 2019).

336 As we presumed, denialism was further identifiable as we analyzed the presentation of biological ageing in the picture books. In our selection, fewer than 10 % include any presentation of elements of the biological ageing. Despite the far more established science of ageing as well as the culture of communication between scientists and the lay public in the U.K. in comparison to Slovenia, there is no significant difference between the two. The exact analysis of the reasons behind it exceeds the scope of this study. However, we suggest that it could be connected with the persistence of the denialism of ageing within both societies, which cannot be simply addressed by the specific media coverage of scientific work, but would have to be more generally addressed in the media to reach those not specifically interested in science and those most likely to escape into denialism.

Picture books most often present cultural and social attitudes towards ageing, older people, and death, but very rarely include any physiological descriptions of the process of ageing. Even, when authors choose to describe some biological aspects of ageing, for example, age-related diseases or illness as such, they often ignore or circumvent biological facts. For example, Laura Langston prefers to invent a symptom of dementia rather than look up an actually existing one. Furthermore, in *Recept za Ljubezen / A Recipe for Love* the main character's grandmother has apparently a very serious disease, which hinders her independence, however, it is described solely as a disease the name of which the child cannot remember. Similarly, the pigs in Wild's *Old Pig* have no intention to look for the cause, the name, or the cure for the sudden disease. Thus, a (grown-up) reader has the feeling that the old pig has a chronic disease, which, in accordance with the general character of the book, the pigs do not name or discuss; just as they do not discuss death or sadness.

It seems that when communicating with children we are generally prepared to discuss old age only as a time of peace, freedom, and wisdom, and present death more or less just metaphorically as a goodbye, as a dance with the stars. We are trying to avoid a discussion on the topics such as ageing and death with children, especially on the level when we have to face the unembellished reality, such as symptoms of age-related diseases or the process of dying. Opening doors to scientific perception of ageing often means opening doors to further questions that demand further consideration and do not allow an escape into denialism. Quality picture books such as Lindberg's *My Little Grandmother Often Forgets* or Macaulay's *Angelo* reveal the elephant in the living-room for what it is. Although social, cultural, and personal attitudes towards ageing present the main focus of these books, they successfully entangle them with scientifically accurate presentations of biological ageing, which is an important part of ageing, just as ageing, diseases, and death are important parts of our lives.

4. Opening a dialog on ageing with the help of selected book titles

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The analysis of the selected picture books helped us identify some staggering aspects of the denialism of ageing—most importantly, the general emplacement of the elderly at the edge of society and the persistent ignorance of the biological aspects of ageing. However, it also helped us find some high-quality titles of children's literature that discuss life, death, and age in all their complexity. These were crucial as we aimed to develop materials for pedagogical praxis with a potential to open a dialog on ageing and offer an alternative to the denialism of ageing.

From 2016, we conducted three annual projects supported by the Slovenian National Committee for UNESCO: *Opening a Dialog on Ageing with Books* (2016), *With Books and Films to Science and Ethics* (2017) and *Tales of Age* (2018). The main parts of the projects were workshops, aimed at different age groups (from primary school children to the elderly). The workshops were based on the premise that quality literature can provide us with a comprehensive understanding of the ageing process (McGuire 2016) and has the ability to co-define our attitude towards the ageing and elderly

(Hollis-Sawyer and Cuevas 2013; Ansello 1997). They were focused on two aspects of ageing connected with the denialism of ageing, as identified within the analysis of picture books:

- the social perception of the elderly and the problematic emplacement of the elderly within the society; to address these, we have selected some quality book titles that depict active ageing and intergenerational relationships;

- the ignorance of the biological aspects of ageing; to address this, we have selected some quality book titles that depict physiological symptoms of ageing, age-related diseases, and the process of death.

The selection of book titles used at the workshops (in the Appendix 1 and also on: <https://tinabilban.wixsite.com/zgodbestaranja/izkusnje-iz-preteklih-let>) consisted of picture books, children's and Y.A. novels, and novels aimed at general public, in accordance to the specific reading tastes and abilities of the target public, as well as the goals of the workshops.⁶

338 It was our aim to open an interdisciplinary dialog on different aspects of ageing and thus to intertwine the discussion on literary depiction of ageing with personal experiences of the participants, scientific aspects of ageing, and philosophical/ethical reconsideration of some aspects of ageing.

4.1. Workshops with younger children (ages 8–10)

Workshops with younger children were based on quality picture books, which, with their combination of illustration and text and their small volume, enabled the reading of books at the workshops, in groups, combining critical reading with games such as children forming their own story with the help of illustrations before reading the text itself. Thus, it was possible for children

⁶ The selection of picture books was based on the results of the 2014 research, supplemented with some quality new titles. The children's and Y.A. novels were selected with the help of the Pionirska archive and its electronic search engine that enables searching for key words, age groups, and identifies recommended quality titles, and finally chosen on the basis of our expertise in the field of quality children's literature and performance of reading workshops. The selected novels aimed at general public were chosen on the basis of our personal expertise in the fields of contemporary literature as well as some recommendations of other experts, such as editors or reading groups' mentors.

to engage more with the books and their message. Furthermore, as children formed their own stories to accompany the illustrations, we were able to get some insight into their perception of ageing; for example, children presented with Blake's illustrations of *Mrs Armitage*, a very active character, who is surfing, cycling, rowing, probably all at once, interpreted the character as being middle-aged (despite the grey hair and wrinkles, which they interpreted as early symptoms of ageing) male (despite the long pony tail, which they interpreted as personal style of the curious character). Later, when reading the story, they were, however, surprised that the extremely active character in the story is actually an older lady.

On the second visit, we organized intergenerational workshops as we had asked the children to invite their grandparents or other older friends, relatives, neighbors, etc. We first encouraged them to read the selected picture books together, discuss the presented topics, and answer some questions on what they have just read. Later, we performed a quiz on biological ageing. The quiz on some basic knowledge from the field of biological ageing (with questions, such as "Who ages?," "Why do we live longer as people a hundred years ago?," "What are age-related diseases?," "How can we effect the ageing of our brains?") was actually a form of a lecture as every question-answer segment was followed by a short presentation of scientific data and their explanation. With the quiz, we engaged the children to listen more carefully and stimulated intergenerational collaboration, as children and their guests were taking parts in the quiz in mixed groups of children and the elderly. Furthermore, the quiz provided us with further insights into occurrence and forms of the denialism of ageing: when presented with the question "Do some cognitive functions, for example, memorizing, generally decrease with age?," some of the older guests quite actively advocated their opinion that they do not. They were unwilling to accept that their brains age as well as other parts of our body. Ageing of brain cells is connected with a specific stigma and we were faced with very strong denialism. For example, when presented with a MR-photo of the brains of an 80-year-old, compared with the photo of a 20-year-old, which clearly showed the effect of the brain cells' ageing and dying, the older participants of the quiz were willing to accept that some changes in cognitive functions show at the age of 80, but not at 60 or 70, which was generally their age. Such a reaction was in

accordance with our previous detection of the connection between the denialism of ageing and the ignorance regarding the biological aspects of ageing: biology of ageing confronts us with clear symptoms of ageing that do not allow much space for different interpretations, if we want to succeed with the denialism of ageing, the biological facts, or at least some of them, have to be ignored.

340 The quiz was also an excellent indicator of the role literature can have in providing children with a specific image of age and ageing. When answering the questions, children often based their answers on information provided by the picture books they have just read. The power of books was especially evident in the case of a short illustrated story *Človek ne spomni se / A Man Does Not Remember* (2011) by Katarina Kesič Dimić: a story focused on the relationship between a young girl and her grandmother who has dementia, starts with the grandmother's sudden illness, which is the reason that the grandmother has to move to a nursing home. However, later, when the girl visits the grandmother in the nursing home, the disease, which affects their relationship most, is dementia. Thus, the pupils, reading the book, made a conclusion that the disease the grandmother suddenly got and because of which she moved to the nursing home was dementia and it was almost impossible to persuade them that dementia progresses very gradually. The knowledge presented within the lecture could never have had the same effect as the knowledge incorporated into a story. When reading, children identify themselves with the characters from the book, they experience the events presented in books almost as vividly as through first-hand experiences. With the selected quality picture books we have provided children with experiences that exceeded the denialism of ageing (e.g., books discussing age symptoms, age-related diseases, etc.) and general social attitude towards the elderly (e.g., books that present intergenerational relationships, active ageing, and the elderly as an important integral part of the contemporary society).

4.2. Workshops with older children (ages 11–12)

For the workshops with older children, we prepared a list of quality children's and Y.A. novels of different genres and difficulties and let the children choose which title to read. During the two months, more or less all

the children participating in the project (approximately 50 children) read at least two books from the list. Against the mentors' expectations, otherwise reluctant readers did not only read the books, unconnected with the school curriculum, but were also willing to take an active part in the discussion about the books and topics they open. We propose that this success is connected with the possibility of, to some extent, free choice, which book to read, as well as with the interdisciplinarity of our approach: we were not solely interested in books and reading, but were constantly connecting the knowledge provided by books with children's personal experiences, scientific facts, ethical reconsiderations, etc., thus, we could address the children of different talents and interests to actively participate in all aspects of the workshops, using their interests as the entry point for the particular individual.

Workshops were structured similarly to the workshops for younger children with an additional introductory meeting when we offered the first bunch of books to children. With the selected books, such as Marjolijn Hof's *Pravila treh / The Rules of Three* (2015), we have managed to open a dialog on some taboo topics, crucial to our social every day, but rarely discussed, such as: whose is the decision about an old person's last days. The masterful depiction of topics, such as family struggle with the grand-grandfather's dementia or an old man's decision not to go to the nursing home but to meet his end in the mountains in accordance to his life-long philosophy, withdrew the social stigma from the topics otherwise considered, if nothing else, inappropriate for children. Children connected the stories with their own experiences, formed they own opinions and critically evaluated the actions of the characters as well as our social attitude towards these questions.

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Again, the immense educational potential of quality books could be noticed during the quiz. For example, children reading novels presenting people with dementia (for example, Ivona Brezinová's *Bombonček za dedija Edija / Candy for Grandpa Edi*), were able to identify particular symptoms of the characters and connect them with a more general scientific description of dementia symptoms.

However, the comparison of the results of the quizzes conducted at the workshops with younger and older children, revealed better overall results of the younger children, especially when it came to the topics connected with the

denialism of ageing, such as the stigma connected with the age-related decrease of some cognitive functions. As similar results were provided within the school class 1, where numerous older guests joined the quiz, and the school class 2, with only one older guest, the choice of answers cannot be (solely) connected with the influence of the guests. We propose that social patterns influence the individual's perception and behavior in an age-dependent manner. On the one hand, older children are already under the influence of social prejudices and demands, thus they are constantly on the watch for the trick-questions, where the answers, which seem right, might prove to be socially unacceptable. On the other hand, younger children are more open to new knowledge, while their view is far less pre-defined with social prejudices and expectations.

4.3. Workshops with students of educational programs

342 The workshops with children provided us with an insight into the importance to open a dialog on ageing and offer an alternative to the denialism of ageing at an early age, when children are not yet burdened with social prejudices, expectations, and fears. Thus, we have decided to address the group of young people, who will have the most influence on our young in the future—namely, the students of the educational programs. We have organized lectures for future primary school teachers and workshops for future kindergarten teachers. As I am, in the present paper, interested in active engagement of the participants with books, I will hereby present only the latter.

We organized workshops for the students of the High School for Education and Gymnasium Ljubljana. The students were addressed in a twofold manner, as our primary target public and as future kindergarten teachers and thus mediators of the gained knowledge. Thus, we have provided them with two different selections of books:

1. With the selected quality novels and Y.A. novels in order to open a debate on their personal perception of ageing and age, ethical, social, and scientific aspects of ageing and age. The students actively engaged in the dialog, including discussion of some delicate and taboo topics, including social attitude towards the elderly as redundant or the right of the elderly to choose their final destiny. Again, the discussion, guided by different entry-points, from personal

experiences to literature interpretation, reconsideration of scientific facts, or ethical perspectives, enabled the young with different interests to actively participate. According to their mentor, we managed to engage some of the students, who otherwise very rarely participate in discussions connected with their school curriculum.

2. With the selected picture books aimed at kindergarten children in order to provide the future kindergarten teachers with some insights they could later use when working with children. The students were obliged to prepare a work plan for kindergarten activities connected with the selected picture books. Although the students were very open to the discussion of ageing, age, and death at the previous workshops, they had more restraints when preparing a discussion on these topics for younger children. While they were eager to discuss intergenerational relationships, active ageing, or even age-related diseases with younger children, they were less confident or even less prepared to discuss more disturbing parts of reality, such as the processes of dying and death, with them. Some of the books identified as problematic by the students were previously well excepted by the children—e.g., at workshops with younger children a year before or at some other reading events, including reading events for pre-school children, conducted either by the project-team members or their professional colleagues. The denialism of ageing is often connected with the reluctance to open a discussion of these topics with children. Burdened with the fear of ageing, people consider these topics too heavy, disturbing, or incomprehensible for children and are not prepared to delve further into the topic.

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4.4. Workshops with the elderly

Within the second year of our projects, The University for the Third Part of Life expressed an interest for similar workshops to be organized for their students. Again, we opened a discussion with a selection of books: novels, as well as Y.A. novels and picture books, which enabled some insight into Y.A.'s and children's perspective of age, ageing, and intergenerational relationships. The participants, some of them reading picture books primarily to themselves, for the first time, appreciated these new insights, which encouraged a vibrant discussion on the complex perception of age, ageing, and death, co-defined by

specific attitudes of different generations. Connecting the content of the books with their own experiences, the participants became aware of these different age-related attitudes, including small children's unselective perception of life, before the formation of fear of ageing and death and escapism into denialism. Thus, we could appreciate the wide potential the children's and Y.A. literature has for the overcoming of the denialism of ageing, including the ability to change the perspective of the elderly.

5. Conclusion

344 We have proposed that due to specific nature of literature, it can enable us an insight into the life-world we meet in, while at the same time it has the ability to co-define the readers' life-world, influence their perception and action. Based on this proposition, we have employed literature to face the two main challenges connected with the overcoming of the denialism of ageing: first, to identify the denialism of ageing and the different forms it takes on, and, second, to project a pedagogical praxis that can successfully open a dialog on ageing and offer an alternative to denialism.

The analysis of the presentation of ageing and age in picture books provided us an insight into the scope and nature of the denialism of ageing. We have connected the lack of the elderly characters in supporting roles with the position of the elderly within our society: generally we do not perceive the elderly as an integral part of our society, but perceive them as the others (Brand 2016; Stoller 2014; Gullette 2004; Woodward 1999; Beauvoir 1972). The social divide between different generations, connected with the disintegration of extended families and the institutionalization of the elderly, supports the denialism of ageing, as it enables the young to keep the more obvious reminders of old age and its symptoms out of sight. Now, the younger lack a complex image of the old age. With the lack of understanding, the fear, the main reason behind the denialism of ageing, naturally grows. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the lack of depiction of and discussion on the biological aspects of ageing, including ignorance of biological facts when discussing topics that touch upon the biological aspects of ageing (Langston 2005), circumvention and suppression of the questions connected with the biological aspects of ageing (Wild 1995; Podgoršek 2012).

We propose that this is closely connected to the denialism of ageing as the physiological symptoms of ageing are the hardest to deny and they face us with unembellished reality as they present life in all of its complexity.

These insights were crucial as we prepared the workshops for different target groups, the aim of which was to open a dialog on ageing with the selected high-quality literature titles. The selected titles as well as the organization of work were prepared in accordance with the two topics essentially connected with the denialism of ageing as identified by the previous analysis: first, the problematic emplacement of the elderly within the society and therewith connected need to establish firm intergenerational relationships, and, second, the ignorance of the biological aspects of ageing. The workshops met our main objectives: after reading the books, the participants were prepared to share their own experiences and opinions, including comprehensive opinions on otherwise tabooed topics. Knowledge provided by books was later connected with some further scientific facts about ageing and/or philosophical discussion about some aspects of ageing: from the discussion on what ageing actually is and/or what it means to us, how we experience ageing, and how our experience of ageing changes, to the question whose decision is it how to spend the late years and/or how to prepare for, or how to meet death.

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Furthermore, the workshops allowed us to get some further insight into the forms of the denialism of ageing, for example, the extremely strong denialism of the ageing of the brain and therewith connected impairment of cognitive functions. Our approach was more successful in the case of younger children, who are, I conclude, not yet burdened with social expectations, fears, and prejudices—they were prepared to openly discuss different aspects of ageing, were genuinely interested in the topic, and very open to the new information, especially information provided in the form of a story. The workshops also provided us with an insight into the immense potential of children's and Y.A. literature when we are to open a dialog on ageing with the elderly: quality children's and Y.A. literature presents the reader with the child's or Y.A.'s perspective, it connects the older reader with his/her younger self and through that with younger generations. This is a good starting point for the overcoming of the denialism of ageing as it can present the elderly an alternative primary understanding of age and death, not yet burdened

with fear and therewith connected denialism. Furthermore, it is an excellent starting point for an intergenerational dialog and therewith connected gerontological ethics.

As I have stressed in the “Introduction,” ageing is one of the most important phenomena in contemporary society. It defines who we are, how we perceive the world and the others:

aging is a function of personal life, and that personal life is social all the way down: experience is qualitatively different as we age and as we build a past; age is intrinsic to personal identity; finally our sense of age is formed in relation to others and in our dependency on others. (Bavidge 2016, 222–223)

346 As more and more people live long enough to await the old age, today we also speak about the phenomenon of the aged society. The phenomenon of ageing thus importantly affects our perception of society and projection of the future society we would like to live in; constructive intergenerational dialog is necessary if we want to project a successful and inclusive future society. As Søren Holm argues in his essay “What do the Old Owe to the Young?,” “the old do have a set of both formal and substantive obligations towards the young” (2016, 398), from equal respect and equal rights, to fairness in equal societal participation, fair distribution of resources and fair assessment of claims, to the benefit of their friendship and knowledge (399). Here, we could recall Eugen Fink’s view on education. Fink primarily understands education as an inter-generational relationship. For him education is to be found “wherever a difference between the generations exist, where those who are older feel responsible for the younger” (Fink 1959). However, as Holm concludes:

It is important to see that all of these obligations can, and should be reciprocated by the young. The young, for instance, owe the old equal respect and equal rights, and they owe them to respond appropriately to offers of friendship. (2016, 399)

The inter-generational dialog has to be based on experience of oneself and the others, as Silvia Stoller argues in “We in the Other, and the Child in Us” (2014), where she outlines a gerontological ethics based on phenomenological reconsideration of age and time in Beauvoir (1972) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). In *The Coming of Age*, Simone de Beauvoir appeals to the reader to recognize oneself in one’s older other and thus to identify with the elderly as our future-selves. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty appeals to the reader to remain in contact with our younger self. Silvia Stoller connects their lines of thought. The young should identify with the elderly as their future-self, while the elderly should identify themselves with the young as their past-self (2014). The understanding of ageing, of the aged people, and of the aged society is based on grasping the experience of ageing and of understanding of ourselves (as those who live in time and are thus *a priori* set in a dialog with ageing): “our lives are ageing lives” (Bavidge 2016, 211).

Philosophy can offer a phenomenology of aging: it could describe the structures of the experience of aging. Or, to avoid the assumption that experience is something subjective going on inside our heads, we might say philosophy could describe the structures of the ways in which the world becomes available to us as we age. (Bavidge 2016, 208)

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However, the thematization of ageing is not possible, if we are unwilling to discuss ageing, if we deny ageing and its symptoms. The inter-generational dialog is not possible, if we consider ageing as a topic inappropriate for younger generations, as the subject that only concerns the old.

Here, we propose, lies the potential of quality literature, which can help us open a dialog on ageing and can help us identify ourselves with the other, to become aware of their position within the society and their perspective of the world. While the analysis of literature and the workshops based on the selected literary works that thematize ageing, the main part of our research, do not directly follow philosophical methodology, they are based on a philosophical position—on our need to thematize the phenomena of ageing, our experience of ageing, etc.—, and open the path for a philosophical discussion on ageing, our fear of ageing, and the denialism of this fear.

We believe that within the workshops we have constituted a pedagogical praxis that can be successful in overcoming the denialism of ageing. However, we are highly aware that if we were to observe long-term changes in the attitude towards ageing, it would be necessary to perform such workshops more regularly, for example, to include them in the school curriculum.⁷ Furthermore, it is a praxis that should support, and be at the same time enriched by, a philosophical reconsideration of ageing, with a comprehensive thematization of the subjective and inter-subjective experiences of ageing and age.

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⁷ Our attempt towards this goal was actualized in the didactic manual *Knjige na temo staranja in starosti / Books on the Topic of Ageing and Age* (Bilban and Jamnik 2018), where we gathered some quality literature titles used at the workshops together with our experiences, expert knowledge, and recommendations on how to work with these books as we open a dialog on ageing with different target publics. It was our aim that the manual, primarily intended for teachers, librarians, and reading mentors, would lead to such a long-term project and would provide us with further insights into the prospects of the presented pedagogical praxis.

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Appendix 1 | Dodatek 1

Literature used at the workshops

- Picture books:

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REVIEWS | RECENZIJE

Małgorzata Przanowska: LISTENING AND ACOUOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

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Without listening, there would be no education; it not only centrally co-constitutes the traditional processes of the transmission of knowledge in a classroom setting, but also, in the wider sense, in an almost all-encompassing manner, fundamentally—from (before) birth to (after) death—co-determines human existence, insofar as, as beings of language, of word, we dwell within the communicatively and communally shared (life-)world. Listening—as the opening of being, as an experiential openness towards the other—is a medium, the inter-mediative midst of inter-personal, inter-worldly mediation. We (can) learn, and learn to teach, and teach, (only—or, at least, primarily—) through—and by—listening.

The recently published book entitled *Listening and Acouological Education* by the Polish philosopher and composer Małgorzata Przanowska, assistant professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of Warsaw, attempts to think and rethink the (basic, basal) problem(s) of pedagogy from the perspective of a discussion of listening as one of the essential phenomena defining the human(ness of) being-in-the-world. Whilst, on the one hand, the author, following the foundational hermeneutical and phenomenological

precepts, attentively and minutely discloses the variously differentiated, yet mutually interconnected dimensions of the phenomenon in question, she, on the other hand, upon such a detailed deliberation, outlines the principal traits of a theoretical and practical reconsideration of education grounded in the dialogical and dialectical—in itself always already educational—experience of listening. In the concluding chapter, the “coda” of the book, the author, therefore, thus succinctly circumscribes the proposed concept of “acouological education,” of education—as the prefix suggests—that finds itself anchored, that finds its own anchor in listening: “Acouological education is the education that is immersed in and directed by the *akroatic logos*. It realizes itself in the task of learning to listen to the wor(l)d, to others, and to ourselves.” (278)

Although the present review cannot exhaust the extensive wealth of Przanowska’s analyzes—nor could it ever endeavor to do so—I would like to, nonetheless, if only through a brief and rough sketch, tentatively denote the main thematic emphases offered by the author.

356 Upon the “overture” of the introduction, leading the reader—by a preliminary discussion of preceding approaches towards the issue in comparison with the presented stance—to the heart of the (“subject”) matter, the book consists of two parts, linked by an “interlude” devoted to a deliberation upon the Greek notion of *mousikē*: the first part is dedicated to “The Phenomenological Hermeneutics of Listening,” whereas the second part bears the title “Toward Acouological Education.”

Delving more and more profoundly into realms binding listening and education, concentrically expanding horizons of the reciprocal relation between them, the first part, its three chapters, commences, taking as a departure point, as an inspiration, the juxtaposition of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s and Jean-Luc Nancy’s contrasting, but compatible philosophical thoughts, with an elaboration of the dialectics of question and answer: supplementing Gadamer’s idea of a hermeneutical conversation, where crucial importance is entrusted to understanding, with Nancy’s descriptive exposition of ontological tonality, the author underlines the audibility of things within what she comes to call “the wor(l)d” expressing thus the meaningful mutual permeation—the belonging-together and the co-appurtenance—of word(s) we utter and

world(s) we inhabit, “we,” who partake of them, participate in them. The approximative movement of the second chapter delineates, on the basis of the debated hermeneutic priority of the question, the ontological and existential layers of listening imparting onto education the character of transformative experience that correspondingly, insofar as it, on both parts, evokes the necessity to respond and to cultivate the ear, engages students and educators alike, the learning and the teaching, the taught and the learned: “The *event* character of questioning is hospitable and receptive to the advent of the unexpected. It enables teaching and learning, in the to-and-fro of conversation, to become more open to the transformative promise.” (82) The subsequent chapter concludes the first part with a comprehensive hermeneutical-phenomenological explication of the various(ly) inter-related forms or aspects of listening, ranging—to enumerate merely a few—from the comparatively simple unconscious receiving of surrounding sounds in unwitting listening, through the intentional or attentive listening to the content of what is being heard and said, which finds its hermeneutical variation in the understanding or interpretive listening, through instrumental listening, through critical or interrogative listening, which accurately analyze and radically question what gives itself onto them, to the remarkably complex modalities of (psychologically or philosophically) therapeutic listening that—akin to listening to music, akin to musical listening—lead to the ultimate recognition of “the musicality of the wor(l)d as an invitation to participate in the wor(l)d differently.” (172)

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Before venturing a closer reflection upon the concept of acouological education in the second part of the book, Przanowska interpolates a chapter on the meaning of the ancient *mousikē*: such a re-actualization of certain notions of the great Greek philosophers—especially in the struggle to grasp the revolutionary trends of the Athenian “New Music”—, on the one hand, not only proffers a historical backdrop for the author’s own efforts, but also, on the other hand, points to the trans-formative harmonization—the unity in the diversity—of all the human being’s (bodily, intellectual, and spiritual) faculties through listening effectuated in (the pedagogical) practice.

In accordance with the contemplation upon the manifold dimensions of the listening phenomenon, the two chapters of the second part represent at once a further convolution and a final evolution of the book’s topic exemplifying

the theoretically elaborated with the practicality of realized educational courses. Whereas the author, first, as a metaphor for the performativity of the pedagogical process, discusses the experience of translation, parallelizing—and critically assessing—the myths concerning translation (in the translational studies) and education (in the academic pedagogy), in order to, confronted with the dilemmas of decision-making that each translation endeavor entails, contour the—to a certain degree “ideal(ized)”-figure of the “Meaningful Translator-Educator” (221 ff.), whose diaretical, diagnostical, and dialogical capabilities of listening illustrate a true (hermeneutic) dialectician, the following, penultimate chapter culminates, on the pathway(s) towards the sense of acouological education debating the relationship between philosophy and pedagogy, which, strained by numerous reductionisms, may find (final) resolution in the dynamics of the “in-between,” entrusted to a hermeneutics of education, in the reappraisal and reevaluation of the tactfulness of taste as an intellectual faculty of differentiation and a moral judgement guided by formative educational listening: “Taste is cultivated in the community spending time together. More critical than acquiring rules or the knowledge in advance and taking it for granted is the *sensu plenius* being-with-others. Education as the cultivation deprived of the sense of taste, *sensus communis*, sound understanding, tact, and right judgment is instead an instruction and senseless, technical socialization.” (270)

The concluding “coda” of the book entitled “Acouo-Educator”—closing, in a similar manner as the introduction had been opened, *in medias res*, open-endedly: with a parable—briefly summarizes the undertaken voyage towards a re-thinking of education from the perspective of listening as a way of being: “Thanks to listening, everything that resides in language – in our wor(l)d – can be understood.” (277)

Małgorzata Przanowska’s treatise on *Listening and Acouological Education* is a thoroughly researched and masterfully written work that presents, with its undeniable underlying interdisciplinary nature, taking into account not only the fields of philosophy and pedagogy, but also of musicology or psychology, an invaluable, original contribution to existing and subsequent considerations regarding listening and education and (also) the inter-twining of their inter-relation.

Adhering to the principle of the hermeneutic circle, I would like to conclude the review of the book with a citation, binding its ending with the beginning, binding its beginning with the ending, appealing to potential readers, inviting them to participate in the conversation: “Questions and answers are audible in ourselves; they resound in us. We are listening.” (58)

Andrej Božič

CONVERSATION | RAZGOVOR

UDC: 2-277.2

Małgorzata Hołda

THE POETICS OF EDUCATION

IN CONVERSATION WITH ANDRZEJ WIERCIŃSKI'S *HERMENEUTICS OF EDUCATION*

Hermeneutics of Education: Exploring and Experiencing the Unpredictability of Education (2019b) is an uncompromising book of inviolable tenor and significance in the field of hermeneutic education. It is also an unprecedented and exceptionally far-reaching voice in the scholarship on education in general. Its problematic not only inspires the reader to reconsider the exigencies of hermeneutic education in today's academic milieu, whose growing alienation from lived experience is a challenge for teachers and students alike, but invites us to respond to education's many and disquieting voices in the true spirit of Gadamerian hermeneutics as the art of conversation. A response to these voices is skillfully teased out, bit by bit, in the compelling diversity of the book's chapters that range from Gadamer's view of the lingual nature of human existence and his insistence on language as conversation, via Heidegger's crucial notion of calculative and non-calculative/contemplative modes of thinking (*berechnendes* and *besinnliches Denken*), right through to rich insights into Ricoeur's anthropology and phenomenological hermeneutics, and to pioneering reflections on Hegel and psychoanalysis, to name but a few of its central issues. The polyphonic nature of the book accounts for the intimate liaison and connectivity between speaking, thinking, and understanding,

conversation

which Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, in their inimitable yet complementary ways, recognize as being central to a hermeneutic investigation.

362 Wierciński's book is an unparalleled meditation on what it actually means to be a human being, whose being-in-the-world is, for that reason, a presence that is characterized by a restless search for understanding, wisdom, and growth, and thus for education as an ontologically corroborated mode of existence. It is only *in* and *through* this unflagging pursuit to understand reality, the Other, and the self, that our being as a human being comes to its full realization. Education is thus an expression of our humanity. In its embracement of this uniquely human quest for development, *Hermeneutics of Education* engages us to see and to understand that it is the hermeneutic welcoming of the heterogeneity of being a human being and of our being-in-the-world that creates a true possibility to view education as a mode of being, and to benefit fully from a thus defined stance. Assisting us on our journey through philosophical hermeneutics, hermeneutic anthropology, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, as well as inviting us to appreciate poetic artistry and theological reflection, Wierciński makes us dwell in the depths of this rich reservoir of human thought and follow the hermeneutic recognition of the indispensability of such diverse, but also intersecting, paths of thinking that are brought together in the creative act of reaching out to what it means to be a human being. It is the reaching out for understanding of who we are as human beings that advances Wierciński's hermeneutic research. Reaching out for an understanding of *who* I am necessitates the orchestrating of many voices, as Wierciński does in his book, to the effect of edging nearer to answering the question about our humanity (and therefore also the educational project) in light of it.

Ever since the times of Aristotle, the stark differentiation made between the poetic and phronetic modes of being has marked what we understand by the imaginative (creative) impulse and provided the practical discernment for our understanding of reality (Aristotle 1962, 5–6). The tension between *phronesis* and *poesis* situates itself within the horizons of dichotomous thinking. Being in conversation with Wierciński's *Hermeneutics of Education* encourages us to grasp that it is only through thinking-the-difference (*das Differenzdenken*)

that we can understand reality's phenomenality more fully (cf. Wierciński 2019a, 61–91). Thinking-the-difference embraces such an understanding of what is on the other side of the divide that it does not make us stop at the dichotomous partition of the ways of thinking, does not lock the difference up in its differentiating propensity, and does not thereby coerce us to succumbing to the totality of its powerful differentiation. To employ thinking-the-difference in a response to Wierciński's book grants the reader a unique opportunity of experiencing this thinking's empowerment (*die Ermächtigung des Differenzdenkens*), and enables us to recognize the poetic pole of the educative venture as a legitimate space for an in-depth understanding that education embraces our reaching out for an understanding of a human being in its being-in-the-world. Thinking the two sides, thinking-the-poetic-pole, as reflected in the title of this review—"The Poetics of Education"—ensues from the conviction that, when we remain within the horizon of the inevitable tension, we can follow, as evidenced in Wierciński's book, to best advantage pedagogy's opposing paths of practical wisdom and creative (imaginative, poetic) ability.

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Being in conversation with *Hermeneutics of Education* encourages further reflection on the opposition between *phronesis* and *poesis*. Viewing Wierciński's book in light of Ricoeur's re-articulation of *phronesis*, which encompasses a less extreme approach to the demarcation lines between *phronesis* and *poesis*, sparks off a recognition that the poetic is one of *phronesis*' irreducible constituents. Ricoeur contends that *phronesis* engages with the fundamentally tragic situation of moral incommensurability and responds to this tragic situation by means of the creative act of devising appropriate solutions, appropriate—that is—in the circumstances (Ricoeur 1991b, 23–26; cf. Wall 2005, 75). Education is the *bona fide* locus of unpredictability and risk-taking. If we want to truly learn, we must understand that education is *not* about an accumulation of knowledge, and is *not* to be awarded to our lives as if it were a fine ornament (which can even make us vain, conceited, and narcissistic), but that it is about what we learn impacting the entirety of our lives, not leaving us as we were before. Education is a life-changing enterprise which listens to the incommensurate voices, enhancing a phronetic and, as we may say, also a creative (imaginative) response—which rests on Aristotle's *poesis*. Education is

a highly creative rejoinder to the endless possibilities of being that open up before us when we participate in Being. In its creativity, education nurtures the human being's fundamental need of interpreting and understanding. Dialoguing with *Hermeneutics of Education* in the perspective of the propinquity of *phronesis* and *poesis* to us, allows us to open ourselves to the unmapped, formerly unrecognized spaces of the educational enterprise *per se*.

364 The book offers a hermeneutic answer to the queries raised in contemporary educative literature and the practical problems discernible in today's educational practices. Wierciński places his reflection on education within the tradition of Wilhelm von Humboldt's notion of *Bildung* (formation). His pondering on *Bildung* shows some affinities with today's other widely read scholars in the field of hermeneutics and education, Jean Grondin, Nicholas Davey, Babette Babich, Graeme Nicholson, and Ramsey Eric Ramsey (cf. Fairfield 2010). However, upholding the Gadamerian elucidation of the primacy of conversation as our mode of being-in-the-world, the book situates the *formative* aspect of education within an exceptionally wide range of areas—so far uncharted—in which it widens the scope and testifies to education's *transformative* dimension, and thus makes us fully appreciate Wierciński's one-and-only voice. His insights into education's concerns, as afforded by philosophical hermeneutics, endorsed with a keen investigation into theological thought, and substantiated with finesse in his appreciation of poetry (as diverse as that of Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, T. S. Eliot, Friedrich Hölderlin, Wisława Szymborska, C. V. Cavafy, and Rainer Maria Rilke), can be picked up by us as Wierciński's distinctive hallmarks. This book stimulates its readers to stay in a productive dialogue with the abundance of meanings it proffers while they follow the exhilarating path as carved out by the author's true companionship in understanding (*mane nobiscum*). Wierciński's exquisite fidelity to the hermeneutic investigation's ultimate openness to the unexpected invites us to make it our own *conversatio morum*, in which we find ourselves entering new and inconceivable realities. The author's hermeneutic reflection not only enthruses us to follow St. Bonaventura's plea to expand on our contemplative work (*contemplata tradere*), but makes it happen (*Hermeneutik im Vollzug*).

Compounding philosophical and theological research, Wierciński's *oeuvre*, as exemplified by *Hermeneutics of Education*, gives testimony to the universality

and versatility of hermeneutic endeavor. His astute drawing from the wealth of Christian theology is an enactment of interpretation, as hermeneutics' primary goal *par excellence*. Interpretation makes the paths of philosophy and theology converge: it really cannot help it! Wierciński explains the theological basis of interpretation thus:

Interpretation is an event, an encounter (*Begegnung*), where the human being is addressed by a Thou, a God, whose veiled face is looking at the human face in the eternal now, in the inviting gesture to con-verse (*conversare* means to turn around). In this turning around lies the secret of attentiveness, the sensitized awareness of someone else's presence even if this is a silent presence, not manifested in vocal communication. (2019b, 85)

Following the overlapping paths of philosophy and theology is engrained deeply in hermeneutics. We can call upon Heidegger's sincere admitting to the theological origin of his philosophy: "Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking." (Heidegger 1971, 9–10) It is hard to overestimate theology's and philosophy's intersecting routes. Essentially, the etymology of "to contemplate"—Latin *contemplāre*, to look at fixedly, observe, notice, ponder—marks pointedly the human being's capability of pondering, which breeds philosophical and theological contemplative work alike. Underwriting his pedagogical reflection with Heidegger's distinction between *calculative* and *meditative thinking* (cf. Heidegger 1968, 8; Heidegger 1966, 44–56; cf. also Wierciński 2005, 413–432), the author maintains that it is the contemplative (non-calculative) mode of thinking that predisposes us to a genuine recognition of what happens to us and in us when we teach and learn. It is the non-calculative thinking that enables us to appreciate the true value of educating and being educated, against the outrageous policy of measurable ends and reckless concentration on the efficacy of educational systems.

Theological thinking, which Wierciński employs as an aid in explaining the crux of education's *forming* aspect (St. Augustine's teaching), is embedded in an impressively broad perspective of education's trans-*formative* potency. It is the focus on the application (*An-wendung*) of a dialogic encounter, in its vital

openness and an inevitable *metanoia*, as professed by Gadamer (1986, 188), which makes Wierciński's voice reverberate strongly in a time of incessant dissatisfaction with the pedagogical performance as offered by the academia, and a devaluation of education's main precepts. Re-conceptualizing our beliefs about the very core of what we understand by education, he finds in the inconclusive, surprising, and unrepeatable character of the dialogic encounter, which happens between the educator and the educated, a true possibility to respond to the problems faced by today's educational systems.

366 The art of conversation in its phenomenality provides us with a possibility of understanding, and to understand always anew and differently. Conversation is the true locus of our reaching out for understanding. It is only *in* and *through* conversation that we can experience the distinct way of how understanding happens. Without *con-versing*, we would not be able to understand a particular phenomenon in the same way. The presence of the Other, our interlocutor, gives us a unique opportunity to unravel what needs to be understood. It is not through devising multiple and versatile answers to a given question, or through an accumulation of more details, that we come to an understanding. Being-in-conversation means that we can discover something that we would not be able to discover on our own. It is the communal aspect which causes that the phenomenon stands in front of us *differently*, it speaks to us *differently*. Espousing the centrality of the dialogic encounter, as elucidated by Gadamer, *Hermeneutics of Education* proves dialogue's indispensability in the educational environment and its ever-energizing, phenomenal validity in teaching and learning.

The book's introduction invites us to dwell in thinking as our true and primary commitment of our-being-in-the-world, and to remain in amazement concerning the beauty of the unpredictability of a human being's experiencing of his/her being-in-the-world. The concluding sections dub education to be the true space for a hospitality, in which the educator and the student can give and receive generously. The reciprocity of being a gift to the Other is an essential prerequisite for an effective pedagogy. Education, which treats hospitality as its paradigm, is also a risk-involving endeavor in which one's cultivation of a willingness to understand entails situations of precariousness and incommensurability.

The opening sections invite the subsequent discussion of education's manifold facets through the lens of hermeneutic sensibility. To approach them in a highly evocative fashion, in the book's opening, is Wierciński's hermeneutic, welcoming gesture to appreciate their full involvement in the corpus chapters. Explicating the eventful nature of education (which is always also a collaborative event), Wierciński affirms that education is the art of "leading forth." Education is an expression and fulfilment of human inquisitiveness and restlessness, and can, therefore, be viewed—as it looms large in Wierciński's account—as being the culture of questioning.

Upholding the event-like character of education, the author accentuates its experiential and ontological provenance: "Education is always a happening, ἐνέργεια. It is an enactment (*Vollzug*) of processes we are involved in. Thus, education is a way of being-in-the-world of the human being. This *modus essendi* is always a *modus experiendi* of Being." (2019b, 10) He asserts that education cannot be severed from the lived experience of a human being: "Education is the art of leading forth (*educere*), and, as such, belongs to the totality of human experience. In drawing forth that which is within, it cannot be separated from the experience of being-in-the-world." (ibid.) Molding and training (*educare*), although important, do not suffice, since education in its immersion in the human being's being-in-the-world encompasses much more, in fact, the whole of human existence and his/her experiencing of him/herself, the Other, and the world.

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Through thus emphatically expressed relatedness to the Other and the world, we are led to appreciate education as a collaborative event (in Latin, to collaborate means to labor together: *com-laborare*; cf. 2019b, 11). We experience our working together as a genuine opportunity for an opening up of completely new horizons. It is, as the author explains, the merging of our own horizon and that of the Other (Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung*; 2006, 388–389) that allows us to see novel and otherwise unattainable perspectives.

Invoking Czesław Miłosz's enticing stanzas, Wierciński muses on our possession of inquisitive and restless minds, capable of "marveling at the beauty and complexity of being a human being in the world as a condition of living in the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals." (2019b, 12) It is the very experience of dwelling in that fourfold, thus sketched, that makes us not

only wonder about our relationship to ourselves, to others, and the world, but persist in asking questions. Through our perseverance in posing questions we build education—the culture of questioning. It is education’s magnanimous role not to fall prey to a neglectful attitude as regards uncertainty and ambiguity. As a matter of fact, it is ambiguities, the profuse, vague, and even confusable opinions that are welcomed by hermeneutic education in its fearless openness to otherness. If confidence, security, and precision are fundamental to our understanding and self-understanding, ambivalence and uncertainty go squarely into the heart of the hermeneutics of education. Such an attitude mirrors Ricoeur’s elucidation of the hermeneutic enterprise as involving a two-fold allegiance: our willingness to understand and our being earnest enough to doubt, to air our suspicion (cf. Thiselton 2009, 19).

368 In his ample scrutiny of education’s miscellaneous aspects, Wierciński joins the necessity of listening to those diverse voices to the phenomenon of the narrative nature of our lives—with our urge to tell stories and to understand our experiences via stories, “understanding un-folds as the story progresses.” (2019b, 14–15) Teaching is a gradual un-folding of understanding. It is the multiple layers of meaning, the multitudinous senses of everything that get unfurled, which make the educational activities so thrilling: “Teaching/Learning is a journey toward the complexity of the world and us in the world.” (2019b, 15) The accent on the narrative is of seminal import. In its appealing advocacy of the narrative theory, Wierciński’s book shows not only an adherence to its tenets but epitomizes its strengths. His introductory essay “Hermeneutic Commitment to Thinking” anticipates part three, which is an in-depth unraveling of the benefits of the narrative turn in education.

If we assume that teaching has always been about the use of some particular tactics, then, without a shadow of a doubt, Wierciński’s alerting to the specificity of tactics occasioned by hermeneutic education, revolutionizes our view of effective pedagogy. Debunking the commonly believed understanding of tactics at the service of educational systems, he speaks of it in terms of “tact (*tactus*), a way of handling the difficult task of education, which involves our real touching (Latin *tactus* means touching, from *tangere* to touch). The experience of touching implicates that we are always both, touching the other and being touched by the other.” (2019b, 18) A firm conviction of the mutuality

of teaching and learning has an enormous bearing on our understanding of education, as it allows us to see what is happening to us when we teach and learn. In light of this cutting-edge *touch* on pedagogy, we can more fully appreciate Wierciński's radical hermeneutics of education and his demystifying of deep-rooted and unfortunate assertions by educational systems in existence.

While the guiding thread of the book is an avowal of the primacy of conversation in hermeneutic pedagogy, the manifold aspects that the book tackles arise from an acknowledgement of the inextricable tension between sameness and otherness in the educational context. It is the stirring otherness of the Other that is conversationally inspiring for us. Conversation is a true opening toward Being, (with)in our limitedness, finiteness, and conditionality. If education seeks to enlighten, to ennoble, to improve, it is a lack (or imperfection) that directs us to the heart of the hermeneutic education's ontological bases. Hermeneutic education does not aim to fulfill our craving for knowledge, even though it is commonly thought to be education's basic role to do so, but to make us aware of, and guide us in, our response to Being. As Wierciński reminds us: "Our experience of imperfection influences our answer to the revelation of Being; it stimulates our receptivity to the countless possibilities that Being gives us as a gift." (2019b, 76) It is the infinite possibilities that unfold before us, which make us genuinely search for self-development, and, above all, for disclosing to ourselves the meaning of our existence.

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The book's division into three main parts reflects an attentive and mindful discernment of hermeneutic education's central and pressing concerns. Chapter one, "Hermeneutics of Education as a Hermeneutics of Conversation: Education in the Horizon of Responsibility," places hermeneutics of conversation within the skyline of the meaning-laden notion of responsibility. Fore-fronting the primordial belonging together of thinking and speaking, this part of the book resorts to phenomenological hermeneutics and its ontological backdrop, allowing us to see understanding as our mode of being-in-the-world. Wierciński accentuates that it is the tension between familiarity and strangeness, sameness and otherness, that activates hermeneutic education's openness to the richness, unpredictability, and radicality of the conversational encounter between the educator and the educated. The author's unrivalled explication of responsibility-as-a-response (resting on responsibility's Latin

root of *re-spondeo*) draws us to the very heart of what it means to be a responsible human being.

Since education always aspires to make our capability of responsibility evolve and mature, the seriousness of the question of *how* to do it cannot be overestimated. Wierciński discloses to us that a genuine development of a human being can only be occasioned by engaging oneself in an act of responsibility, which is always an act of our exercising a response. Giving a response is ultimately an individual act. In its phronetic orientation, our response can be a discovery of what is already there in us and is best fitting, in particular to the circumstances, or what we are called to devise instantaneously in order to behave responsibly. The idiosyncratic nature of our answer attests not just to our individuality (it can be different from somebody else's response), but to the uniqueness of the situation we encounter and through which responsibility is activated.

370 Wierciński's sagacious approach in elucidating the unique character of hermeneutic education is expressed in a thoughtful deployment of the opulence and vibrancy of philosophical as well as theological thinking. Following St. Augustine's teaching, the author invites us to see that being too full of oneself is an essential obstacle on the way to reaching one's full potential. The unadulterated self-development requires a remarkable kind of openness to self-emptying, to answer the call for an unlimited *effata*. Hermeneutic education therefore reflects *existentia hermeneutica*, which is also a kenotic existence. Wierciński reminds us of education's kenotic aspect that lies at the center of our identification of its conversational character:

The conversation is the experience of the self-emptying (*Entäußerung*, ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, Phil 2:7). In this kenotic aspect, it is precisely the openness to experience, the readiness to accept the pain of critique and misunderstanding, which makes us aware of our limitation as radically finite human beings. (2019b, 38)

To develop fully as a human being means to allow oneself to be emptied in order to be filled up, to facilitate one's blossoming in unforeseeable and novel ways. Hermeneutic education aims to provide means to make us reach

our unique irreplaceability which actualizes itself in the lived experience as we journey through our lives. This is a bewildering self-*Bildung*, in which we participate, a conscious, creative, and responsible *Nachbildung* (*homo capax Dei*), as well as a formative and transformative *Vorbildung* (2019b, 10).

Assuming that trust is education's indispensable mode of communication—trust enables the educator and the educated to create the space for mutual expectations and fulfillments, despite the many unavoidable, and also needed situations, where suspicion makes the educational path both thorny and exhilarating—we can better understand the closeness between trust and responsibility. Following Ricoeur, Wierciński makes the interlocking character of trust and responsibility clear to us: “responsibility is the counterpart of fragility as that ‘which one exercises toward someone or something fragile that has been entrusted to us.’” (Ricoeur 1994, 25) Education is a process of entrusting oneself to the Other, and exercising responsibility for the Other as entrusted to me. The hermeneutic education's dynamics of trust (sympathy) and suspicion (disbelief) reflects hermeneutics' double commitment: the need to understand and to suspect, fostered by Ricoeur. In this light, Wierciński's clear-cut accentuation of the connection between responsibility and phronetic judgment cannot be overstated:

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It is instructive to consider Ricoeur's notion of responsibility in the context of *phronesis*. Practical judgment is a reflective act of reasoning, enabling us to recognize the call to act and to respond adequately to that which calls us to action. Practical judgment depends on the perceptiveness and responsibility of the individual self. (2019b, 123)

Inasmuch as hermeneutic education orients itself toward practicing responsibility for the Other, it concerns also a self-trust and self-responsibility, responsibility for one's self. Elucidating Heidegger's differentiation between calculative and non-calculative (contemplative) thinking, Wierciński demonstrates the gist of Heidegger's hermeneutics of responsibility, which rests on taking responsibility for oneself, by an act of which one partakes in Being's self-disclosure. To guard what is disclosed, delineates the trajectory of a responsible action. Although Ricoeur's and Heidegger's approaches seem

to differ substantially, Ricoeur's admission of the Heideggerian legacy in his thinking can be traced in "Entretien" (Ricoeur 1994, 25). Wierciński contends that Ricoeur's and Heidegger's views on responsibility, although inimitable, can also be seen as entwining with one another. He calls upon Ricoeur's understanding of responsibility: "The responsibility has only a temporal significance, new developments and new perceptions call for a new discourse. But this responsibility is cosmic responsibility, bound to the human existence to preserve the dignity of man *per se* as ever-transcendent possibility." (2019b, 131) The complementariness of Ricoeur's and Heidegger's approaches to responsibility is expressed in the hermeneutic education's concern with the care for the self, the care for the Other, and the care for the self as the other.

372 The book's second part puts the human person as the capable subject at its center. By engaging with the tenets of anthropology, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, as well as drawing on the recent findings of carnal hermeneutics, it participates in the ongoing debate on the holistic approach to education with its emphasis on the soul's and the body's cultivation. This part takes full cognizance of the human being's fundamental capabilities in the process of education and self-education, understood as a *formative* and *trans-formative* venture. The chapter's concerns are encapsulated in its telling title: "Cultivating the Hermeneutic Eye and Ear: Education as the Care for the Self." Part two is an apt and inspiring evocation of the hermeneutic care of the self. Wierciński's wide-embracing approach makes space for the issues of the cultivation of the soul (*cultura animi*), hermeneutic hospitality, as well as a phenomenological investigation of the manifold psychological states of being under the thought-provoking caption of "the disease of the soul." Rounded-up with a reflection on the convergences between hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, part two also sheds light on the inescapable limitedness of possible interpretation—with which we need to make do, any time we attempt to understand our human predicament.

Tackling various aspects of our existential journey through life, "Cultivating the Hermeneutic Eye and Ear" convinces us that: "The art of living human life consists in mastering the art of being with oneself and the other. It is the art of facing life." (2019b, 148) This "facing of life" calls us to recognize our experiences in the entirety of their incomplete and unsatisfactory character,

and thus to feel *pro-voked* (*vocatio*) into searching for meaningful changes and growth. Re-orienting, re-directing, and re-locating ourselves in life, we give an answer to the transformative call of Being. It is our indispensable openness and suppleness of partaking in Being, our tenacious following of the path of life, through which our humanity has a chance to fully transpire. Not stifling the often-confusing voices predisposes us to respond to Being's call for an authentic existence. Wierciński accentuates that it is vital not to neglect, disregard, or dismiss the often contradictory, competing, and even threatening voices that we hear in ourselves, as it is exactly through a very patient and thoughtful discernment of those voices that we can reach for an understanding of our existence, as well as being capable of choosing wisely while exerting our response to the ethical issues we are confronted with. For Wierciński,

[...] there is no voice which can be suffocated if we want to live a human life. It is essential never to be at peace with conventional answers but always patiently learn to listen to the voices, which often bring about great confusion rather than the simple clarity. This surrendering to the voices of human life without manipulating them uncovers the potential of being different. It is an answer to the transformative call of Being, which requires our re-positioning in life, our *con-versio*. (2019b, 144)

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Drawing extensively on the intrinsic tension between human capability and vulnerability, as rendered in Ricoeur's notion of the subject as an acting and suffering person (*l'homme agissant et souffrant*; cf. Ricoeur 1992, 21–23; cf. also Thomasset 1966, 195 and Wierciński 2013, 18–33), Wierciński makes it explicit that in our sincere search for self-understanding, as acting and suffering subjects, we are called to admit that we are both “inherently open and unable to come to a final closure.” (2019b, 192) Thus we can experience ourselves as being molded, chiseled, and polished in the creative and joyous acts of self-*Bildung*, with no “lasting satisfaction,” no “stable resting place,” (2019b, 162) staying open to newness, to the unending process of becoming (*Zuwachs an Sein*; cf. Gadamer 2006, 135–136). As the author suggests, it is the human being's openness and essential capability of a continuous astonishment which propel phronetic education's versatility and agility in its comprehensive

recognition of the human existence's potential. Following Ricoeur, Wierciński maintains that, as human beings, we face the unwavering call of Being to shape and re-shape our existence hermeneutically. In an incessant quest for understanding, instigated by an unflagging awe, we experience a *metanoia* of the ego in the detours to the self via the richness of signs that have been deposited in culture.

The tension between human capabilities and the corresponding vulnerabilities of the human being compels us to take a closer look at the human person as the suffering subject. An insight into what happens when we help the Other as the vulnerable and wounded self, leads Wierciński not only to delve into the meanderings of the human soul (melancholia, depression, sadness), but to present healing as the genuine process of taking care of the soul. Wierciński's involved approach prompts him to reflect on the apparent intersections between psychoanalysis and education, which is his ingenious contribution to the meditation on education as the care for/of the self. The author's unprecedented take on psychoanalysis in light of Hegel's notion of unhappy consciousness and situating it in the wide spectrum of his discussion of hermeneutic education, opens up the possibility of new forays into an understanding of education's and psychoanalysis' interweaving paths.

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The novelty of Wierciński's approach lies in unveiling to us that the psychoanalytic *con-versation* as *con-version* enacts a model of an educational encounter. Psychoanalysis can be seen as mirroring and enacting an educative paradigm. The gist of the psychoanalytic conversation rests on its educative aspect for both sides: the analysand and the analyst. It is not the know-how, a set of hints or ready-made answers of how to get out from the quagmire of one's predicament that counts in successful treatment, but the creation of a space for the analysand to uncover a unique path and to recognize it as just the right one and unrepeatable path towards regaining one's integrated self. Assisting the wounded self in his/her own untangling of the knot, facilitating him/her on the way to integrative maturity, is what the effective treatment consists in. Undoubtedly, such an approach displays a hermeneutic (phronetic) sensibility. In this light, psychoanalysis is an exercising of practical wisdom. Furthermore, a psychoanalytic dialogic encounter entails the analyst's self-education. It precipitates not only the analysand, but the analyst, into taking part in self-

education. The dynamically interchanging roles of the analyst (educator) and the analysand (the educated) manifest what is happening in the psychoanalytic conversation. This unusual interplay of being analyzed and analyzing the Other is a prerequisite of an effectual cure. Education impacts both the student and the educator, and similarly, the psychoanalytic conversation affects not only the analysand but also the analyst. The paradigm of educating and being educated is mirrored in the psychoanalytic encounter. The psychoanalytic conversation, when seen as reflecting an educative process, but also education, when viewed as modelled on the psychoanalytic conversation, confirm the interlocking and reciprocal relationship between psychoanalysis and education.

In light of the above, we may notice that even if the section on phronetic medicine and the phronetic doctor in “The Disease of the Soul and the Imperative of the Care for the Soul” can be, at face value, considered as far-fetched, a closer look at it affords an appreciation of a highly observant meditation on the all at once staggering awareness of the body’s import in today’s world and an impasse in bringing forth the prudent treatment of our bodies. As Wierciński claims, it is the hermeneutic approach to a human being’s ailments, as well as to medical systems, that is capable of reinstating a conscientious cultivation of the body that encompasses an existential and integrative change. He wins us over by claiming that: “Healing is rather a new way of existence of the patient, in which not only the condition of the patient changes but, and primarily, the patient oneself.” (2019b, 179) And so the passage on phronetic medicine (which, in fact, attests to the need of our being in dialogue with all voices, and which perplexes us on first reading, in an even more involved way), convinces us further that it is the self-*change* (the patient’s, i.e., the analysand’s *metanoia*) that the healing process (be it medical or psychoanalytic) occasions, which truly answers the need of a return to an existential *equilibrium*. Inserting a thus elucidated viewpoint on phronetic medicine in his meditation on education as reaching out for an understanding of who we are, Wierciński leaves no doubt about its significance for our understanding of the centrality of con-*version* in the patient, the analysand, and the student alike.

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Discussing the hermeneutic hospitality of a human being, which makes it possible to face the Other, and the self as the other too, both with gratitude, and in the wholeness of experience, part two of the book also gives us an

important insight into the issue of translation as “one of the most compelling hermeneutic gestures,” (2019b, 214) thus deepening our awareness of the inimitable connection between translation, interpretation, and our ardent need for effective communication. Taking an understanding of interpretation’s and translation’s intimacy to its fullest degree, Wierciński postulates that the unmatched strength of hermeneutic education rests on its full recognition that the horizon of interpretation is just the one that we have, and that by dwelling in it we can, not only uncover for ourselves the best ways of responding to our being-in-the-world, but continually re-interpret, and understand anew what we have already understood (Gadamer’s indefatigable dictum of *Immer-anders-Verstehen*: “Wir verstehen immer anders, wenn wir verstehen;” 2006, 297). Wierciński asserts that:

376 [...] all human life, all experience, thought, and language are interpretation/translation. In fact, to be human means to interpret/translate. The art of being human is the art of interpretation/translation. To exist is to be situated in the hermeneutic horizon in which translation is a model of hermeneutics. (2019b, 215)

The author’s explication of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self, of his state-of-the-art notion of narrative identity (cf. Ricoeur 1991a, 73–81; Ricoeur 1987, 249), as well as the discussion of the implications of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of capability for an understanding of “who we are” (in part two), is a conscious move to focus on the demonstration of the application of Ricoeur’s philosophy of the self in the educational environment in the book’s subsequent part. As a result, part three offers a novel approach in showing the fruits of the Ricoeurian hermeneutics, with the exigency of the narrative understanding of human existence as its pivot. The author’s original voice in this respect is summarized in the part’s title: “Narrative Turn in the Hermeneutics of Education. Toward a Hermeneutics of Lived Time.” Resonating with the ground-breaking significance of the hermeneutic turn (the linguistic turn) in cultural, literary, biblical, and, as a matter of fact, all other fields in the humanities, as well as in the natural sciences (medicine, law, etc.), Wierciński’s focus on the narrative turn in the hermeneutics of education is undeniably a one-of-a-kind explication of endless

possibilities of the employment of narrative theory in the praxis of education.

Demonstrating the import of the narrative turn in the hermeneutics of education, part three accounts for the necessity to see education as the locus of lived experience that happens in time, is aware of its processual nature, and impacted by time's existential demands. Education, viewed as reflecting the narrative character of human existence, involves both the satisfaction of self-development and the risk of failure, and, insofar, becomes challenging as a rewarding project that situates the human being's striving for self-improvement in the enticing ambit of narrating and re-narrating the story of one's life. This part's first section, "A Healing Journey toward Oneself: Paul Ricoeur's Narrative Turn in the Hermeneutics of Education," is a convincing appeal to risk entering upon the journey of understanding, and is also emblematic for the entirety of the themes embraced by the author's investigative grasp of the phenomenon of an understanding of our lives via a narrative.

The chapter's first subsection, "Narrative Mode of Understanding: Education as the *Bildung* of the Humanity of the Human Being," proposes a remarkable shift in educational paradigms. The narrative turn in education allows us to release the obsessive concentration on the achievement of the best educational goals to see "people in their full integrity as the *raison d'être* of any educational system, and, as such, as a vital part of the possible solution." (2019b, 234) It is a twisting from an understanding-from-the-outside to an understanding-from-within-the-inside, in which the human being stands firm as education's true target. Instead of the slavish obedience to a set of prescribed rules and the frenzied pursuit to meet measurable ends, education (when freed from its achievement paradigm) is capable, according to Wierciński, of creating a hospitable place for ambiguity, plurivocity, and heterogeneity for an unforeseeable development of a human being's full potential.

Hermeneutic education topples the falsity of the portrait of a well-educated person as confident of his/her "own intellectual treasures toward an optimally orchestrated self-reliance and independence," (2019b, 233) often haunted by unhealthy pride and arrogance, and helps "discover the full spectrum of what it means to be a human being and how to 'live a good life in just institutions,' including all insecurities and weaknesses, not by masking and covering them up, but by humbling ourselves in the most profound

sense of humility.” (Ibid.) The movement from arrogance to humility is the only effective way of our self-*Bildung*, of building the humanity of ourselves as human beings, contrary to the dehumanizing politics of effectiveness and the race to success.

378 The narrative turn in education is a genuine response to the call of Being and the phenomenality of narrative as an all-embracing and universally valid mode of expression. We are always already in stories, we find ourselves to be telling stories, and, as story-tellers, we are the first to be astounded by how and what we narrate: “We live surrounded by our stories and the stories of others, and from the very beginning of our existence, we learn to see everything in and around us through these stories.” (2019b, 234) I agree with the book’s claim that our lives are not fully intelligible to us. We need narratives to be able to capture the fragmentary and often highly tangled “hi-stories” of our lives. The constant re-configuring work that we do, when trying to dismantle the complexities of our lives and enigmas, bespeaks the plurality of voices that grant meaning to our existence. We continually construct and re-construct (Ricoeur’s three-fold *mimesis* that accounts for pre-figuring, configuring, and re-configuring of reality’s representation; cf. Ricoeur 1984, 52–87). Narration does not delimit itself to its constructing role. And the narrative’s age-old cathartic function still does not exhaust its countless propensities: the narrative can also camouflage and distort covering up the displeasing elements by using stratagems and producing covert, evasive, and deceptive statements.

The narrative turn in education is fed by the narrative’s manifold functions in its encouragement of questioning the homogeneous world view, by making it possible for us to position ourselves in different and surprising horizons. Every attempt to narrate reminds us also of the incomplete, insufficient, and even inadequate nature of our rendering of reality, also the reality of our lives. The illusoriness of the reliability of our accounts attests to the mirage of a total intelligibility of ourselves and of the world.

The narrative grants us with an exceptional possibility to work through our experiences (the Freudian *Durcharbeiten*; cf. Freud 1950, 155–156). Wierciński picks up on this propensity of the narrative to assert that the narrative turn in education provides us with an irreplaceable possibility to meet our need

of understanding our wounded self. Setting off on an educative journey is also embarking on a healing journey. It is the dialectics of remembering and forgetting (which Ricoeur discusses in his influential *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) that activates, as Wierciński elaborates, our meaningful return to the whole. We can thus attain an integral maturity:

Education can help us to see the horizon of our healing, despite the clouds on that horizon. It encourages discovering the meaning of pardon on the way to make this horizon into the horizon of healing. If the pardon is a healing of memory, then remembering is necessary to pardon with forgiveness, which is an experience of healing the past in order to make us whole again for the future. (2019b, 246)

Attaining integral maturity means growing in wisdom. It is our educational gain. Paradoxically, our losses, wounds, and traumas become our most precious gains.

Advocating strongly for the narrative turn in education, Wierciński contends that it is when we constructively engage with social conventions and patterns of thinking, and do not instead fulfill our wish to overcome them in haste and too easily, that we give an existential answer to the complexity and diversity (*circumdata varietate*) of our lives. A human being's experiencing of the essentiality of the existential aspect of education is expressed in one's concern with

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[...] carrying oneself through one's life. It is a special kind of carrying, carrying with happiness, εὐφορία (εὐφορος, "bearing well" from εὖ and φέρειν "to bear"). It teaches us to situate ourselves between different cultural horizons and different narratives in order to consciously shape one's identity and life story in the ambivalent horizon of in-between. (2019b, 235)

Espousing diversity as "a global spiritual language of humanity," the hermeneutics of lived time, as explicated by Wierciński, stands up against any reductionist approaches to education, any attempts to narrow it down and to

fashion it so as to satisfy some particular community's or individual pressures. Wierciński makes a strong claim in this respect:

Education cannot be reduced to an answer to the demands of individuals and society. Education is far less about duty than about engagement. By engaging the whole person, we are getting acquainted with him/her and experiencing the person from her or his underlying conviction. This kind of existential opening toward the other results in the fundamental change we undergo. (2019b, 255)

Opening ourselves existentially, we open ourselves to the other, to the other as betokening a different world view, different experiences, and a different history. It is the inescapability of our conversion (*con-versio*) which is prompted by the confrontation with otherness, and which makes hermeneutic education so entrenched in our lived experience.

380 Being in conversation with *Hermeneutics of Education: Exploring and Experiencing the Unpredictability of Education* leaves no doubt that Wierciński's illuminative contribution to pedagogical scholarship is an outstandingly abundant, varied, and multi-layered piece of literature. It will definitely impact anyone who truly searches for an answer to the recurring question of education's role and destiny in the postmodern milieu of lost certainties, axiological crisis, and existential void. The lavish and nuanced nature of the book's investigations calls us to pursue phronetic wisdom and to apply (*anwenden*) it in the educational environment.

Wierciński's book is an inspirational answer to the voices questioning the validity of the hermeneutic approach to education and allows for a fuller appreciation of the hermeneutic response to today's educational dilemmas. It proves that the alleged disconnectedness of the hermeneutics of education from empirical research cannot be taken up as a convincing standpoint. Wierciński's evocation of the hermeneutics of the lived experience in the pedagogical environment demonstrates the inseparability of any of the human experiences of being in an educative process from their existential, and also their empirical dimension. To partake in pedagogical practices means to enter a situation, each time, in which the research on educational methodology

activates itself in a dynamic and captivating way. The book's thematizing of the phenomenology of education and the filtering of pedagogical practices (exploring what happens to us when we teach and learn) through the lens of philosophical hermeneutics show that the hermeneutics of education is not an ornate addition to pedagogical studies but unveils education's real face. The veracity of the hermeneutics of education is confirmed in a human being's unrelenting search for an answer to his/her need to be educated. This interminable quest is, as a matter of fact, a hermeneutic process of constructing and reconstructing, interpreting and re-interpreting of what best suits one to fulfill the desire of being a well-educated person. Education, in its most rudimentary character, is a hermeneutic enterprise which opposes any oversimplifications or reductionist construing and tailoring of what it means to teach and learn. The inseparability of hermeneutics and education provides a fertile ground for further pedagogical research in the humanities.

All in all, to use the language of narrative theory, which is the book's unquestionable axis, I must say that thinking with Wierciński is an engrossing and open-ended *story*, which confirms that in our openness and unflinching desire to interpret and understand we are always in the position of learning more and learning anew. Education is thus our *modus vivendi*, a lifestyle.

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Hermeneutics of Education: Exploring and Experiencing the Unpredictability of Education stirs up our minds to be attentive and vigilant, while powerfully convincing us that education is about "getting at the imaginative variations of ourselves." Wierciński's elucidation of the narrative turn in education sensitizes us to the multiplicity of forms and voices that the educative narrative encompasses and makes us see the ultimate intimacy of the liaison between the narrative of education and the narratives of our lives. The narrative turn in education accounts for our unceasing educational discoveries, for reading and interpreting what is in us. In our configuring and reconfiguring of our life's narratives, we open ourselves to the hermeneutic hope of education. Following Wierciński's hermeneutic thinking through the book's impressive assembly of themes, we move forward towards a better understanding of the poetics of education.

Wierciński's book, like poetic discourse, unveils to us the hidden aspects of education's reality. By voicing them, it makes us identify new ways of

seeing them and allows for new ways of experiencing them. I am delighted to recommend this landmark piece of pedagogical literature to anyone who is capable of taking the risk of exploring and experiencing the beauty of education's unpredictability as mandatory reading.

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REPORT | POROČILO

UDC: 111.11

Andrej Božič

FRAGILITY OF EXISTENCE

In Poland, during the month of May, the International Institute for Hermeneutics/Institut international d'herméneutique, presided by Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wierciński, annually—in collaboration with locally and globally acknowledged (academic) institutions—organizes the International Summer School in Philosophy and Education. This year, the summer school was hosted by the Center of Formation and Training Księżówka in the city of Zakopane, the health resort and winter retreat nestled at the bucolic foothills of the Tatra mountain range. In accordance with the underlying idea of the school, dedicated to the ensuring of space and time for a dialogue between scholars of different provenances, between teachers and (their) students, between students and (their) teachers, to the enabling of a welcoming, open conversation among various and varied voices concerning common issues of the contemporary world, participants from Israel, Poland, Slovenia, and the USA gathered to discuss—as designated by the title—the topic(al)ity of “Fragility as a Mode of Being-In-The-World: Hermeneutic Ethics of Capability.”

Although a written report neither can nor could claim to re-present—that is to say, re-call (from) the absence (of the past: of what remains, retains itself only in passing and being passed onwards)—the liveliness of—inter-personally shared—experience(s), of the papers delivered and of the exchanged opinions,

report

the debates, moderated throughout, with extraordinary hermeneutic vigor, by Wierciński, it is—for such sort of an endeavor—, nonetheless, possible to denote the principal problem realms disclosed at the summer school, in order to, at least, demonstrate the abundance of aspects and of approaches to the theme or the motif of fragility as it essentially determines our finite worldly existence, yet at once also exhorts to a becoming (aware) of all the capabilities bestowed upon us.

Without effacing the particularity of the singular existence, a deliberation upon fragility, however, bears witness to the universal generality of the human condition. Ramsey Eric Ramsey and Ronny Miron, both, the former through a re-consideration of philosophy as a way of life, as practice, which finds its fundamental modality in the figure of Socrates, the latter through a re-reading of Wilhelm Dilthey's notion of self-understanding, which attains meaning in the historicity of experiencing reality, emphasized the dimension of linguality, of communicative inter-action among people leading towards the well-being within, and of, a community. The contributions of Marcin Baran and Wojciech Hanuszkiewicz dealt with the questions of morality and its boundaries: Baran, drawing inspiration from the work of Charles Taylor, circumscribed the social atomism symptomatic of the contemporary consumerist society, whilst Hanuszkiewicz, on the basis of Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of the liberal tradition, addressed the dialectics between the individual and a society. In a similar vein, Małgorzata Przanowska's talk on the relation between philosophy and education, focusing on the problematic of listening, emphasized the fragility of our participation in the event of being.

Several papers devoted attention to specific, often conflict inducing phenomena of post-modernity, yet did not neglect to indicate the historical pre-suppositions of today's (hermeneutical) situation. Ayelet Yokev, bespeaking (against) the inherited trends of a prevalent romanticizing of childhood, outlined the possibility of an ontological—even metaphysical—understanding of parenthood. Taking into account the experiences of refugees confronted with the exigencies of resettlement, Tracey Sands accentuated the fragile character of identity that is frequently, within the conditions of cultural imperialism, condemned to marginality. Dilemmas in choosing a profession, a career to follow, in the globalized environment ruled by multinational

corporations were debated in the speech of Kamil Kołodziński, whereas Patryk Szaj attempted, productively engaging Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought in the dispute regarding the Anthropocene, to reflect upon the task of humanity faced with the threats of technological science, of climate change, of extinction of life on earth.

In compliance with the opulently ramified hermeneutic tradition, some of the participants, explicitly or implicitly, in-directly addressed the problems of textual understanding, of its multiply stratified nature. While Alenka Koželj, referring to Friedrich Schleiermacher's influential theory on the different methods of translation, contemplated upon the experience of fragility in translating the work of Étienne de La Boétie, I myself, explicating the unreadability of the world through a reading of a poem by Paul Celan, discussed the fragile equilibrium within the in-between of the text and its contexts. The interpretation of Virginia Woolf's oeuvre offered by Małgorzata Hołda touched upon Paul Ricoeur's idea of the capable self and ultimately conveyed, re-tracing the path of self-formation from a confused to the defused self, a plea for the taking of responsibility for one's own life (and death).

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Not only literature, but art as such, insofar as it necessarily needs to be conceptualized as one of the foremost and eminent manners of the un-folding, un-concealing of being(-in-the-world), received careful consideration in the contributions of Yael Canetti-Yaffe, Diane Gruber, and Jordan Huston. Canetti-Yaffe presented a hermeneutic understanding of the architecture of urban public spaces as built environments, to which meaning is imparted by their use. Lectures delivered by Gruber and Huston converged in the pondering upon the importance of the role of art and (artistic) imagination in the potential achievement of social change and political liberation: whereas Gruber stressed the ambiguity of human suffering shining through the fragile—perhaps fractured—image, inviting the beholder to take part in the conversation, Huston, recounting the movement of situationism, in the artistic event as a transformation effectuated through materialized imagined worlds recognized the prospect of revolutionary action.

Lisa Watrous and Elise Poll, although, in their respective papers, dealing with heterogenous matters, approached the issue of fragility from a common, the same theological perspective: both assumed, as their departure point, the

theory of an anatheistic re-turn to God beyond God as proposed by Richard Kearney. However, Watrous, in the search for the potentiality of a redemptive language, introduced the notion of sabbath as the (w)resting-free from the demands of the profane, and Poll, in view of the doubts and the risks of “a faith easily broken,” underscored the emancipatory force of the advent of the strange that requires a response.

388 The human—as a fragile—being, in its existence directed towards, and through the mystery of communication connected with, the other—(as) the Other?—, as a creature of sociality, is summoned to dwell in—of course, preferably peaceful, albeit oftentimes strained and imperiled—cohabitation, which raises the question of distinct and distinguished forms of solidarity. Paulina Sosnowska’s speech on Hannah Arendt’s understanding of the tragedy and the happiness, the suffering and the consolation constituting the human condition argued that in the multispectrality of the world a narrative identity preserves memory against the forgetfulness of action. According to Urszula Zbrzeźniak, vulnerability and solidarity concern the relation between particularity and universality, and with regard to suffering encourage a responsibility for the other: the precariousness of life calls for a politics of recognition.

The vivacious, at times vehement debates during the sessions and the informal meetings at the International Summer School in Philosophy and Education “Fragility as a Mode of Being-In-The-World: Hermeneutic Ethics of Capability” offered not only a supportive forum for meaningful conversations within a community of re-searchers, but also an intriguing overview of some of the fundamental dimensions of the fragility of—the human(e)—existence.

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The journal *Phainomena* welcomes all submissions of articles and book reviews in the field of phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy, as well as from related disciplines of the humanities. Manuscripts submitted for the publication in the journal should be addressed to the editorial office, the secretary of the editorial board, or the editor-in-chief.

The submitted manuscript should preferably be an original paper and should not be concurrently presented for publication consideration elsewhere, until the author receives notification with the editorial decision regarding acceptance, required (minor or major) revision(s), or rejection of the manuscript after the concluded reviewing procedure. After submission, the contributions are initially evaluated by the editorial office and may be immediately rejected if they are considered to be out of the journal's scope or otherwise unfit for consideration. The ensuing process of scientific review, which can—provided that no additional delays occur—take up to 3 months, includes an editorial opinion and a double-blind peer review by at least two external reviewers. The articles that do not report original research (e.g.: editorials or book reviews) are not externally reviewed and are subject to the autonomous decision of the editor-in-chief or the editorial board regarding publication. When republishing the paper in another journal, the author is required to indicate the first publication in the journal *Phainomena*.

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390 The contributions should be formatted as follows: Times New Roman font style; 12 pt. font size; 1.5 pt. spacing (footnotes—in 10 pt. font size—should, however, be single spaced); 0 pt. spacing before and after paragraphs; 2.5 cm margins; left justified margins throughout the text. Instead of line breaks please use internal paragraph indentations (1.25 cm) to introduce new paragraphs. Do not apply word division and avoid any special or exceptional text formatting (e.g.: various fonts, framing, pagination, etc.). Footnotes and tables should be embedded using designated MS Word functionalities. Do not use endnotes. Notes should be indicated by consecutive superscript numbers placed in the text immediately after the punctuation mark or the preceding word.

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Toulmin, Stephen. 1992. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 2015. “Homo respondens.” *Phainomena* 24 (92-93): 5–17.

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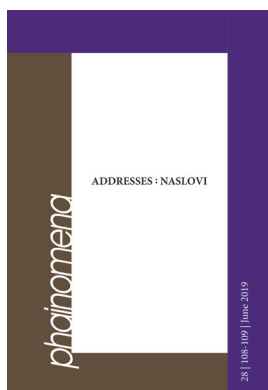
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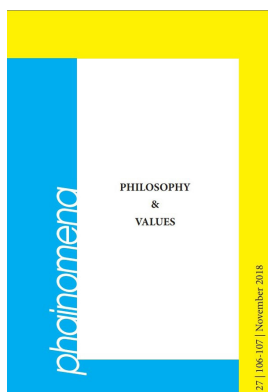
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