

Are Philosophical Methods Suitable Instruments in Education?

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Abstract

Today, education is more related with a practice which orientates the individual towards an economical adaptation. How to make money seems to be the supreme value in our days. So, is Philosophy able to be an appropriate paradigm to rethinking the education?

Science for science, knowledge for knowledge, wisdom for wisdom are empty and useless ideas in education. In the paper, we propose to make an interpretation of the dynamics of the educational values and how those are seen from the philosophical/psychological perspective. Our method is a hermeneutical one applied on several concepts which are considered as fundamental in education. At the same time, we emphasize on a phenomenological approach of the problem. Consequently, we have in front of us a system of values as a powerful one that affects the psychological desire, with the values having their own dynamics.

We found that most of the educational issues have to be treated like psycho-analytical ones, but also by introducing some philosophical instruments. In this respect, there are several teaching strategies which can easily enhanced the learning process and contribute to the knowledge transfer.

There are several channels to integrate philosophy into the actual education, but basically, the philosophy represents a clear mode of thinking about our world and life, producing a major impact and engagement with the world and life, completing in many ways different types of education.

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1. Introduction

We will introduce the central issue that concerns us in this article in the context of a more general question. Therefore, the first aspect we will talk about is the which interlinks the *philosophical thinking* and the *educational thinking*. Normally, those two types of thinking are not separate - there is no need to recall the ancient issues of education, issues that were expressed only on a philosophical level. But,

given the fact that today we are talking about the *science of education*, a branch of the tree of philosophy, we will analyze things from this separatist perspective. The exercise we are about to do implies, if I may, a return to philosophy. Why? The history of ideas showed us that a discipline which made itself distinct, which created its own method and object of study, when enters a period of crisis, a solution for this crisis is *a return to the source*, meaning a return to philosophy. That discipline returns to previous, fundamental questions, questions that belong to philosophy (Popper, 1985; Patapievici, 2011). This does not mean that, by doing so, it will automatically find the liberating solutions. It just means that it will be able to see from another perspective the crisis it is dealing with and thus the chances of finding a solution will increase. Is education in such a crisis? We have a strong belief it is. We see it daily, both in practice and in theory. What would be the central element of this crisis? What exactly generates a problematic situation inside the field of education?

First of all, we have a group of problems. And we see their essence in the situation we are about to present. The general problem regards the relationship between education and teaching/ training. Education represents the whole field – and the relationship it has with teaching is similar to the one between ethics and moral – and its essence lies in the *process of nurturing, of growth*. Education is a process of guiding, of leading. But leading what and where? *Ex-ducere, education* applies to human being. But the strictly philosophical field remains Being. This general school of thought could play a positive role in the management and understanding of educational processes. From the philosophical point of view, “*being*” is mainly characterized –hence generating a lot of specific issues – by “*becoming*”. And education is this method, this art of nurturing the becoming of the human being who reaches towards a certain degree of development, a maximum point, after which the individual “exits” the species, leaving a bag from which other individuals will continue their search, referring more or less to what that certain individual meant to human condition. Education implies, as Constantin Noica would say, *a path*, the art of guiding the individual on this path of his being becoming. In Jungian terms, we say that education is the process of individuation, the process through which the individual reaches his maximum performance and by which he engages his full capacity of being. Philosophically speaking this time, education pursues this path taking into account three areas: *knowledge* (le savoir), *savoir-faire* and *savoir-être*. This means it seeks the control of this guiding of being with the help of three coordinates: theoretical, practical and the combination of both, political/ social (Arendt, 1958; Noica, 2012, p. 53). But the essential element of education in this formula is the exact process of leading the being on a path. Nothing more, nothing less. What does this thing mean? First of all, education activates directly the potential of the individual, or the entire system of mental energy, and therefore its purpose is *taking the maximum profit from this energy*. The extremely important aspect of note here - which is ignored and generates confusion, as we shall see – is that education does not deal with *a certain finality of the human being*. It is not concerned with the end of the path. It is not concerned with the moment of the individual arrival in a wonderland, which would lie beyond the completion of being. Also, it does not create a unique model of this end. It has, at best, an orientation, a direction. If I may, this end of the path can be named only ethically. Education is oriented towards good. The one which refines things, which sets limits and well defined stages is teaching, training. You learn for something in particular; you are trained in order to achieve a particular performance you

practice in a field. You educate yourself, instead, to be able to perform in certain directions you chose in life. But the general problem that includes our subject regards precisely this confusion between learning and education. But how do we get here?

2. General problem sources

The source of the problem comes from an exaggeration of the *savoir-vivre* level. This means the political component is infiltrated excessively in education. We speak today about a democratization of education, as we speak about a democratization of almost all social institutions. But this is taken as such and assumed to be good. Democracy is good, independent of any system which it is applied to! This is the statement that causes a lot of problems. Democracy is a system of political thought. It cannot be applied as such to any other system. In Defense, Medicine and Education, democracy cannot be applied without causing irreparable damage. This is the first step that leads to the destabilization of education. The second cause comes from a direction associated with politics, which is economics. Any system of thought - as institution - is based on a system of fundamental values. They have a particular dynamic. We believe that when the system prioritizes multiple values to be achieved at once, the system works well. Just like in the human psyche. More energetic complexes generate mental health. When a single value or a single complex control that system, then an inherent imbalance appears. The world is strictly seen under the interpretation of that certain complex and the actions are oriented in the same direction, to seek the fulfillment of needs and desires that the complex brings to surface. This is what happens today with the education system. There is a unique-value that occupies, in all its subsystems, the first place – this is the exchange value, or, in other words, the value of money (Orlean, 2011). This value is the research object of a separate science, economics. But this value "immigrated" from this science and occupied the place of an absolute and unique value in many systems, unfortunately some of them fundamental, such as politics and education. Therefore, we are witnessing a double action that occurred in education: on the one hand, the political factor introduced democracy as an absolute value, this coordinating the structure of education; on the other hand, the exchange value affected the object itself of education. The two values combined generated what we now call the educational crisis. It is the democratic factor that changed the face of education in the sense that it gave it a revolutionary dimension, of the left side. As a result, education is considered to be a system-method to achieve a specific goal, which may be called as such and be valid for the whole society. This goal is measurable, and the unit is money. An educational – and learning – system is considered successful today if it ensures its subjects a good positioning on the financial market. The school that prepares you to earn the most after finishing it becomes a school of reference. Education is programmatic, aims for a certain end, which is purely economic. Money, the economic instrument that measures value (not general value, but the value of production and as commodity, not the spiritual values which are ignored or left out by this science), is an element which, if achieved, ensures, in the new educational concept, a set of other skills that can fall into the primary educational ideals. But things are not quite as they seem.

3. Philosophy and education. A return to the original problems.

Therefore, is philosophy a tool to solve the educational crisis? How? First of all, it is necessary to take into account the time/ era factor. Philosophy is not a key that opens all the doors of present, past and future. It has, at least, a wider palette than the other sciences, but it is no stranger to the becoming of the being itself, as some may assume beforehand. There is a set of values that are associated today with the technological factor (Schultz, 1967; Erikson, 1963; Erikson, 1968; Simondon, 2005). The human being has entered a new era, in which the individual's becoming is clearly based on the technological factor. This change has a good and a bad side. Philosophy already started a detailed analysis of the technological object (Simondon, 2012). The bad side is the one which inevitably approaches the technical object to the exchange value. But what is the philosophical method which could compensate or would solve this problem?

Rethinking the contemporary value system, focusing on spiritual values, this is the solution offered by philosophy. The central value is *the desire to have a passion*. The role of philosophy in the context we discussed above is that of *coordinating*, of *guiding* and of *educating the development of passions*. "What teachers don't know, but Romanian common sense does: «Do not give advice to the one who did not ask for it, because he would not listen». Make him thirsty first. Put him in the situation to ask. And then tell him - if you have something to say." (Noica, 2012, p. 62). The problem of the education system emerges from a misunderstanding of the term passion/ desire. Passion is replaced with satisfaction, with fun and feeling good. The school is a place where there are no more pupils/ students, but customers who must be extremely satisfied with the purchased products. Only the surface of passion was embraced, the cover, which is the pleasure. Noica says, this time referring to the "hard" philosophy: "We do not have a Romanian term for becoming. We have several for being, but we have none for becoming. We could have had the term: arriving - "*Petrecere*" in the original text in Romanian - (something arrives, which is more than happening, occurring: it requires development). But the flingers took it over. Our only becoming is found in parties, in fun - in alienation." (Noica, 2012, p. 7).

The second level is that of rethinking the idea of school. Fortunately, the history of philosophy offers a lot of examples to assist us in this regard. We do not think of the many educational systems that are put into practice today, some more creative than others, and almost all being variations on topics already practiced in history. We will take an interesting example proposed by the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica. He was obsessed with two ideas which we consider conjunct. On the one hand, The Prodigal Son – in his diary we see how absorbed he was with the prodigal son model as it is presented in the Gospel. This triad – the father, the good son and the prodigal son – represents an educational situation of crisis. The question which still troubles our mind: how it is possible to welcome the son who squandered all the money with the same joy - if not greater - you welcomed the good son, who followed the teachings of his father? It is a joy of returning to the condition of authenticity (in H. Arendt's words) after an "adventure" in the world. "The prodigal son would not have traveled the world if he had met his teacher." "The prodigal son's brother would have traveled the world if he would have met his teacher." (Noica, 2012, p. 93). Hegelian speaking this time, truth is nothing without error – mental balance is nothing without dark and its understanding; you cannot move forward without fighting an angel! Noica says: "The sadness of not having sinned. This sadness occasionally envelops

angels and almost always mediocre people. And the prodigal son's brother as their leader." (Noica, 2012, p. 17).

Then, the idea of School is outlined simply: "I dream of a school where, frankly, nothing would be taught. To live quietly and decently in a city outskirts, and young men, some young people of the world, to come there to free themselves from the tyranny of the professor. For everyone and everything teach them lessons. Everything must be learned from outside and by repetition, and the only thing that they are allowed to do at times is to ask questions. [...] We are only mediators between them and themselves. [...] The disciple comes to you to ask. You have to teach him that he has nothing to take, that he should grow. The disciple wants to become ivy. You have to let him be what he should be: even weed. And your most beautiful end - fertility! - is to be choked by weeds. [...] I am obsessed with this School idea, where nothing would be taught. Moods, these must be given to others; not content, not advice, not teachings. That is why lessons are not required. Even to a man who asks you a question, you don't need to give him lessons. A book you take from the library, a Prelude of Bach you listen to in the evening, quietly, or an example of intellectual serenity are more educational than a lesson. Those young men see you nesting an idea and begin to nest one too." (Noica, 2012, p. 8-9).

A final element of the new school regards rethinking disciplinarity. Also in Noica's view, philosophy is a method of return, if not to the encyclopedic man of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then to the man who must succeed or excel in combining several areas. In this direction, action is already being taken, because we are talking more and more about inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity. "Vitruvius says about the architect that he should know: writing, drawing, geometry, a little optics, mathematics, history, philosophy, a little music, medicine, law and astronomy. Nowadays, he only needs to know architecture. Pity!" (Noica, 2012, p. 21).

4. Conclusion

From all of the above, one might deduce that *a philosophical method would not provide a response to a crisis of education*. Rethinking the *object* and other *original values* of education means a re-questioning of this field. The approach is one that *re-interprets*, but the condition or the frame under which this reinterpretation takes place is obviously related to *ethics*.

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