

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: A real change for the good of education process claims also to consider the necessity and utility of a new integrative *philosophical* perspective. The “pedagogical situation paradigm” offers a semiological approach of the formative process, by which one may highlight various opportunities in education that can be generated and no less powerfully activated by philosophy. From the perspective of fundamental references such as *ontological, gnoseological, psycho-logical, methodological, sociological* and *axiological*, the education is no more truncated in unfolding maybe the best frame of knowledge and practice to improve the human being as an individual and part of the society and the entire environment of living.

Keywords: education, philosophical view, pedagogical situation, vertical and horizontal interpretation

The frequency and magnitude of extreme behavior, from violence to mental illness and suicide, illustrated in the contemporary world, prove not only the major weaknesses of the educational act, but also the absence of a perspective on life and on the role and the sense of the human individual, on the social character of human life. Exaggerated pragmatism without other values given by an integrative perspective may have adverse consequences for the individual and the human species.

Social intervention through education is a perspective, *long-term investment*, that can considerably reduce material, psychological, value costs, time wasting, and their associated dramas, socially and individually. Prevention of social pathology is inconceivable out of a meaningful investment in education, which targets all efforts regarding the training and development of the human structure in its complexity.

Education is not only an act of prevention of social and individual pathology, but a *fundamental social need*, to be organized in a systemic way for the continuous improvement of person and the

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achievement of social progress. For that, education has to be connected to a *unifying and integrative* perspective, especially in the context of the informational society for which it must work.

Social pathology is a consequence of educational shortcomings, while intervention through education is a law of human training and functioning. In the light of an ideal citadel with zero pathology, the approach of education must be reconsidered linking it with philosophy. Using as references the *pedagogical situation* factors, through interpretation, multiple opportunities in the educational process offered by philosophy deserve to be highlighted.

The major change in education can occur by an integrative vision of the formative process, seen both as a system and on each level of intervention, using benchmarks that allow the complex involvement of the student's personality. The milestones can be: *ontological, gnoseological, psycho-logical, methodological, sociological* and *axiological*.

We will emphasize the key directions of the intervention *through* and *on* education to improve its efficiency, and the directions of social intervention through education, outside the educational institution, thanks to a philosophical view.

Thus it turns out that “philosophy is not a theory but an activity”¹, a way of life as the Ancient Greeks would have said, or an instrument, for example “a ladder to be climbed and then discarded after it has served its purpose” – as Sven Birkerts writes about the peculiar state by reading a book². In this approach, the “art of thinking”, “the art of arts” is mandatory, *Logic* itself as a “science of education”, for a while the only science of education, instrument, *organon*, “the principle of art and science”³.

For a long time it has been practiced and confirmed that human nature is the synthesis of practices and choices, the emblem of the social and cultural environment in which the individual evolves. The current complexity of social life automatically requires an improvement of social intervention through education. It is not only an adaptation of formative practices to the requirements of the social and

¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 4.112.

² Sven P. Birkerts (1994). *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. New York: Ballantine Books, p. 84.

³ Aristotle (1961). *Analytica Posteriora*. Romanian translation: *Analitica secundă*. Bucharest: Scientific Publishing House, II, 19, 100a.

cultural stage, the urgent renewals on the perspective of educational approaches in school, but also the need for *an integrative vision of social intervention through education* taking into account all the institutions, as well as other factors that generate educational effects.

The technological development and informational expansion, the direct and easy access to other sources of information and training, voluntary but overwhelming in relation to school activities, claim the expansion of school on an institutional level.

For a proper update of social intervention through education, three fundamental directions of action are required, made in a uniform manner through the philosophical perspective: 1). School restructuring as a system; 2). Approaching effective learning throughout the six philosophical benchmarks; 3). The expansion of school through educational goals, system of values, etc. at a social level, at the level of other institutions. In other words, the current social status of human development requires a new vision on education, on learning in the broad sense, on exercising the humane through systematic learning.

1. At the *school system* level, there is the requirement of a thorough reading, vertically and horizontally, of educational factors involved and their respective activation in relation to current social challenges. This exercise would provide a unified vision of the educational act and it would allow the reading of appropriate solutions.

Educational factors brought into question are those described by Olivier Clouzot in the model of “the pedagogical situation”: the *pedagogical activities (A)*, the *trainer (F)*, as a teacher, professor etc., the *content of the activity (C)*, the *objectives* or targeted purposes (*O*), the *evaluation (E)* and the *trainee (T)*, the beneficiary of the formative activity⁴.

The educational situation and the didactic communication situation unfold themselves as complex relationships between the six elements embodied in thematically determined learning contexts. Through interpretation, 64 combinations between the variables of the *pedagogical situation* can exist, expressing as many concrete learning situations, inventoried by Petru Ioan⁵.

The vertical interpretation of pedagogical variables permits the

⁴ Olivier Clouzot (1989). *Enseigner autrement. Des logiques éducatives à la transparence pédagogique*. Paris: Les Éditions d'Organisations.

⁵ See Petru Ioan (1995). *Educație și creație în perspectiva unei logici „situaționale” / Education and Creation from the Perspective of a “Situational” Logic*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, pp. 19-24.

materialization on educational levels (from the system as a whole to the lesson and its parts) of the realities involved in the formation of the young generation: the human factor, the goals, values, instruments, methods and contents.

By linking variables on the same level of generality, the horizontal interpretation allows their analysis. This kind of interpretation consists in *relating an educational factor to the others*⁶, the materialization of one factor in each area designated by the others. The operation is realized in combinations such as: C_O , F_O , E_O , etc., when the *objectives* (O) are analyzed in relation to the other factors, which translate into: objectives regarding the informational contents and the corresponding operations; objectives of teaching; objectives of educational activities evaluation, etc.

The second method for the horizontal interpretation implies the materialization of each of the six factors, in the area designated by the one analysed. When the other factors are embodied in the objectives (O) area, the obtained combinations: O_C , O_F , O_E , etc. are translated into: the content of the objectives; the initiators of objectives; the evaluation of objectives, etc.

In nowadays Romanian school, a change for the good should aim to rethinking the educational objectives and contents, a reform of the training methodology for the teaching staff, a reform of the learning conditions, a reform of assessment methods, too. All of these require an improvement of the educational policy. Since both the proposals and the implementation methods belong to the human factor, their quality is the measure of *human quality*. The paradox of the reform is given by the fact that the reformer needs to be reformed. Here is the vicious circle that can only be eliminated through strategic investments in education, starting from improving the human factor that ultimately will reach the decision-maker position in the educational field.

In the process of the educational factors' reform, *the educational objectives* call the tune. The horizontal interpretation of educational objectives is useful for a synthetic delimitation of the essential directions in which the school should intervene for human formation, in accordance with the complexity of native availabilities.

⁶ Melentina Toma (2012). *Perspective semio-logice ale situației didactice / Semio-Logical Perspectives upon the Didactic Situation*. Iași: „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing House, pp.156-158.

Thus, six types of objectives are detached; they would allow a harmonious and complex development of the human being⁷: *ontological* objectives regarding one's self and existence but also the integration and relationship with the environment; *gnoseological* objectives, regarding information, competences, cognitive structures and behaviours; *psycho-logical* objectives, regarding the affective, volitional, motivational, character development; *methodological* objectives, regarding the algorithm of various actions, behaviours specific to problem-solving, competences and attitudes specific to the action; *sociological* objectives regarding group behaviour, social attitudes and benchmarks; and *axiological* objectives, relating to the system of values, their hierarchy, competences for the assessment of activities, situations, self-evaluation, following human representative reference points.

Performing this type of analysis, the pathology of the field for each educational factor can also be outlined. From the perspective of the six types of educational intervention, we find school acting only in the *cognitive* direction, with its corresponding limits. This means that all the other directions are free to be enabled or not by the students by random criteria, with the help of their peers and other institutions. The external influence of school cannot be considered insignificant in the informational society, so we approach education in a broad, integrative perspective.

The deep pathological aspect is made by the fact that the criteria of choice and value system are given to young persons from the outside, since the school does not practice axiological objectives. Once the consumer is systematically and freely "poisoned" on all levels, from the material to the informational and emotional, the justification of pathological functioning of institutions appears under the pretext that "this is the demand", i.e. this is what the consumer (who has recently been taught to consume what is supplied) expects.

If the school would appropriately intervene in education on all the six directions of human formation, including much more rigor and responsibility on the cognitive direction, and if the activities of other institutions would be linked to that of the school, the natural structure of thought would not be daily assaulted by the political pathological speeches, immersed to the brim in *ignoratio elenchi*. The children's mind would not be exercised on the contents of textbooks with logical

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

mistakes, they would not be emotionally deformed by age-inappropriate contents or by the performance of any public figures; they would not be “poisoned” as a people against each other, against the nation, against the natural environment in which they were born, against any human value system, by the performance of some journalists, and would be exposed to incest, murder, refuge in alcohol and drugs, family disintegration and denigration, would not assist in defiance of the law even by its guarantors, would not assist to the decadence of the doctor, the teacher, the professional in general, and the list goes on.

The fact that today we are witnessing the activities that have lost their human purpose is the utmost pathological, by lack of education, this pathological announcing the suicide of the species: the material production has become an activity in itself, politics is an activity in itself, the pharmaceutical production is an activity in itself, education is an activity in itself, namely activities without a purpose for the beneficiary, without contributing to human development or even to its preservation, and as such without any social purpose, the purpose stopping at the producer who himself has been affected by a scale of values reduced to financial profit.

Human, social and individual progress illustrates the infinite horizon of learning. It is unnatural to reduce school requirements or to stress a sort of unnatural hierarchy of them in a society with more and more complex demands.

Similarly, as the objectives have been analyzed, the other educational components can be analyzed. *The contents* should be rethought in the light of the six directions, to be correlated with different pursued objectives. Educational plans should illustrate a certain proportion of the types of matters, of the theoretical and applied ones, of some sequences, etc., as curricula should illustrate an appropriate thematic, coherent choice of objectives and their realization through proper textbooks like adequate informational instruments for students and educational goals.

In the same integrative view, the training of trainers should be completed with educational professionals, coached to decipher and implement the six directions of exercising the humane, namely educators who can harness information in a gnoseological, axiological, psychological, methodological, ontological and sociological plan, thus actually engaging in the complex development of the students,

properly activating the human potential in every individual, by each lesson.

From the same integrative perspective, the *evaluation* approach, the approach of *the trainee's conditions* and of *the methodology* can reveal the improvements that would serve as a necessity in achieving a complex and unitary education.

2. On the level of concrete *didactic activity*, teaching, the information of each study discipline can specifically contribute to the six directions of the unitary evolution of the student, to self-knowledge, to the environment's knowing, to the perception of life and its values, expanding the range of formative accountability. Thus, each discipline, geography, biology, chemistry, for example, can significantly compete with social and humanities subjects in the humanistic formation of the student. Finally, the young person is what someone has practiced to be, in a gnoseological, axiological, methodological, psychological plan, etc.

The integrative learning perspective, given by the six directions, offers a training exercise in accordance with the complexity of human nature, thus contributing to its activation, giving the young people a broad vision of life, a style of relating to self, to society and to the natural environment, empowering them to do the best as regards the own purpose followed in the world.

In parallel with such an integrative view on education, precisely through the education system, some serious deficiencies or restricted and incoherent character of exercising the student's personality can be seen emerging; and so, they could be solved and corrected.

3. With all these aspects that illustrate the shortcomings of educational intervention on the level of the specialized system represented by school, which claims the need and urgency of a reform at this level, there is also a need for the educational institutional reform out of formal education, through the unitary activation of the six groups of educational objectives in *the activities of all institutions*. This would help eliminate the first great pathological rift between what school proposes and what its disciples practice, professionals in well-demarcated positions in other institutions: journalists, administration staff, etc.

School remains the basic institution of the training exercise, but it literally cannot operate in parallel with other institutions, in a competitive system of opposing value choices between *the Good* and

the Evil, the Permitted and the Prohibited, the Beautiful and the Ugly, etc.

At this stage, the Romanian society has a dual language in institutional education, with pathological consequences regarding the individual behavior, as well as the functioning of state institutions.

Social rift between the educational activity of the school and the formative influences from other institutions is not only a structural pathological reality, with pathological individual manifestations, primarily affecting the system of values and the horizon of individual development, but also an urgent constraint for the social intervention through education in a philosophical view.

The criteria for assessing and functioning state institutions can and should be educational; otherwise society operates in *a major inconsistency* against people, as individuals and as species. The evolution of human qualities cannot be real, unless through a proper practice in all areas and in all situations.

It has been imposed almost as natural that the other institutions operate independently from the education system, possibly hostile to a good human formation. Media, administrative institutions, etc. would work better for the individual and for the community if they had common educational goals with the school. Only this way would open the social normality, so that society could move as a whole in a favorable direction. Thus, we could say according to Constantin Noica that Romanians are equipped with a tendency to focus more on “life’s comment” than on life itself⁸.

In conclusion, the educational valences of a philosophical integrative perspective could lead to *major* changes in educational policy, in the teaching-learning exercise, in the complex capitalization and in a positive direction regarding school outcomes, but also in the functioning of institutions and their unitary participation in human improvement. This would ensure a comprehensive, profound and pragmatic education that could lead to a *responsible relating* of the individual to *self*, to *others* and to the *environment*: a better human being, trained in an adequate exercise, in a proper world.

By a philosophical perspective on exercising the humane in all social structures, which may coincide with the practice of life, the

⁸ Constantin Noica (1978). *Spiritul românesc în cumpătul vremii. Șase maladii ale spiritului contemporan / Romanian Spirit at the Conjunction of Time. Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*. Bucharest: Univers Publishing House, p. 154.

individual may acquire an authentic reference to life, activating all the noble and complex potentialities, towards the progress aspiration and support.

The impetus of knowledge is an essential inner engine of the human being, genetically set, shown from the first days of terrestrial life through relentless curiosity. Moreover, this engine would transcend the physical, being specific to spirit. From this perspective, on the one hand, the instrument of superior knowledge would not be only the brain; and on the other hand, the knowledge would not be, individually, a process interrupted by death, the horizon of learning remaining infinitely outlined.

Education should positively fulfill in its direction, coherence and consistency, using a philosophical perspective on itself and no less on life, in general. The knowledge of man in his complexity and essentiality and its use in the educational process in a philosophical perspective, in the direction of good, is the key to any major individual and social changes. The fact that educational policy is not given enough importance shows *indifference* regarding the future: socially, regionally or globally. Insofar as “ethics represents the theory of social relations”⁹ and it involves the theory of good, educational reform is inconceivable outside ethics adapted to the proper foreseen changes.

Those who do not understand the importance of education in social transformation must be helped by real professionals, with a philosophical view upon this activity; otherwise, dilettantes will decide the ‘path’ to be followed – surely not in the adequate direction, for the individual and social progress. We really need a good and safe platform of action and intervention for developing ourselves and the society through education; and the philosophical references can assure the grounding view on that point.

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