

1.3.1 The Idea of Education or, What Is Not Visible for the Approach of Objectifying Science?

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Here, I would like to contribute with some remarks concerning the *Idea*¹ of education and with some basic structures, as they are visible in the phenomenological approach. I myself belong to the tradition of Czech philosophy of education, which originates mainly in phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Eugen Fink and Martin Heidegger and also hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Thanks to Jan Patočka, phenomenological approach was discussed and opened already in the era when the official philosophy in Czechoslovakia was Marxism–Leninism. Philosophers who visited Patočka’s lectures and seminars at Philosophical faculty and later on, when Patočka was expelled from the university after 1968, in his home seminars, among them Radim Palouš (1924–2015), Jaroslava Pešková (1929–2006), were able to continue in Patočka’s phenomenology and in his questioning the Idea and the sense of education. And I consider myself lucky that their students and successors in this line of philosophy of education, Anna Hogenová, Naděžda Pelcová are my teachers.

What is distinctive in this line of philosophy of education? Here I can only point out the main character: The education is not an issue here as a process but as an Idea. That means the questioning concerns the necessity which is constitutive for education as education. “Philosophy of education” here is not interpreted as a special science, but as theoretical practice of philosophy itself. Philosophy as Plato’s discovery does not mean here a mere theoretical thinking about something, for instance about education. It is philosophy as a “love of wisdom”, which provides the basic structures for the asking about education. In this sense, the theme of questioning here is not only a philosophy of education, but also a philosophy of education. Also “education” in this line of Czech philosophy of education is not interpreted as an object of expertise, of special sciences, but it is questioned and investigated in its Idea in the Platonic sense, that means in its characters that necessary belong to it.

¹ I write here the word “Idea” with the capital “I” to indicate that I mean the Idea in the Platonic sense and not in the sense of “representation”, as it is understood in modern thinking based on Cartesian metaphysics.

Philosophy as a love of wisdom involves the paradoxical erotic² structure (cf. Plato, 1973: 209a-b) in which we go beyond our present knowledge to what we do not know. This presupposes that we are able to see ourselves in our not-knowing. And this structure belongs also to the Idea of education itself as a movement in which I am striving for understanding of myself, for "who" am I as human, for my humanity. The humanity of human, the Idea of human is thus discovered by Plato and to this Idea belongs essentially the movement which we call "education".

Let me elucidate this discovery of the Idea of humanity by a short interpretation of Heraclitus fragment: "Dogs bark at every one they do not know" (Heraclitus, Fr. 97). I interpret: the dog is able to encounter the negativity of "not-knowing", but only in a way, that he barks at this "not-known". That means the dog in his being has no ability to go beyond what he encounters. In contrast, to the human being as human belongs the "erotic" ability to go beyond the sphere of his knowledge to what he does not know. Human is able to speak about his own not-knowing in the form of the question and he is also able to strive for the answer to his question. Speech (logos) is not only an ability to produce the words, means to communicate, but to be able to about my own "not-knowing", to go beyond my present knowledge. Speech is the way how we as humans are in the world in contrast to dogs, cars, buildings etc. And the ability cannot be adequately interpreted by any special science, because the negativity it involves is not an object.

To the Idea of education belongs the possibility to free myself by knowing myself in my "not-knowing", in my pre-judices that orientate my living and acting, that pre-decide how I understand anything whatsoever in the world, including myself. In education, I am freeing myself from my prejudicial, believing self, which is enclosed in his prejudices, his believing and his opinions. In such a way, education also enables me to understand someone else, to understand that my view is not the only possible view and also that my experience in its meaning is not something random or rhapsodic, that it has its validity from the sense-giving (Sinnggebung) source of my understanding which always already throws its light and makes something visible as something. This explication opens up a possibility to understand, why things are appearing so and so and that this necessity of appearing is not the same as their reality. That I encounter this or that in the world is something random in the sense that it would not create any contradiction

² It is good to remind the reader that Greek "ero" means "to strive for", "desire" and also "to ask".

if it would not be or if it would be otherwise. But that I encounter something as this or that is not random and it involves the necessity even if I, in the course of my experience, am not aware of this necessity.

To encounter this necessity means to have the correlative “where-from” I encounter something in my encountering. This “sight” itself, this having something given together with the “sight” through which it is given is precisely what Plato called *Idea* (our Czech word “vid” is maybe closest to the English word “sight”). This encountering we cannot understand in a metaphysical or psychological way in a sense that there is a ready-made ego in the world who relates itself to something in the world, but in other way around that this relation is the very originating of myself, the ego, to “whom” a correlative environment (*Umwelt*) belongs with its disclosed possibilities. Using Plato’s metaphor of the cave, the getting out of the cave is also getting out of some ego, as “who” I grow up through the constitutive acts of belief (here I have in mind what Plato calls “*doxa*”) into a correlative “world”.

In this sense, what belongs to an educated human is the possibility and ability to see the issues through the eyes of someone else, not to be enclosed in one way of seeing which I confuse with the reality, and also in one particular ego, which is petrified in his own ways of encountering and so in his petrified possibilities how to encounter anything. Such a human being lives in self-enclosing to his own self, insofar this enclosing means not knowing about my not knowing, i.e. about myself (as not knowing). And this self-enclosing to my own possibilities also means the enclosing within our tradition, which thus creates a Platonic cave of higher order.

What the educated human is able to accomplish is not only to manage entities in the world, but and primarily to make visible the visibility itself, in other words, his own relation to the given and through this he is also able to disclose his own self. Human being always already transcends the given in a way, that he gave this given to himself, but in this “always already giving to myself the given and thus always already understand this given” I do not understand my understanding, because I aim primarily at what is understood, not at this understanding alone which decides as what something appears to me. And as it is always me who gives himself something somehow (i.e. in some sense-unity) and as the education consists in making visible this self who gives something as something to himself, we could say that the idea of education is nothing else than the answer and at the same time the repetition of the old question covered within the Greek discover of *gnothi seauton*, know yourself.

Education as *e-ducare*

Within our tradition, we are inheritors of discoveries, insights into the way of interpreting the appearances or, correlatively our experiences. Our Czech word "ob-jev" (literally in English: "through-appearance") is close to English dis-cover, meaning "to go beyond the appearances and to uncover the source of light with respect to the necessity of why something appears so and so" (Vopěnka, 1989: 439). But what cannot be taken over are these insights, only the results of these insights, so we do not know the questions which led to the results, to the answers we inherited. In this sense, education is *e-ducare*, "bringing out" of the sphere of mere appearances, presuppositions to the insight into the criteria of knowledge.

Philosophy of education goes to the origins of the European tradition, mainly to Plato's philosophy. The Idea of philosophy as discovered by Plato means a totally new, specific type of experience that provides the ground for thematically practiced education. Plato's discovery of education (*paideia*) as specifically human possibility not only to think from some set of assumptions, from the shadowy picture of the world but also to go beyond these assumptions to the understanding of them. It is important to add that it is not about application of some pre-given theoretical concepts and rules. That would transform thinking into a mere technological operating with concepts and their application. To the Idea of education belongs the care for the ability to go beyond the fixed frame of our concepts and beliefs.

In order to operate with logical concepts and apply them on the particular cases, we would need to have some logic and its correlative "onto-logic" beforehand. But philosophy as a striving for a total non-prejudicial knowledge (Husserl) questions this logic in its sources and the ontology of the world which belongs to this logic. In this sense, philosophy of education is located in the space before this cut between concepts and particular cases.

Idea of education and object of education

Why is this line of thought important and actual? Special sciences are not able to understand human being as a whole (cf. Fink, 1979: 106ff.). That means in his ontological structure, in his "humane" way of being. Why not? Because this ontological structure is not an object in the world, it cannot be objectified. But there is always already metaphysical decision executed in modern special sciences, as concerns the question what does mean "to be". As long as these sciences operate within the structure of consciousness,

within the subject-object relation, “to be” means for them “to be an object”. But as was already said, the ontological structure of human being cannot be interpreted only as being an object.

Phenomenology re-discovers the discovery of philosophy with its “erotic” structure in this double being of human: Human is not only an *object in the world* but also a *subject for the world* (Husserl, 1983: § 28; Husserl, 1970: §§ 53–55). Human being always already understands the world and himself in the world, but this understanding itself is not in the world. I do not speak here about psychological knowledge. Because psychology itself, as any other special science, is already located in the world and investigates the objective mental processes.

For instance, the validity of the judgment “two and two equals four” does not depend on the mental process as a psychological process. It depends on the truth itself (it is an instantiation of the Idea of truth), which is given in an intuitive manner. You simply see in your mind that if you collect four units, you get the four. This mental seeing provides the last criterion without which any logical deduction could not be possible. This seeing cannot be deduced. First you need to see in your mind and then you can divide what you see into deductive steps of reasoning. Or in a simpler case: the redness cannot be deduced or defined, you must be able to see it and this seeing provides the criterion for knowledge of what does it mean to be “red”.

Insofar as special sciences are able to investigate only what is made an object for them, they are blind to this constitutive aspect of human being which we call “being subject for the world”. The world alone is not in the world and yet I always already know that we are in the world. How and from where do we know this? The world is not an object, but the horizon within which we can encounter something as something.

Phenomenology with her questioning about the way of being makes us able to understand the education as an ontological movement. However, the approach of special sciences is important, this science conceive human being as an object of their own particular expertise. But education concerns human being not only as an object in the world, but also in his relation to the world and to himself as such. Phenomenological approach is important, because it makes possible to investigate this paradoxical double-sided structure of human being.

Philosophy and modern sciences

Of course, we can see education from different perspectives, for instance as a psychological, social, political etc. process. But then it is important to understand that we see this *objective process* in the world and not the issue itself, education in its essential characteristics. But it must be this Idea of education that must provide the criterion according to which any practice of education must be regulated. And insofar as to education essentially belongs bringing human to his own humanity, and insofar as to this humanity belongs the structure of striving for understanding of the world and myself in the world, we cannot do the theory of education and education itself only by means of special sciences and their objectifying methods. The education cannot do without these complementary sides of human being, which we have stressed in moments "being object in the world" and "being subject for the world". To be able to think of these moments in their unity, we need other science that is able to thematise the mode of being itself and this science is philosophy.

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