

Walter Omar Kohan - IV, 23, 20, 21, 27, 29, 33. I, 3. II, 9

From Human Education in the 3rd Millennium

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From the tradition of Latin American Popular Education (with emphasis in authors like Paulo Freire and Simón Rodríguez) as well as with some contemporary French philosophers these are my ideas concerning the actual reality and challenges of Education. What follows are some principles. Principles do not mean foundations but beginnings to think about and practice education

a) A philosophical education

There is a tradition as early as Socrates conceiving philosophy not as a form of knowledge or intellectual activity but as practical wisdom, as a form of life. It is a form or dimension of education that has to do with a relationship to knowledge, ignorance and thinking. Today it is a fundamental dimension of teacher education: help teachers to pay attention and be sensitive to the philosophical dimension of educational practice;

b) Education and the World

Paulo Freire insisted that the reading of the words presupposes a reading of the world. Literacy is about reading the world as much as reading words. Today, school has a paradoxical relationship to the world: while in a sense it reproduces the world, it does not speak a language that enables to understand and put it into question;

c) Equality as a principle

In his reading of J. Jacotot, J. Rancière has shown that equality (of intelligence) is the single principle needed for an emancipatory education. Paulo Freire stresses: anyone can learn anything if given the conditions and opportunity to do it; education is not about evaluation but about given value to each human being. “To transform the social world is difficult but not impossible”; “education cannot transform the world but no transformation is possible without education”. Another world is always possible and education has a role in the construction of another world;

d) Love as a form and as an aim

According to A. Badiou love is what is experienced from the Two and not from the One. Love is the encounter of difference, and not identity, that gives birth to a new world. Pedagogical love is love not only to persons but to the position of educators and students and to the world; education as a loving practice towards a less unfair world;

e) Hospitality, education for all, citizenship

Millions of people are excluded from educational practices and institutions. This exclusion takes place outside (letting them out) or inside (through the educational institutions). A society where just one person is not educated is a non educated society, Simón Rodríguez, the master of Simón Bolívar stated: “schools for all because we are all citizens”. It is not the school that will make citizens. The citizens are going to make the school.

23) Education and thinking (*Is it possible / desirable / needed to teach to think? Learning to think by oneself with others. Philosophical dialogue, childhood, a new philosophy in education.*) Education for wisdom (*inquiry learning; judgment; understanding; the role of critical thinking; empathic moral inquiry in education*).

33) The problem of time for education (*Chronological versus aionic and kairotic time. Teaching and giving time. Teaching in the present. School and free-time*)

From the tradition of Latin American Popular Education (with emphasis in authors like Paulo Freire and Simón Rodríguez) as well as with the inspiration of some contemporary French philosophers these are my ideas concerning the actual reality and challenges of Education. **Bold text**

What follow are just some synthetic principles as a draft to be discussed and problematized with other participants of the Conference. They are contestable, polemic, arbitrary, contingent. I offer them as sources of dialogue. ‘Principles’ do not mean in this short text solid foundations but rather provisional beginnings to think about and to practice education in our times. So they look forward both to critically understanding the aims and sense of education while at the same time embracing our educational practices.

a) A philosophical education

There is a tradition in the so called Western Philosophy as early as Socrates conceiving philosophy not as a form of knowledge or intellectual activity but as practical wisdom, as a form of life. This understanding of philosophy is also present in other cultures and traditions closed to the very concrete issues of existence. Philosophy is then a form or dimension of education that has to do with a relationship to knowledge, ignorance and thinking that gives “meaning and sense” to our (educational) life: we live an examined –questioning others and self-questioning- life inside and outside educational practices. P. Hadot has studied in Ancient Greek spiritual exercises as forms that can inspire the unfolding of philosophy in educational settings.

Today such understanding of philosophy is a fundamental dimension of teacher education: it helps teachers to pay attention and be sensitive to the philosophical dimension of their educational practice; so this principle means that “another” education emerges when philosophy is practiced not only or mainly as a content or discipline (as the history of philosophical ideas) but as a practical dimension of actual teaching and learning. Its not an “either or” relationship. The discipline of philosophy might help to foster this dimension more practical dimension which has to do with a questioning relationship to knowledge and practice in education, i.e. a philosophical teacher is one who is not worried mainly about teaching (and learning) something (this or that content) but about helping students to find meaning in a questioning relationship to whatever they desire to learn (and teach).

In other words, in a philosophical education, students and teachers engage in a questioning relationship to what is taught and learned in their educational practices and to the common world they are living outside them. What is important for a philosophical teacher is to foster a curious form of being in the such world both in herself and in her students: a philosophical teacher aims the student to always desire to know more than knowing this or that and she herself is interested in questioning her teaching and herself being the kind of teacher she is.

b) Education and the World

3) Dangerous trends (How contemporary dangerous trends for humanity are met by education? or - How education may lead to threats and risks

Paulo Freire, Brazilian philosopher of education, insisted that the reading of the words presupposes a reading of the world. By this he means that education is political and that the role of the educator is a political one: literacy is about reading the world as much as reading words, i.e. about understanding the reason the world is

the way it is. Our capitalistic world makes millions of human live a non-human life and education has to do with putting this world into question and being able to critically reading it, i.e. understanding the reasons it is the ways it is.

In this context, school has a paradoxical relationship to the social world: while in a sense it reproduces this capitalistic world, it does not speak a language that enables to understand its logic and to put it into question; in capitalistic present times, education seems to be a dispositive that reproduces the world and its social order more than it helps to understand it. Values like efficiency, productivity, competition, entrepreneurism and alike are fostered uncritically in the educational systems. While the material conditions to teach are constantly being worse in our countries, our institutions and its inhabitants are “tempted” and encouraged to reproduce those values if they want to survive and “be successful” in such a world. Critical teachers, educational administrators and other educational actors live a difficult time: they seem to be pressed to educate in a way against their believes and values if they want to survive.

Thus, a philosophical teacher struggles to be able to live a critical form of educational in school, to suspend and profane (Masschelein & Simons) this institutional order so that a school can be a school: a space and time where people put the social world they share on the table in order to question it and create the conditions so that she and her students can live the kind of world they want to live and share.

c) Equality as a principle

20) *Equality not as an aim but as a principle of education.* 21) *The role of alterity for education as such* (Teaching and studying an understanding and coping with alterity. A comprehensive relationship with the other) 27) *Agonistic pedagogy and other approaches. The oppressed and education for emancipation* (intellectual, i.e. individual; social; political).

In his reading of Joseph Jacotot, Jacques Rancière has shown that equality (of intelligence) is the single principle needed for an emancipatory education. If there is such thing as an emancipatory education (Jacotot turned to be quite pessimistic about this possibility throughout his life), the only thing this educator needs to know (better: to believe in), is that all human beings are equally intelligent. If she does not believe in this principle she will reproduce the stultifying order of educational institutions: a student being treated as an unequal learns this inequality and through it a hierarquical and authoritarian order.

Contrary, with an emancipatory teacher students learn that they are equality capable as any other human being of being what they want to be, i.e., they learn an equalitarian order, the principle of emancipation. Then, equality is a principle and not an aim of education. If education establishes equality as an aim it would reproduce the inequality from which it departures. This Jacototian emancipation is individual and intellectual. Paulo Freire stresses the social, epistemological and political dimensions of emancipation. Emancipation is not an individual act but a collective one. It begins when everyone belief that anyone can learn anything if given the conditions and opportunity to do it and it projects into a social world where every human being can live a human life it deserves to live. Without the overcoming of social oppression education would be ineffective or functional to the status quo.

"To transform the social world is difficult but not impossible"; "education cannot transform the world but no t

d) Love

29) *Education, friendship, love.*

According to A. Badiou love is what is experienced from the Two and not from the One. Love is the event of the encounter of difference, and not identity, that gives birth to a new world. Pedagogical love is love not only to persons but to the position of educators and students and to the world; education as a loving practice towards

a less unfair world; according to Freire, love is political because both are dimensions that affect all spheres of human life aiming another political order, more fair, democratic, beautiful. Love is also about time: it makes us “forget” the dominant chronological experience of time reproduced at school institutions and it makes it possible to experience a more durative, present time.

Teaching, then, has also to do with “giving time” (Derrida), which means an antinomy and a double impossibility: a) first impossibility: no one can give what no one can have (time) and b) an absolute giving (one that does not expect anything) is also impossible; so giving time is something at the same time impossible and necessary for a teacher because it is impossible to teach in the time of the dominant capitalistic institutions.

If we remember the Ancient Greek notions of time, *aion* (a qualitative, durative time) is the time of love, as it is of thinking, playing and art while *chronos* (the quantitative number of natural movement) is the time of science and the institutions. A loving educator experience education in the present and makes it possible for her students to suspend *chronos* and experience a present time in *aion*. She teaches “time”, i.e., she creates the conditions to experience a durative present where to think together what she and her students consider to be important. In this kind of educational experience time goes more slowly, it nearly stops in a present where thinking takes place. It is a free time (*scholē*). When love is central in educational practice it enables students and teachers to create a new world out of the experience of difference.

e) Hospitality, education for all, citizenship

9) Empowering young people and adults to be as critically engaged citizens.

Millions of people are excluded from educational practices and institutions as well as from our societies. This exclusion takes place outside (letting them out from the educational institutions) and inside (explicit or implicitly throughout educational institutions). A society where just one person is not educated is a non educated society, Simón Rodríguez, the master of Simón Bolívar stated: “schools for all because we are all citizens”. It is not the school that will make citizens. It is the citizens that are going to make the school.

Non-discriminatory access to educational institutions is, then, needed. Education, then, is public, general, universal and is close to what J. Derrida call “absolute or philosophical” hospitality, i.e. one that it is offered with no conditions in the name of humanity to every new human being. Simón Rodríguez repeated “we invent or we err”. This phrase has very different meanings, in each word. It can mean a) or we invent or we err. If we do not invent, we err; b) it might be saying also that the second part “we err” is an equivalence or a form, another way of the first part, “we invent”. That is, it may be meaning: we invent, that is, we err; Etymologically, invention comes from the Latin *in-ventus*. *Ventus* means arrived, it is the participle of the verb *venire* that means to arrive or to come.

So *in-ventus* is what has come in, inside, what has arrived inside. That is, invention is something that arrives from the outside to the inside. For Simón Rodríguez, the most important thing in education is hospitality to those who are outside, to those who need to enter school so that we have all inside. To err, can mean also a couple of things: error can be the opposite of the success; but erring can also mean wandering, walking, traveling without a fixed destination. I think Simón Rodríguez, among other things, was thinking that for a teacher, errancy and error, wandering and mistakes can be forms of invention, of both inventing themselves as teachers but also to give space to those who are outside. It is necessary to err, in both senses, in order to invent yourself as a teacher sensitive to hospitality.

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