



Finitude - the root of educability in the human being

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ABSTRACT. The phenomenon of education, foregrounded on certain ideas by Heidegger, with special reference to finitude and the meaning of being, is analyzed. Current paper shows the basis of education within the original comprehensive opening of the human being, within the characteristics of the project of have-to-be, present in humans and absent in other beings. Results show that the concept reveals no objective and universalizing alternative. The only alternative is to put on the way and always prepare the subject Dasein as from himself, allowing him to be aware and available for the occurrence of world.

Keywords: Heidegger, education, authenticity, hermeneutics.

Finitude – raiz da educabilidade do ser humano

RESUMO. Tomando como ponto de partida alguns elementos do pensamento de Heidegger e focando, sobretudo, a finitude e o sentido do ser, este texto busca pensar o fenômeno da educação. Pretende mostrar o fundamento desta na originária abertura compreensiva do ser humano, no caráter de projeto, de ter-que-ser, próprios do ser humano e ausentes nos outros entes. Conclui que não se pode oferecer, a partir desse pensamento, alguma alternativa objetiva e universalizante, mas somente colocar a caminho e preparar sempre o sujeito 'ser-af' a partir de si mesmo, permitindo que se mantenha desperto e disponível para o acontecimento do mundo.

Palavras-chave: Heidegger, educação, autenticidade, hermenêutica.

Finitud – raíz de la educabilidad del ser humano

RESUMEN. Tomando como punto de partida algunos elementos del pensamiento de Heidegger y enfocando, sobre todo, la finitud y el sentido del ser, este texto busca pensar el fenómeno de la educación. Pretende mostrar el fundamento de esta en la originaria apertura comprensiva del ser humano, en el carácter de proyecto, de tener-que-ser, propios del ser humano y ausentes en los otros entes. Concluye que no se puede ofrecer, a partir de este pensamiento, alguna alternativa objetiva y universal, sino solamente poner en marcha y preparar siempre al sujeto 'ser-ahí' a partir de sí mismo, permitiendo que se mantenga despierto y disponible para el acontecimiento del mundo.

Palabras clave: Heidegger, educación, autenticidad, hermenéutica

Introduction

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a philosopher who had major impact in the twentieth century philosophy. He has challenged reflection from both the ones who sympathize with him and his ideas, and the ones who have some antipathy or resistance to him. Heidegger's ideas confrontation helped several of his critics to build their own philosophy.

Gradually, as the temporal distance rises in relation to him and his contemporaries, adherence or hasty and excessive rejections are left aside, and then a more peaceful framework starts being developed, which is watchful towards the limits and contributions of his ideas. It is possible to note his

decisive influence on philosophy and other areas of knowledge, the wealth and thoroughness of his project, and at the same time, the weakness and fragility of ideas developed by someone situated in a certain time and space, by a finite Being, a *Dasein*.

According to the author himself, what is the fundamental element of his ideas? It is the meaning of Being. But Being, in this case and differently from tradition, is not a supratemporal entity, an objective foundation, an ultimate reality that works as an assurance of the philosophical and scientific projects. Being is now the open and finite horizon where we exist, in which we know, value, act, choose and educate. It is closely connected with the Being that exists, the *Dasein*.

Therefore, rethinking the meaning of Being is related to a deconstruction of the way how we think, as we understand ourselves, as we understand the world, searching for its roots and overcoming the determinations that operate already always, but which are forgotten (forgetfulness has also been forgotten itself), in our thinking and existing. When asking about the meaning of Being, regaining the ability of admiration, astonishment and enchantment that were absent due to the world obviousness where we were born and grew up, is at issue. Another issue is the way we understand ourselves, what essentially characterizes us as humanity. It is the pursuit of the original foundation, concealed in the crystallization of the determinations and obviousness that constitute our daily lives.

Therefore, we aimed to show in this paper, some elements of the Black Forest philosopher's thought in order to, with them and through them, conduct us beyond the constituted, beyond the determined, without, however, presenting a new and better determination. More importantly is to put on the way again, freeing from the tendency of the immobilism of metaphysical thinking, getting open towards extreme and mobilizing inquiries.

The human condition in the world –understanding of Being

The Dasein (Heidegger's name attributed to human being in its origin) always already understands the being, it is in the being's opening, inhabits the horizon of meaning, is being-in-the-world. This being that exists, understanding the being, exists in time, it is finite. That is why being, time and Dasein are inseparable. Dasein is where the being expresses itself. This way, it is possible to claim that there is not outside anymore, an atemporal instance that can support the practical or theoretical projects of the human being. Everything that is, is inside the world, the time. All human projects are finite, language moves within the limits of time. What it is, is always 'something as something' (*etwas als etwas*).

The human being is left to himself. It is not; it exists. They have to do something about them; they do not have any absolute reference, except for the ones considered absolute within finitude. They have to take decisions. Heidegger says in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics – World, Finitude, Solitude* (2006) that the Dasein is world-forming. A rock is worldless, an animal is world-poor and man is world-forming. A rock is completely immanent, in the absolute capture within the environment; an animal is also captured by the environment, but they have some inner limited possibility and the human

being is in transcendence, although it is an immanent one. Both the rock and the animal are determined by the circumstances, have no freedom to decide about their destiny, about their being. On the other hand, the human being 'is' not, is not previously determined in its being, but they do exist and, as such, need to decide, choose, make something about themselves.

In other words, the human being is free, condemned to freedom, they are responsible for their choices and consequently, for their being, as it depends on their accomplishments. They are 'cared', they are responsible for what they become; they can and must become and project themselves in time. Only humans have past, present or future – they bring in memory, language, the events and the past choices, they understand the present and project themselves towards future. They are open, they are opening, and they always already understand the being. It is that entity for whom the world makes sense, things are something as something.

Given the idea that the experience is the opening for the world and putting the skeptical objections of the issues about fallibility of perception aside, McDowell (2005) searches for the human being's specificity, analyzing the difference between the 'mere animals' and the 'human mode', supported by Gadamer's reflections. The difference of opening to the world is about being in the environment and being inserted in the world. The merely animal mode is stuck in the environment while the human mode is inserted in the world. In other words,

[...] in mere animals, sentience is in the service of a mode of life that is structured exclusively by immediate biological imperatives [...] and it merely embraces the [...] ability to cope with problems and exploit opportunities (McDowell, 2005, p. 154).

In the human mode of life, however, when conceptual powers are present, there is also the spontaneity, the ability to decide and choose what to think and do. It is as if there was a first nature apart from the determinism of nature (first nature). There is not a separation between biology and human life, but there is a relation of transcendence of the second in relation to the first, which characterizes a "[...] free and distant behavior" (Gadamer, 1997, p. 645).

Differently from the 'mere animals', the Dasein 'exists': they do not have previous essence, do not have their being (as man) determined by nature, although they are part of it, but they need to produce this being through existence, with their decisions and activities. The other entities simply 'are', they show themselves as such in the understanding of this being that exists.

The root of being educable or not, lies in this difference. The animal is not educable; it is not open to the different possibilities from its own nature. They can even be trained, conditioned to certain behaviors, but they will never be able to decide and support their choices, choose their destiny. Whereas the human being is not, but should be. They can even choose to become, to be, according to others' project, the impersonal and, therefore, live inappropriate and inauthentically. But they can also, being 'aware' of their being-in-the-world, their finitude, choose according to personal reasons; decide according to a personal and authentic project. They cannot withdraw from the world, in which, first and normally, they are in the everyday and average life mode. Although they cannot withdraw from the world, they can assume it comprehensively; they can allow themselves to be affected by the original condition through anguish, boredom and limit situations. We learn a determined language, a way of valuing, judging and relating to things that can be assumed comprehensively instead of just being led by impersonality.

In summary, the human being is an educable entity because it is in the opening of the being, it is the entity in which such opening happens and that is not previously determined in its being. While open, it is initially absorbed in the common, everyday interpretation, and in the routine occupation with the being around them. They understand themselves from the relation with the things they are concerned with, with the objects or tools that are on their world's horizon, without being aware of their mundane condition, of their being-in-the-world, of their finitude, their thrown, factual and existential condition. They are involved in the interpretative circle, in which things and logic that support the things perpetuate. In other words, they are finitude, they do not happen objectively, but they are constituted in time, caring with themselves, with the others and the world. They do not have objective references from outside the time, to beyond the time, which is that comprehensive universe that they inhabit since their conception. They need to make themselves.

Moving from property to authenticity implies the understanding of this condition. But this understanding does not happen through some new theory or external intervention. The understanding of being-in-the-world or the experience of the own existence is triggered not only through intellectual effort, but also some willingness to allow themselves to inquire, escape from the logical and closed circle, which is anticipant of any new experience. It is

allowing the experience through the destruction or deconstruction of the predictable everydayness. In *Being and Time* (1998), Heidegger suggests anguish as a device that signals and refers us towards ourselves, towards our mundane and finite condition. Among all the organizations, explanations, theories and predictions that surround us, which are encrusted in our own everyday language, the anguish emerges as a warning of the original condition escape, of the thrown condition, of finitude and the historicity from which we are made. It destroys the logic that protects us from our being-in-the-world. It brings us back to the mundane and finite conditions in which we exist.

Human being and finitude

Let's go back to Heidegger's project a little more. Acknowledging the issue of the meaning of being as the most important one, he shows the necessity of rethinking our relation to the world, to the unknown, to our being. As for him, this relation is traditionally objectifying, comes from the entities' model, from a determined relation to the entity and stays in it. In this relation stuck in the entity, the previous conditions in which the entity is possible as entity are hidden. When knowing the entity and the practical relation with it, the meaning of being is hidden. It is necessary, then, to rethink the problem of meaning of being so that man is free in his possibilities, in his being as project. The entity is not 'in itself', but it is always inside a determined temporal human projection (it is always 'something as something', as mentioned beforehand).

Escaping from death, from the being-toward-death signals an attempt to escape from finitude, it is a struggle in search of familiarity, of the security of 'cosmos' against 'chaos'. Therefore, the necessity to elaborate strategies of distraction even more efficient to hide finitude emerges. But anguish appears as a memory of the insurmountable mortal, historical and finite situation. Although in the everydayness it is possible to hide it, it cannot be in fact eliminated, and it continues characterizing the human projects. Projecting itself is a remark of finitude. The 'project' by Heidegger (1998) means that what it is, is inside the projection, of the *Dasein's* projecting, a mode of being of this entity that understands the being and needs to make something about themselves. Reality is nothing outside the human project, the being-in-the-world. Things, however, are not in themselves, but are always within the human project. The dichotomy which is within the Metaphysics base is overcome, "[...] that way of thinking that postulates the reflexive confrontation between a self and a real world, between a thinking subject and a more or less

'inert' nature" (D'agostini, 2003, p. 176, author's emphasis).

Everydayness in *Being and Time* is the description of this environment which is always assumed as atemporal, present and infinite or, as Nunes points out, "[...] the original time is finite and ensures the genesis of the being of *Dasein* and the everyday existence. The improper temporality leads to infinitude" (Nunes, 1992, p. 27). The impersonal is nourished by this environment and keeps, through it, the being-in-the-world concealment. Metaphysics, infinitude, concealment and denial of death through the times are almost synonyms. They express the "[...] desire of omnipotence that surrounds the heart of man since his origin [...]" (Corrêa, 2008, p. 85), which is easily visible through the struggle for appropriation and expropriation of death by contemporary medicine, cosmetics and aesthetics, in which the "[...] concealment and denial of death have reached its greatest level, supported by the technical-scientific apparatus" (Correa, 2008, p. 85). And unfortunately, "[...] philosophy will take a lot of time to acknowledge finitude and mortality as the most universal aspects of the human condition" (Correa, 2008, p. 85). Nunes explains the meaning of finitude within the human being:

Claiming that the *Dasein* is finite means 'it is not its owner in fact', and affirming that man is determined by his *Dasein*, means that only the being understanding, the root of its finitude, preceding any anthropological position, show who we are. 'More original than man is the finitude of *Dasein* in him', claims Heidegger in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1992, p. 156, author's emphasis).

Acknowledging and assuming finitude, knowing we are finite and mortal, means that, in order to support your truths, the philosophical discourse will not be able to employ the absolute anymore. It is now let to himself, it needs to take on the responsibility of being in charge of its destiny. The human being, in this case, faces a hard task which demands braveness and patience, because

[...] man only wins if he supports the real meaning of his own life, becoming able to accept the 'no', the limit, all kinds of losses which continues through all his life and are part of his everydayness (Corrêa, 2008, p. 107, author's emphasis).

Returning to finitude means, in this case, moving towards the world, remembering the original place, the opening of the being, in a withdrawal from the objects that settle their everyday life, to reach the horizon of possibilities of these objects, i.e., the world. Within the

everydayness it is needed to, always again, understand, explain, develop the ability of being involved in the impersonality, accomplish themselves. The property and authenticity are only achieved when the presentification is overcome towards the fundamental temporality, the mode of being finite of *Dasein*, of the being-in-the-world.

There is not any awareness or pure me, for we are always already in the world. The fact we are interpretively in the world is what remains. We exist interpreting towards ourselves and the entities that surround us. The entities are what they are from our interpretive relation to them. The phenomenology becomes hermeneutic phenomenology. Before knowing theoretically, we already understand, we are in an insurmountable interpretive circle, from which we cannot break free. We always already understand the being; we never approach something in a pure way, without any previous temporal understanding.

Analyzing Heidegger's course through reading his works, we realize that there is not a fixation of knowledge or the description of objects (entities). There is always some tireless effort that attempts to do some type of experience with the entities. It is a pedagogical way that does the best to conduct the reader beyond the objects, to make the experience of the experience of objects.

Heidegger's thought as a pedagogical process

Heidegger's work can be read as an exercise that pedagogically forces us to assume a human condition in the world. It is not about an agreement on education, it is not a book of science that tries to explain a certain object, but it is a reflection that conducts beyond the everydayness capture. However, it is not also possible, according to what it seems, to wait for objective and direct answers for the pedagogical questions which educators face. The problems of education are at the level of entities (the specific and varied elements that make up the education phenomenon), they require some arrangement or rearrangement with the entities: at this level the reflection of 'science' of pedagogy moves. Philosophy, especially the hermeneutic phenomenology, is not an answer for any specific problem, ontic (man as an object among other objects and treated by specific sciences), but it is awakening for the original condition of the human being, of each human being. It is a preoccupation with the foundation of the being of the entities. It is not about something that can be theoretically or practically taught or learnt, but it is unlearning, a kind of forgetfulness, forgetfulness of the occupation with the problems and specific objects of

education, to remember the being-in-the-world.

There is not and we cannot even wait for a new theory that helps us explain methods, contents, assessment processes, teaching and learning, but there is a greater awareness of what provides meaning and demands such explanations, of the project in which we are temporarily involved, of the destiny we are moving towards. In this respect, making use of the reflections of the hermeneutic phenomenology is disappointing for someone who wants a new pedagogical theory. We have a process of deconstruction, of forgetfulness of the circumstantial things that enchant us and capture all of our attention; this process reconducts to things themselves, whereas being in an interpretive horizon, of meaning, of finite human project.

It does not mean the occupation with the objects, entities, with the specific problems of education are not important. They are important because they are within a mundane opening and have their meaning within this opening. Being aware of this significativity provides a proper place and a better view of the dimension they have in the whole of a human life. In other words, stuck and involved with the problems of education within the everydayness, we cannot emerge to breathe and check the dimension of what we do, of the place it has in the human project which is in progress.

The hermeneutic phenomenology, not as a new theory about education, about human being or any other entity, deconstructs the everydayness, the logic of the objects that provide us security, peacefulness and power over things, and throw us towards finitude, towards the responsibility facing what we are, both personally and collectively. It put us back to insecurity, in the condition of foundation without a bottom, of authors who are more or less responsible for our being. It looks away from the entities that occupies us, the logic that conducts us, to focus on what is the condition for the entities to be. Instead of being occupied with the entities that are in the opening, it focuses on the opening itself. The hermeneutic points that knowledge is not finite, against the traditional ambitions of objective, absolute and finite knowledge.

Although being concerned about understanding the educational process better and having chosen to do it based on the reflection produced by the hermeneutic phenomenology, we are afraid we have to recognize it does not easily work for such aim, because it resists, refuses any simplification, reduction and objectivation. Thus, its importance and potential may lie in it: not allowing to objectivate and objectify, or making recipes for specific human problems. We might allow ourselves

to change through its deconstructing potential, learn with its refusal to be learnt as object and recipe.

It challenges us to revise the anthropological and epistemological assumptions that support our preoccupations and educational theories, in order to overcome the positivation it was victim of in modernity, but also in all metaphysical tradition. Neither the human being nor their educational processes can be originally understood according to the objective, ontic or mathematical model. Before that, acknowledging our inability to assume an external place regarding time is required, a place of an eternal entity that could indicate our being, as it happens with the entities within the world (according to the human ambition), that can be subjected to previous theoretical measures. We are, as *Dasein*, a mystery that cannot be explained, but that requires to be comprehensively lived.

Instead of another pedagogical theory, or a new anthropological or epistemological theory, a different attitude is performed, open to the occurrence. A more receptive and open attitude, willing to run risks and uncertainties, immerse in the movement, in the temporal come to be. Heidegger mentions a preparation for the occurrence, for the experience of origin, of the projecting and projected being, of the comprehensive opening of the being-in-the-world. The original understanding of the human being, the *Dasein*, of the fundamental occurrence "[...] can never be obtained, but can only always be ready. Awakening is a matter for each individual human being" (Heidegger, 2006, p. 402). What we obtain is made available, objectified, it becomes an entity. The questioning about the meaning of being is never stemming, but a movement of permanent opening, which does not close at some determination found.

Phenomenology wants to be a return to the things themselves. Hermeneutic has the meaning that the access to things is given within a project, an interpretation. To the things themselves, to education, to the human being from the inside of the interpretive circle, of a virtuous circle, in which a greater authenticity and property become accomplished through the assumption of the condition being-in-the-world.

Re-conquering yourself, re-meeting the finitude, the condition of being-in-the-world already is, in itself, a pedagogical process. It is a way back to the roots of our being as humans. The awareness of finitude can help live better, make responsible choices, committed with the construction of a self from authentic and personal projects. Such awareness can also contribute towards the

recognition of the limits and possibilities of our knowing and acting in the world. Our effort to control and turn the processes of learning and teaching trustworthy, typical of the pedagogical theories, can be involved by a more open awareness, which is rooted in the factual conditions which we are constituted of. It can conduct to

[...] an attitude that is not limited by methods and previous contents, but that is attentive for knowing, learning and teaching as modes of being of the human being [...] (Seibt, 2009, p. 262)

Without, however, disregarding methods and contents.

Besides what we already showed, we can also view the pedagogical matter with the help of the authenticity and property notions. As moving from improper to proper. Education, as it is known in everydayness, is a process in which ready information and knowledge is passed on for whom do not possess them. This process, and the acquisition in it, does not produce appropriation, for knowledge and information are hardly turned proper. The pupil does not acquire them from themselves and through themselves. Knowledge ends up as something which was produced in tradition, which lost its roots and its base, and it is now passed on and learnt just because it must be. It is not within the strength that mobilizes the original experience.

The Idea of *Dasein*, the origin of the human being, leads to think about an education that enables the property (appropriation) without denying the importance of this knowledge and tradition, but re-inserting them in the flow of occurrences and lived life, reconnecting with the world, with the finite experience which is in its roots. It would give way to the autonomy and authenticity, which would have potential to break each individual free to be actor and subject in the learning processes and in life, which does not get stuck in the mechanical and automatism of the everyday life.

Final considerations

According to what we wrote, an authentic and proper education does not allow patterns and universalizing theories. Each individual needs to start and continue the course, and always keep in preparation, be never ready and determined. As Heidegger claims, getting back to the self as a *Dasein* can never be obtained and, besides, “[...] awakening is a matter for each individual human being” (Heidegger, 2006, p. 402). It is about a change of thinking based on dealing with the entities, the objects, to the thinking from the being, the finite

comprehensive opening. It is a constant willingness for the dialogue that opens for beyond the certainties and keep the movement through the uncertainty and the doubt.

The finitude is the root of the educability of the human being. We are educable because we are not determined in our being. But we always already understand the being and we are then, inserted in a historical project and tradition. We can, and we normally do it, get enclosed in the security of the available realities in this project and tradition, but we can also accomplish, in this cultural environment we live, the freedom to choose, know, understand and act from ourselves.

Having to make something from ourselves turns us different, as *Dasein*, from other entities that we live with. We have to choose and project our existence, and in this project our being is at play. In other words, it is being on the way, in which each human being can learn and exercise the being

[...] willing to inquire all their refuges and appropriate themselves. Appropriate while turning theirs what is received from tradition and their world (Seibt, 2015, p. 203).

From within the world we inhabit, acquiring the space and the ability to say yes and no, to project the self from own choices and not only and exclusively impersonal.

We are finite, for we do not have a model or atemporal idea that can or must inspire our must-be, except for the ones we choose as such from within the temporality. We are educable because we are not something as any property has been attributed to us or we have inserted ourselves in a project that always continues in projection. What we must be comes from outside, from a cultural project, a tradition, and not from a natural essence. Our being can also result, after being within a cultural horizon which opens us to the world, from our own actions and reflections.

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