

## Philosophical remarks about educational materials: a threshold of thinking

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### Abstract

The connection between a non philosophical work and its reception in education through its transformation into a learning/teaching material and a possible philosophical reading, in order to recognize and define the philosophical stance of this very material, could not but be a challenge for philosophy of education itself, namely, in its relation to (or as) practical philosophy. This kind of reduction to the state of material could instrumentalize the latter raising practical, ethical and methodological issues about the pedagogical intention itself; subsequently, the art, literature, philosophy, and science lying behind materials become equally instrumentalized and evacuated. This article attempts, on the one hand, to circumscribe and describe this movement of “becoming material” as a question philosophically and pedagogically challenging and, on the other, to reflect about a critical understanding of this very question as an example of research in practical philosophy.

Palavras-Chave: learning/teaching materials, “becoming material”, de-normativization, philosophy of education, object, problematization.

### Observações filosóficas sobre materiais educativos: um limiar de pensamento

### Resumo

A ligação entre um trabalho não filosófico e a sua receção na educação através da sua transformação em material de ensino/aprendizagem e sua possível leitura filosófica, de forma a reconhecer e definir a postura filosófica deste mesmo material, não podia deixar de ser um desafio para a filosofia da própria educação, a saber, em sua relação com (ou como) filosofia prática. Esse tipo de

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redução ao estado de material poderia instrumentalizar este último levantando questões práticas, éticas e metodológicas sobre a própria intenção pedagógica; subsequentemente, a arte, a literatura, a filosofia e a ciência que estão por trás dos materiais tornam-se igualmente instrumentalizadas e evacuadas. Este artigo tenta, por um lado, circunscrever e descrever este movimento de "tornar-se material" como uma questão filosófica e pedagogicamente desafiadora e, por outro lado, refletir sobre uma compreensão crítica desta mesma questão como um exemplo para a pesquisa em filosofia prática.

Palavras-chave: materiais de ensino/aprendizagem, "tornar-se material", desnortivização, filosofia da educação, objeto, problematização.

### **Observaciones filosóficas sobre los materiales educativos: un umbral de pensamiento**

#### **Resumen**

La conexión entre una obra no filosófica y su acogida en la educación a través de su transformación en material de enseñanza/aprendizaje y su posible lectura filosófica, con el fin de reconocer y definir la postura filosófica de este mismo material, no podía dejar de ser un desafío para la filosofía de la educación en sí, es decir, en relación con (o como) filosofía práctica. Este tipo de reducción al estado de material podría instrumentalizar este último al plantear cuestiones prácticas, éticas y metodológicas sobre la propia intención pedagógica; posteriormente, el arte, la literatura, la filosofía y la ciencia detrás de los materiales se instrumentalizan y evacúan por igual. Este artículo intenta, por un lado, circunscribir y describir este movimiento de "convertirse en material" como un tema desafiante filosófica y pedagógicamente y, por otro lado, reflexionar sobre una comprensión crítica de este mismo tema como ejemplo para la investigación en filosofía práctica.

Palabras Clave: materiales de aprendizaje/enseñanza, "convertirse en material", desnortivización, filosofía de la educación, objeto, problematización.

### **Remarques philosophiques sur le matériel pédagogique: un seuil de réflexion**

#### **Résumé**

Le lien entre une œuvre non philosophique et sa réception dans l'éducation à travers sa transformation en matériel d'enseignement/apprentissage et son

éventuel lecture philosophique, dans le but de reconnaître et de définir la position philosophique de ce même matériel, ne pouvait manquer d'être un défi à la philosophie de l'éducation en elle-même, notamment, dans sa relation avec la (ou en tant que) philosophie pratique. Ce type de réduction à l'état de matériau pourrait instrumentaliser ce dernier soulevant des questions pratiques, éthiques et méthodologiques sur sa propre intention pédagogique; par la suite, l'art, la littérature, la philosophie et la science derrière la matière sont également instrumentalisés et évacués. Cet article se propose, d'une part, de circonscrire et de décrire ce mouvement de "conversion en matériau" comme une question philosophique et pédagogiquement stimulante et, d'autre part, de réfléchir à une compréhension critique de cette même question comme exemple de recherche en philosophie pratique.

Mots clés: matériel d'enseignement/apprentissage, "conversion en matériau", dénormativisation, philosophie de l'éducation, objet, problématisation.

*La question du style, c'est toujours l'examen, le pesant d'un objet pointu. Parfois seulement d'une plume. Mais aussi bien d'un stylet, voire d'un poignard. A l'aide desquels on peut, certes, attaquer cruellement ce à quoi la philosophie en appelle sous le nom de matière ou de matrice, pour y enfoncer une marque, y laisser une empreinte ou une forme, mais aussi pour pousser une forme menaçante, la tenir à distance, la refouler, s'en garder – se pliant alors ou repliant, en fuite, derrière des voiles. (Derrida, 1978, p. 29)*

## Introduction

It seems to be a usual procedure in educational settings, the use or adaptation of a work of art or literature not only as study objects but, more specifically, as teaching/learning materials in order to serve particular objectives related either to this very work and the art it represents as well, or to educational purposes, mostly irrelevant to this material which, in this case, would serve rather as a tool for their attainment. Beyond any theory of didactics about the teaching with/through materials, this kind of reduction to the state of a material, instead of adding value to it by hereafter scrutinizing it, could, on the contrary, result in reifying, manipulating, denuding it from

its singularity, dragging it to a hasty or even impetuous dissection: it seems that the material becomes progressively a tool. Subsequently, the art, literature, philosophy, and science lying behind materials are equally instrumentalized and evacuated. This procedure becomes even more complicated if its purpose is either the discovery and highlighting of philosophical elements within this material (a discovery which could result in the understanding of a certain relation between philosophy and the art associated each time with the particular object of study) or a possible exercise based on the use of philosophical tools in order to analyze the material<sup>2</sup>.

The connection between a non philosophical work and its reception in education through its transformation into a learning/teaching material in conjunction with a possible philosophical reading of it, in order to recognize and define the philosophical stance of this very material, could not be but a challenge for philosophy of education itself, namely, in its relation to (or as) practical philosophy. The reduction to the state of material, hidden in this very transformation, could instrumentalize the latter (and consequently the former) raising the need to clarify the pedagogical intention itself, its presuppositions and objectives. This article attempts, on the one hand, to circumscribe and describe this movement of “becoming material” as a question philosophically and pedagogically challenging and, on the other, to reflect about a critical understanding of this very question as an example for research in practical philosophy.

## Becoming material

On that basis, two series of questions could emerge: firstly, about the detection of philosophical elements-traces in a non-philosophical material (and then about

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2 As, for example, in the case of a philosophical text (or of the recognition of a text as philosophical), which could be seen pedagogically as a material, a main goal could be rather the exercise of the reader as to be capable to recognize and read a philosophical text, a goal though which could not be totally independent of the philosophical education of both, teacher and learner as philosophy readers in the first place. Here the task is more specific and the converting of a such text to a “material” rather needs to serve most philosophical reasons and depends on the combined special capacities of the teacher and the learner. Even more if reading experience, as a pedagogical stake, is an act composite, dense, related to knowledge, exercise, pleasure, understanding, hermeneia, writing capacity. In fact, there is an ethics of reading which would safeguard the singularity of the text by preventing the reading frivolity and “seriousness” as well: “I admit that you need one thing above all in order to practice the requisite art of reading [das lesen als Kunst zuüben], a thing which today people have been so good at forgetting – and so it will be some time before my writings are ‘readable’ [“Lehrbarkeit”] –, you almost need to be a cow for this one thing and certainly not a ‘modernman’: it is rumination [das Wiederkäuen] . . .” (Nietzsche, 2007, p. 9). Thus, an ethics of reading can be related to an esthetics of reading as pleasure of the text in Barthes. This example shows some of the complications and in the same time possible developments of the simple act of converting a text into a study material.

the specification of the ways through which these traces are philosophical or about the sense and degree in which the material is philosophical), and secondly, in what sense and degree the philosophy of the art related to this material can inform these clarification attempts. Nevertheless, the sidestepping of such questions within educational procedures and the subsequent neutralization of the object of study (i.e., a piece of art or a literary text) by subordinating it to a certain, often stranger logic, and thus preventing the material from being free to breathe, to continue to be open while keeping its rugosities and roughnesses (Theodoropoulou, 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b), they raise practical, ethical and methodological issues about the whole pedagogical strategic. An organic approach, instead, developed as a scaffolding-in-progress could help toward this aim, the organic not as a reference to the center of a sense around which the construction of the work gravitates, or the idea of a total unity, but as a way of seeing the work from inside and being capable to recognize and follow its own movements. Organic because it co-creates the material, it accompanies it while not removing its scaffolds, but bringing them to the surface (Theodoropoulou, 2018, 2020b)<sup>3</sup>.

During this approach, philosophy of education could work upstream, in order to understand, primarily, the pedagogical decision which inaugurates this kind of research and then, downstream, by trying to interfere for the purpose of making possible philosophical expectations clear, but also the need for the philosophy of education itself to have a clear notion about complications that ordinary teaching approaches could result in<sup>4</sup>. All the more, since the question about the relation between philosophy

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3 "In other words, it is possible to find the way in which each different material, which is being exploited during the didactic process, would lend itself for opening up new areas of encounter with philosophical thought (or for the reduction of a special regionality – literary, cinematographic, visual, etc. – to philosophical ideas). It is possible for each material to allow, from its very nature and its means, its special ways of construction and shaping, the creation of philosophical nuclei/receptors/notches. The revelation or discovery of a philosophical web will, subsequently, be in a position to support the possible development of analytical paths within and outside the text, precisely because it creates a reflective/trans-reflective environment (...) the interest lies, primarily, in the recognition of those elements upon which it makes sense for philosophy to ponder (...) In this sense, this effort could adopt the character of a so-called organic reading, if we wish to underline, in this way, the tendency to retain, to support the particular texture of the material, in virtue of which the latter can be recognized as such" (while containing its different layers and aspects, which compose it, Theodoropoulou, 2018).

4 In this frame, we need to conceive philosophy of education's movements integrated in a philosophical experience and initiation process seen as a lifespan work, developed, completed, deepen, as a spectrum connecting theory, poesis (production of philosophical works), praxis and exercise of life (cf. Schlanger, 2002, p. 186 sq), in a dynamic articulation between all four levels, holding together the person in its wholeness – a possible continuum created by their interweaving and interdependence as they describe philosophy. Moreover, different possible intermediate paths according to every subject relation to philosophy and the kind of experience is insinuated referring to philosophy, can be formed and identified. This relation, though between experience and philosophy needs to be doubly clarified, as far as both terms are

and forms of non-philosophy and plans of expression is put significantly, following Deleuzian thought, if philosophy, would want “to attain the conceptual resources to restore the broken links of perception, language and emotion” (Lambert, 2002, p. 9). This possible interest on behalf of philosophy of education is also related to the research ethics as part of the teaching procedure itself: the blurring of boundaries between knowledge, hypothesis, assumptions, judgments, prejudices, the deficient examination of the given by surrendering to common sensical certainties progressively deprives education procedures from their critical stance.

Treating a study object as a pedagogical material, but without putting this very procedure of transmutation under question, appears to be a “blind” act as it risks reducing the material to an inert matter destined to serve merely exterior aims; moreover, this ordinary transmutation could be methodologically invalid. After all, it would manipulate the object, educationally confined because it would eliminate research moves, philosophically inoperative because it would privilege foregone conclusions or impose prefabricated conceptions. It seems that, from this point of view, the material is more vulnerable, more exposed to alterations. But on the other hand, this inactivation threatens equally the subject which is not capable of going beyond the plan of a premeditated analysis any more, because the question procedure is annihilated and consequently the relevant dialogue is as an inauthentic one (in a Gadamerian point of view recognizing in dialogue an art of testing, i.e. the art of questioning, Gadamer, 2006, p. 361)<sup>5</sup>. As “the close relation between questioning and understanding is what gives the hermeneutic experience its true dimension” (Gadamer, 2006, pp. 367-368), the subject is alienated from this experience by losing its

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concerned and their interrelations as well. Philosophical culture seems to conduct philosophical education beyond the limits of knowledge and expertise if philosophical culture is discernible on what a person does, since it permeates and reveals the person characterizing and illuminating its stance and choices. Nevertheless, it seems that the separation of these two dimensions creates interesting conflicts regarding either the definition of philosophy or of a philosopher, but notably regarding the relation between theory and practice in philosophy, as an unescapable relation for the understanding of philosophy itself. In fact, we cannot understand philosophically the teaching or develop a philosophical approach of it without this integrated view of philosophy itself.

5 “Discourse that is intended to reveal something requires that thing be broken open by the question (. . .) The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, awaiting a decisive answer. The significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned. It has to be brought into this state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium between pro and contra (. . .) Every true question requires this openness. Without it, it is basically no more than an apparent question. We are familiar with this from the example of the pedagogical question, whose paradoxical difficulty consists in the fact that it is a question without a questioner. Or from the rhetorical question, which not only has no questioner but no object. The openness of a question is not boundless. It is limited by the horizon of the question. A question that lacks this horizon is, so to speak, floating” (Gadamer, 2006, p. 357).

openness to an “ongoing integrative process in which what we encounter widens our horizon<sup>6</sup> but, only by overturning an existing perspective, which we can then perceive as erroneous or at least narrow” (Gadamer, 2006, p. XIII). This is exactly a procedure whose effect “is not simply to make us ‘knowing’, to add to our stock of information, but to give us that implicit sense of broad perspectives” (Weinsheimer & Marshall, in Gadamer, 2006, translator’s Preface, p. XIII). The ethical (and methodological as well) aspect in this situation lies in the fact that the concealment, the lack of horizons and question openness, the authenticity failure for the subjects implicated to the material processing are related to a lack of respect for this very material being hereafter seen as detached from the source, i.e. the frame (the art or literature in question) and the details constituting this particular work or “oeuvre d’art”. This detachment leads to the instrumentalization effects, from the fragmentation of the material to its total subordination to prefabricated schemes.

Elseways, the subject (teacher)’s power on objects should not be a priori unlimited and unquestionable, the subject’s conception cannot be predominant and unquestionable, the subject’s right to turn objects into things and vice versa, to think objects like things and vice versa, to be careless of thinghood in objecthood and vice versa is not unquestionable. Materials, objects, resist to gestures of domination, and this resistance must be of main concern in education which should habituate subjects to be attentive in front of/with their objects of study accepting their recalcitrance, i.e., the fact that they are capable to escape subject’s imposition on things. Attention is due to material-objects as a methodological and ethical gesture related to the complex mental work of an act of bricolage (as indefinite reconstruction, variation, with the same materials) but also to the capacity of distinction (Weil, 1957, p. 123) and the respect of the complexity of the appearance and of the perception as well.

“... Nothing could appear, the word ‘appearance’ would make no sense, if recipients of appearances did not exist -living creatures able to acknowledge, recognize and react to- in flight or desire, approval or disapproval, blame or praise- what is not merely there but appears to them and is meant for their perception. In this world we enter, appearing from a nowhere, and from which we disappear into a nowhere,

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6 Cf. the “change of horizons” in Jauss: ‘If one characterizes as aesthetic distance the disparity between the given horizon of expectations and the appearance of a new work, whose reception can result in a ‘change of horizons’ through negation of familiar experiences or through raising newly articulated experiences to the level of consciousness, then this aesthetic distance can be objectified historically along the spectrum of the audience’s reactions and criticism’s judgment (spontaneous success, rejection or shock, scattered approval, gradual or belated understanding)’ (Jauss, 2005, p. 49).

Being and Appearing coincide . . . Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator . . ." (Arendt, 1978, p. 19)<sup>7</sup>.

There is a necessary, ethical in the first place, transition from an instrumentalized, pathetic conception of the material to a conception according to which a systematic care of the details forming the idiosyncrasy of the material can be really pedagogic<sup>8</sup>. The material is condensed and fluid, "evident et in-evident" (Corniquet & Rhety, 2011), at the same time delimited, defined, (as) a "study object" (Moles, 1969, p. 5), linked with the subject and a mysterious entity capable to escape explicative seizing crushed under the pressure of a normative coding-decoding procedure.

In fact, by its recalcitrance, the material is developed as a heterotopia, where the subject meets the object not to establish – through this meeting – the right of a connoisseur or of a formal didactic object (as philosophy also is), i.e. the right of a mastery, but to allow, through disagreements, incompatibilities, arrhythmias, deviations, recessions, a peculiar exercise space in order to an education of questioning to appear/to be revealed, during this explorative relation, an education contributing to the achieving of an understanding that, according to Arendt, enables the human subject to find the depth of its being-in-the-world<sup>9</sup>. Here, the subject and the object create together new ways and forms of encounter, unclothe one of these minor spaces that, imperceptibly, resist to normativity and normativization immobilizing effects.

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7 Cavell has spoken about "the cinematic image accentuates the conspicuousness, obtrusiveness and obstinacy of things" based on Heidegger's way to characterize, in the *Being and Time*, the phenomenon of the "worldhood of the world announcing itself" in which "a particular mode of sight or awareness is brought into play" by "the "work-world", i.e., a disruption of the matters of course running among our tools, and the occupations they extend, and the environment which supports these occupations. It is upon the disruption of such matters of course (of a tool, say by its breaking; or of someone's occupation, say because of an injury; or of some absence of material) that the mode of sight then brought forth discovers objects in what Heidegger notes as their conspicuousness, their obtrusiveness, and their obstinacy" (Cavell, 1978, pp. 249-250). The same characteristics, relating the disruption of a "work-world" with "a particular mode of sight" and the "objects obstinacy", we recognize in the materials when they are left to be revealed by disrupting our manipulating conception about them ("this human capacity for seeing or for treating something as something", that Wittgenstein elaborated in *Philosophical Investigations*, Cavell, *ibid.*, p. 251).

8 Thus, "... the educative material is not an exhibit or a springboard and the philosophical concept is not a lens, which functions momentarily, or an interpretative embroidery, and does not correspond to the indifferent motion of the spectator, who turns her/his back to the exhibits to continue wandering elsewhere (nor does it correspond to the melancholy of this inhospitable movement" (Theodoropoulou, 2018).

9 "Through understanding (as reconciliation) is created the depth, not the meaning – is like feeling that being in the world, you are at home: is like putting down roots. The uprooting is equal to leave on surface, to being thus a parasite. This lack of depth to which our life and education prepare us is revealed as a gap, a chasm open beneath surface" (Arendt, 2005, *Cahier XIX*).



## The frozen material

Normativisation is either a smooth, ordinary movement of recognition, repetition, reproduction of a normative element and of conformity to a normative frame and procedure or a brusque movement of creating and imposing the norm as an unsurpassed measure or even a way to mitigate or to falsify anti- or de-normativization choices as disruptive factors. Behind this movement lies a trust in the power of norms to guarantee the existence of meaning, of objectivity and, consequently, of increased efficiency and stability against the undermining intrusion of uncertainties, indeterminacies, divergences, ambiguities, contradictions, dilemmas, probabilities, hesitations, hidden intentions. In fact, there is a common basis and perspectives formed by what is commonly or/and officially accepted (as being objective) through legal, axiological, ethical, scientific, epistemological, religious, political, philosophical codes and statements, and, as such, they either consciously/visibly or unconsciously/indirectly influence the organization of educational reality on the basis of more or less common expectations. This mass of elements, from the visible to the hidden, constitutes a tissue within which education seems to develop inevitably and against which it creates new normative schemes as parapets.

It would be, on the other hand, a task for philosophy of education to introduce critical approaches, to analyze the concept of common sense (even more if the growing of common sense corresponds to the growing of a civilization of cliché, Deleuze, 1983, p. 281), to decompose the organic Manichaeism between the recognition and renunciation of what blocks the thinking on the one hand, and, on the other, of what releases critical interventions by demonstrating failures and illusions of this unperceptive and ineffective rhetoric. What is at stake here is the capacity to figure out how normativity works in education and adopt strategies or actions to cope with it (if that is the case) by understanding what this means for education itself and for each philosophy of education one chooses to support. Educational practices and techniques have difficulties not to be logocentric and monological, remaining rationally fascinated by the existence of a unique truth or a clear definition able to remedy or cover discrepancies, controversial issues or incompatibilities, even if critical theories continue, within the same educational frames and discourses, to defend open sense and polylogical operations inducing emancipatory approaches in education. Normativisation procedure smashes knowledge to small pieces that would be easily absorbable and mainly, it would not remind, exactly or at all, of their

source or their references. Besides the creation of misjudgments or errors, this very smashing creates generality and confusion effects<sup>10</sup>.

Subsequently, the selection or the creation of pedagogical material seems usually and primarily to facilitate normativization operations and the designation of normative elements through which the material could become transparent, readable, codifiable, manageable. In this sense, the material is useful only as a docile trigger for thinking – it has no value per se; correspondingly, the thinking itself is neutralized as limited by a predefined, mechanistic decoding process. Philosophically though, the intention would be to make sure that the educator is capable not only of handling a given, codified, ready-made “material” but also of imagining and producing a material from scratch, on the basis of clearly chosen criteria out of his/her broader conscience of the stakes in each educational context and mainly of recognizing and elaborating various forms of differences as a way of giving the material its voice. On this basis, teaching of, or through, a material does not except or exclude, neither critical approaches of this very thinking nor problematizing choices for its processing as ways of defrosting what is immobilized in predefined ways of being and understanding (Arendt, 2009), as an exercise for a gaze capable of taking distances from an unexamined truth, a univocal language and a unique sense (Plouchart, 1998, p. 833). The judgement should always be active, sustained with necessary criteria and ready to be suspended if these criteria are imperfect or unclear.

Constantly, persistently and uncompromisingly, critical moves unfolding reflective spaces for both teacher and learner (where the wind of thinking which is not knowledge, but the capacity of distinction blows – Arendt, 1978, p. 193 – and none of the general rules of behaviour in specific cases appearing in everyday life can resist it – Arendt, 2009, p. 201) could counterbalance the instrumentalization effects:

“It is not too much to say that an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as ever was the traditional education which is reacted against. For any theory and set of practices is dogmatic which is not based upon a critical examination of its own underlying principles” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 10-11).

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10 As the characteristics of the semi-formation culture whose attitude is one of “taking something for granted” by constantly declaring: “What, don’t you know it?”; here everything is a representation of things and critical conscience critique cripples itself in a blur gaze backstage (Adorno, 1998, pp. 93-121).

## **“Something becoming something” (Cavell, 1978, p. 249)<sup>11</sup>. The living material**

Against this kind of dissolution, annihilation of the material, de-normativisation moves could prevent immobilizing effects, as described above; nevertheless, these moves cannot be seen only as a disagreement, a dissolution, an antidote, a remedy, a solution, a quick turn, a kind of hope, a political statement, a method or anti-method. It would be rather about a patient deconstructive process, even more, or probably mainly, a dissection or surgical process, sometimes a dismantling. Philosophically, we recognize here the need to escape the traps of indoctrination, to keep the desire for research alive, through a critical examination of every parameter forming the material, a resistance to the obvious and the common sense as producer and reproducer of stereotypes, the material and the subject's views and expectations could be problematized (Theodoropoulou, 2014). The aim would be to understand how materials respond to interpretation visits and processing attempts (instead of limiting this processing to a mere recording of the results of these attempts considered a priori as the only possible or the most appropriated). Additionally, to understand if and how they are capable of misleading expectations based on prefabricated concepts and schemes, of bringing out new research paths, of unfolding their compositeness and removing the subject's conceptions and preconceptions towards different formulations, so as to reconstruct the subject's experience. Shortly, the aim (par excellence pedagogical) would be to let the subject be moved by and to move towards this material, to try to keep materials alive.

“We do not ever arrive to thoughts. They come to us.

This is then the defined hour for dialogue.

It calms and prepares to shared meditation.

This one does not accuse oppositions, as it does not tolerate accommodating approvals.

Thinking stays exposed to the wind of the thing.

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11 Expression used by Cavell (1978) to describe the “particular relation ... that holds between things and their filmed projections, which is to say between the originals now absent from us (by screening) and the new originals now present to us (in photogenesis)” (p. 249). “The relationship between things and their projected images is dynamic, transitive, and transformative; a ‘becoming’ that is akin to a metamorphosis combining the senses of a ‘natural’ transformation, a psychological and social event, and an experience of aesthetic pleasure in contemplating nature” (Sinnerbrink, 2014, pp. 59-60).

During these exchanges, some probably can assert themselves as companions in the trade of thinking. So that one day, without any one being capable of to foretelling it, one among them appears to be a master" (Heidegger, 1947/1966, p. 25).

As the carpenter notches the ends of the wooden beams, after having worked relentlessly on different beams, destroying different beams, we need to know how to notch, in order to respect the material and then, probably, create another object. But carpenters and woodcarvers, who touch the wood with their bear hands, have a relation with this wood, whereas this relation hides a certain knowledge. In other words, this living material, through a subtle initiatory training, acquires a learning value, as Bachelard has shown us ways of doing so. This, then, could be a kind of de-normativisation. Every notch, every dissection or dismantling movement being a threshold to another form, where the subject learns to (re) organize the world through such a material.

This kind of procedure pays attention to details trying to reveal the various elements constituting the object-material: in this frame, this discovery is more important than the finished result as a totality and a systematic totalization which obviously makes sense. Revealing (or transforming) the material as the place of an open laboratory, where the ways of its construction remain visible and observable, is an effort to participate tactfully (even more if the material is a selected piece of art or literature) in the construction of the object/material, to re-imagine the object away from the claim of a persistent clarity, a claim particularly relevant and dominant in education. It's like cutting intensities and problematizing the material by agitating its elements with all its possible inherent contradictions, by sculpting slots as receptors of philosophical elements, by excavating philosophical elements hidden in its structure or created by this very structure. Setting aside the effort to discover or create philosophical elements in a material and setting aside the possible ways to do (it), this effort of de-normativization could signify a philosophical gesture, a philosophical practice in itself (if by philosophical research, we also mean the capacity to keep its strength of thinking among normativities and normativization turns).

More particularly, as far as the non-philosophical material is concerned, the philosophical element cannot only be an exterior, added and intervening factor, but it could be also searched in the very structure of the material itself to the degree that the latter is capable or ready to contain or explicitly create philosophical elements which can be naturally included in it. This way, we can recognize philosophy on three levels: internally, when material educes philosophy and philosophical traces are included in the material (needing though to be recognized as such), and externally,

both when the material is analyzed in philosophical terms and through philosophical tools and when philosophy is used to bring changes to the material. In all three cases, there is the need to turn, ideally, to a well-grounded sagacious subject who could guarantee the recognition and processing of the philosophical element. This reference can be counterbalanced only through the acceptance of the power of the material to escape gestures of appropriation – thus, philosophical approach could be seen as a thinking gesture rather than a gesture for the thinking as a mechanism of domination. The invocation between philosophy and material becomes mutual. The material can keep its distance, gather all its parts in itself and be the necessary scaffold for the thinking to climb over, but also as henceforward it is a part of this living and developing thinking, it cannot be absorbed, consumed and vanish: it becomes a landmark. Perhaps it is a hidden material of/for philosophy, as the latter tries to define itself in front of a presumably non-philosophical substance (as pedagogical material could be).

## The double work

Education itself is a double mechanism producing, on the one hand, legitimacies, credibility, wisdoms “concerning powers, territories and frontiers” (Cifali, 1999, p. 5), but on the other hand, permitting, along with the history of educational ideas and practices, the dispute of unexamined obedience to powers and certainties and the reaction to domination via theories and actions of care and dialogue. This very constant tension between territorializations and deterritorializations, between inclusion and adaptation, forced rationalization or rush for totalization and autonomy, multi-referentiality and critical spirit through gestures of clarification, conscientization, disputation and imagination (Ardoino, 1999, pp. 319-324), create an inner risk in education that makes it an impossible profession even if or exactly because

“The condition of possibility of this thing called responsibility is a certain experience and experiment of the possibility of the impossible: the testing of the aporia from which one may invent the only possible invention, the impossible invention . . . when a responsibility is exercised in the order of the possible, it simply follows a direction and elaborates a program. It makes of action the applied consequence, the simple application of a knowledge or know-how. It makes of ethics and politics a technology ?” (Derrida, 1992, pp. 41, 45).

Philosophy, furthermore, cannot escape this antinomic complexions describing its role through contradiction, paradox and double injunctions (Derrida, 1990, pp. 511-

524). Philosophy of education assumes this double inner contradiction and develops it so as to retain the double work, philosophical and pedagogical, as a difficult but necessary equilibrium between engagement and disengagement, pointing out the necessity to develop “an ability to mediate differences and boundaries, exclusions and violence, hierarchies and borders (...)” (Eg  a-Kuehne, 2002, p. 202). Thus, if the aporetic nature of education is accepted, then “rather, not only should we refuse to settle for easy consensus, simplify, neutralize, or translate, but should we not also accept and assume the responsibility to ‘think, speak, and act’ within aporetic situations, under the double contradictory imperatives of a continuum of ‘double duty’?” (Eg  a-Kuehne, 2002, p. 204).

In fact, for philosophy of education representing the subtle exercise of a double duty and work, this very equilibrium, not every time, obtained, represents in its turn a fine exercise of a balancing act, an inner difficulty which must be faced in every decision and gesture. Discourse schematism is not the ideal, continuous and sleek text moving beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, abrogating them within the peaceful unity of a connective thought; but rather a space of complicated conflicts; where we must save the discourse within its multiple roughnesses (Badiou, 1993). Thinking is reproduced on the basis of uninterrupted dialogical dynamics by forming loops and vortexes; thinking is not an affair of balance. Even more, complex thinking, as Morin put it, simultaneously recognizes the impossibility and the necessity of a totalization, a synthesis but by combating against the simulation of this synthesis, because it is aware of the unfinished character of all knowledge, thought, oeuvre d'art (Morin, 2008, p. 1201).

## Hidden thresholds

To problematize materials, then, means that the world is not as it is, it is not exhausted in the immediate experience, even so, it is not enough to admit it: one must become familiar with the multiple consequences of possible appearances. The recognition of differences can reveal a problematologic positivity, an indicator. The problematizing process develops this indication, opens other perspectives during its emergence, forms problems stemming out of this emergence. In fact, the problematizing education comes before the manifestation of the difference by preparing the mind to integrate this clinamen in his route which will thus include this extraordinary sign by reorganizing its map. In other words, this appearance crosses the thickness of the given. The problematization is, at the same time, a way of bewildering the immobilizing effects (the choc of the surprise) or the destructive ones of

the unpredictable, the stupor of the inexplicable (by retracing with patience its genealogy and its itinerary), it is a way of challenging all the possible transpositions with a view to creating a new economy or broadening the limits of the paradigm. The fundamental is not to dry the expectation up but to exercise the mind to elaborate the presuppositions and the consequences of these appearances: what kind of problems do they reveal? In this case, problematization is conceived as a double mechanism: on the one hand, “an opening mechanism or a reduction to the unpredictable (that is, if it allows for, or triggers the emergence of new ruptures, new potential, new questions, methodically asking the conditions of the problem and overcoming the limits of mere awareness”; on the other hand, a mechanism “of prediction, identification, appropriation, and generally of alleviating the unpredictable – ultimately of resistance to undesirable consequences” (Theodoropoulou, 2014, p. 137).

Philosophy of education, by its very constitution, is a field extremely sensible to the challenge of limits and borders and movements of interpenetration and double tendencies. As a philosophical interface between philosophy and pedagogy describes at the same time a non-continuity and a continuity, each of them not being able to negate the other; then, a zone of exchanges and meetings is open with significant difficulty. The reference to the notion of threshold indicates this kind of double movement through spaces which could be at the same time open and closed; the threshold functions as a call and a challenge, covers and uncovers, permits and prevents, calls and recalls – an ongoing mediation incapable of promising a unifying end, a pace for inexorable research, a trigger, a security valve and a retarder, the threshold is indestructible and unbearable. It could, then, function as a possible problematologic angle in education through which different activities can be seen: the treating of educational materials as thresholds of thinking would remind us that this treating is not a routine for the application of teaching devices on neutralized materials but a dialogue with a responding object, having history complexity, depth.

But these thresholds are mainly hidden or even on the verge of existence as they are not traced from the beginning or afterwards in order to indicate and establish the definition of a limit or frontier nor the act of its safeguarding, denial or trespassing; they rather emerge (revealed or created) on the intersection between subject's and material's mutual reactions through their interconnection. As long as materials are opened, crossed and explored, thresholds emerge from different directions as lines (cracks and at the same time bridges) for possible courses, as possibilities of transition from one form, interpretation, course to another. This kind of plural movement multiplies the dynamics of materials while at the same time permits and in fact needs the recognition of their specific characteristics. Works of art or literature as teaching/learning materials conveying philosophical elements, far from being tools, can be an example for research in practical philosophy, since they convey and reveal in many aspects the epistemological, methodological, ethical, esthetical and

pedagogical dimensions of a particular relation between the subject and the object as a form of praxis in education.

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