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THE “WHAT FOR” / THE TELOS: THE IDEAL OF LIFE AS MAIN LANDMARK OF EDUCATION

„Pentru ce” / Telos: Idealul de viață ca reper principal al educației

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THE “*WHAT FOR*” / THE *TELOS*: THE IDEAL OF LIFE AS MAIN LANDMARK OF EDUCATION

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To the memory of my husband, Dumitru Bazac, PhD (1945-2022)

Abstract

This paper of philosophy of education sketches the modern concept of ideal of life as main vector of construction of man, and thus, of education. It is a humanistic and Western Enlightenment concept, and for this reason the introduction deals with Kant’s substantiation of the concept of ideal as such. Then, after a note about some philosophical ideas showing the openness and *differentia specifica* of the ideal, the concept of ideal of life as manifestation of the concept of ideal is decomposed: following the pedagogical, thus multidisciplinary outlook of D. Bazac’s book published in 1983 about the adolescents’ ideal of life.

The ideal of life is individual, and its dialectical relations with social ideals and with educational ideals shed light on a complex in which all these types of ideal condition each other and involve equally complex relations with different social values. The role of models towards the ideal is showed, as well as the constitution of the ideal of life following a “de-idealisation” of the models: ultimately, the concretisation of the educative ideal in models concerns and strengthens the awareness of the different, divergent or convergent relations between ideals and reality. Just this capacity to mirror reality and induce the humans’ power to transform it and themselves according to the moral that underline the uniqueness of their species gives to the ideal of life

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the importance that only the educative process can emphasise. Thus, the ideal of life highlights the reason-to-be/telos/“what for” of the human beings as such.

Keywords: adolescence, ideal of life, models, philosophy of education, values.

Rezumat

Acest articol de filosofie a educației schițează conceptul modern de ideal de viață ca principal vector de construcție a omului și, prin urmare, a educației. Este un concept umanist și iluminist occidental și, din acest motiv, introducerea tratează fundamentarea de către Kant a conceptului de ideal ca atare. Apoi, după o notă despre unele idei filosofice care arată deschiderea și diferența specifică a idealului, conceptul de ideal de viață ca manifestare a conceptului de ideal se descompune urmând concepția pedagogică, deci multidisciplinară a cărții lui D. Bazac despre idealul de viață al adolescenților, apărută în 1983.

Idealul vieții este individual, iar relațiile sale dialectice cu idealurile sociale și cu idealurile educaționale pun în lumină un complex în care toate aceste tipuri de ideal se condiționează reciproc și implică relații la fel de complexe cu valori sociale diferite. Se arată rolul modelelor față de ideal, precum și constituirea idealului de viață în urma unei „dezidealizări” a modelelor: în ultimă instanță, concretizarea idealului educativ în modele privește și întărește conștientizarea relațiilor diferite, divergente sau convergente, dintre idealuri și realitate. Tocmai această capacitate de a oglindi realitatea și de a induce puterea oamenilor de a o transforma pe ea și pe ei înșiși conform moralei care stă la baza unicității speciei lor conferă idealului de viață importanța pe care doar procesul educativ o poate evidenția. Astfel, idealul de viață evidențiază rațiunea de a fi/telosul/ „pentru ce”-ul ființelor umane ca atare.

Cuvinte-cheie: adolescență, filosofia educației, ideal de viață, modele, valori.

1. Precautions

The goal of education is the *civic formation* according to the social order and leading interests in a specific society. Therefore, both the potentialities and needs of any human being to be happy/at least to minimise suffering are chiselled and canalised according to the “social needs” framed by the relations of power. The asymmetrical importance of the individual’s aspirations and the relations of power is “solved” by the *educational ideal*: that, as every concept related to humans, is structurally contradictory. The problem is, thus, to harmonize the relations of power to the individual’s aspirations which, they themselves, must never infringe any other individual aspirations. Obviously, this fundamental aspect does not belong to education: which, nevertheless, must always be aware of it.

The above sociological warning is rather neglected at present. The modern expression of *formalisation* of the individual aspirations – the *ideal of life* – is reduced to models of pragmatic/professional excellence, successful insertion in institutions and social relations, or individual immersion in the quest of spiritual truths (Albu, 2013). Or, generally, to the strengthening of the individual identity in and irrespective of a frozen social *status quo*. However, the individual child and youngster are very sensitive to the time and environment they live in. And they react with their entire enthusiasm but also with disappointment. The educators tend to control this with their soft means (Pels & de Ruyter, 2012): and they once more arrive to the necessity of approaching the ideal of life (de Ruyter, 2007).

In this paper of philosophy of education, the book of Bazac (1983) is only an opportune *pole* in order to highlight the place of the ideal of life in the architecture of education, confronting its functions with some educative paths showing that the “pragmatic” reduction of education to instruction for efficiency in and for the spectacle of the market is opposed to the very end of education as a cardinal eternal human activity. The theoretical fathoming made by the book for the topic of ideal of life is relevant even though it was forged on a different social ground and different worldview presumptions. But, once more, not the reminding and discussion of the book is important here, but the understanding of the ideal of life for the educative construction of the human being *qua* human.

2. Instead of introduction

In a Kant philosophical year, let's start in a Kantian tone. That can be understood without being a professional philosopher: even if it frightens, the complexity of the Kantian decomposition and re-composition of the human being and its capacity to know was clear just because Kant himself wrote in a clear and accessible language. The present introductory reference to him chose only an aspect of Kant's theory and thus, it is all the more intelligible. When the human individual pursues this or that, he is *aware* of this or that end. In order to arrive to the end, the individual makes many movements – for instance, for taking a book from the shelves which are not near him, he gets up from the chair and goes to the shelves – but most of these movements are unconscious, or better here, unconsciously subordinated to the aim. Yet, consciousness means, first of all, the awareness of the subject's *purpose*. And of course, this awareness involves also the awareness of the *means* he/she deploys in order to attain the goal. The human knows that in order to achieve his/her purpose, he/she must fulfil some intermediary actions/targets, but normally he/she never considers the physiological movements at their base, and mostly neither the intermediary movements.

Consciousness is just the action/movement *with* its knowing (*con-scientia*)/ it is just the knowing of the action/movement: or, *knowledge* means just the *awareness of one's thinking as a proof of one's existence, action/movement* (Teilhard de Chardin, 1956, p. 109¹): and it has the same meaning as συνείδησις (*syneidēsis*) thinking together, in fact, with the ideas one deploys². Consequently, here the difference between the unconscious and the conscious is cardinal: since the unconscious is in principle outside the awareness act, it is not known and thus it cannot be an end as such. So, only what is conscious is known and is an end. And again, when one knows, he/she has *in mente* his/her free will³ to choose the end (and also, at least some means). *Knowledge* as a proof of the mental capability to choose and thus to efficiently act according to the human *reason* – that is and gives also the human *reason-to-be* – is Kant's phenomenon that substantiates even the reality of things.

Now, the *ends* can be classified according to many kinds, and people choose according to the aggregation of the many criteria related to an object of

choice. For our topic, in order to have an understanding, a “definition” of the desirable object of choice, it would be useful to connect the realms/scopes related to the desirable object of choice (they form, roughly, the qualitative criteria) and the *ordinal* goal, the ranking of ends according to their evaluation at their desired level (here is the “mathematizable”, the quantitative criteria). Therefore, the choice involves a *ranking* between the avoided end and the beacon, *the most desirable end*.

Do not forget: the choice takes place in the mind and its markers show the power of the reason’s assessment. It involves imagination and, irrespective of how far it flies, it always has in view the specific desired object of choice related to the earthly human life.

The highest landmark is the *ideal*. The *concept* of ideal is *modern*, even though its common philosophical content – as the *most desirable and necessary end* – was sketched in various forms of *virtue*, and of the *mean* between the excesses (Bazac, 2017), of *faith and its observance*. Kant used the concept as such, defining it as the *ultimate goal of knowledge*, a *subjective* creation of pure forms, rather from concepts than from senses, an unconditioned condition of thinking because it is an epistemic stake/landmark, its object being an “ideality”, and an *a priori*, “because (AB, as every category)” it grounds “the possibility of other cognition *a priori*” (Kant, 1781/1787/1998, p. 256); the ideal is – letting aside the highest one, personified by God – “the highest ontological perfection as a principle of systematic unity” (Kant, p. 683).

And the *human being’s* ideal is not simply happiness, but the *moral ideal* (Kant, 1781/1787/1998, p. 681), because it proves the rational free will. The moral ideal – the human behaviour according to the principle of the categorical imperative to never treat the others only as means but always as ends, too – reflects the transition from the simple *individual* ideal, happiness, to the human as “*species being*”, thus *sine qua non* involving in his ideal the others, *society* as every human being and all of them⁴. Therefore, the highest good of the human being is the moral ideal intertwined with rationality, or happiness *and* morality⁵.

3. What does a philosophical outlook provide?

As we saw, philosophy sketched the *concept of ideal* and legitimated it. The concept was necessary from an epistemological standpoint: as an imagined state of perfection⁶, a principle “of systematic unity” (that is to say of the *desirable* that covers and is the criterion of our attitudes towards things), the ideal allows comparison and judgements which transcend the empirical and challenge and force the concepts to arrive to principles, to generative ideas. Accordingly, the concept of ideal provides the *frame* and *criterion* to harness the reason as such and, obviously, its results: which are the already mentioned principles, generative ideas.

However, what kind of provision? The concept as such is a form, and to specify it as concept of ideal does not say more: it is only a form, too. Philosophy sought to answer to this shortcoming in two steps:

- *firstly*, by arguing that the projection of things is a universalizable feature, and that it is translated through what is desirable; the ideal is the desirable; but if it would remain only as such, its unique force of being a stake and a criterion of the human knowing would vanish; in order to keep this force, the *desirable must be universalizable*: this was Kant’s lesson, replying *avant la lettre* to the next centuries’ proponents of different types of particularism and “difference”;
- and *secondly*, by emphasizing that the *qualities* of the concept of ideal – to signal the stake and the staking, to give the purpose, and thus the meaning – are historical: the ideal can become a “*grand récit*” that may even dissolve its qualities in new historical conditions and thus, must be substituted by many different and opposed particular narratives which are contradictory but must coexist in dialogue (Lyotard, 1979). But this “postmodern” stance does not solve the big problem of the desirable “unity” that the concept of ideal embodies: particular opposite “perfections” may hardly arrive to the *universalizable* given by the (Kantian type) ideal. And since the universalizable can no longer be attained, neither the purpose and meaning given by the ideal are. Instead, they are disintegrated by the historical conditions which developed a so unbearable overabundance of particular stimuli of consumerism – thus, including in the informational one – that the meanings themselves disappeared and a new quest of meanings and ideals tends to appear (Han, 2010/2015).

Therefore, philosophy questions and substantiates the peculiarity of the concept of ideal towards the concepts of *illusion, utopia, anticipation*. As it was shown, the ideal is neither a delusion or hallucination, nor an impossible lunge of imagination: letting aside that the concept of perfection is a pole helping the measurement of things according to their or our *particular* ends – so, perfection is always related to particulars – the concept of ideal is not utopian, but realistic. It is not a prediction – going from the present to the future – but an anticipation, walking the road from the future to the present: and it is a construction of the present endeavoured on the basis of a *desirable universalizable*.

4. The ideal of life from a pedagogical viewpoint

First of all, education is a strange and unique manifestation of philosophical creativity – somehow as its climax –: because it is not a simple transposition of the existing models of humans fulfilling their social functions – to be a good citizen, a good professional and a good family founder – thus actualising the social continuity and status quo, from a methodological standpoint a *description* of the pedagogical goal, but an *explanation of the deep causality* of humans, a “disclosure of the truth”⁷ of both the human being and society; this truth is the deep reason-to-be or final causality of pedagogy, issuing from and highlighting the ultimate *reason-to-be* of the humans: that they have something that transcends the use of reason for surviving as beings as such, something that fuels the will of ascendance to their own unique capacity of reasoning in a moral way as discernment between the evil and the good.

And reasoning in a moral way not only according to conjunctural conditions generating “hypothetical” maxims – methodological principles for actions towards specific concrete situations – but especially according to the most important inner principle of the human being, principle that supports all the inner moral debates about the decisions of choosing the good: the principle of *being just / of treating the other human beings so as their dignity be preserved/suffer the least*. “They are humans like me” is the inner voice – as if this one would be the inner god inside “me” that never says what I must choose, because the god lets “me”/my conscience to choose, but it stops

“me” to decide the bad (as Socrates mentioned it in the *Apology*) –. Kant concretised this principle as the categorical imperative *to treat the others* always as *ends* and not only as *means*: indeed, to preserve the dignity of the others – “dignity” according to the Pico della Mirandola’s old suggestion of man as equal with the divinity that constructed him rational and thus full of transformative abilities – means to be careful towards their *power to behave as humans*. Because “I” and “they” are members of the same species. They are ends of this species and only by manifesting their dignity can they contribute to the *dignity/end/reason-to-be* of our human species. This is the unique peculiarity of *education* in the frame of n types of actions and professions. Education gives/transmits the principle that sustains all the other moral principles and that underlies all the instruction: the reason-to-be, the *telos*⁸ of being human. Not the reason-to-be of being a good professional, a good parent, a good citizen, but the reason-to-be of all these endeavours together in a permanent effort to tend toward the ascent of the transient human individual we all are⁹. In this respect, pedagogy is not only the discipline – and art – of *how to construct* complex human behaviours in the offsprings of this species but also and always of *how these behaviours* and objectives should be, *why* do the educators choose these or those behaviours, and *what for* doing this.

The concept that best represents this peculiarity is the *ideal of life*.

*

The philosophical introduction of this paper should not seem superfluous. Yes, the humans have “predispositions”: the first is, obviously, “natural”, but there are also those which arise from and give the peculiarity of the human beings: to manipulate things (the “technical”), other people, too, (the “pragmatic”), and, first of all, the “moral” one, to treat others and ourselves “according to the principle of freedom under laws” (Kant, 1790/1987, p. 203; Kant, 1798/2006a, p. 235).

But the artificial/cultural “predispositions” do become *actual*¹⁰ only through the rational endeavour to tending toward the correction of our actions, to aiming their “perfection”: and this, only with the help of “ideals”.

We approach, therefore, to the *functions* of the ideal. They are *moral* and *praxiological*, triggering the human individual’s *conscious* process of

positioning within society and driving him toward an *active* – namely, according to Kant (1784/2006b, p. 3), *critical* – and *efficient* social integration. These attributes of the social integration of the individuals are not speculations, but proved by the multidisciplinary analysis of the human personality and society.

This analysis emphasises that, from a realistic standpoint, the ideal “is not the superlative of acknowledged values” (Bazac, 1983, p. 52) but the *conscious* design/picture of a *desirable life of the human individual within a desirable society*¹¹. If so, the ideal is *ideal of life*. And “as ideal of life, it is ‘ideal’ only at the extent that someone wants to make it concrete” (Bazac, 1983, p. 43), this meaning that the ideal of life is *achievable, feasible*.

Consequently, the ideal of life is, first of all, *conscious* and the result of the subject’s conscious analysis of:

- the “data” of his/her aspirations according to the human inner propensity toward the good (or of *the truth-the good-the beautiful*, or Aristotle’s happiness *framed* in the search of this ancient tripartite unique ideal goal, or Kant’s more precise, concrete explanation of the moral criteria of happiness), and
- the “data” of the long-term conditions allowing or restricting his aspirations.

As a result, it is more than a prospective approach: a “future study” fit for being integrated within education (Liu, 2023). It is, obviously, *analytical*, namely, *critical*. This means a conscious aim of *evaluation* of things, of both goals and means, developing an *evaluative interpretation*: that leads to *creativity*, thus *efficiency*, in theoretical and practical problem-solving (Nussbaum et al., 2008). Therefore, to a conscious, active and efficient social integration of the individual, a conscious critical evaluation of life corresponds.

But the ideal of life is such a complex problem that it can be unravelled only through an assumed goal of “multidisciplinary research”; it involves the study of the *social ideal of life*, of the *individual ideal of life* and of the *educational ideal*: which are, all of them, historically and socially determined. Accordingly, it includes and discerns within these different ideals of life, *models of life*¹², *values, purposes*¹³, in a pedagogical, psychological and sociological treatment, because the pedagogical problem itself requires this

multidisciplinary approach: and *beyond the philosophical descriptions*. This research generates a “monographic view” (Bazac, 1983, p. 23) explicitly subordinated to the educational scope, as it was constructed in the *first Romanian comprising book about the ideal of life*. And yes, *the comprising meaning of the ideal of life cannot be but explicitly educational, pedagogical*.

*

The psycho-pedagogical meaning of the ideal of life, thus the *individual* ideal of life, has in view the ways the individual concretises and customises his/her own purposes. From a psycho-pedagogical standpoint, “the ideal of life is the axis of the existence of the human subject”, cardinal in the process of “self-education” (Bazac, 1983, pp. 46-48). It pushes more forward; it has the power to impulse the mobilisation of the individual to objectivating it. The purposes are poles in the process of transposition in the actuality of the ideal of life, but this ideal of life is the lunging into the desirable future. According to which values?

The first (but indirect) answer involves “a multidirectional dialectical relationship” (Bazac, 1983, p. 39) between the individual ideal of life, the educational ideal, and the social ideal of life. We can express this relationship as a system where the *bottom-up* and the *top-down* relations transfigure into each other, the social ideal being both the frame, and thus the *top* that directs the individual ideals, and the result, the *down* generated by the individual ideals; and the individual ideals being both the first cause, the *top* that determines the eventual synthesis of the social ideal, and the consequence of the social ideal, the *down*. While the educational ideal is always an *intermediary* between them.

However, things are finer. All of these ideals carry the *fingerprint* of the social system where they exist, but since there are different social classes in a system, the fingerprint itself is plural, the different social ideals coexisting and thus, influencing both the different educational ideals and the individual ones. Very briefly, in a social system the different social ideals compete each other in the process of shaping the individual ideals, but what really triggers the humans’ openness toward creativity is only the social ideal *where there is no lack of perspective*¹⁴. The influence of the customised individual ideals on the social ideal (and on the educational one) has different “amplitudes”. These customised

individual ideals go through a “purification process” made by the *educational ideals* themselves: which, simplified, are the *official* one selectively synthesising the ends of the strata in power, and the *popular* one promoting the commonsensical moral. These may well diverge, even though they also have common ends. The multitude of all of these ideals and vectors of aspects and influence could be better expressed as a “perpetually *overturned hourglass*”, disclosing to us not only the succession but also the simultaneity of all of these intertwining of ideals (Bazac, 1983, pp. 39-43).

The second, direct, answer concerns a still dialectical confrontation of the “present-day real” (Bazac, 1983, p. 45): with the *values* which issue from different loci. There are objective official values, including from education – and their matching with /mismatching to the reality generates the “de-idealisation” that is the subject’s *critical* position that surpasses its first “genetic”, ontological, position of assumption of reality, and that is a “quasi-mandatory stage of the subjective evolution”; and there are subjective values, formed as a result of the critical stage. These subjective values, assumed as the best ones, thus desirable, are the skeleton of the ideal of life: or, conversely, the subjective values can be subjectively evaluated by the individual and organised in more or less coherent ideals of life. Therefore, ultimately, it is about a confrontation between the individual ideal of life, critically constituted in a turbulent gestation, and reality.

If so, we also could think to a confrontation between the individual ideal of life – always full of maximal values of moral and human behaviours – and the social ideals of life. And when these social ideals are official, legitimating the present, a “metaphysical restlessness”¹⁵ happens to the individual: he/she begins to doubt the spiritual values of mankind. He/she can remain drowned in this state, but if the individual ideal of life is consolidated enough, he/she tries to give humane solutions to the given situations. The ideal *mobilises*¹⁶.

5. From the abstract outlook about the ideal of life to the concrete one

The constitution of modernity has led to the *conceptual expression* of the awareness of the *principles* governing the psycho-social individual life,

implicitly the educational life. If for John Locke the principle was the manner the socially desirable *model* was to be transmitted as shape of citizens, if J.-J. Rousseau tottered between models and passions of the soul, Kant was, as mentioned before, that who expressed the *ideal* as a principle. And Hegel continued, concretising it as a substantialised *universal* and, inherently, coloured by subjectivity (appetence for subjective friendship and models) in adolescence and underlining that this principle is, in adulthood, a universal liberated from subjectivity. However, this ontogenetic evolution is not a smooth path, but marked by contradictions: just the adolescence is more open to the nobleness of soul, its flight towards goals is gratuitous, while the adult is pragmatic, subordinating his desires to what is possible, but – look at this beautiful dialectic that is, at the same time, suitable to the fundamental principle of “reality = rationality” – just this subordination being to be active in the service of the world (Hegel, 1894, § 396 (1)- §397 (3), whose Romanian translation is quoted in Bazac, 1983, pp. 60-61).

Outside philosophy, thus outside abstract formulation, the concept of ideal of life was not present: but, obviously, the models and ways to transform the young generation into a desired adulthood were. However, with the maturity of modernity, when the illusions of efficient formation of man as a result of official models were about to vanish, the Romanian pedagogical school passed to concretely expressing, justifying and practically transposing the need of ideal of life, beyond the copy of appropriated models (Dimitrescu-Iași, 1898; Narly, 1925; Stoian, 1934, 1943); to this school, an emphasis of the social conditioning of the ideal followed – the sociologists Drăghicescu, 1914; Bărbat, 1928; Herseni, 1935; the philosopher Vianu, 1933 (all discussed in Bazac, 1983, pp. 70-78). And what is important, the Enlightenment’s focus on the disclosure of the peculiarities of the ages of man, of childhood and adolescence was continued and developed: not only here, of course. Accordingly, the Eastern and Western studies of these ages were reviewed in order to have the set of concepts necessary to researching if the hypotheses of the book can be demonstrated as scientific theory (Bazac, 1983, pp. 79-99; hypotheses 18-23). Between these studies, the Romanian ones from the 70s have continued the first half 20th century’s enterprise.

The concrete display of the research (formation of the ideal of life at Romanian adolescents¹⁷, between 13 and 18 years old) would deserve more

space for the methodological principles and epistemology of a multidisciplinary pedagogical approach. The model of the genesis and “metamorphosis” of the ideal of life of adolescents suggested that the ideal of life is the axis of the constitution and permanent re-formation of the human personality not only in adolescence but *throughout the whole life*. Its dialectic concerns the *complex* of relationships between *all the social formative messages/ influence* and *the individual taking over of models*¹⁸, *their processing, and the building of a personal model*.

Thus, it is not about a static *coexistence of models* – where there is an ontogenetic hierarchy of models (parents, grand-parents, teacher and so on) – with and alongside the whole social *alterity* gradually discovered, but about the dynamic of *self-awareness*, result of and aiming at a *projective and anticipative imagination* that, in its turn, *orientates* the human person toward *evaluated* synthetic ends. Therefore, what is of utmost importance is that the adolescent *constructs* also *the ends*, following a critical judgement of alternative ends: once more, not related to different paths to attain different professions, but to the morally desirable frame of social relations *and* ends. The ideal of life shines above the personal model of life that, in its turn, is part of the ideal of life. This convergence and interdependence allow the *autonomy* of the subject towards models and influences, namely, for his own (self-)education (Bazac, 1983, p. 140).

The pedagogical approach allows the orderly organisation of all these aspects: it *reevaluates* them (Bazac, 1983, pp. 130-139) according to the official educational ideal, generating strategies to actualising this accord.

The official educational ideal is, as it is known, the shortening of the leading social ideal. But, since there are also other social and educational ideals in a social system, and obviously the individuals may take over elements of these ones, the vault key and at the same time the skillfulness of the whole pedagogical process is just: 1) “the identification of the tendential differences” between the individual and, on the other hand, the official social and educational ideal of life, and, 2) their pedagogical capitalisation. However, what does this last aspect mean? It means a “*preventing educational strategy*” that is also a “*completion of the moral ontogenesis of the human personality*” (Bazac, 1983, p. 146).

Ultimately, this strategy corresponds to the ends of the leading social ideal. In an optimistic view, the book considers that in no case should the strategy “inhibit” “the freedom of youngsters” and the uniqueness of individual access to the future (Bazac, 1983, pp. 146-147). But it can use a special technique of “moved clichés” (pp. 146-148): that is, of *critically* approaching the models as such. And the result is perceived not only in the responses of the subjects to specific questions in the multidisciplinary fieldwork supporting the theoretical research, but also in the concrete *socialisation* of adolescents that is not an alignment to pragmatic commands but a thought-out evaluation and internalisation of values, and at the same time an enthusiastic communication to society of their particular inspired elan, generating a “rejuvenation” of society itself (pp. 149-162).

6. How?

What was said was thoroughly clear for capturing the role and functions of the ideal of life and the leading pedagogical principles concerning it. Philosophy is here the emphasis of the deep educative causation linking its ends to the pedagogical principles. In the trail of this approach, some more concrete notes do appear.

- a) The entire process of education – both vertically/chronologically and horizontally/integrating all the voluntary and involuntary formative messages of all the social institutions and moments of the organised school education – *is* a whole, and thus must be *coherent* from the standpoint of educative message. A main cause of failures in the organised school education – failures experienced both during the school years and, perhaps especially, after them – is just the incoherency of formative/moral messages of the entire society.
- b) But, since the school as such has no power beyond it, its only means to counter the above-mentioned contradictions is the *coherence – unitary moral education* – during all the educative moments. The moral education is not outside the specific instructive classes, a “superfluous” aspect towards them, but it regards *every* teaching and teacher-student relation.
- c) This *integrated* feature of education in school (and organised educative institutions) means the emphasis of socially appreciated *values*, namely, the behaviour of teachers according to these values, the promotion of these values – because children have the right to *meaningful education*,

marked by values (de Ruyter, 2002) – but always in a *logical, explicative* way that is not an *ex cathedra* closed discourse but just an open one, generating *ethical responsibility* (Lee, 2023). This last condition protects us from both formalism – thus, inefficiency – and infringement of both students and teachers’ *rights* (Parkin, 2024), because it develops the *critical thinking* (Pettersson, 2023).

- d) An important aspect – that is related to the methodology of the scientific approach of things, here concretely, to the methodology of the entire social discourse about “human affairs” – is that the moral education cannot be deployed in a “neutral” way, avoiding the social problems, namely, the *critical thinking all the way*. The contradiction between this requirement, linked to the formation of the ideal of life, and on the other hand, the official command to not involve social problems – and thus, to focus on “technical” instruction and to consider things in a *fragmented* way – is challenging, indeed: the official injunction tends to annul the social activism (that is, in essence, all the way) or to channel it within a route harmless to the system, actually even aiding it; while the ideal of life pushes to an *integrated* view of the entire society and thus, to activism all the way. This is the dilemma of the present theory and practice of education. But, first of all, the answer is – again from a methodological standpoint – to be aware of this dilemma. Then, to *search* for the meanings of the “flourishing” of the human being (Wolbert et al., 2017).

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

The adolescents’ ideal of life reflects and “measures” the efficiency of the educative process. And, though it is directly formed by family, school, the different youth organisations (and circles), it undergoes many influences. The big problem, however, is not to prevent the officially undesirable ones, but to constitute in society “*the reserve of means and resources to concretise the ideals of life*” (p. 165). Therefore, the entire society is responsible for the ideals of life of the young (p. 166).

How can we evaluate the importance of the ideal of life, specifically of a humanistic ideal of life? Let’s make an exercise of *reductio ad absurdum*: what if it would not exist at all? What if, and what would have been if, the humans would live only within the life preserving reactions to the present?

What if they would have only egotistic pragmatic views and no universalistic perspective would open and enlarge their range of vision? And what if in their education they would receive only success patterns to achieve an endless “what do you care?” except one’s own well-being?

NOTES

¹ (Teilhard de Chardin, 1956, p. 109): “the animal knows, of course. But certainly, he does not know that he knows”.

² Both concepts (*conscientia* and συνείδησις) are late constructs.

³ The animal *access consciousness* involves the *conatus*, the impulse “to persist in its own being” (de Spinoza, 1677/1996: III, Prop. VI, p. 72), and the constitution of the human being along the process of evolution has enveloped the animal *conatus* by the multi-layer *interpretative consciousness* of the self as first person and its reflections and transformations into the second person and the third person. The meanings generated by these latter persons form the *meta* layer of the self, being constituted as the reflective mirror of the self (Plotinus: “every man is double, one of him is a sort of compound being and one of him is himself”, quoted in Samellas, 2010, p. 92).

Free will is not the result of *conatus*, but of the human interpretative consciousness of the self in relation to the surrounding selves. (See Kant, 2006: AA 07:322, pp. 234-235: (the human being) “first preserves himself and his species; second, trains, instructs, and educates his species for domestic society; third, governs it as a systematic whole (arranged according to principles of reason) appropriate for society.... to bring about the perfection of the human being through progressive culture, although with some sacrifice of his pleasures of life”; also (Kant, 2006: AA 07:325, p. 239).

Actually, the free will is the *consciousness* and the joy of both free will and its awareness, it involves the value of *well-being because of this freedom of the will*. Bergson has synthetised these complex meanings of the free will as *joy of life* doubling the *élan vital* with the consciousness of *freedom*, of the *unexpected* and of *creation*, namely of “materialization” of the will (Bergson, 1919, esp. 18-25).

⁴ (Kant, 1998, A 813/B 841, p. 681): “Yet morality alone, and with it, the mere worthiness to be happy, is also far from being the complete good... In order to complete the latter...it puts itself in the place of a being who would have to distribute all happiness to others”.

⁵ (Kant, 1998, A814/B842, pp. 681-682): “happiness in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings, through which they are worthy of it, alone constitutes the highest good of a world”.

- ⁶ Let's remember Aristotle's concept of *entelechy*, describing the state of *perfection* as a cause that determines a thing, and thus this state itself being "within the thing" as its reason-to-be (*telos*), through the internal energy of the thing, that tends to the fulfilment of the thing, namely, of its state of perfection/ according to the state of perfection: without which the thing as such does not even exist.
- ⁷ We do remind here of Heidegger's Platonian definition of truth, (truth as a disclosure) don't we?
- ⁸ This is Aristotle's term.
- ⁹ Man must transcend himself within his own unique peculiarity of moral reason. Otherwise, a "post-humanism" occurs: that is not man's ascent but descent, because any physical and intellectual improvement with chemistry and AI, that ignores the moral reason – thus, also the conditions of moral reason – is not a "superman" but "a dream of diminished man" (Rey, 2018).
- ¹⁰ In Aristotle's meaning (as *real/realised*).
- ¹¹ And the desirable society is not a vague "post present", but the result of a critical evaluation and a prospective attitude towards both the present and the future.
- ¹² The *model* of life – a pole, a cliché, a prototype – *orientates*, its function being that of *exemplarity*, and it is *concrete*, immediately perceptible and known, while, if the ideal of life is not perceptible and known, it is the surpassing of the model; it impulses the subject to go farther than the model. "This is the ontological basis of the statement – frequently present in the pedagogical papers about the adolescents' ideals of life – that many adolescents do not follow or are not inspired by a model. In fact, those subjects surpassed the models, they want to be 'more than', they want to be "the most" (Bazac, 1983, p. 36).
- ¹³ The purposes are "operational elements", "something that must be undertaken within a certain period of time and under precisely determined conditions", but they have different meanings (statical and dynamic) and "the psychopedagogical perspective" is sensitive towards these meanings and indicates the ways "the subject models the purpose in personal sense, the ways the subject customises it" (Bazac, 1983, p. 37).
- ¹⁴ The problem of the *existence of perspective* – thus, of a social ideal that allows the *universalizability* of the individual ideals – is of utmost importance. If these perspectives are narrow or absent, in both a structural meaning and a conjunctural one, the individuals have a shrinking capacity to imagine ideals of life or do not have it at all. And the corresponding theory expresses this fact by substituting the ideal of life with *aspirations* – which have not the functional capacity of the ideal and always concern concrete purposes – or even with "daydreaming" (thoughts which evade from the "current, external tasks" the individual aims): that mixes/posits together *fantasy*, thus even the one that wanders in a "second life", *emotions*, and *critical imagination of the future and the place of the*

- individual*. While the psychological studies about daydreaming and its negative form, maladaptative daydreaming, are interesting and important, their declared suggestion is that the daydreaming may highly probably oppose the straining of the individual's efforts for real tasks: but if so, the daydreaming is absolutely opposed to the ideal of life that, on the contrary, fuels these efforts; in a critical manner.
- ¹⁵ D. D. Roșca, *Existența tragică. Încercare de sinteză filosofică*, București, Fundația pentru literatură și artă „Regele Carol II”, 1934, 217 [*The Tragic Existence. Essay of philosophical synthesis*]: “Only the metaphysical restlessness is not biologically justifiable and appears somewhat gratuitously (in the face of the great whole)”.
- ¹⁶ The human creativity is, thus, preceded by the constitution of human hermeneutic capacity. Because without the consciousness able to penetrate the connections of things, the motivations of actions and the interweaving of experiences, man cannot discover and give meaning to existence, that is, he cannot create values, the *sine qua non* benchmarks of civilisation.
- ¹⁷ The book synthesises the special group devoted to the study of the ideal of life constituted in the Research Centre for Youth Issues immediately after the establishment of this Centre (1968). D. Bazac initiated the investigation in 1967, already based on a consistent statistic, and was coordinator and member of the studies published by the special group (Bazac, 1983, pp. 24-25).
- ¹⁸ This moment is transposed at psychological level as “satellitisation” (Bazac 1983, pp. 139-140).

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