

Dewey, Heidegger and the Challenge to Cartesian Metaphysics. Education as Living Forward

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In this paper, I stage a comparison between two thinkers who, at first sight, may appear far removed from each other, namely, Dewey and Heidegger, discussing their challenge to Cartesian metaphysics. I make my point by locating the analysis in the contemporary educational debate and the necessity to overcome the subject-object split, which still haunts much of the current educational theories and practices. Specifically, I analyse the critique both Dewey and Heidegger put at the core of what may be considered the pivotal feature of Cartesian metaphysics, that is, the self-sufficient, ego-logical, enclosed Cartesian subject. Along the way, I also wish to argue that such a subject is also the—hidden—ground for what seems to be the current dominant educational discourse, that is, the actual testing and efficiency culture dominating educational landscape.

KEYWORDS: DEWEY, HEIDEGGER, EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AND PRACTICES, METAPHYSICS

Introduction

In this paper, I stage a comparison between two thinkers who, at first sight, may appear far removed from each other, namely, Dewey and Heidegger, discussing their challenge to Cartesian metaphysics. I make my point by locating the analysis in the contemporary educational debate and the necessity to overcome the subject-object split, which still haunts much of the current educational theories and practices. Specifically, I analyse the critique both Dewey and Heidegger put at the core of what may be considered the pivotal feature of Cartesian metaphysics, that is, the self-sufficient, ego-logical, enclosed Cartesian subject. Along the way, I also wish to argue that such a subject is also the—hidden—ground for what seems to be the current dominant educational discourse, that is, the actual testing and efficiency culture dominating educational landscape.

With respect to the comparison I put, I wish to show that the two philosophers, although located in quite different traditions and geographical contexts, sink their roots in a common ground. Moreover: by analysing Dewey with a Heideggerian lens, as it were, and, conversely, by analysing Heidegger with a Deweyan lens, I wish to offer a perspective on their thought which put embeddedness, and unpredictability center stage. Otherwise stated, I

believe that this approach allows for bringing something to presence that can remain hidden, or underestimated, when considering each thinker in his own right.

As stated above, I shall frame the issue in terms of what goes beyond the detached and self-assured subject that is supposed to found the kind of managerial frameworks that dominate educational discourse and practice worldwide (Ball, 2003; Masschelein and Simons 2008; Todd 2015). My attempt, then, is twofold: a) drawing from Dewey and Heidegger, I wish to contribute to the debunking of such a self-assured depiction of educational subjectivity; and b) bearing in mind questions and phenomena highlighted in such an anti-foundationalist turn, I attempt to unravel deep affinities between the two thinkers. In other words, the Dewey-Heidegger comparison can be better understood by adopting such an anti-foundationalist educational lens.

Specifically, it is my contention that for both Heidegger and Dewey, we are, on the one hand, thrown into the world, delivered to an uncanny and uncertain condition—in Dewey's words, we «cannot escape the problem of how to engage in life» (Dewey, 1922, p. 81). For Dewey, as well as for Heidegger, we are always-already vulnerable and exposed, because «experience is primarily a process of undergoing a process of standing something; of suffering and passion, of affection, in the literal sense of these words» (Dewey, 1917, p. 10). In Heidegger's words, «Da-

sein stands primordially together with itself in uncanniness (Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 264). However, such an undergoing, such an uncanniness, is also the condition by which we can «overreach ourselves» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 165), fulfilling the «broadening of the self» (Dewey, 1913, p. 89) that is education. This is because for Dewey, undergoing «is never mere passivity» and experience is always «a matter of simultaneous doings and sufferings» (Dewey, 1917, p. 10). In Dewey's understanding, the subject is always pushed out into the future, enlarging and emancipating its experience, thereby deepening and intensifying its quality. For Heidegger, a similar dynamic comes to define uncanniness and Dasein's condition, which is embedded with projecting and transcendence, namely, the ways in which «Dasein chooses itself» (Heidegger, 1992/1928, p. 190). Such a choice, in turn, «is the summons of the self to its potentiality-of-being-a-self, and thus calls Dasein forth to its possibilities» (Heidegger, 1996/1927 p. 253). Thus, both Dewey and Heidegger—although differently—highlight the subject's exposure and vulnerability while also framing this condition as essential for the «potentiality-of-being-a-self» / «broadening of the self» to occur.

Given such premises, I wish to make clear from the outset that my attempt is a conceptual one. Nonetheless, at the end of my paper, I shall attempt to point at some practical bearings for education. More specifically, I deal with the question as to what it means for teaching taking into account such a twofold debunking of self-assured subjectivity. It is my contention, in fact, that the Dewey-Heidegger comparison may offer a foothold for a different conception of what it means to engage in and set up educational processes and practices, a conception that is at poles with the kind of «teaching effectiveness» (Hannan, M., Russell, J.L., Takahashi, S., Park, S. 2015; Ronfeldt, M. 2015), which seems to inform both teaching and teaching learning programmes worldwide (Alexander 2011; Ball 2003; Biesta 2015).

The paper is framed into four sections, respectively committed to analysing the precedents of the comparison I put (section one), Deweyan thinking (section two), Heideggerian questions of transcendence and becoming (section three) and the educational bearings of the

comparison I have argued for. I begin with discussing the precedents of Dewey – Heidegger comparison.

Discussing Dewey – Heidegger comparison

My comparison of Dewey and Heidegger has several precedents, both on the terrain of philosophical and educational understanding. Troutner, at the end of the 1960s, was the first to stage such a comparison. Undoubtedly, he has the great credit of introducing the argument, thus highlighting deep similarities between the two philosophers under the surface of diverse interests and concerns. Troutner, in fact, notices that «both are concerned about immediate experience» (Troutner, 1969, p. 147) and such a common understanding works to challenge Western self-sufficient Cartesian subject and theoretical gaze:

Dewey's organism- environment transaction and Heidegger's 'being- in- the- world' would appear to be on common ground [...R]elationships are paramount in both formulations. There is no organism without an environment, nor, as Heidegger says, is there any world without Dasein. (Troutner, 1969, pp. 147-148)

Despite his effort and credit, Troutner, as far as I can see, fails to recognize some important aspects of both, a problem that was also noted by Kestembaun (1972). Troutner, indeed, in saying that «the action between Dasein and the world is unilateral» (Troutner, 1969, pp. 147-148) misunderstands Heidegger and his deep challenge to Western modern detached subject: Heidegger, in fact, framed Dasein as «already-being-with world» and as «a way of being [...] toward other beings» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 128). We may even say that the essential insight of Heideggerian thought has been exactly the discovery, if we may use such a term, that human beings are always-already-embedded in an environment, and that to conceive of such an environment as detached from a kind of monadic subject is senseless—an argument, as we all know, well developed in Deweyan critique of modern epistemology. Troutner, moreover, also misunderstands Dewey—or, at least, gives a very restricted account of his thinking—in saying that he is «a social engineer» with a «heavy reliance upon the natural sciences for his thinking model» (Troutner, 1969, p. 148).

Troutner's claim that «Dewey[']s major focus is essentially epistemological» (Troutner, 1969, p. 148) was challenged by Dewey in advance in his strong critique of the «industry of epistemology» (Dewey, 1917, p. 17). In addition, a number of eminent scholars have sufficiently shown that Deweyan commitment begins and ends with concrete existence (Alexander, 1987; Bernstein, 2010; Biesta and Burbules, 2003; Garrison, 1998; Hickman, 2007).

Another thinker who put such a comparison was Rorty, in his famous article *Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey*. Rorty's work starts along Troutner's lines, although he does not explicitly mention Troutner. Rorty highlights that both philosophers overcome «the distinction, in ancient philosophy, between contemplation and action [and] both abhor the notion that poetry is supposed to offer us 'values' as opposed to something else—'fact'—which we are to find in science.» (Rorty, 1976, p. 298) However, it is remarkable that Rorty misunderstands deep features about both philosophers; such an evident misunderstanding led Margolis to make a sharp critique of his work. Indeed, Margolis said that «Rorty misreads Heidegger [...] misreads Dewey, misreads the similarity between the two.» (Margolis, 2010, p. 111) Rorty's work, in Margolis analysis, is reduced to a «gymnastic manoeuvre» (Margolis, 2010, p. 111). Because of space limitations, I may provide only two examples of such misunderstandings. First, despite his thinking sinks its roots in the pragmatic turn, Rorty appears to give a very reductive account of Dewey's thought: Rorty, in fact, drawing from Heideggerian words, claimed that when Dewey praises our modern manner of seeing nature as something to be used rather than contemplated he is simply falling in with modern technology's insistence on seeing «the earth's crust as a coal mine, the soil as a source of minerals.» (Heidegger, 1976/1954, p. 114) The problem with this observation is that Dewey, as Garrison (1998, 2003) and Biesta and Burbules (2003) have sufficiently argued, challenged in advance such an understanding of his work, which was devoted to overcome the «exclusive identification of the object of knowledge with reality,» as he states in *Experience and Nature* (Dewey, 1929/1925, p. 157). At the same time, when Rorty says that «Heidegger's weakness was that he could not escape the notion that philosophers' difficulties are more than just philosophers'

difficulties—the notion that if philosophy goes down, so will the West»—he appears to forget that Heidegger, throughout his entire work, exactly highlighted such difficulties as the collapse of the West, a collapse—in Heidegger's words, «the world's night»—that «comes to the light of day only slowly.» In Heidegger's thought, philosophy's commitment is exactly «[t]o see this danger and point it out.» (Heidegger, 2002/1950, p. 18)

Toulmin's impassioned work is a defense of Dewey's «central position the classical traditions of philosophy.» (Toulmin, 1984, p. 9) He begins «[b]y putting Dewey's arguments alongside those of his younger contemporaries, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger» (Toulmin, 1984, p. 9); such a move allows Toulmin to see «how deeply [the Deweyan] critique of traditional epistemology was capable of cutting.» (Toulmin, 1984, p. 9) Toulmin clearly recognized that both Dewey and Heidegger refused to see the world «as a view, [a] 'view' being something that a spectator can contemplate without intervening.» (Toulmin, 1984, p. 9) Although he did not mention explicitly the intertwined traditions staged by both thinkers—namely, hermeneutics and pragmatism—we may say that, starting from Toulmin we begin to recognize the hermeneutic side of Dewey and, conversely, the pragmatist side of Heidegger.

Rosenthal offers an insightful account, identifying a number of points of contact between Dewey and Heidegger and overcoming, in my view, the problems of Troutner's and Rorty's perspectives while developing a number of Toulmin's insights. Rosenthal highlights how both Dewey and Heidegger undercut the «subject- object split that sets the problems of the modern period» (Rosenthal, 2010, p. 127) rejecting «the illicit reifications of the object of science.» (Rosenthal, 2010, p. 128) Moreover, she fully recognizes that

Dewey's focus on the biological is far removed from the 'biologism' that reduces the human to lower level of existence and to which Heidegger so strongly objected. Dewey's focus on the biological [...] reveals the purposive activity out of which awareness of meaning emerges. (Rosenthal, 2010, p. 128)

In the following, based on these precedents, I will address the point educationally, attempting to push the discussion forward thus shedding a light on some educational

bearings such a comparison entail. I begin with Deweyan understanding of existence as «living forward».

Deweyan «living forward»

In this section, I wish to discuss how, for Dewey, the subject is always-already beyond itself, always-already «liv[ing] forward» (Dewey, 1917, p. 10). Such a condition, importantly, is also the doorway for «the increment of meaning» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 90) in the being-with-others that education is.

I will begin, as stated above, with Deweyan conception of «liv[ing] forward». When speaking about perceiving, acting, thinking—the very means by which a human being is embedded in the world—a strong reference to the future in his work is brought to the fore. Indeed, such phenomena are phrased by Dewey in terms of their connection with «unattained possibilities» (Dewey, 1929/1925, p. 182) and the future. Let us consider the following statement:

[We] live forward; since we live in a world where changes are going on whose issue means our weal or woe; since every act of ours modifies these changes and hence is fraught with promise, or charged with hostile energies—what should experience be but a future implicated in a present! (Dewey, 1917, p. 10)

Although one key point of Deweyan thought is the conception of experience as an on-going process of undergoing and doing that develops as a continuum, it is worth noting Dewey's emphasis on the future: «[we] live forward», that is, the present is framed by what is going to happen. This dependency of the present on the future has a two-pronged root. On the one hand, in fact, «changes are going on whose issue means our weal or woe». As living beings constantly in contact with our environment, we are radically exposed to the environment's changes, which may determine «our weal or woe». On the other hand, we also produce such changes through our doings. Indeed, Dewey notes that «every act of ours modifies these changes and hence is fraught with promise». To the extent that uncertainty also springs from our doing, we do not master the whole of the consequences of our actions. This is not an isolated passage in Dewey's reflection. Twelve years later, in *The Quest for Certainty*, he states,

The distinctive characteristic of practical activity, one which is so inherent that it cannot be eliminated, is the uncertainty which attends it. Of it we are compelled to say: Act, but act at your peril. Judgment and belief regarding actions to be performed can never attain more than a precarious probability. (Dewey, 1929, pp. 6-7)

Here, uncertainty is the very basis of doing. Of course, such an uncertainty, faithful to the Deweyan transactional approach, is not to be understood nihilistically. Quite the opposite: meaning creation and the «emancipation and enlargement of experience» (Dewey, 1910, p. 156) of education, in being prospective, stand on unpredictability. That is to say that uncertainty, meaning creation and education come into the world together (Garrison, 1998). Unpredictability, importantly, is also involved in perception. In a passage from *Experience and Nature*, Dewey furnishes an account of such a phenomenon, which moves it from the static frame in which it was understood—perception as recognition, identification—towards a dynamic one in which behaviour, acknowledgment, and even judgment are embedded in the act of perception:

To perceive is to acknowledge unattained possibilities; it is to refer the present to consequences, apparition to issue, and thereby to behave in deference to the connections of events. (Dewey, 1929/1925, p. 182)

Such a passage comes to challenge any linear account of behaviour, judgment and decision. It is not that we first perceive and then judge and decide. In any act of perception, we «acknowledge unattained possibilities»; judgment is embodied in perception, and in any perception, we are already projected into the future. Moreover, without such a projective character, without «refer[ring] the present to consequences», perception is literally impossible. Stated otherwise, in Dewey's account, it is not only that inquiry into present conditions is essential to our knowledge of the future. It is also the other way around: projection into the future, acknowledgment of «unattained possibilities», is also the basis for actual perception. We may even say that in Dewey's account, the future and new possibilities constitute the leading force of the present.

Thinking, too, is conceived of by Dewey as a projection into the future. In his 1910 work devoted to the analysis of thinking, this process is understood in terms of jumping and leaping. Time and again, Dewey highlights the risk and uncertainty by which thinking is crossed:

The exercise of thought is, in the literal sense of that word, inference; by it one thing carries us over to the idea of, and belief in, another thing. It involves a jump, a leap, a going beyond what is surely known to something else accepted on its warrant. (Dewey, 1910, p. 26)

Dewey uses the same terms—«leap» and «jump»—a few pages later to describe inference (Dewey, 1910, p. 75). Therefore, I believe that the terms «jump» and «leap» must be carefully understood. Indeed, when leaping, we are not sure where, how and even if we land. Leaping entails leaving the ground to reach something else, something uncertain. Moreover, Dewey notes that «no matter what precautions be taken», thinking can never reach certainty in advance. This uncanny condition, however, must not be seen a nihilistic defeat of purposes; rather, it should be connected to the pivotal function of thought, namely, pointing toward newness. Insofar as we stand on secure ground, we do not add to assured knowledge. Thus, thinking becomes a mechanical activity, one in which all is pre-conceived and known in advance. This theme recurs in subsequent works. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey states, «All thinking involves a risk. Certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance. The invasion of the unknown is of the nature of an adventure; we cannot be sure in advance» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 174). A few pages later, Dewey is even more explicit. When speaking of inference, he states that such a pivotal means must be conceived of as «always an invasion of the unknown, a leap from the known» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 186). The term invasion is also meaningful. An invasion is something not at our disposal; it is something we have to undergo or endure. When we are invaded by something, that something is not under our own power. Quite the opposite: it is something that disposes of us. Being invaded means the loss of self-control and self-governance. The question is pivotal because Dewey is not speaking about affects or desires or pain; Dewey is speaking about the intentional, rational act of inferring something. Stated differently, Dewey discloses an

inescapable condition of uncertainty at the core of human thinking. Again, I believe such an uncertainty must be understood in terms of possibility. Not only does the very act of thinking involve risk, but experience, too, is always more than we can understand because

in any object of primary experience there are always potentialities which are not explicit; any object that is overt is charged with possible consequences that are hidden; the most overt act has factors which are not explicit. (Dewey, 1929/1925, p. 20)

For Dewey, then, the goal is not so much to encompass experience by thinking but to enlarge or engender new experience by thinking and education. Because «we live forward» (Dewey, 1917, p. 12), the engendering of experience which education is, is an open affair. Thus, the attempt to master and encompass education by projecting in advance its ends or outcomes is, in Dewey's understanding, both inconsistent and undesirable because «education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 62) and «[g]rowing is not something which is completed in odd moments; it is a continuous leading into the future» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 65). Such a leading into the future, importantly, also is the basis for Deweyan conception of democracy and society (Striano, 2017).

Transcendence and becoming in Heidegger

Thus far, I have discussed Deweyan account of experience from the standpoint of his conception of growth, thinking and uncertainty. It is my contention that a similar dynamic comes to define Heidegger's questions of transcendence and becoming. Contrary to interpretations of Heidegger's work as wholly devoted to addressing the question of the meaning of Being, my contention is that in the late 1920s, Heidegger developed an ethics of freedom, commitment and becoming that is, in and of itself, educational (see Standish, 1992; Gennari, 1997; Thomson, 2001; Bonnett, 2002; Cambi, 2006). Indeed, in this period, themes such as «being-ahead-of-oneself» (Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 180) and «becom[ing] what we are» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 6) are at the core of Heidegger's reflection. Heidegger developed such questions in one of his works of the 1930s, that is, *The Fundamental Concepts of*

Metaphysics. In that work, he states that to become what we are entails «taking our Dasein upon ourselves» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 164): Dasein «[has] to resolutely disclose itself» towards its own freedom (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 164). Such a freedom, as Heidegger puts it, is not «a free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the ‘liberty of indifference’» (Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 135); instead, becoming what we are is described by Heidegger in terms of struggle and striving. It is an endless task that we attend to our entire life. Heidegger explicates this question in a passage about the «liberation of the Dasein» that deserves close attention. In the pages devoted to the analysis of boredom, Heidegger speaks about the need

to liberate the humanity in man, to liberate the humanity of man, i.e., the essence of man, to let the Dasein in him become essential. This liberation of the Dasein in man does not mean placing him in some arbitrary position, but loading Dasein upon man as his ownmost burden. Only those who can truly give themselves a burden are free. (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, pp. 166-167)

In this passage, what strikes me as a significant ethical and educational move is the presence of three issues: a) the need «to liberate the humanity in man, to liberate the humanity of man»; b) the discourse about Dasein in terms of something to be fulfilled; and c) the link between burden and freedom. In particular, the passage seems to position Dasein on a different register; Dasein is not something already given—our being-in-the-world—but rather something we continually have to realize, something related to our freedom. Moreover, it is precisely freedom—liberation—that is at the centre of the passage. Human beings—man, in Heidegger’s words—must realize freedom by liberating the humanity in themselves. Such freedom, which is human beings’ «ownmost burden», is realized through Dasein’s «becom[ing] essential». In this work, Heidegger leaves open the question of what such becoming concretely means. We find a cue to better understand the issue in *Being and Time*, in a passage that again raises the issue of freedom. I quote the passage below and then provide my comments:

Freedom makes Dasein in the ground of its essence, responsible [verbindlich] to itself, or more exactly, gives

itself the possibility of commitment. The totality of the commitment residing in the for-the-sake-of is the world. As a result of this commitment, Dasein commits itself to a capability of being toward-itself as able-to-be-with others in the ability-to-be-among extant things. Selfhood is free responsibility for and toward itself. (Heidegger, 1982/1927, p. 192)

Here, I believe, the well-known Heideggerian structure of the «circling movement of philosophy» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 180) is at work. Freedom, responsibility and commitment intersect and find each other in a movement through which selfhood is established as such. On the one hand, commitment and being responsible are grounded upon freedom; only freedom gives human beings such a possibility. On the other hand, Dasein is capable «of being toward-itself» exactly by such a commitment. Interestingly, such circularity does not close Dasein in itself in a kind of solipsistic relation to Being. Instead, the «capability of being toward-itself» is conceived of as the capability to be «able-to-be-with others in the ability-to-be-among extant things».

This ethical feature of Heideggerian philosophy is not new. A number of scholars have emphasised the role of choice in Heidegger’s thought, framing it in terms of a call, of the possibility to think and act differently—see, for instance, Dreyfus (1991), Standish (1992, 1997), Olafson (1998), Bonnett (2002), and Thomson (2001). Furthermore, that Dasein has a fundamental ethical and educational characterisation also emerges from other passages by Heidegger in *Being and Time* as well as other works in the same period. Due to space limitations, I can only highlight a few of them, which I hope may show how Heidegger’s reflection between 1927 and 1929—perhaps his most creative period—is grounded in a context of choice, commitment and transformation of the self, or, stated differently, in an educational context.

The focus on choice and commitment is apparent in this passage from *Being and Time*: «Dasein becomes [...] always only that which it has chosen itself to be, that which it understands itself to be in the projection of its own most peculiar ability-to-be» (Heidegger, 1982/1927, pp. 277-278). Here, Dasein’s becoming is tied to Dasein’s choice. Such a choice takes form in the open terrain of not-yet, of Dasein’s «being-possible», as «Da-sein is a being-possible entrusted to itself, *thrown possibility* throughout»

(Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 135). Again, this not-yet, this being «*thrown possibility* throughout», must not be understood as some indifferent possibilities from which to choose. Time and again, Heidegger highlights how Dasein cannot escape to its being thrown into not-yet and projecting from its very beginning (Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 136) and how such a possibility is related to a commitment and to a responsibility towards itself—a commitment that calls into question, as he puts it in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, «the demand for a complete transformation of our conception of man» (Heidegger 1992/1929-1930, p. 62). Indeed, Dasein «succeeds for itself, in its own existence, in first throwing itself beyond itself-to its limits. Only from the height of this high projection does it glimpse its true depths» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 17). Such throwing, such «overstepping», is the transcendence of Dasein, namely, «the primordial constitution of the subjectivity of a subject» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 165). It is this founding structure that allows Dasein to be towards itself and with others:

The Dasein as such is being-toward-itself, being-with others, and being-among entities handy and extant. In the structural moments of toward-itself, with-others, and among the-extant there is implicit throughout the character of overstepping, of transcendence. (Heidegger, 1982/1927, p. 301)

«Being-toward-itself», «being-with others», and «being-among entities» belong to Dasein from its very beginning and are fulfilled in the condition of overstepping. Dasein is always-already pushed beyond itself and realizes itself in pursuing its own transcendence. Here, Heidegger's reflection brings to the fore a conception of selfhood-as-being-with as an endless and groundless transformation. Such a conception opens up the subject to a plurality of possibilities that are not already pre-established, a plurality that, in turn, works to challenge given systems of understanding. Thus, the space of «unattained possibilities» and the «future implicated in a present» that come to define experience, on Dewey's side, and the question of Da-sein as «being-possible entrusted to itself, *thrown possibility* throughout», which is pivotal to Heidegger's understanding, also point towards a shared recognition of human beings as projecting, transcending

beings who gain meaning in being stretched into the future while choosing such a condition of being pushed out, beings who need education to fulfil their being. In what follows, I attempt to put forth some educational bearings of the comparison I have staged.

Education as not-yet

First to begin the concluding section, let me make a brief remark on my attempt: I am aware that the way I have highlighted this openness lacks concreteness and perhaps even qualification. Indeed, one can reasonably ask what it means and entails if we are to make sense of it educationally. However, faithful to the need for «not knowing» and for «something prior to [and beyond] naming experience» (Todd, 2015, 412), which can challenge existing pedagogical orders (Masschelein and Simons, 2008; Vlieghe, 2010), the extent to which we can concretely define such a gesture is uncertain, as openness hardly bears definition. Nonetheless, I think that something may be said about schooling and, particularly, about the way in which teachers conceive of curriculum and educational relationships.

According to the analysis I have attempted to make, curriculum should not be conceived as something managed and controlled by teachers, something enacted in order to achieve pre-determined sets of skills and knowledge. Curriculum should be conceived as the space in which teachers and students attempt to dwell in the pure potentiality for growth, in the space of «not-yet» (Heidegger, 1996/1927, p. 226), which should characterize education and learning, thus pursuing the radical newness to which a consistent part of educational literature is calling for (Biesta, 2011; Lewis, 2015; Mortari, 2009; Riva, 2004; Todd, 2009, 2015). Curriculum, in this sense, becomes a matter of hesitation and wait, a matter, also, of interruption and withdrawal of the self (English, 2013; Vlieghe, 2010). Teaching, then, comes to be informed by an ethic of finiteness and humility, one in which we do not aim to master living situations; such an ethics works to show, at the same time, how our educational effort is always-already uncertain, not because of a lack of competence, but for the very nature of educational encounters. Stated otherwise, through Dewey-Heidegger comparison emerges a notion of becoming as something

we both enact and have to endure, something we actively choose and something into which we are thrown. Something that we cannot manage and, yet, something that is up to us to enact.

This conception, while not undermining subject's educational responsibility, works to debunk the existence of educational practices and policies that conceive of the subject as something already established, something that can acquire this or that competence at will, enlarging itself, integrating itself in that kind of neo-liberal educational apparatus which rules educational practices and policies worldwide. While I cannot develop this issue extensively, I wish to highlight how, over the past two decades, we have witnessed two—related—processes: a) an atomisation of educational practices, whereby education is individualized and divided (Ball, 2009); b) the standardization and interchangeability of contents and skills in education and learning processes, and an emphasis on methods, conceived as given protocols and techniques. Through such a vision, teaching is conceived of as a «facilitation» in the learning market (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2004). Such a learning politique tends to reduce diversity—both students' and teaching practices' diversity—emphasising a supposed mastery over experience, which is increasingly standardized and narrowed down to what is functional to neoliberal — educational—apparatus. Students, then, are only required to best perform learning, thus producing the right learning outcomes, no matter what contents and subject matter they are engaging with.

Such policies put forward a rather narrow depiction of knowledge and what we may call the educational subjectivities—both of teachers and students. Then, as a result, a univocal and abstract logic is imposed upon teachers and students, which are only required to adjust to and perform in such a logic. As a corollary, much of the literature about teaching and teachers education has been framed, over the last decades, in terms of what it means to be a « [s]kill-ful teacher» (Brookfield, 2015) or how to pursue «teaching effectiveness» (Hannan, M., Russell, J.L., Takahashi, S., Park, S. 2015), and a narrow conception of inquiry and reflexivity has emerged in teaching training programmes as well. Then, a different conception of teaching and schooling is required. Consistently to the analysis developed above, we should

think of schooling as the place in which the interplay among students, teachers, curriculum and the space of not-yet which education is, is brought about. This is not to deny teachers' responsibility and engagement in framing concrete understandings and practices. Quite the opposite: this is to locate knowledge and schooling in the place they deserve, namely, the source of purposes and practices of societies. Then, if we conceive of education as the means by which human life gains its always-open, always-possible meaning, and society has the possibility to radically change, a different way to conceive of schooling deserves our attention. In this sense, curriculum is not just a means by which students can develop the right skills; it also is the space in which students and teachers attempt to dwell in pure potentiality for growth.

Thus, in drawing my paper to a conclusion, I wish to highlight how for both Dewey and Heidegger, the subject is at once exposed, vulnerable from the very beginning, and pushed beyond itself. It seems to me that here one can find the significance of Dewey's leaping and leaving forward (Dewey, 1917, p. 10) and Heidegger's transcendence and «becom[ing] what we are» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 6). It also happens that such a leaping and becoming, such a transcendence and leaving forward is an open and endless condition, both for Dewey and for Heidegger. Dewey, in fact, repeatedly notes that «[e]nds are, in fact, literally endless, forever coming into existence as new activities occasion new consequences» (Dewey, 1922, p. 231). In Deweyan transactionalism, there is no such thing as a fixed point to reach or to start from. At the same time, for Heidegger, «Da-sein, too, *is always already its not-yet* as long as it is» (Heidegger 1996/1927, p. 227). In addition, the well-known Deweyan statements about education we find in *Democracy and Education* point in the same direction: «Since in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 60). Furthermore, «[s]ince growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself» (Dewey, 1930/1916, p. 62). Dasein, too, is to be conceived of as continually striving to pass its own limit: «Human Dasein gains depth only if it succeeds for itself, in its own existence, in first throwing itself beyond itself—to its limits. Only from the height of this high projection does it

glimpse its true depths» (Heidegger, 1992/1929-1930, p. 17).

What I hope to have shown, then, is that the intersection between Dewey and Heidegger allows us to see both the displacement of the sovereign subject that comes from behind the territory of self-transparency and self-governance and the displacement the subject itself enacts in leaping and transcending its own boundaries, in «leaving forward» and «being-with-others». It is exactly in bearing such a twofold displacement that the subject

becomes responsible. Responsibility, then, is no longer founded on knowledge; rather, it is a commitment founded upon the unpredictability and vulnerability that are, at the same time, behind and produced by the subject. In bearing and enacting such a twofold displacement, we come to better understand the on-going, self-transcending transformation that is education.

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