



A Critical Analysis of Ontological Foundations of Modern Education Understanding

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Abstract

The present study aims to assert the basic characteristics of modern education understanding by examining its philosophical foundations. As an activity of education philosophy, this study aims to relate the basic characteristics of modern education with modern thought, society, and power structure and to understand the social and political structure by relating the same to the transformations in the world of thought. The outline of the structure of the modern education understanding becomes clear in case the adventure of establishment of modernism in Europe and then gradually throughout the world is examined by taking into consideration also the rupture from the scholastic thought of the middle ages and feudal power structure. Therefore the present study will assert the most basic characteristics of the modern education understanding which on the one hand is rationalist, scientific, secular but also massive, national, progressive, competitive, standardizing, and market-oriented on the other. Doing so the modern education understanding will be related on philosophical grounds to the characteristic structure of the modernist thought and society structure, which is rationalist, secular, scientific, and progressive, upon which the nation-state and the power of capitalism have been established. Besides it will also be examined what kind of a teaching – being taught relationship the modern education understanding could have inflicted in the scope of the foregoing.

Keywords: modernism, ontology, instrumental rationality, power, mass education

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Modern Eğitim Anlayışının Ontolojik Temelleri Üzerine Eleştirel Bir Çözümleme

Öz

Bu çalışma modern eğitim anlayışının temel karakterlerini, onun felsefi temellerini irdeleyerek ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bir eğitim felsefesi etkinliği olarak bu çalışma modern eğitimin temel özelliklerini modern düşünce, toplum ve iktidar yapısıyla ilişkilendirmeyi, toplumsal ve politik yapıyı ise düşünce dünyasındaki dönüşümlerle ilişkilendirerek anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Avrupa’da ve giderek dünyada modernizmin yerleşme serüveni, ortaçağ skolastik düşünceden ve feodal iktidar yapısından kopuşu da göz önünde bulundurarak ele alındığında, modern eğitim anlayışının yapısının genel hatları da belirginleşmeye başlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede bu çalışmada; modern eğitim anlayışının bir yandan akılcı, bilimsel, laik ama bir yandan da kitlesel, ulusal, ilerlemeci, rekabetçi, tek tipleştirici ve piyasa güdümlü olma gibi en temel özellikleri, modernist düşünce ve toplum yapısının akılcı, seküler, bilimselci, ilerlemeci, ulus devlet anlayışının ve kapitalizmin iktidarının yerleştiği karakteristik yapısıyla, felsefi zeminde ilişkilendirilerek ortaya konulmaya ve bununla birlikte modern eğitim anlayışının nasıl bir eğiten-egitilen ilişkisi doğurmuş olabileceği ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu çerçevede özellikle Frankfurt Okulu filozoflarının izinden gidilerek aydınlanmanın ve modernizmin bir diyalektiği olduğu, modernizmin insanlık adına olumlu bazı değerleri doğurmakla birlikte totaliter devlet yapılarının ortaya çıkma ve aynı zamanda kapitalizmin yerleşme serüvenine işaret ettiği için insanlık adına bir çok hayal kırıklığını da beraberinde getirdiğini söylenebilir. Modern eğitim anlayışının diyalektiğini kısaca özetlemek gerekirse; modernizmin doğuşundaki tüm sancuları kendi üstünde hissederek belirginleşen modern eğitim anlayışı, ontolojik dönüşümün toplumdaki izdüşümlerinin temel özelliklerini taşımıştır. Bu bakımdan “Modern Eğitim Anlayışı”; ortaçağın dine dayalı eğitimine karşı “laik”, “akılcı” ve “bilimsel” olma gibi insanlık açısından temel olumlu karakterleri taşıırken, bir yandan da “kitlesel”, “milliyetçi”, “ilerlemeci”, “piyasacı”, “indirgemeci” ve “tektipleştirici” olma gibi insanlık için olumsuz özellikleri de içerisinde barındırarak, varolan olumlu değerlerinin de kapitalist iktidarın kendisini temellendirmek için araçsallaştırıldığı temel diyalektik karakterine kavuşmuş olmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: modernizm, ontoloji, araçsal akıl, iktidar, kitlesel eğitim

Introduction

This study aims to examine the philosophical foundations of the modern education understanding and provide a critical account of the effects of modernist philosophy tradition and capitalism, as the reflected ideology of the foregoing, on today's educational approaches and practice.

In order to understand the modern education philosophy, modernism and the transformations occurred in the world of thought during transition to modernism should be briefly reviewed. Therefore in an attempt to understand the philosophical character of the modern thought and accordingly the modern education understanding the study will address the changes as seen in educational approaches parallel to the transition of philosophical thought from scholastic philosophy to modernism and the ontological foundations of the modern education understanding. Hence the study will assert the parallelisms between the basic characteristics of the modern philosophical tradition and such attributes of the modern education as massive, secular, national, scientific, rational, progressive, and market-oriented etc. The study will also reflect on the teacher-student relationship as introduced by the modern "Cartesian subject" understanding into the practical life and education process. In this sense the present study will attempt to critically relate the ontology of modernism to modernist education approaches and processes.

The study will first address the ontological debate, which gave a rise to modernism, and assert the essential character of modernism based on the said debate in an attempt to understand the philosophical foundations of modernism and modernist education understanding. It can be argued that modernism and the philosophical foundations thereof are immanent within the political, economic, cultural, artistic, or social relations and life styles as developed by humanity for centuries until today. Nevertheless both the philosophical debate, cultural structure, power, and the educational approaches cannot be explained by resorting merely to the help of modernist paradigm in today's globalized world and that the new power form of the capitalism and the postmodern condition prevailing in all of the above fields and the effects of globalism and neoliberalism should also be taken into consideration. However, rather than addressing to the reflection of the debate on globalism and postmodernism on education, the main purpose of the present study is to provide a critical assessment of and try to understand, from an educational perspective, a longer process from Renaissance and Enlightenment to the end of 20th Century, when the modernist paradigm established thoroughly in the world.

Therefore in this framework first the modernism and the ontological debate during transition from scholasticism to modernism should be covered in order to understand the essential character of the modern educational understanding and address to the philosophical foundations thereof.

Modern Ontology and Its Social Reflections

Foundations of modernism can be attributed to the rupture from the scholastic philosophy, which tried to explain and understand the universe, existence, and anything with regard thereto by Divine origins and subjected the reason to belief or revelation during the Middle Age. With modernism it was thought that the entire

universe could be known and interpreted by human reason. There appeared a firm trust and belief in human reason and rationality. Reason was considered to be able to explain everything; and the idea that the whole world could be 'enlightened' based on reason became the dominant one (Çiğdem, 1997; Touraine, 1995).

Development of rationalism, the essential character of modernism, became possible due to the sociological and philosophical transformation, by which the dominance of religion could have been eliminated in terms of both power, and social structure. As a matter of fact the ontological debate throughout the Middle Ages based on the thought that God was ontologically immanent within the entire universe, human beings, and things or that all creatures were coordinated pursuant to an ontological hierarchy with the God placed on the top of it, and that the existence of things was due to their share from the absoluteness of God (Marenbon & Luscombe, 2006). These philosophical systems rather based upon the conceptual realism (Platonic Realism) and conceptualist ontologies based on thoughts of Aristotle, and used to underlie the religious understanding, on which the social life style, power and state understanding, and the ideational structure were established (Cassirer, 1984; McGrade, 2006; Touraine, 1995).

The essential character of the ontological debate on the problem of universals during the Middle Ages provides in a sense tips regarding how it could have been possible to transit from scholastic thought and religion-based social structure to modernism. A brief review of the aforementioned Platonic Realism and Conceptualism as the two traditions of thought that justified the God-based ontology and feudalism as based on ecclesiastic power throughout the Middle Age will be helpful to understand, how the dominance of these thought traditions were transcended by means of thoughts based on "Nominalist" tradition and how the modern thought broke through the foregoing.

For instance the true reality and the idea of good, which is the most perfect of all universal forms, in Plato's theory, appears as the concept of 'God' as the most universally inclusive of everything in the universe, which is immanent in all particulars, and which is the absolute reality in the Middle Age. God is pure form and the most universal form as interpreted by the Platonic ecclesiastics known as Platonic realists- (McGrade, 2006). All forms except for God are limited with the object by which they are materialized. "Every creature exists thanks to the unique and the most perfect existence(ens perfectissimum); It is this existence, which grants existence to all objects; and This power, which grants existence to all objects, is the highest essence; It is what is called God" (Çotuksöken, 1993, p. 153).

Similarly, according to Thomas Aquinas, one of the representatives of Aristotelian Conceptualism during the Middle Age, who tried to base the religious knowledge on a rational ontology, everything that happens in reality is an extension, evolution of the essential forms within the object. Universals or forms are immanent in the substance as a potential power (potentia) like seeds to grow later. Universal is on the one hand is a product of reflection (on particulars) but on the other hand it is not only in the mind, it is a substantial form in the material world (forma, eidos). According to Thomas Aquinas, the essence, which gives the object the name of its existence is not only the form or matter, but composed of the both. Everything that happens in the word is predetermined in line with a purpose (telos, finis); being in

the world is an organic teleological existence. It is the God, which initiated being and that the purpose of being is the God, which is the most supreme best (Aquinas, 1993, p. 275; Gökberk, 1996, p. 173).

During the last periods of the Middle Age, the theses of Nominalism had begun to be adopted against the ontologies based on Plato and Aristotle, which tried to prove the reality of universalities. For instance according to William of Ockham, universals do not really exist but the knowledge of universals is the product of abstraction from the knowledge of particulars. To him, natural empirical knowledge as the only type of knowledge accessible to human is only the knowledge of the individuals (particulars) but of nothing else (William, 1993; Cevizci, 2002). Questioning the reality of universal in the metaphysics of the middle ages with the introduction of nominalism and acceptance of individuals and particular objects as true reality were penetrated into the entire social thought by renaissance and in a sense became the basis of the bourgeois individualism.

The aforementioned ontological debates of the middle ages were in a sense the mirror of the social structure and that transformations in the social life as parallel to the transformations in those ontological debates could be observed in an intertwined fashion. For the purpose of the foregoing it can be said that the beginning of paradigm shift in the world of philosophy is also an indication of the shift in the social structure and form of power. Such that the new ontology that was liberated from God and based on autonomy of the particulars (individuals) allowed transition from laws of God to Natural Law (secularization) in social terms and furthermore enabled evolution of the conception of state from City of God (Augustine, 1950) to “national monarchies,” where sovereignty was concretized in the individual body of the king, first, and then following the French and American revolutions to “Nation State,” where autonomous nations could possess their own power on the basis of republics (that gradually transformed into totalitarian regimes upon victory of the said power) (Brett, 2006).

Feudalism as a mode of production based on church was transcended and the bourgeois movement became stronger in the class struggle throughout the Middle Age thanks to the debate, regarding the possibility of empirical scientific knowledge that is based on reason rather than religious knowledge, as conducted in the world of thought through the channel that was opened by the nominalist tradition and by the commencement of transcending the dominant paradigm. Thus a new power structure peculiar to modernism was introduced and a bourgeoisie class, which became richer and believed in that such richness, could be limitless and universal, was born (Giddens, 2005; Çiğdem, 1997).

This young status quo, which gained strength with capital accumulation of bourgeoisie and based on the dominance of reason, started to think that human beings can know everything. Thereafter such positivist ideas as the fact that there was no knowledge that cannot be accessed by humans via reason, that there was no knowledge, the truth of which cannot be proved, and those metaphysical or imaginary propositions were not needed for explaining the universe and nature became to be the dominant ones. Thus the phenomenon itself must be addressed rather than resorting to metaphysics and the real things should be known by

examination. In the sense above, scientism became one of the most essential characteristics of modernism.

Therefore along with the emergence of a new conception of the subject (modern subject) based on rationalism, the emergent idea of modernism replaced God in the center of the society with “science” and allowed religious beliefs only within the constraints of private life. In this context the idea of modernity is firmly connected with the idea of rationalization. The moment, when the Western thought was most strongly identified with modernity, it desired a transition to rational society idea, a wider conception than the basic role as considered for rationality. Moreover, in that rational society not only the reason administers the scientific and technical activity but also holds the administration of human beings and objects in hand (Touraine, 1995, p. 24). In this context modernism refers to a world-view that is a product of the intellectual transformation due to the Enlightenment and *scienticism*, rationalist, progressive, and human-centered ideology that is based on humanism, secularization, and democracy (Cevizci, 2002).

In other words modernism represents an ideation, life, culture, and societal form and structure substituted by the firm belief in such principles as autonomous reality of the particulars, value of the individual, power of human reason, inalienable rights of humans, science, technology, progression, production, and commerce rather than the thought tradition of thought, which was born in the West and explained everything with a divine substance, and religious life style of the Middle Age (Steinvorth, 2009). It can be said that the most essential character of modernism especially with the Enlightenment thought is the “rationalism”. The ideation of a free and autonomous individual, who can resort to reason, is most clearly expressed by Kant in his definition of Enlightenment: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one understands without guidance from another” (Kant, 2000).

Modernism is indicated with a rupture from the scholastic philosophy and based on the values of Enlightenment Philosophy. This rupture is an evidence of a change in both ontological terms, and in the sense of power. This change was realized in the state structure following the Middle Age through a transition period of enlightenment and reign of pre-republican monarchies. As with questioning of the ontological position of God and accordingly state, society, and humans in connection therewith there observed changes also in the sovereignty conceptions. The absolute ontological positioning of God was altered and the sovereignty was gradually transferred from kingdoms under ecclesiastical control to independent national monarchs and to the individual body of the absolute monarch representing the entire nation (Saygılı, 2014). After individualism and the ideation of ontological autonomy of individual were fully established the new and true power of the modern period would rise, that sovereignty would be transferred to national “republics”, which were materialized in the body of the nation especially after the French and American revolutions, and that the new sovereign power would be capitalism as led by bourgeoisie also by the effect of the Industrial Revolution. When considered together with these transformations, such universal values as secularism, rationalism, and scientism of modernism and Enlightenment, which could be seen positive for humanity, had become to be

recognized as the natural attributes of the power of capitalism and they were transformed into the power apparatus of capitalism.

In other words, on the one hand modernism can be considered a positive advancement for history of humanity on the grounds that rationalism, secularism, and scientism had become established values, but on the other hand, one should notice that this process evolved into totalitarianism of a new power establishment as capitalism. Modernism has also been considered having a rationalist character on the grounds that the same indicated a transition from ontological positioning of the existence based on God to a human-centered ontology based on the subject (self). Nevertheless the gradual transformation of rationalism to subject-centrism and totalitarianism of the subject towards the external world raises the problem of “instrumental rationality.” In the scope thereof, modernism has an almost insoluble contradiction as noted by Adorno and Horkheimer (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). While modernism in a sense represents an ‘innocent’ uprising against the scholasticism of the Middle Age and the feudal power, and is accordingly indicative of the trust in human reason and a secular socialization replacing the divine ontological positioning of the existence, the same, on the other hand, incorporates such elements that may end up with imperialism as progressivism, egocentrism, and reductionism etc. In this framework as with the experiences in which the positive essential characteristics of the previous major social changes in human history were transformed into power apparatuses, one can argue that bourgeoisie too entered into an instrumentation process regarding all the principles of enlightenment, which served as a basis thereof, for the sake of becoming a center of power.

It is important to trace the ontological projections of the aforementioned social changes in order to understand modernism. In respect thereof one should understand the essential character of the Western metaphysics, which replaced God as ontological resource with reason and placed the subject as conveyor of that reason. Therefore when addressing to the social or political reflections of the conception of subject as a product of modern subject metaphysics’ reduction of the entire world to the consciousness of self, it would be readily possible to reach the finding that capitalist power was placed in the position of the subject taking into consideration the process by which the whole world was attempted to be shaped under control in compliance with the capitalist power.

In that respect the Frankfurt School philosophers was right to claim that the form of existence of the capitalist power was actually an implication of the modernity project. The Frankfurt School philosophers suggested that the disappointment of humanity in connection with the bourgeoisie, which was based on the main principles of the Enlightenment philosophy, was inevitable. According to a similar comment by David Harvey, the death camps of the 20th Century, militarism, World Wars, nuclear extermination threat, and violence constituted a major disappointment regarding Enlightenment and the modernity process (Harvey, 2006). In this framework, Adorno and Horkheimer suggested in “Dialectics of Enlightenment” that monarchies transformed into bourgeois dominance, republics to capitalist and imperialist hegemony republics, rationalism to instrumental rationality based on coercion, or to apparatuses of dominance, and progressivity to prosperity of capital and progression of capitalism in lieu of masses together with industrialization

(Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972). In that sense the “modernity project” incorporated a suspicion that it was from the very beginning destined to transform the goal of liberation of humanity into a universal system of suppression for the sake of salvation of humanity, contrary to its objectives (Giddens, 2005).

When modernism is considered in the framework of philosophy and especially the subject metaphysics, it is important to address how the ontology that underlies the bourgeois individualism and the self-centered understanding of capitalist power serve as a source for a domination relationship.

One of the well-known basic criticisms against modernism is by Heidegger, who targeted the thought of Descartes and his Cartesian dualism. The fact that Descartes asserted reality as two substances that could not be reduced to each other, i.e. thought and matter disconnected the subject that knew, perceived, and thought, from the object, which was known and perceived. In that sense matter, known object (*res extissa*) was considered separate from self (*res cogitas*) and a dead, dull world was created, the principles of which was known to the subject (Turan, 2003). Furthermore, subject (*res cogitas*) was sealed as a consciousness or a “thing” isolated from nature, history, or life (Soysal, 1999). The aforementioned “complete and definite separation of material and mental substance renders the interaction of these substances a true impossibility regardless of wherever the contact point has been placed or how open the interaction experience has been” (Cevizci, 2001, p. 167).

Therefore many contemporary philosophers have criticized the Modernist Philosophy tradition, which is considered to have started with the Cartesian metaphysics of Descartes. For instance “according to Heidegger the imperialism as established by human beings by means of technical equipment is the peak of the development of the Western civilization through the channel for the subject as had been made available by Descartes. The birth of the object in the modern sense started, when subject became self and self became ego cogito in Descartes” (Bumin 2003, p. 52). Therefore with Heidegger’s interpretation Descartes was considered the architect of the conception of subject in the modern sense and the forerun of modernity, and that modernism started to be conceived as the process of the domination of subject over object (by means of technique), subject’s reduction of object to a position, where object is merely an issue of subject’s design, subject’s exclusion of object as a different field, and subject’s closure of object. Therefore the metaphysical modernity, which transforms everything into an issue of subject’s design and which was classically formulated by Berkeley as “*esse est percipi aut percipere*” (to be is to be perceived), defined human beings as the only and the true *subjectum*, the reference center of the one that exists (Bumin, 2003).

Thus the rationality of the system (accounting for all that exists) and subject metaphysics, which made subject as the foundation and model of all that exists appeared as a technical domination over the world as different facets of the same modernity. Therefore technique (or realized metaphysics according to Heidegger) a product of modernity underlies the social, economic, and political totalitarian policies of our age, and metaphysics underlies the said technique (Bumin, 2003). In this framework the relationship as established by the self with the external world is only based on a knowing relationship. According to Heidegger, the Modern reasoning as the peak of the Western metaphysics is a ‘calculating thought,’ by

which thinking loses its origins. Calculating thought implies the limitless transformation of everything in line with benefits and uninterruptedly and unconditionally determining-calculating the way everything extends itself. Thus in the Western metaphysics truth was reduced to the accuracy theory as suitability (Kurtar, 2014).

In modernism, according to Heidegger, as demonstrated in Cartesian philosophy, “intellectual activity –designs– are realized always in the form of the thinking self’s accompaniment with the designs. The thinking self always knows oneself in the thinking activity and this is uncontested, guaranteed knowledge. The essence of right is the definitiveness of the self-reflection knowledge of the self, thinking oneself. Overlapping the designs the thinking self is disconnect from the world and transformed into a power center, which does not refer to anything but itself. This at the same time is a new freedom definition. “A path must be defined for all such that one can find all essential information in oneself to steer one’s life without borrowing from anyone else.” Envisaged as the image of absolute power and freedom, cogito-human is a nominee anymore to destroy and crush to all barriers against the reason with his thirst for absolute knowledge. The method of Cartesian thought based on “calculate, control, and possess” is indisputable dominance over nature and the highest value of the human image as characterized by the dominance of individual is the progression considered as the “victorious march of reason” (Turan, 2003, p.168).

Similar to Heidegger, Levinas is also a stark critic of modernist philosophical tradition and its human conception. According to Levinas, the modernist subject as characterized by equalizing oneself with the different and the other, manipulate the same, and totalise into the consciousness of self has an ego-centered structure. Levinas criticizes the conception of subjectivity, which conceives the universe from the angle of the self and incorporates the other into its design (Levinas, 1969). For Levinas, the egoist ‘I’ tends to make all others similar in “the self”, and make the same a part of the self. This is the relationship between the ‘self’ and the other that ‘I’ use to recognize, understand, and express the other. ‘I’ tires to establish a relationship with the other on the grounds of fictiveness. Nevertheless as reduces all others to the self, the ‘self’ also tries to conceive the other, the other human being based on his consciousness. However, this brings down the relationship, supposed to be established for understanding from the very beginning. This also indicates another dimension of the violence exerted to the other. As a matter of fact, the other has an irreducible difference and has a different meaning other than mine (Beavers, 1990).

From the perspective of Levinas, the subject metaphysics with its structure that crushes otherness indicates an “ontology of dominance,” which prisons and constructs the entire external world and the other human being inside the cage of consciousness. In such an egocentric ontology, the difference of the other was subject to totalitarianism of the same, and relation to the other by departing from the ‘self’ transformed into a fictitious character, a relationship of knowing, and an epistemology. Departing from the ‘self’ reached to constructing the entire universe and the other inside the ‘self’, domination over the nature and the other, violence, and solipsism. Therefore, according to Derrida, having seen the imperialism of the modern subject conception towards the “other,” Levinas asserted that the Western metaphysics was metaphysics of violence or war (Derrida, 2005).

A review of criticism towards modernism suggests that the basic point of departure of the foregoing criticisms is the Cartesian subject conception and the fact that the link between the thinking self (*ego cogito*) and the external world and the other is ruptured. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Cartesian thought accounts for all the sins of modernism. The problematic of subjectivity and the subject-object dilemma as introduced by Cartesian philosophy was reinforced by certain philosophers (e.g. Kant) and was tried to be transcended by others (e.g. Hegel, Husserl). However these attempts could not liberate the Cartesian thought from the grip of the modernist metaphysics, which prisons the other inside the same. For instance according to Kant, we know the objects through *a priori* forms or categories. Our comprehension skills place the given intuition objects under such categories and basic concepts of causality, substance, or relation. These are the supreme principles that allow experience. In this framework reason (or subject) imposes one's principles to the nature. Kant further developed the consciousness of what is called "ontological difference" in modern terminology, in other words the consciousness that object and the subject are not identical, was developed (Adorno, 2005). Hegel, for instance, attempted to remove the aforementioned ontological flaw, which turned out to be the sickness of modernism. However, according to Levinas, Hegel's totality idea serves nothing but negation of the other and the restraining the other inside the same. Levinas thought that Hegel played one of the major parts in the Western philosophy, which he accounted for the long list of terror during the twentieth century, including the Holocaust. Such that for Hegel, the history of philosophy was the history of a one and eternal mind which presented itself in the infinite variety of forms. This history indicates a victorious march towards the tactility of the Spirit. Therefore the allergy towards the "other" in the modern philosophy is sustained and becomes further totalitarian in Hegel's philosophy (Bernasconi, 2011; Derrida, 2006).

In this framework it is seen that the modernist conception of subject was shaped by an ontological position, which paved the way for domination of men over men, and men over the nature. Modernism, with the ideal of progression, which was determined by the goal of domination over nature and other human beings and strengthened by 'thought' that is the most essential substantial characteristics of the modern subject, and rationalism that was constructed thereupon, or the firm belief in the mind, attempted to reinforce the ideal of progression by scientific and rational foundations. The modernist subject in an attempt to understand and explain the other could not move beyond establishing a fictitious relationship and prisoned the other inside the boundaries of its own design, inside the cage of its consciousness (Levinas, 1969). It can be argued that the modernist subject metaphysics is manifested in the social and political ground and mostly in the spirit of capitalism and its relationship with the world.

In this context the modernist subject took its place in history by relying on strong ontological resources thanks to its worldwide freedom, happy and selfish consciousness, and the imperialism imposed by that freedom as it was exactly provided by the liberal capitalism. Now the problem was what kind of a subject or human being would be developed or raised out of the subject metaphysics that was incorporated into the social ground via those possess it.

The modernist ideology introduced the conception of human, who was compatible with the power understanding of capitalism and its political, social, economic, and production relations. Having relied on the principles of dominance over nature, scientific progression, and rationalism, that human would adopt a Husserlian “intentionality” based on understanding and explaining the universe in accordance with the above principles. Naturally that human would be self-centric and adopt the totalitarian structure of modernism, which suppresses and assimilates the other.

The political power emerged as materialization of the modernist ideology, naturally, organized an educational understanding, which will serve to raise the desired human beings. Thus education would be nothing than a tool of the power and the will to power of the hegemon as it had been throughout the history. In the framework of that understanding, education would be limited to the process of raising individuals compatible with the society, political order, and power structure of the period. Therefore education would bring the individuals who cannot escape the human conception of modernism, which renders the relation of domination inevitable today (Kükürt, 2007).

Thus it is seen that the states, based on individualist liberalism as nurtured by modernist metaphysics and on dominating capitalism as the former’s projection to the economic and political fields, organized the modern education to raise individuals that would maintain their conditions to dominate, who on the one hand adopt such values as individualism, economic liberty, and private property, but on the other hand, who at the same are qualified to maintain the production cycle.

Modern Power and Modern Education Understanding

It can be argued that the essential character of the modern education understanding developed in compliance with the reductionist character of modernism itself. Therefore it is possible to assert that the most essential philosophical substratum in the shaping of modern education understanding is the Western metaphysics on which modernism was constructed. Such that the modernist conception of subject exceeded the metaphysic boundaries and produced actual social outcomes based on western-centrism such as ethnocentrism, fascism in certain countries, and imperialism in many countries (Adorno& Horkheimer, 1972; Levinas, 1969).

In that sense we can observe the modernist ontology in also the relationships between human beings within the social life. We can argue that the subject-object dichotomy that is originated from the foundation of modernism creates oppositions in relations of human beings with the nature and other humans and make the other as one self, similar. It can be said that these dichotomies are experienced in the society, human vs. nature, capitalist vs. worker, woman vs. man, West vs. East, or teacher vs. student. It can be further asserted that such contradictions are based on an approach, which tries to make the opponent similar.

It can be said that the modernist/capitalist paradigm, which has penetrated deep into the social life, utilizes the mechanism that will ensure the continuation of its power and operates the same mechanisms in its discourses. The power aimed to raise

individuals that can be easily administered and that are suitable for the society that can be manipulated in line with its intentions in order to ensure its endurance and hold the power in hand. Therefore education was considered the most important ideological apparatus and a tool to steer the society (Althusser, 1991) and that the most important characteristics of the modern education has been its massive and standardizing attributes in line with the needs of capitalism. It can be said that the most essential characteristics of modern education is to raise the society in mass in line with realization of the intentions of the capitalist power (Spring, 1997).

Therefore it can be argued that modern education understanding transformed education into a tool. After education was considered a tool, education understandings, educational goals, and even the definition of education was adapted to that general understanding. The expectations from modern education was designed to reflect and sustain the pro-enlightenment, 'progressive', i.e. "scientific" and "rationalist," discourse that was adapted to capitalism; however these attributes were transformed into instruments as with the political field in such a way to be characterized so as the capitalist power could reproduce itself and thus the main purpose of education was to load students with knowledge that would make them suitable "labor power" for industry. Therefore "compliance with the market" as one of the mainstays of the conduct of capitalism leads the most basic characters of the modern education (Apple, 2004; Grioux, 2007). Taking into consideration the status of mass modern education today, it can be asserted that the independent value of knowledge was set aside and knowledge was seen as a tool to change the society into desired direction as a part of general discourse, and that the said tool was loaded to students via education process.

It can be observed that the capitalist power decisively show efforts to raise individuals, who think scientifically and rationally in accordance with the images of modernist ideology but could adapt the same as based on progressivity understanding peculiar to modernism to the progression or sublimation of one's own nation, and serve the industry underlying the progression. Therefore the flawed logic of considering people as labor force constitutes the basis of the reasons for the modern industrial states set mass school education as their education understanding. Moreover the prevalence of this system poses the risk of control and suppression of human mind in a dogmatic way (Spring, 1997, p. 12).

We can conclude that the basic characteristics of modernism dominated by rationalism, scientism, and especially positivism, are also the basic characteristics of modern education understanding. Throughout the modern era many countries, especially in Europe and gradually in the world designed an understanding, which values rationalist, secular, scientist, and absolutely positive information as their national education approach. Nevertheless as with the capitalism, i.e. the only power that marked the modern period, which transformed reason into "instrumental rationality" and science to a tool in service of industry, the mass character of the modern education valued sciences as much the latter served the industry and those fields of science required for the "advancement" of the capital were prioritized in educational curricula, thus the true value of knowledge started to be forgotten.

Above it was underlined that modernism also introduced a change regarding the ontological place of political power and that nation-state constructs replaced the

God-city conception of the middle ages. In that sense the most important revelations of the egocentric ontology that shaped the modern education in power construct has been the aforementioned egocentric constructs such as ethnocentrism, imperialism, and fascism. Such that modernism gave birth to new secular and at the same time nationalist nation models, where the ontological origin of the state and society gained autonomy from God and was positioned as an existence and power in and for itself. In modern era capitalism would operate as imperialism based on such strong nation models (Giddens, 2005). Therefore the most basic characteristics of the modern education understanding along with “capitalism” was the fact that an education understanding emerged that had been shaped as a “secular” construct and “woven with nationalist values” especially after the French Revolution and that accordingly “national education” systems with completed national models were introduced in many countries throughout the world. In other words, with modernism each nation experiences a particular version of modern ideology and its educational projections[†] and designs its national education system in a “national” framework (Green, 1997).

As pointed out by Godwin, while on the one hand the Western societies experienced the tension of transition from monarchic administration to republic at the end of 18th Century and at the beginning of the 19th Century, on the other hand there developed a close relationship between the political method and mass state school education (Spring 1997, p. 12). Godwin felt that political institutions approved the rich people’s seizure of power and that they tended to aggravate the differences between the rich and the poor. In addition Godwin believed that big and centralized states would result in sublimation of such values as adventures for national victory, patriotism, and economic and cultural competition in the international area that would rarely benefit the individuals. In this framework Godwin underlined that “The will to possess larger territories, conquering neighboring countries or have them live with fear, outcompete them in arts or arming is based on prejudices and false foundations... To him such features will bring forth that national education are to be used in chauvinist patriotism and political and economic power of the state (Spring, 1997).

The fact that the purpose of modern education transformed into a tool for the capitalist power is also manifest in the definitions for education and that education has been defined as the way to instill desired behaviors (Revill, 2007), shaping the student, and orient the student in line with the desires of the society. The fact that the mind of students was compared to wax (Locke, 2004), perceiving the same in such a passive mode of shaping, basing the definitions of education to the consideration that students are programmed machines required to show desired behaviors were in complete harmony with general expectations from modern education.

[†]Similarly in Turkey the education understanding was liberated from the Middle Age mindset especially with the Republican period and designed on secular, rationalist, and scientific bases, and further, gradually transformed into a nationalist and capitalist character. In that sense it can be argued that the adventure of modern education understanding in Turkey was quite similar to the transformations seen in Europe. However, one of the major differences is that the course of modern education in Turkey as compared to European countries is under the risk of becoming religious, thus returning back to the scholastic mindset while retaining its status as a tool of capitalism beginning from 2000s. This is a particular characteristics of modern educations in Turkey.

Forming the modern education understanding and purposes in compliance with the power's desires indicates the tendency of reducing the student, who is an individual with differences, to the uniformity of the general purposes through the education process as analogous essentially to the modernist subject vs. object antagonism. The aforementioned character of modernist education brings forth a problem of antagonism between the student and the teacher and, who is inevitably urged to act as a representative of the power. In that sense programmatic modern education bears the discourse of the dominant paradigm in the mass school system, identifying with the same, and reducing the "others," i.e. students, to this uniformity.

One of the most important expectations from the "Mass Modern Education" is that the educational system should accelerate the economic growth and development. The economic services of education are equipping individuals with knowledge and skills suitable for contemporary technology and raising labor power necessary quality and quantity for all levels and fields as required by development. Since the foregoing is the basic expectation from educational systems, the same are designed in line thereof, the curricula are composed of knowledge-intensive programs, and a "competitive" educational system suitable for the needs of the market is favored. While the reason of so much trust in scientific data was only to get stronger against the nature before competition started among the countries, this was complicated with the will to get stronger against other countries, which relied much more on an ambitious competition (Kale, 2003).

Thus as noted by Lyotard, knowledge in the form information commodity continues (1979) to be an essential part of the competition throughout the world as inseparable from the productive forces. Unfortunately the importance put in sciences and the knowledge of sciences serves such a utilitarian purpose. Since the expectation of the state and the society from scientific knowledge is merely the above, the schools align themselves to that expectation as a tool in the information process (Kale, 2003). Therefore it is inevitable that the thought which steers the education activity transforms into a modernist swirl or impasse that can be described as "knowledge as a tool of power," "knowledge as educational objective," and "education as a tool to maintain power."

P. Freire introduced one of the most important analyses regarding that basic character of the modern education understanding which instrumentalize knowledge, education, teacher, and student. Freire refers the educational idea of the modern world as traditional education claiming that it renders the minds obsolete. Freire asserted that the traditional education was based on "banking" concept of education, in which students were not considered subjects in the learning process but objects into which knowledge was instilled. According to Freire this banking concept of education bore many features of an oppressive society and incorporated all the irreconcilable characteristics of the modernist subject vs. object contradictions between the teacher and the student. According to Freire, as stipulated in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, banking education maintains and even stimulates the contradiction through the following attitudes and practices, which mirror oppressive society as a whole:

The teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; the teacher talks and the students listen -- meekly; the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply; the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher; the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it; the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students; the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects (Freire, 2003, p. 50).

In the banking concept of education, which confines the students to being objects of the learning process, “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers existence -- but unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher” (p. 41).

The modern education understanding that causes a structured hierarchy between teacher and learner finds the highest motivation in raising students with crippled minds in line with market values and requirements. That is why we can say that for Illich the liberation of human beings from modern market grip means liberation from school. To him it is impossible to escape from “progressive” consumption without liberating from compulsory education (Illich, 1971). This is because of the fact that the greatest aim of the modern school education is to raise good slaves, production workers, and further, good consumers for the modern capitalist market economy.

M. W. Apple one of the leading Marxist figures of critical pedagogy adds:

We are told to “liberate” by introducing our schools to competitive market environment, reconstruct the traditional shared culture and emphasize discipline and character, and tighten central control by more rigid and strict standards and examinations. However while education should be mostly understood as providing students with objective knowledge, in that discourse the basic role of school is the equip students with necessary knowledge so that they can compete in today’s changing world (Apple, 2004, p. 51).

According to Apple (2004), having been structured as such most of the modern education models tend to approve or at best leave intact the inequalities that deep-rootedly characterize this society. Most of these inequalities relates to school and economy, gender, class, and racial discrimination in wider sections of the society, complex policies towards popular culture, and the methods of financing and supporting education (p.52).

For Apple the objectives of education today are the same as that of those who aim education to economic and social welfare goals. The pursued goals are proliferation of that well fabricated story called free market without obstruction, emphasizing over-competitive action structures inside and outside school, lowering the economic security expectations of people, ‘disciplining’ the culture and body, or in other words spreading the Social Darwinist thinking style. As accentuated by Apple, the efforts by education to provide a structure in conformity with the requirements of the free market economy made it inevitable the formation of a modern education system complying with this structure. It was considered that ensuring the continuance of power conditions could be possible not only by merely reproducing the mode and relations of production, but at the same time by reproducing the hierarchical relations as a reflection of the power relations within institutional structures as with modern education.

In this framework we can conclude that the particular standardizing basic hierarchy incorporated into the modern education spontaneously gave birth the hierarchy between the teacher and the learner. In that sense, to summarize, modern education bears the traces of the basic philosophical and social structure of modernism and thus incorporates a specific dialectics. Therefore while on the one hand modern education in some sense values scientific knowledge and somehow characterized by rationalist and secular aspects, on the other hand it emerged and developed upon instrumentalization of capitalist power with characteristic aspects of mass, national, standardizing, being in conformity with market economy requirements, competitive, and progressive, imposing hierarchy between teacher and student.

Conclusion

In the present study an analysis about the basic characteristics of the modern education paved the way for understanding the change in social structure and mode of power, which unfolded parallel to the transformations in the world of thought as two faces of the same paper. Rather than sticking to a determinative approach as with the classical superstructure vs. infrastructure debate, i.e. whether a variable in the world of thought or sociopolitical fields solely determined the others in an absolute way, this study tried to show that these two structures changed in an intertwined fashion having effect on one another. In that sense it is the most probable experience to observe that if one face of the paper is torn, then the other will be torn itself implying that the changes in the said two spheres realized simultaneously.

As a matter of fact transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, and that from scholastic thought to modern thought occurred simultaneously. For instance together with modernism the debate on universals of the scholastic philosophy gained another dimension and the divine position of the “universals” at the top of the ontological hierarchy was transferred to political sphere and especially left to capitalist power or the universality of its market values.

Together with the change in the world of thought through debates in the ontological domain and transformations in the sociopolitical spheres, transformation also occurred in institutional structures such as law and education. In this framework,

we can argue that basic characteristics of the modern education understanding were formed parallel to the scientific, rational, secular, but at the same time, progressive, national, entrepreneurial, and market-oriented values of modernism.

Having conformed to the modernist thought and followed the tracks of instrumentalization, the modern education understanding aiming to raise standard labor force suitable for “universalized” market requirements brought forth a problematic teacher vs. student relationship. In that sense, modern education process was confined to a logic, which tended to melt the singularity of students in the universalities of the power. This thought that prisoned the minds of the students could have raised only the individual, who cannot think, participate, or liberate, and thus it paved the way for a society that could readily be steered to desired directions.

Due to the fact that the specific was reduced to general pursuant to the mass education logic, the education process was formed accordingly and that students became passive in the class, unable to participate in the process, unable to think creatively, or had to learn the patterns provided to the students. Students that were passive in the teaching process were always perceived secondary to the active teacher placed to the center.

Adopting the market-oriented and competitive trend of the era the teachers tried to conform students to that trend and inevitably assumed the role of the bearer of the power logic inside the classroom. This situation indicates the most prominent alienation effect of modern education on students and teachers. The phenomenon of “power in classroom” implies, in a sense, the hegemonic relationship of power with teacher, i.e. the fact that teacher assumes representation of and inspirit the “authority of power” in the classroom albeit the same does not completely correspond to teachers, similar to assertions of (Laclau, 2007) regarding the representation problems in the political sphere. As suggested by J. Dewey, teachers under the grip of hierarchical cycle of modern mass take from superior authorities’ delivery of knowledge and values to which they are not familiar, and which they have to convey (Dewey, 1996).

Teachers are also assigned the authority of power together with the knowledge of power incorporated into educational objectives and programs. Teachers encounter students with the pleasure of authority, while students suffer the weight of the said authority. Intentionality has become the character of modern teacher as with the egocentric modern subject. The otherness, as positioned to the pole of intentionality, awaits for being reduced to ‘self’. Market-orientedness render the educational processes innate to modern mass education so massive, generalized, and automated that teachers generally assume their tasks without being able to question that reducing the otherness of students to ‘I’ or “self” is actually to conform students to the represented ideology.

Teachers can only reduce students to authority of power without question. This indicates a whirl of alienation, by which students are instrumentalized by teachers and teachers by power. This is nothing but a reflection to school of a sort of metaphysics of violence as suggested by Levinas. In that sense the true source of “violence at school” becomes clearer.

In this framework, we can argue that the massive modern school education with its modernist reductive character, serves as the idea of controlling the minds and

exposing them to the design of power by holding thousands of otherness or thousands of students with different individualisms together, or acts as a space of violence in the foregoing sense.

Therefore, consequently we can re-summarize the dialectics of modern education understanding. Incorporating all the pains at the birth of modernism, modern education understanding bore the basic characteristics of the social projections of the ontological transformation. Therefore, as asserted above, while incorporating such characteristics as “secularism,” “rationalism,” and “scientism” against the religion-based education of the Middle Age, which could be seen positive for humanity, the Modern Education Understanding also involves such characteristics as “massive,” “nationalist,” “progressive,” “reductive,” and “standardizing,” which suggests the basic dialectic character thereof, in which the existing positive values have been instrumentalized for fortification of the capitalist power.

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