

## Educating and facing an uncertain and hasty world: Contributions to a critical teleological reframing

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### Abstract

We first present the challenges of the endangered environment we live in, marked by growing populations, hypermobility, resource depletion, climate degradation, promising yet menacing revolutions in artificial intelligence and bioengineering, and the end of static and predictable labour markets. All of these are fragmenting our lives, leaving change as the only constant. Education is appointed as the contemporary key differentiator in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Character qualities and soft competencies appear as part of the social dynamics that imply civic participation and trust, forming a kind of social glue, indispensable for creating an environment conducive to the attitudes and the behaviours of compromise, compliance, risk-taking, change and innovation that are needed. Secondly, we discuss the concept of competencies to show how knowledge, attitudes and values are intertwined in a complex construct, concluding that we need humanities as much as we need science and mathematics. Thirdly, we consider the teleological question as fundamental to education. Consequently, an antinomial approach to the functions of education is proposed, namely, by differentiating qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. Meaning that the educands can be given a qualification but also the opportunity to grow through socialization processes and by opening the ways to construct their subjectification, without which they will never achieve the status of being authors of their own personhood, owners of their own lives, meaning that education ought to address the empowerment and emancipation of living minds. So, the person's emergence and affirmation are stated as the core to articulating the values of the current dominant regime and to envisaging a breakthrough to emancipatory education. Considering the issues referred, the problem of this essay could be stated as follows: "What answers are requested on the teleological realm of education when facing the challenges of our hasty world, namely regarding the competencies required, the functions of education, and especially the core problematic of the person's emergence and affirmation."

**Keywords:** Education, uncertainty, globalization, competencies, qualification, socialization, subjectification, emancipation

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### 1. Education within the perfect storm of an uncertain and hasty "Brave New World"

Humankind has come to a historical phase that seems to be close to producing a "perfect storm", indicating a drastically rare combination of circumstances that can produce a catastrophic event. There is no doubt that we currently live in an endangered environment (Schleicher, 2018), marked by growing populations, hypermobility, resource depletion, climate degradation, promising yet menacing artificial intelligence and bioengineering revolutions, along with the end of static and predictable labour markets (WEC, 2016). Globalization and intense challenging processes of interaction and acceleration are steering the general dynamics intertwined with narratives void and connected to a growing fragmentation of our lives (Han, 2017), with change as the only constant (Harari, 2018).

Regarding the societal matrix, we can say it is engendered by the dominance of economic neoliberal capitalist policy of indefinite growth and is responsible for the installation of the hegemony of efficacy, or "performativity", as Lyotard (1979) foresaw when the process was already past the germination phase. The techno-scientific and consumerist, capitalist-dominant paradigm entails the cult of power as an aim under the dominance of Anthropocene narratives and neoliberal economic growth (Fremaux, 2017). As collateral damage, we are watching the withering of educational teleology, the devaluation of humanities and a bias of the school systems towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Before I address the details of a proposed solution, we note that education was identified by Schleicher (2018) as the contemporary "key differentiator" when considering the SWOT analysis of the complex current global situation. The threats it envisaged include the maintaining or widening of the processes of inequality; the biological computer-engineering revolution impact on humans; the technology clash

between schooling and human competencies; and the eventual effect of massive destruction of jobs, which is quicker than the creation of new ones. As to weaknesses, we must sort factors such as humans' lower competence when compared to that of robots and artificial intelligence; humans' low resistance to change when compared to that of machines. However, it is also compensatory to mention the strengths of humankind: the cognitive, emotional competencies we are endowed with and can develop through education and reality interaction; the development of character qualities to cope with the challenges ahead; and the values, the creativity and the supposed unlimited capacity of adaptation and imagination that are credited to humans.

Considering the dilemmas that afflict our societies, the OECD has uttered a warning: "If not steered with a purpose, the rapid advance of science and technology, may widen iniquities, exacerbate social fragmentation and accelerate resources depletion" (OECD, 2018, p. 3). And it goes on saying that: "In the 21st century, that purpose has been increasingly defined in terms of well-being. But well-being involves more than access to material resources, such as income and wealth, jobs and earnings, and housing. It is also related to the quality of life, including health, civic engagement, social connections, education, security, life satisfaction and the environment. Equitable access to all of these underpins the concept of inclusive growth. *Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future* [the italics is mine]. Learning to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find untapped opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big problems will be essential in the coming years." (OECD, 2018, pp. 3-4)

It does become clear to the OECD that education needs to focus on preparing for a domain that exceeds the reductive concern with the world of work, namely, what could promote students' commitment as active citizens. In this respect, Schleicher (2018) insists on knowledge, competencies, and something more refined, which he denominates character qualities. As to these, Paul Tough (2012) has poignantly shown how character can be determinant of success within the school system up to higher education completion and beyond, mainly by getting a job. The author devises 11 competencies of character that can be innate but also be the subject of education: optimism, self-control, motivation, determination, awareness, perseverance, challenges, discipline, habits, identity, and metacognition.

In many ways, we can see in this reading—now broadly supported by scientific literature—the same approach as Aristotelian ethics, which rely on the formation of a second nature by cultivating good habits, while aiming at moderation, as the regimen for conducting one's life in all realms, so to grasp a sense of the transient "end of ends" towards personal and social fulfilment (Hall, 2018). All this could be attained by relying on human experience and good reasoning within a cooperative way of living, indispensable to social beings. It must be stressed that the whole process entails realising one's potential, never to be conceived apart from the social context, but planned intentionally, by reason, will, commitment, discipline, and effort, which requires not only education but also a certain kind of education, precisely the one sufficiently attentive and sensible to be able to help the educated "to identify their potentialities and actualize them" (Hall, 2018, p. 46).

The above-referred character qualities are inserted into a domain that Schleicher (2018) denominates as **soft competencies**, which he proposes as part of the social dynamics that imply civic participation and trust, forming a kind of social glue, indispensable for creating an environment conducive to the values, attitudes and behaviours of compromise, compliance, risk-taking, change and innovation. As the author stresses, an equitable-education growth model is needed for assuming the ethical and societal requirements in addition with the opportunity of the –more than desirable, indispensable– equitable distribution of knowledge, competencies, and earnings. The latter cannot be understood as simple economic redistribution dissociated from social participation (Schleicher, 2018). Such is the basis for a more inclusive society and a more dynamic economy, i.e., an overall better society and economy, which ought to achieve the balance of justice, cohesion, and sustainable production, where education plays the role of "key differentiator".

## 2. What competencies and what for

We are summoned to configure our education systems (ES) as critical instruments for the guarantee of delivering the knowledge, competencies and character qualities demanded by our uncertain and hasty "Brave New World". Thus, our ES are expected to engender the dynamics able to provide the knowledge construction, the increase of competencies and the stimulation of the character qualities that the daredevil civilization we have unleashed is pressing for. Here we must take care of the duality of such defiance, which could be worthy or not, depending on the teleological point of view we adopt, an issue to be addressed later in this essay.

A subject that has dominated the discourse of education in the last three decades, coming from corporate management, is the concept of competencies or skills. After the meteoric rise of the concept, criticism started to appear in a more organized and incisive fashion. For instance, Christodoulou (2014) has presented a famous stinging critical analysis against the envisaging of education based on competencies.

It is now widely recognized that the convergence in the development of competencies has become the hegemonic discourse in several domains, from educational sciences and psychology to economics and the policymakers of various origins. A profusion, not to say a cacophony, of opinionated appraisements, have come to blur the subject more than to clarify it. It seems that sometimes the oracles on the issue missed reading each other's utterances.

The concept of competencies is traceable back to the concerns of managerial literature coming from the realm of industry. A seminal advance on the matter was made by Durand (1998), who presented a concept that intertwines knowledge, know-how and attitudes as interdependent components of competencies (See Figure 1).

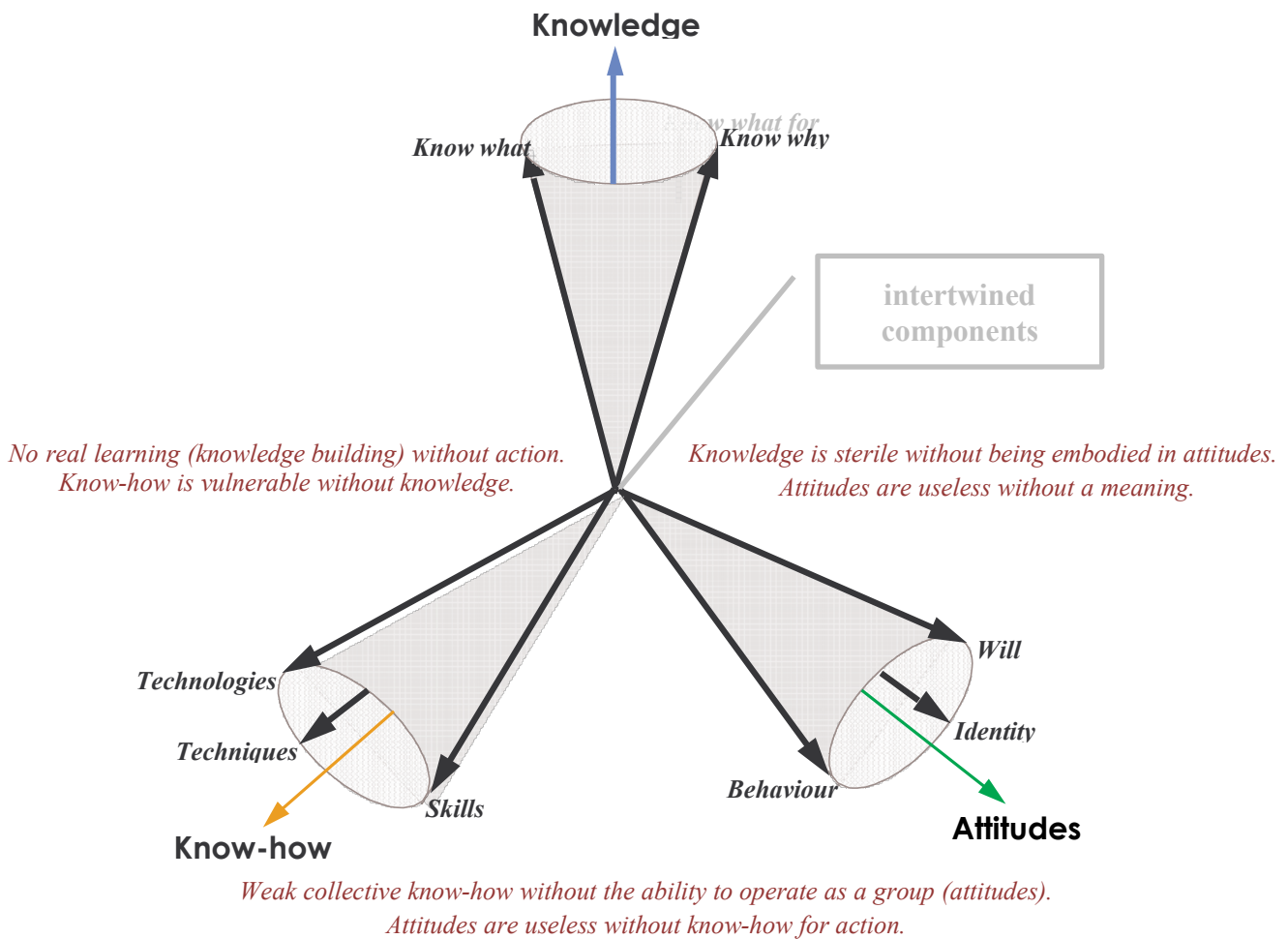


Figure 1: Durand's competencies framework (adapted from Durand, 1998)

As could be inferred from the above-presented figure, there are epistemological implications, as well as pedagogical ones, underpinning the intention of interrelating the three components. The cited author points to knowledge-building through action and to the vulnerability of knowing how to act when having some knowledge deficit, which could represent a kind of blind or grope acting. On the other hand, we suggest that knowledge is broadly sterile if not embodied within attitudes, which are dependent on knowledge to make a person be prone to act in a certain informed way.

Attitudes would be as useless as they are empty when devoid of a meaning coming from knowledge. Yet knowing how to act collectively could suffer from weakness when group-embodied attitudes are absent. Finally, I should note it is sterile to have the right attitudes without knowing how to act properly, and lacking the strength of that will give way to initiate an action.

Such an account explains the interrelation of the components and provides the epistemological ground for the pedagogical understanding of the concept. Moreover, it is necessary, both epistemologically and

pedagogically, to consider the sub dimensions of each component. Knowledge entails “know what” and “know why”. Know-how relies on skills, techniques, and technologies, which configure a continuum from the tacit- to knowledge-supported acting, and this could refer to psychophysical as cognitive ways to proceed.

Too many times we have seen competencies confused with skills, a word that is so frayed that it has become a black box for disseminating misunderstandings and ill-informed approaches. A divulged “learning framework” that refers to the concept of competencies was presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2014. The programmatic document issued by the OECD aims to introduce global changes until 2030,

Recently, the Council of Europe (2016) published a proposed model of competencies for democratic culture, which contributes to the subject by presenting values as a new competency or, in my analysis, a new component of competencies. The authors of the model argue that values and attitudes differ because the former are “characterised by their normative prescriptive quality”; hence they stress that values are essential to specify and “underpin competencies”, namely, attitudes (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 36). The clover of knowledge, know-how, attitudes and values, gives a sound description of the concept of competencies, inserting in the equation four elements essential to understand human complexity. The problem arises when the same document refers to skills instead of know-how, thus plunging the reader into an obscure conception of competencies. The OECD Learning Framework considers knowledge (disciplinary, interdisciplinary, epistemic, and procedural), but recedes to the concept of skills (cognitive and metacognitive, social, and emotional, physical, and practical) and conflates attitudes and values (personal, local, societal, and global). The scheme also shows competencies as intertwined and focuses on students’ language literacy and numeracy, along with data, health, and digital literacy as learning realms to be fulfilled. Which implies responsible commitment, disposal to reconciling tensions and dilemmas, by applying reflection, anticipation and be involved in action for attaining an individual and societal wellbeing, counting with the participation of teachers, parents, and peers for attaining the necessary solutions.

The approaches I have elucidated all coincide in looking at the importance of education and competencies, envisaging the latter as including the already alluded to soft competencies (Schleicher, 2018). They include the capacity to participate, to compromise, to be responsible (the so-called social glue), to be opened to change and risk-taking, and to be enthusiastic about innovation. While the term “soft” serves to denote human potentialities that, although related, are not limited to the sole purpose of efficacy and efficiency in the “world of work”, it requires, nevertheless, a critical approach. In one way, it seems that designating some competencies as “soft” serves to reinforce the current proclivity towards STEM. This reflects the organisation of the curricula and the overvaluation of quantitative aspects—such as of learning, teaching, educational administration, rankings, privileged areas of the curricula, and quantitative research about education—by installing a “culture of measurement” (Biesta, 2009).

In another way, the term “soft” does serve to becloud the importance and the role of humanities in our ES. Such culture corresponds to unbalance setting for developing autonomous, critical, and creative persons. And he has seen it instilled since the very beginning of schooling, not to say right from the cradle when one considers the parents' expectations regarding school and work.

Soft skills are often treated as personality or character competencies relating to attitudes in the context of the “world of work”, which is why some view them as “transferable skills” (Cimatti, 2016). Hard skills are considered abilities to perform a specific professional activity or task. Soft skills are not necessarily depreciated; rather, they are seen as complementary and even strategic as personal and professional achievements, being considered necessary criteria for hiring selection, given the current appreciation of competencies such as communication, cooperation, teamwork adaptability, responsibility, empathy, and sociability. This is because a company’s success does not just depend on the materials used or technical expertise, but largely on the atmosphere or culture it can generate. Hence, it stays hostage to the “human capital” literal approach, when strongly dependent on the paradigm of efficacy, being blind to regarding Humanities’ importance, significance, and role. Configuring an understanding that cannot see that an integral human conception requires an education must go beyond professionalism, technical competencies and the useful; it must focus on what can make us better and freer persons, which is the basis of the humanities, also referred to as “the usefulness of the useless” (Ordine, 2017).

Although mainly approaching the issue from the “human capital theory”, Cimatti was well aware of the slippage to a technical formation obsessively focused on the “world of work” when she stated, following the OECD, that we must stress “the need to develop a whole child with a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills in order to better face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Cimatti, 2016, p. 103). In fact, she recognized that establishing a clear border between hard and soft skills implies their dissociation, thus failing to comprehend how they “are integrated and the same task always requires using both together” (Cimatti, 2016, p. 108).

Moreover, relying upon Martha Nussbaum (2010), “Not for profit” book, one can examine “profitable skills”, which erode critical and divergent thinking while cloistering people in mainstream ways of thought by blocking complex approaches to our problems, and by failing to look at competencies as encompassing those that aim at the wholeness of the person.

I conclude that we need humanities as much as we need sciences and mathematics. Moreover, we need STEM not just balanced with STEAM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), but also as it can be integrated into learning for the whole person and for conceptualizing humankind, as I will explain in the next section.

### 3. What education and what for?

The analysis I have essayed above has brought about the problem of teleology in education, to which I will attempt to give at least a clarifying, if not completely innovative, explanation. All the astonishing subjects, all the complex, subtle, impassable, and far-reaching issues or aporias until now have brought our analytical perambulation to the point that unveils the inescapable question of “What is a good education?” It is a question that is silenced by the narratives of performativity and “learnification”, a term coined by Gert Biesta (2009, 2010) to express a practice and a culture that biases education by narrowing its functions, overvaluing the “learning” element, and devaluing teaching, contents, under a scope of several purposes.

In fact, we have observed in the past decades a growing tendency towards a process of erasing and obnubilating the question and the importance of educational teleological approaches. It seems as if these are either dispensable by introducing a simple didactic focus of the teaching and learning processes or not existent at all. However, when we ask what education is for, not only do we find that the point of education is not that students learn, but also that they “learn something, that they learn it for a reason, and that they learn it from someone” (Biesta, 2015, p. 76). This reinstates the teleological issue as a basilar starting subject from where to initiate the reflection about the purposes, the ends, the aims, the contents, the methodologies, the assessment strategies, the ambiances, and the cultures to develop. Without it, we will be like Alice lost in wonderland asking the Cheshire cat

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”  
 “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.  
 “I don’t much care where –,” said Alice.  
 “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.  
 “–So long as I get SOMEWHERE,” Alice added as an explanation.  
 “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”  
 (Lewis Carrol, 1866, pp. 89–90)

Just as the cat mysteriously disappeared from the branch of the tree, so too the teleological question will disappear, leaving the bizarre smile of those who make peremptory discourses on education without once recognizing the crucial role of the teleological fundamental stance.

To deepen the teleological question of education, it is unavoidable that we appeal to theories of education that must lay far-reaching roots, thus demanding a kind of reflection that is aware of its complexity. The teleological question is as fundamental as it is constitutive of education, meaning that as a practice it necessarily refers to an indispensable normative horizon of referents. When we ask, “What is education for?”, it is plausible that the issue of the functions of education stand out, being that we can easily and concomitantly unveil several domains of educational purpose, for instance: qualification, socialisation and subjectification: “Qualification has to do with the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills and dispositions. This is important because it allows children and young people to ‘do’ something—it qualifies them. This ‘doing’ can be very specific, such as in the field of vocational and professional education, or it can be conceived more widely, such as in general education that seeks to prepare children and young people for their lives in complex modern societies. But education is not just about knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Through education we also represent and initiate children and young people in traditions and ways of being and doing, such as cultural, professional, political, religious traditions, etc. This is the socialisation dimension, which is partly an explicit aim of education but, as research in the sociology of education has shown, also works behind the backs of students and teachers, for example in the ways in which education reproduces existing social structures, divisions, and inequalities. In addition to qualification and socialisation, education also impacts positively or negatively on the student as a person. This is what I have referred to as the domain of subjectification, which has to do with the way in which children and young people come to exist as subjects of initiative and responsibility rather than as objects of the actions of others.” (Biesta, 2015a, p. 77)

Such domains are well represented by the following scheme (Figure 1), which I adapted from Biesta (2015a, p. 78).

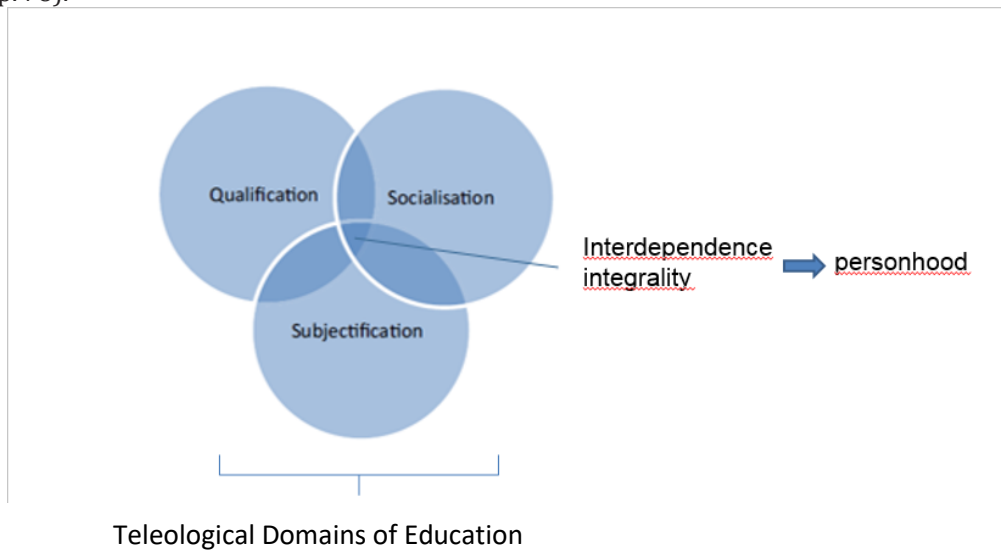
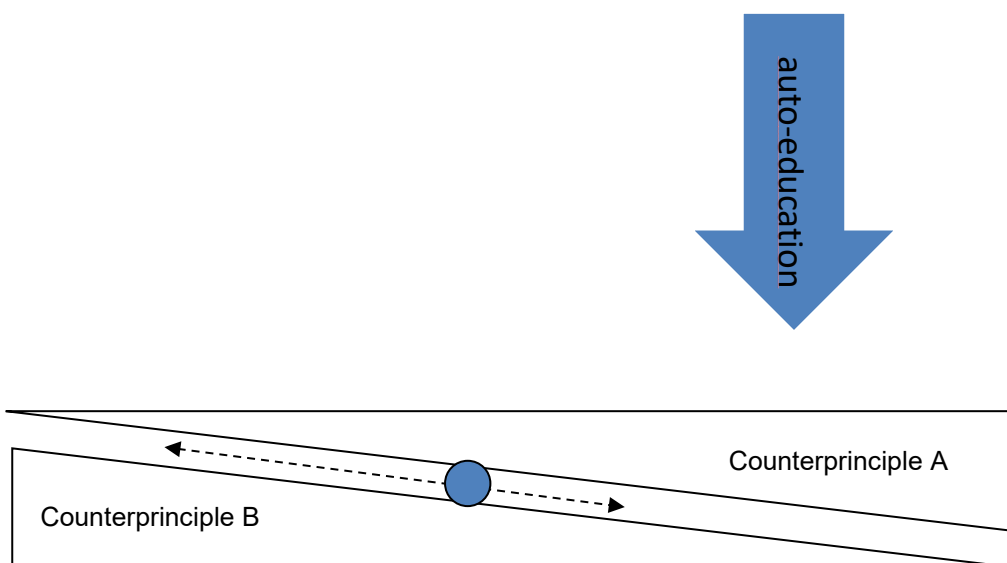


Figure 2: Teleological domains of education (adapted from Biesta, 2015, 78)

The above-selected domains are all important, although their relative importance can vary along the educational continuum. To figure out the relative importance of the purposes, we approach education through an antinomical dialogical methodology (Reis, 2014). In such an approach, we consider education as being antinomical, i.e., intrinsically constituted by antinomies that form a pair of opposed principles, albeit both being sustainable. Hence, we require a reading that can distinguish such principles and still understand their integrative unity. An illustration of this perspective can be given with an example that considers that each educand needs hetero-education (through the intervention of someone) as well as auto-education (developed by oneself), although the balance between them could be dynamic. One can be more dependent on hetero-education at the beginning of one’s life and, as one grows in autonomy can be more competent to assume one’s own education and become less and less dependent on others. This means, as I try to show in Figure 2, that the optimum equilibrium point may be displaced in accompanying the appreciation of the subject’s conditions once the space for hetero or auto-education would be dependent of the of the advances and/or setback experienced by the educand.



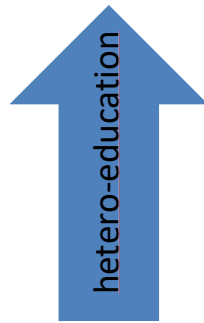


Figure 3: An example of the dynamic antinomical “dialogy” of education (Adapted from Reis, 2014)

We can envisage the analysis of qualification, socialisation, and subjectification by a dialogical approach—if we try to balance two factors—or more adequately a “trinomial” reading if we try to consider the three teleological domains at once. To grasp the complexity of teaching, seen from the perspective of the triple character of educational purpose, we can use the metaphor of three-dimensional chess in which three complete games are played on overlapping boards and in which the pieces not only interact horizontally but also vertically. Hence, “a move in the ‘game’ of qualification not only impacts what happens and can happen there, but at the very same time ‘does’ something in the ‘games’ of socialisation and “subjectification”, and vice versa.” (Biesta, 2015b, p. 5) Such insight can easily make us envisage how an overweighting of one of the teleological domains can imbalance and deform the curriculum, the educational ambience, and methodologies to the point of producing an abomination.

When it comes to considering the impact of an eventual distortion on the subject (teacher/student), by, for instance, installing a hegemony of qualification along with a dominant perspective of “learnification” that overvalues the preparation for the “world of work”, we risk inducing a deformity in the outcomes. School systems could tend to a sole recognition of the educands and the educators as agents (acting under control), or at best, as being allowed to embody an actor’s role (like the operator of machines), never acknowledging the possibility of the subjects’ becoming authors of meaning (Pourtois & Desmet, 1997). This result is, at best, an adaptation that forces the subject to behave in the role of a functionary, thus becoming converted into a gear wheel in the system. Such an arrangement could destroy the space for the inclusion of differences like interests, motivations, desires, skills, rhythms, and dissent. But if we expect that not only the educands are allowed to grow through socialisation and by opening ways to construct their subjectification, but they will also never achieve the status of being authors of their own personhood or owners of their own lives. This means that education ought to address the empowerment and emancipation of living minds.

We have just referred to the subject of personhood within the issue of the teleological purposes of education. As a consequence of such approach, we have to conclude with the help of a scheme, presented below, so to try to show how the concept of person could endow us with the integral telos of education.

As we have seen, all domains of teleological purpose are to be considered *a priori* of equal importance, although we can devise relative arrangements that may attribute different importance to each telos. Besides, we should bear in mind that the fact that the domains intersect means that they are intertwined; thus any “moves on the board” of a given domain entail repercussions for the others, which could be positively stimulating or hindering. The eventual intersections that represent the interactive dynamics of the domains raise the most defiant questions in education. All together they claim a kind of critical reflection that facilitates a profile for the educands when achieving, for instance, the end of compulsory schooling<sup>1</sup>. When it comes to the intersection of the three realms of educational purposes, we found more than an arrangement between telos; we unveiled the integrative nature of education. Such point of confluence exponentiates the meaning stemming from the teleological conjugation of purposes; it indicates the whole person or personhood as the desired teleological referential centre of education (see Figure 2). It cannot be but an ample proposal or we would risk proposing some kind of monstrosity (Standish, 2003).

Postmodernists, while rehearsing a fair criticism of the mercantilist, consumerist and performative concept that has settled in education, try to discard the teleological framework, as it usually houses an essentialist fallacy, so they say. However, they still end up recovering the critical subject’s desideratum of education. Standish (2003), for example, showed how important it is to transcend the cloistering teleological schemes of performativity and the essentialism of short-sighted views: “teleological thinking becomes grotesque when it conceives human beings and their policies as perceptible in terms of ends that

<sup>1</sup> That is the case for Portugal since the promulgation Order No. 6478/2017, of July 26, ratified an educational teleology document entitled “Profile of Students Leaving Mandatory Schooling”.

are in principle achievable" (p. 227). Such criticism is important and correct when thinking about the current contexts of functionalized education to technical and economic performances, or about the totalitarian drifts of the 20th century. However –concerning the modernity paradigm–, it seems to forget that the modern concept of becoming an educated human being is asymptotic, closing indefinitely to a better state of perfection. In the modern conception, we can never assume that we are educationally finished, as we can never assign collective emancipation to a consummation date. The cited author intends to evade the teleological perfectibility scheme, turning to the Emersonian concept of perfectionism. In this line, he devises a flexible and open conception, which should nevertheless "suggest the aspiration for the best of ourselves" (Standish, 2003, p. 228).

In our view, facilitating the emergence and affirmation of personhood could represent the integrative – while ample and open-ended– central telos of the domains of education. Such axial teleological referent could be described by searching the configurative categories of the person.

Assuming the person's emergence and affirmation as the core incumbency of education, by corresponding to the person's educability, which could be taken for the unconditional central category, we obtain a referential to attribute a set of categories as constitutive traits of personhood. The "personological" plane is the highest and last because only in it the dignity of the person appears "as a conscious and impassable value" (Patrício, 1993, p. 60). Hence, education essentially consists of a personalization process. "To educate is to transform in one a person; to educate oneself is to make oneself a human person, it is to develop in oneself the human person that one is germinally. Man is not born a made person, he is born a person to be constructed and, strictly speaking, a person to be self-constructed" (Patrício, 1993, p. 141).

It seems congruent to assign identity as an eminent category of the person that burst out of the regimen of anomie by entering the realm of existence: an authentic being in the present contemplating her/his finitude, loaded with a past while projecting he/she to the future (Heidegger, 1962). Now, although we tend to begin by characterizing personhood as referring to identity, we immediately have to inscribe it in the context of a relationship with others. As we can infer from Buber's (1974) phenomenology, identity can only be understood based on the I-Thou relationship, thus making education a process of encounter (McHenry, 1997). Therefore, identity must be seen as dialogical virtue, meaning sprouting out of dialogical processes (Lopes, 2001). In the context of relational anthropology, based on the principle of the *primum est relationis*, it is possible to see how consciousness emerges from an interdiscursive process, symbolically mediated, and that the person and his identity are always the results of interlocutory relationships. No longer the subject-consciousness, solipsist, and monological, no longer language as a mere instrument of thought, but rather the relationship and language as constitutive and essential to consciousness. The person, being one of the "dialogical virtues", is relational in its genesis, structure, and development.

We cannot fully understand identity without referring to other categories. "Morin defines conscience as a reflective art (in a situation of interdependence with intelligence as a strategic art) and thought as dialogic art, as an art of conception. Human intelligence is spiritual and cultural without prejudice of being animal and individual. Thought develops through conception, which transforms the known into the conceived, speculative, practical, and technical competencies. Consciousness is understood as reflexivity, product and producer of reflection, its intentionality being shared by the object, by the knowledge process and by the states and behaviours of the knowing subject. The fact that consciousness can go back to the different planes of the unconscious does not mean –contrary to the illusions created by the spiritualization of the self-consciousness– that it can escape the dependence it maintains with the processes from which it continually emerges: consciousness is at the same time, historicized and individual." (Carvalho, 1998, pp. 37–38)

To be coherent with the above dialogical antinomic reading, we must refer to affectivity as a person category, which relates to emotions and feelings, the latter being emotions reflected (Damásio, 2012). By combining intelligence and affectivity humans can produce evaluations about reality and themselves. Hence, they can be defined as those beings of whom it is inescapable to refer to values and fulfil values. "The person recognizes himself as a value. That is why she only wants, only aims, only orders, only stems from for what is valuable. The will to learn and the will to be of the learner —of the person-learner— is the will for values: the value that he is, the value that he gives to what is given to him, the value that he gives to what he performs. Meaning, it is the appeal of value that crosses the entire interior space of the human being: value calls, within that space, for its fulfilment. This is the sense we see in Goethe's famous sentence: be who you are. This imperative is a call: it is the call to be. It is within this vocation that all vocations take place; it is within this appeal that all the appeals that arise, and urge, resound, within the interior space of a human being." (Patrício, 1993, p. 305)

As we can infer from the above citation, the person is always thrown towards perfectibility, as a utopic horizon of becoming (Carvalho, 1988, 1994a, 1994b; Kant, 2003). Man, himself must be considered as a



utopic being, a dimension that “accounts for his structural restlessness that results from his condition of incompleteness, his awareness of finitude and the appeal of perfection that he feels” (Araújo & Araújo, 2006, p. 109).

If perfectibility imposes itself as a category of personhood, we can say less of happiness, conceived as “the end of all ends” (Aristotle, 2004) or as an “ideal of imagination” (Kant, 2003), which, in a sense, are confluent ways of expressing an equal meaning. Moreover, it is to be noted that either we are compelled to conjugate perfectibility with happiness, or we may risk sliding into the deplorable case of those who, through a supposed process of education, have become experts at the cost of their happiness.

All the categories until now found ingrained in personhood cannot dispense their embodiment. For Mounier (2004), who rejects the metaphysics of the “fall” and the “body as the spirit tomb”, the body is not a simple object either; it is up to the body to teach us the meaning of spatiality and temporality, as well as the weight imposed by the natural realm. Thus, we must understand the body’s functions of continually supporting and mediating the life of the spirit.

The person’s emergence and affirmation claim for another constitutive category of the humans’ mode of existence—in the Heideggerian sense—a postulated possibility of freedom (Kant, 1898) and the “power of will” to grant it (Scheler, 1960). The tessitura of categories we have brought forth through my analytic has just unveiled another category intrinsic to personhood, namely ethics. We must refer to the human ethical experience as implying a free willingness for intuiting, capturing, estimating, and realizing values. Such process must develop within the context of responsibility and reciprocity towards oneself and others, including the “more than human”, so to achieve a kind of “ecojustice”, that could be fostered by an “ecojustice education” (Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2011), which means an education that would have to go beyond anthropocentric and neoliberal economic growth narratives (Fremaux, 2017). Or, as Biesta (2015b) argues, the conjugation of the educational domains of purpose implies a kind of formation that motivates a quality personal growth through an encounter with others, including the world as a whole. This means to go beyond the “egological” mode of being and enter a “non-egological” posture, which takes a kind of pedagogy of interruption, interpolating the purposes of the current dominant regimen.

In the process of growth, the person can configure a certain personality expressed by a character that is *constructed* from the ethical relationship and *specifies* the person (Boavida, 2005), becoming essential to the person’s affirmation and being enabled by the structuring of competencies I have specified above (Tough, 2012). With Boavida (2005), we would say that education will always aim to achieve the humanization that, by the continued incorporation and realization of values, is likely to get closer to achieve the fullness of the person. It is concerning it that we will understand the character as a way of specification that is, as Boavida (2005) has explained, the way of being by which the person appropriates his existence so that the educative and the uneducative will be appreciated, considering the impact that is verified to have a certain influence upon the person’s character.

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