

# I, You and The Others, Among Otherness, Diversity and Education

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## **Summary:**

When one thinks of the other and the other, they are not due to the sameness of power and hegemonies, and that this other is identified as a face, there remains the possibility of guiding behavior or ethics, along the paths of diversity, understood This is like the discovery of diversity and otherness in education, which are the most appropriate ways to understand that one's own autonomy is in debt, under the figure of a hostage. Humanity has embarked on a path that has no possible reserve and this consists of opening, via postmodernity, a type of thought that is capable of generating recognition scenarios for what is different, as a discovery that greatly benefits everyone. Proposing that otherness is the basis on which diversity is built is already then an open path in education and to be followed that makes life have more meaning through the ethical recognition of the other and of the other who will accompany me in a path of history

**Keywords:** Alterity, Otherness, diversity, education, human rights, recognition, inclusion.

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## **1. Introduction**

From the early writings of Descartes, Locke, and Kant to contemporary discussions of mind and brain, philosophers have provided strong support for the reality of bounded being. In many ways the hallmark of Western philosophy was its presumption of dualism: mind and world, subject and object, self and other. Furthermore, the field of philosophy is also nourished by the dispute and while the individualist vision of human functioning has been dominant, there are significant escapees, several of whom have become textual companions in developing proposals for the relational being. My conviction for existentialism led me to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1970) who, although he placed individual consciousness at the center of his thoughts, also postulated a consciousness deeply inhabited by the other. From the above, the perception we have of the other contains in itself an awareness of being perceived by the other. When we observe the other during a conversation, for example, we are also aware of being observed and both forms of awareness are inextricable. Or, in the same vein, the awareness of touching another person embodies in itself the awareness of being touched by another.

The work of Martin Heidegger (1962) is closely related. As for Merleau-Ponty, much of Heidegger's analysis deals with the phenomenological world of consciousness, and at the same time the latter attempted to subvert the traditional subject/object dichotomy, in which conscious subjects are contrasted with a world apart from external objects. For Heidegger consciousness is always consciousness of something. If all objects of consciousness are removed, there is no consciousness; if all consciousness is removed the objects cease to exist.

Thus, subject and object are fundamentally coexistent and the insertion of hyphens between the words of their fundamental concept, being in the world, works as a visual illustration of the conceptual break with the traditional binary model. Although coming from the terrain of American pragmatism, the work of John Dewey and Arthur Bentley is consistent with Heidegger's (1949) innovation of breaking the binary model. In their view, there is a mutually constitutive relationship between the person and the object (mind and world) and both agreed to replace the traditional interaction view (independent objects in a causal relationship with experience) by the concept of transaction.

Another very important school of thought is the one that emanates from sociological and political theory and whose work is especially important for its critique of liberal individualism, both in terms of its influence on cultural life and its suitability as an orientation to civil society and society. policy. Regarding the data of daily life, the book *Habits of the Heart* by Robert Bellah (1989) and colleagues is fundamental in its significance. The book reveals in detail the insidious implications of individualist ideology for human relationships. In addition, it includes the initiatives of the community movement led by Amitai Etzioni (1993) and his colleagues. Here the emphasis is placed on the obligations we have to the community as opposed to the claims of individual rights.

On the other hand, the work of the political theorist Michael Sandel (1996) and the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1987) adds an important conceptual dimension to this movement as both focus attention on the individual's deep location in relationships and hit on the idea of the gravely flawed carefree free agent. All these works have been sources of incalculable value for me, although I express some discontent with the value of the favored community as an alternative to individualism. There is not only the problem of determining the limits of what constitutes one's community, but there are additional complications resulting from the very establishment of those limits. Educational communities are also bounded entities and create the same types of conflicts that attend the public as essentially separate. In the case of community commitments such as religious and political the consequences can be disastrous.

At the same time there is an important difference that separates this work from all previous theories (except Wittgenstein). All those philosophers have worked in a tradition dedicated to establishing foundations, that is, foundations of reason, truth, human nature, ethical value . Fundamentals that are sometimes called first philosophies. In contrast, this writing has no such aspirations, and while the form of the writing may sometimes suggest otherwise, my goal is not to articulate what human nature simply is or should be. In fact, neither do I claim to be true or precise in traditional terms, but I hope to offer an attractive construction of the world, an inviting vision, or an entity of understanding, all materialized or embodied in relevant actions. The basis is not a series of marching orders but an invitation to dance.

## **2. The pedagogy of alterity: a way of enabling and understanding the educational experience of the present**

Since its inception, pedagogy has been defined as the discipline that, *Conceptualizes, applies and experiences knowledge related to the teaching of specific knowledge in different cultures. It refers both to the teaching processes of the exhibition of sciences, as well as to the exercise of knowledge, within the culture (López, Barragán and Aguirre, 1990).*

That is to say, pedagogy is specifically in charge of the methods and theories for the understanding of the educational matter, of the forms of teaching in educational practices, it is what allows one to reflect on the various realities in which the human being is being built as a subject. in continuous training.

During a good part of the 20th century, different perspectives regarding pedagogy and its teaching methods were created and developed; So much so that pedagogical models such as the developmental, behavioral, social

or traditional appear to be able to give a satisfactory explanation to a portion of that educational reality, because,

*Pedagogy has built, from its history, a series of models, as ideal representations of the real world of education, to theoretically explain its doing, that is, to understand what exists. But these models are dynamic, they transform and can, at a certain moment, be imagined to be poured into the real world (González, 1999, p. 48).*

And indeed they have become reality in such a way that, in many cases, they have served for societies to take advantage of these models and can become fundamental axes of learning and teaching for the transformation of a context for the common good. of all human beings.

This transformation can be mediated by a relatively new form of teaching, the pedagogy of otherness. This educational perspective relies heavily on epistemological constructions of philosophy, and little by little it has been generating a wide debate, especially in Chile. This pedagogy has very clear claims regarding academic work as such, while what it seeks is the recovery of the word of the other, that voice that has been silenced for a long time, for ideological, political reasons, for the eternal conflict between the power and the knowledge that is gestated within the classroom, which prevents any human being from being able to manifest their logos, their thought, their power in expression. The conception of alterity is manifested by an ethical relationship insofar as, *it is a responsible relationship with the other, and the educator is someone who is passionate about the word, about the transmission of the word, about the reception and hospitality, about the donation ( Mélich , 2002, p. 51).*

The discourse of alterity in essence offers the possibility that voices, thoughts, argumentative constructions and conceptual clarity intermingle within the classroom. This pedagogy is the bearer of the Promethean dream, of knowledge that no longer belongs to a single individual, but belongs to many men. The word of the other is spilled and drawn with the subjectivities of the others, to create free people committed to change and transformation. Thus,

*The incurable melancholy with which students move has its roots in the almost general complacency of thinkers or educators in the direction of negativity and suspicion, in the silence that they offer as the only answer to the question that students ask and ask themselves. about the meaning of life, in the lack of an alternative they find in the face of the nihilism of the time, in the inability to grasp the nature of reality that is theirs, in the pessimism that surrounds them when they express enthusiasm, passion, desires. When they overflow with life, they want to impose castration, submission, and obedience on them. They are supposed to train free men, but they make slaves ( Onfray , 1999, p. 53).*

To understand a specific pedagogical model, two aspects must be taken into account: didactics and the curriculum. In this sense, these two concepts could be defined to provide clarity and lay the foundations of the various conceptions of educational work in a good part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Because,

*didactics is constituted from the teaching-educational process that takes place in the school institution. This process relates the world of life with the world of the school based on the goals that a society sets for itself to form a type of man, to which the school responds from its didactic strategies, it is much more than just means of teaching ( Onfray , 1999, p. 48).*

Didactics is the discourse through which teaching and the most appropriate ways to transmit knowledge have been thought of; and in turn, for the understanding of the different conceptions that the world has as a whole. Said conception then corresponds to those forms in which whoever has knowledge projects their knowledge to others through strategies that help to understand and explain phenomena, not from mere theoretical conceptualization, because that is the task that pedagogy, but as the discourse that is directed more specifically towards educational action as such.

Meanwhile, the other fundamental component in this educational triad is the curriculum, the one that is constituted as the predominant course in the construction of procedures and plans that are intended to register. Therefore,

*everything that happens at school is its main guide that is built on educational activities (...) it is the bridge between the real world and the world of the school; he makes possible the relationships between the past of humanity, to bring it to the present of the educational act and project the future of the communities; Thus, he establishes a multitude of relationships between the old and the new, between the known and the unknown, what was and what will be, between everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge. The meaning of the educational organization is to curricularize the experience of man in the world of life, in such a way that it acquires a formative meaning with a specific orientation ( Onfray , 1999, p. 50).*

All of the above allows configuring a solid formation in the human being so that he can understand the context that he inhabits, and in turn, understand the epistemological diversity that accompanies it.

With the above, it is possible to begin to configure the different perspectives that have been established in terms of educational practices, the different discourses and the specific claims that accompany each of the pedagogical models that have wanted to provide answers and satisfy the needs in the field. educational. Therefore, it is urgent to talk about the forms of teaching that have had a vast influence throughout the 20th century, and have allowed to configure part of the educational tradition. In the first instance, the traditional model, *emphasizes the formation of the character of the students, through religious and moral teaching. It is concentrated in content already elaborated, and what the student does is learn it from the teacher. In this model, the method and the content, in a certain way, are focused on the imitation and emulation of the good example, and whose closest incarnation is found in the teacher ( Onfray , 1999, p. 122).*

This type of pedagogical vision is still put into practice in societies that, despite the great advances and the apparent change in the mentality of its citizens, still fully trust that this method is very effective in order to learn the contents of a course. just by the mere repetition of what the teacher says. In this model, what prevails in the didactic part is the process where the strategies start from;

*moral and intellectual legacy of humanity, under objectives imposed by tradition; the contents are encyclopedic; the methods are broadcasters ; in the forms, the teaching process prevails over the learning process, the work of the teacher over that of the student; the means are the blackboard and chalk; and the evaluation is rote and quantitative ( Onfray , 1999, p. 53).*

All this didactic vision remains in many places, but the new tools and processes for understanding the world do not allow knowledge to be encoded in mere data or dates, or that learning means repeating any number of names of countries or politicians, without that this has a relevant repercussion in the social context that each one inhabits. We must reformulate the ways of understanding knowledge, and know that it is always necessary to put it into practice so that it continues to be valid and equally useful.

The behavioral pedagogical model has a very close relationship with certain characteristics of the traditional model; however, it has its essential particularities because,

*it was developed in the highest phase of capitalism, with the aim of meticulous shaping of the individual's "productive" conduct. It is based on the setting and control of the achievement of "instructional" objectives.*

*The parceled transmission of technical knowledge is made, through an experimental training that uses the "Educational Technology". They identify intellectual development with learning ( Onfray , 1999, p. 122).*

When talking about educational technology here, it refers to the processes that are made effective for the teacher through planning and control; It is a purely mechanical method that seeks to make knowledge feasible for the growth and improvement of the means of production imposed by the State of Chile.

### 3. Otherness and diversity

It is important to clarify that a culture and a pedagogy in Human Rights require, urgently and unavoidably, that we focus our attention on two fundamental themes: otherness and diversity. This look is not something fortuitous, an academic occurrence, but is the result of a long conceptual journey in Human Rights Education, in education for tolerance and non-discrimination, in multicultural education and, above all, in a critical look at the reality that we have to live on a daily basis. From now on I must point out that, although recently our societies have begun to move along the path of recognition of the Other/Other as a legitimate Other/Other and of the existence of cultural and social diversity, the challenge that remains to be ahead is complex and the obstacles to overcome are not minor.

multireligious character that defines our society has been ignored. Unfortunately, education, from the homogenization process, has historically been in charge of reproducing discrimination and intolerance. It seems that only now education has decidedly addressed the issue and has sought ways to gradually amend this situation, since today it incorporates respect for social, cultural and religious diversity and the recognition of the inviolability as part of public policies. of human dignity.

Insisting on the thesis raised, it is my opinion that in the homogenization and concealment, in the invisibility of the Other / Other and in the ignorance of diversity, not only a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is violated, which textually states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and endowed with reason and conscience, they must behave fraternally towards one another", but also makes it difficult and why not say it impossible to build a democratic, tolerant and non-discriminatory society.

In short, alterity and diversity are necessary conditions to build a culture and a democratic, inclusive and respectful coexistence of people's rights. The mission of education is to deliver knowledge, contribute to the development of attitudes and, above all, reinforce in students those social skills that allow them to relate as citizens of the same humanity in the recognition of the Other/Other as legitimate Other/Other.

#### Otherness

The relationship of alterity, especially referring to culture and the pedagogy of Human Rights, requires crossing philosophical, epistemological and educational borders that require research in a highly complex field. I will only try to give some brushstrokes, with the good understanding that concepts will remain hinted at and open to dialogue and reflection.

First of all, and based on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas (2000), I will point out that recognizing the Other/Other as a legitimate Other/Other is an ethical position and not an ontological one. For Levinas, after Auschwitz the philosophical concern —I would add, also the pedagogical one— cannot be remitted to the "ways of being", "to the understanding of being", but to ethics, that is to say, to the relationship of being with the Other/Other, with the responsibility with the Other/Other, to the encounter with the Other/Other. Responsibility at Levinas is:

*"The essential, first, fundamental structure of subjectivity, since it is in ethical terms that I describe subjectivity. Ethics here does not come as a supplement to a previous existential base; it is in ethics understood as responsibility, where the very knot of the subjective is tied (...) Responsibility, as responsibility towards the Other/Other, as. Well, as a responsibility for what is not my business or does not even concern me; or that precisely concerns me, is addressed by me. like Face".*

Levinas 's response, in my opinion, a central element in his position must be rescued: what it is to be a man. For him, being a man means not being, living in a human way, communicating, going out of his way for the other Other/Other. He even maintains that responsibility reaches the level of being responsible for the responsibility of the Other/Other, it is up to me... Since the responsibility towards the Other/Other is part of the essence of

the subject, it is something that cannot be waived. The self is “hostage” of the Other/Other. As Levinas (2000) makes clear: “Responsibility is not a simple attribute of subjectivity as if it already existed in itself, before the ethical relationship. Subjectivity is not a for itself; it is initially for the other. The other is not close to me simply in space, or close as a relative, but essentially approaches me insofar as I feel responsible for him.

As we pointed out, responsibility is linked to the Other/Other. The question is who is that Other/Other? In terms of Hans Georg Gadamer (1976), the philosopher of modern hermeneutics, the knowledge of the Other/ Other refers to the Other/Other not as an "instrument", as someone who can be used for one's own purposes, who can become visible or invisible . arbitrarily.

The Other/Other is not the “analog” either, which is considered as different, but always with reference to myself, a reflection of myself. For Gadamer (1976), the knowledge of the Other/Other is that of “opening”, when one allows oneself to speak for the Other/Other. It implies “the recognition that I may be willing to allow myself to assert itself. something against me, even if there is no one else who is going to assert it against me”.

The general tendency has been to reduce the Other/Other to the same thing, or to use it for certain ends or purposes in many cases in ignorance of the Other/Other or hiding the true intentions of the relationship. Reducing the Other/Other to myself is not only violence, but domination, it is exercising an undue and arbitrary power over the Other/Other. It is, ultimately, annihilating diversity by subsuming it to homogeneity.

For Levinas , the direct relationship with the Other/Other does not mean thematizing it, considering it a knowable object or someone to whom I communicate knowledge. If you want to preserve the Other/Other, you cannot reduce it to an object of knowledge or be experienced from an “ egological ” position.

In short, alterity and diversity are necessary conditions to build a culture and a democratic, inclusive and respectful coexistence of people's rights.

### **Diversity**

Diversity is part of the transformation process that the discourse of modernity is undergoing and that some have called the discourse of postmodernity, which is the "announcement of a new era, after modernity." There are those who consider that the discourse of modernity; characterized as a unifying and totalizing hegemonic discourse, typical of enlightenment and instrumental reason, begins to run out.

Others, in a more open position, perceive the current time as a seminal time, in which great cultural transformations are taking place. In this context, José Joaquín Brunner identifies neo-community ideologies within modernity that respond to the experience of communities made up of autonomous individuals (or whose liberation is postulated) and thus differ from the structures of traditional communities, which are characterized by being hierarchical, with traditional forms of domination, whose legitimacy rested on the sanctity of inherited powers. The prevailing rationality in neo-community ideologies is communicative rather than instrumental: it seeks to build identities and integrate the individual into an association that mobilizes its own resources to realize its value. Says Brunner (1992);

*“Frequently these ideologies are linked to social groups 'disinherited' by modernization, whose rights they proclaim and whose condition they seek to transform or liberate. But at the same time, these ideologies reach expressions that appeal to various groups that are at the center of modernity: communities of life, generational and gender groups, de-professionalization movements, certain religious movements, therapeutic communities, “counter cultures”. ” of diverse nature in the fields of health, food, the use of appropriate technologies, “communication” of knowledge ”.*

In short, we are witnessing the emergence of a wide variety of identities that some have defined as "post-materialist" and which include, for example, environmental groups, the elderly, groups that fight for tolerance and non-discrimination, rights defense groups: women, indigenous, homosexuals and lesbians, among others.

Diversity presupposes questioning conformism, social asymmetries and, also, injustices. In this sense, the message of diversity is not neutral.

Assuming diversity as a relationship means, for now, accepting inter and multiculturalism as a new paradigm of social organization where concepts such as social responsibility, active citizenship, empowerment, participation citizenship and deliberative democracy are redefined and invigorated. Diversity occurs in the most diverse fields: social, cultural, philosophical, religious, moral and political Diversity, which is sometimes defined as plurality, "is a factual fact of every society

in which there is a mismatched variety of beliefs, convictions, feelings and points of view about issues that are important as the origin and purpose of human life; the relationship of man with a possible divinity; the idea of a good life and the necessary means to achieve it; organization and distribution of power.

Now, as I have pointed out, historically there have been serious attempts to deny diversity, to hinder its growth and expressiveness, to stigmatize it as a phenomenon that could jeopardize the survival of a unitary social project. Sometimes it is usually hidden, made invisible, even combated and eliminated. Totalitarian, authoritarian and dictatorial regimes have been characterized precisely by these anti-diversity behaviors. Think, for example, of Nazi racism that used the physical elimination of all those who did not agree with the criteria of the "superior race"; in the military dictatorships of Latin America that prescribed, with the use of force and the violation of fundamental rights, all political manifestations that did not conform to the security project; in the regimes of the countries that prohibited, concealed and sanctioned those cultural manifestations that moved away from the official canons.

All these attempts to suppress diversity have been accompanied by severe violations of human dignity and Human Rights. The diversity of different cultural and social groups (with discontinuous times but which are simultaneously present, the existence of a culture integrated by diverse traditions) is and has been a characteristic of the Latin American world. Multiethnicity, multireligiousness, multiculturalism and multiclass have been and still are present in the history of Latin America. However, the tendency has been to deny diversity: to homogenize it, fragment it, marginalize it, disseminate it, make it invisible. In the name of order, of national unity, of "modernizing" and "civilizing" desires, not only has diversity been denied and rejected, but it has also been fought and censored.

One of the most severe manifestations of the denial of diversity is and has been that of discrimination, built on prejudices and irrational stereotypes that have been installed in the culture, in attitudes and behaviors in a very profound way.

Historical reasons of the most different nature have led to certain groups of people being intensely threatened or violated in their rights and have been subjected to very severe discrimination in an institutionalized and systematic manner.

This is the case for women, people of color, Jews, certain minority religious groups, gays and lesbians, the disabled, the poor, youth, and the elderly. This situation has originated (and why not say it, has required) the elaboration of a series of international instruments tending to prohibit and eradicate systematic discrimination. In this regard, special measures have been adopted with the sole purpose of accelerating the de facto equality of these groups (positive action).

#### **4. Otherness, condition of diversity**

It could be said that alterity is a necessary condition, although not a sufficient one, for the diversity relationship. There is no possibility of relating to diversity if there is no capacity, firstly, to recognize the Other/Other as a legitimate Other/Other, and secondly, if there is no responsibility, assumption, apprehension of the Other/Other as Face.

In the invisibility, in the concealment, in the silencing of the Other/Other, the relationship of diversity is impracticable. In the same way, if the Other/Other becomes an Equal, if it is subsumed into the Same, if it is analogized, if it is instrumentalized... the diversity relationship is distorted, it becomes a deceitful relationship, devoid of opportunities for development and growth. This happens, for example, when the different is folklorized, when there are no opportunities for diversity to manifest itself in its fullness; when the diverse is hierarchical, establishing levels of superiority. That is, when it is said: I accept diversity, but there are diverse and diverse!

Now, the relationship of diversity with the responsibility of the Other/Other is due, in my opinion, to understanding how a relationship with the Other/Other is a plural: a we-us, a you-you, a they-them. It is the Face in plural<sup>9</sup>. Consequently, in my opinion, we will always be related to Others/Others, with a multiplicity of Others/Others. In an open society, like the one we want to build, we will always be in the presence of many Others/Others. It is a relationship that is assigned to us, embraces us, understands us. We cannot, even if we would like to, unless we get into a barrel, a ghetto, a tunnel of self-solitude, of self-exclusion, do without diversity. It is imposed on us. Therefore, we will have to live with it. But this coexistence cannot be one of imposition, but of commitment; it cannot be an obligation, but a bond; It cannot be an inevitable fatalism, nor can it be an approximation as an object of knowledge that is expressed in the phrase: how beautiful is diversity!

Levinas alluded. A responsibility without reciprocity. A responsibility with the Others/Others that enriches me and us, but that is not conditioned to this enrichment. A responsibility with the Others/Others, despite the fact that sometimes they are distant from my own identity. It is the search for approximations, for communication, even if it means breaking some of my own identity schemes. In a responsibility with a breakdown, with a breakdown of my identity, but without abandoning it.

I would like to return to what was stated in the introduction and point out that from the perspective of the cultural and pedagogical implantation of a single-national model, education has historically been characterized by having transmitted a scheme of meanings and symbolic representations that correspond to the culture of the culturally dominant groups in society. In this way, the diverse character that makes up our society has been ignored. This ignorance has been charged, in a notorious way, by the disqualification and devaluation of any cultural manifestation that moves away from the homogenizing nucleus, in which all kinds of prejudices have been engendered that have resulted in discrimination deeply installed in the national being of our countries. The amount of prejudice that has been raised against all those who deviate from the dominant culture is unknown to no one.

However, it should be noted that from public policies, I think, for the first time, a frontal criticism of the reproductive nature of education regarding inequalities, inequity, and social injustices has been made. It has been verified that discrimination, ethnocentrism, marginalization and homogenization have been predominant characteristics of the educational service.

However, the road ahead is long. The question is how this discourse becomes a consistent educational practice, in a culture in a pedagogy of diversity and otherness. Without wishing to simplify, I think that Human Rights Education has a very important proactive role to play in this regard. For now, it is essential that you identify and point out that diversity is a right enshrined in multiple national and international instruments. It requires linking this right with another series of social, cultural, economic and political rights and showing the tensions that the validity of these rights has in a society that promotes homogenization for the purpose of domination.

Certainly, Human Rights Education based on the recognition of the Other/Other and on the respect and promotion of social, cultural and religious diversity is a long road, but not impossible.



In short, alterity and diversity are necessary conditions to build a culture and a democratic, inclusive and respectful coexistence of people's rights. The mission of social education is to deliver knowledge, contribute to the development of attitudes and, above all, reinforce in students those social skills that allow them to relate as citizens of the same humanity in recognition of diversity.

## 5. Conclusion

The educational and pedagogical tradition has bequeathed us many things, some of which it is necessary to forget and others that it is peremptory to maintain. Therefore, the question arises as to whether a conception of training anchored and established in presuppositions from long ago could still be preserved, or whether the dynamics of society as a whole provide the essential characteristics for the activation of another way of conceiving reality.

Due to the above, it is possible that the pedagogy of alterity could become, over time, a proposal that favorably stimulates teaching and learning practices, thanks to its conception centered on dialogue and thought, with its assumptions. conceptual and epistemological that offer diverse variants in front of the formative task, leaving aside the perpetuation of an activity that is energized in most cases by an incessant tension between power and knowledge, forgetting the word and experience as firm builders of a change of perspective for our own educational daily life.

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