



Nietzsche and Education: A Dimensional Vision

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Abstract:

Our objective in this research paper presented depends on providing a Nietzsche-philosophical perspective on the educational issue and its dimensions. It is an issue that has occupied The Interest of Friedrich Nietzsche in the level of his intellectual reflections, which translated the spirit of the historical field to which Friedrich Nietzsche belongs. It is an objective condition that prompted him to analyze the educational issue in its association with culture and the elite. It is good education that is consistent with the person of the philosopher-teacher, who targets the elite of society of students. One of our most important conclusion is that culture, in Nietzsche's perspective, is inseparable from education. It is the ultimate aim of true education. Moreover, the academic freedom observe at the level of higher institutions, which are part of education, means slavery and submission to the teacher-leader.

Keywords: Friedrich Nietzsche; educational issue; elite; spirit; philosopher-teacher.

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Problematic Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche was elevated to the status of one of the most important philosophers by Martin Heidegger. In his Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger (1977, p. 179) declares that philosophy has reached its end and that Nietzsche was the one who completed it. For Heidegger, traditional philosophy is synonymous to metaphysics. The philosophy does not simply end, stop, or vanish but attains its ultimate potential, which is the beginning of thinking. This possibility allows for the emergence of something new, which Heidegger refers to as *Ereignis*. This kind of new beginning is not based on the traditional understanding of the history of philosophy but thinking itself. According to Heidegger, the sciences have been separated from the ideas of philosophy. Philosophy comes to its end upon the completion of the separation between philosophy and science. Philosophy becomes transformed into a science and a technology. Heidegger describes this moment as *Gestell* (see Taminiaux 1998, pp. 183–201). Also education becomes transformed into technology, and Nietzsche's statement of education of masses represents this idea.

Nietzsche, the philosopher of *The Will to Power*, is the last metaphysician of the West. The age whose consummation unfolds in his thought, the Modern Age, is a final age. The Modern Age

is an age in which at some point and in some way, the historical decision arises as to whether this final age is the conclusion of Western history or the counterpart of another beginning. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's thinking and his five fundamental expressions belong to the end of philosophy. These expressions are nihilism, the revaluation of all values, the will to power, the eternal return of the same, and the overman (Übermensch). Heidegger argued that these five expressions are fundamental for understanding our time as the end of philosophy, and they are the key to understanding science and technology. Heidegger claims that Nietzsche's philosophy represents the ultimate objectification of being as the end of philosophy. Heidegger refers to the opposing idea as meditative thinking and Gelassenheit (releasement, letting-be) (Heidegger 1991, p. 8, 2003, pp. 89–94).

Nietzsche and Education

What can Nietzsche contribute to the modern democratic concept of education? Our answer is that nothing, unless we apply some philosophical counter-perspectives to his ideas. A number of truly embraced ideas, which allude to Nietzsche and his notion of self-realization, have been presented with regard to how to teach and educate (see, e.g., Lambert and Smeyers 2003). It is quite tempting to adopt those aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that serve one's own purposes and to smooth over or ignore whichever aspects contradict them (see Rosenow 2004, p. 200; Cooper 1983, pp. viii–ix). However, there has never been a clear explanation of what the famous phrase “to be who one is” actually requires according to Nietzsche. My argument is that Nietzsche's demands are excessive. Our perspective is Heideggerian, and from this perspective, the Nietzschean idea of education is really education with a hammer in the negative sense. We might even go so far as to argue that we do not even need the Heideggerian argument of the end of metaphysics in order to see it. It is education with a hammer if we view it through the traditional concept of education, the concept of philosophy, or just common sense. (Nietzsche's lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* can be said to have had at least one influence, namely, on Heidegger's program for university reform and the “leadership principle” he outlined in the Rectoral Address. Heidegger's later complaint that “Nietzsche ruined me!” takes on quite an interesting meaning in this context. I can see some contradictions between my Gelassenheit thesis and Heidegger's Rectoral Address, although identifying them also requires a close reading of Heidegger's deposition to the Committee on De-Nazification. See Thomson 2005, pp. 43–44; Heidegger 2003, pp. 2–12; Peters 2002, pp. 27–43; Huttunen 2003.) Our argument is that if we interpret Nietzsche in a Heideggerian way, we are able to reconstruct the notion of education that is referred to as Gelassenheit-education. This reconstruction follows Heidegger's own example of aesthetics. In his Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger presents a new understanding of the work of art and the end of aesthetics. He uses five of Nietzsche's arguments and presents counterarguments to them from the standpoint of his philosophy. We are presenting five counter-expressions to Nietzsche's five expressions concerning the end of philosophy (Heidegger 1979). These fundamental counter-expressions will provide the foundation for what we might refer to as *Gelassenheit*-education. This kind of education would also be the result of the thinking of education and not just the science of education. We will begin, however, by clarifying Nietzsche's teachings on education and educators.

Nietzsche as an Educator-Philosopher

There are three main literal sources concerning Nietzsche and education. The most well known is *Schopenhauer as Educator* (Nietzsche 1983). The second source is *The Will to Power*, which includes virtually any Nietzschean idea one could imagine. *The Will to Power* is comprised of a total of 1067 paragraphs (Nietzsche 1968) (on the editions of *The Will to Power*, see Kaufmann 1968, pp. xxvii–xxix). The third source is Nietzsche's five lectures entitled *On the*

Future of Our Educational Institutions. It is a philosophical dialogue that is over 100 pages long. It consists of six public lectures held in the auditorium of the Museum at the University of Basel. Actually, only five lectures were delivered in the spring of 1872. The sixth lecture was never held and Nietzsche withdrew his offer to have the book published by writing:

We had to make a serious and important decision. This touches upon our business insofar as it in any case delays it. My lecture should still be completely reworked and will be cast in another form; wherefore I require above all time. (Nietzsche 2004, p. 124, Appendix A: Letters)

Nietzsche's thinking on education is very antidemocratic and conservative, which is why it is education with a hammer. This becomes quite clear when we read the following quotation from his notebook:

General education is only a preliminary stage of communism: education will be so weakened down in this way that it can no longer bestow privilege at all. Least of all is it a means against communism. General education, i.e., barbarity, is just the presupposition of communism. Education "according to the times" degenerates here into the extreme of education "according to moment": i.e., the raw seeing of momentary utility. (Nietzsche 2004, p. 133) (The quotation is from Nietzsche's Notebook 8, not from the original lecture. Notebook 8 is thought to have been written from winter 1870–1871 to autumn 1872.)

We see very little possibility for Nietzsche to serve as a source of critical thinking in terms of education. Surely, his educational thought is not radical in the sense of critical pedagogy. From Heideggerian perspective, Nietzsche really is the last representative of the metaphysics, which should be overcome. For Nietzsche, culture and education are inseparable, and his primary concern is with the attainment of culture (Kaufmann 1974, p. 416). Nietzsche claims that culture distinguishes us from animals and makes us something more than mere things of nature. The purpose of education is to elevate us above nature (translation of the German words *Erziehung* and *Bildung*; see Cooper 1983, pp. 31–31; Grenke 2004, p. viii).

In the preface of *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*, Nietzsche demands three qualities from the reader. Firstly, he must be at rest and without haste and understand how to read the secret between the lines. "Such a human being has still not unlearned how to think while he reads" (Nietzsche 2004, p. 19). Secondly, he demands that the reader should not think his own education. Thirdly, the reader should not expect as conclusion "tables and new curricula for Gymnasium and Realschulen" (Nietzsche 2004, p. 18). These qualities required of the reader are briefly condensed into the word "high-minded," and Nietzsche refers to Aristotle's *Megalopsykhia*, the great-souled man (Aristotle 1989, pp. 1123a34–1125a35; Kakkori and Huttunen 2007). Therefore, worthy readers are extremely exceptional, but so are those who are worthy to educate or to be educated. We will return to this point later in more detail.

The Barbarism of Education - Ideas and issues -

In the first lecture, Nietzsche recognizes two main drives that rule educational institutions:

1. The drive toward the highest possible *extension* and *broadening* of education
2. The drive toward the *decrease* and *weakening* of education itself (Nietzsche 2004, p. 36)

The second drive is the consequence of the first. The state lies behind these drives, because the state reserves education for itself. This is why education gives up its highest, noblest, and most elevating claims and resigns itself to the service of the state. It is for this reason that utility serves as the goal and purpose of education. In Nietzsche's view, the main goal of education thus becomes speed. In other words, students are encouraged to complete their education as quickly as possible in order to become money-earning beings. From Nietzsche's elitist point

of view, the masses are almost like animals, who only seek immediate satisfaction and the release from senseless suffering. Nietzsche writes in *Untimely Mediations*: “And it is, truly, a harsh punishment thus to live as an animal, beset by hunger and desire yet incapable of any kind of reflection on the nature of this life” (Nietzsche 1983, p. 157). He claims that the most general education is barbarism. Is it barbarism because the education is a means to an end, utility? And we can read between the lines that Nietzsche (2004, pp. 36–38) considers it barbarism, as his view is that most people are not worthy of education.

These two drives also have fatal consequences for higher education and the study of science. The field of science has expanded to the extent that it is possible to specialize exclusively in one particular narrow field. It is possible for a scientist to master one specific area of one specific discipline and become the most respected scientist in that field. Nietzsche (2004, p. 39) sees no difference between this kind of scientist and the factory worker, who makes nothing more than a specific screw or handle for a specific tool. Here, once again, Nietzsche’s arrogance is visible. Not all humans are valued equally but only according to what they do and what position they hold.

One Proper Language for German Spirit

The main point of the second lecture is Nietzsche’s concern with spoken and written language and the defense of classical education. He calls his age newspaper German, and only remedy to this is to put gifted youth with force under rigorous linguistic discipline. Moreover, if this does not help, there is always the possibility to return to Latin. “Take your language seriously!” (Nietzsche 2004, p. 44), demands Nietzsche. Nietzsche advocates *Hochdeutsch*, which is only spoken by the upper class, and rejects colloquial language, which he refers to journalism. He thinks that it is impossible for a student to have good taste if he does not speak the right language and if he does not speak correctly. The classical education begins with right language and with the correct manner of speaking, and it provides the possibility to become part of the German spirit. The exaltation of the German spirit begins at this point and persists throughout lecture series, remaining vague in terms of its meaning.

The Teachers and the Student

Nietzsche states that there is one major problem with classical education. There are so few adequate teachers and hardly any worthy students.

But we must be of one mind, that by nature itself only infinitely rare human beings are destined for a true course of education, and that even a far smaller number of higher educational institutions. ... The same holds now with regard to the teachers. (Nietzsche 2004, p. 65)

The third lecture ponders the question of who and what a true teacher is and how to identify such a fabulous being. We learn from the text *Schopenhauer as Educator* that the true teacher is a philosopher (Nietzsche 1983). For Nietzsche, the ultimate true teacher was Schopenhauer, although there are interesting interpretations that he is actually not referring to the image of Schopenhauer himself but rather to his own process of self-education (Aristotle 1986). Being one’s own philosopher teacher comes very close to the idea of a superman.

Nietzsche declares that the education of the masses cannot be the goal. Rather, it must be the education of individual, selected human beings, in other words geniuses. Moreover, we can conceive of the education of the genius through the metaphor of the mother. The genius must ripen and be nourished in the mother’s lap of the culture of a people, from which he receives all the warmth and shelter he needs (Nietzsche 2004, pp. 71–72).

The bad philosopher is also a very bad teacher, and in the worst-case scenario, he works for the state, because he teaches university philosophy. True teachers are great philosophers who teach the truth about things. These great philosophers do not give lectures every day, because

they know that they cannot always speak about truth and true things. They also know that there are days when they cannot think of anything. A true teacher can also select his students, so he does not have to speak to the masses. According to this idea, lecturing on the history of philosophy is not speaking of truth. Nietzsche refers to those university philosophers who must teach every day and who cannot choose their students as learned as opposed to philosophers (Nietzsche 1983, p. 186).

The True Education

Nietzsche declares that there are no real educational institutions and no true education, although there is an urgent need for them. Either institutions have become nurseries of dubious culture or they produce sterile scholarship. In order for this to change, Nietzsche claims that our philosophy and education must begin not with wonder (Erstaunen) but with horror (Schrecken). What he actually means by philosophical horror remains unclear to me, but the source of this horror is the opposite of the culture, namely, nature and natural needs. Nietzsche also referred to this horror earlier in the lecture series: “Whomever it is not able to bring horror is asked to leave his hands from pedagogical things” (Nietzsche 2004, p. 42). Nietzsche stresses that there are two sorts of things, which should not be confused with one another. A human being must learn a great deal in order to be able to live his life. He is referring here to things that we usually teach children, namely, basic skills and basic knowledge. This vast work is not education for him, because he sees it as belonging to the world of necessity and utility. The true education begins in a stratum that hangs high above that world of necessity, of the struggle for existence, and of neediness. True education is aimed toward culture. We need instructions as to how to live our every-day lives, and Nietzsche admits that receiving these instructions is crucial. But those institutions which enable human beings to cope with the every-day struggle are not cultural institutions, but “institutions for the overcoming of the necessities of life, whether they promise now produce civil servants or merchants or officers or wholesalers or farmers or doctors or technicians” (Nietzsche 2004, p. 83). Here, culture is seen as something higher and something above the average person. Nietzsche goes so far as to claim that *Institutions of Culture* and *Institutions for the Necessities of life* are in direct opposition to one another, and he prefers to speak of the former (Nietzsche 2004, pp. 80–85).

Education has nothing to do with either children or the majority of adults. The goal is to educate those few decorous students who are not members of the vast group of students and who understand the importance of following and committing themselves to the power of the genius-teacher. Nietzsche describes this concept through the analogy of two kinds of travelers: mass travelers and the rarer lone travelers on the way to education. If you chose to follow the path of the smaller group, the road will be more difficult to follow; it will be steeper and more winding. Here, Nietzsche, our antichrist, speaks with biblical tones, which he later repeats in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. The first path is quite easy to follow, which is perhaps why most of us chose it. Moreover, as you travel along this path, you are sure to encounter many likeminded souls travelling both in front of and behind you. The other path will offer less companionship, and, as I mentioned above, will be more difficult to follow, steeper, and often dangerous. Three types of people belong to this smaller group: first and foremost, the teacher-philosopher, i.e., the genius; secondly, the students, who are likely to become geniuses, the first-rate talents; and thirdly, the group of students who are needed in the process of the birth of genius, assistants, who are second- and third-rate talents. It is clear that Nietzsche himself considered himself to be a philosopher in this elitist group. Moreover, in the text *Schopenhauer as Educator*, it is Nietzsche who is the hero, not Schopenhauer, because he understands Schopenhauer’s brilliance and genius, which elevates him to Schopenhauer’s level and even beyond it. This is very human, but not humanistic (Nietzsche 2004, p. 96, 1983, pp. 175–176).

Academic Freedom

In the fifth lecture, Nietzsche describes his conceptualization of the university student and presents his views on academic freedom. He begins by criticizing the typical lecture hall scenario, in which the professor reads from notes and speaks to the students while they listen to and write what he is saying.

One speaking mouth and very many ears with half as many writings hands – that is the external academic apparatus, that is educational machine of the university in action. (Nietzsche 2004, p. 106)

It is in this academic apparatus that academic freedom lies. The professor says what he or she wants, and the students hear what they want. The state hovers somewhere in distance and reminds us that there is a purpose behind this action. Academic freedom implies the lack of a leader, the Führer, and poses the illusion of freedom, which actually makes the student powerless, lost, tired, lazy, fearful of work, terrified in the face of everything great, self-contempt, and hateful.

Nietzsche does not reveal the potential consequences of this wrong kind of education and institution. The only thing that he does make clear is that in them the German spirit vanishes. So what happens to it then? What is this German spirit? Is it high culture, Wagner, Schiller, Goethe, and so on? From the postmodern point of view, this type of German spirit has died out, and it is not missed by many. Educational institutions must be rooted “in an inner renewal and excitation of the purest moral powers” (Nietzsche 2004, p. 117). These powers are geniuses, who are also leaders. These leaders must be obeyed, as all forms of education begin with obedience, as well as with subordination, discipline, and servitude. To put this another way, education begins with everything that we understand as being the opposite of academic freedom. The leader-philosopher-teacher must have certain abilities and freedoms in order to come into existence. He must possess manly characteristics and an early knowledge of mankind (whatever that may be), he must lack any kind of academic education, must not be narrowly patriotic, have no necessity for bread-winning, and no ties with state (Nietzsche 1983, p. 182). In other words, he needs to be Aristotle’s ideal of a virtuous man in the slave society of ancient Athens.

The Conclusion and Five Counterarguments

Nietzschean education is education with a hammer or, in Heideggerian terms, the education of enframing (Gestell) and calculative thinking. We have condensed Nietzsche’s idea of education based on his lectures into five arguments:

1. Culture is inseparable from education and is the highest goal of true education. Utility is not the goal of education. Nature is in absolute opposition to culture and is thus the source of our horror.
2. There is only one right and proper language for education – *Hochdeutsch* – the literary language.
3. Only a select group of people are worthy of being educated and even fewer are capable of educating.
4. Academic freedom as part of education means obedience, servitude, and submission to the educator-leader.
5. Educator has the truth in his power.

As the alternative to this idea of education in the time of the end of metaphysics, we summed up the Gelassenheit-education as five counterarguments. Gelassenheit-education or letting-be education must not be confused with O. Niell’s free education. Gelassenheit-education is based on the Heideggerian concept of human being. This concept is not Dasein, the famous slogan

from *Sein und Zeit*, but is based instead on Heidegger's *Zollikoner Seminare* (1987). The basic problem is his interpretation of Dasein as human being. (See Thomson 2004.) A human being is always already in the world, and the world opens up to her at a certain historical time and place. And one of the most important aspects of being-in-the-world is to be-with-others. The world opens up to us as something, because our basic mode of being is to understand the world. This understanding reveals the world as language and everything in the world is something either present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. There is nothing without language or names. For this reason, there is no distinction between the manmade higher culture and wild nature or the higher and lower needs of human beings. From this point of view, We have reconstructed five counterstatements as principle of the Gelassenheit-education:

1. Instead of pedagogical horror, there is a wondering, natural curiosity, and ability to ask questions. There is no dichotomy between nature and culture.
2. The language is the world. There is not one proper language that supersedes all others.
3. Education is itself the occurrence and it belongs to everyone. There is no distinction between the educator and the educated.
4. Freedom is those possibilities that we encounter in our own being in the world with others.
5. Truth is an occurrence and an historical event. No one can claim that she has exclusive access to the truth.

These five statements are just a brief outline of the principles of Gelassenheit-education. Heidegger speaks about learning and teaching in his lecture *Was Heisst Denken?* That supports these five statements (see Heidegger 1954, pp. 1, 48, 50). Learning and thinking are very important for Heidegger, and he sees them as belonging together. Learning and thinking form an hermeneutical circle; we know what thinking is once we are ready to learn how to do it and we learn it while we are thinking. Heidegger (1977, p. 346) poses the question of what learning is and answers: "Man learns when he disposes everything he does so that it answers to whatever addresses him as essential". According to Heidegger, teaching is even more difficult than learning, and We generalize this idea by stating that to educate is also more difficult than to be educated. It is difficult because real teaching is *to let learn*, and the teacher must learn to let her students learn, *das Lernen-lassen* (Heidegger 1954, p. 50). We might go so far as to say that this means that the teacher is less sure of her materials than those who learn are of theirs. There is no room for the authority of the "know-it-all" in the genuine relationship between teacher and learners and educator and those who are educated. To become a good teacher is completely different than becoming a famous professor.

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