

Meet the Educator – Is Schopenhauer One?

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The aim of this paper will be to show in what way Nietzsche's reading of Schopenhauer's philosophy of education can shed some more light on education and teaching. Following the two hundredth anniversary of the publication of his most prominent work *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer was chosen to be the focus of this work. Here, we will not only try to outline his thoughts regarding the philosophy of education, but will also try to compare and parallel him to the more contemporary philosopher of education, John Dewey. We hope to outline that some of Schopenhauer's philosophy of education is quite similar to that of Dewey, especially when tackling the questions of critical thinking, individual self-reflection, thinking for oneself etc. What stands to be of the utmost importance is the fact that Schopenhauer's outlook on education might not be so different from his predecessor Kierkegaard, or of those who came after him, for example, Dewey, Whitehead and Frankena. The primary focus here is to display and support Schopenhauer's perspective on upbringing, to present it as not that much different from existentialist philosophers' outlook in general. Hence, we will discuss some of the most important topics found in his educational approach, but also touch upon the notion of authority as the one that primarily lies with the teacher, and draw some lines of similarity between his views and the sobering reality of today.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, Philosophy of Education, Nietzsche, Critical Thinking, Dewey, Self-development, Existentialism, Individual, Educator.

1. Introduction

The rise of civilisation had seen many philosophers trying to explain and give value to notions such as education and upbringing. Ever since the dawn of time, communication and dialogue had played an important role in developing one's character and a system of values. The importance of fostering a righteous, rational, self-realizing individual was ever-present throughout history, and the questions have arisen and fallen regarding the apt ways of creating (or upbringing) and becoming such an individual. The questions "who is responsible for one's upbringing" and "how can one be responsible" have remained at the core of philosophy of education.

Throughout history, many have tried to make their contribution to defining and developing the philosophy of education, including fostering, upbringing, teaching, and educating as such. This attempt remains to be perfected still. Following the official definition, philosophy of education «is the branch of applied or practical philosophy concerned with the nature and aims of education and the philosophical problems arising from educational theory and practice»¹. Its subjects truly are wide-ranging: dealing with fostering and parenting, the question of knowledge worth teaching, developing critical thinking in an individual, socio-economic context in which an individual is brought up, educational equality etc. Hence, philosophers of education explore not only what upbringing and education are, but also the values and norms relevant to upbringing and education, and the relation between educational theory and practice (real-life).

It is often said that “teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions”. This might not be far from the truth. If we consider philosophy of education through its close bond to philosophy in general, primarily by means of its methods, we might come to a conclusion that philosophy and philosophical ways of thinking, or critical thinking, are necessary constituents for philosophy of education. Observing it from a more general perspective, philosophy came to be understood as an attempt to clarify concepts in almost all other areas. It both has no subject-matter of its own, and it has them all. Thus, philosophy has also come to worry itself over the notions and theories of education. What must be noted here is that issues regarding philosophy of education are somewhat different, in their nature, from those of philosophy in general. In the case of philosophy of education, as mentioned in Moore, these problems «are not usually problems arising from conceptual confusion, but are real substantial problems arising out of practice. These problems need to be solved rather than dissolved.»² When we take into account different issues and notions arising from education as such, for example “teaching”, “knowledge”, “instructing”, “upbringing” etc., and when we acknowledge the fact there are different kinds of theories all revolving around the same core issue, it might be stated that the central issue would be producing a specific, individual type of person via transferring the knowledge, skills, understanding, and thinking from one person to another. Such transmission of

¹ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/education-philosophy/> (As found on 14th May 2019)

² T. W. Moore, *Philosophy of education: an introduction*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, third ed. published by Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2010, p. 13.

knowledge through discipline and authority is primarily viewed in the relationship between the pupil and the teacher, where the emphasis of “what” is taught, is lost in favor of “how” something is taught to the pupil.

To outline the background, we will mention just a few modern and contemporary authors who dealt with philosophy of education: Kant, for example, had made himself a proponent of public education and of learning by doing, putting emphasis on empirical aspect of learning, all the while having development of character and teaching of his moral maxims in the very centre. Some time afterwards, Dewey had deepened and expanded Kant’s empirical views of learning into what we now know as Educational Progressivism. Having been a proponent and a campaigner of educational reforms, Dewey emphasised his concerns over deliverance of knowledge – why modern education only shifts its focus onto delivery, and not enough onto understanding of its students’ actual experiences. Somewhat preceding and intertwining with Dewey’s time, existentialists have also put their two cents in regarding teaching, authority and character development within educational realm. Since they view the world as the one which can be only subjectively experienced, where reality is also individually defined, they advocated character development and teaching as completely individual matters both within classrooms and beyond its doors. Social context, which also affects the formation of one’s character and enables teaching to be possible, is an entity of its own – it is where the real experience, real answers come forth. Examining life by looking at it authentically, on your own, is a basis for a genuine learning experience. Involving students to be active participants in their own subjectivity and reality, is highly opposed to having students forced down onto mere objects that can only be tracked, measured, standardized and mediocrified. Following in existentialist philosophy’s footsteps, self-realization is key in existential education of philosophy. Everything starts and ends with the student/individual, rather than just the curriculum content³.

In this paper, the primary focus shall be on Schopenhauer’s views on education in two ways: first, from Nietzsche’s perspective, and second, from Schopenhauer alone. It should be said that both are intertwined in the ways of relating to philosophy, ethics, goodness, morality and the issue of creating such an individual who will be able to self-realize himself through education. One other issue of importance here will be the matter of authority, *i.e.* who has the

³ https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_existentialism.html (retrieved on 17th May 2019)

authority when educating another. In some parts, existentialism will play a significant role in explaining and outlining Schopenhauer's thoughts on education. Finally, we will attempt at connecting Schopenhauer's views with those of John Dewey's and his philosophy of education, thus pinpointing at the actuality and modernity of all three.

Looking at Schopenhauer from Nietzsche's⁴ perspective, «we are responsible to ourselves for our own existence»⁵. There should be no one but ourselves to point us to a certain direction, because «there exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you: whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it»⁶. This serves as an invocation of the need of one's self-development which is yet to come, to be discovered within the individual himself, for himself.

However, this proves to be easier said than done. How can we "find" or develop ourselves again, is the question asked by Nietzsche. It seems there is this multi-facetedness of a man to which we have no conclusive answer. In fact, a man itself is considered to be a question without a possible, finite answer, leaving him to be a never-ending project of self: «How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say: 'this is really you, this is no longer outer shell'»⁷. Nietzsche goes on to continue his thoughts on discovering who and what a man is, pointing to the aspect of education as the one that is crucial in aiding him discover who he is. He goes on to say that

«your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access, bound and paralysed; your educators can be only your liberators»⁸.

It seems Nietzsche considers educators to be an inevitable factor in formation of one's existence. They cannot be immoral or false, at least that is in Nietzsche's view. The reality, however, is much different. Nowadays, we stand witnesses to a devastating paradigm shift, where morality and virtue merely become words, and

⁴ See more in: F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by D. Breazeale, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

«virtue is a word that no longer means anything to our teachers or pupils»⁹. Instead of educating by and through morality and virtue, by means of ethics, these notions fall into abyss within and without the classrooms, sparking only hypocritical smirks and despise.

Also, authenticity is being questioned or at least held at bay, in the scope of teaching. Many educators are hiding behind empty truisms, not fully living what they teach and not being able to justify it by setting themselves as examples. Rarely do they even try not to deceive the ones they teach, holding a position merely for the purpose of it. In Nietzsche's view, «Schopenhauer never wants to cut a figure: for he writes for himself and no one wants to be deceived, least of all a philosopher who has made it a rule for himself: deceive no one, not even yourself!»¹⁰ It goes to show that each educator should put all efforts into avoiding deceit, both deceit of himself and of his pupils. To do so, he should be able to speak with himself, and to think and speak in his own words, not someone else's. What Nietzsche points out numerous times, «we are lacking such writers»¹¹. However, he was disappointed to a certain extent, because he «had discovered that educator and philosopher [he] had sought for so long. But [he] had discovered him only in the form of a book, and that was a great deficiency.»¹² He regrets not having met Schopenhauer and thus learning from him first-hand, claiming he can «profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example».¹³ Nietzsche also parallels Schopenhauer's perspective with those of ancient Greek philosophers, who not only wrote down their philosophical thoughts, but lived them in their entirety¹⁴. One such epitome of “live what you preach” philosophy was indeed Socrates¹⁵ himself, with his “know thy self” formula as a call for self-realization and understanding of one's self. It should not go without mentioning he had been a true apostle of critical thinking, freedom of one's choice, and self-reflection, thus indebting the whole philosophical tradition that was to come afterwards. Moreover, we can also find one such, similar-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ «But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books—in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone by what they wrote.» (*ibid.*, p. 136).

¹⁵ For more, see D. R. Morrison, *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

minded epitome of self-reflection in the philosophy and life of Kierkegaard¹⁶, only approximately 200 years ago. In his later works, and especially in his last essay, “the Father of existentialism” believes his mission is very much alike to that of Socrates’. Hence, he was proclaimed “the Socrates of the North”¹⁷.

Looking from a broader perspective, it seems Nietzsche wholeheartedly advocates philosophy to be the only aspect of human thought and endeavour, offering «an asylum to a man into which no tyranny can force its way»¹⁸. This might lead to a possible conclusion that Nietzsche advocated philosophy, or critical thinking, as the only sphere which cannot be manipulated with or taken away from a man. This might be further developed into the following: having philosophy as the core of one’s education and having a philosopher/ethicist as the primary figure in one’s education, education cannot be handled by whichever outward forces.

Thus, Nietzsche views Schopenhauer as the most promising educator there is (or was), saying that «to understand the picture one must divine the painter – that Schopenhauer knew»¹⁹. This is closely related to the notions of existentialism, where one’s existence is solely understood via his own self, and not something or someone else. Nietzsche admires Schopenhauer in this aspect, saying that «his greatness lies in having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a whole»²⁰. However, it may only be achieved throughout isolation and despair of the truth, otherwise unauthenticated existence might be at play.

It can be seen how Schopenhauer’s thoughts on education correspondent with the main thoughts and ideas of existentialism are. We should be able to interpret our own existence individually, as Schopenhauer does for himself –

«individually, by the individual only for himself, so as to gain insight into his own want and misery, into his own limitedness, so as then to learn the nature of his antidotes and consolations: namely, sacrifice of the ego, submission to the noblest ends, above all to those of justice and compassion [...]»²¹.

¹⁶ For more on Kierkegaard’s own views of Christianity, see the work titled *The Moment* (also translated *The Instant*) published by Kierkegaard himself, especially the tenth and final (posthumous) installment, published and entitled by Kierkegaard as *My Task*.

¹⁷ See P. Impara, *Kierkegaard interprete dell’ironia socratica*, Armando, Roma 2000.

¹⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, cit., p. 139.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Quite so, gaining higher awareness of one's misery and limited existence seems to be in line with Kierkegaard's thoughts on existence²², that later on served to be the focal point of existentialist philosophy. Becoming a self-aware individual is a necessary premise for the entirety of one's self-realization. It is the only way of truly knowing oneself, if one is genuinely aiming towards self-improvement by overcoming his wants and miseries.

But, let us go back to Schopenhauer's thoughts, the way Nietzsche sees and interprets them. In Nietzsche's view, Schopenhauer is also teaching us how to discern between «those things that really promote human happiness and those that only appear to do so: how neither riches nor honours nor erudition can lift the individual out of the profound depression he feels at the valuelessness of his existence [...]»²³. Not just that, but also that every individual tends to discover his or her own limitations, with regard to own abilities and morality, resulting in feelings of despair and depression.

«Everything, contemporary art and science included, serves the coming barbarism. The cultured man has degenerated to the greatest enemy of education»²⁴. It seems the culture entails a negative connotation, being the norm of certain behaviour and thinking of a particular time and place, thus suffocating free thought and critical thinking for oneself. Having culture as a popular buzzword for a thoughtless, loveless replacement for one's own thinking, it is easy to see why a cultured man would be an adversary of education as such. Even worse, he would be an adversary to his own self, and his own self-realization.

Moreover, following Nietzsche's thoughts and his advocating of Schopenhauer as the true image of an educator, he goes on to say that

«it is necessary for us to get really angry for once in order that things shall get better. And to encourage us to that we have the Schopenhauerian image of man [who] voluntarily takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful, and this suffering serves to destroy his own willfulness and to prepare that complete overturning and conversion of his being, which it is the real meaning of life to lead up to»²⁵.

Thus, acting against what culture imposes on one's self and making a 180 degree turn from it, means to finally accept one's own truth however hurtful it

²² For more, see: S. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. by W. Lowrie, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London 1944.

²³ F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, cit., p. 142.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

may be. Upon doing so voluntarily, one finally turns to the true meaning of his own life.

Contrasting,

«he who regards his life as no more than a point in the evolution of a race or of a state or of a science, and thus regards himself as belonging wholly to the history of becoming, *has not understood the lesson set him by existence* and will have to learn it over again. This eternal becoming is a lying puppet-play in beholding which man forgets himself, the actual distraction which disperses the individual to the four winds»²⁶.

2. *Thinking for Oneself*

In Schopenhauer's essay *On thinking for oneself*²⁷, there might be a tiny, yet valuable germ of an educational theory. But firstly, we ought to have a look on what Schopenhauer claims about thinking as such. It is interesting to note how thinking and reading are made to be the opposites, at least in Schopenhauer's view on education. He argues that

«just as a fire is kindled and sustained by a draught of air, so too must thinking be through some interest in its theme, which may be either purely objective or merely subjective. The latter exists solely in connection with our personal affairs; the former, however, is only for minds who think by nature, to whom thinking is as natural as breathing, but who are very rare. Thus with most scholars there is so little of it»²⁸.

In Schopenhauer's view, reading is completely opposite to thinking, since reading can merely provide other people's thoughts, claiming that «reading is a mere makeshift for original thinking. When we read, we allow another to guide our thoughts in leading strings»²⁹. In fact, as he claims further, «the surest way not to have thoughts of our own is for us at once to take up a book when we have a moment to spare»³⁰. On the other hand, Schopenhauer does allow for some reading, which is to be done only when «the source of our own ideas dries up,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155. Emphasis in cursive is added.

²⁷ <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/essays/chapter6.html> (accessed on April 30th 2019). All citations in the following paragraphs are pertaining to this source: A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays* (1851), vol. II, trans. from German by E. F. J. Payne, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1974, ch. XXII, *On Thinking for Oneself*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, § 257.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, § 260.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, § 258.

which will be the case often enough even with the best minds.»³¹ When one reads, one simply and mostly accepts what he reads, without giving it further critical thought. When one thinks for himself, however, «his mind follows its own natural impulse»³². And that is why thinking for oneself is a more valuable endeavour one can ever aspire to have. Furthermore, Schopenhauer's view is that is it far more better to think for oneself, even if one arrives at the exact same conclusions and thoughts others have reached before him. This is not a question of who thought of what first, or the question of originality of thought. This is a matter of having a broader, fuller understanding of what one comes to know by his own thinking, by figuring it out for himself. By merely reading others' thoughts, we are bound to forget them, most of the time. By thinking for ourselves, we come to an understanding of a better quality, reaching a certain higher level cognition, one we are most unlikely to forget. In Schopenhauer's words, «[...] it is nevertheless a hundred times more valuable if we have arrived at it through our own original thinking. Only then does it enter into the whole system of our ideas as an integral part and living member [...]»³³.

In terms of education, according to Schopenhauer's view, it is acceptable to familiarize oneself with a given subject, only if it is done through one's own thinking. A better connection with the subject is established if one thinks it through on his own:

«The truth that has been merely learnt sticks to us like an artificial limb [...], the truth acquired through our own thinking is like the natural limb; it alone really belongs to us. On this rests the distinction between the thinker and the mere scholar»³⁴.

With much persistence and given time to do so, one can experience the growth of his own system of thought, which is crucial if he is to be exposed to other's words and thoughts, either in written or oral form. Only after one has reached his own conclusions about a certain matter can he be exposed to what the experts on that matter have written or said. This only further reinforces one's own belief system, making it truly authentic. However, Schopenhauer does not have any issues with reading as such, or obtaining one's knowledge about the outside world from the outside itself, as long as one carefully reconsiders what was read.

³¹ *Ibid.*, § 260.

³² *Ibid.*, § 258.

³³ *Ibid.*, § 260.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, § 260.

This is the case especially with such people who dedicate their lives and careers to scientific inquiry, since no scientific advances would be possible without getting the knowledge from the external sources. He also claims that

«a scientific thinker also does [read] to a greater degree. Although his needs much knowledge and must, therefore, read a great deal, his mind is nevertheless strong enough to master all this, to assimilate it, to incorporate it into his system of ideas, and thus to subordinate it to the organically consistent totality of his vast and ever-growing insight»³⁵.

Not all knowledge can be obtained from within, and with time, one can establish the habit of independent thinking. What Schopenhauer argues against is reading constantly, and thinking too little. He merely claims «we should not read *too much* lest the mind become accustomed to the substitute and cease to know the thing itself»³⁶. Moreover, not all knowledge can be obtained from without as well, via experience: «mere experience is as little able to replace thinking as is reading»³⁷.

Finally, an individual who thinks matters through, for himself, can be recognized «by the stamp of earnestness, directness, and originality, by all his ideas and expressions that spring from his own perception of things»³⁸. Even more so, «the characteristic sign of all first-rate minds is the directness of all their judgements and opinions»³⁹. These individuals are the ones who «have an imperial immediacy in the realm of the mind»⁴⁰, being stark contrasts to those who «labour under all kinds of current opinions, authorities, and prejudices, [and who] are like the crowd which silently obeys laws and orders»⁴¹. As we have previously seen in Nietzsche's view of Schopenhauer, there is no worse a thing than to be an individual who cannot see and think further than what is being told to him by the state and culture. According to Schopenhauer,

«we can divide thinkers into those who think primarily for themselves and those who think at once for others. The former are the genuine self-thinkers in the double meaning

³⁵ *Ibid.*, § 261.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, § 263. Emphasis in cursive is added.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, § 264.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, § 263.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, § 265.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, § 265.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, § 265.

of the term; they are the real philosophers. [...] The others are the sophists; they wish to shine and seek their fortune in what they hope to obtain from others in this way»⁴².

What is crucially important for an individual, if one wishes to fully understand and realize his own self, is to become the philosophical type of thinker, and to consciously nurture the thoughts of his own existence. To be consciously aware of his own self, within a very limited mental horizon endowed to humans, poses an endeavour that overshadows all other purposes, beliefs or problems in one's life.

This is what Schopenhauer originally argues and it is the baseline of our argument here – that each should think for oneself, first and foremost. We have seen those lines of thought in the previous paragraphs regarding his essay *On Thinking for Oneself*, and we will see it from a slightly different perspective in the following sub-chapter, which mostly relies on Schopenhauer's essay *On Education*. In the terms of education, we will try to reflect Schopenhauer's thoughts onto education of both children and adults.

3. Authenticity of one's knowledge

In his short piece *On Education*⁴³ within his *Studies in Pessimism*, Schopenhauer claims there are two different methods of education. The first one he calls the *natural* method of education, where one «has a perfect acquaintance with both sides of his experience, and accordingly, he treats everything that comes in his way from a right standpoint»⁴⁴. This would pertain to what is known now as critical thinking – creating thoughts of your own based on all evidence that is present at a given time.

The opposing method would be what he calls the *artificial* method of education, which means «to hear what other people say, to learn and to read, and so to get your head crammed full of general ideas»⁴⁵. Reading other people's works would fall into this category, as it is evident from the quote. This is considered a wrong way one can judge things and people surrounding him – he may only see them from another's perspective, from another's point of view,

⁴² *Ibid.*, § 270.

⁴³ See: A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays* (1851), cit., ch. XXVIII, *On Education*, § 372. As found on:

https://archive.org/stream/23341891SchopenhauerParergaAndParalipomenaV2/23341891-Schopenhauer-Parerga-and-Paralipomena-V-2_djvu.txt (accessed on 14th September 2019)

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, § 372.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, § 372.

which cannot ever replace one's own standpoint, his own thinking and judging. Therefore, one may come to the conclusions which are not his own, and in Schopenhauer's view, «in this manner, education produces distorted and biased minds»⁴⁶.

Furthermore, as he argues in the article, when such methods are reflected onto educational environment as found in a typical classroom, it may be apparent that the consequences can either be marvellous or terrifying. What happens when a child is taught to endorse the artificial method is that «instead of developing the child's own faculties of discernment, and teaching it to judge and think for itself, the teacher uses all his energies to stuff its head full of the ready-made thoughts of other people»⁴⁷.

We witness such endorsement even today – a large number of schools are prone to such ready-made, reproduction-based learning, instead of enticing one's curiosity and giving time to develop one's own system of thought. However, there are certain schooling systems that oppose this, such as Summerhill and Montessori, since it has become evident that at the very base of one's knowledge, an original, well-developed thought must stand.

What Schopenhauer vigilantly claims is that «to acquire a knowledge of the world might be defined as the aim of all education. [...] As I have shown, this means, in the main, that the particular observation of a thing shall precede the general idea of it»⁴⁸. In this case, it may be argued his views are primarily empirical – one's particular observance of a particular thing in a particular time, should and must precede the general idea of it. The primary goal is to let particular observations precede general ideas, and not vice versa, which usually is the case with education of today.

It should be recognized as important to let a child's ideas be formed out of his own experience of the world surrounding it. Otherwise, if a child has too many ready-made, already installed notions about the outside world, it may only prevent it from fully experiencing the world for himself, without any preconceived judgment or categories made by other people and reflected onto the child. This is where developing one's own critical thinking comes into play, and it has a tremendous role to play, indeed. Schopenhauer advocates an education that will help develop faculties of discernment and one's own critical thinking skills

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, § 373.

without infiltrating a child's mind with the «ready-made thoughts of other people»⁴⁹. If imbibed early in a child, certain wrong notions and disfigured perceptions of its surroundings can hardly be rooted out. Being a particularly delicate period of one's life, childhood should be the time of innocent play, and of learning about such subjects where «no error is possible at all, such as mathematics»⁵⁰. Since one's judgment reaches maturity at a later age, it should be endorsed that a child be taught philosophy and ethics at a somewhat older age. As Schopenhauer claims, «childhood and youth form the time for collecting materials, for getting a special and thorough knowledge of the individual and particular things. In those years it is too early to form views on a large scale»⁵¹.

Not well after a very mature age has one reached critical self-observance of his own system of thought. After a certain amount of time, one may have come to a right understanding or another, clearer look on the matters, typically when least expected. Up until such a mature age, one's thinking was obscured, thus the matters at hand were seen as difficult, complicated, and too complex to comprehend on one's own. In addition, having skipped certain lessons in one's early education years, whether they be artificial or natural based, there would have been certain hollow gaps in one's knowledge and ability to comprehend.

In Schopenhauer's view, any attempts in education of a child should be made to follow a natural course of one's knowledge, in such a way the child becomes fully, or as fully as possible, acquainted with his own system of thought and the originality of his own judgments, however faulty they may be at first. Since a child would still be at a very young, delicate age, an emphasis should be put on preventing a child from using words without having understood them clearly first. The semantics should not fall victim to one's gaining of knowledge, and thus the meanings and application of certain notions and words must be taken care of mindfully. With their maturity reaching its peak, children should be given books to read and become acquainted with, but without haste – this way, they would slowly become acquainted with the actual, real life surrounding them, and the world they are a part of.

However, given that maturity is «the work of experience alone [...] [and therefore] it requires time»⁵², educators should understand one's abilities and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, § 372.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, § 374.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, § 375.

inabilities at a certain, very young age, and provide instructions carefully, so as not to disrupt a child's experience of the world surrounding it. The work of acquiring knowledge about the world is one that never ends, and «even the mature man often has to make up for many lessons»⁵³. Reading is, yet again, mentioned as an activity that may disrupt one's early developmental acquisition of notions, since Schopenhauer says

«through novels a thoroughly false view of life is foisted on them and expectations have been aroused which can never be fulfilled. [...] [Therefore,] those who in their youth have had neither the time nor the opportunity to read novels, such as artisans, mechanics, and the like, have a decided advantage»⁵⁴.

Obviously, Schopenhauer vehemently continues his advocacy against reading from his previously mentioned essay *On Thinking for Oneself*.

It seems *On Education* serves as a critique of how badly educators light the educational spark in young children, forcing them to swallow information mindlessly and then reproduce them robotically, without experiencing them for themselves first. This is a scenario still present today, in the world of ever-rushing advancement of technology, and never-ending delivery of new information, where one's critical thoughts, slow as they may be, are silently pushed aside.

4. Dewey and Schopenhauer comparison

Being born both illiterate and innumerate, humans are too young and too ignorant of the societal norms and cultural standards of the society they were born into. This is the exact point when and where educational systems come “to rescue”. It has been imagined that there should be certain, well-developed and highly-conscious “superbeings”, oftentimes called teachers, who are to be in charge of the youth’s intellectual and moral development. It has been imagined that they, these “superbeings”, should be able to create a newly-bloomed, appropriately inbred and self-functioning young individual, all within a period of less than a decade (in the framework of most elementary schooling systems). Despite their efforts, they are doomed to fail and succeed to a degree, depending on a variety of factors that come into play. Such factors may be, but are not

⁵³ *Ibid.*, § 376.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

restricted to: youth's genetic predispositions (talents for certain subjects at school, the lack of it for others), immediate family surroundings, peer and friend circles of support, availability of learning resources or the lack of, information exposure with regards to the media, the internet and social media platforms, and many more.

In other words, within a few years, out of a more or less illiterate and innumerate child, teachers create a self-thinking individual who is able to read, write, calculate and behave in a socially acceptable manner. Again, to a degree. However, the question arises: how that happens. Several sub-questions follow, such as "what conditions should be satisfied in order for education to happen", "what determines education to be successful", and "how does one's education impact his life and self-development, if at all". We are going to look at how John Dewey attempted at answering some of these questions. With correlations and comparisons being drawn between what we have seen in Schopenhauer's thoughts on education and those of Dewey's, we are going to sheepishly attempt at bringing both of their educational lines of thought together, in order to presuppose and hopefully conclude that Schopenhauer's thoughts have indeed been in some aspects very much alike to those of Dewey's. Even more so – the thoughts of both are still current and applicable.

When discussing education, the first philosophical "superstars" that come to one's mind are probably Socrates, Aristotle, and Kant. In this part, with the kindest thanks to what the formerly mentioned philosophers had written in their times, we are going to focus solely on one such "superstar" – John Dewey. As Frankena stated,

«the first main point is that [Dewey] rejects the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy which is so central in Aristotle and Kant. [...] Philosophy should be the most general theory of practice, eventuating in «the projection of large generous hypotheses which, if used as plans of action, will give intelligent direction to men in search for ways to make the world more one of worth and significance»⁵⁵.

Even more than that – for Dewey, all philosophy is actually a philosophy of education, since

⁵⁵ J. Dewey, as found in W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, Scott, Foresman and Company, Chicago 1965, p. 137.

«if we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education [...] Philosophy is the theory of education as a deliberately conducted practice»⁵⁶.

Having been not just a philosopher, but a psychologist and an educational reformer, with his work peaking somewhere around the turn of the century, Dewey had many things to say about the education of his time. To say the least, things had not looked promising. Teaching *ex cathedra*, putting the teacher into the centre of educational process, memorizing and reproducing of information, dividing intellectual from moral education, and teaching only a specific set of skills related to a certain field of expertise were no longer viewed as satisfying ways to teach children. Realizing that, Dewey had insisted on a different approach – teaching students *how* to learn, instead of simply *what*. Dewey had indebted the society of both then and now tremendously, and here we are going to shortly outline his ground-breaking views on education.

Having seen the necessity of a new direction in which education is set to go, he rejected the authoritarian, tradition-based teaching methods implemented in schools, if not imposed onto students. Thus, instead of teaching students a given set of skills, instead of trying to imprint information into their brains and having their minds function the certain directed ways, Dewey insisted on the need of learning how to learn in the first place. Pinpointing the importance of learning differently led him to conclusion that not just students should be the ones undergoing the change, but the teachers as well. Both students and teachers must learn together, in such a way that the paradigm shifts from a teacher being the sole centre of the students' educational process, to the teacher being a facilitator who actively interacts with and encourages the students to think on their own, to develop ideas originally, and to question the world surrounding them. More likely, to become somewhat philosophers.

Moreover, Dewey does not stop at that. Introducing the paradigm shift of the teacher's position, he goes on to say that such education should emphasize the need to learn primarily by doing. Claiming that humans learn through hands-on approach places him in the area of pragmatism, where pragmatism postulates the importance of experiencing reality on one's own. This view is later known as *progressive education*, involving both students and the teacher to co-interact

⁵⁶ J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, The Macmillan Company, New York 1961, pp. 328, 332.

with one another and their environment, in order to be able to adapt and learn more. In order to do so, the application of intelligent empirical inquiry is a necessary tool when dealing with one's experiences in all aspects of life. As Dewey once pinpointed, education is «of, by and for experience»⁵⁷. Empiricism is at play here, and it should be noted that, for Dewey, all philosophy, including the philosophy of education, must be empirical, in the sense of using the kind of experimental enquiry that is characteristic of the empirical sciences. The method of scientific intelligence and intelligent action based on the use of this method is, according to Dewey, «the sole ultimate resource of mankind in every field whatsoever»⁵⁸. Now, the question stems as to why education should take philosophy as its guide. Before answering the question, we need to consider one other, crucial matter.

Dewey claims schools are «social institutions»⁵⁹, which can and should serve the purpose of creating a better society. Education, thus, «is a process of living and not a preparation for future living»⁶⁰. Apart from being taught various information and pieces of knowledge at school, students are creating numerous relationships within its walls: friendships, peerships, teacher-student relationship, etc. They also learn different sets of moral and intellectual values, socially appropriate behaviour, develop self-consciousness and more. According to Dewey, schools are more than just places where students are taught numbers or facts, but also places where they learn *how* to live. At that time, Dewey thought that school should not be a world on its own which is completely separate from students' life experiences, but that both should be intertwined. Otherwise, he claimed, learning is not possible, it does not fulfil its purpose, and it lacks meaningfulness. As Dewey points out, «I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life»⁶¹. All of this results in having education the least memorable period of one's life. On the other hand, Dewey's insistence on experiential learning leads to students being able to actively engage in their school activities

⁵⁷ J. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, New York, Macmillan, 1959. As found on: <http://www.schoolofeducators.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/EXPERIENCE-EDUCATION-JOHN-DEWEY.pdf> (retrieved on 2nd September 2019), p. 10.

⁵⁸ Dewey as found in: W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, cit., p. 138.

⁵⁹ J. Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, , E. L. Kellogg and Co., New York and Chicago 1897, p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

and to think on their own, through doing on their own. If the students are allowed to actively take part in their learning, they can develop a far better understanding of the learning itself and the roles they have within a society. If they were to become active, self-thinking citizens rather than silent, compliant pawns under authoritarian education system of the time, it was necessary to undergo the change – both on students' and teachers' part. For how a teacher is supposed to teach her students if she herself does not have certain moral and intellectual dispositions to do so. This will be addressed later in this part as well.

Moving onto a broader perspective, Dewey also claims «a man is essentially social. Man would not even be able to think, since thought depends on language, which is social. He becomes aware of himself only in relation to others»⁶². Furthermore,

«if we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations»⁶³.

It is noticeable how much self-awareness and the ability to think critically on one's own are crucial for one's full self-development. Not just that, but for knowledge acquisition and transmission as well.

However, as we have stated above, not only students are susceptible to this line of thought, but teachers also. Having the ability to critically discern between child's capabilities, interests, and habits, those that are beneficial and those that are less so, plays a massive role in *how* a child is to be developed in the future. And, most importantly, into *what* he is about to develop. This is what teachers continually have to and choose to deal with. In Dewey's words,

«I believe that the teacher's place and work in the school is to be interpreted from the same basis. The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the *community* to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences»⁶⁴.

⁶² See W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, cit., p. 179.

⁶³ J. Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, cit., p. 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9. Emphasis is added.

The teacher's role goes well beyond simplified, traditionally-viewed educational purposes, and stretches onto preparing these young individuals for immersion into a "nightmare" called social life and life in general, outside school walls. Moreover, in Frankena's words, «it is still primarily the teacher's responsibility to find the conditions that call out self-educative activity, and to cooperate in and guide this activity so that it leads to the formation of the desired dispositions.»⁶⁵ The purpose of the activities created and executed by the teacher is to commence full-growth in all aspects, including intellectual and moral, since both are closely-knit and cannot be understood or taught separately (more on this later in the following text). Even more, Dewey's acknowledgement and awe of the teacher is a lot stronger and more noticeable in the following words:

«I believe, finally, that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life. I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth»⁶⁶.

However ideal this may seem, there is only so much a teacher can actually do. They, after all, are no superbeings, but mere humans. All their efforts may prove to be in vain, in the end.

Formation of proper social life and an individual that is ready for such life is nonetheless challenging in itself. The question arises for both intellectual and moral aspects of education, so commonly referred to as aspects or distinctions essentially different from one another. However, although Dewey does believe that the task of education is the formation of certain dispositions⁶⁷, he also claims that these two are necessarily bound and inseparable from one another. Both moral and intellectual dispositions fall into the same category of origin, and that is experience. As Frankena states further, «not all experiences are educative, but all education comes about through experience.»⁶⁸ Again, it is noticeable how the emphasis is also placed on the importance of creating such knowledgeable, educated, self-reflexive individuals, for the utmost benefit of the entire society and overall humankind.

⁶⁵ See W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, cit., p. 175.

⁶⁶ J. Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, cit., p. 18.

⁶⁷ See W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, cit., p. 141.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

5. Instead of a conclusion

Being a philosophical pragmatist in the realm of philosophy of education, Dewey insists that, first and foremost, «we must develop a reflective disposition or habit of intelligence. This means acquiring a whole complex excellence which is *moral* as well as *intellectual*»⁶⁹. However, in order to gain the habit of reflection, we should also strive for creating a habit of getting knowledge, first-hand if possible. This is what we have seen Schopenhauer advocate more than once in *Thinking for Oneself*, in the previous part of this paper. Once we have obtained such habits, we are following the patterns of learning to act in such a way that we reach conclusions by reflection. What Dewey means by reflective thinking is the «active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends.»⁷⁰ Dewey claims that «to have this complex disposition [...] is to have character. [However,] with it comes an assumption of responsibility for consequences»⁷¹. Thus, according to Dewey, we should also acquire the habit of reflective thinking, which also includes any other skill or ability that will aid us in doing it well. However, reflective thinking cannot and should not be restricted only to intellectual purposes. The same pattern of thought should be used when coping with moral dilemmas and issues, as we have seen Dewey claim this before in this paper. He even goes so far as to say that

«the prime need of every person at present is capacity to think; the power to see problems, to relate facts to them, to use and enjoy ideas. If a young man or woman comes from school with this power, all other things may be in time added to him. He will find himself intellectually and morally»⁷².

Similar thoughts have been seen in Schopenhauer's thoughts – think first, for yourself. Everything else comes in time, after one has gained an insight of one's own. Both Dewey and Schopenhauer advocate freedom of thought, looking towards one's future, co-operation within society, and most importantly – learning from one's own experience, by doing. Afterwards, reading and all other means of transferring knowledge may have a role in acquisition of knowledge and

⁶⁹ See *Ibid.*, p. 144. Emphasis is added.

⁷⁰ J. Dewey, *How We Think*, D. C. Heath & Company, Boston 1910, p. 6. Italics removed.

⁷¹ See W. Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*, cit., p. 144.

⁷² Dewey, J., as found in: Frankena, W. *Three Historical Philosophies of Education. Aristotle, Kant, Dewey*. Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1965, p. 147.

one's development. The whole body of institutional schooling cannot surpass development of individual's intelligence and inquisitive insight. Both morality and intellect should be nurtured inseparately from one another, as we have seen both Dewey and Schopenhauer advocate this. Older, traditional-oriented, *ex-cathedra* education is coming to an end, and fixed conclusions serve no purpose, however true they are, if they have not been reached by one's own thinking.