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Kindness in memorable university teachers

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ABSTRACT. The article presents some insights derived from research on 'good teaching practices' in the context of the School of Humanities, Mar del Plata State University, Argentina. The professor in charge of the 'Introduction to Philosophy' course has been signaled as 'memorable' by her advanced students, and thus become part of the investigation. In her classes, the relationship with the students entails peculiar ethical dimensions, and hospitality is one of the categories involved in her didactic proposal. Much data has been gathered through ethnographic reports of classwork, interviews, surveys and analysis of reference materials, which aims at throwing light into good teaching at university, as part of the investigation conducted by the Research Team on Education and Cultural Studies (GIEEC) in this University.

KEY WORDS. Hospitality – Pedagogic Bond – Memorable Professors – Higher Education Didactics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present article proposes to analyse the findings of our inquiry related to C's teaching practice, the main memorable[1] teacher of our investigation, in greater detail. From Litwin's (2008) investigation regarding good teaching, "perseverance" in teachers' practices were identified and considered to "generate a good teaching platform" (p. 99). In this respect, we have been able to identify that C's teaching style has a distinctive characteristic; the kindness which is extended throughout the four-month period of observed classes.

According to our inquiry, the term "kindness" in teaching refers to the ethical aspects built in good teaching practices. In particular, what incites us to reflect about this issue is the pedagogical context; we questioned ourselves how human beings interact in a pedagogical situation. In teaching, the way in which the teacher intends that his or her teaching has a direct impact on the student can limit information transfer in a technocratic framework if the subject who is learning is considering to be lacking in something, in this case, knowledge. Currently, efficiency-focused research is being led by remodelling identified aspects such as temporary knowledge, the impossibility of neutral and absolute objective and contextual historical subjective dimensions, in this way the essential idea which establishes teaching and maintains an artificial separation between theory and practice is left out. A "pedagogical context" is not referred as a fundamentally essential quality relationship, if that were the case we would be focusing on essentialism in another context. This statement corresponds to the warning issued by Adorno (1986) in support that the

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efforts made to reduce and simplify the reality of a unifying concept is a generalisation. There is no "primary" concept, there is intervention, but if "intervention"is understood as an original principal, then the relationship concept would be confused with a substantial concept.

There are several ways to understand the relationship between them. From a gnoseological point of view, which of course has ethical derivations, Husserl (1986, 1988) gives attribute to the implementation of alter ego. If we think about it in terms of polarity, on the other extreme there would be Levinas' (2002) ideas, which according to him ethics proceeds ontology; what is given "before" is the presence of the other that claims recognition which creates a print in the person themselves.

We made an incursion related to the ethical context in teaching. Given that we agree with Mèlich (2006) who states that education is not merely "conforming" or adapting the student according to established frameworks, but instead is it fundamentally about transforming oneself and adapting to developments in education. In that case "ethics have an alterity relation, but not every alterity relation is ethical" (Mèlich, 2006, p.28), in this way "it is ethics which precisely distinguish educational action from teaching" (p.21).

In the last decades, ethics have allowed the pedagogical context to be seen under a new light. We are particularly interested the finitude of ethics which Mèlich (2006) contemplates beyond the "narrative reason" nomination, so that it generates an awareness in support of the enquiry. Just as Inneratiy's (2008) kindness ethics which prioritises the demands of safeguarding ethics and the care and protection of the current people's general vulnerability. It is about a vulnerability which starts with the subject who feels less protected, exposed to estrangement and bafflement. Within the framework of a "weak ontology", the fundamental philosophical acts are receptive because the availability and attention that is offered as a reality is revealed, but not as a metaphysical basis so that "the moral imperative facing vulnerability is no longer developed but assisted" (Innerarity, 2008, pp. 25-26).

Our analysis related to the "kindness" category in the teaching context, empathises the teacher's perspective with the students' perspectives, because if we omit their voices we would be distorting their views and eluding the interaction that happens in class. We will also turn to our records because what the researcher's say reflect the hermeneutic, interpretive and reflective task of our fieldwork.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Teaching can take on diverse modalities according to the person that supports the teacher, which results in their practice. In our case, we agree with Morin's (2009) complex concept of humankind which involves an individual-society-kind triad which could not be comprised in a separate manner; from its interactions which it relies on and gives it value to, a culture emerges. Morin talks about "antropoetic" which involves three terms and implies some conscious decisions; respecting each other in terms of differences as well as individual identity, develop solidarity ethics, develop the understanding of ethics and teach ethics to humankind (p.106).

In order to understand the relation between people in the education sector, we have to firstly recognise today's concepts which intergrade educational vocabulary with a sense of sharing, as it occurs with "alterity" which houses in itself historicity. Some philosophical contributions manifest this historicity. Husserl's (1986, 1988) phenomenological development is one of these contributions, but at the same time it is insufficient to meet the ends of our study due to its self-explanation of philosophical ego and inclusion *of alter ego*. In some instances, it is sustained as

1 Memorable teachers are those who have left their students' memories with prints of their good teaching. It is possible to identify specific practices which make up the habitual actions of memorable teachers, but it is also a matter of principles, beliefs and interpretations regarding the teaching and learning that manifest in intervention methods which extraordinary teachers foment in their classes (Porta, Sarasa & Álvarez, 2011, p. 195).

it is ingrained in self-ego. It is from that self-ego that the other makes sense, the other is a sense of derived value: it is another subsumed. The Heideggerian hermeneutic is not in itself sufficient as it supports the exteriority area, such as that the *Dasein* is ecstatic, fearless in the world. These feelings and meanings come from the relation which is maintained with the outside. Given its pre-comprehension originating from the *Dasein*, it is interpreted by its interactions and its inter-self. Heidegger (1998) deals with the ontological side, but not the ethical side, the "other" does not stand-out in its theoretical construction, however, we recovered its potential notion of *Sorge*, with precaution or care, which is the essential human existence determination. Ricoeur (1996) redefines both contributions, as he considers a dialectic between Husserl's "component" of self-ego and Heidderger's "interpreting" self-ego. The result is not only a dialectic conclusion, the "oneself with another" is a renewed sense, but it also deviates from the conscientious paradigm, as consciousness is a moral task in which *one-self* recovers with the other. In other words, alterity is a combined construction, the axis is in the relation, not exclusively in self-ego, nor in the exteriority of the other. It also offers support to Jona's responsibility ethics which deal with a more ontological ethic than deontological, due to the difference between someone's duty, which requires equality between subjects, instead this type of responsibility is sustained by inequalities, there is a weakness in the other which requires protection, however, the biggest difference between duty and reasonability is that responsibility refers to a "human weakness feeling" (Jonas, 2005, p. 40). Jona's responsibility principal is directed at preserving the world and future generations who face humanity threats due to the technical and scientific developments which threat the quality of life and life itself.

Together with some of Jona's statements regarding ethics, the current contributions that we give more significant value to in the educational field proceed the kindness ethics (Innerarity 2008) and Mèlich's (2006) finitude ethics, who believes that "to educate is a kindness task" (p. 67). Both ethics consider current problems: people's vulnerability, the weakness in links, fragmentation, individualism, human finitude and temporality as an inaudible concept. Both understand that interpersonal relationships are events in which there are changes in every being because they mutually influence each other. They do not take on any metaphysical concepts; they dispose of a closed modern rationalisation with its monologic reasoning, certainty, ultimate basis and the all-powerful self-ego which acknowledges that these modern standards have been displaced by uncertainty, unpredictability, diversity, openess, contingency, insecurity and the shifting of life itself. In short, it is about ethics and alterity, as according to Mèlich (2006) "We are what we are because of the relations we create with others" (p. 62), and according to Innerarity (2008) "The idea of kindness reminds us of something distinctive about our condition: our brittle and fragile existence is needy and dependent on things that are not at our disposal", therefore, "we need from others their acknowledgment, approval or friendship" (p. 38).

3. BACKGROUND HISTORY

The Education and Cultural Studies Investigation Group from the Humanities Faculty at Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (UNMDP) looks into memorable teacher's autobiographies with the aim of analysing their life stories associated with development and professional identity. Since 2003, these projects have contributed to the understanding of good teaching within the framework of Teacher Training and Higher Level Teaching Approaches. The first project was "Buenas prácticas y formación del Profesorado de Inglés: Aportes para la nueva agenda de la didáctica" (Good practices and training of English Teachers: Contributions to new teaching approaches) (2003/5), which identified these practices and its conceptions about good teaching were analysed. The second one was "Formación del Profesorado II: La narrativa en la enseñanza" (Teacher Training II: The teaching narrative) (2006/7), which goes into detail about the teaching narrative

role and investigation. The third one has a narrative-biographical characteristic, "Formación del Profesorado III: (auto) biografías profesionales de los profesores memorables" (Teacher Training III: professional autobiographies of memorable teachers) (2008/9) which studies teachers' life accounts from the faculty, whose advanced students declared them as significant. The forth one was "Formación del Profesorado IV: biografías de profesores memorables. Vida profesional, mentores y prácticas docentes" (Teacher Training IV: memorable teachers' biographies, professional life, mentors and teaching practices) (2010/11), which summarises emerging concepts in the continuity and ruptures of obtained life stories. Finally, the fifth project was "Formación del Profesorado V: Biografías de profesores memorables. Grandes Maestros, Pasiones Intelectuales e Identidad Profesional" (Teacher Training V: Memorable teachers' biographies, Great teachers, Intellectual passions and professional identity) (2012/13), which reconstructs already established categories and focuses on memorable teachers' intellectual passions. The on-going project titled: "Formación del profesorado VI. (Auto)Biografías y Narrativas de Instituciones, Estudiantes y Profesores Memorables. Conocimiento, Pasiones, Emociones y Afectos desde una mirada descolonial" (Teacher Training IV. (Auto)Biographies and Narrative Institutions, Students and Memorable teachers. Knowledge, Passions, Emotions and Effects from a decolonising view), addresses four big lines of work related to the theory and practice in Higher Education classes. The first is associated with a conceptual-theoretical view, which allows us to organise aspects linked to the decolonising critic towards teaching and narrative studies in order to think about alternative ways that rupture the modern educability mould and that focuses on the ethical "relationship" which combines intellect and affection[2]. The second one, generates institutional biographies of alternative schooling spaces analysis in a comparison format (Argentina-Brazil); the third one address aspects related to passions, emotions and the affection that is manifested in university memorable teachers' (auto)biography relationships regarding the teachers' teaching approaches and their own learning.

4. METHODOGICAL DESIGN

Within our ample objectives of our investigations, the proposal reflects about the Teaching field categories as a way to rupture the modern educational mould in relation to the emotional, affection and passion role of teaching. It interprets emerging categories from different memorable teachers' record types modalities (interviewing teachers, surveys and student interviews) and autobiographical interviews to those teachers.

During this project, we intend to account one of the nestled categories in different records associated with the practice of a memorable teacher: kindness, in line with the ethical teaching dimension and the creation of "natural critical learning environments" (Bain, 2007).

In terms of the methods and techniques put in place, we addressed an interpretative focus within the framework of the qualitative investigation. The investigation design initially adopted the narrative-biographical perspective, to which we add the ethnographic micro record and macro classes, which give us detailed and thorough record of the class routine. Since we agree with Litwin (2012) with making the importance and value of study standout in classes as they develop, this implies taking into account the actions, decisions and interventions by the teachers in their classes (p. 37).

We have used observation records, author records, a field diary, interviews and surveys. The records refer to the non-consecutive participant observations during the first quarter of classes of the year 2013, in charge of this course is a professor in Introducción a la Filosofía (Introduction to Philosophy) from the Humanities Faculty at Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata. This

2 Narrative category of our investigations. Their developments can be found in specific publications from the investigation team.

module is obligatory in Philosophy and Teaching degrees which take place in the first quarter of the first semester according to the curriculum. It is also offered as an optional module for the Teaching degrees in Literature, History and Geography.

In terms of the group of students who took part in the observed classes, there were 80 students of both sexes. We surveyed a total of 51 of those students: 32 from the Philosophy and Teaching degree, 17 from the Literature Teaching degree, 1 from the History Teaching degree and 1 from the Geography Teaching degree. The age group of 33 students was between 18-24 years old, 8 students were from the age group of 25-30 years old, 4 students were between 30-40 years old and 6 students were between 40-50 years old. All students were in their first year of the Philosophy degree. Among the others, the Geography student was in forth year, the History student didn't provide this information, among the Literature students, 5 were in first year, 2 in second, 5 in third, 2 in forth and 3 in fifth year of their degrees. In other words, 37 students out of 52 were in their first year of their university studies.

Question 1.a. of the survey asked students to mention which concepts in their opinion categorised the Introduction to Philosophy classes, in 1.b. they were asked to extend their opinions with brief sentences, in 2.1. they were asked to provide key words which categorised C's teaching and in 2.b. they were asked to synthetically make explicit their pervious point.

The coding of the material we selected for this project are the following: BI (Biographical Interview of the teacher); IQ (Teacher interview during the first observed Quarter); SI (Student interviews); R (observation Records of non-participants with a correspondent number in chronological order of classes, for example: R1); AS (Anonymous student Surveys). The last one belongs to a number used in our analysis, for example: AS 23 followed by a letter which indicated the degree studied (P (Philosophy), L (Literature), G (Geography), H (History)) then a number which indicates the year of study and lastly a number which indicates the student's age.

The format chosen is to account for the results and discussions which offer the category treatment with the intention of framing the relation that emerges from each and every one of the instruments as a way of saturating and triangulating the emerging categories in the dialogue within the referential framework.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 "Kindness" in the praxis of the memorable teacher

In the narrative-biographical interview, the memorable teacher of our study (C) expressed that: "It would be hard for me to work with indifference and with impersonality environments or institutions without generating affective relationships that in some way would support my work." (BI). Afterwards, in the carried-out interview during the period of observed classes, when she was questioned about her conception of teaching C began her response in the following manner:

> Teaching to me is an act of engagement. In order to attain the possibility that others are incorporated in a learning experience, it is necessary to build a bonding relationship, a correlation, a connection. We can almost think about it as a weaving metaphor… so that we can all be included in that relationship (IQ).

This stated intention of inclusion and alterity is based on an ethical approach in which the "kindness" category stands out, which besides inclusion, also involves empathy and responsibility as constitutive ethical dimensions.

According to Innerarity (2008), kindness is an ethical category which is revealed as mainly an anthropological category. "The fundamental ethical competence consists of an opening towards the other and the others, by being accessible to the world requirements, aware of one's difference" (p.19), this is understood as a meeting with the other, it is about guest-host reasoning, strongly cut off from a self-sufficient subjectivity. Identity in a complex world is not conquered with an empathetic act of self-affirmation, humankind often produces its own "self-confirmation choreography", looking for acknowledgement without any problems, but this corroboration is not sufficient without critics, humankind also needs the discrepancy, correction and interpellation of others. "This ambiguous experience of feeling apprehended and knowing that finite is the threshold for who accesses a form of tasks which no longer use imperative language of power but instead request it" (Innerarity, 2008, p.26).

> As it were, C said that "years of teaching experience have given me the reason for this institutional model and the best results are given or obtained when the learning relation has been mediated with an *emotional bond*" (IQ).

The "emotional bond" that C mentioned has an ambiguous meaning as it can be understood as feelings that are generated from an interpersonal relationship, in this sense "care", "appreciation" and "respect" towards others, but also as "affection" as a Greek sense, manifested as *pathos* in the human condition. That is to say that feeling affected would be a way of "suffering" in every event, in this case, attending each class. This would then constitute a way of feeling pity, an affective resonance. For this reason, ethics in kindness allow for a greater relationship comprehension to be closer between beings who meet in an educational environment. As Innerarity said, this ethic can be understood as an ethic of events which support each other more in passion than in action, since it emphasises human life as an experience which "is less a combination of sovereign initiatives than answers to invitations that the people frequently make without our consent" (p. 18). We understand that C, indeed, does not try to impose actions on her students but instead to interact with them in a way that her teaching practices form events in which the doing and the suffering, or in other words, in which the action and passion overlap. To quote C: "I believe that teaching is something from within. A type of vigour, passion, *pathos* in the Greek sense of affection. We do not have to skim on human feelings of feeling affection by the class" (IQ).

5.2 Kindness in the students' praxis

Students also feel "affection" by classes, to that effect, the students' words contribute to the clarification of the concept's meaning:

> I believe that C as a teacher has one of the most valuable things, not only is she an academic forcefulness, but on the hand she also has the affective ability in the sense of possibility and affection with what is said, what she transmits is not only with strength of the content, but also generates an emotive, affective relationship (…). To me, this seems valuable because not all teachers are like this, there are teachers who work with a very good theoretical ability, with a very good conceptualisation, but there is no bilateral relation of mind to mind and from what I have seen for a long time is that C transmits a question of *affective resonance*. That is the difference (SI).

That "difference" that the student talks about is a part of the kindness ethics. As we will see, C has a critical approach about certain teaching that does not establish an appropriate bond with the student:

> One does not exactly know who the teacher is talking to if there are no prone gestures

> that show comprehension towards the student. There a common saying which is 'he/she knows a lot but does not know how to transmit it'. I was sceptical that this is very natural, who knows a lot knows how to transmit it. In the teaching field of this matter, solid knowledge and theory complement each other on how it is transmitted. I would end such phrase with a question mark ('he/she knows a lot but does not know how to transmit it?'). It seems to me that there is something that encloses certain desired questions that others will not be able to know what I know. Some *dissymmetry* in the teaching practice that draws on and has precisely power games *which put teachers and students in crystallised roles. Who knows, knows how to transmit it and if he/she does not know how to transmit, he/she finds a way of how to do so. Because from there on there is someone who awaits to know* (IQ).

5.3 Interlinked reports about kindness

Candelero (2010) states that when students do not understand, a "*lethal disagreement*" is produced between the teacher and student[3] (p. 102). The author points out that students need explanations, in the sense of describing, giving causes and reasons for something, but also students need to be shown ways, links between causes and reasons, and it might be the case that the teacher does not know those "ways". In this way, the student can be blamed for not understanding or it can be thought that the professional "is lacking in training". To that effect, the teacher "has a professional obligation to know how to teach" because teaching is part of the science or theory that is taught and this issue involves moral aspects, not only epistemological; in the light of widespread idea that someone "knows but does not know how to teach", means that the teacher should recognise himself or herself a trainee and should achieve that way of teaching (Candelero, 2010, p. 102-105). Let's consider that the teaching style of a teacher, in addition to the teacher training, is the inclusion of an ethical posture which avoids lethal disagreements as mentioned before. At the other end of the spectrum, kindness consists of inviting and accompanying the student in their knowledge building and we find that the teachers' attitudes that show indifference towards incomprehension involve a certain lack of respect towards the way in which the subjects learn. It would be a way in which kindness is captured in the teaching practices which reveal signs of arrogance and/or pride, rather than an example of teaching "ignorance". Thereon, C gave the following opinion in the narrative-biographical interview: "I believe that philosophy has sinned and sometimes elites still commit sins of certain epistemological arrogance in terms of masters of the truth" (BI).

From Morin's (2009) perspective, mutual comprehension between human beings is vital in order to leave the current state of incomprehension (p. 17). The author understands comprehension ethics as a living art which requires understanding in a disinterested way and requires effort since it does not aspect reciprocity; but that comprehension towards other needs the conscious of the human complexity (p. 99). In other words, the educational field would consist in understanding that the student is not just a learner or a dissociated stranger of the human condition which unites the teacher. The author believes that comprehension is an epistemological problem because "in order for there to be comprehension between thought structures, it is necessary to be able to have a meta-structure thought which comprises the causes of incomprehension of some issues with the respect of others and can overcome them" (Morin, 2009, p.102). As we have been able to reveal, C understands comprehension as an epistemological sense, but also in an ethical sense as we can see in the following narrative statement: "it is necessary to follow the curriculum and my biggest objective is that the students follow it effectively and transmitting it incorporeally. And the incorporation depends on the object's in question appropriation of what is complex" (IQ). The mentioned accompaniment favours the addressed issues about comprehension (as an

3 The italics are from the author.

epistemological sense), in a comprehensive understanding environment (as an ethical sense). In this sense, the accompaniment overlaps with cognitive and affective aspects in the framework of ethical kindness: "Comprehension forms part of a bonding relationship, students gain the effort of who unfolds the work, constant work, so that they dominate the problematic objects (…). This will generate the *confidence of being recognised*…" (IQ).

As we have seen previously, C is conscious that "from then on there is someone waiting to know". In this way, it replies to the other which its only presence is questioned. This sense does not allude the commitment of the students' questions or requirements, to clarify, it always corresponds, as our records show, it is expressed and positively valued by the students. Mentioning that person who is ahead and is waiting to know, alludes to something previous, that *presence* of other which is questioned and affected. As Levinas (2002) said in his ethical framework of alterity, ethics begin with the presence of the other, it is the face of the other, his claim is what provokes a moral response.

The students value C's epistemological-ethical positioning which coincides with her teaching, as we can see in the answer 2.b. of our survey: "the teacher possesses a great simplicity, the closeness that only someone can possess by recognising, everlastingly as an apprentice" (AS 34- P1- 19). "C is a professional because she demonstrates her commitment towards her profession. Despite all her knowledge *she does not demonstrate arrogance* in the student-teacher relationship and teaches in the sense of answering questions in a clear and concise manner which can be understood" (AS 40- L4- 21). "The teacher is always accessible and predisposed to students' queries. She is always aware and is patient towards our requirements" (AS 13- L1- 42). "The teacher addresses the students in a clear, affable and very pleasant manner, creating a calm environment in which it is much easier to follow the class. She is open and receptive towards students' needs and is always willing to co-operate with them" (AS 14- P1- 46).

In question 1.b of the survey, we also found a combination of value with the teacher's expertise and C's kindness teaching style: "During classes there is dialogue and a favourable environment to explain any doubts. The teacher is characterised for her *knowledge*: she is an extremely able teacher with her work, and because of her accessibility, she is open in order for us to become close and query through different methods" (AS 46- L3- 21). (The italics belong to us). "The classes are characterised for their clarity of concepts; the teacher clearly explains them. Respect: she deals with the syllabus in a respectful way towards the students. Passion: it is clear that she enjoys teaching what she teaches, she explains everything until EVERYONE understands and with LOVE" (AS 23- P1- 25). (The capital letters are from the student). "the classes are educational, the teacher has a lot of experience, dedication and love towards the philosophy of teaching, she teaches the syllabus with skill and with ease, resulting in a calm environment which take the practice and the theory away from a debate and a problematic method" (AS 1- P1- 29). "The classes are entertaining as the teacher breaks down the idea of a Master's class in which only the teacher talks, furthermore, leaving the fact that she is a professional to one side, she presents the content in an informal way when it is necessary for a greater understanding of the content" (AS 40- L4- 21).

5.4 What the classes reveal: kindness as affection, inclusion, empathy and responsibility

C's kindness is expressed in the first minute of class when she says to the group:

> Before we go any further, I would like to welcome you, an affectionate welcome. A welcome which begins to be more affectionate than academic. Institutions tend to be a fairly wicked device in which the link with the subjects and universities do not escape

> this, therefore, the first caress is affective, academia comes afterwards. Therefore, feel welcomed in this theoretical course in Introduction to Philosophy. (R1).

The whole fragment is highly affective towards the students because they undoubtedly feel "affection", in other words, intellectually and emotionally affection. By using the words "caress" in this context, it has a relevant meaning because as Mèlich said: "The ethical relation is a *caress*[4]" but it does not refer to tactile caress, but instead with feeling because the ethical relation is a responsive encounter with other (p. 133).

The recognition of alterity is the starting point of a teaching bond, this can be identified when in that first class C says: "Along with me you will present yourselves as *my colleagues* of the course who are the students, in a moment I will explain what is the function of the students and another person [name of the investigator] which from Monday to Monday will see you and will make you aware of the role they play and will fulfil a particular function" (R1). By saying "colleagues of the course" she is showing her consideration that all present are fellows. The gesture is of kindness in a sense of considering the involved people in the previous presentation like pairs in their condition of present subjects and active in the same event, independent of what their individual "function" may be. The students are therefore not considered to be in an inferior hierarchy situation and the gesture tells the group of students that nothing is hidden, this is the starting point of developing an environment of trust. In the narrative-biographical interview, C was referring to the importance of trust in the students when she clarified: "But the trust in the subject that one is facing, is something like a contract of affection. I believe that, that environment vehicles learning opportunities" (BI). In other words, once again, it is that initial presence of the other that inspires trust in beings. As she said in her welcome talk: "I believe that from the affective relationship, which is a fundamentally *secure* and *mutual trust* relationship, we can learn even more things of great importance in its difficulty" (IQ).

As the classes went on, trust became mutual. In question 2.b of the survey, students expressed (the italics belong to us) that: "The teacher is always willing to clarify any doubts and to me, this generates *trust* as a student and as a curious intellectual" (AS 3- P1- 23). "The teacher is enthusiastic and humorous when explaining topics that are not manageable to everyone. She cares about clarifying doubts and is open to questions. She *inspires trust*" (AS 8- L5- 22).

As we can conclude from the students' words, they do not feel ignored, but instead included, borne in mind, therefore, we can say that the teacher is able to overcome what Morin (2006) refers to as "anonymisation" and "laxity indifference" as characteristics of modern individuality (p. 103).

In the presence of those "others" in that same first class, she presents herself in a way which also reveals kindness. Her presentation is not limited to offering data and basic information. In an extensive account, she offers details of her academic career with gestures and a cordial tone of voice and colloquial language without any superiority gesture which might establish an affection barrier. At a certain moment she says: "In actual fact, I dedicated myself to two things in life, the Ancient Philosophy and Foucault", she continues with her account and then gives detailed descriptions of her neighbourhood, her travels, her training paths, some anecdotes of her experiences while traveling in Buenos Aires, which is where she lives, at Mar del Plata where she runs this course, she says: "Therefore, there it is, that cuisine, that mixture of experiences that one puts together in one's *intellectual stories*, *which are life stories in the face of intellectual stories*", she ends by saying: "*And life goes on*. I write books, I go to conferences, I have an entire life dedicated to academia" (R1). It is understood that her "profession" is not a "job" nor as something "extra" in her personal life, but instead as something attached to her vital condition. That presentation

4 The italics are from the author

reveals her identity as an overlap of her actions and passions, in a dynamic ethos but not because of dispersed or unspeakable accounts, because like Mèlich (2006) says, human beings move in a tension which never results in everything "between traveling, stories, exodus and settling down, getting established and being stable" (p. 45). In this section of the class, a "narrative reason" is manifested, own denomination of the mentioned philosopher who thinks that the human being is a *homo narrans*, a tangled being in stories because he lives in tension between "what he does" and "what happens" and throughout the story of his existence, every human being invents their own meaning of life, configure their identity, "always becoming, always provisional" (p. 43). As Innerarity (2008) said, a kindness ethic which implicates generosity, openness and favourable availability towards complexity, is "an unstable ethic that is vulnerable, results in a host situation which previsions are always threatened by the inappropriateness of a visit" (p. 20). In other words, C's presentation initiates her settling in with that group, but what has to happen is still uncertain, time will develop that relationship that C intends to. The first step of openness, of receptivity, is given during the narrative of "who" is the teacher, and there is a sense of the host's metaphor that the guests receive in way that make evident that C does not just implies teaching authority.

5.5 The teaching bond which alterity is anthropologically equal

We would like to mention a section of C's interview without any cuts in order to incorporate our analytical and reflective considerations.

> Managing a relationship (…) is an ethical principal of settling-in, therefore, generating a bonding space does not mean that it is a demagogic gesture, it means a true *acknowledgement* of the other as another. *The affection that is built from that first student perception like a pair*, an anthropological pair, dissolves the initial hierarchy in supporting the practice. Undoubtedly, I know more about philosophy than those that are in front of me, which does not imply that the first approach is not to recognise those students as pairs, like pairs in their subject condition, *without prejudice*, without any frequent images at this time, anticipating youth from questions such as unproductiveness, the limited background knowledge in some cases, the criminalisation of young people, a series of *preconceptions* that seem to me that us as teachers go through which are difficult to avoid because *those views of general negative bias among young people are spoken about among teachers*. The historical context criminalises them, therefore, building an affective relationship means initiating that willingness. It is a willingness principal, *an ethical principal to deal with students with the smallest load of preconceptions* that there are about this segment which have to do with youth: that their mind is somewhere else, that it does not interest them… And we lack in being plentiful, we all know that… The complex view that we have about young people, especially the young people we receive for the first year of a university degree as it is me who teaches the initial syllabus. Ideally, when they finish their university studies, society's view about young graduates changes, but in that difficult transition between secondary school and the first year of university, *we collectively see them with a very negative view. Creating that bonding base, is to start fresh from the saying*: "what is said" according to Heidegger *is to respect the other in their role* in the classroom space in which the lesson takes place, which in this case is the bond that connects them with me and with the purpose of knowledge (IQ).

First consideration: In relation to C's confirmation that she knows more than her students, it is clear in her conscious that this mentioned anthropological parity does not mean selfhood nor identity in mathematical sense, it is not about that A=B. Her identity is not dissolved by recog-

nised alterity, in fact, a characteristic from human complexity is to be equal and simultaneously diverse.

Second consideration: Overcoming prejudices related to youth is a possible condition to "create that bonding base". However, here is where responsibility has a relevant place. As Innerarity (2008) said: "untwisting reality has a responsibility price to the maker". It happens that when the human being feels able or competent to make reality better, he/she becomes more responsible for the reality that did not get better, in that way self-fatalism occurs in some positions in adverse situations, it would provide an exoneration of one's own commitment in negative situations and it would be able to appeal to one's difficulties about things or blame other instances (p. 42). This could be the teachers' approach who settle in the negative environment, eluding their commitment of transformation. This is not C's case, who opts to actively commit in negative situation transformation, as she puts it:

> No-one ignores the insecurities without it becoming prejudice, no-one ignores methodological insecurities that young people bring beyond their training journeys, we have to fight with this and one eventually fights deploying all weapons, forgetting who to blame: the system, secondary school education, that it does not interest them… It does not matter, it does not matter… In other words, *if we remain in the enteral negative diagnostic of how they live, no transformation is generated.* One should put the body into it. That is, leaving behind material conditions that students bring and if they are uncertain, one must revert them and they are reverted by explaining, explaining with a clear discourse which does not mean that is it easy, it means that one must find interstices from which students understand (IQ).

C knows the "material conditions" that students bring and how "precarious" they are in their first year at university, but she does not stigmatise them nor lower their ontological condition. C does not elude these conditions through her teaching. We interpret that in this position, in addition to her teaching commitment, empathy takes part as a constructive kindness dimension.

It is necessary to clarify that the term "empathy" seems to refer to a semantic diversity which provokes philosophical controversies. In a broad sense, this can follow Hume's "friendliness" term with a human tendency to participate and relive others' emotions, being the cause of friendliness and similarity among human beings and it could mean altruism as it creates natural feelings such as compassion and solidarity, caused by external misfortunes (Flores, Yedaide and Porta, 2013, p. 179). More recently, empathy has been considered as an epistemological concept, as an ethical concept, even as a concept with political derivations. In the context of our work, we do not refer to empathy as a knowledge source, but instead it consists of a concept which contributes to comprehension of teaching bonds. Carnap's (1990) critique about husserlian *Einfühlung*[5] for the absence of an epistemological value, because Carnap considers that empathy is not knowledge, it contributes to clarify our conception of the "empathy" concept:

> Empathy is a doing, not a knowing; more precisely, it is a doing which produces a feeling with the other and therefore it can drive another practical attitude and as a consequence of it, a different way of acting towards the exterior. But these are all related to practice, not theory. Here, ethical values have a role to play; but this has nothing to do with it being true or false (Carnap, 1990, p. 38).

5 Husserl (1988) devotes himself to a reflection about "how the alter ego, however much experience, is manifested and verified in ego" (p.15) to which he uses the German term Einfühlung (.p 16) which is translated as intraffection, empathy, endopathy, impathy, considering that it is not possible to expose the sense "other that exists" without consulting the phenomenological sphere itself where the problem of others emerges as a significant experience topic of the other's experience, as endopathy, but according to what is said: "world experience is not merely like my private world, but instead like an intersubjective world" (p.16). Husserl (1986) goes in depth with the intersubjective topic from a phenomenological explanation about alter ego, the purpose is to show how that alter ego is manifested in ego itself.

Beyond all the divergence that we may have with Carnap's thinking, we agree that empathy involves ethical values, that it is not a "knowing" and that it is a "doing" which causes shared feelings. However, we would add that empathy is also a "suffering", it is feeling affected by the affections of the other. Breithaupt (2011) believes that empathy is produced, because it is the similarity of the subject that observes and the one which is observed is overestimated. This overestimation is a condition which produces empathy, but in turn, it requires a certain control in order not to conceive others as similarities, in a way that "the empathy challenge consists in producing similarity" (p. 87). C has made it clear that her conception of the student as an anthropological pair does not mean the loss in her teaching identity by declaring: "I know more about philosophy than those in front of me". In this way, the symmetry and the dissymmetry mutually interfere, we do not agree with the idea about overestimating similarity in empathy.

In the light of the previous philosophical evaluation, we opt for the term "compathy" which its meaning is "compassion", but in the sense that Mélich (2006) assigns, in other words, it involves the *pathos*, affection, not remaining apathetic towards others' feelings which can be anguish as well as suffering or such as joy or happiness (pp. 96-97). Kindness therefore involves compathy.

Let's look again at the classroom situation in order to go into more detail about what was explained above, because empathy is demonstrated in communication. In a class, C explains to the group the meaning that Jaspers gives to communication. Related to the topic, C asks: What is Philosophy? And she includes her own views:

> The way in which I understand communication from heart to heart (…) has to do with *recognising the other as an anthropological pair, recognising the other's face, as forming a part of a pairing community*. This is not merely intellectual. It is existence. (…) And so, I believe that this communication is the sense of recognising the other, if not there is no communication of any kind, if the other is lost out of my sight it is because I am too distracted or too focused on a narcissistic feedback that does not see the other. From human communities to countries, from the micro to the macro goes with that I am saying. This has to do with Ethic (R3).

Here we can see that communication in the kindness framework is not expressed in an appropriate alterity reception of how oddly it maintains the subject centred on oneself, but instead, it allows for the subject to not remain enclosed in oneself. As Innerarity (2008) says, receptiveness about alterity moves away from the subject, from their "natural tendency of own redundancy, by resembling too much to oneself" (p. 21), in other words, kindness avoids the mentioned "narcissistic feedback" that alludes C. A few minutes later, a student says that he did not understand well the meaning of communication from "heart to heart", to which C replies:

> Well. It means recognising the other as an anthropological pair, as a human being, *and in our mutual dependence, interdependence. Because I am, for you (…). She (pointing at a student), her alterity, her not being C, gives me back me being C, like as her, my being, my alterity, because I am not her, she confirms her existence. This anthropological first thing*, which has nothing to do with loving your neighbour, *is recognising the alterity in the other* (R3).

Compathy is also revealed in recognising that her students are beginners in their university life: "The syllabus does not become easy because the object is complex, with even more meaning for

the first year students, *for beginner students*. It seems to me then, that *it is necessary that all the elements that facilitate accompaniment are unfolded*" (IQ).

Let's consider that exposing a section of a class will allow us to exemplify everything explained until now in a concrete manner, taking into account the students' perspective, whom in question 1.b. of our survey express their opinion about classes as: "a true introduction to the subject. It summarises fundamental concepts and succeeds in transmitting them with clarity. While it is a good synthesis, it is not reduced to simple topics. It opens doors to continue investigating further. And it does not lack in humour, this helps us to stay concentrated throughout the class" (AS 35-L3- 20). "The succession of classes are perfectly linked together. The topics that are exposed are clearly explained, so that there are no doubts. The methodology is brilliant" (AS 2-P1- 23).

Even though we have a wide range of recorded situations, we selected C's following discourse section:

> Theocentricism is a type of thinking that makes centre, which forms an axis in the figure of God. Great, be careful with that! It is a God that will have very particular characteristics, that is not from that field of ta theoi that we left a while ago, it is not a divine plan that myth was put in scene (…). I am making the differences (…). Keep this in mind: a God is a father. This father statement is unpublished. That God is a father, that he is a creator… Keep this in mind: father and guide. What I am bringing is precisely this mental scheme, not a piece of Catechism which has appeared on the course this afternoon just because I have gone mad…[6]

This expression causes general laughter, as a student expresses: "the teacher has a solid intellectual training. She engages with humour as a solemn disruptor in class but who teachers seriously" (AS 51- P1- 21).

Attempting to control the laughter, C continues by saying:

> No. It is not Catechism because the discourse that I am bringing is the one that corresponds to this theocentricism. I am talking about the Augustinian God, who is the father, the creator (…). God is the explanatory reason that explains everything else that is not explained. Therefore, God represents that principal, a guiding principal, that principal that *arkhein*… Very good (…). That origin does not exactly have to do with a temporary question, but instead we think about "origin" as a condition of possibility of all existence. The condition of possibility of all beings. Of being. Of everything that is (…). It is about a God what is the principal of creation, of an ex nihilo creation. What is that? Latin… creation from… nothing, from nothing to a being… That wilful intelligence creates because it wants to. What is that creation like? It is for love. No one forced God to create. If someone had forced him to create, it would not have been perfect because, in reality, there would be another pressure which would force something on. God creates love. God creates willingness. Not for necessity. The ones who have necessities are men, because they are precarious. But if God is a fulfilled being, an ontological being who is not lacking in anything, he cannot create for necessity. He creates because it is chanting to him. For love. For willingness. For freedom. Not for compulsion. Not because someone forces him. Why? I insist because this is very important to understand such a perfect structure as God's one. If something is needed, then it is not

6 The meaning of this expression is to mean that someone has lost mind, their sanity.

> perfect. If someone forces him, it is not perfect. I need things, to eat, to shelter myself in order to not die… because I am precarious. I act because of compulsion. The State is my employer and every Monday I come to Mar del Plata as a compulsion that has to do with this contract that I have established with my employer. Here there is nothing that forces you, because if there was someone who would be forced to be here there would be an ontological contradiction. There would be something in God's being that would not be a fulfilling being (…). How is God? Perfect. How is God? In-engendered. What does that mean? We are going to work above the word "in", its negative prefix, no one has engendered him, no one came up with him, because if so it would be limited. I am engendered. My limit is my mother and father. Every single one of you have a limit, because by being you were given by someone and at the same time it limits them in an absolute existence plan. God is three "omni": omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. And so is a fulfilling being. This is knowing to be fulfilling. This is the fulfilling power. While God is everywhere, I am in this floor tile and I cannot simultaneously be somewhere else (R9).

Let's consider that this narrative can be understood as an effort that C has made in order that her students understand, she does not assume that everyone is catholic and knows about these ideas, she uses a colloquial language, incorporates humorous expressions in order to keep everyone's attention and maintain a relaxed atmosphere, she uses real life examples, she repeats concepts so that auditory perception can be registered, ultimately, she responds to the call of the other that awaits to know. And she does it with teaching sensibility and as a human responsible for her role and with sufficient empathy as if she puts herself in the place of someone who is listening to such expressions, for example *ex nihilo,* for the first time.

We conclude with a student's significant perspective: "The charisma that C unwraps is admirable for some of us that comes from the 'other world'" (AS 20- P1- 18). We could not define with certainty what "the other world" is referred to. However, the student's appreciation shows that he feels included in the classroom life world. Due to his eighteen years of age, especially in university life, he is very young and surprised by the teacher's teaching that he considers "admirable". It is likely that this world that already belongs to his past, would have been populated by teachers that did not have a kindness ethic in their teaching.

6. CONCLUSION

Our investigation project does not have the intention to generalise data which would involve recreating the dominating, rational matrix in terms of the initial process contributing to teacher training. It has the intention of granting teachers' voices as a main objective which students have said that are those teachers who leave prints. This voice is granted from a significant variety of methodological instruments that allow us to access more profound subjectivities in contexts (diachronic and synchronic) related to teaching and learning that is at stake. The aspiration that happens in class, acts as a launching platform to improve practices, it compromises the clarity that the publication of these essays grant and support a line of work that substantially modify the subjects' lives that are going through relationships that configure potent affection which allows us to transform practices in order to grant a powerful anthropological sense. The affectionate, emotional and loving dimension that involves defining kindness in the teaching practices of this teacher, leave us in a place to analyse the performance in the university's transformation in teaching.

In this sense, the memorable teacher's teaching practices of our study achieve an effective student inclusion in the classroom dynamic by the means of distinctive characteristics that succeed in imprinting a teaching bond as a combined construction, sustained in an ethical approach, not excluding epistemological factors that take on the students' subjectivity as someone who's ontological quality is the same of that of someone who teaches. It is not about any homogenisation that would subsume the other in itself, but instead, it includes students in the same bonding relationship without hierarchy stratifications that would underestimate them. The teacher keeps up with certain widespread views that see youth negatively, the ones that analyse and criticise, but as a consequence she acts in way to transform situations of students' possible lack of interest or lack of commitment by contributing in overcoming unfavourable conditions based on certain problems that emerge from her previous training in secondary school. The classroom life is filled with kindness, in an analogy with kindness in other human relations, as Innerarity (2008) says that human life "involves rationality that is not identified as dominating, but instead as an opening, receptiveness and astonishment" (p. 39). The classes offer a window of opportunities and without this innovation and cultural evolution would not be possible.

Kindness involves a sequence of affection; it is not only a doing but also a concern with the other. In other words, it implies sufficient awareness in order to accept alterity questioning in a complex interplay between affection and intellect in which inclusion, empathy and responsibility create that bonding relationship. Therefore, the students characterise C's teaching with sensitive and moral terms which simultaneously express their experiences, such as: accessibility, openness, friendliness, respect, non-arrogant, kind, simplicity and trustworthy. They also recognise the teacher's professional expertise.

We will conclude with a poetic expression, since kindness has revealed to be an ethic that also configures a teaching aesthetic: "Dar amparo, recibir, es recibir lo que nadie puede darse a sí: la alteridad" (Giving protection, receiving, is receiving what no one give themselves: alterity) (Mujica, 2004, p. 126).

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