



Educación XX1

ISSN: 1139-613X

educacionxx1@edu.uned.es

Universidad Nacional de Educación a

Distancia

España

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Deliberative democracy and education

Educación XX1, núm. 10, 2007, pp. 179-193

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia

Madrid, España

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## DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

(DEMOCRACIA DELIBERATIVA Y EDUCACIÓN\*)

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### ABSTRACT

The word *topos* is Greek and denotes a place. Later on, it took on the meaning of the Latin *locus communis*-literally “common place”. The English word “commonplace” is rendered in the Oxford English Dictionary as “an ordinary topic of conversation” or “an everyday saying; a platitude”.

In my paper I would like to stress the existential aspect of the topic, related to the “deep” topics of enmity and conflict, of friendship and love and care, themes that are reiterated and re-established in the more or less artificial settings that we call schooling and education. This leads me to the question of the transcendental, or rather the work of the transcendental in the activity of education. The main point is that the transcendental is not far away or beyond of our real life, but has its place and setting in that very life, inside the life we live. My argument here starts with a thought figure sifted from G.W.F. Hegel's *Logic*, the finite-infinite relation presented in the first book under the heading of the Doctrine of Being. There is, in short, an inner and intimate relationship between the finite and the infinite, the real and the utopian, the here and the beyond. I shall argue that Hegel's dialectic configures an everyday, existential and transcendental thinking relevant for education.

## RESUMEN

*Topos* es la palabra griega que denota un lugar. Este término tomó posteriormente el significado del latín *locus communis* -literalmente, "lugar común". Y el Diccionario de Oxford traduce la palabra inglesa "commonplace" como "un tema ordinario de conversación" que viene a ser lo que se entiende en castellano por "tópico" o "lugar común".

En mi artículo me gustaría subrayar el aspecto existencial de los "tópicos", tales como por ejemplo, la enemistad y el conflicto, o la amistad y amor; que son temas recurrentes y reestablecidos en los escenarios más o menos artificiales a los que llamamos escolarización y educación. Esto me conduce hacia la cuestión de lo trascendental o, mejor, al papel que desempeña lo trascendental en la actividad educativa. El punto principal es que lo trascendental no es lo que está lejano o más allá de nuestra existencia ordinaria, sino que se encuentra dentro de la misma vida que vivimos. Mi argumento comienza con la consideración de la íntima e intrínseca relación entre lo finito y lo infinito, lo real y lo utópico, el aquí y el más allá, tal como la presenta Hegel en el epígrafe dedicado a la Doctrina del Ser, en el primer libro de su *Lógica*. Sostendré que la dialéctica hegeliana configura un modo de pensar cotidiano, existencial y trascendental, que tiene una gran relevancia para la educación.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades the soul and future of western liberal society has increasingly been discussed under the label of deliberative democracy. What is deliberative democracy? The term deliberative harks back to the European Enlightenment, to Immanuel Kant's idea of "publicity", to Edmund Burke's idea of the parliament as a "deliberative assembly", and later to John Stuart Mill's idea of a "government by discussion"<sup>1</sup>. The modern idea of deliberation relates to a critical scientific spirit, to a constitution, and to the institutions that assure the principles of freedom and justice in the western democratic state. The salient features of today's democracy are often caught in the distinction between representative, participatory and deliberative practices, that is, voting, cooperation and rational discussion. The first refers to individuals in elections, the second to collective problem solving, and the third to the justification of moral and political claims in argumentation. Democracy is a mix of problem-solving practices including discussion, negotiation, bargaining and voting. Many everyday conflicts are, as we all know, solved by discussions that have elements of negotiation in them and may reach a final decision only by flipping a coin or by casting a vote.

I shall not talk about the individual in terms of personal character traits, virtues or attitudes. Rather, in addition to rational discourse as the basic component of a deliberative education, I would like to suggest the importance of existential *topoi*, well aware of the fact that I then extend the notion to include existential questions that go beyond strict deliberation. What is a *topos*? *Topos* is Greek and denotes a place, as in topography, the mapping of geographical areas. The term soon became part and parcel of classical and modern rhetoric,

and according to Aristotle *topoi* applied “equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many things that have nothing to do with each other”<sup>2</sup>. The word *topos* later took on the meaning of the Latin *locus communis* - literally “common place”. The English word “commonplace” is rendered in the Oxford English Dictionary as “an ordinary topic of conversation” or “an everyday saying; a platitude”.

In my paper I would like to stress the existential aspect of the topic, related to the “deep” topics of enmity and conflict, or friendship and love and care, themes that are reiterated and re-established in the more or less artificial settings that we call schooling and education. This leads me to the question of the transcendental, or rather the work of the transcendental in the activity of education. The main point is that the transcendental is not the far away or beyond of our real life, but has its place and setting in that very life-its inside the life we live. My argument here starts with a thought figure sifted from G.W.F. Hegel's *Logic*, the finite-infinite relation presented in the first book of that work under the heading of the Doctrine of Being. There is, in short, an inner and intimate relationship between the finite and the infinite, the real and the utopian, the here and the beyond. I shall argue that Hegel's dialectic configures an everyday, existential and transcendental thinking relevant for education.

The traditional distinction between reason and virtues, what we do as autonomous agents and what we do as embedded in the mores of our forebears, often makes us pass by the ethical phenomena that I call existential *topoi* of, for example, love and friendship, death and mourning. These *topoi* or topics open on to dialogues on the human condition by authors like Hannah Arendt, Martha Nussbaum or Jacques Derrida. Consider love. Love is neither a procedure for problem solving, like inquiries, negotiations or argumentation; nor a personal virtue like courage, compassion or humility, important as these are in themselves. Existential topics neither submit to the formal moral point of view of the Kantian, nor to the analysis of personal virtues or local values of the Aristotelian. They range freely across genre boundaries and they are indeed often better described in novels and poems and films than in philosophical tracts. *Topoi* describe the “places” where persons meet and events happen; the emotions they stir, the actions they instigate and the stories they engender. The rendering of topics in this wide sense contributes to answering the question of what I owe to myself and what I owe to others. They are made for reflection and dialogue rather than for decision.

Dialogue tempers inculcation and tradition is made transparent. When the teacher is not assigned an unquestioned authority, she is free to fashion authority in her work with the students. When the curriculum is not determined by the received canon of texts, she and her colleagues may discuss the paradox “There is no canon, thus we need one!” and thus question the established doxa. When the school stops controlling by a system of rules and regulations, teachers and students are free to discipline themselves in inquiry and coopera-

tion. When individuality is seen in its double description as definable and inefable, stable and restless, the teacher may start to appreciate the fine balance between giving her verdict and withholding it, between establishing an adequate rhetoric of cooperation and accepting a common fallible future. Reflections such as these have not made much of a dent in the current debate on education. The effect of globalisation and the world wide competitive agenda inaugurated by the OECD/PISA-evaluation tests in 2000 and 2003, and the thrust towards knowledge and elementary skills as the sovereign aims of teaching, now characterises the discussions both within and without the academy. Politicians are pursuing their goals along the dated opposition between the dialogical, child centred, pedagogy and the teacher-directed knowledge and skills pedagogy. In this topsy-turvy world progressive pedagogy is outdated and outdated pedagogy is progressive, with deliberation rather low on the practical agenda.

Argumentation points itself out as a civilising means in a highly differentiated society dependent on reaching a consensus on political matters. Argumentation is the prime rational tool because it is based, not on local habits and traditions for problem solving, but on taking the perspective of the other according to the principle of universalisation. The abstraction from both personal prejudice and public opinion makes way for the point of view of all possible participants in discourse. This is a valid ideal even if the participation of all in rational argumentation is factually limited by class, talent and luck. We shall see below that the opposition between ideal and real is in fact a vital dynamic relation. As a case of the Hegelian finite-infinite thought figure, the relation defends rather than defeats discourse. The first question now is if the principle of universality or impartiality has educative implications beyond the thin air of the universalised norms themselves. The overall ideal approach of discourse ethics points to its limits. Yet the opposition between real and ideal does not, as we shall see, scorn real discourse but rather belongs to it as a motivating force. Just to take an example, despite the fact that class, family and access to education systematically exclude many people from taking part in political discourse, we may include them in principle-the ideal of inclusion has, after all, been a main political motive in the effort to spread democracy to the poor and underprivileged in western social democracies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Any claim raised in the family, the schoolroom or in political disputes, can be tested for its local validity in argumentation. There are also features of utility involved in discourse ethics, since the discussants have to take the possible future consequences of their adjudications into consideration. Yet some aspects of life are beyond the pale of rational argumentation: human emotions and passions in everyday interaction. Their neglect makes reasonableness stumble in its path. What works in the seminar discussions does not always work in family quarrels, and what is decided in court does not solve family conflicts, as persons who take custody quarrels to court often realise. Bullying in schools are obvious cases for normative argumentation, for example according to The Convention on the Rights of the Child, when it speaks against "attacks" on the

other person's "honour and reputation". Impartial judgment is, as teachers know, often not enough. If we want to get things right, moral argumentation has to be tempered by intuition, tact and emotional support from teachers and peers.

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL POINT OF VIEW

So far, deliberative education has been modelled around rational procedures for resolving moral conflicts as an alternative to teaching by inculcation or seduction. The transcendental is non-factual, it points to things you cannot see, touch or taste. They apply to discourse in general, yet do their work "inside" each singular discourse. Ideals is not free-floating mind stuff but constrained by time and place, by the rational resources of the actual cases. The force of the argument rather depends on the dialectical relation between what I say and the anticipations that plays into the case. Force belongs to language and to the argumentation that brings the real-ideal relation to life in singular cases. Both Habermas and Derrida refer to real-ideal dialectics in their thinking, even if they come to quite different conclusions as to its import and consequences. For Habermas the transcendental feature of language, as expressed in "the ideal speech situation", is a pragmatic premise that makes the wheels of argumentation turn smoothly on their ball bearings. For Derrida the transcendental feature contributes to the paradoxes of speech and action that leads to aporias, and to certain kind of aporetic reflection<sup>3</sup>. Discourse ethics relies on the hypothetical attitude, a more or less formal rule following and an appetite for consensus. Deconstructive ethics comes through as the aporetic restlessness that resides in the text as a promise or an expectation of things to come-a messianism without Messiah, to speak in Derrida's own vocabulary. To make out the differences I shall recover what I take to be their common Hegelian background.

The turn to language offers an alternative to fixedness in thinking. The alternative had an early spokesman in von Humboldt, but it is Hegel who configures my discussion in his description of the finite-infinite relation. With an explicit reference to and criticism of Kant's view of the "ought" - *das Sollen* - of duty, Hegel argues in his *Logic* that the ought, by implying a future ideal, implicates a limit (*Grenze*) or limitation (*Schranke*) between ideal and real. A current example: the promise you make here and now points, at the same time, beyond that situation, to its possible fulfilment or disappointment. The promise, then, sets the limit between the present and the future, between the expressed pledge and its fulfilment or not. In the ought of the promise the present and the future are thus already internally related, as is the case with marriage vows and business contracts. If you ask "Where is the future fulfilment?" one answer is "The future is here!" with all its existential certainties and uncertainties. That is to say, you cope with the promise as an existential *topos*. On the other hand, when the ought is withdrawn, the future withdraws, too, the same way con-

tracts that are cashed in are no longer contracts. Instead of making the ought into a Kantian regulative idea, something apart and beyond, Hegel situates it in the present, as a dilemma or rather contradiction that exists in the present situation. The limit, then, is a limitation that affects us existentially as the oscillation or alternation between the present and the future in the here and now. Hegel thus transforms Kant's regulative idea into the transcendence of the concrete other: the promise is the limit rather than the solid ground, the restless relation between an honest pledge and the fact that the honesty may not be redeemed. The simple question "What ought I to do?" invokes the infinite as internally relation to the finite, as the flip sides of the same coin, the infinite as real as the finite in each singular case. The ought has, says Hegel, "... its place and its validity in the sphere of finitude ... the ought is only the standpoint that clings to finitude and thus to contradiction"<sup>4</sup>. The satisfactions of the ought are never fully enjoyed, it is a suspended satisfaction and thus aporetic. With Hegel's figure of thought philosophy made a significant step toward a post-metaphysical and neo-pragmatic stand that is still nourished by the transcendental. Hegel configures the present discussion whether you invoke Habermas' ideal speech situation or Derrida's *différance*.

Habermas has been criticised for his idea of the ideal speech situation and has, over the years, highlighted its mundane pragmatic features. In an interview conducted with Torben Hviid Nielsen in 1990 he distances himself a bit from his earlier use of the term. He stresses the fact that we orient ourselves by this idea when we want to give all voices in a discourse a hearing and when we hold that the best arguments available should be brought to bear. The ideals do not, then, work as regulative ideas in the Kantian sense - there are no stars that may stir the imagination and lead our efforts. As Habermas puts it: "The point is, rather, that if we want to enter into argumentation, we must make these presuppositions of argumentation *as a matter of fact*, despite the fact that they have an ideal content to which we can only approximate in reality"<sup>5</sup>. The point is that the presupposition that validity claims can be made good, the "as if" of the redemption of those claims, exists as a fact within the very discourse we carry out. Or as Hegel put it above: "the ought have its place and validity in the sphere of finitude".

Philosophers of education have noted that the procedural-deliberative model of democracy tend to exclude those features of modern society that go beyond rational discourse<sup>6</sup>. In his book *Back to the Rough Ground*, Joseph Dunne asks: Is there a thicker idea of practice than the one suggested by a strict idea of deliberation? His deconstruction of Aristotle leads him to the idea of a "phronetic" *techne*, i.e., one whose responsiveness to the situation is not fully specifiable in advance and which is experiential, charged with perceptiveness, and rooted in the sensory and emotional life"<sup>7</sup>. Dunne's question brings us beyond the quarrel between liberals and communitarians, between those who want to foster rational rule-directed practices and those who want to teach the virtues. It leads me to the simple question: are there phenomena in life that can

be taught even if they are neither skills nor virtues? The answer is, I have already suggested, found in the existential *topoi*. Among those are trust, care and tolerance-and love, joy and happiness. They make up our everyday life but are not methods or procedures. Neither are they personal dispositions or virtues like friendliness or fidelity or patience. That means they do not fit easily into the rule-governed activities of teaching and learning.

Sometimes these phenomena may, of course, be tilted toward descriptions of personal qualities and habits, as in the virtues of a loving, friendly or caring person. But *topoi* have a much broader descriptive scope, they are more akin to Karl Jaspers' "limit situations" (suffering, struggle and death), Martin Heidegger's "existentials" (making room, concern, attunement) and the Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup's "spontaneous life expressions" (speech, trust, and care). They take on the character of existential phenomena that are intimate parts of ordinary people's life but not necessarily of their character. For the philosophers just mentioned existential situations have an ontological status: they belong to human existence despite the variety in their cultural expressions. In C. S. Lewis's account of the four loves of affection, friendship, eros and charity in his book *The Four Loves*, they are woven into our everyday conversation, yet nobody would mistake them for personal virtues<sup>8</sup>. *Topoi* are not privileged but range from the commonplaces in the weekly *Cosmopolitan* to the conversations between teachers and students and on to textual and cultural analyses. They are unavoidable and recurrent life themes or topics that we keep on talking about in private and public, in a way that take us beyond the particular relation between speaker and hearer to a wider variety of common concerns. *Topoi* can even have non-linguistic features. As embedded in the material situations that determine the choreography of our thoughts and actions, as embodied in the pains and passions we express they colour our relations with others.

So why insist on putting such flimsy things back into a theory of deliberative education? What can an aporetics - raising questions without providing neat answers - ever do for education? Readers of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* often overlook the human drama in Hegel's concept of experience, the fact that the "... road [to knowledge] can ... be regarded as the pathway of doubt, or more precisely as the way of despair"<sup>9</sup>. Experience appears as both a gift and a curse, the *pharmakon* that Derrida used to speak of. Hegel's description of the master-slave relation in the *Phenomenology*<sup>10</sup> brings to view that mutual recognition, self-realisation in the eyes of the other, is achieved by dramatic transformations, personal, social and political. These struggles bear witness to a life of restlessness and despair, as well as of promise and hope. In this context authenticity (Rousseau) and autonomy (Kant) as the "right" that modernity has bestowed on its citizens, become fragile political goods that are historically transformed and never finalised. Yet, in the face of disappointments and defeat we never stop presenting self-realisation and freedom as hopes and aims for education. We cope with this fate because the alternative to doubt and despair is stasis and stagnation and the repetition of the same. We cope because



of the paradoxical freedom inherent in aims that cannot and should not materialise. We cope because perfect knowledge means the death of wisdom, perfect self-realisation the death of self and perfect education the death of education. So our most cherished aims better remain, in Derrida's words, parts of "impure" processes that are never finalised and thus leave us free to explore our finitude. In this sense Derrida can say that "The self, the *autos* of legitimating and legitimated self-foundation, *is still to come*, not as a future reality but as that which will always retain the essential structure of promise and as that which can only arrive as such, as *to come*"<sup>11</sup>. This is, I think, the gist of deconstruction in the context of education.

## EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

In education, democracy is traditionally treated in the stories handed over from historians and political scientists. Some programmes of civic education seem on the whole happy to teach its institutions and explain its workings according to the textbook. Others, aware of the motivational and educative force of practical participation in democratic processes, engage the students in project work and in internal decision making. The recent neo-liberal thinking fails here, partly because of its idea of freedom as freedom of choice, but more significantly because of its reliance on systems integration. It configures the school as a system of pressure and control, the curricula as goal-rather than aims-related, and teaching as coaching for efficiency. Its freedom of choice is a freedom of closure. What, then, to expect from the radical "perhaps" of deconstruction? The preliminary answer is that the analysis of the radical perhaps reminds us that education for democracy is no algorithm; that democracy is not a given fixture, and that political education must go beyond mere instruction and initiation—that is, if we want to defend and teach a viable democracy in our educational institutions.

We are not completely determined by the institutions and situations we are part of. An example may illustrate the point in its practical significance. In January of 2005 the Norwegian Student's Organisation staged a boycott of the national tests introduced a few years ago and conducted on four different age levels; among them the first year of higher secondary education (ages 16-19). The NSO's main grievance was the decision by the Ministry of Education to publish the school leagues on the internet. This was taken as a breach of privacy since the public results could be traced back both to the particular school and to the individual student. Another, implicit, theme was that the students willy-nilly had to participate in the global competitive schemes pursued by politicians and established by the Ministry in conformity with the international OECD-PISA studies of 2000 and 2003. The students wanted their legitimate interests as individuals and students to be respected and recognised. The boycott is interesting on several counts. The most obvious is that the 16-year-olds

that participated literally walked out of their role as clients in the machinery of teaching and evaluation. The NSO worked as a Trojan horse, so to speak, within the established system of administration, which baffled the authorities. The immediate reaction of the Minister of Education was to threaten with low marks, a punishment directed at their character and comportment as well as their academic performance. The fact was that no public laws or regulations had actually been violated, which made state sanctions illegitimate and local education authority action ineffective (only 2% of Norwegian schools are private). The Minister admitted later, on a TV talk show, that the woman president of the NSO was a quick and clever person—an oblique recognition of her and the boycott action. The response was one of civil wisdom, because the students had, arguably, acted according to the aims of a democratic education, as put down in § 1 of the Norwegian Education Act of 1999. They acted like responsible students in a field traditionally defined as administrative and non-political.

As a legitimate NGO action the boycott challenged traditional systems of legitimization, pitting civil society against the power of the state education authorities. The action temporarily opened the doors for a discourse in which validity questions could be raised, for example the question of the right of state schools to impose competition on international and national school systems, down to local schools, teachers and students. The action also moved the conflict from the level of system integration to that of moral integration, that is, from the steering mechanisms of competition and control to discourse and justification. In order to stage the discussion the students took to strategic action, which shows how political conflicts are characteristically muddled: public discourse opened up by strategic and tactical action. The struggle posed a challenge to those who reflect on deliberative democratic education: how can political protest and deliberation be a legitimate part of secondary education; is it legitimate to see 16-year-olds as sovereign citizens? Whatever answers that are given, the boycott demonstrates a more adult role for teenagers in contemporary digital society. Habermas reminds us of “... the peculiar character of reflexivity that constitutional principles enjoy”<sup>12</sup>. Applied to the student protest the educational authorities had to tolerate “civil disobedience” on the part of the students because the constitution covers such acts on the condition that the “... rule-breaking resistance be plausibly justified in the spirit and wording of the constitution and conducted by symbolic means that lend the fight the character of a non-violent appeal to the majority to once again reflect on their decisions”<sup>13</sup>.

Derrida's analysis is part of an aporetic: the sense for what calls for a reflection that widens the field of political insights. The aporetic is not conjured up by political defeatist but, in this case, offers a diagnosis open to discussion and to political action. The aporetic attitude is, I think, the reason why some readers get impatient or even reject Derrida's analyses instead of seeing them, in their preliminary, diagnostic and heuristic mode, as part of a deliberative democracy. Our hopes for democracy is, as Derrida has it, “... faith in the possibility of this impossibility and, in truth, undecidable thing from the point

of view of knowledge, science, and conscience that must govern all our decisions”<sup>14</sup>. We cannot fully or totally implement democracy (total control as totalitarian democracy, a contradiction in terms), so we have to rest content with the “democracy to come”. Political science cannot fully catch social reality in its conceptual schemes, and rational procedures often do not touch the underlying problems of democracy. That leaves us democracy as “undecidable” and in need of “faith”, a word that has a religious ring to and refers to a complex of thought and feeling. This is the place where Derrida clearly distances himself from the proceduralism of discourse ethics. Democratic responsibility is not, he says, exhausted in “... following, applying or realizing a norm or rule” that leads to “a calculable consequence”<sup>15</sup>. Those who think or act according to political algorithms are, in a certain sense, irresponsible because the manual or recipe has it all laid out for them. In a world of the recipes there is no fear or trembling, and thus only the responsibility of making things to order. At a deeper level following the rules is irresponsible because the sense of the world is laid to rest. Derrida's critique of rule-following can be read as a criticism of purposeful and strategic action on par with Habermas' critique of instrumentalist action. But it can also be read as a critique of the hypothetical attitude of discourse ethics, and the formalism that runs through Habermas' pragmatics. But be not deceived by the differences between Derrida and Habermas! On the eve of Bush's and Tony Blair's war against Iraq in early March 2003 the two of them together wrote an article in the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* denouncing the occupation as unfounded and illegitimate.

For Derrida practised hospitality is opposed to “pure” hospitality. Pure hospitality, Derrida says, is “practically impossible to live” (I would leave out “practically” here). It cannot be defined or organised, it has no legal or political status, and thus seems to be beyond our powers and of no practical significance. Yet, he continues, “... without this pure and unconditional hospitality ... we would have no concept of hospitality in general”. That is to say, without it we cannot practise hospitality; we do not have a form our life according to an ethical point of view<sup>16</sup>. The concept of pure hospitality makes it possible to demand a redress of the violated right to hospitality, it works as criterion of hospitality proper. What is lost with the loss of pure hospitality? Derrida provides an answer by relating that he learnt from philosophy “... the necessity of posing transcendental questions in order not to be held within the fragility of an incompetent empiricist discourse, and thus it is in order to avoid empiricism, positivism and psychologism that it is endlessly necessary to renew transcendental questioning”<sup>17</sup>. The right method often promises the adequate resolution. Derrida's purport is negative: to stop impatient measures in their track and keep the avenues of discourse open in a world of hasty resolutions. Hospitality in this sense gives us pause for reflection and thus avoids its own death at the hands of premature closure.

Again, how can “pure” concepts like hospitality, justice, friendship, care, trust, love still remain part of the everyday world? Again, a key to the answer

lies in Hegel's thought figure. Real hospitality survives because we cannot act toward the other without implying pure hospitality, that is, a pragmatics of hospitality. As human beings situated, so to speak, in the *topoi* just mentioned we are bound to "re-inscribe" the pure into everyday life. Derrida prefers to speak here of "transactions" that realise ethical responsibilities, and these transactions are as real as you can get them. The finite-infinite relation appears in practice as the limit situations of hospitality or care or love even when they are not felicitous, when they fail and collapse. Likewise we hold on to the promise of democracy in the face of its crises-with hope as the integral part of democracy in transaction. Derrida's promise of the "democracy to come" is the infinite reflected back upon the present life, the expectation of a renewed democracy, the sensitivity for what is in the coming, reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's concept of natality. The sense of coming into being implies a history that does not repeat itself and the accidental that cannot be predicted. 9/11 belongs to the history of terrorism but it is a different story from earlier state -or anarchist-terrorism; and it could not be predicted any more than the disintegration of the Soviet empire after 1989-the first revolution without a shot fired. These are main stream reflections that get their "forbidding", and among many academics forbidden, expression in Derrida's work. At the same time every finite-infinite transaction has its place in situations of finitude and singularity. The unique cannot be universalised, and in this respect deconstruction stands at the far end of discourse ethics. But *techné* cannot be avoided. As Derrida has it in an interview, this time about respect for the other: "Deconstruction must not impose itself. But at the same time, obviously, this respect is a calculation; it is contaminated by calculation"<sup>18</sup>. Derrida is always ready to detect the impurities of a life that is tainted by double descriptions of the calculable and the not calculable. We tend to accept such descriptions in novels and short stories, where they make for irony and drama, crisis and suspense. But they are, understandably, not happily admitted into the life of the scientist or teacher who is routinely working under the dictates of procedure and control.

The freedom to teach is contaminated by calculation: to make freedom part of democratic thinking and action. To make something is to draw the blood of freedom for the benefit of practical needs, which, in the context of the citation above, is the teaching of philosophy. Teaching needs methods. But at the same time, deconstruction "must not impose itself"; it cannot take the form of an algorithm, however lax it is. The crux of an education for deliberative democracy, then, is that responsible teaching may just take the responsibility out of teaching. When the ends and means are set, our responsibilities are accordingly set and circumscribed. The procedures for making validity claims good, the technicisms of legitimate action both extend and curb our democratic responsibilities. The same paradox befalls teaching when democratic virtues harden into set habits. It may seem that deconstruction, essentially occupied with *topoi* rather than rules or virtues, may free us from this paradox. It does not. If anything it sharpens the pain of the paradox. *Topoi* do not imply the technicisms of argumentation or inculcation, they are part of the self-examined life that has to

be endured. On the one hand the *topoi* mentioned -and the list is easily prolonged- describe everyday situations within given cultural contexts. They are the “places” where thinking dwells, in Heidegger's parlance. They recur as topics in education when teachers and students reflect on friendship, justice and the care for the other. On the other hand, *topoi* are in a sense outside the ken of the educational: they exist independently of teaching the virtues and the rules we play by in our pursuit of a democratic form of life.

Do *topoi*, then, belong to a third category -a pre-ethical one, grounding or overriding rules and virtues? I think not. *Topoi* are unavoidable parts of the human condition, presented in scriptures, philosophies and novels. But they are not categorical; they cannot be appropriated by dogma, culled by scientific theories or configured into social mores; and they cannot be made into a canon for an education for democracy. They cannot, because they are radical experiences that raise new and different questions and answers. I have presented those experiences as the relation between the finite and the infinite, as a mental restlessness, as living on the edge; and therefore as the fate of vulnerable minds. It may, after all, be a bearable life, a life of educative experiences, as we find it in Derrida's descriptions of friendship and hospitality and of “democracy to come”, buoyed as they are by promise and hope. It is a bearable life even when we introduce the evil infinite, the threats we nurture in the dark recesses of the psyche and re-enact in self-destructive politics. In any case, I do not think we can talk about education for a deliberative democracy without taking this critique upon us as thinkers and teachers, and as responsible citizens of an open society.

## NOTES

- \* Lecture given at UNED, Madrid, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007. A longer version of this article has been published as "Education for Deliberative Democracy", in GUR ZE'EV, I. & ROTH, K. (Eds.) *Critical Issues in Education in a Global World*, Springer, London 2007.
- 1.- See Elster, Jhon (ed. 1999): *Deliberative Democracy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
  - 2.- See Aristotle: Rhetoric 1358a, 12. In Jonathan Barnes, ed (1984): *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol Two, Princeton. Princeton, University Press.
  - 3.- See especially Derrida, Jacques (1993): *Aporias*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
  - 4.- *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Translated by A. V. Miller (1976). London, George Allen & Unwin, p 135-136.
  - 5.- Habermas, Jürgen (1993): *Justification and Application. Remarks on Discourse Ethics*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, p 164.
  - 6.- See for example Bauer, Walter: Demokratisierung als reflexive Lernprozeß. In Abeldt, Sönke/Bauer, Walter Hrsg (2000): "...was es bedeutet, verletzbarer Mensch zu sein", Mainz, Grünewald, p 237.
  - 7.- Ibid p 355.
  - 8.- I am grateful to Maria G. Amilburu for commending Lewis' book to me.
  - 9.- See Hegel, (1807/1977): *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p 49 §78. In German there is a significant wordplay here between *Zweifel* and *Verzweiflung*, the first referring to the cognitive dissonance, the second to existential despair. Hegel does not accept the gap between thinking and feeling.
  - 10.- Ibid, p 111ff. Hegel plays of the German words *Zweifel* and *Verzweiflung*.
  - 11.- Derrida, Jacques (2002): *Who's Afraid of Philosophy: Right to Philosophy 1*. Stanford, Stanford University press, p 22.
  - 12.- Ibid p 41.
  - 13.- Ibid p 42.
  - 14.- Ibid p 115.
  - 15.- Ibid p 134.
  - 16.- Borradori, Giovanna (2003): *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, p 129.
  - 17.- Mouffe, Chantal (1996): *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. London, Routledge, p 81f.
  - 18.- Derrida, Jacques (2002): *Negotiations*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, p 15.

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## **KEY WORDS**

Democracy, Dialectics, "Topos".

## **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Democracia, Dialéctica, "Topos".

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Fecha recepción del artículo: 10. mayo. 2007

Fecha aceptación del artículo: 11. junio. 2007