

Opponent's review of the Doctoral Thesis written by Brian Policoff: "Epimeleia: Care for the Soul"

The purpose of the thesis is explained by the author: "The purpose of this work is to introduce the subject of Epimeleia (care) as the necessary and fundamental premise of educational endeavours. The focus of these endeavours is not directed toward any fixed point but instead, driven by attention to and delight in the process. The outcome of this human experience in becoming, is absent of any goal, beyond that of a life well-led." (Abstract, p. 2)

The starting point of author's considerations constitutes the question: "Why do we teach?" (p. 2) As author explains, this question is not posed to be solved once and for all, but its purpose is to open the space for further asking (p. 6). Other important provides the fact that in intelligence tests the only one and linear activity of the mind is assumed as testable and measurable by the number of operations per time limit. In contrast, we can see that to every person belong his own and unique way of approaching the world, i.e. his own unique rationality. The author uses the concept of multiple intelligences as it is developed by psychologist Howard Gardener (pp. 28-29). From this concept, the social as well as educational consequences are explicated. According to Gardener, we must acknowledge as equal the multiple intelligences and thus persons in their uniqueness. This ideal is not achieved in the society based only on economic calculation (pp. 34-5). Author also discusses the scientific effort to define our own human experience. With reference to Vygotsky, he stresses the dependence of cognition on cultural context (p. 43). Here, the concept of the care is introduced: according to the author, we need to care for the way how student grows up in the world. The author criticizes that teachers are more focused on testing procedures than on the understanding the world. The inner motivation for studying is stressed. In the light of modern emphasizing of assertiveness in education, author's insight that the external affirmation leads to the dependence on this affirmation seems to be very interesting (pp. 64-6). Critical considerations are focused on the violence of money, power and status, valued as the highest criteria for success in modern society (p. 74). According to the author, teachers are able to oppose this tendency the justice in *epimeleia* and authenticity in *arête*. But, as the author points out, these two substantial moments are lost in the modern school. So here the task arises: to provide the *anamnesis* of the meaning of education. We appreciate that the author goes his own way. Also his effort to understand phenomenology and using it for deepened asking concerning teaching and learning must be highlighted.

As a consequence of the above considerations, these questions follow:

- 1) How to reconcile the tension between universality of intelligence on the one hand and uniqueness and multiplicity of intelligences (the concept of *multiple intelligences*) on the other hand?
- 2) With regard to author's calls for the *epimeleia* and *arête* as a hope for modern society: Is the form of our society something depending on our sole will? Is not this presumption precisely founding for the culture of measurement as a means for controlling and constructing society according to our will?
- 3) What is the essence of intelligence?

Inasmuch as the presented dissertation fulfils the criteria, *I recommend it to be defended.*

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