**Educational Philosophy:** *A Work In Progress*

My educational philosophy is an end itself—a striving towards an unachievable ideal. It is an ideal that keeps me restless. In other words, this ideal is never achievable, while, simultaneously providing the compass towards this ideal. It equates to wrestling and giving birth to an idea (Hansen) by creatively engaging with facts (Freire, 2005). It is never perfect but ongoingly refined in the process of becoming more educated. It is a dynamic seeking, refining, and ultimately transforming process.

Education is a pre-state of philosophy that requires consciousness (Curren). In other words, it provides a parameter in which one’s training can be judged. It is a central aim to bring forward the best in humans (Curren). It provides a standard in which good training can be evaluated within education’s proper confines (Peters, 1964). In other words, it applies to its intrinsic standards. Moreover, this standard does not solely refer to training. Instead, it also ought to improve a person’s introspection. This intrinsic goal of education is what Freire calls “consciousness as consciousness of consciousness” (2005).

Although education is in contemporary times seen mainly as a means, it does not imply that one ought to treat it as such. In fact, education ought not to be treated as a means to an end since it loses its intrinsic nature. If one does, one distorts its purpose. That is providing the standard whereby good training (education) ought to be judged after. For example, no matter the nature of the training, its aim is educational. It is inward as supposed outward driven. That implies that training trains humans for their flourishment (Curren), whether to provide the best education for being an activist, carpenter or a teacher within education’s own confines.

Let me illustrate my point because it can be tricky when it comes to humans. First, because humans have choices, whereas dogs and other animals don't. In other words, measured by the same standard, we easily think of education as a choice, and a means to an end. For example, to become the best husband, wife or educator, I need to study the curriculum to achieve X, Y and Z. Consequently, I can achieve to be this and that. In this sense, education is outward- instead of inward driven—meaning within its own confines.

Education’s intrinsic aim is critical because it provides the standards to judge a training's educational quality accordingly. For example, it provides the standards in which a student and aspiring activist from East St. Louis ought to be trained to enact changes in their immediacy, ideally. An activist or carpenter’s ideal education needs a reference to judge the respective education. Consequently, education ought to attempt, due to its training, to set standards that can alleviate or anticipate repeating historical human failure.

How does such an ideal, in other words, my educational philosophy translates into practice? At first sight, it seems an oxymoron. As I stated above, an ideal can never be achieved, let alone implemented. Therefore, it seems not more than a thought experiment. It seems another idealistic but unpractical approach to teaching and learning. However, it does not differ much from our ‘practical’ practice itself. In other words, our practice is still innately fallible, a mirror of ourselves. At best, there is the aim of best practice. As a result, to be clear about one’s ideal becomes the pivot of all that follows.

How then does such an attempt of best practice look like and for whom? While I agree with Macedo that Plato’s thought has little immediacy, at first sight, in East St. Louis, it might do so in the long run. However, as I tried to illustrate above, the point is not that education is a means; instead, it is an end itself. That is to provide a standard whereby the educational level can be judged, according to the subject’s specific confines. For example, it is the best training to become an activist to impact (in the immediacy or the long term) positively East St. Louis. This implies that education might differ. In other words, the standard whereby we judge an education as valuable or less valuable.

The question then becomes, how ought educational standards look like in East St. Louis or Westmount? Unsurprisingly, they might look very different based on people’s contexts. In other words, the standards differ because each subject (or craft) students want to engage in may differ. On the other hand, to automatically assume a kid growing up in a poor socioeconomic neighbourhood as East St. Louis wants to become an activist to improve his/her community is problematic in itself too. The same applies to a kid in Westmount growing up in a socioeconomic wealthy family.

In other words, don’t we reinforce the stereotypes that educational content ought to be much different between East St. Louis and a wealthy neighbourhood such as Montréal’s Westmount? In other words, don’t we reinforce this inequality by possibly assigning more hands-on reading? For example, to combat systemic racism, one must engage it with the very language or origin it is made of. Hansen's notion of an idea as a process while simultaneously assessing its potential consequences requires precisely this. Influential ideas must be studied, not in a romanticized manner, but each student's relative historical context.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s helps us to understand what such a process entails and how non-linear and complex it is. “Man” has little influence on the education of nature (biology). That is to say, nature might not necessarily help in ethical decision making without implying that biology determines one's life. Similarly, the “education of things” is, to a large extent, subjective. In other words, how I experience an event or an object, depends on an internal process. Thus, it depends from person to person (that is not to say that there is such a thing as radical cultural relativism). Instead, it alludes to the limitation a teacher has to educate people because experience and how it is perceived can differ. On the other hand, “education of man” rests in man’s (teacher) hand in that it is intentional (i.e. from man to man). And yet it faces an irreducible complexity in that man cannot control all the variables that shape (positively or negatively) his education.

Although it seems radically unradical, it forces us to engage with the here and now critically. It forces us to study in-depth and with great care the past and the present. There is no short-cut. Although people (rightly so) ask for change as is evident in the current landscape, it is all the more important that we critically assess these ideas, including their consequences (Hansen). All the more so in an emotionally loaded social and political landscape as ours. The USA represents best what is at stake if one votes based on flawed thinking (i.e. change for its sake). The same one risks today, from one extreme to another. To avoid repeating these same mistakes, one must be able to think clearly to improve existing or give birth to new ideas (Hansen).

To think clearly requires the individual’s self and one’s awareness of it. It requires the alignment that makes the self or “heart” complete (Parker). In other words, it is the “intellect”, “emotions”, and “spirit[‘s]” alignment with each other, which is of itself a journey. That implies an inner journey to discover the self’s “landscape”, its present and past origins. What is our educational standard and our contribution to a better idea (e.g. system)? Instead of asking how, what, and why the system produces such injustice, we ask *who* are we (Parker), ideally and educationally speaking, and our contribution in the system to train people to advance the educational standards within their proper confines?

In sum, I believe, and regardless of people's differences, my educational philosophy is on improving education within the confines of people's contextualized realities and what is most dear to them. It is meant to inform people's educational standards to empower them, whether in their immediacy or the long term. It always has to improve educational standards set for their respective educational aims to avoid further distorting education’s intrinsic virtue. Not more, not less.