EDUCATIONAL THEORY

ADVANCING EDUCATION'S AUTONOMY THROUGH LOOKING EDUCATIONALLY AT PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. This article offers a general framework for considering education's autonomy and its implications for the relationship between education and philosophy. In it, Doron Yosef-Hassidim examines an initiative in Israel that calls for an autonomous secular public education and uses it as a context to clarify what education's autonomy means and to identify its major characteristics. To enhance the idea of education's autonomy, he further argues that education should not be subordinate to philosophy and that the question about being human must be kept open and educational. In particular, education's autonomy requires resisting the temptation of applying a philosophical framework about being human to education, even if the particular philosopher of education agrees with the philosophical framework. Finally, Yosef-Hassidim proposes a strategy for treating the question about being human as one that involves both the work of philosophers of education and practitioners in the classroom.

Key Words. education's autonomy; philosophy; being human; meaning making; curriculum

Introduction

This article offers a general framework for considering education's autonomy and the implications of education's autonomy for the relationship between education and philosophy. I argue that to enhance the idea of education's autonomy, education should not be subordinate to philosophy, and that the question about being human must be kept open and educational. I suggest a particular strategy for treating this question as such that involves both the work of philosophers of education and practitioners in the classroom.

As a general preliminary understanding of education's autonomy, I embrace John Dewey's rendering of it:

> Education is autonomous and should be free to determine its own ends, its own objectives. To go outside the educational function and to borrow objectives from an external source is to surrender the educational cause. Until educators get the independence and courage to insist that educational aims are to be formed as well as executed within the educative process, they will not come to consciousness of their own function. Others will then have no great respect for educators because educators do not respect their own social place and work.[1]

By using the terms "educational function," "educators," and "educative process," Dewey suggests that he does not limit "education" to an academic discipline but that he refers to a broader social sphere (which, admittedly, includes academic inquiry). This broad meaning for education's autonomy is supported by John Wilson's argument against basing education on a social or political ideology,[2] Pádraig Hogan's claim that "education is precisely a *sui generis*

[1] . John Dewey, *The Sources of a Science of Education* (New York: Liveright, 1929), 38.

[2] . John Wilson, "Education versus Society," *Oxford Review of Education* 23, no. 3 (1997): 333–343.

undertaking, or more plainly, a coherent practice in its own right,"[3] and Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons's claim that "the school must suspend or decouple certain ties with students' family and social environment on the one hand and with society on the other."[4] Still, Dewey does not offer a comprehensive framework for education's autonomy.

Framing Education's Autonomy

When autonomy for education is mentioned, it is common to see eyebrows raised: how can an endeavor that is so entangled in social, political, and ideological networks be autonomous? Doubts about education's autonomy notwithstanding, a recent initiative in Israel, formed independently of any academic or scholarly work on education's autonomy, deserves attention. A brief look at this initiative will assist in drawing some general observations about education's autonomy.

The initiative in Israel, led by prominent scholars and activists, calls for an autonomous secular public education, mostly in response to what the organizers consider recent undemocratic moves by the Israeli government and the Education Ministry's efforts to impose Orthodox Judaism and ultra-nationalism on students.[5] A major goal of the initiative is to enshrine in law schools' right to pedagogical autonomy, including the establishment of an independent education council. In fact, at its foundational convention in June 2019, leaders of the initiative declared their intention to establish such a council; while the declaration does not carry any formal meaning, it signifies the seriousness of the initiative's leadership. Most of the thirteen council members are full professors in the area of education, and several hold administrative positions: one is a former Minister of Education, two others are school principals, and one is a teacher education administrator.

The council's declaration states:

> The Council is composed of senior educationalists and academics who are willing to dedicate their time and energy to work for the advancement of democratic, humanistic, and liberal education,inordertoprotectthepubliceducationsystemfromprocessesthatemptyeducation of these values.[6]

3. Pádraig Hogan, "Preface to an Ethics of Education as a Practice in Its Own Right," *Ethics and Education* 5, no. 2 (2010): 90.

4. Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, *In Defence of the School: A Public Issue* (Leuven, Belgium: E-ducation, Culture & Society, 2013), 15.

5. For a news report in English about the initiative, see Or Kashti, "Group of Israeli Educators Seek to Protect Public Schools from State," *Haaretz*, May 26, 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/ group-of-israeli-educators-seek-to-protect-public-schools-from-state-1.7284496.

6. Independent Council for Public Education, *Declaration on Establishing a Public Education Council for the Advancement of Democratic, Humanistic, Liberal Education* (2019) [in Hebrew, my translation].

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One of the leaders of this initiative, philosophy of education professor Nimrod Aloni, said at the foundational convention:

> Most of us here are not only caring citizens but also educationalists, … women and men with a basic commitment to challenge society toward the highest standards of openness and breadth of opinion, of humanistic morality and democratic citizenship, of cultural richness, artistic experiencing, and environmental sustainability. And when we come together to take action, we find out that public education has long been exhausted. Over the years it has been stripped of all of its resources and has remained without a clear way and without appropriate leadership.… Under the reign of Minister Bennet [former Minister of Education] and now under the wing of Minister Peretz [current Minister of Education], a small group consisting of 14 percent of the education system has gained the power to force its values, manners, and officials on public education — on more than 60 percent of the learners and teachers in the education system. They have protection from us while we don't have any protection from them.[3]

The mayor of Tel Aviv, who supports the initiative and also took part in the foundational convention, echoed Aloni's sentiment, stating that "It is about time to focus on nurturing public education and to define in law the boundaries for intervention or nonintervention. It is unacceptable that the Ministry is a political platform for instilling the Minister's values."[4]

The Israeli initiative for an autonomous public secular educational system merits deep empirical and conceptual examination, which is beyond the scope of this article. However, following this initiative — and taking it as an example — several comments are in order to clarify what I mean by education's autonomy and to draw some boundaries around the discussion.[5]

First, it should be clarified that when I refer to or address "education" as if it is (or should be) an agent — that is, as having agency, consciousness, and its own volition — this personification or anthropomorphism of K–12 education is both deliberate and more than merely a metaphorical device. I realize that "education," of course, is not a person and that education, as a social construct, does not have wishes or intentions; people do. However, we regularly personalize other social institutions, and we do not usually find that tendency problematic. Specifically, agency is usually attributed to other social spheres that embody or represent forces that use K–12 education for their interests: the state "protects" its citizens; the economy "is in a depression"; the church "refuses to acknowledge" same-sex marriage; universities "look for" extra resources; the military "is trained and ready" for war; the Democratic or Republican Party "betrays" or "is loyal" to its voters; democracy wants to defend itself;[6] and the government "considers" raising taxes or cutting budgets. However, it seems strange to consider the sphere of K–12 education as entitled to its own agency, even in

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[3] . *Educating for Democracy, Prof. Aloni's statement* (2019), 1 [in Hebrew, my translation].

[4] . "Educators, among them Yuli Tamir and Yossi Yona, established a council against religionization in the schools," *Haaretz*, June 25, 2019, [in Hebrew, my translation], https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/ education/.premium-1.7409692.

[5] . Some of these comments are based on my inquiry into sovereign education. See Doron Yosef-Hassidim, *K–12 Education as a Hermeneutic Adventurous Endeavor: Toward an Educational Way of Thinking* (New York: Routledge, 2018), esp. chap. 7.

[6] . Raphael Cohen Almagor, *The Boundaries of Liberty and Tolerance* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1994); and Sharon Weinblum, *Security and Defensive Democracy in Israel: A Critical Approach to Political Discourse* (London: Routledge Studies in Liberty and Security, 2015).

metaphorical terms.[7] This special treatment of education is, I think, very telling; the double standard is indicative of the instrumental approach taken toward education and of how deeply rooted that approach is: because K–12 education is perceived as a means for serving the ends of other social units, it — as a social sphere and as a collective of individuals who take part in it — is not supposed to have its own consciousness. Education and educational professionals, in particular, are essentially expected to take a servile stance — that is, to do what others tell them to do. Thus, recognizing K–12 education as an autonomous social sphere is necessary in order to accord to education the same level of recognition that other social spheres receive. Autonomy of "education," therefore, means acknowledging K–12 education's status as equal to that of other social spheres. Doing so will, as much as possible, eliminate the subordinate and subservient status education — as a social sphere and in terms of the organizations (schools) and individuals associated with it — has in society and will, in turn, confer significant and effective autonomy on educational theorists[8] and practitioners as a result of their affiliation to this sphere. In other words, autonomy of "education" contributes to "standing up for education" and speaking "educationally for education."[9]

Second, clarification of "autonomy" is needed. Saying that education is "autonomous" actually means that it — the K–12 education system (schooling) — is both autonomous and independent, in other words, that it is, as I call it, sovereign. As an autonomous social sphere, education essentially operates by itself without being controlled by others (for example, the state). It has the capability to formulate its own goals and design its own plans; autonomous education is a self-governing entity (as discussed briefly below) that has its own "nervous system." As an independent sphere, education has the legitimacy and capacity to define its own concerns and priorities and to make its own decisions without necessarily considering other matters; independent education is a self-determining entity that has its own "mind" or "consciousness." This is different from the autonomy exercised by, for example, a robot that has its own sensory decision-making (programming) and movement systems; the robot may be able to act "autonomously" within strict limits, but it is not independent because all of its features were designed and built by someone else with their own goals for that robot. Thus, endowing K–12 education independence is crucial to prevent a situation in which the body holding *de jure* authority over schooling, although formally separated from the political realm at the respective jurisdiction, is in fact still controlled by the political powers that be with

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[7] . When we do find personification of education in popular discourse, it is usually in a negative or instrumental sense, for example: "the failure of education," "education needs to be more rigorous," or "in the past, education served us better." In addition, other scholars also use personification of education to convey its subordinate status. For example, Biesta decries "educational functionalism, that is, the idea that education should just do what 'others' — be it politicians, be it societal groups, be it big business, be it the church, be it parents, be it students themselves — would want it to do." Gert J. J. Biesta, "What Constitutes the Good of Education? Reflections on the Possibility of Educational Critique," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 52, no. 10 (2020): 1024.

[8] . Below I argue that education, as a discipline, is considered inferior to other disciplines, therefore educational theorists (and educational scholars in general) are constrained in their theoretical work and depend on these other disciplines (and therefore are not themselves autonomous). Educational scholars will also reap benefits from the autonomy of practitioners since that will create better circumstances for their recommendations and visions to be realized.

[9] . Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström, "A Manifesto for Education," *Policy Futures in Education* 9, no. 5 (2011): 542.

respect to what happens in schools.[10] In such a scenario, the state pulls the strings of education from afar while simultaneously removing responsibility from itself. Thus, although schools do earn some autonomy in managing their affairs, they are not independent because they are committed to meeting the criteria set by the state.[11]

Third, the Israeli initiative demonstrates that talking about autonomy for the education system, without political intervention, is not a fiction. While realizing that achieving the initiative's goals may indeed seem very unlikely, the leaders and activists involved in this initiative are serious people; a number of them hold senior positions in academia, and some are world-renowned scholars in their fields. Rejecting the notion of education's autonomy based on the belief that in education "everything is political," or that education is naturally a political act, only precludes the possibility for deep and fruitful discussion regarding how to strengthen what is educational in education.

Fourth, while a major (although not the sole) motivation for education's autonomy is protecting schooling from self-interested political interventions, such interventions — despite the impression the Israeli case might create — are not necessarily limited to the right wing of the political arena. In the neoliberal (and nationalistic) atmosphere that prevails in many democratic countries today, it is indeed mostly attempts by the right to influence education that prompt critique and calls against political intervention;[12] still, it is crucial to remember that education's autonomy is not a leftist project and is not supported in order to promote any particular political vision. In this regard, it is interesting to note that complaints regarding politically motivated attempts to take over education are lodged not only against policies of the right but also against those of the left-. For example, just recently, as part of a critique against "the tide of social justice education," it was claimed that "[t]he Left has so captured our education system that it's now very risky for students or faculty members to dissent from any of its beliefs."[13] Regardless of the veracity of such claims, education's autonomy should resist identification with any (partisan) political program.[14]

Fifth, it is important to acknowledge that education's autonomy is viewed here not only as a vital means for fighting against instrumentalization of the education system, and not only as a vehicle for materializing educational values, ideas, and visions. Rather, I argue that there is an inherent value in education's autonomy — that is, education's autonomy is an essential

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[10] . Critics of neoliberal policies identify such manipulation of schools from afar by the political policymakers through means of accountability. See, for example, Michael W. Apple, "Comparing Neo-liberal Projects and Inequality in Education," *Comparative Education* 37, no. 4 (2001): 409–423; Michael W. Apple, *Educating the "Right" Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Yossi Yonah, Yossi Dahan, and Dalya Markovich, "Neo-liberal Reforms in Israel's Education System: The Dialectic of the State," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 18, no. 3–4 (2008): 199–217.

[11] . For the purpose of consistency throughout this article and across the symposium, I will use the terms "autonomy" and "autonomous" rather than "sovereign" and "sovereignty" from this point.

[12] . See, for example, Apple, *Educating the "Right" Way*; and Emery J. Hyslop-Margison and Alan M. Sears, *Neo-liberalism, Globalization and Human Capital Learning: Reclaiming Education for Democratic Citizenship* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

[13] . See George Leef, "Fighting Back against the Tide of Social-Justice Education," *National Review*, January 6, 2020, https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/fighting-back-against-the-tide-of-social-justiceeducation/.

[14] . This does not mean rejecting human rights as a basis for educational ideas, even if human rights are incorporated in political platforms.

characteristic of education itself. Similar to the appreciation of individuals' autonomy as a value that stands by itself, one that does not require identification of a particular end for which to use this autonomy, education's autonomy — when it is attributed to the K–12 education social sphere — does not depend on arriving at a particular and predefined situation for the system.

Sixth, as demonstrated by the preceding quotes from the Israeli activists, the leaders of the Israeli initiative speak in terms that, in some respects, resemble the language used by scholars who advocate for education's autonomy: for example, their use of notions that suggest boundaries for education (or "in" and "out," "us" and "them"), their emphasis on protecting against the political and ideological instrumentalization of education, and their identification of values that are and are not educational. Admittedly, unlike much of the critical literature calling for education's autonomy or the need to protect education, the Israeli case against instrumentalization of the education system is not articulated in terms of (economic) neoliberalism,[15] but rather in terms of weakening democracy and religious imposition (the initiative is titled "Educating for Democracy — The Belief in the Human Wins"). Nevertheless, the initiative in Israel, even if in rudimentary stages and still far from capturing broad public interest, demonstrates how aspects commonly discussed in educational theory circles as key to securing systemic autonomy for education (for example, the significance of humanistic values, and the need to protect the education system from attacks) might be put into action. This correspondence suggests not only that theoretical and conceptual work on education's autonomy is not useless, but also that there is potential and significance for cooperation or even collaboration between scholars and activists.[16] Therefore, I argue that it is valuable and important for philosophers of education in general and advocates of education's autonomy in particular to closely examine and learn from the recent developments in Israel, as well as from similar initiatives in other places. Attention to such real-life events is in line with recent calls for philosophers of education to engage with empirical research and education policy.[17] More importantly, though, such examination has the potential not only to benefit conceptualization of education's autonomy, but ultimately also to provide theoretical and conceptual support toactualattemptstogainmoreautonomyforeducatorsandfortheeducationalsystem as a whole. In other words, theorists (including philosophers of education) who advocate education's autonomy should see it not just as an intellectual-scholarly interest or project that yields publications and academic status, but also as an educational-political transformative agenda, something they can legitimately pursue, motivate, and promote within the academic community and even beyond it.

Seventh, when it comes to the education system, I argue, in line with the Israeli activists, that education's autonomy ultimately has to include autonomous governance over the system; that is, there must be educational — and not (partisan) political — governance of schooling.

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[15] . Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); and Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic, 1983).

[16] . Perhaps following the example of Michael Apple, with his notion of critical scholar/activist and his service as a "critical secretary." Michael W. Apple, *Can Education Change Society?* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[17] . See, for example, these special issues: Meira Levinson and Anne Newman, eds., "Philosophy of Education, Empirical Research, and Policy Analysis," symposium issue, *Theory and Research in Education* 13, no. 1 (2015); and Doris A. Santoro and Terri S. Wilson, eds., "Philosophy Pursued through Empirical Research," special issue, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 34, no. 2 (2015).

Such an understanding of the meaning of autonomy exceeds autonomy for education as an academic discipline.[18] Setting educational governance of schooling as a goal means that, in order to advance the agenda of education's autonomy as part of one's academic work, one must take a clear stand in the debate about the place of philosophy of education in educational practice: if advocates of education's autonomy seek to change how people[19] (other than themselves or their readers[24]) are educated, they must pay attention to the social means through which ideas about education are materialized. Moreover, those scholars who are interested particularly in institutionalized mass education of the young must pay special attention to K–12 schooling, specifically to the governance of the K–12 education system. In other words, scholars should take part in the efforts to reclaim for educators authority over K–12 education, that is, legitimacy and power in setting the meaning and goals of K–12 educational institutions.[25] The statement by Dewey quoted in the introduction suggests the need for such an authority. Other thinkers in the field have set out arguments in this spirit, calling for the "reclaiming" or "claiming" of educators' authority over education. Gert Biesta, for example, emphasizes the need "to give teaching back to education, that is, to reclaim a proper place for teaching and the teacher in our educational endeavours."[26] Henry Giroux uses the same term in the context of critiquingneoliberalismandadvocatingforsocialjustice,assertingthat"education has to be reclaimed."[27] Pádraig Hogan argues for "a voice that might claim for education a sphere of liberty of its own."[28] And Gary Fenstermacher calls on educators to consider "reclaiming control of their own practice."[29] Significantly, in all these cases, what can and needs to be reclaimed is not an abstract notion of education but a more tangible thing: schooling.

The importance of nonpolitical governance of the education system — and not just conceptual-theoretical autonomy for the discipline — is made especially clear by the Israeli initiative example. The fact that scholars who have significant scholarly freedom in the academic realm are leading the fight for such governance is significant. These scholars understand that their individual academic freedom is not enough to safeguard the education system from instrumentalization or to defend it from political interventions. It is important to note, though, that educational governance over schooling poses a number of complicated theoretical

education. Period. It is not aimed at any particular group of consumers of the fruits of philosophy of education. All who wish to partake are welcome." Harvey Siegel, "On the Obligations of the Professional Philosopher of Education," *Journal of Thought* 18, no. 2 (1983): 34. While logically such a position does not necessarily reject education's autonomy, it also does not welcome it.

24. I assume here that the greatest influence of theoretical and philosophical texts comes from readingthem (as opposed to, for example, listening to a lecture about them), and that this influence generally does not extend much beyond individual readers.

18 . Gert Biesta, "Disciplines and Theory in the Academic Study of Education: A Comparative Analysis of the Anglo-American and Continental Construction of the Field," *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 19, no. 2 (2011): 175–192; and Foster McMurray, "Preface to an Autonomous Discipline of Education," *Educational Theory* 5, no. 3 (1955): 129–140.

19 . Not all philosophers of education are committed to such influence. Harvey Siegel is perhaps the best representative of this approach, as he — as a *philosopher* of education — expresses readiness to depart from education as a practical endeavor and is indifferent to whether philosophy of education's goodness actually impacts educators: "Who gathers in this goodness is simply whoever wants to. If educators do, fine.… The professional philosopher of education, in short, aims at producing good philosophy of

25. Here, I mean "institution" in the broad sense, both organizations (schools) and especially the education system.

26. Gert J. J. Biesta, "Giving Teaching Back to Education: Responding to the Disappearance of the Teacher," *Phenomenology & Practice* 6, no. 2 (2013): 36.

27. "Neoliberalism, Youth, and Social Justice," Henry Giroux interview for TAFTtalks, March 27, 2014,YouTube video 10:03, www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW5FRuMkQ6g.

28. Pádraig Hogan, "Education as a Discipline of Thought and Action: A Memorial to John Wilson," *Oxford Review of Education* 32, no. 2 (2006): 254.

29. Gary D. Fenstermacher, "Should Philosophers and Educators Be Speaking to Each Other?," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 3 (2002): 343.

and practical problems, including the legal status and authority of the sort of governing body the Israel initiative has called for, the membership model for such a body,[20] how its members would be elected, how the body would operate, and the relationship between this body and elected political governance. One major question in this regard pertains to funding and the budget for schooling: Since public education is funded by taxes collected by the government, should the autonomous educational governing body have access to this money? Should this body have authority over how to spend it? These and other questions must be addressed by those who advocate for education's autonomy in the fullest sense.

The last point on nonpolitical governance of the education system leads to the final issue I want to address here regarding the theoretical framework for education'sautonomy.Anycurrentorfutureinitiativeforautonomousgovernance of schooling (such as the Israel initiative discussed here) requires a theoretical foundation in order to better construct coherent and sound claims to present to the public and to different relevant forums. I call philosophers of education to take the lead in building a theoretical framework that will help to justify, and hopefully realize, ideas about education's autonomy at the system level. The guidance and leadership of philosophers of education is also vital for advancing the legitimacy and relevance of philosophy of education in educational studies (especially teacher education), educational practice, and policymaking, as the discipline's legitimacy and relevance have seemed to diminish in recent times.[21] A theoretical-philosophical study of education's autonomy is also necessary in order to lead or complement empirical studies on educators' autonomous work in other areas. For example, theoretical frameworks that were constructed following empirical studies on broad-scale educational change[22] and on the noninvested interests of teacher unions[23] offer some valuable ideas about autonomy in the education system,

[20] . Educational control over the governing body does not negate representation of parents, students, and other groups in society.

[21] . René Vincente Arcilla, "Why Aren't Philosophers and Educators Speaking to Each Other?," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 1 (2002): 1–11; Richard Pring, "Reclaiming Philosophy for Educational Research,"*EducationalReview* 59,no.3(2007):315–330;andPeterRoberts,"'ItWastheBestofTimes,It WastheWorstofTimes…':PhilosophyofEducationintheContemporaryWorld,"*StudiesinPhilosophy and Education* 34, no. 6 (2015): 623–634.

[22] . See, for example, Andy Hargreaves, and Dennis L. Shirley, *The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2012).

[23] . See, for example, Lois Weiner, "The Teachers' Trifecta: Democracy, Social Justice, Mobilization," in *Teacher Unions in Public Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 189–199.

but they lack a comprehensive conceptual understanding of autonomy of education at the system level.

While, clearly, a comprehensive theoretical analysis of education's autonomy would needto address many different facets and considerations, in the remainder of this article I focus on one particular aspect: the relationship between education and philosophy. Throughout its history as an academic discipline, education has had very close ties to philosophy. Here, I ask what education's autonomy means for this relationship: When it comes to conceptualization and theorizing, can and should education and philosophy go in some separate ways? In such a case, what would a philosophy of education that promotes education's autonomy agenda look like? To address these questions, I specifically examine how education — as a discipline and a practice — can use ideas from philosophy while retaining its autonomy.

Looking Educationally at Philosophy

The Relationship between Education and Philosophy

In order to offer a way of doing philosophy of education that contributes to education's autonomy — even if "education" is understood only as an academic discipline — let us examine the debate over the relationship between the two actors: education (as an academic discipline) and philosophy.[24] The central question is, in Biesta's words, "whether there are forms of theory and theorizing that are distinctively *educational* rather than that they are generated through 'other' disciplines."[25] The Anglo-American construction and the Continental construction of educational studies differ in their answer to this question. Historical overviews of the Anglo-American tradition identify several stances — especially within British scholarship — that implicitly or explicitly deny a distinct form of educational theorizing.[26] These skeptical attitudes toward the possibility of an educational way of thinking lead, in the English-speaking world, to a "disciplinary approach" according to which education is constructed by contributions from other foundational disciplines.[27]

Perhaps the leading representative of the Anglo-American tradition, if not one of its most important founders, is Paul Hirst. For Hirst, educational theory mediates between the

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[24] . Despite the terminology of "relationship," philosophy is not taken here to be a self-contained and clearly bounded intellectual field; I do not assume a clear-cut classification of what is considered philosophical text. Philosophical reflections indeed appear in every area, and "philosophy," as used in this article, does not necessarily refer to publications under the banner of "philosophy." Nonetheless, this usually does not present a problem for philosophers of education (and philosophers in general), as this community is quite inclusive with regard to and in agreement about whether a specific text is philosophical or not (which, in any case, does not resolve the question "what is philosophy?"). Similarly, I do not assume that educators and philosophers are necessarily different people; they might be, and quite often are, one and the same. This is why the relationship I refer to is between "spheres," not people.

[25] . Biesta, "Disciplines and Theory in the Academic Study of Education," 176.

[26] . See ibid.; Gert J. J. Biesta, "Is Philosophy of Education a Historical Mistake? Connecting Philosophy and Education Differently," *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 1 (2014): 65–76; and Gary McCulloch, "Disciplines Contributing to Education? Educational Studies and the Disciplines," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 50, no. 1 (2002): 100–119.

[27] . See, for example, R. S. Peters, *Education as Initiation* (London: The University of London Institute of Education, Evans Brothers, 1964); and John William Tibble, "The Development of the Study of Education," in *An Introduction to the Study of Education*, ed. John William Tibble (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 5–17. See also Biesta, "Disciplines and Theory in the Academic Study of Education."

contributions of the established disciplines — philosophy, history, sociology, and psychology — and educational practice.[28] In other words, scholars of education apply the teachings of philosophy, history, sociology, and psychology in education to produce school teaching that is truthful to the existing theories. The principles of educational theory, Hirst argues, "stand or fall entirely on the validity of the knowledge contributed by [the fundamental disciplines]," and since educational theory does not generate "some unique form of understanding about education" in addition to that generated by the "fundamental" disciplines, education is not and cannot be "an autonomous discipline."[29] Therefore, beyond the reasons provided by the "fundamental" discipline, the validity of the principles for educational action "turns on nothing [distinctively] 'educational.'"[30] As Biesta explains, Hirst actually argues that "the reasons that inform educational principles must be judged solely according to the standards of the particular disciplines they stem from."[31] Hirst's conception of educational theory, according to Biesta, "necessarily makes the study of education into the inter- or multidisciplinary study of the 'phenomenon' of education to which educational theory itself has no cognitive contribution to make. This, in turn, is the reason for it lacking a disciplinary status amongst other disciplines."[32] Thus, in Hirst's view, the superiority of the contributing or "feeding" discipline trumps any insight the educationalist might come up with. I argue that this way of perceiving educational theory has profound implications, specifically, educationalists — both in academia and in school — are deprived of any discretion in how they approach their own endeavor. They are essentially demoted to engineers who follow the insights generated by scientists (in the best case) or to technicians who follow the insights and instructions of both scientists and engineers (in the worst case).

In contrast to the impossibility for education's autonomy within the disciplinary approach in the English-speaking world, the Continental construction of educational studies, which governs the German-speaking world, was guided by an academic approach — *geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*[33] — in which education is understood as a discipline in its own right. According to this approach, Biesta explains, "we need a theory of education that is neither psychological, sociological, historical nor philosophical, in order to identify our object of study."[34]Recently, in particular with regard to philosophy, an increasing number of voices have sought to identify and emphasize that which is educational against that which is philosophical in educational theory; in addition, they have called for a more explicit *educational* perspective in considering and integrating philosophy, whether in using philosophical methods or in drawing on philosophical reflections and insights. Thus, Biesta characterizes the Continental construction as one in which educators "saw insights emerging from other disciplines, including philosophy, as *possible resources* for what they saw as their

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[28] . Paul H. Hirst, "Educational Theory," in *The Study of Education*, ed. John William Tibble (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 29–58.

[29] . Ibid., 50, 57, 51.

[30] . Ibid., 51.

[31] . Biesta, "Disciplines and Theory in the Academic Study of Education," 182.

[32] . Ibid., 183.

[33] . Ibid.

[34] . Ibid., 190.

key task, which was to develop educational forms of theory and theorizing."[35] Biesta also explicitly points to a distinction — although not an estrangement — between education and philosophy. In his critique of humanism in education, Biesta argues,

> The challenge to overcome humanism is, therefore, a double challenge, as there is not only the question how this might be done *philosophically*, but also the question how it might be achieved *educationally* — and the two questions are partly separate as I do not wish to see educational theory as simply the application of philosophy.[36]

Such resistance against a simple derivation from philosophy to education has actually already trickled into educational thought, as Claudia Ruitenberg observes:

> [E]ducation is commonly considered an "applied field"; philosophy in and of education is often expected to consist of the application of more general philosophy to the particularities of this field.… In contemporary philosophy, however, it is much less common to find the kind of general philosophy that lends itself to such application. In fact, generalisability and the possibility of applying general theory to particular situations have themselves become objects of critique.… "[A]pplication" is more often than not a misnomer for the way in which philosophers in and of education relate to theory and philosophy.[37]

Other scholars have even raised doubts about the worth of philosophy for education, or have expressed worry that the relationship of philosophy and education damages education. For example, Fenstermacher asks, "might not an educator also properly be entitled to the view that some philosophy, while interesting in some general way, is of little value or utility in the context of educational practice?"[38] In a similar vein, Marianna Papastephanou argues that the "*objective* sense" within "philosophy of education … constructs education as an *object* of philosophical endeavor," and "[i]n so doing, it typically assigns education a subservient position."[39] When education is discussed in a philosophical debate, "it is approached in a condescending way, indifferent to education's own conceptual resources."[40]Papastephanou concludes that "[t]his stops educational concerns from becoming central to assessing the philosophical sources themselves" and argues further that "[i]t blocks also the possibility of philosophy hearkening to education as the guiding force it can sometimes be, rather than viewing it as a passive recipient, the object of philosophy's concern."[41] Finally, Audrey Thompson takes a feminist approach to analyzing the relationship between philosophy and education. Using the metaphor of a heterosexual couple, she critiques the perception of philosophy as the one that does the deep thinking while education is seen as the needy partner in the relationship: "Implicitly female and heterosexual, education is portrayed as eager for advice and direction from a committed romantic partner who will listen to her and weigh in

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[35] . Biesta, "Is Philosophy of Education a Historical Mistake?," 72.

[36] . Gert J. J. Biesta, "Philosophy, Exposure, and Children: How to Resist the Instrumentalisation of Philosophy in Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 2 (2011): 313.

[37] . Claudia W. Ruitenberg, "Distance and Defamiliarisation: Translation as Philosophical Method," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43, no. 3 (2009): 430–431.

[38] . Fenstermacher, "Should Philosophers and Educators Be Speaking to Each Other?," 344.

[39] . Marianna Papastephanou, "Method, Philosophy of Education, and the Sphere of the Practico-Inert," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43, no. 3 (2009): 451.

[40] . Ibid., 467n3.

[41] . Ibid., 452.

with the proper degree of authority and sexiness."[42] Thompson adds that philosophy's "assumption that education is dependent upon him for guidance institutes a patriarchal relation … [in which] his wife is in charge of implementing his decisions."[43]

Keeping the Question about Being Human Educational and Open

These and other voices stress the importance of education's autonomy — or agency, as I argue above — in handling theoretical and practical matters, specifically vis-à-vis philosophy. But they do not suggest how education's autonomy plays out in an alternative constellation of the education–philosophy relationship. Here Chris Higgins's work is helpful. In seeking a way out of the dilemma between rigor in philosophical writing and relevance of philosophical reflection for education, Higgins actually rejects a dichotomy between education and philosophy and the assumption that they are "foreign lands, each speaking its own strange tongue."[44] Instead, "rigor and relevance are just two sides of the same coin"[45]of an education-philosophy structure that focuses on being human and human development. Instead of seeking a strict separation between education and philosophy that is supposedly aimed at protecting education from philosophy's tyranny or control, Higgins argues for — or envisions — a relationship in which there is a "flow in both directions,"[46] that is, one where both philosophy and education contribute to each other's insights. In this mutual relationship, the philosopher of education is "a mediator, striving to pull together, or shuttling back and forth between, the separate worlds of philosophy and education," and she "stands to learn as much as her audience does as she comes to see her own ideas from a new angle."[47] Higgins also applies this two-way traffic and mediating role specifically to the teacher. Referring to teaching, he argues that "[j]ust as our visions of human flourishing inform our pedagogies, so our knowledge of what brings us closer to the good stands to teach us something about the good itself."[48] Similarly, he claims that "[t]o theorize or practice education is to join the long conversation I am calling philosophical anthropology, wrestling with such questions as … What is the human condition? What is human nature?"[49]

When Higgins includes philosophers of education and educators in philosophicalanthropology,heactuallyclaimsthattheyhavethelegitimacytosaysomething aboutbeinghuman.Thatmeansthatintheorizingandpracticingeducation,educationalists and

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[42] . Audrey Thompson, "Maybe We Can Just Be Friends: The Unhappy Marriage of Education and Philosophy," *Educational Theory* 52, no. 3 (2002): 328.

[43] . Ibid., 335.

[44] . Chris Higgins, "Educational Philosophy as Liberal Teacher Education: Charting a Course Beyond the Dilemma of Relevance," *Philosophy of Education 2000*, ed. Lynda Stone (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2000), 276.

[45] . Ibid., 277.

[46] . Ibid., 276.

[47] . Ibid.

[48] . Chris Higgins, *The Good Life of Teaching: An Ethics of Professional Practice* (Malden, MA: John Wiley, 2011), 260.

[49] . Ibid., 261.

educators (if such a distinction is even viable) do not just use an "educational 'filter'"[50] in selecting appropriate material from other disciplines (including philosophy), but they also use an educational "generator" for creating ideas. Granting to people the legitimacy to say something about being human stimulates and inspires us to consider also granting such legitimacy to education, the social sphere — both as theory and practice — beyond people. One result of such legitimacy is that education has agency to operate without commitment to philosophy.

However, to be an agent that is truly free from the mastery of philosophy — and, by this means, to facilitate education's autonomy — we need to go further and prevent the imposition of philosophical frameworks about being human on education. Even if "every educational action and document is laden with assumptions about who we are and why we need education,"[61] the educational theorizing and action must not be shaped by a predetermined picture. In other words, we should adhere to Biesta's call "to treat the question of what it means to be human as a radically *open* question, a question that can only be answered by engaging in education rather than as a question that needs to be answered *before* we engage in education."[51] Here, I take Biesta as implying (and if I read him correctly, I argue with him) that when it comes to the matter of being human as an educational question, philosophy should not take precedence and should not prescribe for educators how to address this question. This position is linked to Biesta's critique of humanism mentioned above, and specifically to his critique of educational philosophy programs for children that are rooted in traditional humanism and instrumentally impose a specific philosophical standpoint about being human: "Philosophy is deployed as an instrument that is supposed to work upon individuals so that they can develop and/or acquire certain qualities, capacities and skills."[52] This critique is remarkably similar to the one turned against dominant social forces — especially economic interests — that attempt to influence K–12 education.[53] The fact that educational *philosophical* programs are subject to such a critique just demonstrates that the need to protect education from philosophy is not illogical or unfounded.

But for philosophers of education, applying a philosophical picture of being human to education is a big temptation. This is understandable; after all, philosophers of education read philosophical texts and, while reading, adopt philosophical positions that they might later think appropriate for educational theory. However, education's autonomy requires resisting that temptation and rejecting the application of a philosophical framework about being human to education, *even if the particular philosopher of education agrees with the philosophical framework*. In order to keep the educational question of what it means to be human radically open, we must not use any philosophical picture of being human as a framework for education. Certainly, any particular philosophical proposal — like other proposals — can be part of

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[50] . Gert Biesta, Julie Allan, and Richard Edwards, "Introduction: The Theory Question in Education and the Education Question in Theory," in *Making a Difference in Theory* (London: Routledge, 2014), 4. 61. Higgins, *The Good Life of Teaching*, 260–261.

[51] . Gert J. J. Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2006), 4–5.

[52] . Biesta, "Philosophy, Exposure, and Children," 310.

[53] . Trevor Norris, *Consuming Schools: Commercialism and the End of Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

discourse among educators and students,[54] but to take a philosophical proposal as the starting point for educational theory and practice would significantly close the question of what it means to be human. This is not to say that any and all proposed pictures are worthy of consideration in the classroomphilosophical-anthropological,ethicopolitical,andpedagogicalconversation, to use Higgins's terms.[55] For example, in the course of the educational process, a racist picture should be explicitly criticized by educators as wrong. Moreover, I do not suggest that current prevailing pictures of being human, which are based on extreme individuality, should be exempted from criticism in schools. But radical openness in education to the human question requires that we refuse to import and designate any view as *the* educational view on being human, regardless of how noble, just, and ethical this view might be considered to be.

Such an understanding of education's autonomy in philosophy of education implies that, contrary to seeing education as an object to be analyzed philosophically (through a philosophical view of or on education, a view that imposes philosophical frameworks on education), philosophers of education should instead conduct an educational examination of philosophy, that is, they should look educationallyatphilosophy.Thephilosopherofeducationshouldserveasagatekeeperof education,[56] andthusisresponsibleforcarefullyexaminingphilosophicaltextsand for keeping the positions on what it means to be human presented in those texts from being taken up as the "right" model for those to be educated. In this arrangement, philosophy is not treated as a superior discipline for understanding what being human means. This does not mean that a philosophical position cannot be useful for education; on the contrary, philosophical reflections are an enormously important source for educational ideas, as I discuss below. Rejecting philosophy as a superior discipline means, however, that it should not serve as a foundation for educational programs. If the philosopher of education finds a position about being human appropriate for education, keeping the question about being human open requires her to find a way to integrate that position into her educational work rather than adopting it as is.[57]

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[54] . Thismeansthatthequestionaboutbeinghuman,orthequestionaboutthemeaningofbeinghuman, is an ongoing point of reference in the educational process, without an aim of arriving at the "right" final answer with which to equip students. It is more a question that students carry with them after schooling ("after school" both daily at the end of every school day, and after graduating). Schooling is a site that raises awareness of the question and provides some "training" for how to examine it.

[55] . Higgins, *The Good Life of Teaching*.

[56] . It is important to stress that, in arguing for some selectivity in the traffic from philosophy to education, I am not advocating a xenophobic mentality aimed at isolating the education sphere from philosophy. I do not see education as an "enclosed" domain; I do not call for erecting walls between education and other domains; and I do not claim that there is a clear separation of education and philosophy in the sense of "Here education, there philosophy. To each its own." Such an attempt at estrangement of the two is, as Higgins claims, impossible. But this does not mean that education (even as a discipline) has to be subordinate to philosophy.

[57] . This is not necessarily the case for any idea found in philosophical texts. As education's basic business is about "making" humans — both as individuals and collectively, but without dictating for them who or what to be — it is necessary to prevent the imposition of answers about what it means to be human. This does not, of course, refute ethical education or dealing with ethics in education.

Paraphrasing Arendt, we might say that philosophy of education should seek to look at philosophy "with eyes unclouded by philosophy."[58]

I do not offer this view on the relationship between education and philosophy, which encourages and facilitates education's autonomy, as just another way of doing philosophy of education. Rather, I present it as *the proper* way of doing philosophy of education,[59] if education's autonomy is to be promoted. What is at stake is not only the relevance of philosophy of education or educational theory in general, although the education–philosophy relationship proposed here does make theoretical-philosophical arguments and accounts of and on education more relevant for educational policy and practice. What is at stake is not only allowing educators to take part in the ongoing philosophical-educational anthropology conversation "about human becoming sparked by characteristic questions and sustained by the (philosophical) disposition to value these questions in their openness."[60] What is at stake is not only protecting education (and particularly schooling, as argued below) from being instrumentalized and exploited. Most importantly, what is at stake is education's role in a democratic society as well as education's broader role in contributing to humanness as a whole.

Meaning Making about Being Human

What might it mean to leave the question about being human an open educational question, one that is not dictated by philosophical positions? I would like to offer a strategy for such an approach, through which students and teachers can address the question about being human and generate relevant meanings about being human. In accordance with the aim of keeping this question open, as well as approaching the question as an educational one, here "meanings about being human" refers to insights on the experience of being human. The strategy is composed of the work of the philosopher of education and the educational work in the classroom, when the former offers ideas to be used by the teacher. In the educational context, I propose that ideas drawn from philosophy will guide students and teachers in the classroom as they form meanings. I will first elaborate on the work of the philosopher of education and later on the educational process in the classroom. Both contribute to keeping the question about the human educational and open.

The strategy for keeping open the question about being human that I offer here challenges and exceeds the prevalence (not to say dominance and tyranny) of the structured curriculum as a major guide in teaching. In particular, the strategy uses philosophy of education to keep the question open by offering classroom practitioners ideas about being human that go beyond the structured curriculum of subject matters. The curriculum, as a formal policy document that imposes or at least guides what to teach (in terms of courses and course content), reflects

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[58] . In conversation with Günter Gaus, Arendt said, "I want to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes unclouded by philosophy." Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr, trans. Joan Stambaugh (1965; repr. New York: Penguin, 2000), 4.

[59] . It seems to me that the term "philosophy of education" suggests philosophy's precedence over education. Perhaps, to encourage an educational view toward and treatment of philosophy, it would be better to adopt instead the term "educational philosophy."

[60] . Higgins, *The Good Life of Teaching*, 268.

political struggles over ideologies, values, and goals of education.[61] Moreover, the curriculum, alongside teachers' commitment to follow it, is currently the major directive for content in schools and, as a result, is the main vehicle for conveying beliefs about being human.[62] Therefore, it is a both means for and a signal of education's instrumentalization. Given this, the curriculum is also an obstacle to education's autonomy, since it precludes educational practitioners, researchers,andtheoristsfromshaping(oratleastsignificantlyhinderstheirefforts to shape) schooling according to what they consider to be educational values and goals. Breaking the monopoly of the curriculum over content would contribute to opening new doors for reflecting on and generating answers about the question of being human. Moreover, it would contribute to keeping the question about being human open, not one that has been resolved. Thus, offering and realizing alternatives to the structured curriculum as a way of thinking about being human will contribute to education's autonomy.

The strategy I propose offers two avenues for thinking educationally about being human. The first path uses the existing curriculum, comprising subject matter from various disciplines, not as an instructional-pedagogical endpoint in which specific content is transferred to students, but rather as a source for addressing the question of what being human means. Approaching subject matter as a resource for gaining new meanings about being human is essentially different from approaching subject matter as a means to acquire predefined content (curriculum) that is ready to be delivered and to be digested. The goal shifts from "covering the curriculum" to inquiring into what different subject matters tell us about being human; in other words, the ultimate aim is not to learn subject matters but to *learn from* them. What does history tell us about being human? What does geography tell us? What does mathematics tell us? This is a very different approach to the disciplines taught and learned in school, comparing to the dominant instructive one that governs schools. A major way philosophy can support this approach is through offering philosophies of disciplines (philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, and so on) as a bridge to other academic and professional spheres, providing ideas about how to reflect on these spheres and their insights on being human. Looking educationally on these philosophies would mean to look for ideas about what different disciplines — as organized bodies of knowledge — can tell us about being human.[63]Thus, educational use of "mixed disciplines"[64] goes beyond Jonas Soltis's notion of generating "new ideas and approaches to teaching not only content but also the 'structure of the discipline,'"[65] and also

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[61] . See Hyslop-Margison and Sears, *Neo-liberalism, Globalization and Human Capital Learning*; and Michael W. Apple, "Curriculum Planning: Content, Form, and the Politics of Accountability in *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*, ed. F. Michael Connelly, Ming Fang He, and JoAnn Phillion (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2008)., 25–44.

[62] . Especially within a neoliberal framework. The centrality of the curriculum is also evident in its identification with "education" in general, as seen when an introductory curriculum course overlaps with — or replaces altogether — general foundational education courses. The pedagogical emphasis in teacher education programs is another sign of the curriculum's dominance. Another telling example is this statement on Western University's Curriculum Studies and Studies in Applied Linguistics webpage: "Curriculumstudiesisanestablished,butnotuniform,disciplinethathasbeenidentifiedasthefirst(and perhaps only) discipline to be birthed from education itself" (https://www.edu.uwo.ca/faculty-profiles/ cssal.html).

[63] . I explore mathematics in this regard in Doron Yosef-Hassidim, "The Science-Engineering Studies and Teaching Interdisciplinary Mathematics," in *Teaching Interdisciplinary Mathematics*, ed. Timothy Sibbald (Champaign, IL: Common Ground Research Networks, 2018), 91–117.

[64] . Bruce B. Suttle, "The Identity Crisis in Philosophy of Education," *Educational Theory* 24, no. 3 (1974): 276–283.

[65] . Jonas F. Soltis, "Perspectives on Philosophy of Education," *Journal of Thought* 18, no. 2 (1983): 20.

beyond Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons's proposal for using subject matter "in order to present the world to students in an interesting and engaging way."[66]

The second path for addressing the question about being human veers into relatively uncharted territory, leaving behind the structured curriculum altogether as it seeks to draw meanings about being human from what happens in the world — or, more accurately, from what happens to human beings, whether they be students, teachers, or anyone else, near or far in place or time. I assume here that, in general, what human beings undergo suggests, or constitutes a foundation for, insights about the overall experience of being a human or about particular aspects of this experience. Following this path, to look educationally on philosophy would mean seeking out ideas about what particular kinds of experiences tell us about being human. For example, what experiences of suffering, failure, loss, or boredom — and also exaltation, success, or joy — reveal about being human. The relevant philosophical sources for such ideas are probably more eclectic than those found along the first path; these may include texts from areas such as phenomenology and existentialism. In any case, this path for drawing ideas about being human is especially important since it, much more than the structured curriculum (and even morethanthefirstpath),allowsandinvitesmeaningsthatareunexpectedprecisely because these meanings are based on the contingency of people's experiences. In consequence, this way of keeping the question about the human open carries the potential to support what Biesta terms the "weakness" of education against current dominant perceptions of education and a "desire to make education strong, secure, predictable, and risk-free."[67] For Biesta, "strong" education is associated with "effective production of pre-defined 'learning outcomes'" and with "a limited set of identities." He argues that education "isn't a mechanism and shouldn't be turned into one" and that, actually, the educational way is "the slow way, the difficult way, the frustrating way, and, so we might say, the weak way, as the outcome of this process can neither be guaranteed nor secured."[68] He advocates in education events of subjectification that occur "when individuals resist existing identities and identity-positions and speak on their own terms."[69] Since the event of subjectification "may or may not happen," there is a risk in education, and "[t]o engage with the openness and unpredictability of education … means to take this risk seriously.… [W]ithout the risk, education itself disappears and social reproduction, insertion into existing orders of being, doing, and thinking, takes over."[70] This weakness of education, which is characterized by openness and unpredictability, can also be applied to the question of being human. When we divert from the curriculum as the source of meanings and allow students (and teachers) to draw meanings about being human from their own experiences by speaking "on their own terms, "we strengthen the unpredictability of the meanings generated (or presented) in the classroom. Thus, the weakness of education becomes an important feature of education's autonomy.

As education's autonomy refers both to theory and practice, the work of the philosopher of education finding ideas about being human, as described above, is only part of what is

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66 . Masschelein and Simons, *In Defence of the School*, 15.

67 . Gert J. J. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2014), 2.

68 . Ibid., 4, 3.

69 . Ibid., 7.

70 . Ibid., 140.

required in order to educationally keep the question about the human open; there is also the need to use these ideas in the classroom. Students and teachers will use the ideas — originating from a range of subject matters and people's experiences — to generate meanings about being human, whether by examining their own experiences (inside or outside the classroom) or by examining experiences of others. What makes such reflection in the classroom *educational* rather than philosophical — despite the fact that the question about the human is rooted in philosophical traditions — is that the teacher's primary concern is not to develop the philosophical anthropology conversation (although this happens), but rather is students' formation as human beings. In other words, the aim is the students, not an answer (or answers) to the question. This characterization of educational reflection on being human, and of addressing the question about being human as educational, differs from a philosophical reflection (at least as it is done academically) since it does not seek, and usually will not necessarily meet, criteria for doing philosophy or criteria for considering a question philosophically.[71] In particular, and especially important for the educational context, the features unique to philosophy or philosophical questions and missing from the discussion in the classroom are (1) that "philosophical questions cannot be resolved empirically"[72]and (2) that "philosophy is historically or academically continuous with at least some of what other philosophers have regarded as philosophy."[73] Instead, as I see it, the question about being human in the classroom can be (although it is not necessarily) addressed solely by participants' experiences, and past answers are not necessarily considered. The educational inquiry into what being human means allows a fresh process each time a teacher works with new group of students (and each time a group of students works with new teacher).[74]

As for keeping the question about the human open, I would like to stress that I do not expect educational practitioners to develop pedagogy or educational programs without some working theory of what it means to be human. However, keeping the question about the human open does means that educators should be aware of their views about being human, should make these explicit, and then — using the ideas provided by philosophers of education — should enable and invite challenges to their views while allowing, encouraging, and presenting other (even alternative and opposing) views about being human. In other words, keeping the question about being human open means to open the question before students. Moreover, addressing the question does not mean seeking *the* answer, or one overall meaning of being human. Rather, the educational process allows and encourages examination and presentation of a gallery of meanings, collected or processed from the structured curriculum or from human beings' experiences.

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[71] . I follow here Bialystok's list of features that generally characterize the form and content of work recognized as "philosophy." Lauren Bialystok, "Philosophy across the Curriculum and the Question of Teacher Capacity," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 51, no. 4 (2017): 827–836.

[72] . Ibid., 822.

[73] . Ibid., 823.

[74] . From a social justice perspective, what is important in the classroom is the diverse experiences of students and teachers, as well as the diverse experiences (especially of marginalized populations) brought into the classroom, and how these experiences are interpreted into meanings. In this approach, different people, with different experiences (or interpretations), might generate similar but also different meanings about being human.

Conclusion

This article outlines a general framework for education's autonomy and offers a pertinent view of the relationship between philosophy and education according to which philosophy is looked at educationally. In particular, it offers philosophers of education a way to keep the question about being human educational and open. In line with this focus, philosophy of education is portrayed here as a means for promoting the agenda of education's autonomy. More work is required to develop the strategy I have outlined for drawing ideas from philosophy to address the question being human from an educational standpoint. I call philosophers of education to develop theoretical frameworks for how to draw ideas from different subject matters and from experiences of being human, and for how educational practitioners can use these ideas in the classroom. The latter task invites collaboration with teachers and other practitioners (such as teacher educators and curriculum designers), and it also indicates that collaboration across educational areas — and especially between theorists and practitioners — will be necessary in order to promote and facilitate education's autonomy.

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