

*Active method in contemporary educational demands: a discussion in the light
of constitutive processes of human uniqueness in Edith Stein*

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss how the use of active methods can constitute a response to the contemporary educational and knowledge demands. It presents cases where active method was applied to university students, it presents the results and analyzes them from the point of view of the development of social-emotional skills. It discusses the theme and the experiences presented, using the philosophy of Edith Stein, relating the development of social-emotional skills and the value education, searching for humanization of learning processes. The results announce that the use of active methods from the perspective of social and emotional development can contribute to the uniqueness' constitution, a fundamental aspect, according to Edith Stein, of the structure of the human person.

Keywords: active methods, values, Edith Stein, spirituality, education

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INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyze how educational proposals based on active methodologies and educational value enable the means of singularization of those involved in learning processes. Initially, it will describe contemporary forms of relationship with knowledge and point to the possibility of considering active processes as devices for the spiritual development of the human person.

One of the questions that permeates the scientific projects of the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries is: Is man a being of nature or culture? In the postwar period, as Pain (2009) pointed out, Pedagogy considered only one part of the human being: the epistemic subject - which is dedicated to knowledge, based on his or her ability to know. The fact that he has, at the same time, a story, a trajectory, a way of being, a singularity, was not taken into account.

A new context is inaugurated in the twentieth century with the knowledge about man

and nature, coming from Quantum Physics. At the quantum level, any particle can be a wave and propagate through space, or it can be mass and subject to continuous observation in a given space and momentum. And who determines whether an observed particle is a wave or mass is the Subject that observes it. The natural particle does not have a unique quality in itself, but its quality is constructed in relation to the Subject that observes it (Eisberg & Resnick, 1979).

1. CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS AND THE CONSTITUENT PROCESSES OF HUMAN SINGULARITY

For education, the study of quantum particle behavior allows the Subject an unprecedented role. It is observed that the Subject not only acquires knowledge, but also mixes with it, transforms it as much as it is transformed, just like the quantum particle that may or may not be wave or matter, depending on who observes it. This discovery of the way of knowing changed the position of the Subject observing and interacting with the Object, giving it much more importance. Thus, subjectivity is rescued as an important element of knowledge, especially regarding the possible relations between Subject and Object. Moreover, the multiplicity of subjects and, consequently, of possible views on the object, leads us to understand the complexity involved in the act of learning. The object can be many things, depending on the look that constitutes it at any given time. Therefore, transdisciplinarity and complexity are arrived at as forms of knowledge of the Object and the challenge of pertinent knowledge within a complex environment (Morin, 2001).

This epistemological change was represented by Deleuze and Guattari (1995) with the metaphor of the knowledge tree structure. In this image, knowledge is distributed from a thematic trunk to be interpreted, taken as reality. From this central trunk, branches hierarchize strands of knowledge arranged from the trunk, drawing as a knowledge tree whose fruit is the truth (Gallo, 2003). In opposition to this traditional view, Deleuze and Guattari proposed the metaphor of the rhizome, branched, tangled and complex stems.

Contemporary education should be able to understand knowledge as circumstantial and unpredictable. It is no longer about understanding networked learning – a concept closer to the idea of a knowledge organizing center - but about allowing the consideration of human destiny in the educational process (Morin, 2001, p. 61).

It seems to be one of the main tasks of education to find an educational device capable of pointing to rhizomatic, transdisciplinary and complex knowledge, and also capable of taking into account the human destiny, which we have taken from that point on, as the author's realization of the human in each person involved in the educational process. Establishing a dialogue between Deleuze, Guattari and Morin, it follows that a methodology capable of achieving such objectives should first of all focus on the route. Not as a guide or method, but as an experience of walking, of traveling, enabling the learners' irregular, hesitant and erratic movements across the territory to be explored.

However, considering the dynamics and the constant institution of pedagogical needs, we observe the importance of a formation based on values and spirituality. We consider that it is not a matter of refusing conservative values or identifying with the exercise of a specific religiosity, but of understanding that the education of values and spirituality becomes, in the contemporary context, a path to be built. No wonder Delors (1988) presented in its four pillars of education (learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be) a set of skills that point to the need for skills development in the socio-emotional field.

Because of this, this article will also dialogue with the anthropological philosophy of Edith Stein, especially her work *Structure of the human person* (2003). This work allows us to understand not only Stein's educational vision, but also the anthropological concept that supports it. What is the issue of education for Stein? Become authentically human and

authentically become yourself. For her, education is the formation of the human being in its completeness.

2. REPORT ON THE USE OF ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES WITH HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

The following are two reports in which the use of active methodologies – in higher education classes – are analyzed from the point of view of the contribution that these methodologies can provide to the development of socioemotional skills.

2.1 Context of reported experiences

Working with university students on the southern outskirts of the city of São Paulo, we realized that the lack of access to quality education in the years prior to the university resulted in difficulty in reading and understanding texts and compromised the ability of argumentative thinking and perhaps, the development of certain general cognitive skills.

As a result, these students express themselves briefly, succinctly and without clarity, compromising the cultured use of language. This is the context of the students we worked with in this account. They have difficulty working with theoretical concepts, merely memorize and repeat the concepts, and seem to have difficulty relating them to other concepts, considering them in different situations, using them creatively, broadening them, and, prominently, to internalize them to make them the basis of new and broader worldviews. It is therefore, a relation with the knowledge in which the meaning, the pleasure, the goal, the ideal, the relevance of learning were lost. They do not understand why they should learn. They do not understand that they must also learn how to learn. They have lost the spirit of education, which for them is not presented as freedom, discovery, autonomy or creativity.

According to Stein (2003), the divine spark, responsible for the creation and meaning of life, was obscured by the obstacles of a dehumanizing education. Dehumanizing means any attitude that distances the human being from his intimate project as a person, which disregards both his subjectivity and his personal originality. From the perspective of Christian philosophy, dehumanizing is any circumstance that hinders divine revelation as an educational tool.

Therefore, education is presented as a revelation. In this context, the ultimate meaning of education lies in the revelation of the divine spark. It is therefore correct to say that the energy required for the enterprise of education comes from one's own knowledge. If "the more one knows God, the more one wants to know God" (Stein, 2003), principle can be applied to the educational circle: the more one learns, the more one wants to learn; then unfortunately, the opposite is also true: the more deficient education is, in every way, the more difficult it will be for the student to consider education a desirable project.

2.2 Experience Report

We seek to solve the difficulties of the students described earlier with the use of inverted classroom. To this end, students were invited to read a text indicated at home and make a mind map, formed only with the keywords of the text (Buzan, 2005). In order to fully realize the proposal, it took three attempts. In each of them, the students were approached to complete the task. After these attempts, they actually began to reverse the class: they read the text at home, made the mind map, and used it for their classroom discussions. At that time, they became more autonomous and participated more easily in the discussions.

In this experience, we realized how the use of a less traditional methodology can achieve: 1) more autonomy: students do not depend on the interpretation given by a teacher to the reading of a text; 2) more organicity: students do the task because they feel its importance, not because it is worth a grade or was requested by the teacher; 3) increased ability to transcend text, relate it to reality, discover the various meanings of text polyphony; 4) text perception regarding various reading contexts; 5) modification of the role of the teacher, who assumes the posture of mediator and even curator (Cortella & Dimenstein, 2015), not the source of knowledge and content legitimizer.

We also found that, by attributing protagonism to university students, the initial difficulties arising from the former traditional school education began to change, allowing the emergence of new social and emotional skills, such as: 1) Availability to change: students often accommodate a methodology they already know. They find it difficult to adapt because they have to move from a passive stance to another in which they are protagonists of their own learning. In this process, the teacher may be accused of “not teaching” and “leaving everything to the student”. These criticisms arise in response to the methodological change and the confrontation of its limitations, imposed by the new more active pedagogical methodology. 2) Self-knowledge or self-awareness: In this process, the teacher can point out to students, the paths they use in relation to knowledge. Before they “thought” of the old methodology, which only allowed the reproduction of a content according to the teacher's class, now, in this new methodology, they interconnect subjects, organize concepts, discuss, relate and expand meanings. 3) Extrovert communication skills: By better understanding the interpretative nuances of the text, students gain more confidence to express their opinions, discuss points of view, and affirm textual meanings. They abandon the mechanical task of listing content in a single voice so that they can deal with the multiple possibilities that deep reading of a text brings. 4) Kindness and respect for themselves and others: By understanding that various readings can be made from the same text, students begin their journey of respect for the opinion and unique way of placing themselves, as well as also earning respect for their own opinion about the text studied. We observe that they stop shouting or imposing unfounded opinions, they also stop running to answer first, because they realize that their point of view is original and particular. 5) Self-control: this skill will be required all the time, because there will be a confrontation with the text, a recognition of difficulties, the creation of strategies and, later, the possibility of sharing an original and unique intellectual path.

We also observed that the students questioned their own values and the meaning of education, while performing the activity, moving from a traditional position, more objective in the pursuit of the supposed rightness and conformity of norms, to a more open, universal attitude, self-directed and stimulating. Exercising these different postures can lead to a profound questioning of yourself and the values that guide your worldview (Tamayo & Schwartz, 1993).

3. EDITH STEIN'S LIVING EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL VISION

Stein's anthropological philosophy aims at the integral formation of the human being as a creative process that takes root in interiority. Hence its definition of education as a “supreme art whose material is neither wood nor stone but the human soul” (Stein, 2003, p. 576). It is an art that is equivalent to creation: while other faculties stop at the human faculties, education penetrates even the soul itself, even its substance, to give it a new form and thereby recreating the human being in its entirety. In other words, it is “from the innermost soul (that) the whole human being is formed part by part – it is the inner life that is the ultimate foundation, the formation is from the inside to the outside” (Stein, 2003, p. 577).

In so far as the “process of complete development and formation goes from the inside out, we may consider it an ecstatic phenomenon. To educate is to take out, it is to get out of;

and that is why it is about talking about a gesture “(Rus, 2015, p. 46). After all, what is a gesture but “an irradiating movement” from an inner core? “Education is an epiphanic gesture by which an existence takes shape in its manifest uniqueness” (Rus, 2015, pp. 47-48). For the philosopher, the formation processes are not only in the sense of obtaining an external content, but by the internal and self-directed transformation of each human being. This means that it is not just a matter of directing cognitive attention to a particular content, but relating to the content in order to freely allow “personal appropriation according to an inner form” (Gaspar, 2017, p. 399) without which the human being does not authentically form.

Therefore, the use of active methodologies and the construction of socio-emotional skills are tools in the educational process to facilitate the genuine appropriation of everything that contributes to human formation. They are at the service of the revelation of the human being as someone capable of constituting himself, in a free and authentic relationship with others. Thus, its use meets the characteristic pursuits of spiritual development.

E. Stein even affirms the unity of the person through his body-soul constitution and in this, he presents his originality not only as a unique and unrepeatable individual, but also as a bearer of an originality in the created world and in the spiritual world. The person has a central core from which the truth of himself emanates, a center to be heard, known, received as a source of authenticity, as a bearer of a truth about the person to be revealed, as a bearer of a structure of the person to be respected and favored (Meneses, 2016, p. 134).

Thus, active methodologies contribute as a device for the construction of singularity. By reversing the learning direction of a knowledge-bearing core and organizer of all knowledge, it points to the core of each person to try to allow knowledge-building from that place in a sharing environment. In the interdisciplinary and complex context of education and knowledge building, valuing the unique and authentic core of each student is a fundamental task, conditioned on the discovery of intellectual and spiritual methods of investing time, determination and will. Because of this, spiritual development stands out as a fundamental device of education, as it becomes the possible and necessary way to distinguish the truth, to choose the method and to persevere in the work of knowing.

The importance of the meaning of what is lived is reinforced so that it really becomes a source of motivation, that is, only the experiences whose content has a reference to the person's self allow the flourishing of a life-giving energy. “Giving clarity about the cooperation between causality and motivation, he refers to situations that have value and meaning, that is, they have characteristics and meanings that touch the person's self and this resonates with value” (Gaspar, 2017, p. 399). We have the presence of motivation recognizing that “between both experiences, there is not only a causal relationship, but also a relationship of motivation” (Stein, 2003, p. 660).

The differentiated view brought by Stein puts the question of the human person before the learning processes. Active methodologies are pedagogical devices for the learner to establish a relationship based on the free act of personal construction. Motivation becomes, in this perspective, the result of the relationship between the person and knowledge, a relationship that also enables self-knowledge. Like this:

First of all, it must be remembered that, by establishing the field of motivation as a realm of consciousness in action and the possibility of the free acts themselves that emerge or may emerge within the torrent of experiences (having as correlate, the casually determined psychic), the individual is constituted as a person acting as lord of their experiences (Santos, 2017, p. 279).

In this way, Stein goes beyond Morin, Deleuze and Guattari, in that she understands the relation with knowledge from the singular and free constitution of the person before the world. The fragmented reality of the world is organized and makes sense within the individual's interiority, at the core of his personality, conscious source of his freedom of action.

A person does not exist as a substance or a thing in itself behind one's actions. By the free act, from which the realm of sense and reason begins, the person is constituted as a core of personality, which is by no means casually determined but becomes a source of determination. From this perception emerges the fundamental consequence of Edith Stein's phenomenological description of psychic causation and motivation as a dual constitution acting together in the individual: the psychophysical and spiritual individual can act both blindly and consciously of the motivations that drove his action; therefore, you can gain your freedom in action, that is, act beyond all determination unrelated to your self (Santos, 2017, p. 279).

If active methodologies do not contribute to overcoming external and non-self determinations so that the person can find his free and self-constituting relationship with the objects of study, then the criticisms pointed out earlier in this article will find their *raison d'être*. On the contrary, they must become motivational devices because they align with the inner desire of the self in the pursuit of its self-development and improvement. The daily education thus becomes a process of spiritual exercise, in which the will directs the action of self-discovery. "The core of personality and the motivational field of an individual constitute the center from which the individual acts, not blindly, but aware of his motivated will" (Santos, 2017, p. 281).

Thus, the relationship is established between the pedagogical tool used in the educational process and the intended objectives in this process. Active methodologies can help the educational process, bringing the pedagogical approach of human formation closer through the experiential experience of values. By enabling the experience of freedom in the process of self-formation – which in this case involves the experimentation of less directive pedagogical devices and processes – allows one to elect personal freedom as the determination of one's own development. "It is in this sense that the connection between motivation and freedom is established" (Santos, 2017, p. 281). In pedagogical work, therefore, values are not presented as *a priori* knowledge, which should be sought through the use of certain pedagogical tools. In addition, values arise from the practice of self-knowledge derived from the freedom to relate to knowledge, according to the determinations that come from the inner self.

At this point, the question of singularity imposes itself as a theme to be highlighted. "According to Edith Stein, we find in the spiritual soul, the core of the person, the personal center, the individual essence, the starting point for a theory of individuation" (Zilles, 2017, p. 382). The use of active methodologies can facilitate a path to uniqueness, to discover personal ways of coping with difficulties in the pursuit of knowledge. Thus, it is the constitution of uniqueness in the relationship with learning, that is, the possibility of understanding learning as a process of individuation.

Despite being subject to influences on intersubjective relations, the person retains his personal mark, that is, his uniqueness. This is at the core of personality. In order to experience the singularity, the indispensable condition is the vigilant self, because it refers to the qualitative essence of our experiences and the mark of the singularity and above all, the affective experiences that,

according to Edith Stein, are rooted in the depth of being. The uniqueness of the human person is thus its unchanging mark which lies at the core of personality (Zilles, 2017, p. 382).

The full realization of one's uniqueness is a spiritual work that draws on intellectual, relational, and value faculties. It is not just a pedagogical event covered by a range of devices treated here by active methodologies, but an intellectual purpose to respond to the challenge of investigating things, in which subjectivity and objectivity contribute to the free expression of human uniqueness.

The free person is at the center of action to be free. Active methodologies point out how to make this work. It is a work of the spirit. The intention coming from the spirit orders the sensible material by reason and intellect. Motivations come from the objective world and the spiritual will recognize them. Spirituality, thus is the result of reason and will be employed in knowing oneself and the world.

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