

ALAIN BADIOU AND EDUCATION AS A PROCESS OF SUBJECTIVATION THROUGH TRUTHS

Alain Badiou y la educación como proceso de subjektivación a través de verdades

WENCESLAO GARCÍA PUCHADES*

Universidad de Valencia, Valencia/España

Wenceslao.Garcia@uv.es

Orcid Number: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0919-9816>

Abstract

The following text presents some theses about what the work of the French philosopher Alain Badiou can contribute to the debate about the current situation of education. To do this we will read his work from a propaedeutic point of view. Our starting hypothesis is that his work can be read as a project of recovery of philosophy understood as an education through truths. To locate this thesis in the contemporary educational debate we will use the theory developed by Gert Biesta, who has built in recent decades a system of thought that offers a theoretical framework in order to ground alternative educational proposals to individualistic, functional, mediating and controllable tendencies of the dominant neoliberal model. For Biesta (2013a), education has undergone a learnification process which prioritizes its socializing and qualifying functions and forgets its subjectivizing function. The text will argue to what extent the education model proposed by Badiou contributes to recovering the subjectivation function of education. Education as a process of subjectivation through truths would offer teachers the possibility of encouraging educational experiences that interrupt the individualizing, functional, mediating and controlled character of the hegemonic educational model. The text claims for giving greater importance to Alain Badiou's thought within critical pedagogy when it comes to establishing educational proposals according to more democratic and cooperative teaching models.

Keywords

Badiou, Biesta, truth, subjectivation, education, learning.

Suggested citation: García Puchades, Wenceslao (2021). Alain Badiou and education as a process of subjectivation through truths. *Sophia, colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, 31, pp. 157-176.

* Bachelor of Philosophy and Physical Education from Universidad de Valencia and European Doctor of Art: Production and Research from Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. He is currently a profesor in the Department of Teaching Musical, Plastic and Body Expression at the Faculty of Education at Universidad Valencia. As a researcher his field of work has developed around the philosophy of esthetic and political education.

Resumen

El siguiente texto presenta algunas tesis acerca de lo que puede aportar la obra del filósofo francés Alain Badiou en el debate acerca de la situación actual de la educación. Para ello se hará una lectura de su obra en clave propedéutica. La hipótesis de partida es que dicha obra puede leerse como un proyecto de recuperación de la filosofía entendida como una educación a través de verdades. Para ubicar esta tesis en el debate educativo contemporáneo se utilizará la teoría elaborada por Gert Biesta, quien ha construido en las últimas décadas un sistema de pensamiento que ofrece un marco teórico con el que fundamenta propuestas educativas alternativas a las tendencias individualistas, funcional, mediadora y controlables del modelo neoliberal dominante. Para Biesta (2013a), la educación ha sufrido un proceso de 'aprendificación', que prioriza sus funciones socializadora y cualificadora y olvida su función subjetivadora. El texto argumentará en qué medida el modelo de educación propuesto por Badiou contribuye a recuperar la función subjetivadora de la educación. La educación como proceso de subjetivación a través de verdades ofrecería a los docentes la posibilidad de fomentar experiencias educativas que interrumpen el carácter individualista, funcional, mediador y controlado del modelo educativo hegemónico. El texto reivindica mayor influencia del pensamiento de Alain Badiou dentro de la pedagogía crítica a la hora de fundamentar propuestas educativas acordes a modelos docentes más democráticos y cooperativos.

158



Palabras clave

Badiou, Biesta, verdad, subjetivación, educación, aprendizaje.

Introduction

Alain Badiou is the name of one of the most important French philosophers in life. But it is also the name of a mathematician, a political activist, a playwright and a novelist. Few contemporary philosophers are so versatile and show such a heterogeneous set of disciplines in their philosophical arguments. In the face of the trend toward the specialization of contemporary knowledge, its texts show not only a domain of terminology that is typical of philosophy, but also of politics, psychoanalysis, mathematics, science, universal history, history of art and filmic, literary, poetic or theatrical studies.

His work has inspired different theorists to explore the consequences of their thinking in various disciplines, resulting in publications in international prestigious journals. However, compared to what was said in other areas, little has been mentioned about how his thinking influences the contemporary educational situation. Among the most outstanding works in the Anglo-Saxon language, one of the first in this regard was the work carried out by Cho and Tyson (2005). These authors analyzed, in line with Freire's pedagogical proposal, the potential implications of the most relevant concepts of the French philosopher in educational theory and practice.

Exploring the educational implications of Badiou's work and relating it with established education theorists has been a common strategy in much of the texts that continued this task.

A highlight is the publication of a special issue in the journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Much of the texts appearing in that issue sought to justify the pedagogical reading of Badiou's thought in contrast to some of the most relevant theories of education of the twentieth century. For example, Kesson and Henderson (2010) related Badiou's philosophy and ethics to American curriculum theorists such as Dewey, Green, Eisner or Pinar; while Sthran (2010) related to critical pedagogy theorists such as Apple and Ozga.

For his part, Jagodzinski (2010) articulated the concept of Badiou's unesthetic through the three Lacanian records (real, symbolic and imaginary) and the works of Deleuze and Rancière. The latter philosopher, although not specifically a pedagogist, appears as a very present theorist in many of these educational studies about Badiou's work thanks to his work *The Ignorant Master*.

Thus, while Jagodzinski (2010) highlights the disagreements between Badiou and Rancière in the field of aesthetic education, Barbour (2010) does the same in the field of political education.

It is also worth noting the work of Den Heyer (2009), who uses the key concepts of Alain Badiou's thought to make a curricular proposal for ethical education based on Doll's curricular theory (1990). It is also important the work conducted by Bartlett (2006, 2011) who bases the theory of education through truths on Platonic thought. In studies carried out in the Spanish language, we found those conducted by Cerletti (2008, 2013), García-Puchades (2011b, 2013, 2016) and Colella (2015, 2016 and 2018). They all use Alain Badiou's subject theory to propose educational models opposed to the dominant neoliberal model. For this task, as for many of the theorists mentioned above, it is constant the relation with Jacques Rancière and his work *The Ignorant Master*.

In line with these works, the following text continues to explore the consequences of Alain Badiou's thinking in the debate about the contemporary educational situation. Unlike the previous proposals, this paper will be based on Gert Biesta, an education philosopher who has built a system of thought to base educational proposals alternative to the individualistic tendencies inherent in the dominant neoliberal model.

This paper has two main objectives. First, to justify to what extent it is possible to think of Alain Badiou's work as a recovery project of philosophy understood as education for subjectivation (or emancipation)

through truths. Secondly, to place the proposal for philosophical education of Badiou in a theoretical framework elaborated specifically in the philosophy of education and thus to favor the application of his thinking in that field. In short, this study aims to ensure that those theorists critical of the dominant educational model find in the French philosopher's thought a conceptual approach to justify other alternative and more democratic models.

To carry out this task, the text will argue, first, to what extent Badiou's theory of the subject can be understood as a philosophical education through truths. Later, the main theses in which Gert Biesta's criticism of the current situation of education will be presented, particularly, his theory about educational functions. Finally, to conclude, it will be argued to what extent the notion of education through Badiou's truths fits and complements Biesta's educational theory, being an excellent tool for thinking alternative educational proposals to the dominant ones.

160



Alain Badiou's work as philosophical propaedeutic

Although Alain Badiou's work is difficult to address because of its multidisciplinary nature, his texts do not show all this diversity in a disconnected way, but they can be related by a vector that converges them toward a common orientation, namely the didactic exposure and transmission of the idea of 'contemporaneity'. For Badiou (2010a, 2010b), the philosopher must not, in any way, give up thinking and presenting with clarity and systematicity the time in which we live as vague as it may seem. It is the work of philosophy to show the present in a systematic way, i.e., to obtain its image or, in Plato's words, to access its idea (Badiou, 2010b).

However, for Badiou (2010a, 2010b), an idea is only clearly shown around the event. Understanding as 'event' the emergence of a moment that interrupts the dominant knowledge of a given historical situation and requires each of its elements to position in relation to it:

The event structures a situation according to two types of logical figures: an exceptional figure, which Badiou calls as 'truth', which seeks to transform the situation from the new generic logic that evidences the event, and a dominant figure that reacts to the exceptional logic of the event to try to weaken it and thus return to the pre-event situation [*pré-événementiel*]. For Badiou, moreover, the exceptional figure or 'truth' can evolve into dark and violent logical figures that would seek the complete destruction of their opposite figure from the application of fictitious forms (García-Puchades, 2012, p. 24).

For Badiou (2011) only the event can structure a situation and condition the philosophical task of thinking the present. In other words, for philosophy to clearly show the idea of ‘contemporaneity’ there must be events capable of creating post-event figures. These figures are called by Badiou (2008a, 2010b) as subjective figures or, quite simply, subjects. Therefore, a subject is a logical and emotional result of an event. The philosopher’s task is to identify his faithful, reactionary and dark figures, thus drawing up a theory of the subject of the present.

However, for Badiou (1990, 2003), the history of humanity has shown that there have been four areas in which events have taken place, and therefore subjective figures: art, as a formal revolution of an artistic discipline; politics, as an emancipating political revolution; science, as an epistemological revolution; and love, as a revolution in the life of a couple from the loving encounter. The philosopher must be attentive to these four areas to identify the existence of contemporary subjective figures, if any:

[I]n the artistic realm, the existence of new formal configurations (artistic truths) that break into the dominant trends of spectacular, multicultural art, without falling into the nostalgia of classical art; the political arena, the existence of new emancipatory and egalitarian movements (political truths) that break into unequal policies without falling into past totalitarian formulas; in the scientific area, the existence of new epistemological methods (scientific truths) that break into scientific methods dominated by technological innovation and industry without falling into old dogmas; in the loving realm, the existence of new processes of love (loving truths) that break into the debauchery and counteractualist conceptions of the couple without falling into romantic figures (García-Puchades, 2012, p. 26).

For Badiou (2003, 2010b), the task of philosophy is to present the idea of contemporaneity by making ‘congruent’ the subjective figures of each of these four figures. However, just as it was for Plato, for Badiou (2010a, 2011), the philosopher must not be satisfied with having an intellectual representation of the idea, but must also convey it. This transmission, unlike the Platonic doctrine, must not be directed to few elected people, but must aspire to be universal and democratic. In other words, the work of philosophy is to transfer the idea that any individual can take part in the present he is living if he is previously aware of artistic, political, scientific and loving developments. Following Bartlett (2011) and García-Puchades (2013), this section can be concluded by stating that the originality of Badiou’s thought lies in the defense of a philosophy



understood not so much as theoretical elaboration of the idea, but as a pedagogy of its transmission from the truths existing in an era.

Philosophical education as a subjectivation process through truths

For Badiou (2008a, 2008b), philosophical education is an education that aspires to the intellectual emancipation of the individual, insofar as the encounter with a truth as a novelty with regard to dominant knowledge in an era; it allows to decide whether he wants to be subject of his acts. In this sense, for the French philosopher, the subject would correspond to the set of finite elements that allow truth to remain active over time. Thus, philosophical education must be understood as a process by which a person discovers the existence of the subject of current truth (Badiou, 2010a). This process is called subjectivation process. At the end of that process, a person can decide whether to be responsible for his actions and to look for truth.

Philosophy, as a subjectivation process of individuals, deviates through truths from an academic conception of philosophy, as university discipline linked to a theoretical body of knowledge. The philosophical model defended by Badiou (2010a) is based on Plato's thought. As for Plato, philosophy for Alain Badiou (2017b) must be understood in the educational process intended for the formation of the citizen. Philosophy is not education, but one of its attributes. In this way, education may or may not be philosophical. In this sense, non-philosophical education would be useful in developing competences and socializing individuals in ensuring the proper functioning of the city. However, in Badiou (2017a, 2017b), philosophical education would aspire to allow every individual to reflect on how to transform the city organization so that all citizens can live a happy and dignified life. A philosophical education should include a thought about a radical novelty, but not any novelty, a universal and eternal novelty. A novelty that is capable of integrating the happiness of all and not just that of a few. From this point of view, for Badiou (2017b) the political nature of philosophical education fosters continuous reflection on how to achieve a fairer world: a world in which anyone can participate in the organization with the intention of living a dignified life.

In other words, according to Badiou (2011), in order to achieve the philosophical idea, a type of education is necessary that allows the citizen to reflect on the organization of the city in terms of novelty and



universality. In Plato's time, this implied a break with the *status quo*: at a time when consensus dominated around language relativism and the idea that the validity of opinions depended on the good use of rhetoric, any attempt to defend a universal opinion was classified as dogmatic. In that context, philosophical education for Plato had the task of transforming that consensus and ensuring that every citizen could believe that there are not only relative opinions, but also universal opinions.

But what was the difference between a relative opinion and a universal opinion in Plato's thought? While relative opinions have validity criteria that are known only to one individual, universal opinions have transparent and accessible validity criteria. A universal opinion has truth as its reference, because truth is nothing other than an object to which all people have access to and can prove its validity. For example, within his dialogues, Plato uses the Pythagorean theorem as an example of mathematical truth about which a conversation between equals occurs. Anyone can participate in it freely with different opinions.

However, as the conversation progresses, Socrates strives for all particular opinions to be referred to as theorem, so that these progressively become universal opinions. The end result is a consensus on the true meaning of Pythagoras' theorem.

In short, Badiou's (2019) proposal for a philosophy seen as a subjectivation process could be understood as a translation of the Platonic theory of philosophical education applied to contemporary moment. For Badiou (1990, 2003, 2008b), this translation is mainly based on a reinterpretation of his idea of truth, which focuses on five points: (1) truths are not abstract, but have a material and immanent dimension; (2) there is no truth, but multiple truths; (3) truths are distinctive interruptions of existing knowledge; (4) truths are universal because they can be recognized by anyone, but cannot be described in existing language; (5) truths are eternal, but they do not have to be visible in all ages. Each of these points will be discussed with more detail below:

- First, truths are not abstract entities, but procedures that have a material component. Truths are not immaterial entities, nor hidden thoughts in an individual's mind. They possess a corporality that is oriented by a subject within a particular situation; hence their immanent component. All truth is presented by his subject. For that reason, for Badiou (2007, 2008a), there are political, artistic, scientists and loving subjects. The corporality of the political subject is made up of the individuals of the social



movements; the artistic is made up by the different works and their material component; the scientific is composed by the declarations, formulas and theories; and the loving one is made up by the individuals who share together their life in a couple relationship.

- This would lead us to the second point: there is not one truth, but multiple truths. The political truth would correspond to the movements of popular emancipation; the scientific to the consequences of their epistemological revolutions; the artistic to the formal revolutions carried out by the artistic movements; and the loving to the revolution in private life that begins with a declaration of love.
- Thus, given their revolutionary character, truths are shown as perturbations of current knowledge. Truths are interruptions of the knowledge that dominates the realm of politics, science, art and love. Within the policy sphere, truth is subtracted from the way political or trade union institutions organize themselves. Within science, a truth is an exception to existing scientific theories. In the world of art, truth escapes the narcissistic artist's way of acting and the laws of the art market. And in loving relationships, truth eludes a romantic and unitary conception of the couple, the marriage contract and sexual freedom.
- The fourth point would reinterpret the universal character of truths. For Badiou (2007), truth is not universal as a consequence of a particular knowledge, but because of the interruption of that knowledge. So its intelligibility structure is outside of any existing knowledge regime. For this reason, its elements are presented without identity, without property, according to the dominant symbolic regime. This is therefore a generic logic that demonstrates equality between its elements. However, there is not a single generic logic, but there are many. The generic logic of a political truth would affirm that every person can belong to a group without any distinction of race, nationality, social class, etc. From an artistic point of view, its generic logic would affirm that every form, musical note, work or frame can be part of an artistic composition, regardless of the artistic movement to which it belongs. The generic logic of a loving truth would affirm that every person can live a life with a couple, whatever their sexuality, social class, wealth, etc. And finally, from the point of view of scientific truth, generic logic would



affirm that any statement can be analyzed by this theory, and thus contribute to improving its coherence, whatever theory it belonged to.

- Finally, the fifth point would reinterpret the eternal character of truths. For Badiou (2007), truths have an eternal language, but their appearance is intermittent. Truths have appeared and will appear at any time; however, they are not always present. Truths re-emerge in an unpredictable way, thanks to their infinite nature.

Thus, for Badiou and Plato, philosophical education is not linked to the qualification and socialization of a citizen, but to his transformation into a subject. Thinking of education as a subjectivation process means to encourage an individual's reencounter with the subjects of truths (political, artistic, loving and scientific) of an era. For this reason, for Badiou (2011), the professor must organize educational situations in which there is dialogue about the existence of these truths, about the presence of logic that cannot be explained or classified with the existing knowledge in art, politics, science and love. Within these dialogues, students should analyze whether it is true that this logic is exceptional. The challenge of the professor, like the Socratic professor, is to ensure that the validity of the opinions affirmed can be contrasted by any of the participants, so that the debate ends with a consensus about the generic, exceptional and eternal nature of the logic identified.

However, what place does the idea of education outlined above occupy within contemporary theories of education? This notion of education as subjectivation through the truths outlined above would fit and complement Gert Biesta's theory of education. For Biesta (2006a, 2010), education has been suffering a learnification process that reduces its functions to socialize and qualify students.

As a consequence of this process, subjectivation, a third educational function, has been neutralized. Biesta (2013A) affirms that a quality and democratic education requires that this function be restored, and that occurs by interrupting the learnification process of education. It will be shown on what measure education helps to recover the subjectivation function of the education, interrupting the learnification process. At the moment, the education theory proposed by Biesta and the role that subjectivation plays in it is developed.



Gert Biesta: Educational subjectivation as an interruption of learning

For Biesta (2010) the element that constitutes good education must be able to respond to three functions: socialization, qualification and subjectivation. The socializing function offers the opportunity for different individuals to be part of a social, cultural and political order. The socializing use of education is established when certain professional, cultural or religious traditions transmit norms and values with the intention of preserving and maintaining such traditions. The qualification function provides children, youth and adults with the knowledge, skills and abilities that allow them to do something. This function is one of the main reasons for justifying public education. This is mainly due, but not exclusively, to its relationship with the preparation of an adequate labor force that favors the development and economic growth of a country.

However, for Biesta (2017), education should not be limited to providing opportunities for children and young people to maintain certain orders (social, cultural, religious, etc.), but it should provide them opportunities to act for themselves regardless those orders. The subjectivation function offers students the opportunity to become responsible subjects for their own actions and thoughts. In this sense, subjectivity is something that the faculty cannot teach voluntarily, since if so, the students would no longer be responsible of their own actions. Subjectivity arises in an eventful and unpredictable way. For this reason, the function of subjectivation differs from socializing and qualifying in that it is not instrumental, since it is not linked to a previous knowledge that allows the faculty to plan it. In this sense, Biesta (2010) points out that subjectivity can only be experienced at times and always as a consequence of the encounter with new, unexplainable and unpredictable situations. At this point, Biesta's proposal for subjectivation is similar with the theorized creation process of Collingwood (1938) in his theory of art. For this author, artistic creators do not produce because they are not acting with the intention of achieving an end or following a preconceived plan.

However, although the faculty cannot force or plan the subjectivation of students, for Biesta (2013B) the effort should be done. To achieve this, the professor must create educational situations that favor difference and plurality (Biesta, 2006a, 2010). On the one hand, the subjectivation of an individual is linked to the experience of a 'new beginning', an act of radical creativity in and with the world. Faculty should offer students the opportunity to take actions beyond conventional knowledge assumed by

166



a community. Reviewing Linguis's theories (1994), Biesta (2010) considers that in the absence of knowledge, an individual can only use himself to seek new possibilities for action and relate to the world around him through new meanings. Only on those occasions can an individual not be replaced by another individual, so he experiences himself as fully responsible of his action.

This takes us to the second characteristics of subjectivation: plurality. Biesta (2010) adopts this concept from Arendt's theory of democracy (1979). For both authors, every act of radical creativity represents a demonstration of our freedom, but this act is not solipsist, but is subjected to its consequences on others. Hence, a person is a subject of an action only in situations where his creative acts are adopted by others, so that they are also an opportunity to carry out his own creative acts. In this sense, subjectivity also requires the experience of democratic plurality.

By introducing plurality as a requirement of this experience, Biesta (2010) manages to take subjectivation, and thus the uniqueness of an individual, out of the private sphere. Uniqueness is not something that depends solely on oneself, but on a public or intersubjective situation. This conception of uniqueness has its foundations in the work of Linguis (1994). For this philosopher, the unique character of a human being is only given in situations where it is irreplaceable. Uniqueness is not something that makes someone different, but something that makes this person unique in a given situation. The important thing about this nuance is the place where uniqueness is located. For Linguis (1994), identity is not a set of different characters which makes an individual unique. It is the situation that makes an action unique. The uniqueness of the situation requires the individual to perform it and not another. But when is a situation unique? When it does not require someone to act by using the knowledge obtained from the speeches and practices of the community or tradition he belongs to. If so, it could be replaced by any other community member who had the same knowledge. Thus, in these situations where knowledge as a member of society cannot be made to serve, it is the responsibility of acting as a single individual, as a subject. As Biesta (2010) says, for Linguis (1994), there is a rational community that shares a relational structure and 'other' community that presents the problems of such a structure. An individual lives most of the time in the rational community, acting in agreement with such a structure; however, occasionally the 'other' community appears in the need to act on the sidelines of such structure. It is in these times when an individual is responsible for his actions.



As shown below, placing the subjectivity of the individual in the situation or context brings Biesta's theory of education closer to the materialistic premises on which Alain Badiou's subject theory is held. The education through truths proposed by Badiou offers the opportunity to create these unique and pluralistic situations, those 'other' communities in which any individual can experience as the only individual responsible for his action. In the next section we will develop this idea. For the time being, it will be argued to what extent the current situation of education limits subjectivation and its functions to qualification and socialization.

The dominant educational situation: education as a learnification process

168



For Biesta (2013A), in recent decades, education has undergone a *learnification* process that is evident in the way the language used in the educational field has been transformed: it differs from 'teaching' and 'learning'; professors are considered as 'mediators' or 'facilitators of learning'; and the school is considered a 'learning environment'. This language has been consolidated as a result of a number of developments:

1. the impact of new learning theories in the field of psychology that have led to the emergence of theories, such as constructivist, that focus its attention on students and their activities rather than on teachers and their contributions, as studied by Fosnot (1996) and Lave and Wenger (1991);
2. post-modern criticism of authoritarian forms of teaching which, according to Giesecke (1985), has shifted the emphasis from teaching to learning, to the extent that it has questioned the idea that educators can free and emancipate their students;
3. The 'silent explosion' of learning analyzed by Fiel (2000), which emphasizes its diversity in adult education; and
4. The individualizing impact of liberal policies on education transfers the duties and responsibilities of the State to the individual's duties and responsibilities (for example, attributing social and political problems to learning problems). As Biesta (2006b, 2013A) and Fejes (2006) claim, this change of perspective makes learning not to be associated with the search for an 'inner treasure', but to a personal pressure: lifelong learning internalizes the governance process of the state as a necessity.

For Biesta (2010, 2013B), the current debate on the situation of education is limited to reflecting on how to rewrite the educational process in terms of an economic transaction between the students, the professor, the educational institution and the market. This debate would take place assuming a consensus on the four pillars of a learning process:

1. individuality, in which the idea is to satisfy the desires of a student who knows or should know what he or she wants to study and why he or she wants to learn it;
2. functionality, insofar as these desires are adapted to the professional needs of society and the demands of a global economy;
3. mediation, to the extent that the educational institution and the faculty offer opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and flexible skills that enable them to integrate into society;
4. measurability, as they aspire to achieve results that must be quantified to determine the effectiveness of the process and offer reliability to the professor.

However, for Biesta (2006b, 2010), conducting this debate on the basis of a consensus on these four pillars leaves aside the question of what good education is and what its functions are. This involves a risk to the extent that this consensus hides the way in which the educational process has limited its functions to socialization and qualification. The learning process, understood as an effective acquisition of knowledge and skills according to the social needs of the individual, avoids thinking about the subjectivation of the students, because while qualifying and socializing education purposes contribute to empowering individuals to act in an existing socio-political configuration and provide them with adequate skills and knowledge, the subject is oriented towards emancipation and, therefore, to the transformation of the existing order, because he presents or embodies in his own action different ways of doing.

In this sense, Biesta says (2010, 2013A), to aspire to a good education means to recover its subjectivation function through the construction of educational situations that are different and pluralistic. To do this, it is necessary to break the consensus on the essential features on which the learnification process is based. This involves recovering an education that is not only based on the promotion of particular learner satisfaction, the acquisition of useful knowledge and skills, the application of a mediator, or a control system that measures its efficiency.

At this point, it is appropriate to mention the educational consequences derived from Alain Badiou's subject theory in the review of the

educational situation proposed by Gert Biesta. The use of truths, as they are theorized by Badiou, in education would offer us the opportunity to create those unique and pluralistic situations that make subjectivity event more likely. In the next section we will show how the encounter with the truths of an era could interrupt the dominant learning process, since it generates educational situations that, being subtracted from hegemonic knowledge, are accessible to anyone and prevents them from being evaluated in terms of efficiency and utility.

Education as an interruption of learning by truths

As stated above, Biesta (2010), following Arendt (1977), justifies that education should not be seen simply as an instrument that prepares the student for something, but as a democratic space where individuals can be subjected to their actions and can carry out their 'new beginnings' in the world, so that they do not interfere in the beginnings of others. The question for professors is how individuals may be subject if subjectivation cannot be granted, planned or scheduled. For Biesta (2010, 2013B) the answer occurs because the professor needs to know that the logic of learning that dominates the current educational situation does not allow the student to own his actions, since these are determined by the existing orders. Education must interrupt such logic and place the student in an empty place in knowing that he legitimizes such orders, so that he can experiment as a subject of his actions while taking into account the possibilities of others to be subject. In other words, the objective of education should not only be socialization and qualification, but subjectivation for all.

Biesta (2010) has defined subjectivation as a 'coming to the world' in which the new beginnings are assumed by the others in a way that it does not prevent them from carrying out their own. In other words, the coming into the world of unique individuals can only be understood as a creative process that necessarily depends on the plural view of the world.

The challenge of a democratic education conception, where these situations based on the uniqueness and plurality of actions are included, is to answer the question of whether it is possible to interrupt the individualistic, functional, qualifying and controllable character on which the dominant educational process is based.

- The philosophical education implicit in Badiou's work offers possibilities for this interruption. For Badiou (2003, 2007), only with truth it is possible to carry out an action in which an-



yone can participate, and it cannot be measured or controlled by existing knowledge. Philosophical education, understood as a subjectivation process by truths, is a bypass of the dominant consensus. Indeed, this education would interrupt the consensus on the four pillars on which the debate on the current state of education is based:

- Philosophical education implies an interruption of relativistic discourses that originate individualistic theories of education. Subjectivation process develops in an educational situation in which individual opinions become universal opinions as a consequence of their adaptation to the principle of evaluative transparency: Every individual must be able to corroborate the statements of the other members. After all, the purpose of the generated debate is to build a consensus on the identification of the generic logic of the political, scientific, loving and artistic truths that exist today.
- Philosophical education implies an interruption of education as a functional instrument. Thanks to the subjectivation process, an individual experiences a radical rupture with knowledge placed at the service of the conservation and legitimization of a given order. For Badiou (2007), an individual becomes subject as a result of the introduction to truth, which could be called an impossible novelty. Contrary to possible developments, the impossible ones 'permeate' the symbolic regime of established knowledge that legitimizes a state of affairs. The possible novelty is predictable according to that knowledge, however, the impossible cannot be deduced or thought with it. For Badiou (2008a), subjectivation means participating in the consequences that result from giving the greatest existence to this impossible novelty for the dominant order in a situation. In other words, giving the body-subject maximum existence of a new movement of citizen emancipation, a new artistic movement, a scientific novelty or a loving relationship invites an expeditious practice within politics, art, science and personal relations, looking for knowledge that questions the functionality of the system.
- Philosophical education implies a rupture with the educational institution and, in particular, the professor as a mediator in the educational process. For Badiou (2010a), as for Biesta (2017), the professor cannot plan the subjectivation of students because





he does not know how to display truth in a particular situation. However, the professor can favor such subjectivation by presenting the exceptional character of the existing truths. Subjectivizing means placing the student in the abyss of communication, within the limits of rational discourse, with the intention of discovering for himself whether he wants to participate in the construction of an impossible novelty. In this abyss, the student discovers that there is no speech that can convey him. Truths interrupt the flow of knowledge that can be said and communicated. In reference to truth, no element of a situation can state something meaningful by making use of existing knowledge. However, truths do not cause the destruction of all forms of sense, but of those that can be articulated from a certain regime. Truths are unique experiences that cause a disturbance with what can be said with meaning in the field of politics, love, science and art. Within an educational context, the student understands that he must explore the indescribable structure of a truth on his own. But he also understands that, in order to validate the results of such exploration, his views must be able to be corroborated by any of those present in that context.

- Philosophical education implies a division with the logic of control and security. For García-Puchades (2011a), placing the truth at the center of the educational situation requires that the professor be unable to anticipate the evolution of the subjectivation process: He does not know the way his students should follow. Following Rancière (2003), there are only two postulates that guide him in this task: encourage students to continue exploring what they ignore by relating it to what they already know, and to make the validation criteria to transparent their results. Consequently, the professor, with the intention of subjectivizing his students, must take risks and locate the educational process at a certain distance from his comfort zone.

Conclusion

The text started by asking how Alain Badiou's work could contribute to the current debate about education. The starting point chosen is Gert Biesta's critique of the way education has undergone a learnification process, forgetting the question of how to implement its subjectivizing

function. Following the line of research of some contemporary authors, Alain Badiou's work has been analyzed from an educational perspective. This work presents an educational proposal for the subjectivation or intellectual emancipation of students based on the encounter with novel practices, called truths, in the field of art, politics, science and love. This proposal, read from Biesta's theory of education, would interrupt the dominant consensus on an education understood as a process of acquiring knowledge and skills individually justified, which is functional, completely measurable and guided by the authority of a mediator.

Education as a subjectivation process by truths would offer professors the possibility of fostering educational experiences based on creative and democratic research projects. The fact that these truths are exceptional in artistic, political, scientific and loving knowledge poses a risk in carrying out these projects, as the professor lacks of a model to measure, evaluate and control them. In this sense, the professor cannot be understood as a mediator, but as a researcher who participates with his students in the development of this project in terms of equality.

To conclude, it can be said that Badiou's work has much to offer to education theorists. Although she does not directly address the educational field in a systematic way, her work can be understood as an ideal space to present alternatives to the dominant educational model. Related with critical pedagogy, she offers a suggestive conceptual framework capable of basing educational proposals according to more democratic and cooperative teaching models



Research and financial support

This text is part of the R+D+i project "Participation to agonism: Artistic-political practices for a democratic citizenship education", funded by the Spanish Government's Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (HAR2017-85230-R).

References

- ARENDET, Hannah
1977 What Is Freedom? En H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (pp. 143-171). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- BADIOU, Alain
1990 *Manifiesto por la filosofía* (trad. Victoriano Alcantud Serrano). Madrid: Cátedra.

- 2003 *Condiciones* (trad. Eduardo Lucio Molina y Vedia). México D. E.: Siglo XXI editores.
- 2007 *El ser y el acontecimiento* (trad. Raúl J. Cerdeiras, Alejandro A. Cerletti y Nilda Prados, Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- 2008a *Lógicas de los mundos: El Ser y el acontecimiento, 2* (trad. María del Carmen Rodríguez). Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- 2008b *Teoría del sujeto* (trad. Juan Manuel Spinelli). Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- 2019 *Le Séminaire - Pour aujourd'hui: Platon! (2007-2010)*. Fayard: Paris.
- 2010a *La philosophie et l'événement. Alain Badiou avec Fabien Tarby*. París: Germina.
- 2010b *Segundo manifiesto por la filosofía* (trad. María del Carmen Rodríguez). Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- 2011 *La relation énigmatique entre philosophie et politique*, París: Germina.
- 2017a *La verdadera vida. Un mensaje a los jóvenes* (trad. Adriana Santoveña). Barcelona: Malpaso.
- 2017b *Metafísica de la felicidad real*. Adriana Hidalgo editora: Buenos Aires.
- BARBOUR, Charles
- 2010 Militants of Truth, Communities of Equality: Badiou and the ignorant schoolmaster. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(2), 251-263. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00488.x>.
- BARTLETT, Adam
- 2006 The Pedagogical Theme: Alain Badiou and an Eventless Education, *Anti-Thesis*, 16, 129-147
- 2011 *Badiou and Plato: An Education by Truths*. Edimburgo: Edinburgh University Press.
- BIESTA, Gert
- 2006a *Beyond Learning. Democratic Education for a Human Future*. Londres, Paradigm Publisher.
- 2006b What's the Point of Lifelong Learning if Lifelong Learning Has No Point? On the Democratic Deficit of Policies for Lifelong Learning. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(3/4), 169-180.
- 2010 *Good education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- 2013a Interrupting the Politics of Learning. *Power and Education*, 5(1), 4-15.
- 2013b *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. Londres: Routledge.
- 2017 Don't be fooled by ignorant schoolmasters: On the role of the teacher in emancipatory education. *Policy Futures in Education*, 15(1), 52-73.
- CERLETTI, Alejandro
- 2008 *Repetición, novedad y sujeto en la educación. Un enfoque filosófico y político*. Buenos Aires: Del Estante Editorial.
- 2013 Identidad, Igualdad y Educación. *Praxis & Saber*, 4(7), 17-33.
- CHO, Daniel y TYSON, Lois
- 2005 Education and Event: Thinking Radical Pedagogy in the Era of Standardization. *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education*, 5(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.3138/sim.5.2.001>



- COLELLA, Leonardo.
 2015 Multiplicidad y encuentro educativo. Un aporte de la filosofía de Alain Badiou para pensar los cambios y los procesos de subjetivación en el ámbito educativo. *Estudios de Filosofía Práctica e Historia de las Ideas*, 17(1), 11-20.
 2016 Un análisis ontológico de la educación a partir de los aportes de Badiou y Rancière. *Estudios de Filosofía*, 52, 165-182
 2018 ¿Qué significa un cambio en la educación? Aportes desde la analítica trascendental de Alain Badiou y la noción de “igualdad” de Jacques Rancière. *Saberes y prácticas. Revista de Filosofía y Educación*, 3.
- COLLINGWOOD, Robin
 1938 *The Principles of Art*. New York. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DEN HEYER, Kent
 2009 Education as an affirmative invention: Alain Badiou and the purpose of teaching and curriculum. *Educational Theory*, 59, 441-463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2009.00330.x>.
- DOLL, William
 1990 Teaching a Post-modern Curriculum. En James T. Sears and Dan Marshall (eds.) *Teaching and Thinking About Curriculum: Critical Inquiries* (pp. 39-47). Nueva York: Teachers College Press.
- FEJES, Andreas
 2006 *Constructing the Adult Learner: a governmentality analysis*. Linköping: Linköping University.
- FIEL, John
 2000 *Lifelong Learning and the New Educational Order*. Trent: Trentham Books.
- FOSNOT, Catherine
 1996 *Constructivism*. Nueva York: Teachers College Press.
- GIESECKE, Hermann.
 1985 *Das Ende der Erziehung*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- GARCÍA-PUCHADES, Wenceslao
 2011a El pensamiento de Jacques Rancière: un platonismo contra Platón. *Res pública*, 26, 201-210.
 2011b La educación para la emancipación política a través del arte en el pensamiento de Alain Badiou. *Astrolabio. Revista internacional de filosofía*, 11, 199-208.
 2012 *El lugar del cine en el pensamiento filosófico de Alain Badiou*. Tesis doctoral no publicada. Universitat Politècnica de València. <https://doi.org/10.4995/Thesis/10251/14862>
 2013 Alain Badiou y la filosofía como presentación didáctica del ser en común. *Isegoría*, 49, 583-598. <https://doi.org/10.3989/isegoria.2013.049.12>
 2016 La inestética como educación ética según las verdades del arte. *Lógoi*, 29(30), 85-104
- JAGODZINSKI, Jan
 2010 Badiou's Challenge to Art and its Education: Or, 'art cannot be taught it can however educate!'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(2), 177-195, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2009.00531.x>

- KESSON, Kathleen y HENDERSON, James
2010 Reconceptualizing Professional Development for Curriculum Leadership: Inspired by John Dewey and informed by Alain Badiou. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(2), 213-229, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2009.00533.x>
- LAVE, Jean y WENGER, Etienne
1991 *Situated Learning. Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LINGUIS, Alphonso.
1994 *The community of those who have nothing in common*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- PETERSON, Thomas
2010 Badiou, Pedagogy and the Arts. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(2), 160-176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2009.00530.x>
- RANCIÈRE, Jacques
2003 *El maestro ignorante. Cinco lecciones sobre la emancipación intelectual* (trad. Núria Estrach) Barcelona: Laertes.
- STHRAN, Anna
2010 The Obliteration of Truth by Management: Badiou, St. Paul and the question of economic managerialism in education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(2), 231-250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2009.00534.x>

176



Document reception date: December 15, 2020
Document review date: February 15, 2021
Document approval date: May 20, 2021
Document publication date: July 15, 2021