K-12 Education as a Hermeneutic Adventurous Endeavor:
Theorizing the Instrumental Approach, Education as a Sovereign Agent for Humanity, and the Relationships with Philosophy

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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2015

Abstract
This work introduces and discusses my vision for education as a response to a dominant instrumental approach to education. Situated within a broader discussion of the place and role of public education and education research in our lives and in society, I touch upon several key components of foundations of education in order to point at what I consider a problematic and dangerous approach to education as a social and political instrument. This approach, which has become prevalent and taken for granted, divorces education from its deep human capacities and as a result damages students’ humanity and humanity as a whole. From theorizing the instrumental approach I argue for the need for stronger statements about public K-12 education and to the necessity to protect it, and propose a shift in perceiving its role from a social servant to an agent for humanity based on the guideline that we are all human beings. This characterization is meant to make schooling an adventurous endeavor, both for teachers and students, that enables and encourages imagining alternative ways of life and alternative social arrangements. To support this kind of education, I propose to incorporate basic human features alongside the curriculum, namely experiences, understandings, and meanings. As a step towards restoring education’s agency I propose to
establish a sovereign education that will depoliticize schooling and will reconsider its associations with other spheres. Particularly, I examine education’s ties with philosophy and argue for non-committal relationships between them in the form of distilling educative ideas from philosophical discussions. Practical measures and policy implications, as well as several expected objections, are discussed and comparisons are made to other views and educational programs, especially to Dewey’s. By way of conclusion, this work offers several ideas about school as a social organization and about public education as human enterprise.
Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the kind support of many to whom I am in debt for guiding me in this academic journey.

John Portelli was supportive of my philosophical ideas about education even before my arrival in Toronto. He helped me to link the area of educational administration with philosophy of education and to see how the two mutually influence each other. John has showed me how exciting and fun philosophy of education can be, and has inspired me to go further and deeper in my work. Through critical questions he continuously challenges me to think deeply and consider the unthought. He is a true mentor and a friend.

Lauren Bialystok encouraged me in my pursuit of looking at the big picture of public education and was invaluable in providing wide philosophical support. She was always available to discuss difficulties and concerns. In many long conversations and with endless patience, Lauren helped me to examine difficult dilemmas and to propose novel solutions to what otherwise seemed as impasses. I am thankful for her careful and accurate critique.

Mario Di Paolantonio has provided crucial broad commentary on an earlier draft of my work and his contribution is decisive with regard to several maneuvers I made in developing my thinking and in stressing central ideas. I thank Mario for his wise observations and recommendations.

Eric Bredo has assisted me to examine my ideas vis-à-vis Dewey and has enriched me with helpful insights that contributed to my ability to situate my work. I am also grateful to him for his warm welcome upon my arrival to OISE.
Ori Eyal, my MA supervisor who has become a good friend, has continued his support and mentorship deep into my doctoral studies. In contributing his critique and ideas to course papers in which I examined preliminary ideas, he helped shape my thinking about public education and its relationships with philosophy.

Ian Thomson has assisted me to link my ideas to Heidegger through fresh philosophical eyes. I also thank him for the opportunity to present my ideas about education to an audience of philosophers while hosting me as a visiting scholar at the University of New Mexico.

I also wish to thank those who have dedicated their time and offered important advice that led me to explore new directions and new areas in my work. I wish to mention Natasha Levinson, Gert Biesta, Sam Rocha, and Abigail Bakan.

I thank Joanne Bacon for her assistance in reading my texts and offering suggestions that make my writing clearer.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I thank Manu Sharma for her support in crucial milestones of my doctoral studies and accompanying me in times of accomplishments as well as in times of doubt. Beyond her wise ideas, I am grateful to Manu for teaching me humility in life and in my writing.
Preface

There are almost no real adventures left in our lives. Far from adventures created by Disney and Pixar producers and artists, in which we participate only as listeners and viewers, most events we consider as having adventurous features are actually planned in detail and involve careful suspension of the busy flow of our daily lives. Think of a vacation, for example; people might say they “go on an adventure” while they already know exactly where they are going, their hotel is booked, and they are equipped with a tour guide after learning about the popular attractions on site (including, perhaps, the best shopping places). Moreover, tourists become disappointed when the reality they encounter is different from what they expected. To go to school, on the other hand, might seem the farthest one can think of from an adventure; after all, being in school is not just planned in time and space, but it is mostly perceived as an unpleasant experience for students as they are bound to master things they are not necessarily interested in or are not versed in. Many teachers, too, as well as administrators working at schools, hardly find this practice an escapade but a stressful and dissatisfying experience. In this work, however, I propose to perceive public education as an adventurous endeavor that is exciting both to students and educators.

This work is a step in my development as an educator. It follows other important steps such as my teaching experience and my MA research, and it is the fruit of years of contemplating practical and theoretical matters that go back to my undergraduate engineering studies even before I thought about switching to education. Although a product of broad thinking, it reflects changes in attitudes towards education that took place not just before my doctoral studies but also during the writing of this work.
Perhaps the most dramatic change in my thinking has to do with how I perceive education’s status in our lives. I have realized that in order to let education be what we—educators who care about our students and our world of education—want and hope it to be, we have to take the lead with regard to education, to take responsibility about education, and claim our authority over it. While at an early stage of my doctoral studies I sought to ‘base’ education on philosophy and attempted to formulate what Heideggerian education is, I find myself today arguing and calling for an education with its own agency and its own consciousness that is allowed to think for itself and conduct itself by virtue of its own sovereignty.

Several professional and academic stations in my life are sources for the ideas laid out in these pages. Working as an engineer and programming for hours every day, to being a student teacher and then serving as a full time teacher for several years with experience in curriculum design and policy making, as well as being a researcher in educational administration and focusing on educational in-house entrepreneurs (champions), were all crucial positions that together with the people I met along the way assisted me in developing a vision for education that is anchored both in concepts and theory as well as in the daily, dull, and exhausting experience of being a teacher or a researcher. Only later in my evolution as a scholar, when I deeply engaged with philosophy and philosophy of education literature, did I become aware of the part I played in the education system without fully understanding the forces that influence and manipulate schooling. Thus, my motivation for this work stems both from personal disillusionment and learning from others who in their insights put into words feelings that I was not able to articulate. Indeed, I stand on the shoulders of others, a few of them I even had the delight to meet or work with.
Ideas presented here have been developed for quite some time and were negotiated with many. However, converting ideas to meaningful lights and points on the screen as well as addressing critique—friendly and supportive as it is sharp and thorough—is an arduous and painstaking work that requires a great deal of effort and endurance and is accompanied by doubts, frustrations, and sleepless nights. Indeed, it is not just poets but also scholars who struggle daily in finding something worth saying and in discovering ways to say it. However, paradoxically and magically, despite the difficulties, there comes a point where it seems as if the work has acquired its own life and it becomes very difficult to stop it from evolving. It is as if the work begs to go on, begs to grow, secretly, away from light, refusing to show its face to the world, wishing to flourish in the dark, while I have already accepted its maturity, I am ready for it to leave the nest; indeed, much like a delivery of a baby that I will never experience.

Indeed, the work—literally and figuratively—is not done. It is not just the obvious or common apology that there is much more to say (and then, unfortunately the dissertation would be too long), but also that there are unexplored places that, as in a real adventure, we just do not know about. Therefore, what you will find in these pages is a picture of my ongoing thought about public education in general and the issues and problems examined here in particular. This essay is indeed an instance of my evolving pondering and as such it is forced to stop, to represent or to show what I have come up with until that moment of ‘Send’.

Beyond the scholarly contributions I wish to make as I explain mostly in the introductory and in the concluding chapters, I hope that this work and the spirit that motivates it will draw adventurous and capable people into the field of education, whether within school’s walls or
in academic campuses. We sometimes forget how exciting education can be, and I believe that restoring educators’ control over education is crucial in order to keep it exciting.
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Introduction

Public K-12 education is logistically and administratively a huge and complex social endeavor. In terms of employment, for example, the public education system is one of the biggest workplaces and probably the most populated system in society.\(^1\) Public K-12 education is also a public good that attracts broad interest; as schools are sites where students spend significant portion (if not most) of their waking hours on weekdays and where students are under constant supervision and influence of adults and peers, what students undergo and the impact on them is of interest not just to them and their parents but also to every person who has an interest in the young as young or future adults, and arguably of interest to everyone who pays taxes (especially if one is interested in the way taxes are spent on public education). Public K-12 education is also a very contested endeavor; it is not only of interest to many people, but also an endeavor that evokes ideas that frequently differ if not conflict. Given these characteristics, any comprehensive proposal about public K-12 education might seem too ambitious. A proposal that argues for changing basic and—I will argue—deeply rooted perceptions about the education system, especially if this proposal rejects the notion that ‘education is political,’ might even seem naïve.

And yet, nevertheless, in this work I propose my vision for public education that is based on an analysis and critique of a prevalent perception of education that I consider a threat to education itself. I will show that a dominant view on education is an instrumental one in the sense that I explain below and exemplify in chapter 1. This view or approach to education

\(^1\) For example, as of 2013-14, in Ontario, Canada, teachers in K-12 public education constitute more than 6% of the workforce and considering together with students schools host about 16% of the province’s population. See https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/educationFacts.html
leaves education under attack by forces that wish to exploit it, and therefore I argue for a need to protect education. My vision for education will emerge from this call for protecting education.

It should be clarified from the outset that by ‘education’ my interest and my concern is with public K-12 schooling, as I explain in section 1.1. The literature tends to attribute crisis and other catastrophic terms mostly to higher education, as the university attracts a lot of attention among scholars who are worried about the institution’s loss of identity as a result of over vocationalization and a decrease in the prestige of undergraduate studies stemming from market forces (see for example: Collini, 2012; Coté and Allahar, 2007; Readings, 1996). However, I believe that as a result of instrumentalism public K-12 schooling is just as much in a state of emergency and requires appropriate measures in order to protect it. Moreover, as higher education is fed by the K-12 system, it might be that in some sense the higher education crisis originates from the perception of parents and students at the pre-university level and that at least some of the problems of higher education—especially those of the humanities—can be addressed by changing attitudes towards public K-12 schools.

**What I Mean by Instrumentalism**

By ‘instrumentalism’ I mean, simply put, perceiving and using public education as an instrument for something else that does not necessarily intend to contribute to students or to the endeavor of ‘public education’ as a whole. In other words, instrumentalism is treating

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2 It might also be speculated that scholars prefer to stress the crisis in their own workplace and that they consider writing about higher education as a more promising path for promotions, tenure, and funding. The situation of higher education was also in the focus of the keynote address of the 2015 AERA Philosophical Studies in Education SIG given by Chris Higgins who referred to the wealth of literature on the matter as “crisis fatigue”.

3 In this work, by the notion ‘instrumentalism’ I mean that the object that is being instrumentalized is specifically public education. I do not refer by ‘instrumentalism’ to any situation in which human beings use
public education without fundamental interest in the favor of students or the favor of the educational system. In fact, I will show that the forces that take an instrumental approach towards public education actually damage students’ humanity and education’s agency. I expand on this sense of instrumentalism below and in chapter 1 but for now it is important to differentiate between this sense and the one of education as a commodity, that is, goods that are marketed in order to serve (real or imagined) consumer needs or preferences. According to this perception of instrumentalism, education—or its outcomes such as grades or a diploma—is a product, and people in education attempt to ‘sell’ this product to potential consumers. This is the view that Lubienski (2003) has on education as an instrument, and she maintains that instrumentalism promotes a form of marketization where:

educational provision is based on a quasimarket model manifested in consumer choice and competition between independent providers. Instrumentalism seeks to liberate and elevate consumer preferences as the paramount concern and—relative to institutional schemes—allow greater ease of entry, operational autonomy, and organizational independence for providers. (p. 495)

Molnar (2005) warns us of the perils of such instrumentalism:

Today, across the nation and around the world, the ideal of the public school as a pillar of democracy is being transformed by a wave of commercialism. Commercialism is an expression of advanced capitalist culture and a profound threat to democratic civic institutions. Once held to be a public good that could be measured by their contribution to the community’s well-being, schools have come to be seen as markets for vendors, venues for advertising and marketing, and commodities to be bought and sold. (p. 16)

We encounter similar views on instrumentalism with regard to education in Feinberg (2001) and Biesta (2006). Within this understanding of education, schools are to be perceived as things, including other human beings, for their own interests, whether willfully or unintentionally. I also do not deny that there is a neutral sense by which human beings use things in order to achieve some goal (for example, using an hammer) or a neutral sense by which human beings instrumentally serve other human beings (for example, a taxi driver, although in such cases there is a danger for an unethical attitude towards the other). By ‘instrumentalism’ I refer here to a specific attitude towards and treatment of public education that do not primary intend to benefit it, and, directly or indirectly, students.

4 I take a closer look at Feinberg’s (2001) and Biesta’s (2006) views of instrumentalism in section 1.2.
competing businesses offering choices for customers, while the governing factors are the market forces. While this perception of schools, based on consumer-driven models of provision, is widely criticized, Lubienski (2003) sees instrumentalism thus understood as a positive phenomenon since she contrasts it with what she terms an ‘institutionalist’ pattern of public education, that is, a politicized public education that is based on “direct democratic control” (p. 484) and a more centralized governing of education that is saturated with bureaucratic administration. Lubienski argues that instrumentalism as commercialism is supposed to contribute to the depoliticization of education: “A central tenet of the instrumentalist approach to public education is that schooling should be removed from the political arena, where it is susceptible to the corrupting influence of providers and other self-interested groups.“ (p. 492). Instead of political control over education, instrumentalism as commercialism emphasizes “outcomes—as acknowledged by consumers—over organizational arrangements or processes dictated by bureaucrats” (p. 489) and grants access to public schooling to both public as well as private entities.

However, my use of ‘instrumentalism’, although not unrelated to commercialism, is different: in using this term to characterize how K-12 schooling is perceived, I do not see schooling as a business in which educators (or those who ‘own’ the business of schools) attempt to sell something to parents and students. Rather, I use ‘instrumentalism’ in the sense of how others see public K-12 education as a means, a tool. As such, this sense is closer to—although not entirely overlapping with—the Kantian sense of ‘means’ as it is expressed in his categorical imperative, or the Heideggerian sense of ready-to-hand, or the Buberian sense within the ‘I-It’ attitude: education is perceived as something to be used, or one might say to be exploited, as “merely as a means to an end”, or as a piece of equipment that is taken for
An Instrumental Attitude towards Education: Brief Historical Review

Institutionalized education was always considered a threat for the elite and for those in power. Perhaps the earliest indication of perceiving education as a threat and a response that meant a direct attack on education is the charge against Socrates that he was corrupting the young, a charge which cost him his life. Masschelein and Simons (2013) argue that the school, an institution aimed at serving as “a source of knowledge and experience made available as a 'common good'” (p. 9), was always under close inspection and monitoring, and moreover was given legitimacy as long as served those who had the power to shut it down:

It has been the school's good fortune throughout history to have escaped definitive censure by judge or jury or to have been robbed of its right to exist... It was tolerated so long as it subjected itself to programmes of adjustment or applied itself in the service of a set of fixed (religious and political) ideals and ready-made projects (nation-building, civilising missions) (ibid.).

Religion played a role in establishing organized education in general and educational institutions in particular during the Middle Age and into the early Modern period. But the phenomenon I am interested in exploring in this work has to do with forces penetrating
existing institutionalized general education and using it for their own interest. As such, although using education or influencing it is not new, the phenomenon on which I am focused here is relatively new in the political landscape as most comprehensive systems of education are less than 200 years old (Craig, 1981).5

It is difficult to point out how education has systematically become instrumentalized in the sense that I explore in this work, but it seems that in general an instrumental approach to education has occurred or emerged together with the phenomenon of mass education, whether mass education was a result of a critical mass of schools open to the wider public, public funding for schools, or laws that made school attendance compulsory. It seems that institutionalized education was not broadly perceived instrumentally as a valuable resource before the industrial revolution, as many families preferred to send their children to work (which resulted in the terrible phenomena of child labour) and factory owners did not consider formal education a requirement for work (Craig, 1981; Mitch, 1999; Sanderson, 1972). It is important to note, however, that I do not argue that education was established as a system as we know it in order to serve those who formalized it as such; this is an issue for historians in general and for historians of education in particular, together with historians of economics, sociologists, and political scientists. What I do claim is that—at least conceptually if not in practice—the education system is ‘hijacked’ by forces in society that see the obligatory attendance in schools as an opportunity to have access to virtually all the young and to influence them for their own interests.

5 Scotland is one prominent exception as the Parliament of Scotland constituted in 1496 The Education Act that required landowners to send their eldest sons to school to study Latin, arts and law. This made schooling compulsory for the first time in Scotland.
Roots of contemporary instrumentalist movements in education, at least in the market sense, can be found in the ideas of early 20th century curriculum theorists like Ellwood Cubberley who viewed schools as factories producing workers for the needs of society:

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of twentieth-century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down. This demands good tools, specialized machinery, continuous measurement of production to see if it is according to specifications, the elimination of waste in manufacture, and a large variety in the output. (as cited in Callahan, 1964, p. 152)

I will show in this work that the specifications for graduates as products are not only laid down by economic forces but by a variety of external forces with different interests and different agendas. Moreover, I will argue that these specifications are not laid down as a request but rather as a demand on education and actually that these forces act aggressively in order to influence what education is and what its goals are.

A Need for Stronger and Bolder Statements

The literature acknowledges the pressure put by economic and political forces on education (see section 1.2), and as such the conflict between the demands of education to deliver students with required specifications, on the one hand, and to meet what are considered more ‘noble’ qualities for students such as individual autonomy and critical thinking, on the other hand. As a response to this conflict, in assessing or suggesting the place of education in society among other human endeavors, the dominant approach taken by scholars is to characterize the relationships between education and other domains as complex and delicate give-and-take interactions. Educators and other social thinkers attempt to find a way to settle between instrumentalism—consideration of what is demanded from education as a provider of future human capital—and educational autonomy—some kind of professional discretion in
the hands of educators. In other words, the main line of thought is that of a compromise or a balance in which education and other domains work together in fruitful cooperation based on mutual respect. For example, Kitcher (2009) calls for maximizing or exhausting the potential of a Deweyan democratic educational vision within today’s constraints of capitalism:

our most important tasks are to articulate further the Deweyan connection between democracy and education, to probe more accurately the economic preconditions of democratic education, to expose as precisely as possible the sources of conflict between capitalism, as we now have it, and Dewey’s ambitious project, and, on that basis, to conceive of ways of modifying the economic constraints. (p. 314–315)

Similarly, and following Kitcher, White (2013) talks about ‘economic realities’ and expresses concerns about a “transformation of the global economy” and “how we in the UK and other countries should react to the Eastward movement of economic power” (p. 300), and proposes to address the conflict between these concerns and Deweyan “broad education for democracy” (ibid.) on a “macro scale” level, “not one confined to education alone” (p. 301). In responding to White, Siegel (2014) writes:

I certainly endorse (and in my small way make) efforts to create citizen-protecting bulwarks against threats posed by unchecked capital, policies that ensure basic needs, more-than-subsistence incomes, freedom from servitude, and fair taxation policies. If we must have capitalism, it must be capitalism with a human face” (p. 123)

Shaffer (2005), in discussing different meanings of instrumentalism, argues that “any workable theory of adult education must incorporate the complexity of interaction and structural supports between all of the ‘players’ in the system: students, instructors, institutions, employers, governments, economies, etc.” (p. 4)⁶. He proposes systems theory and chaos theory as a means to assess the relationships between these players, and concludes that “instrumental approaches are sometimes appropriate and should not be dismissed out of

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⁶ Although Shaffer refers to adult education, his broader discussion about instrumentalism applies to education in general.
hand” (p. 1). Finally, Blacker (2000) envisions a multi-sphere space in which education serves other spheres but is also granted autonomy:

Those concerned to protect the identity, integrity and autonomy of a sphere should not look to the Good above or the Good within, but should look to the very instrumentalities that the sphere generates and from which it has become inextricable. For this is how any spherical autonomy at all must arise: through a criss-crossing of lines of instrumentality that connect a sphere, via relations of use-value, to a range of similarly ensconced and similarly useful spheres. The justification of spherical autonomy should be reconceived accordingly. A sphere has standing to speak for itself when it is useful to enough other spheres such that each have their own agendas and so 'tug' against the sphere in question from enough competing directions. (p. 238)

As Blacker both explicitly questions the notion of instrumentalism and offers a framework for bestowing educational autonomy, I will closely examine his claims later in section 2.1. Meanwhile, it is important to note that Blacker, as with the aforementioned scholars who address the conflict between instrumentalism and non-instrumentalism, attempts to find a middle way through which education will maintain ‘good relationships’ with other domains without interrupting a needed social stability under the assumption that a compromise is possible between what other spheres demand from education and what education can contribute beyond these demands. In other words, the available ideas for addressing instrumentalism tend to propose a fine-tuning of the relationships between education and other domains, but not an entire overhaul.

This point of fine-tuning rather than a complete overhaul is crucial since it is linked to the tendency to make education better within certain given parameters of the status quo rather than to deeply think what we want education to be. Making education better, that is, improving education, can only be thought of and done when the essence and general goals of education have already been set. For, evaluating whether something becomes better or thinking how to improve it can be considered only once the standards on how to assess such progress have been determined, and these standards must follow some kind of understanding
of what is the general framework within which to work or the direction we want to take. Thus, making education better means to better meet given standards or expectations. With regard to instrumentalism, making education better, therefore, means to better serve the forces that use education—to be a better tool in the sense of doing what education is designed or supposed to do, but more efficiently, more accurately, sharper, quicker, or whatever qualities others have determined to be preferable.\(^7\) In contrast, thinking what we want education to be challenges the mere essence of what education is and what education is for. Thus, in this work I take education as a whole as my ‘unit of analysis’ or my object of examination, and not a specific educational phenomenon, aspect or component such as teaching methods or ethical problems.

But the attempts to reconcile instrumentalism and non-instrumentalism do not just avoid challenging what we think education is or can be; they also avoid the aggressiveness of the external forces that seek to exploit education. Therefore, benign efforts to settle the demands from education on the one hand and other goods on the other are doomed to failure. My claim is that education is under attack as a result of instrumentalism by forces that seek to use it and are not willing to make any kind of compromise. Therefore, education needs to be protected. In order to do so, we have to make stronger and bolder statements and to take more decisive steps with regard to education’s place in society. As what is at stake is the essence of education and not just this or that goal, it is time to ‘take off the gloves’ and

\(^7\) A half a century ago in *Education and the cult of efficiency*, Callahan (1964) had already identified an “anti-intellectual climate” (p. 222) and “adoption of business values and practices in educational administration” (Preface, first page), and characterized aspects of efficiency in education such as scientific management and perceiving the school as a factory. Contemporary literature (such as Biesta’s (for example 2006, 2010a, 2014c) work in the last decade) shows that efficiency and measurement are still dominant in educational administration and that study in education is focused mainly on evidence-based research while too little attention is paid to purpose of schooling.
(re)claim education’s autonomy in a more explicit manner. In this work I take this approach and argue for education’s agency and sovereignty.

**Is there such a thing as an ‘educational way of thinking’?**

An important implication of seeing education as a sphere is perceiving both the practical aspect —schooling—and the academic one as part of the same endeavor. Thus, a call for a sovereign education bears implications for both aspects (in section 4.4 I focus on educational research). But arguments for granting autonomy to the academic discipline ‘education’ are not new. Biesta (2011a) exemplifies it through his distinction between an Anglo-American and Continental construction of educational studies. According to Biesta, these constructions differ in their answer to “the question of whether there are forms of theory and theorising that are distinctively educational rather than that they are generated through ‘other’ disciplines” (p. 176).

Overviews of the history of the Anglo-American tradition (Biesta, 2011a, 2014a; McCulloch, 2002) find several stances—especially within the British scholarship—that implicitly or explicitly deny a distinct educational theorizing. These attitudes towards the possibility of an educational way of thinking lead in the English-speaking world to the general construction of a ‘disciplinary approach’ according to which education is constructed by contributions of other foundational disciplines. Education as an academic field, including educational research, has been and still is “commonly conceived as the interdisciplinary

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8 In the 1960s the disciplinary approach was consolidated when scholars argued that the academic field is disorganized and that it needs structuring around contributing disciplines. Thus, Richard Peters (1963/1980) characterized the field as an ‘undifferentiated mush’ (p. 273) and Hirst (1966) noted: “educational studies have tended to become either a series of unrelated or even competing theoretical pursuits, or a confused discussion of educational problems where philosophical, psychological, sociological or historical and other issues jostle against one another, none being adequately dealt with” (p. 30). This call to ‘tidy up’ the education discipline through contributions of other established disciplines has made education dependent upon the ‘input’ of these disciplines and their ways of thinking.
study of educational processes and practices” which leads to a situation in which “research in education strongly relies on theoretical input from a range of different academic disciplines” (Biesta, 2011a, p. 175). Historically, the leading ‘feeding’ disciplines are philosophy, history, psychology and sociology, albeit that their respective influence has fluctuated over time and recently other disciplines show as having increased contribution (see McCulloch, 2002). For example, Richard Peters (1964) claims that “education is not an autonomous discipline, but a field, like politics, where the disciplines of history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology have application” (p. 7). And Tibble (1971) asserts: “It is clear that ‘education’ is a field subject, not a basic discipline; there is no distinctively ‘educational’ way of thinking; in studying education one is using psychological or historical or sociological or philosophical ways of thinking to throw light on some problem in the field of human learning” (p. 16).

But perhaps the leading representative of the Anglo-American tradition, if not one of its most important founders, is Paul Hirst. His contribution to The Study of Education (1966), edited by Tibble, is considered a seminal work in establishing the disciplinary approach. Hirst’s notion of educational theory is a moral directive for practice as opposed to a scientific theory that draws on empirical evidence in order to formulate a theory. For Hirst educational theory is concerned with “forming rationally justified principles for what ought to be done in an area of practical activity” (p. 42). He suggests that there is “a great deal to be said for characterising these theories under moral knowledge” because the fundamental task of theory is to make “value judgements about what exactly is to be aimed at in education” (p. 52) in “‘here-and-now’ terms” as Biesta (2011a) says (p. 182). Biesta claims that for Hirst educational theory mediates between the contributions of the established disciplines and educational practice. In other words, scholars of education apply the teachings of philosophy,
history, sociology, and psychology in education in order to produce school teaching that is truthful to the existing theories. It is easy to see how by this way of perceiving educational theory, educationalists—both in academia and in school—are deprived profound discretion about their own endeavor. Educationalists are demoted to engineers that follow the insights generated by scientists (in the best case) or to technicians that follow the insights and instructions of both scientists and engineers. This is evident also in Hirst’s (1966) claim that beyond the reasons provided by the contributing discipline, the validity of the principles for educational action “turns on nothing ‘educational’ beyond these [reasons]” (p. 51). Thus, the superiority of the contributing or ‘feeding’ discipline is stressed over what insight the educationalist might come up with. As Biesta (2011a) 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” (p. 182).

Hirst (1966) argues that the principles of educational theory “stand or fall entirely on the validity of the knowledge contributed by [the fundamental disciplines]” (p. 50) and since educational theory does not generate “some unique form of understanding about education” in addition to what is generated through the “fundamental” disciplines (p. 57), it is not and cannot be “an autonomous discipline” (p. 51). Biesta (2011a) claims that Hirst’s conception of educational theory “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” (p. 183). Thus, rejecting the mere possibility of an educational way of thinking leads to a lower status of education as a discipline. This kind of degrading easily resonates with denying one’s legitimacy or ability to think that results in
power relationships of servitude or even enslavement. In chapters 1 and 2 I show how the instrumental approach, by denying education’s agency, lowers education to a status of servitude.

In contrast to the disciplinary approach in the English-speaking world, in the German-speaking world the leading academic approach to education during the establishment of the discipline—geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik—9—is of a discipline in its own right. According to this approach, Biesta (2011a) explains, “we need a theory of education that is neither psychological, sociological, historical nor philosophical, in order to identify our object of study” (p. 190). Biesta elaborates on the difference between the two constructions:

Whereas in the Anglo-American construction, educational studies is conceived as an interdisciplinary field, the key ambition of geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik was to develop a case for Pädagogik as a discipline in its own right… the theorists of geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik… did not argue for the disciplinary autonomy of Pädagogik on the basis of a particular object of study but rather on the basis of a particular interest. Whereas the identity of Anglo-American educational studies can therefore be characterised as objective as it is based on a particular object of study (education), the identity of Pädagogik might be characterized as interested as it is based on a particular value-laden interest. (p. 188)

We will see below that the interest of Pädagogik is in the child. But first it is important to explain that by being identified as ‘interested’, Pädagogik is different from the Anglo-American sense of educational studies that takes education as an ‘object’ in that for Pädagogik education is less a phenomenon to be examined from outside, less something that is ‘out there’ to be learned and understood in a somewhat neutral manner using other foundational disciplines, but more a discipline that is based on a normative concern beyond

9 Biesta (2011a) explains that “[t]he relationship between Pädagogik and practice was itself understood in hermeneutical terms” (p. 186) and therefore translates or explains ‘geisteszisenschaftliche’ as “a hermeneutic science” (p. 185). Literally, ‘geist’ is more accurately translated to ‘spirit’ or ‘mind’, as in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes, Phenomenology of spirit*. ‘Wissenschaft’ means ‘sciences’ in general. Thus, geisteswissenschaftliche can be understood as the humanities or liberal arts.
intellectual motivation. In other words, for Pädagogik there is in education more than just something to explore; there is something to take care of, an ‘asset’ to tend to, to look after.\(^\text{10}\)

As I argue to protect education from threats of the instrumental approach, Biesta (2011a) explains that Pädagogik also has a protective aspect. This protective aspect originates in the history of Pädagogik “which is not explicitly or exclusively connected to questions of teaching and school education but has a much wider remit which focuses first and foremost on questions of Menschwerdung – the process of becoming human” (p. 189. See also Biesta (2006) which I consider in section 2.2). The ‘asset’ to be secured in this case is linked to being a child:

The idea of the relative autonomy of Pädagogik first of all had to do with the intention to liberate it from its dependence on ethics… and psychology… so as to be able to establish it as a scientific discipline in its own right. To do so, the theorists of geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik connected the relative autonomy of Pädagogik to the relative autonomy of educational practice. The key idea here was that Pädagogik had a role to play in protecting the domain of education – and through this, the domain of childhood more generally – from claims from societal powers such as the church, the state or the economy. The autonomy of Pädagogik as an academic discipline was thus articulated in terms of a particular ‘educational’ interest which the theorists understood as an interest in the right of the child to a certain degree of self-determination. (p. 187)\(^\text{11}\)

This interest in the child stems from perceiving education “as more than just a process of adaptation and socialisation, but rather as a process of emancipation” (Biesta, 2014a, p. 71). I will show in this work that claims upon today’s public K-12 education come from a broad spectrum of societal powers and that “adaptation and socialization” are principle goals within

\(^{10}\) Biesta (2011a) notes that the idea that the identity of a discipline is based on a normative interest rather than on an object of study is not specific to Continental Pädagogik, and gives the example of “the interest in health that characterises the discipline of medicine” (p. 188).

\(^{11}\) Walzer (1983) also uses the term “relative autonomy” to describe the distinctiveness of social meanings and the existence of social spheres (see section 2.1), and Masschelein and Simons (2013) use this term specifically in reference to education (see section 4.1). In chapter 4 I argue for both autonomy and independence of education by using the term ‘sovereignty’.
a functional and machine-like perception of society, a machine in which schooling is supposed to serve by feeding it with prescribed graduates.

It is important to make clear that by bringing forward the distinctions between the two constructions of educational studies I definitely do not mean to imply, in any way, shape, or form, that the Anglo-American scholars are the ‘bad guys’ who give away education and that their Continental colleagues are the ‘good guys’ who bravely protect education from destruction. As Biesta (2011a, 2015b) suggests, the two constructions historically stem from two different sets of cultural, social, and academic conditions. Nonetheless, in ways that hopefully become clearer as this work progresses and in more than one sense, I adopt here a more Continental attitude toward or understanding of education that legitimates and grants the uniqueness of thinking from an educational point of view. In Biesta’s words:

> while other disciplines can study educational processes and practices from their own angles, they do not have the devices to capture the reality of education as an educational reality… while the psychology of education will ask psychological questions about education, the history of education historical ones, the philosophy of education philosophical ones and the sociology of education sociological ones, the question that remains is who will ask educational questions about education” (p. 189-190).

But this work also seeks to expand the Continental call for autonomy beyond the realm of the academia towards the entire education sphere. In doing so, I both frame the discussion within social and political contexts as well as emphasize and center human(istic) aspects that are found in the Continental tradition; similar to the Continental construction that is based on an interest in childhood and humanity, and an interest in being a child and in being a human being, my expansion takes as its explicit interest students’ humanity and humanity as a

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12 For example, Biesta (2011a) explains that the Anglo-American disciplinary approach to education as an academic discipline is stemmed from considering the study of education mainly for practical ends within the context of teacher education, that is, “professional preparation of teachers” as he quoted Tibble (p. 178), so that “the field of education is mainly understood in terms of schooling and school education” (p. 180).
whole, and while the difference between the two constructions “has to do with the role and status of what we might call educational theory” (Biesta, 2011a, p. 189), I am interested in strengthening the role and status of public education in society and in humanity as a whole. It is interesting to note here—interesting in the sense of remarkable, fascinating, exciting—that while for the external self-interested forces that take education instrumentally (‘societal powers’ in Biesta’s terms) an ‘interest’ in education is in the sense of wanting, return, gain, and dividend, for those who grant education a significant autonomy ‘interest’ in education is in the sense of concern, attention, and care. This crucial gap in the motivation about education leads to a decisive difference with regard to the status of education and, ultimately, with regard to the attitude towards fellow human beings.

Going back to the problem of instrumentalism, I suggested above, and will show and explain in details mostly in chapter 1, that the instrumental approach to education has a strong grip on the way we think about our lives in general and about education in particular in such a manner that blocks consideration of alternative ways of thinking. Similarly, Biesta (2011a) claims that from an Anglo-American perspective, “the idea of education as an autonomous discipline with its own forms of theory and theorizing… is perceived as remarkable and, to a certain extent even impossible” (p. 189). In this work I will show why this is the case for public K-12 schooling while looking at education through an instrumental lens.

**How to read this work**

I present in this work my vision for public K-12 education by analyzing the instrumental approach and discussing several key aspects of education. However, there is no intention here to give a comprehensive or detailed discussion on the foundations of education. My
proposal of an alternative perception of education will emerge as the work progresses. As I propose an alternative that might seem counterintuitive to the current prevailing place of education in society, and as this alternative develops from chapter to chapter, it is recommended not to take my ideas as complete at the points they are introduced and to maintain openness to ideas that perhaps contradict the way we use to think about education. Although every chapter focuses on one general issue, additional layers are added in later chapters such that ideas become more complex but hopefully also clearer.

Chapter 1 theorizes the instrumental approach to education. I exemplify the prevalence of the instrumental approach and explicate its dominance and dynamics. Evidence is brought from different domains and the claim for the strong hold of instrumentalism is supported both by literature in education and general philosophical arguments. In this chapter I already point to the damages of the instrumental approach and suggest the need to protect education.

In chapter 2 I introduce the identity (or personality) of the alternative education I propose. The need to shield education from external forces is further explained and through it a case is made for establishing or restoring education’s agency and the founding of education on being human. As this chapter shifts from what education should not be to a positive recommendation for its essence, I also propose to nurture an adventurous character in education.

The adventurous and exploratory character of education is furthered developed in chapter 3 where I propose an epistemological structure that will serve the human guidelines introduced in chapter 2. Although my vision for education does not focus on curricular aspects I believe that any serious proposal for what education should be must refer to the ‘substance’ of the actual teaching-learning dynamics. Therefore, the basic human features of
experiences, understandings, and meanings are explained as directives for managing educational content and a comparison is made to other educational proposals that use similar terminology.

In chapter 4 I address concerns that arise in the previous chapter, mostly with regard to materializing education’s agency. I discuss the idea of depoliticizing education and examine how it can be done in practical terms. The place of education in society is further discussed and developed in this chapter through the notion of sovereignty.

In chapter 5 I discuss the implications of the proposed vision for the relationships between education and philosophy and for the arguably “in crisis” area of philosophy of education. Following proposals given in the previous chapter I outline a process for distilling educative ideas from philosophy without commitment to philosophical positions or philosophical conclusions. An example for this process is given through the examination of Heidegger’s work.

The concluding chapter offers a comprehensive and integrative analysis of the ideas presented in chapters 1-5 and also returns to the two different constructions of education in an effort to enhance a conversation between them. Throughout this analysis I identify several significant contributions of this work. In addition, practical measures to translate my vision to reality, ideas for next steps in thinking about sovereign education, and general theoretical challenges are discussed.
1. The Instrumental Approach to Education

We consider education an important part of our young’s lives that has an impact upon their future. We make efforts to improve education in order that it will be the best we can make it and that it will provide all the good things we imagine it can deliver both to the individual as well as to the collective. But we should not forget—and at times we tend to avoid—that there are threats that endanger realizing the potential of education and that we ought to protect education from these threats so that it will not become something other than we want it to be. This chapter identifies, analyzes, and theorizes a fundamental threat to education, namely, that external factors perceive it as an instrument and use it as such. This threat, as discussed in the introduction, is not new; attempts to subordinate education to others’ will are old as education itself. However, it seems that in our time the instrumental approach to education has become so prevalent in such a way that what education is has become seriously distorted. Therefore, less than to argue for the threat itself, I wish to show in this chapter the prevalence and the grip of the instrumental approach beyond the factors that are usually perceived as using education for their own interests. Specifically, I wish to show how broad and deep the instrumental approach is to education and that it is articulated not just in the economic and the party-political domains but also in other areas that might seem innocent in this regard such as the academia and the military. In following chapters I propose how to protect education from the threat of the instrumental approach and offer my own vision for education.

The outline of this chapter is as follows. In section 1 I define what I mean by ‘education’ and identify the problem in general terms, mainly through the idea of educational goals. Next, I discuss several examples for the instrumental approach. I show that instead of serving
as a renewing source for society, education has become an arena for influence by aggressive external self-interested forces that consider students as potential members in their ranks and encourage them to adopt only specific identities. In section 3 I support my argument for the prevalence and the intensity of the instrumental approach using the philosophical work of Mouffe and Arendt. Finally, in order to explain the place and role education is forced to occupy in today’s society, I offer a theory for the instrumental approach through a systemic model according to which education serves the next sub-systems in the societal line. Throughout the chapter I imply the damage caused to students’ humanity as a result of the instrumental approach, and in the next chapter I propose to found education on grounds that will restore this humanity.

1.1 Education: Who is Calling the Shots?

We will begin our inquiry by not taking education for granted and by examining the meaning of the notion itself. Although this basic analysis of education touches on already much debated points—namely, the way it is perceived and its goal—it is essential in order to better orient the proposed discussion and prepare the ground for later arguments regarding the place of education in our lives, the relationships of education with other realms, and a proposed goal for education.

The first task is clarifying what we are talking about; after all, ‘education’ can be and is used for different meanings, for example, with regard to what happens at school within teacher-student relationships, or what happens at home within parent-child relationships, or what happens during traveling within travelers’ experiences. Since my ultimate interest and concern is with what is called ‘public education’ as a social endeavor, for the purpose of this work education refers to schooling, that is, the deliberate, organized, and comprehensive
endeavor whose activities take place mostly in schools, including the activities outside schools that are related to them—in other words, ‘education’ as in ‘the education system’ for which the Ministry of Education is responsible. Later in this work I critique both the notion of system attached to education (section 1.4) and the political authority over education (chapter 4), but in order to make sure what is the object of my inquiry it is useful to associate it with these concepts.

Although identifying ‘education’ with ‘schooling’ assists in pointing to what I mean by the former, it still does not tell us what is the essence of education; it mostly delimits the notion in terms of time and space, but it does not reveal what is supposed to happen in schools. Therefore, it is vital to ask what education is for, as any discussion on education—at least a discussion that touches on the essence of that endeavor—must consider the question about the overall goal (or goals) of education, or at least must presuppose and be aware of such a goal. But any comprehensive educational goal does not only specify what we want to achieve through education; it also suggests what we mean by ‘education’ and what we exclude from this notion. As such, a goal for education both follows a general understanding of what education is as well as commits to a specific vision regarding what we want education to achieve.

However, we might wonder whether it is not the case that the two—the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of education—are necessarily and directly linked such that the is leads to the ought: a question whether understanding of what education is, or a definition of education, actually already dictates its goal. It seems that the answer to this question, or the strength of an affirmative or a negative one, depends on the way we understand ‘education’ and the attitude (or stance) we take in relation to it. In order to move forward, then, let us examine a general
conception of education according to which education bears a normative aspect, that is, it is designated to reach something positive. Peters (1966) offers such a conception, and even though he begins his discussion without referring to the organizational aspect of education, his proposal is useful for our discussion. Peters sees education as “something that we consciously contrive for ourselves or for others” (p. 24) in which “something worth while is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner” (p. 25). He quickly adds that “[s]uch a connection between 'education' and what is valuable does not imply any particular commitment to content” (ibid), a statement that gives at least some clue as to why education is contentious. By being “transmitted” Peters does not mean that students are just present during the transmission but that something happens to them as a consequence, that is, that some “worth while” change has occurred to them or in them.

Peters’ characterization, as he himself notes, does not specify what is the desired change in education. Moreover, although this characterization of education (i.e. to pass on to students something valuable in a proper way) seems reasonable, it also does not explain why education should change something in students or what are the relationships between any change originating in education and other changes students undergo. The aspiration to create some kind of change in students, so that they will transform in some way from an uneducated to an educated state and their situation in the end will be significantly different enough than in the beginning (otherwise what is the point?), is not entirely obvious and actually goes to the heart of any serious discussion about the foundations of education and its particular realization in terms of learning, teaching, curriculum, and policy (to name only few relevant areas). One might argue that if education is not defined in terms of deliberately changing students in a specific manner, then we get an education that aims just to “hold” students in
place. However, such an endeavor by itself does not render education entirely useless. For example, think of a (quite unimaginable) situation that ‘students’ are perceived to be already in a “perfect” condition, therefore education’s goal is to maintain them in that complete state; or a (more realistic) situation that the important aspect of education is not really the change or the process students undergo but other interests, external to the student herself, one such possibility is an education that just functions as a “babysitter” while the majority of the adult world is free to conduct its own business by paying the rest of the adult world to look after the kids, that is, to ensure that they do not harm themselves or others, perhaps eat nutritious food, and, in the case of a quality caretaker, also play with them, mainly for the sake of passing time. Complaints against or alternatively calls for education as a babysitter are not unheard-of. Indeed, we might question whether such maintenance of young people is, in fact, ‘education’.

If education is understood as creating a desired change in students, so the goal (or any goal under this conception) will revolve around which kind of change or which kind of intervention in students’ lives is to be exerted, and this in turn will be determined by some kind of guide regarding a desirable change or desirable graduates. This guide for the intended change can originate from different sources, and then the ensuing debate about education is actually a debate about the decisive authority to determine this guide for change.

These basic and important questions and difficulties about education and its goals (or aims) have a long history and they still keep occupying thinkers (see, for example, Part I of The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education (Siegel, 2009). At times, professionals in the field also ponder or address them. This discussion about the goal(s) of education is an

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important one and any person for whom education is close to heart should be involved in this discussion. However, in thinking about answers to these questions, we should be cautious not to cut short at the outset any serious and fruitful discussion about the essence and goal of education as a result of displacing these questions into the hands of those who consider education a means for their own ends with little or no real concern for the students. In such an unfortunate case, the real discussion is rendered not about education itself but about that authority or factor that (directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, through specific human agents or without them) decides for education. This situation is not imaginary; in fact, I argue, this is exactly what mostly happens today. Our education systems are virtually governed not by education (or educational guidelines) or by educators but by external forces to education, some of them under the state’s control (such as politics, local economic factors, and the army) and some outside the state’s regulation (such as global economic factors). These external forces are non-educative forces because, as I will show in this chapter and in the following one, they perceive students and education as a whole as a means for their own interests while damaging students’ humanity. These self-interested forces function as the provider or the origin of a quite strict guideline (or guidelines) that is imposed on (in the aggressive case) or picked up by (in the more sophisticated yet still enslaved case) education. Thus, the delivered guideline serves as a compass to what and how to do in schools. This guideline is a result of a dominant or hegemonic perception of our life that dictates a specific social role for education and dictates a specific conceptualization of what education is. So actually, the goal of education is automatically already being decided in advance by that imposed conceptualization that constitutes an ideology or an agenda to be realized. Thus, education in its nature becomes just an *instrument* for the use of other
endeavors and foreign interests. In this work I critique any instrumental approach to education and propose an alternative in the form of a human-centered and a sovereign education that is its own master.

1.2 Instances of instrumentalism

In Democracy and Education (2004/1916) Dewey made a significant contribution to the perception according to which education is a necessary societal renewal device. From a biological paradigm of growth and a pragmatist approach that considers consequences, he sees education “as a social need and function,” “the process by which social groups maintain their continuous existence,” and “a process of renewal of the meanings of experience through a process of transmission, partly incidental to the ordinary companionship or intercourse of adults and youth, partly deliberately instituted to effect social continuity” (p. 346). This association of education with the idea of a vital renewal is widely accepted by thinkers from a broad spectrum of philosophies and theoretical frameworks. For example, Arendt (1961) holds that “education belongs among the most elementary and necessary activities of human society, which never remains as it is but continuously renews itself through birth, through the arrival of new human beings” (p. 185), and that “[e]ducation is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable” (p. 196). Feinberg (2012) maintains that the public school’s unique goal

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14 Describing education as an instrument in the service of other goals is not far-fetched. For example, the keynote speaker (Christopher Martin) at a philosophy of education conference (George Brown College, 2014) explicitly used this term in defending higher education and education in general as a means for economic and employability goals.

15 Although I start this discussion with Dewey’s view, I differ from him in several issues (see section 3.4 regarding his epistemology and section 5.6 regarding the philosophy-education relationships). I take it for granted that societal renewal is worthy without adopting a biological paradigm.
is “to renew a public by providing the young with the skills, dispositions, and perspectives required to engage with others about their shared interests and common fate” (p. 1). An important underlying assumption beneath these understandings of renewal concerns the positive attitude towards the renewal itself: renewal is necessary in order to keep society developing and flourishing. Another assumption is that renewal is universal: education is for everyone and it has a society-wide effect that is meant for the interest of the whole.

However, the critical literature on the economic and neoliberal influences on education tells another story according to which education has became a prominent source in serving specific economic interests that are not necessarily for the benefit of all. Instead of a positive change that is supposed to characterize renewal, scholars find the economic influence on education problematic as it views students through a limited lens that treats them as potential contributors to the economy, while the personal and the collective growth is questionable because the economic forces prefer to maximize their revenues while sacrificing the well-being of the individual or the shared resources. Thus, education as a whole and students as individuals become a tool in the hands of these economic forces. For example, Apple (2006) criticizes the neoliberal position that treats students as ‘human capital’: “[u]nderpinning this neoliberal position is a vision of students as human capital. The world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, any money spent on schools that is not directly related to these economic goals is suspect” (p. 32). Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) observe that “[p]ublic education in the neo-liberal order, then, is simply one component of a larger economic system, and the focus of education policy and curriculum development is directed accordingly” (p. 13). White (2013), following Kitcher
(2009), explains how a commitment to meet economic requirements dictates educational goals: “The problem is that a Smithian insistence on economic efficiency needs workers who fill slots in the division of labour, either as specialists who need some kind of technical training, or – the majority – as low-skilled operatives, who need minimal literacy and numeracy” (p. 299).16 Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2010) say that Freire rejects instrumental education for “reducing learners to the level of human resource” (p. 133). And Norris (2011a) analyzes how commercial factors penetrate schools and promote students’ identity as consumers.17 Thus, the economy sees students as future workers and consumers who constitute buying power. As I will argue later, this perception and this treatment of students damage their humanity and subordinate education to the will of external forces.

With regard to literacy and numeracy, one might argue that standardized tests that monitor students’ skills in these areas actually secure (or at least intend to secure) a minimum level that will allow students a wide occupational selection and will also serve as a basis for developing other qualities. However, the critique against standardized tests shows how these tests fall under the instrumental approach and instead of opening doors they are actually another social and economic control apparatus. For example, Ricci (2004) sees standardized tests in Ontario as part of an “imposed standardized, top-down training system” and “test-driven curriculum” that “train workers at the expense of educating freethinking citizens” (p.

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16 White (2013) adds on economic reason as a result of global economy: “Many, perhaps most, employed people will be working in low-skilled and poorly paid occupations… Others are likely to be unemployed or underemployed. From the standpoint of economic efficiency alone, it is counterproductive to give people in the latter two categories more than a minimal education” (p. 300). The danger of letting economy rule education is clear: it limits people’s possibilities, sets boundaries for exploring their humanity, and restricts the scope of the basic human features of experiences, understandings, and meanings (see chapter 2).

17 Any education that is aimed at “wise consumption” is actually an education for shopping in the disguise of calculated behavior. This is a common characteristic of education that relates to students only partially as human beings: training in playing the game instead of questioning the rules of the game or the mere fact of playing.
and argues that “standardized testing leads to compliance, silences professional expertise, and marginalizes ethical discourse,” and that “[w]ith standardized tests, citizens within a community are disempowered. The control of schooling is concentrated in the hands of those that create the tests and therefore direct the schooling” (p. 359). Kohn (2000, www.alfiekohn.org) also sees the tests as part of an oppressing system, “top-down, heavy-handed, corporate-style, test-driven version of school reform”, and concludes that the tests “are just the means by which this game is played. It is a game that a lot of kids—predominantly kids of color—simply cannot win.” The critique against testing that is supposed to ensure satisfied proficiency of literacy and numeracy indicates that these tests are actually a means for meeting other goals. As such, educators’ authority over evaluating their own students is diminished. As Smith (1998) argues: “Testing, which has become a mania in education, disregards the classic view that you can see whether people are learning by observing what they are doing. Instead, it is based on the odd idea that learning can only be uncovered by probing with test instruments, scientifically designed and rigorously wielded” (p. 61). Thus, educators’ professional autonomy is weakened. Block (2004) adds that the practice of standardized testing has become so pervasive that it is not questionable anymore: “Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and politicians have come to rely on standardized testing as central and indubitable aspects of public schooling” (p. 93). This is another demonstration, although an indirect one, of the external forces’ hold on education.

In a broader examination, Yonah et al. (2008) identify standardized tests as an accountability tool as part of a shift towards a neoliberal worldview, according to which students are perceived as an economic engine:

The principle of accountability plays a crucial role in this worldview. This principle, emerging as the hallmark of this discourse shift, is manifested mainly through
standardised tests designed to measure the scholastic achievements of students and through uniform criteria intended to assess the performance of schools, principals and teachers. According to this new discourse, individuals are envisioned – and ought to envision themselves – as aspiring entrepreneurs or ‘enterprising selves’ in the era of global economy (p. 202-3)

It is important to understand that in the context of the instrumental approach to education what is most at stake is not the level of literacy and numeracy taught and tested in schools but rather which kind of literacy and numeracy is taught and towards which kind of future it directs students. As the critique shows, the tests are a sorting mechanism for the job market. Even if standards are high, one should ask ‘high for what?’ and ‘high for whom?’. Even if the curriculum is designed such that there is an over-emphasis on, say, high computer programming or business skills, this is evidence for a biased curriculum that benefits specific economic sectors over other economic sectors and over other domains of life that become less accessible to students.\textsuperscript{18} Seen this way, standardized tests are a device in sustaining the instrumental role of education and are an indication of a shift in the idea of societal renewal.

It is crucial to add that the economic forces that seek to influence education do not limit their efforts to soft tactics; they operate upon education as they operate in the competitive commercial world: aggressively. After all, education is just another field in which they compete with other economic (and other) forces. The forcefulness of commercial bodies is evident in notions such as ‘aggressive marketing’, and education is no exception with regard to attempts to achieve direct or indirect footholds in schools. For example, Norris (2011a) describes corporations’ aggressiveness outside and inside school by strategies such as partnerships with schools and equipment provision, and how commercialism, marketing and

\textsuperscript{18} One might argue that there is always some kind of bias in curriculum design and in curriculum decisions in general; after all, we need to prioritize what gets in and what is left out. I do not deny that we need to make decisions based on preferences. However, by using ‘bias’ I mean preferences that stem from deliberate, external, and non-educative influences.
advertising penetrate schools. More importantly for our discussion here, Norris argues that “consumption intrudes into the political and pedagogical realms and becomes an ideology of 'consumerism’” which shape politics and schooling (p. 12). Consumerism has become an ideology since “it is a hegemonic world view that is normalized, naturalized, and socially pervasive, yet often invisible and unquestioned, even as it is adhered to vigorously and even dogmatically” (p. 16). Although “there is no ‘Consumers Party’ that represents the will of consumers” (p. 17), “consumerism as an ideology impacts everyone, even at the furthest corners of the world” (p. 10). But, Norris contends, this “ideological force” (p. 12) is detrimental as it invades, alters, and dominates our life. In a later reflection Norris (2011b) goes so far as to talk about the “‘totalitarian’ feature of consumerism” (p. 94). Even if we will not accept Norris’ identification of consumerism as an ideology per se, it is difficult to deny its aggressive character. As consumerism is an integral part of the commercial world and eventually an important part of the Western market economy as a whole (as the latter is based on selling and buying), the aggressiveness that characterizes consumerism is in general typical of the economic forces that attempt to influence education.19

These observations that associate education with specific economic worldviews, ideologies, and interests point to the political nature of education, that is, to its use as a device within a broader network of struggles. As a political device in the service of economic interests, education is utilized to focus on and nurture students’ specific aspects and characteristics that are relevant for advancing these interests at the expense of other aspects and characteristics. But economy is not the only force that uses education as a tool. Indeed,

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19 The aggressiveness of the market worldview in general and of consumerism in particular is demonstrated in many cases where this market both creates desires and proposes to allegedly satisfy them. ‘Allegedly’ since in its essence it does not mean to completely satisfy but only to partially satisfy in order to ensure continual desire and purchase. The food and drinks industries are only simple examples of this technique.
the literature tends to emphasize the role of market ideology within and the financial manifestations of the instrumental relations towards students, usually through some kind of social reproduction lens (see also Engel, 2000). But we should not overlook other (although not entirely unrelated) expressions of the instrumental approach. Below I review several other forces that perceive students as an important resource for their projects and seek (and succeed) to influence education in order to promote specific identities of students over other identities. It is important to stress that more than to demonstrate the instrumental approach to education in each area, my intention is to show the spread of this perception about education beyond the much discussed economic domain.

One major force that constitutes the instrumental approach to education is the state (regardless of who is in power) that wishes to see students as citizens that not only pay taxes but also hold specific identities or values promoted by the national political systems in order to establish or preserve some kind of (real or imagined) unity. Miller (1995) claims that this use of the education system might be justified:

states may legitimately take steps to ensure that the members of different ethnic groups are inducted into national traditions and ways of thinking. This applies particularly in the sphere of education… the principle of nationality implies that schools should be seen, inter alia, as places where a common national identity is reproduced and children prepared for democratic citizenship. In the case of recently arrived ethnic minorities whose sense of their national identity may be insecure, schools can act as a counterweight to the cultural environment of the family… It follows too that there should be something like a national curriculum, a core body of material that all children should be expected to assimilate (p. 142)

However, instilling “national traditions and ways of thinking” is problematic as it opens the door to imposing identities or inclinations that are beyond introduction to an alleged collective political “spirit” and for an uncritical acceptance of political assumptions or norms, as rooted or pervasive as they might be. Usually, as the regulating authority in society that is responsible for the smoothness of daily lives, some of the state’s interests intersect with
economic and social interests, and this alignment or convergence of interests will be reflected in goals prescribed for education. Thus, for example, Labaree (1997) finds three possible educational goals for American education, all of which are aimed at preparing students for a specific social future and a specific social role: “democratic equality (schools should focus on preparing citizens), social efficiency (they should focus on training workers), and social mobility (they should prepare individuals to compete for social positions)” (p. 39). Thus, education prepares, shapes, or manipulates students so that they will acquire a specific kind of social identity: “From the perspective of democratic equality, schools should make republicans; from the perspective of social efficiency, they should make workers; but from the perspective of social mobility, they should make winners” (p. 66). Each goal represents a factor that seeks to ‘produce’ a specific identity with a specific disposition. Seen in this way, the instrumental approach broadens the notion of ‘human capital’ beyond the financial sense towards any pursuit after achieving a gain. Within this framework, the instrumental approach incorporates any perception of individuals – including students – as a valuable resource.

As a political unit, the state sees the education system as a tool to prepare students to be citizens who are capable of performing vital functions required for society and to address societal problems. Criticism against this ‘citizenship training’ is based, to a large degree, on the same ground as the criticism against training students to be employable, namely, instilling (or shaping) in students identities, qualities, and inclinations that limit their possibilities in the future to acquire other (legitimate) identities, qualities, and inclinations, because the ones they already possess have been embedded in a way that blocks others from being explored. For example, Topolski (2008) discusses what she considers as ‘crisis in citizenship’ and by taking Arendt as her point of departure she sees “the philosophical
meaning of education as symbolic of the gap between conservation and revolution, between past and future, which requires that we avoid instrumentalizing any aspect of the human realm, in this case the children” (p. 271). Therefore, Topolski argues that “we cannot allow the crisis in the political realm, or for that matter that of citizenship, to spill over into the schools” (p. 273) and asserts that “[c]hildren are human beings and cannot be reduced to their status as future citizens” (p. 276). Topolski suggests—as I understand her—that citizenship education becomes problematic when it used to address “crisis in the political realm” since then education is used as a tool in the service of another human realm (what we will term later as ‘sphere’) without granting education a say as a result of this intervention (or manipulation). My claim about the instrumental approach as a whole, as I portray in this chapter, is that it expands beyond the use of economic forces and the state to other forces that ignore students’ humanity and reduce students to specific desired identities.

When we turn from the state, as a whole political unit, to specific political-ideological forces and groups within the state – what is usually referred to as ‘politics’ – we can include under the instrumental approach any attempt to influence the education system in order to instill within students tendencies or ideas held by ideological bodies or groups (see for example: Levin, 2008; Thomas, 1983). In parliamentary states, one of the main forms politics takes is party politics, but extra-parliamentary forces also participate in political power struggles whether by attempting to directly influence officials or by conducting public campaigns in order to gain support within the population that hopefully will render political pressure on representatives or officials. Thus, political forces that are formally represented in parliamentary or governmental bodies and influence education (party politics) are essentially no different than political and ideological forces or bodies that advocate their own agendas.
by operating outside the institutions elected by constituency and have indirect—but not necessarily reduced—influence on the representational politics (e.g. economic forces such as globalization and non-governmental organizations such as Greenpeace).

Education is perceived as an important political means in order to keep or gain power by different groups. As Shields, Bishop, and Mazawi (2005) state, in several countries schools are used against specific marginalized populations and serve as “tools of political control and regulation in concert with the broader institutional network, to perpetuate and reproduce the groups’ marginalization and socio-political subordination” (p. 13). One central domain in which this political control takes place is with regard to issues of patriotism and nationalism.

For example, the 2003 Israeli Ministry of Education program to integrate into the junior-high studies 100 terms in (Jewish) heritage, Zionism and democracy. The program was criticized for its limited list of terms, encouragement of memorization over deep understanding, and the tendency to promote national-religious identity over civilian identity. Another example for an effort to influence education is an article by former Republican house speaker Newt Gingrich’s (2006) remarks in the National Review on the subject of economic model in education: “The simplest and surest way to transform education is to give students and parents the freedom to choose where they will go to school…This means introducing free-market forces into education, encouraging schools to compete for students, much like businesses compete for customers” (para. 7). In this last example we can see how economic

20 To be clear: it is obvious that as human beings there will always be political relations between us in the sense of influence attempts. The problem I am pointing to is that education (or educators) is denied the ability and the legitimacy to have a veto (or almost any discretion) with regard to these influences, a situation that opens the door for problematic influences. In the next section I use Mouffe’s and Arendt’s notions of the ‘political’ to further explain the problem. In chapter 4 I propose to remove education away from general politics.

21 For news report in Hebrew, see [http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3184446,00.html](http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3184446,00.html), [http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1314078](http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1314078), [http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/649528](http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/90/649528).
and ideological interests are represented or supported by political forces. What is interesting for our discussion is not just the coupling of politics with money or power and the complex if not murkier relationships between them but more importantly the fact that forces find (intentionally or unintentionally) different indirect avenues to influence education, and that party politics – as close to or controlling the official educational arena – is a convenient way to do it.

Another important force that tries to influence education is academia. In this case, higher education institutions and professionals see K-12 education as a system that is supposed to create students with an academic identity that is required for the demanding life of the undergraduate student. Levin (2008) provides one example in which a plan to remove calculus from the Ontario Grade 12 mathematics curriculum has raised public criticism. Among the critics were university personnel from the departments of engineering and physics as well as well-known leaders of high tech industries. Levin comments: “Although only a very small proportion of the adult population ever studied calculus, and even fewer use it in their daily lives, it became clear that calculus was symbolic of advanced skills and global competitiveness in the Ontario economy” (p. 21). Eventually, the Ministry of Education kept calculus as an optional course in the curriculum. This case also shows the multifaceted intervention of different forces: economic, academic, and political. Masschelein and Simons (2013) highlight this linkage between school, higher education, and economy: “The dream of a school that prepares young people for society - that is, the labour market and higher education - is not new. What is new is the way in which it is being realised today.
Crucial here is the shift of emphasis from employment to employability” (p. 95). Thus, Masschelein and Simons stress, schools are under pressure to shift from a role of developing characters that might also be relevant for jobs to a role of developing characters that mostly increase students’ chance to enter university or get a job.

A general attitude towards education as a supplier of ready-for-university students is revealed in Coté and Allahar’s (2007) analysis of the higher education situation in North America. In criticizing political correctness with regard to higher education accessibility, the authors expect K-12 education to do a better job in sorting students so as to prevent grade inflation and the overflow of incompetent undergraduate students:

what it [the discussion above regarding grade inflation and the democratization of education] does raise is the serious question of how best to identify and recruit the most motivated and talented students… The onus then lies on the educational authorities to devise a programme that equalizes access but avoids the paternalism associated with dumbing down. Such a programme would have as its key goal the identification of strong and weak students, whether elite or non-elite. (p. 117-8)

While the phenomena of grade inflation and credentialism are certainly negative – as well as the result of academic disengagement – it is evident from the terminology and the nuance that the authors attribute to K-12 education – especially high schools – a role in the service of academia: to hand to universities students that are fit for the challenges of higher education. This perception of K-12 education is strengthened in a chapter the authors dedicate to parents.

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22 This shift can be felt in Dewey’s (1913/1900) emphasis of ‘occupations’ in the school, his “stand lost in wonder at the objections so often heard, that such occupations are out of place in the school because they are materialistic, utilitarian, or even menial in their tendency”, and his view that “[t]he world in which most of us live is a world in which everyone has a calling and occupation, something to do. Some are managers and others are subordinates.” (p. 38). I argue that this kind of perception is too fragile and consequently is taken over, distorted, and exploited by economical forces and other forces in society. Indeed, Dewey quickly acknowledges the danger: “How many of the employed are today mere appendages to the machines which they operate!... Until the instincts of construction and production are systematically laid hold of in the years of childhood and youth, until they are trained in social directions, enriched by historical interpretation, controlled and illuminated by scientific methods, we certainly are in no position even to locate the source of our economic evils, much less to deal with them effectively” (p. 38-39). In section 1.4 I use ‘machine’ not as the physical apparatus served by employers but as a metaphor in portraying society, under the instrumental approach, as a machine in which schooling is a serving sub-system.
as they advise them: “what goes in is highly related to what comes out. Students’ initial skill level has a great bearing on the skills they will acquire and how much they change personally by the time they graduate. This is why a good high-school education is important – certain abilities need to nurtured before attending university” (p. 129). From a worthy and important criticism on social pressures on schools to deliver job-oriented education or on uncontrolled access to higher education, the authors call for a K-12 education that is supposed to serve universities’ needs. It is no surprise, then, that parents and students adopt this perception of K-12 education as a ticket for higher education (below I expand on parents as a distinct force that holds an instrumental perception of education).23

As in the case of coupling politics with capital and ideology, we find that K-12-academia relationships are part of a complex array of pressures and a ‘societal production line’ mindset within which education is perceived. Specifically with regard to lucrative or competitive jobs, K-12 education is perceived as the starting point, followed by academia – which itself becomes instrumentalized – ending in the job market. Sternberg (1999) affirms this perception of the school-university-job chain. He discusses IQ tests and laments “the increasing use of education as a means of credentialing rather than of learning” (p. 62). Sternberg observes:

> Education is seen more as an access route than as an end in itself, and parents and children alike scramble for admission of the children to elite colleges not so much to obtain the best possible education but to obtain the best possible job later on. The result is that the IQs of both parents and children are directed not so much toward the enhancement of their learning and thinking as toward obtaining through education the best possible credentials for individual socio-economic advancement. Education is seen not so much as a means of helping society but of helping one obtain the best that society has to offer socially, economically, and culturally. (ibid)

23 This adoption of the instrumental approach by students and parents with regard to higher education is demonstrated (although at times indirectly) also in the films “Waiting for ‘Superman’” (Guggenheim, 2010) and “Tested” (Chin, forthcoming).
I argue below (in discussing parents as external force) that what—according to Sternberg—parents and students consider as climbing the socio-economic ladder is actually internalization of the external forces’ interests; what society has to offer is what the external forces offer as part and parcel of membership in their ranks. Thus, seen through the lens of a social production line, we can identify how K-12 graduates are outputs that are delivered as inputs for higher education, which turns them into outputs in the form of higher education graduates that are then shipped as input to the job market, ready to serve employers, or rather to continue to be modified according to the needs of the specific economic sector.24

Another large-scale and socially wide force that seeks to influence education, although to different degrees according to the inter-political and geo-political conditions, is the army. In places where an army is perceived vital for the existence of the state, it can be seen as another force that attempts to influence education. I will take as an example the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The IDF and military life are deeply embedded is Israeli social life and in the lives of most non-orthodox Jews (Heper & Itzkowitz-Shifrinson, 2005; Levy, 2010; Sabbagh & Resh, 2013, Zemlinskaya, 2008).25 Education is no exception. There is a strong interface between the IDF and the education system in Israel, especially in high school. This interface is at times maintained and encouraged by the political realm, and at times the army is more independent in its approach to schools. For example, soldiers, mostly females, wearing uniforms, teach in schools as supportive manpower; it is mandatory for schools to conduct annual memorial ceremonies on Memorial Day for the Fallen of Israel’s Wars, ceremonies

24 The mere existence of channeling students through distinct learning paths (termed ‘streaming’ in British and Canadian systems and ‘tracking’ in the United States) that lead to different employment or academic destinations suggests a systemic model and a sense of ‘production and shipment’ in the service of the next social units in the social machine. I propose this model in section 1.4.

25 The Arab population is exempted from military service. Most of the Jewish Orthodox population is historically de facto exempted.
which are based on “the model of a canonic ceremony, characterized by military practices, the ethos of self-sacrifice, and the de-personification of mourning” (Levy et al., 2007, p. 134); retired high-ranking officers become principals of schools (Zemlinskaya, 2008); and perhaps most relevant for our discussion, the army is active in schools in order to enhance preparation and motivation of high school students for their impending military service.

The IDF has a strong interest in maintaining high motivation among its new recruits, and to make sure the high school students are aware of the obligatory service they are about to fill and that they are mentally (and if needed also physically) prepared for it. Central features in the army’s involvement in the education system for that end is visits of soldiers and officers in schools in order to inform and encourage students to make their service more ‘significant,’ and a military program, during the 11th grade, that prepares students for military service. Levy et al. (2007) note that “[f]ollowing the ‘motivation crisis’ of the mid-1990s… the obligation to serve in the military was no longer taken for granted, and in 1999 preparation for the military was designated by the Ministry of Education as obligatory within the formal curriculum of the higher grades in high school” (p. 137). I will focus here on the military program designated to make students more prepared for the service. According to Levy et al. (2007), this program, called the Gadna (the Hebrew acronym for “youth regiments”) activity, is “aimed at strengthening pupils’ motivation to serve in the army and preparing them for military life” (p. 138). They describe it as follows:

The activity is for seventeen-year-old boys and girls and lasts for five days under conditions that replicate those of a closed military base. During the week an attempt is made to simulate basic training, so that the pupils encounter the meaning of the military experience. This includes being cut off from home and civilian life; military discipline; a structured daily routine and time pressure; uniforms and military activities such as field subsistence, treks, and shooting practice; and educational activities such as learning about Israel’s wars. (p. 138-9)
Levy et al. (2007) add that as such, the Gadna’s goal is to bring “the pupils closer to the military experience and reinforcing their attitudes to military duty as a civil contribution to the state” (p. 139). Thus, the Gadna activity is designated to enhance both the disposition and preparation of students for military life, and the education system is used as a convenient platform within which to integrate such a program. This instrumental perception is strongly evident in things Levy (2014) said recently at an academic conference: “The military system seeks to influence the educational system as it wants to ensure a flow of skilled, motivated, and cheap manpower into its rank”. A recent example is a new program, launched by the IDF in an attempt to overcome a shortage of military engineers and scientists, that targets female high school students in order to encourage them to study specific fields so they will be able to serve in technological units. The program, initiated by the IDF Chief of Staff’s Advisor for Women Issues, will attach to each school high ranking officers to be responsible for contact with students, parents, and teachers and to recruit students to technological and scientific streams in school and later to relevant military service.

Levy criticized the IDF’s instrumental approach to education in an 2014 interview for a documentary, saying: “The army is no longer able by its own powers to bring whoever it wants into its doors and it enlists brokers for that end, one of which is the education system. Any situation where the army enters the education system and subjects it to its own needs and values, it is a dangerous process from an ethical perspective and the educational system

26 Army and Education Symposium, The Open University, Ra’anana, Israel, October 2014. Levy’s address can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tO9Qol_anvc&index=1&list=PLEMOEwdRMCMakZ1DdM9bOhSpZ5F 7kf5. For the specific sentence, go to 4:05.
27 For a news article about the program: http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/678/631.html?hp=1&cat=875&loc=6 (in Hebrew)
The army’s aggressiveness in its attempt to subjugate education to its own interests is evident. In addition, as the IDF is formally under the command of the government, it also serves as a tool within the societal production line; being a soldier might be viewed as one of the identities sought by the state and specific political powers. But it is also relevant to add that in the literature on the IDF it is often referred to as an independent body with its own interests, especially since the decline of its image as a “people’s army” and the rise of the “market army” that is typified by “the subjection of military doctrine to the market, a post-Fordist structure, a network-centric hierarchy, market values borrowed by the military profession, the convergence of military and civilian occupations, the commodification of military service, and new contractual forms of bargaining between soldiers and the military” (Levy, 2010, p. 378).

Another locally based force that attempts to influence education is religion. At face value it might be difficult to see religion as a self-interested force that perceives education as a tool, at least in the same manner that other forces operate. The difficulty in attaching to religion an instrumental perception of education stems from two main reasons. First, the secularism of public schools and the prevalent liberal character of public education in democratic countries seem to block religious attempts from penetrating schools (Seljak, 2009; Lugg, 2004). Second, religion usually does not seek people to fill definite roles (such as citizen, consumer, university student, or soldier). However, religious bodies or religious institutions, generally

28 Documentary for Channel 10, “Army in the People” (in Hebrew). For news report in which the Documentary is embedded and Levy’s quote is brought see: http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=1039930
29 This connection between the state, the military, and education, is, of course, not new and was already identified by Plato who warns against a situation in which the mission of those who are educated to be the guardians and the auxiliaries (soldiers) is to serve the ruling caste by forcing on the majority the order established by those in power. In the modern instrumental approach that I present here, encouraging students to be soldiers with specific qualities and tendencies is in itself illustrative of the political influence.
speaking and to various degrees, see students (at least in specific populations) as potential devotees and try to influence the education system in order to reach parents and students with the aim of recruiting believers and inculcating a specific lifestyle. This by itself turns education and students to tools—and thus damages students’ humanity—because the intention is to promote a specific way of life by reaching and influencing students through schools (even if this involves an honest intention to salvage the soul). Students’ humanity is damaged even more when the religious leaders encourage (or choose for) their followers a lifestyle of poverty or of ignorance in order to meet religious commands and in order to prevent the followers from exploring alternative ways of life (the Jewish command for procreation and religious objections to sex education are just two examples). Thus, the followers become a tool for religious (and, admittedly, political) interests, and as we will see below religious bodies or religious institutions find avenues to use the education system in order to recruit believers and/or inculcate religious lifestyles.

Despite the general secularization of Western public education in the last century, in some places religion still has a strong grip, mostly through national and political channels. Similar to the influence of the army, Israel is also an example when it comes to religious influences, as we saw above with regard to the program initiated by the Israeli Ministry of Education to integrate Jewish notions into the curriculum. Religious influence in the Israeli general curriculum is perhaps not surprising, given the formal Jewish identity of the state. But religious impact is also felt in the United States, where there is a formal separation of church and state and religious schools are generally not publicly funded. Controversies around different issues, especially concerning scientific evolution theories versus creation-based narratives (e.g. creationism and intelligent design) as well as sexuality education, are at
times influenced by religious bodies. As Lugg (2004) observes, “[d]uring the past 15 years, conservative Protestants have had some impressive political successes in placing members on state and local school boards, which in turn have been able to rewrite various curricular policies involving science” (p. 179). With regard to sexuality education, Lugg (2004) notes:

Given their vehemence, this is the one area where conservative Protestants, sometimes in conjunction with other like-minded citizens including conservative Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, have consistently influenced the direction of the curriculum. In many cases, they have blocked implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programs… in the vast majority of extant HIV/AIDS programs and sexuality education programs, promoting sexual abstinence is the core pedagogical issue, with school districts increasingly favoring an “abstinence only” approach… In addition, issues of sexual orientation and identity are generally either avoided or are addressed in a limited and inaccurate manner. (p. 180)

Feinberg (2000) explains that the lack of state support for American religious schools stems from the consensus of a strong conceptual separation between the notions of public and private, while religion is attributed to the private domain. The same consensus provides public schools considerable freedom to pursue a secular curriculum, and as a result religious groups, in the case that there are no alternatives to public education, become “more vigorous in pursuing their aims within the public schools” (p. 843). This lack of alternatives leads to constant pressures to integrate religious features into public education. Therefore, we can expect that religious attempts to penetrate public education will continue to accompany public secular education.  

30 See also Fraser (2000) for an historical review of the church-state-public education relationships in the United States.

31 One might argue that the separation between the notions of public and private is a liberal conception that forces religion to be considered an external—and therefore not legitimate—force that attempts to influence education; if things were the other way around, secularism would be considered external as in the case of the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial. However, my claim is not against religious attempts to influence education as being religious but as being attempts that stem from perceiving education and students as tools and hence damaging education’s agency and students’ humanity. Similarly, I reject secular instrumental attempts that I review in this chapter. Feinberg’s analysis is brought forward in order to assist me in my general claim that it will be difficult to prevent religious attempts to influence education as long as the instrumental approach is dominant and
But perhaps the more important – and dangerous – impact of religion, for our discussion on instrumental approaches to education, is not attempts to instill religious elements into a secularized system but rather efforts to create alternatives to this system and as such to change the education landscape as a whole. Typical for religious forces, and unlike other forces, are efforts to utilize institutionalized education by establishing or maintaining separated religious educational systems. This separation can take two forms: by using taxpayer’s money or by establishing independent systems or independent schools. One might think that independent schools are irrelevant for examining and analyzing the instrumental approach, since they were established in the first place for a religious purpose of a specific community and there is no attempt to intervene in the lives of others. However, even if there is no intervention in the lives of other people – either secular or from other religions – the separation of a religious or an ethnic school from the secular or the general population does not exempt its founders from being accused of instrumentalism towards the students. The argument about a dominant perception of education and students as a tool is not limited to the secular system or to state funded schools; my argument is not against polluting secular education or against exploiting public money, but against any instrumentalism of organizational education, especially in schools. Religious schools, even if they are self-funded, cannot be excused if they narrow and damage students’ humanity.

With regard to publicly funded religious schools, Israel and Ontario, Canada, are examples of places where religion (or religious forces) succeeds in achieving both legitimacy

external forces have a direct access to the educational system through general politics. In chapters 2 and 4 I address these two concerns, respectively.

Religious people pay taxes too, of course, but the point is not whether their children are entitled to education or whether religious people who pay taxes are entitled to participate in and influence the public discussion about education. The point is the mere essence of education and a claim against its instrumentality.
for separate education systems and public financial support for funding religious schools. With regard to Israel, as it is the only Jewish state, religion and religious matters are strongly integrated within local politics, including the strength of Orthodox Judaism in Israeli politics (Norris & Inglehart, 2011). Swirski (2002) identifies the historical roots of independent schools in Israel: “The first ‘distinctive’ schools opened in the state religious stream as a result of pressure applied by middle- and upper-middle-class religiously observant Ashkenazi parents, identified with the National Religious Party, who wanted to opt out of ethnically mixed schools” (231). Hofman et al. (2007) even distinguish between ‘Zionist’ (secular and religious) and ‘anti-Zionist’ educational systems:

Apart from these Zionist educational networks, there existed an ultraorthodox school system (officially called Independent Ultraorthodox Education). This system was in effect anti-Zionist, emphasizing total rejection of secular life and of national political values. Its curriculum was founded upon the age-old traditions of Jewish education, obligated to ancient teachings and interpretations of Jewish literary and liturgical sources. (p. 306)

Hofman et al. (2007) add that “[t]he ultraorthodox independent system remained intact” (p. 307). Today, in addition to the publicly funded Jewish secular system, there is a distinct publicly funded Jewish religious system and distinct publicly funded Jewish ultraorthodox system (there is also a distinct system for the Arab population). The ultraorthodox system is completely autonomous regarding its internal administration and its curriculum, promoting a curriculum focused on “holy studies” and with very few or any core subjects directed at general, civic, or employment curriculum.

Ontario operates a fully-funded and separate Catholic system, and it is the only publicly funded religious system while other religious groups do not receive provincial support. As such, Ontario is the only province that allows such a distinction, a policy that was criticized in 1999 by the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Committee as discriminatory
(Bedard & Lawion, 2000; Seljak, 2009). For our discussion, what is more relevant is a concern that the Catholic system uses its schools to promote its own religious agenda. Such a concern is raised following a case in 2012 in which the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA) refused to accept a provincial bill to provide more focused measures to eliminate bullying on the basis of sexual orientation. The bill specifically requires that students be allowed to establish gay-straight alliances (GSAs). As a response to the bill, OCSTA proposed an alternative policy, called “Respecting Difference,” on the grounds that GSAs run contrary to Catholic teaching. This case demonstrates a problematic attitude by the Catholic system towards LGBT students (Bialystok, 2014), an attitude that reflects an instrumental approach towards education because it perceives education as a tool in order to highlight specific values over others in a manner that is convenient from a Catholic point of view (or the view of the deciding OCSTA policy makers). The humanity of LGBT students in Catholic schools and the whole student body in these schools is narrowed and damaged as a result of OCSTA’s preferred discourse around bullying students because of their sexual orientation.

Independent religious education systems, that is, those that are not publicly funded but instead rely on parents’ payments and other funds, also exhibit an instrumental approach. After all, one of their main goals is to maintain or instill a specific lifestyle, while parents and community leaders are key factors in pushing for the establishment of such schools. Seljak (2009) explains this phenomenon in Canada: “the removal of Christianity from public schools failed to provide any positive support for minorities to socialize their children into their unique religious identities. Many groups found the secular, public school culture no less

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33 Below I consider parents as a whole (including secular parents) as an external force.
inhospitable to their values and identities than its Christian predecessor. Consequently, religious minorities continued to develop independent religious schools” (p. 179). In the United States, historically, independent religious schools mark communal and cultural identities, at times by using claims for promoting multiculturalism. Sikkink and Hill (2006) note that the shift towards a secular publicly funded education “increases the tendency of conservative religious groups to frame their relation to dominant American culture in terms of a cultural conflict over schooling institutions” (p. 41). Today, private school enrollment is about 10% of total school enrollment in the United States, while the bulk of private school students attend religious schools (Sikkink and Hill, 2006). It is important to stress that seeing via the instrumental view, parents’ or community activists’ involvement or initiative in establishing private religious schools does not diminish considering ‘religion’ as an external force, the same way that parents’ involvement in pushing for more academic or job oriented curriculum does not release ‘academia’ or ‘economy’, respectively, from being considered external forces that are responsible for the pressures by parents.

We can see that the religious forces, as previously discussed forces attempting to influence education, are also intertwined within the broader political struggle and according to the local political conditions are also involved in party politics that shapes education. Whether under banners of ‘values’, ‘school choice’, or ‘multiculturalism’, religion plays a role in nurturing students’ identities, from within or outside the publicly funded systems.

A last potential force for putting pressure on schools is students’ parents or guardians. As this section does not explore parents’ involvement in general but focuses on social forces that treat education and students as an instrument, I am interested in situations where these forces’ interests are mediated by parents. From this point of view, we can suggest a
modification for perceiving education as a commodity as offered in the literature. Biesta (2006) characterizes the process of education in terms of an economic transaction: “‘Value for money’ has become a guiding principle in the transactions between the state and its taxpayers” (p. 19). And as Feinberg (2001) explains, education became a commodity in which the provider is supposed to give the customer what she wants, not what she needs: "In market models consumers are supposed to know what they need, and producers bid in price and quality to satisfy them. In professional models the producer not only services a need, but also defines it" (p. 403). Biesta’s and Feinberg’s observations, which are mostly based on phenomena of privatization in education, seem to argue that the public has power in determining what education will be. However, the instrumental approach gives a different conceptual framework and a different interpretation to the economic transaction: the public – mostly parents for our discussion here – identifies the instrumental approach to education and adopts it, that is, the public recognizes that education should be used as a means to reach a future position for their children. As a result, we arrive at a situation in which the political struggle around education leads the public to join—knowingly or unknowingly—the external forces that wish to recruit education for their own interests. And when the public, as a customer, wants something, it should get it, for “the customer is always right”. The public succumbs to the politicization of education by non-educative powers and embraces it; it just plays the game.34

But this blurred line between what parents want and what economic forces or other forces want does not mean that it is better to keep parents away from schools; things are not that

34 The recent protest against the updated Ontario sex education curriculum demonstrates that parents can be easily led by to believe in unfounded (to say the least) claims, especially when it comes to controversial issues. See http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/04/fact-checking-10-claims-made-by-parents-against-the-ontario-sex-ed-curriculum.html
simple when it comes to parents’ influence. Parents’ interests with regard to what happens in school do not just reflect the adoption of self-interested social and political forces that seek to gain something from students. If that were the case, perhaps it would be rather easy to dismiss any influence of parents. But parents’ interest in their children’s education is more complex and has to do with familial and ethical aspects such as way of life, tradition, and beliefs, as well as personal issues such as health and the child’s own interest. Practically, unless students are physically removed from their families, parents’ involvement almost cannot be prevented. But even if it was possible, it is doubtful whether cutting out parents from schooling is desired, as their input and support is needed for smooth and safe management of their child’s schooling.

However, I still maintain that when there is a real concern that parents’ interests with regard to their children’s institutionalized education reflect those of the non-educative forces, it is preferred that these interests will be considered as external and that parents will be viewed as a self-interested force (see also Feinberg (2000). I consider Feinberg’s claim regarding parents’ authority below). There is no hard rule for determining when it is the case, and it is educators’ job to decide about it in any case, according to their knowledge of the community, the family, and the student, as well as factors such as the curriculum and school’s culture. A result of this consideration is that the student’s immediate environment should not be acknowledged as an authority within public education with regard to matters that exceed the student’s personal life. While the family is a vital source from which educators learn about the student as well as an important source from which the student produces experiences that constitute the basis for meaning making (see section 3), the family’s traditional authority with regard to institutionalized education should be removed.
Thus, guardians’ legitimacy to intervene in children’s education is reduced; not just that children must attend school in order to be provided with this essential human service (see next section), but – I argue – their guardians should be also removed from making decisions that have to do with the regular operation of the school.\(^{35}\) This does not mean to ignore students’ origin, culture, religion, or any other given identity with which students arrive at school and carry into class; as discussed in section 3.1, this is a most valuable source for educative work. But considering what is at stake here – students’ humanity – and the risk that students will become a tool for others, parents’ interests that are directed to a specific identity of their child is to be lowered in importance compared to educators’ considerations.\(^{36}\)

It should be noted that the focus in this section on curricular matters, that is what is taught in school, does not imply that teaching curriculum is the only thing happening in school; on the contrary, there is a lot that happens in school, part of it stemming from genuine educative care and part of it is influenced by other interests: counselors and teachers who deal with the emotional aspects of students, medical issues, and family issues are only few of the matters that are involved in schools’ life. However, every teacher who spends enough time in schools knows that most of what is going on in school with regard to interaction with students is related to curriculum and most of what this interaction means, surely in secondary education, is teaching material – potentially through the manifold means available to teachers.

\(^{35}\) This reduction in parents’ authority over their children’s education might remind us of Plato’s (in *The Republic*) or Rousseau’s (in *Émile*) concern that children are susceptible to negative influences and the philosophers’ exploration of a response to this concern by the idea of extreme isolated education: removing children away from their parents. In my proposal I do not go as far as what these thinkers entertain in (what we can see as) their thought experiments. However, I do advocate a more explicit separation between education and society, as I discuss in chapter 4.

\(^{36}\) In chapters 2 and 4 I discuss guidelines and measures that are meant to address the worry that educators will treat students instrumentally. Generally speaking, perceiving education not as a provider for other social units (or spheres), removing it from the general political mechanism, granting it sovereignty, and protecting its agency are required steps in order to discourage educators from surrendering to and adopting an instrumental approach.
This point on teachers makes it clear that it is not just students that are perceived instrumentally within the education system but also the adults in schools (or in their administrative vicinity) that are supposed to instill in students the required tendencies and identities (or to create the conditions for such an activity or to support it). Teachers, administrators, counselors, and other professionals are part of the perception according to which education is a tool and they have the mission—as the self-interested forces see it—to deliver the goods. Within this instrumental understanding of education, teachers (and other professionals in the system) work for the economy, the state, academia, the army, and other forces, but not for the students, at least not for the students in a non-instrumental human sense. It should be clarified, though, that rejecting an instrumental perception of education does not mean that teachers are not allowed to bring into the class political or controversial issues or even that teachers are not allowed to express their opinions; on the contrary, within my vision of education teachers are to be encouraged to integrate political or controversial matters in their classes and responsibly and wisely share their thoughts and worldviews with their students. However, this integration of teachers’ personal views must be in the service of an educational guideline that protects students from being instrumentally used and is faithful to students’ humanity (I elaborate on such a guideline in the next chapter). Thus, for example, indoctrination by a teacher is unacceptable but so is any propaganda in favor of one of the external self-interested forces.

General observations that imply the instrumental approach to education are made by several scholars. These scholars point to different aspects or different forms of this perception of education, although they do not necessarily use instrumentalist terminology.
For example, Peters (1966) is aware of the temptation to perceive education as a tool for external interests:

Given that 'education' suggests the intentional bringing about of a desirable state of mind in a morally unobjectionable manner, it is too easy to conceive of education as a neutral process that is instrumental to something that is worthwhile which is extrinsic to it. Just as gardens may be cultivated in order to aid the economy of the household, so children must be educated in order to provide them with jobs and to increase the productivity of the community as a whole. (p. 27)

Peters also adds to the distinction between ‘education’ and ‘training’, the latter fits the instrumental perception: “We do not naturally talk of educating men as rulers, soldiers, or economists; we talk of training them… The fact that there may be many people who do not have this concept, or who have it but use words loosely, does not effect the conceptual distinction to which I am drawing attention” (p. 29). Masschelein and Simons (2013) argue that schooling always received a regulating and adjusting treatment: “for a large part of history, efforts to chastise the school's transgressions were correctional: the school was something to be constantly improved and reformed” (p. 9). Masschelein and Simons distinguish between the discipline required in school – what they call “scholastic technology” – and the one used outside school: “School rules are not life rules (for living the good life) and they are not political rules (standards or laws for the order(ing) of society). And in this way they are not designed to initiate young people into a group or society by means of submission” (p. 57). The instrumental approach is evident in utilizing schools: “society and politics have gradually become interested in using this technology to subdue and tame their citizens” (ibid.).

I have reviewed different examples of how students are perceived as a valuable resource to be used. This perception results in viewing students as a tool and consequently reducing or damaging their humanity, that is, seeing them only or mainly as potential contributors to a
specific interest and accordingly addressing and encouraging only specific aspects of them at the expense of other aspects. From the variety of the attempts to influence education in order to ‘recruit’ them we can conclude two types of students’ destinies desired by these pressing forces. One is of filling a role, or function, within an existing organization; this is strongly evident in economic attempts to train and direct students to the job market and in the pressures from academia to produce prospective students with specific knowledge needed for university programs. The second type of desired future deals less with the daily schedule of people and more with their attitude towards a cause or belief; religious institutions and ideological bodies belong to this category as they seek support for their conceptual foundations. Although the forces of the latter category welcome particular active participation in their service, they usually have sufficient manpower infrastructure to maintain their existence and they do not depend on a constant supply of new functionaries to hold positions. The boundary between these two categories is blurred, and many times they co-exist when filling a role require a sense of identification and emotional support, especially when organizations are interested in long-term loyalty. However, when the forces act upon education they will differ in the emphasis they give to the actual utility of the content they push into schools: in the “filling a role” category there will be an emphasis on the actual use of the content purchased in school in order to create significant impact within the organization, while in the “attitude” category what is learnt is mainly supposed to serve as creating a tendency towards or an agreement with the existing agenda.37

37 Advocates of vocational education argue that this kind of education is not designated simply to train students for a profession but also to provide students with a general acquaintance to aspects of employment (see, for example, Billett (2011) and Winch (2000)). Still, however, the direction towards acquiring a specific identity is evident.
Despite these two types of destined futures, we can generalize and say that the forces that influence education attempt to recruit students as *members* in the sense of belonging, being part of a group, with a minimum commitment that is required according to the specific interest. For these forces, some level of membership (that is, number of members) is required in order to be relevant. For, even if these forces can exist without a constant flow of new members that decide to join them, they will lose legitimacy and will cease to be a factor that maintains its interest.\(^{38}\)

What we can learn from the observations brought in this section regarding the forces that perceive education a tool and consequently attempt to influence it is that in our democratic and liberal political atmosphere, the original idea of renewal by education—renewal in the sense of revitalization or novelty, creating something new over something old—has become distorted by factors that focus on their own existence and their own growth; the growth of people who serve them (knowingly or unknowingly) and the growth of society as a whole only as a side effect that might or might not happen, but it is not these forces’ prime concern. One severe result of this distortion in the way renewal is understood or comes about is that students’ humanity is reduced to specific narrow aspects that promote specific identities. The contribution of these identities is either limited to a specific domain of being human or is beneficial only to specific forces in society. The damage to students’ humanity is stemmed from a rooted, deliberate, and consistent view of them as an instrument, as a means to gain something. The instrumental approach towards students – as it is practically realized in

\(^{38}\) This kind of membership as part of the forces’ influence is fundamentally different from membership as advocated by communitarianism, that is, a view that challenges liberalism and concerns about the neglect of community and common good (moral values, shared understandings, public interest). Membership as part of the self-interested forces is closer to a membership in a fitness club or a shopping club with an open admission policy: belonging that although it bears some collective commitments still stems from a strong individual motivation. As such, it is more a liberal than a communal membership.
school’s conduct and curriculum – takes the form of encouraging, addressing, or developing only particular aspects of them as humans beings at the expense of other aspects that are diminished or are left out, whether because they oppose the interests of the self-interested forces (such as in the case of the GSA in Ontarian Catholic schools) or because required resources are not available anymore (such in the case where teaching for standardized tests leaves no room for in-depth discussion).

In conclusion, the alien, self-interested and non-educative forces that try to influence education and under the instrumental approach indeed succeed in controlling education, seek to use students—and any other human beings in their purview—for their own interests. As such, they strive to develop only specific and narrow aspect(s) or only a limited part(s) of students as human beings; the wholeness or totality of students is abandoned and ignored in favor of a specific desired identity that each of these forces wishes the students to adopt as soon as possible so that these forces are able to gain something from their new members. Students’ humanity is ignored and sacrificed in favor of instilling in them or producing out of them specific identities in order to maintain sufficient membership.39

1.3 The Political: Mouffe and Arendt

The examples in the previous section of forces operating upon education might not convince one that education is under a comprehensive (although not coordinated) social pressure to serve the needs of self-interested forces. In order to give philosophical support to what otherwise might seem to be unrelated phenomena, and to better characterize the problem, I

39 Standish (1992) enumerates positivism, scientism, the prevailing idea of the human subject, and the preoccupation with the ideal of autonomy as four limitations that “have been shown to constitute distortions of the conception of what it is to be human” (p. 222).
will use the work of Mouffe and Arendt who have examined the concept of the ‘political’ in a broad sense, beyond that of ‘party-politics’ or interests related to financial revenue.

Chantal Mouffe, a Belgian political theorist, differentiates between ‘the political’ as an inherent antagonism and ‘politics’ as the means to address it. Mouffe (2000) explains the distinction as follows:

By 'the political', I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations. 'Politics', on the other side, indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of 'the political'. I consider that it is only when we acknowledge the dimension of 'the political' and understand that 'politics' consists in domesticating hostility and in trying to defuse the potential antagonism that exists in human relations, that we can pose what I take to be the central question for democratic politics. (p. 101)

By establishing the difference between ‘the political’ and ‘politics’ as a conceptual framework, Mouffe argues that there is an inescapable foundation or origin for our antagonist attitude towards others that cannot be removed; when we live with others – and we do40 – there is always a possibility for a conflict as the political constitutes the ontological condition for violence against the other. Addressing this violent potentiality is done by politics, the arrangements and associations human beings establish to allow order in a world of ever latent conflict. Since the political necessitates politics for conducting orderly life, for Mouffe the political also constitutes the ontological condition for a democratic society.

What is important for us within the current discussion on the forces influencing education is that Mouffe sees the political as an all-encompassing aspect of human relations; thus, we will find the political in all spheres of society. Mouffe (1997) asserts that

when it comes to the creation of a collective identity, i.e., the creation of an "us" by

40. Heidegger’s notions of ‘being-in-the-world’ and ‘being-with’ give an ontological support for this claim.
the demarcation of a "them," there is always the possibility of that us/them relationship becoming one of friend/enemy, i.e., becoming antagonistic. This happens when the "other," who so far had been considered simply as different, starts to be perceived as someone who puts in question our identity and threatens our existence. From that moment on, any form of us/them relationship, be it religious, ethnic, economic, or other, becomes political. (p. 26)

The important claim here is that due to the antagonist foundation, any ‘us/them relationship’—any belonging to different group (or ‘social sphere’ as we will see in chapter 2)—might become ‘us against them’, and therefore any social domain might take an antagonistic attitude towards others.41

Now, in a bustling and compartmentalized society like ours, composed of numerous realms, sectors, and groups competing for people’s attention, and when within many domains there is a fierce competition over scarce resources and limited potential members,42 the erupting of the political to the surface is a reality that is manifested in different degrees and forms of violence. With regard to the forces that put pressure on education, the appearance of the political means that these forces come from any corner in society and that they are characterized by aggressiveness; the us/them mentality will be demonstrated not just within areas of competition (e.g. Coca Cola vs. Pepsi in a struggle for inserting their goods into schools) but also between different domains (e.g. economic or civic interests vs. religious ones, as it happens in Israel).43

41 In section 2.1 I will argue that the picture is not quite symmetrical since the education sphere does not exert pressures on other spheres as they exert on it.
42 This competition is evident also in education where schools market themselves in order to increase enrollment.
43 Mouffe’s understanding of the political is, of course, only one form, and we will see below that Arendt holds a different view that is not antagonistic. The political can also take an agonistic stance and the mere distinction between antagonism and agonism can be questioned. However, in bringing Mouffe’s view I wish to point out the prevalence of the aggressiveness demonstrated by the external forces that we have already seen in the previous section.
Unlike Mouffe who sees the political as a violent and antagonist aspect of human relations, Arendt (1998/1958) perceives the political in more benign terms. According to Arendt, in the ancient Greek Polis there were two dominant realms (or spheres, spaces) of operation: the private and the public. The private realm, which consisted of women, children and slaves, was the realm of necessity and includes the activity of Labor, an activity concerned with the sustenance of human lives. Those who were able to enter the public realm, on the other hand, addressed the political, that is, were able to manifest their relations with others and their uniqueness by Action, the highest form of activity that composed the *vita active*, the active life which Arendt prioritizes over the *vita contemplative*, the life of mere reflection:

Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition—not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life. (p. 7)

A third type of activity, Work, that produces enduring artefacts, is associated with the free citizens of the *polis* and provides support for the political activity although it is not considered as part of the public realm.

However, Arendt identifies a decline of the public realm and simultaneously a rise of a third realm between the public and the private: the social. The social realm is a result of life necessities that have become manifested outside the household through relationships with others; for Arendt, maintaining life has become a social activity. In time, with the expansion of the market economy, this realm has increasingly invaded both the public and private realms. As Lane (1997) explains:

The "social" realm, according to Arendt, emerges with the rise of liberal capitalist culture as a hybrid zone between the rapidly diminishing spaces of private life and
public life… the "social" characteristically swallows up the functions, values, and distinctiveness of both privacy and publicity. When people and issues are socialized, they become less distinct, more homogenized; less open to pluralities, more conformist. Thus the "social realm" not only becomes home to the bourgeoisie in retreat from political responsibility and in pursuit of economic gain but it increasingly becomes the only apparent home for all. (p. 145)

This consuming character of the social realm suggests its aggressiveness and uncontrolled expansion and intervention in people’s lives. As a consequence, Labor has come to be the dominant activity that guides the masses. Arendt (1998) shows how humans as focusing on activities of Work (\textit{homo faber})—activities that are designated to manipulate the environment and produce means for the sake of the political—have been altered to become humans who are occupied with activities of Labor (\textit{animal laborans}):

The ideals of \textit{homo faber}, the fabricator of the world, which are permanence, stability, and durability, have been sacrificed to abundance, the ideal of the \textit{animal laborans}. We live in a laborers’ society because only laboring, with its inherent fertility, is likely to bring about abundance; and we have changed work into laboring, broken it up into its minute particles until it has lent itself to division where the common denominator of the simplest performance is reached in order to eliminate from the path of human labor power—which is part of nature and perhaps even the most powerful of all natural forces—the obstacle of the "unnatural" and purely worldly stability of the human artifice. (p. 126)

By “abundance” Arendt means “abundance of consumer goods” (p. 122) and she argues that our society has become a divided society of laborers who prefer abundance of consumer goods over products that support the political or being involved in the political itself.

For our discussion regarding the forces lurking over education, the important aspect in Arendt’s work is the dominance of these forces in the social realm and the penetration of the social realm into education. The rise of the social and the forces’ taking over of people’s private lives brought these forces to assign or to channel their members mostly to activities that are considered as Labor as they are repetitive and involve necessary goods and services for the sustenance of modern life with its manifold societal and cultural faces; it is not just
biological needs such as food and shelter but also products such as entertainment and services that are perceived necessary for mental or emotional needs in our busy daily and complex lives. Even when the activities produce artefacts, these artefacts are usually not created for the political realm but serve the needs of the forces. It is important to note that a crucial aspect of the forces’ control of the social realm is creating and disseminating needs on the one hand and satisfying these needs on the other, but not entirely, so to ensure the constant consumption of the desired product. This manipulation is not limited just to creating a craving for a hamburger and selling it, but extends to the job market, academia, religious institutions, and every area where these forces compete over potential members.

The social becomes prevalent and within it forces control their members’ needs and activities. As a result of this dictation of needs and activities, we become distanced from the political and are denied its Actions, its highest form of activities. As a result our humanity is damaged – something basic is missing. As Norris (2011a) argues: “Instead of 'appearing' through action and speech in the public realm, humans are reduced to mere adjuncts to the cycle of production and consumption” (p. 95). Moreover, “[w]e come to live surrounded by objects and their signs, which for Arendt is not a political world but a world of consumption. As a result, something fundamental to our humanity and political existence is lost” (p. 97). I perceive consumption in a broader sense than just buying; consumption has become any unreflective registration as a member in the service of the forces that occupy the social realm. When it comes to children, the danger is obvious and intensified. Arendt (1961) expresses her worry in this regard:

The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can thrive only in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, it introduces between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public
and vice versa, the harder it makes things for its children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed. (p. 188)

And thus we arrive at the danger with the invasion of the social into education.

The inherent antagonism in human relations as Mouffe identifies, on the one hand, and the prevalence of the social as Arendt identifies, on the other, lead to a picture in which the self-interested forces that perceive education as a tool seek to use students as part of their dynamics to first, preserve their existence and second, to sustain and augment their influence in society. To different extents and in different ways, and according to the forces’ ability in their local contexts, these forces aggressively attempt to invade education and bend it for their own interests. Maintenance of their existence and legitimacy depends on constant preservation and renewal of membership, while this membership, to a large extent, depends in turn on conceptually poor and impoverished human beings that are not aware of the manipulations upon them and that will not question, challenge, and undermine these forces. Students are no exception, and as an obligatory and organized framework that all young people participate in, these alien forces find the education system both an essential tool for their purposes as well as an excellent opportunity to access the next generation of their potential members.

1.4 The Systemic Model

The instrumental approach is deeply rooted in society and is exemplified in goals that scholars perceive or identify for education. As the prevailing perception of education in our time, the instrumental approach’s dominance is almost total but like other dominant forces it

44 Today’s technology, and especially social media that is so popular among the young, seems to intensify the blend of private and public Arendt is alluding to. Another point to note here is that it would be a misreading of Arendt if one takes her perception of children (“require the security of concealment”) as a deficit view of them, since the need to protect them does not imply them lacking something.
is not always clear or explicit. This is a result of being so wide-spread in our life (both Western and non-Western cultures) and so suited to the political-economic structures that thinking about alternatives seems strange; it would not be surprising to hear in our society a statement such as: “of course education is for preparing our young for their life after school, what else it could or would it be?” This acceptance and avoiding considering alternatives goes hand in hand with avoiding thinking about alternative political or economic arrangements for society, for example the taking for granted of consumerism within capitalism; another common perception, therefore, is along the lines of: of course everyone has to buy stuff in order to live, how else it can be? Portelli & Konecny (2013) have characterized this acceptance as “our tendency to accept the world as is, with little reflection as to why the world is organized as it is, and by the fatalistic belief that we cannot do or live otherwise” (p. 100). Bauman (1999) calls this total acceptance of the existing comprehensive structures and meanings the TINA creed: ‘There Is No Alternative’, a perception that we live within arrangements that are self-evident and inevitable.

At this point it is useful to mention Ball’s work on the discursive aspect of policy in order to better explain how a way of thinking can be so pervasive and difficult to escape from. In perceiving policy as discourse, Ball (1993) assists us in understanding how power is exercised through the production of 'truth' and 'knowledge'. Quoting Foucault, Ball explains that discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak ...

45 Heidegger (1992) explains that the obvious escapes our notice because of “the law of proximity”: “as unconcealed it is still closer to us than what is closest... nearer to us than what is ordinarily and ‘at first’ the closest, and therefore it is correspondingly more difficult to see... To experience the closest is the most difficult. In the course of our dealings and occupations it is passed over precisely as the easiest. Because the closest is the most familiar, it needs no special appropriation. We do not think about it. So it remains what is least worthy of thought. The closest appears therefore as if it were nothing” (Parmenides, p. 135).
46 Some social arrangements like the Israeli Kibbutz show that there can be alternatives to private consumerism.
Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention” (p. 14). He also adds that “Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority” (ibid). Ball even makes a direct linkage between policy as discourse and specific use of language: “Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded” (ibid).

However, Ball warns us, again quoting Foucault, that discourse is "irreducible to language and to speech"; “it is "more" than that. We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do. In these terms we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies” (ibid, emphasis in original). Ball concludes that although “there are real struggles over the interpretation and enactment of policies”, these are set “within a moving discursive frame which articulates and constrains the possibilities and probabilities of interpretation and enactment” while we are subjected to 'regimes of truth' (p. 15. Ball borrows from Foucault the latter term). Hence, “the effect of policy is primarily discursive; it changes the possibilities we have for thinking 'otherwise'. Thus, it limits our responses to change, and leads us to misunderstand what policy is by misunderstanding what it does.” (ibid). In order to better understand what is behind policy, therefore, “we do need to recognize and analyse the existence of ‘dominant’ discourses” (ibid).

Thus, using Ball’s conceptualization, we can say that if indeed the instrumental approach has a hold on the way we perceive education, it is the dominant discourse that prescribes
what can be said and thought about education’s role in society. The involved actors –
teachers, parents, students, and researchers, whether they are aware of it or not – play the
parts written for them by this dominant discourse. In this situation, and especially in light of
the aggressive characteristics of the self-interested forces, alternatives for the role of
education are virtually unthinkable.

The taken for granted social mission of education makes it difficult to be aware of one
major overlooked consequence of the instrumental approach, a structural conception that I
call ‘the systemic model’. The systemic model sees education as a pragmatic component
integrated within society. Education is perceived as a system in the service of the big societal
system, or as a sub-system that is supposed to function in harmony with other sub-systems.
As Masschelein and Simons (2013) observe, although in ancient Greece the school was
established as a challenging place for the existing order, right from its inception “[i]t was
tolerated so long as it subjected itself to programmes of adjustment or applied itself in the
service of a set of fixed (religious and political) ideals and ready-made projects (nation-
building, civilising missions)” (p. 9). As with any system, the whole system—society—has a
goal or goals to meet, and each sub-system has a part to do. The sub-systems are connected
to and communicate with each other through regulations of input and output. Thus, the
education system is fed as input by its own specific goal and resources on which it is
supposed to operate in order to produce expected results as output.47 These outputs, in turn,
are to be delivered to the next sub-system or sub-systems in the social line.

47 Within the systemic model, standardized tests can be seen as a feedback apparatus that is used to monitor
education: the tests sample (measure) the outputs of the education sub-system, and the results are used as an
input delivered back to the system in order to be compared with expected goals (‘set point’ in terms of process
control). According to the deviation (‘error’) between the goal and the sampled output, the sub-system
education is required to take measures to fix itself in order to meet external expectations.
Education’s goal is to produce graduates (who are the outputs) that are fit to fill societal roles according to the current dominant force(s) in the societal fabric. As it materializes in the early stages of human beings’ lives, education has the role of basic preparation of students in order that they become a worthy input for subsequent social systems, such that ideally—if education and the succeeding sub-systems work well—everyone will find an appropriate place in the social matrix. The resources for the sub-system education are students, teachers, schools, computers, administration, curriculum, funding, and any other human, physical, or conceptual means that are used in school. The sub-system education, of course, can be further divided to lower level components of sub-systems, for example by level of age group (in the time domain) or by specific functions (structural division to administration, teaching, maintenance, supervision). We should be mindful that students here are considered the main resources to be processed; active work is done upon them while they are mostly perceived as passive material to be shaped, grown, and developed.

Several scholars acknowledge and criticize the operation of public education as a machine-like system that operates upon inputs in order to convert them to required outputs. For example, MacIntyre (in MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002) describes the mechanic idea as a major threat to education under the regime of examinations:

It is a highly abstract conception of the school as an input-output machine whose activities are to be understood as transforming measurable input into measurable output. Schools are to be rewarded when the ratio of output to input is high and the cost of producing that ratio is low. Schools are to be penalised when the ratio is low and the cost of production high. The input consists of the raw material, the entering students. The output is in test scores and examination results… What is wrong with

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48 The different potential identities in the social matrix are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, one can be at the same time a taxpayer employee, a consumer, and a citizen.

49 When parents cooperate with and support the instrumental approach (as usually happens) they can be considered as resources. Otherwise, they function as disturbance, an undesired factor that influences the system’s operation.
this model is that it loses sight of the end of education, the development of its students' powers, and substitutes for this end that of success by the standard of some test or examination. Yet what examinations principally test is how good one is at passing examinations. But you can be wonderful at passing examinations and remain both stupid and philistine. (p. 4)

Similarly, Biesta (2015b) describes what he calls a ‘technological’ view of education in terms of inputs and outcomes:

The technological view of education relies on the idea that education can in some sense be conceived as a machinery where there are inputs, mediating variables and outcomes. The technological ambition, as mentioned, is to make the connection between inputs and outputs as secure as possible so that education can begin to operate as a deterministic machine. (p. 16)

Deterministic education stands in stark opposition to an adventurous education as I propose in the next chapter. But Biesta also criticizes research that perceives schools in this technological way as it distorts the essence of education and focuses on ‘what works’:

50 Continuing Biesta’s critique on education research with technological expectations, inasmuch as the systemic model is an acceptable picture of the relationships between education and other societal systems, we can see the danger if education researchers are also captured by it. In this case, they might perceive their role as filling the systemic role of feedback within the societal machine in order to monitor and control public education so it will meet expected results. Seen this way, studying education (in general, not just measurement or assessment for research purposes; see also Biesta, 2010) means to sample both its operation and its outputs—the process being done upon students and students themselves. This sampling is compared with the desired expected outputs, and recommendations are made as to how to improve the system’s functioning.
our lives and our place in the world. The instrumental and systemic way of thinking about education nicely fits to the ontology first described most powerfully by Nietzsche which was then appropriated, reformulated, and crystalized by Heidegger (see, for example, Thomson, 2005 and 2011). Thomson explains that Nietzsche identified the main motivation for our life as will-to-power, movement of forces coming together and breaking apart in all directions in the sole purpose of continual movement or the forces’ “own self-augmenting increase” (2005, p. 22). Heidegger took this ontology further and argued that our contemporary late-modern way of being—that is, the way we perceive beings and our world—is a technological one, not in the sense of technological devices (although this is one consequence) but in the sense of considering everything, including ourselves, as “standing-reserve” (The Question Concerning Technology, 1977), resources to be mastered and optimized.51 This technological tendency, which Heidegger called enframing (Gestell), is the dominant way of thinking and it is demonstrated everywhere, in scientific and non-scientific domains, from medicine through transportation to education.52

As everything is considered standing-reserve (already available to use or still not yet in our hands), the social structures that process these resources are eager to put their hands on them; indeed they are hungry—if not to say greedy—to swallow and digest them. As such, the social structures operate as never-satisfied mechanisms. Fitzsimons (2002) considers the aerial transportation system as an example: an airliner is not a means for human to arrive

51 One can find such a technological attitude in Dewey’s (1913) “The school and social progress”, where he appraises geography as a science (and arguably as a subject to be learned in school) through perceiving ‘earth’ as “the final source of all man’s food… the raw material of all his activities… the great field, the great mine, the great source of the energies of heat, light, and electricity” (p. 32-33). Such a technological perception—in general and specifically with regard to education—is linked to Dewey’s pragmatism and experimentalism, approaches I discuss and contrast to mine in sections 3.4 and 5.6.
52 It is important to note, however, that the match of the systemic model (as the operation of the forces mentioned in this chapter) with philosophical ideas does not subordinate the suggested education vision to philosophy. See also chapter 5 where I discuss the relationships between education and philosophy.
from point A to B, but “a flexible and efficient cog in the transportation system and passengers are presumably not subjects but rather resources to fill the planes, thereby enabling the ordering of the system” (p. 178).\textsuperscript{53} The education system can be perceived in a similar fashion: students are not independent agents who take on an active role but rather resources to fill classrooms and schools in order to allow the orderly and efficient operation of the whole societal machine.\textsuperscript{54} Fitzsimons even goes as far as to imply that the whole project of social justice can be seen not as motivated by altruism but rather as part of a technological attitude for efficiency by which everything is treated as resource including “those who have been classified as marginal,” while the ultimate purpose is not to improve their life per se but “the avoidance of waste through the efficient use of all resources” (p. 185). Seen this way, contemporary educational projects such as vocational education can be considered efforts to effectively use every available human being for economic and political causes.

The instrumental approach to education might indicate the emergence of a new type of social reproduction, or keeping the social status quo, alongside traditional social-economic reproduction. While traditional reproduction works in favor of the dominant class, the emergent reproduction phenomenon is characterized by a competition between forces that operate across classes and utilize all classes, a competition for which education is perceived as a crucial source of human capital both for gaining legitimacy and recruiting members.

\textsuperscript{53} As a more domestic example, think of a dishwasher that is served by a human who fills and clears the dishes all over again, in order to keep the machine going.

\textsuperscript{54} Pink Floyd’s film version for\textit{ Another Brick in the Wall}\textsuperscript{(Part II)} (“We don’t need no education”) includes a scene that radically represents students as resources: students marching in unison, following a path until they enter a steamy tunnel section only to re-emerge as putty-faced clones void of individual distinction and proceed to fall blindly into an oversized meat-grinder. In an animated scene for the music video, a teacher enthusiastically crams students into the meat-grinder. Part II of\textit{ Another Brick in the Wall} is a protest song against rigid schooling in general and boarding schools in the UK in particular.
Within this societal reproduction, it is not the upper class that attempts to keep its status in relation to the middle and lower classes, but rather forces such as the economy, the state, academia, party-politics, the army, and religious institutions that struggle with each other. Within each domain, different factors coalesce based on their shared interests, while at the same time conducting an internal competition. Thus, for example, big corporations join forces with small businesses, universities with colleges, and Christians with Orthodox Jews, in order to promote desired tendencies and identities among people. People from all social-economic classes are victims of these struggles between domains as all social-economic classes are perceived as relevant resources for maintaining existence, gaining legitimacy, and recruiting members; the elite are no less relevant and are no less targeted then the poor. A lucrative job can be considered as oppressive as a low-wage one, a manager is potentially enslaved as a factory line operator, a tenured professor as a tenured-tracked faculty (or a graduate student), and a dominant religion member as a minority religion member. In this kind of reproduction everyone is considered useful in the fight for room in the societal space.

This description of a competition between forces and between domains resembles Bauman’s (2005) description of individualization in a “liquid-modern world” (p. 306). In such a world—Bauman’s understanding of the postmodern world—the main figure is that of the hunter who “could not care less about the overall ‘balance of things’”, and his sole task “is another ‘kill,’” and to “move swiftly to another relatively unspoiled wilderness” (ibid). For Bauman, the true essence of contemporary individualization is the practice of the “game hunters”, and it comes at the expense of “forward drive”: “Progress seems no longer to be about improvement, but about survival. Progress is no longer about rushing ahead and winning the race, but about staying on the track… about the avoidance of being excluded…
You can no longer seriously hope to make the world a better place to live… The most you can do is to try to stay among the hunters, since the only alternative is to find yourself among the hunted” (p. 307-8). In my theory of a new type of social reproduction, the hunters are not individual people but social forces that their indifference to “the overall ‘balance of things’” allows them to invade education (and arguably other domains) and use it for their own interests. I will return to this last point in the next chapter when I address a critique of theorizing the instrumentalism of education.

The defining category in the proposed new type of reproduction is not a level of class but identity of the domain, and as a result we can speculate mobility of people not vertically but laterally towards the domain that is perceived (collectively or personally) most influential or important. Thus, we will find movement in different directions, when the most popular is perhaps towards politics—think of people who became politicians from the media, entertainment, education, the army, academia, business—an indication for its status as center of decision making. But we can also find other kinds of shifts, including into education, according to local societal conditions (in Israel, for example, the army is a springboard towards many other domains such as politics, business, and education, as we saw when we discussed the army-society interface there).

Within this domain struggle, and in line with the systemic model, education is usually considered a low or weak domain but at the same time an important one that nurtures the others. In this sense, education is a Hegelian slave that is vital for its master. As a basic instrument, as a provider of potential members, all other domains seek influence there. This double and seemingly contradictory appreciation of education—both as a vital source and a

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55 Walzer (1983) calls this kind of invasion “intrusion from another sphere” (p. 10).
low servant—strips education of an ability to claim its own identity and its own agency, and to conduct itself.

1.5 Conclusion

The literature emphasizes economic forces as the culprit in turning education into a human resource provider. In this chapter I showed that the economy is not the only force that perceives education as an excellent store of potential members, a mine from which to extract future manpower in order to ensure the force’s legitimacy, survival, or intensification. The instrumental approach to education is an encompassing and deep-rooted phenomenon that governs the attitude of any domain in society towards education, including the state, party-politics, academia, religion, the army, and parents. The array of forces exerted on education and the intensity of each force depend on the local social and political circumstances and the power relations between the forces. But as the underlying antagonistic social dynamics and the invasion of the social realm into both the public and the private realms foster a strategy of recruiting new members, education will always be under the influence attempts of others. Therefore, in order to prevent education being molded according to external interests, it should be protected. Much of the remainder of this work is dedicated to proposing how to shield education while at the same time allowing it to be open to the world.

The instrumental approach is not only demonstrated in the efforts of external forces to influence education. It is so entrenched that is has even trickled down to those who are ‘in’ schooling and directly involved in it such that it is adopted also by parents, educators, and

56 A call to protect public education is not new. Callahan (1964) calls “to protect us from the tyranny of an all-powerful central government and to provide the opportunity for local initiative and experimentation” (Preface, third page). Walzer (1983) sees tyranny as “a particular boundary crossing, a particular violation of social meaning,” hence “[c]omplex equality requires the defense of boundaries” (p. 28), while education is one of the spheres to be protected. In chapter 4 I propose a central authority over education but one that is not be in the hands of the government.
students. They too understand what K-12 education is for. Parents and students (explicitly or implicitly) expect or demand schooling to provide the goods that will allow students to go on with their societal advancement; the raw material is now conscious of itself as standing-reserve and is aware of the machine and it demands to be processed so it will be prepare to be shipped to the next processing station. Students accept and demand their own objectification.

Under the instrumental approach both education as a whole and students as individuals are considered tools to be used. By being a subordinate sub-system that serves other social units education is deprived of agency. By being perceived and treated as tools—future members with specific identities and qualities—students’ humanity is damaged. In the next chapter I offer an alternative role for the social servant role that education is forced to take that: education as a humanistic agent. This proposed role is intended to re-center and restore students’ humanity. I explore the nature of such needed agency for education and characterize guidelines that will enable us to protect education from being distorted and exploited.
2. From Social Servant to Agent for Humanity: An Adventurous Education

In the previous chapter I identified and analyzed the problem of the instrumental approach to education. This approach dictates a specific role for education in society: being a servant in the service of others by providing graduates with specific identities and qualities. As a result, education is denied agency and students’ humanity is damaged. In this chapter I begin to propose my own alternative vision of education with guidelines that are designed to grant education its lost agency and to restore students’ humanity. These guidelines will be described in this chapter mostly in general and abstract terms. In the next chapter I discuss in more detail some of the aspects of my vision and in chapter 4 I propose more practical ideas on how to realize this vision.

I open this chapter by addressing a critique of theorizing the instrumentality of education. This critique questions the mere distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental perception of education. I address this critique here and not in the previous chapter since it is grounded on the notion of a ‘social sphere’ that points towards the possibility of autonomy for the education system, an idea that will assist us in making a case for education’s agency later in the chapter (and further develop in chapter 4). Next, I propose as an educational guideline the notion of “we are all human beings” as a means to re-center education around students’ humanity and humankind as a whole. I also examine and reject alternatives for this guideline. In section 3 I introduce the metaphor of “the human territory” in order to propose an adventurous character for education, a feature that enables and encourages educators and students to imagine alternative ways of life and to envision a world that does not currently
exist. Finally, in section 4 I clarify and stress the idea of education as an agent with its own consciousness and its own volition, as opposed to the education that is a mere instrument in the hands of others. I explain why I use a language of anthropomorphism and the importance of thinking about education in this way.

2. 1 Addressing a Critique of the Instrumental–Non-Instrumental Dichotomy

Theorizing the education system as an instrument that serves other social domains or other social systems is not surprising and is not new, mostly due to the central functional role education is given in enhancing the economy and democratic citizenship. In the previous chapter I showed not just how prevalent this instrumentalism is across areas in society and among educators, parents and students but also how this instrumentalism is decisive in shaping the way education is perceived and the underlying conceptual societal architecture that facilitates this perception. I criticized the instrumental approach on the grounds that it renders students as something to be used, a raw material to be processed into a product, and as such I submit that it damages their humanity (I expand on this point in the next section).

In light of this proposed conceptualization and critique of the instrumental approach to education, it is worth examining a challenge to the mere theoretical distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental perceptions of education. Addressing such a challenge will help us to better understand the societal infrastructure that lies beneath considering education as a tool for other domains and to strengthen our critique against a belief that it must be so. Moreover, it might offer us a lead in proposing a response to what otherwise seems a natural and unavoidable role of education in society.

In his paper *The institutional autonomy of education* Blacker (2000) seeks to balance institutional autonomy with public accountability within education. Drawing on Michael
Walzer’s notion of social spheres, he examines and rejects traditional and absolute views of both education's instrumentality and non-instrumentality, that is, he rejects both the call for “education for itself” as well as the perception of education only as an instrument. Social “spheres” are “areas of endeavor” and Blacker enumerates as examples areas such as law, politics, markets, medicine, policing, religion, journalism, and education (p. 229). The notion of “spheres” is useful as it establishes ‘identity’ for human enterprises and demarcates, at least roughly, their boundaries. Identifying ‘education’ as a social sphere is helpful in claiming for its agency and sovereignty as I do in section 2.4 and further develop in chapter 4.

Blacker reviews views that depict education either through the instrumental or the non-instrumental lens. As advocates of education's non-instrumentality he mentions Oakeshott’s conception of “liberal higher education as an 'interval' apart from its economic, political, or even moral use-value” (p. 230) and Arendt’s claim that (as Blacker understands it) “education should not be regarded as a means toward political ends, however democratic or otherwise well-intended the reigning politics might be” (p. 231). In more developmental terms Blacker characterizes non-instrumentality as a call for educators “not to view

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57 In Spheres of Justice Walzer (1983) takes a democratic communitarian approach. He does not call—against liberalism—for a unified community, but rather advocates multiple spheres of justice and by implication multiple sub-communities, each sphere relevant to the meanings of particular "social" goods. Thus, Walzer’s spheres create pluralism of moral foundations. It is important to note that by discussing Blacker’s (2000) paper and his idea of the possibility of autonomy for the education system, based on Walzer’s notion of social spheres, I do not necessarily adopt Walzer's "complex equality" moral and political theory. This is despite adoption of the notion of “sphere”, some conceptual similarities (of which I have already noted above and also note below), and some terminological similarities between Spheres of Justice and my own theory and proposals (such as using “membership” in the previous chapter and “sovereignty” in chapter 4). In fact, I reject Walzer’s understanding of education as a package of goods of which educators and students are “distributive agents and recipients”, that is, that education is similar to other goods that people “give, allocate, exchange” (p. 6). Despite seeing education as a sphere entitled to autonomy, Walzer—as I read him—still maintains instrumental elements in his perception of education such as the pursuit of identities as a citizen or as a holder of a job, elements that (at least) indirectly allow the influence of external forces. Walzer also does not provide a detailed ‘substance’ for education as I offer in the next chapter.
childhood as merely preparatory to adulthood. There is something inherently valuable in childhood and so the educators who occupy so much of that time should never think of their enterprise as exclusively justified in terms of some future state of affairs, however bountiful the promised pedagogical harvest” (ibid.). According to Blacker, common to non-instrumental perceptions of education is “a conviction that there is something to education that is not reducible to its serviceability to allegedly higher aims such as politics (even of the democratic variety), economics or cultural identity” (ibid.).

Despite these non-instrumental perceptions, Blacker claims that “instrumental conceptions of education, from their less to more subtle versions, are the order of the day” (ibid.). He reviews powers from different social spheres that regard education instrumentally, saying that “the most widespread instrumental view is also arguably the crudest: a vulgar economism that holds schools 'accountable' for the value they add to production, consumption and market exchange” (ibid.). He adds to the list of “instrumentalisers of education” (ibid.) other factors, such as powers that seek to use education towards “goals of national or cultural identity creation and preservation” (ibid.) and partisan political powers, but also non-hegemonic groups such as ethnic and religious minorities.

However, Blacker (2000) rejects the distinction between the two camps of education's instrumentality and non-instrumentality because he argues that it assumes “the false dilemma that social spheres must be *either* self-contained *or* purposive” (p. 235). In contrast he proposes a more complex understanding of the appropriate status of spheres and the relationships between them. Blacker advocates the concept of “reasonable pluralism” in which spheres have a “relative autonomy”, that is, a situation in which “spheres might have both internal and external momentum simultaneously” (ibid.) and spheres’ autonomy is
recognized and preserved except in the case of “limiting their sovereignty if they become oppressive or otherwise inimical to democratic norms” (p. 229).\textsuperscript{58} In a situation of relative autonomy spheres “may vouchsafe something of their own, retain a distinct identity… But right alongside this, they may also maintain a network of relationships with other spheres” (p. 235).

Applying this understanding of spheres to education, Blacker sees schools, as part of the sphere of education, as institutions that both maintain autonomy and have relationships with institutions in other social spheres:

While maintaining--albeit imperfectly at times--a sense of themselves as distinct from, say, banks, strip malls, hospitals, and prisons, schools are also quite useful to the spherical interests embodied in those neighbouring institutions… in a healthy spherically pluralistic democracy, this is precisely what we ought to require of our schools, namely, that they pull off this balancing act of managing their usefulness to other spheres while maintaining some sense of themselves, some consistency and integrity as educational institutions. They must serve other spheres; political, fiscal, moral, aesthetic, and other spherically instantiated human interests form a legitimate response set for a pluralised form of educational accountability. Still, however, education cannot be reduced to these loci of accountability or their sum… So, at least for large and complex spheres like education, the purposive/self-contained and, by extension, the instrumental/non-instrumental distinctions appear misleading, if not spurious altogether. (p. 236)

In order to theorize these kind of steady and fruitful relationships between spheres in a society scale (not just in relation to education), Blacker offers a model of multi-sphere equilibrium in which multiplicity of forces by different spheres in different directions cancel each other in such a away that a balance is reached, “not unlike the pushes and pulls of various natural forces that allow molecular, atomic and subatomic particles to attain that most basic of physical equilibria” (p. 238).

\textsuperscript{58} See also Walzer (1983): “In no society, of course, are social meanings entirely distinct. What happens in one distributive sphere affects what happens in the others; we can look, at most, for relative autonomy” (p. 10).
However, the ideal dynamics Blacker (2000) imagines for creating a “healthy pluralistic society” (p. 239) is too naïve: he ignores the ‘uncooperative’ nature of the external self-interested forces that aggressively push and pull education and do not care about society-wide inter-spherical stability or about granting autonomy to other spheres. Borrowing again from Bauman’s (2005) description, they “could not care less about the overall ‘balance of things’” (p. 306). In fact, their interest is to violate education’s autonomy and they do this by penetrating education’s spherical boundaries; as such, they indeed become oppressive, but there is no ‘sphere police’ to stop them. Moreover, the instrumental approach—and with it rendering education a subordinate sphere—precludes education from exerting counter force upon other spheres. Blacker (2000) stipulates that schooling, “qua the dominant institutionalisation of the educational sphere, must answer politically to those representing spherical interests such as business, politics, civil and criminal law, the family and even athletics and public health”, and that in addition to serving “universalistic ideals and principles” and “their own sense of pursuing a uniquely educational mission,” “[s]chools in pluralistic constitutional democracies must serve… the particularistic goods that are socially recognised as valid” (p. 230). Beyond this problematic demand from schools to be accountable to other spheres—a demand that seems to weakens Blacker’s own notion of spherical sovereignty—he fails to recognize that what other spheres demand from education they refuse to accept about themselves: it is difficult to see administrators in banks, strip malls, hospitals, or prisons obey what teachers, as educators, expect them to do. Thus, while Blacker visions a balanced two- or multi-way influence between education and other spheres, in reality there is an asymmetric influence that exploits and abuses education in favor of other spheres.
Despite Blacker’s (2000) naivety with regard to what it seems as spheres’ ‘brotherhood’ of give and take from each other, his understanding of the status of a sphere as a social unit is important for our discussion regarding the place of education in society and in humanity as a whole. As we saw, Blacker’s conceptualization acknowledges the ‘right’ for spherical sovereignty. He adds that “the good society is best understood as a pluralistic one, where different social 'spheres' are allowed as much free play as possible within democratic boundary constraints”, and that these spheres “are, in the best case, each autonomous enough such that they possess the norms, traditions, distributive arrangements and the like that are appropriate to them” (p. 229). In other words, we can say that spheres are entitled to self-definition. Together with accepting that indeed schools must serve “their own sense of pursuing a uniquely educational mission”, what is the guideline for this mission? The rest of this chapter focuses on this question.

2.2 We are All Human Beings

Forces in society, from different social spheres, strategically and persistently see students as potential future members in their ranks with specific and limited identities, and hence consider and treat them as tools, a perception that damages students’ humanity. At the same time, these forces see the education system, as a sphere, as a means to recruit students for their service. This perception of education as a supplying tool, or a provider, for subsequent systems in the societal line, is entrenched and becomes taken for granted even by parents and students. In schools, the instrumental approach takes the form of highlighting or addressing specific aspects of the students towards specific identities at the expense of others, according to the pressures resulting from external forces. As a consequence of this narrow engineered function, education’s role as a source for social renewal in the Deweyan sense of individual
and collective growth (see section 1.2) is distorted and taken over by these self-interested forces. Thus, education loses the ability to constitute a place where students and teachers examine and imagine significant alternatives for existing ways of life and social arrangements; instead, the focus is how to integrate or succeed in the current ones. In other words, education’s questioning, challenging, and adventurous aspects decay. Achieving a better head start pushes away the search for other ways of life.

If indeed we accept that education is under constant pressure and that these pressures distort the good things that education can be and damage education’s agency as well as students’ humanity, then we should protect education from these detrimental forces. If, within the multi-spherical space, education is forced to have imbalanced relationships with other spheres that exploit it, so advocates of education—as some of us do not hold labels of educators in the sphere—should consider how to guard education, as it cannot do it by itself; it does not possess the prestige and status sufficient to shield it against attacks.

Attempts to influence people – whether to buy something or support an ideological cause— are not limited just to the ‘open space’ of streets and media but penetrate what is supposed to be the guarded and safe space of education. If we do not protect education from

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59 The Israeli Kibbutz, mentioned in an earlier footnote, is an example of an existing (although changing and even weakening) social arrangement alternative for the current dominant capitalist way of life (a later development is the urban Kibbutz operating within cities). As an alternative to the current urban architectures that create cities covered by a street grid that enables transportation access to virtually every building, one can imagine, for example, a city composed of a cluster of pedestrian malls or ‘campuses’ which will result in much less neighborhood traffic.

60 I can be accused that my own stance here is also ideological and that I am trying to convince the reader to adopt my ideology. However, seeing my claim in this work about what education should be as an ideology is to confuse my vision about education with a comprehensive normative vision about reality or about how we should live, or, conversely, to insist that only a comprehensive ideology can offer an educational perception, such that if I do not hold positions about the current ideological or political matters I cannot have or am not entitled to positions on education. I am not arguing for a specific perception of education because I prefer a specific way to live our lives and want to recommend education that will lead to it, but because I want to propose a unique role for education in society and in humanity that leaves open the question about life outside the education sphere and the question of being human.
these attempts – even when committed by the state – schools perhaps could claim legitimacy as a safe place only in the physical sense where children are sheltered from materialized threats such as the weather and traffic. Indeed, if we seek education that is more than a babysitter and we advocate imagining alternatives, we have to demand an education that is safe also in the ideological political sense and is one that protects students from forces that reduce them according to their needs or advantages.\footnote{Similarly, Walzer (1983) characterizes unsafe schools as follows: “Schools of this sort may well have walls to keep the children in, but they have no walls to keep society and economy out. They are hollow buildings, not centers of autonomous learning” (p. 206). The political safety I argue for is different from the one Biesta (In Winter, 2011) warns against that prevents “the event of subjectivity from occurring” and by which “we become immunized for the call of the other, where we put up our fences, close our eyes and ears—and perhaps even our hearts” (p. 540). Biesta argues on this kind of safety: “To make education 100% safe, to make it 100% risk-free thus means that education becomes fundamentally un-educational” (ibid.). However, I agree with the last statement when it comes to the need for an adventurous education, exceeding the known human territory and creating new meanings as I discuss later in this chapter and in the next one. I also associate risk with the proposed educational goal of examining the meaning of being human (see section 5.7).}

Against the instrumental approach that results in damaging students’ humanity and extreme preference for the existing and present societal arrangements and present ways of life over reflecting about alternatives, I call to establish education on the basic guideline of being a human being, or, equivalently, that we—all of those who are involved in and/or benefit from education\footnote{Below I discuss and reject alternatives for the form “we are all human beings”.}—are all human beings. This guideline is required in order to (re)center students’ humanity and consequently to restore the renewal potential power of education. Education that keeps loyal to the fact that every student is a human being and not an opportunity to gain something will not be a social instrument but a human endeavor, that is, an agent for humanity that centers the human being in a significant and comprehensive manner. The shift from being a social servant or social object to an agent for humanity means a shift in education’s commitment: from education that serves outside forces and interests to education that serves students as human beings and through them humanity as a whole. If
education is not forced to commit to any specific external force or interest that seeks a specific identity, its essence, attention, and goal(s) are altered from factors that seek to use education for their own benefit to those who, according to the instrumental approach, in the future are supposed to serve these factors: the students. Considering students first and foremost as human beings means moving the focus in education from realizing specific options for them to the simple fact that they are human beings and to what I term as the ‘basic human features’—experiences, understandings, and meanings—that accompany this existence (I discuss these features in the next chapter). Thus, the motivation for education is not a partial human aspect that is specifically targeted and cultivated (or a limited collection of aspects) but a holistic consideration of being a human being. This fact of being human being, or that we are all human beings, both the simplest but also the richest fact, becomes the central educational guide.

It is important to clarify that the fundamental fact—we are all human beings—is not taken here as stating the obvious. As is shown in the previous chapter, the external forces treat students as tools, as objects to be used (recalls the terms ‘human capital’ and ‘human resource’), and therefore not as human beings. In addition, the previous chapter suggests that parents, students, and educators also adopt this perception. Therefore, the prevalence of the

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63 I do not use the adjective “fundamental” in the sense of “foundational”, at least not in the sense that Rorty (1996) understands it when he contrasts “foundations” with “idealizations”. For Rorty, foundations “are supposed to answer the question ‘Should we be engaging in our present practices at all?’,” and foundationalists “think that we not only must adjust our practices so as to render them more coherent but also must have regard to something that exists independently of those practices” (p. 333). Rorty mentions the constructs "human nature," "rationality," and "morality" as examples for objects “that can be studied without any special reference to what we are currently doing and hoping” (ibid.). However, the fundamental fact ‘we are all human beings’ is not considered in this work in the same manner that Rorty perceives these constructs, not as “kinds of human conduct we wish to encourage” (p. 334), and my pursuit after a basic guideline for education is not “a symptom of what Santayana called ‘supernaturalism,’ defined as ‘the confusion of ideals and power.’” (p. 335). As explained below, I do not imply by ‘we are all human beings’ to rely on some kind of "human nature" as a basis for my proposals.
instrumental approach to education indicates that for many it is not so obvious that we are all human beings, or at least many do not act according to this fact. The notion of being human has been worn out and distorted by the self-interested forces in such a massive manner that it is crucial to reground education on this foundation. Moreover, almost daily we encounter scientific discoveries and technological innovations that increasingly blur the lines between what is human and what is non-human, and history and the news constantly cast doubt on the moral boundaries of being human. Therefore, grounding education on being human bears not just societal and political implications but also profound epistemological and ethical ones.

Feinberg’s (2000) analysis of religious schools and of the authority of the state over education is helpful in arguing for being human as an educational foundation. Feinberg argues that parents do not hold an absolute right to determine their children’s education since there are basic societal factors that cannot be ignored:

The private choices of parents alone acting on behalf of their individual child is not sufficient to satisfy the educational conditions that renewal requires. It is important,

\[\text{64} \text{ For a recent article about the mix of atomization and morality that illustrates this blur line see http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/magazine/death-by-robot.html.}\]

\[\text{65} \text{ Hitler was a human being, not a monster as at times he is portrayed, and his ideas and actions demonstrate what human beings can do. Excluding Hitler from humanity, even as an expression of shock and repulsion, distorts reality and ignores what humanity can produce. Similarly, Arendt (1963) reports on Adolf Eichmann, a German Nazi SS officer and one of the major organisers of the Holocaust, who was tried in Jerusalem: “Despite all the efforts of the prosecution, everybody could see that this man was not a "monster," but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown” (p. 55). The same argument against seeing terrible criminals as not human being goes for any crime against humanity, including the massive murder of Native Americans by European conquerors, the Armenian Genocide, and the recent crimes by ISIS. Realizing these outrageous deviations from what we might consider ‘human’ is no less important, vital, and educational that being exposed to human achievements. This idea aligns with Todd’s (2009) emphasis on the imperfection of human beings, that is, the inhumanity of humanity. See also Cornell (2003) who claims that also terrorists such as those who committed 9/11 “are still within the reach of the ideal of humanity” (p. 174). To be clear: I do not deny that crimes against humanity (as other misdeeds) should be condemned, and I also acknowledge that within ethical discourse ‘humanity’ (or ‘humane’) designates a normative qualification that points towards what we ought to aspire as human beings. I also do not oppose defining ethical standards of which students should not violate, but these standards must be consistent with the fundamental fact of ‘we are all human beings.’ In section 6.6 I point to the need for further inquiry in order to address the difficulty of settling ethics with sovereign education.}\]
of course, that parents serve to advocate on their child’s behalf, but parents are not responsible to the larger democratic constituency. This fact alone renders the very concept of a “government monopoly” misleading because it fails to address the character of accountability. Public schools are engaged in shaping and reshaping the citizen base of the nation. They are responsible in a way that parents are not in passing on the basic outlooks, values, and skills required to function in a self-forming democratic community, and democracy requires that the agents of this reproduction ultimately be accountable to a representative citizen body. (p. 850)

Feinberg adds that one of the critical responsibilities of a democracy is “providing one’s children with the intellectual resources to see beyond the horizons set by immediate family, community, and religious circumstances and to take on the attachments and concerns of the larger national community” (p. 851). Thus, my call for establishing education on the fact that we are all human beings (and in the next chapter my argument for structuring educational content on this fact) can be seen as a modified expansion of Feinberg’s argument: from commitment to democracy and the nation to a commitment to broad humanistic features and to humanity as a whole.

The proposal to ground education on being human might make one to argue that for her being human means or necessarily entails additional character (or characters), and therefore education must address this inherent character of being human. For example, one might argue that being human also means to work (in a Marxist, neoliberal, or any other sense), and therefore education must address and promote this character in students. It is important to note in response that by proposing being human as an educational guideline I am not declaring that I am against work, or against profit, religious faith, studying in university, serving in the army, or taking any other identity. However, by the fundamental fact of being human I argue for an education that does not promote and protects from promoting specific
identities in students, especially when adopting identity damages student’s humanity. The education I propose is grounded on the mere fact of being human but at the same time insists on leaving the question of being human open.

One might question the uniqueness of the statement “we are all human beings” as a foundation for education, while there are many other available ways to characterize the beneficiaries of education that might have their own appeal. Beyond the analysis offered above with regard to the danger to students’ humanity and the need to consider humanity as a whole as the reference of education, I would like to examine two (what I consider as) reasonable alternatives to the suggested fundamental fact, alternatives that offer other predicates instead of being human: one is oriented more to the dimension of space (“we all live on Earth”) and the other is oriented more to the dimension of time (“we are all mortals”). The two alternatives can have many equivalent or closely equivalent versions, and I believe together they cover a significant ground of the thinkable space by which to characterize those who go to schools. Beyond identifying what is problematic with them, examining the two alternatives and comparing them to the proposed fundamental fact will discover more about the character of the latter as an educational guideline.

The first alternative considers our physical location: “we all live on Earth”. This statement has, of course, an ecological and environmental appeal that is appropriate to current “green” discourse, and it is difficult to see humanity establishing another home for itself. Moreover, mentioning “Earth” and implying it as humankind’s home suggests a sense

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66 As Todd (2011) argues: “we cannot tell teachers what to do because we no longer have some picture of perfection that we think students ought to fulfill” (p. 312).
67 In chapter 5 I propose a specific educational goal of examining the meaning of being human, a goal that encourages students to explore what does entail in being human.
68 This reference to the dimensions of time and space fits nicely both with philosophical frameworks (as developed, for examples, by Kant and Heidegger) and scientific theories (for example, the spacetime (or space–time continuum) or the Big Bang which is considered the birth both of the known universe and time).
of common destiny shared by all and that this planet already is prominent as a fundamental setting for religions\textsuperscript{69} and philosophies. “Earth”, of course, is also used within environmental education. Thus, settling this world incorporates and implies not just environmental aspects but also other aspects such as the historical, cultural, and political.\textsuperscript{70} This shared ‘venue’ seems to provide an appropriate backdrop for the basic endeavor of education.

The second alternative for the proposed fundamental fact focuses on our temporal character: “we are all mortal”. This statement refers to the temporal window that opens for us and is available to take our projects (or to be indifferent or nihilist with regard to our existence). It also implies our location in history and the movement of time from past to present to future. Thus, although only those who are living now are within the available temporal window and can refer (as living creatures) to the present and to their existence (as living creatures), past and future times as well as past and future beings (events and living creatures) are explicitly or implicitly considered while we—the ones who are alive now—are busy with current challenges and responsibilities. Therefore, the educational appeal of the limited temporal window is inherent in many aspects such as the ethical and the political.

However, despite the attraction of these two alternatives they are not aligned with education as a distinct human endeavor. The two alternatives (as possible equivalents) are too broad in one sense and at the same time too narrow in another sense: too broad since they fit or can also be applied to other living entities, too narrow since they focus on or emphasize a specific characteristic of human beings at the expense of other characteristics or a wholeness.

\textsuperscript{69} It is interesting that in some creation stories, creation begins with or within the world and only later outer space is crafted or shaped. For example, in \textit{Genesis}, God creates all the stars and heavenly bodies only on the fourth day.

\textsuperscript{70} The concept ‘world’ by itself has become a common metaphor—in philosophy but also in other areas of inquiry and practice—for a vicinity where a plot is taking place. Heidegger’s ‘being-in-the-world’ is perhaps one of the most popular.
From an educational point of view, the problem with this mis-overlapping or mis-covering is that by being too broad the uniqueness of education as a human endeavor is lost and by being too narrow each of the alternatives already ‘takes side’, already stipulates something about ourselves with potential political implications that might limit education at the outset. Let me explain how this mis-covering happens for each alternative.

With regard to “we all live on Earth”, grounding education around the physical worldly location of Earth opens the door for any Earth-related phenomenon—or at least for any living creature on Earth—to be equally relevant for education. However, when we talk about ‘education’ as schooling, the fact that we share this planet with other living creatures and with other species does not mean that their existence (or well being or even danger of extinction) is to be prioritized over whatever we perceive as required for being educated. On the other hand, focusing on our habitation conditions—with all their complexity and evolving nature—excludes other aspects of our life and our stay on this planet that are only loosely connected to physical circumstances; many ethical questions in the area of medicine are examples of such an aspect. In this sense, ‘basing’ education on Earth is ‘too environmental’. As for “we are all mortal“, this guideline is too broad for educational purposes on similar grounds to the spacious alternative, for any (individual) known material creature has a limited lifespan. Humans’ (temporal) finitude—by itself—is not unique, at

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71 To be sure: nothing I say here is to deny life’s (taking broadly) debt to Earth as the hosting abode and the direct source of resources, whether by itself or by its linkage to the Sun or other celestial bodies. However, my discussion here is in relation to the human endeavor of education that theoretically could have happened elsewhere and (perhaps more importantly) does not necessarily depend on Earth’s condition. Put differently, if the conditions on Earth would not allow education they probably would not allow human existence, and the whole discussion about education becomes moot.

72 An interesting idea to explore in this regard is the meaning of education in relation to possible total or partial extinction of the human race, whether completely or ‘just’ on Earth (the relevance to the first alternative guideline is obvious). In other words, what should be (if any) the place of the existence of humanity as a whole within educational considerations? After all, notions such as ‘history’ and ‘culture’ assume and depend upon a
least as long as we do not integrate within it the mere consideration of this finitude and this kind of existence. But then, when we turn to grounding education on our awareness of our transitory nature, on our ephemerality, it excludes views that are not based on this ‘specific quality’ of existence. In this sense, ‘originating’ education on mortality is ‘too existential’ or perhaps it is better to say ‘too Heideggerian’. It is interesting to note that even combining the two (what can be considered, in a sense) one-dimensional alternatives into one compound guideline, for example in the form of “our time is limited in this world”, does not escape the overly broad and narrow charting of those who are being (humanely) educated. This kind of framing—which is common by religious views—is still inadequate to capture the special feature of education as an idiosyncratic human venture.

It is important to stress that by considering education as an ongoing human project and focusing on human beings I am not implying a human supremacy in any form, whether as a type of anthropocentrism (considering the humankind as the objective of creation, that is, the world was created for the humankind (‘Crown of Creation’ or ‘Pinnacle of Creation’), or assessment of reality only through a human perspective) or speciesism (a more ethical view according to which there is a superior status for human beings over animals). If any, starting from the fact that we are human beings might lead to considering non-human points of view as well as our relationships with animals and even with inanimate beings. Another (not unrelated) important comment is that the human approach taken here does not deny (although, admittedly, also does not approve) metaphysical foundation or metaphysical origin collective continuity; so even if one grounds education on such notions (as opposed to individual, that is, private existence), what is the point for education if in the end there is no one (human) to consider the human story? While I am not embarking on this exploration, I believe the educational goal proposed in chapter 5 (‘examining the meaning of being human’) leaves room for such contemplation.

73 In chapter 5 I elaborate on this point but nonetheless demonstrate how an educational goal can be retrieved from Heidegger’s work and his notion of Dasein.
for humankind. Indeed, a religious person (from a monotheistic religion) might claim that there is no genuine, independent, or useful meaning for “we are all human beings” apart from God and as such she might demand “we are all human beings in the image of God” as the guideline. However, I reject metaphysical statements as an educational compass not because of the fact that I am a secular person but because I do not see education—as a human endeavor that focuses on human affairs—as being committed to metaphysical claims.\(^{74}\) One is allowed, of course, to teach the young in her community on the grounds of metaphysical belief, but I do not accept such an endeavor as ‘education’ (and therefore reject the founding of schools and curriculum on such metaphysical claims). In this sense the educational guideline I advocate is partial or lacking compared with what a religious person might consider as a complete guideline, but it is not an incorrect one. I believe (although I do not have evidence) that any person who respects all her fellow human beings will accept my proposed guideline as a basis for education. In fact, I claim that the vision for education I develop in this work, based on the fundamental fact of being human, an epistemological structure and hermeneutic aim (chapters 3 and 5), and the sovereign and non politicized status of education (chapter 4), is much more open to the integration of religious views in educational discourse than the current liberal one.

The above discussion shows that referring to specific features of human existence, although each of them points to a commonality and to a basic condition of the human predicament, is insufficient as an educational guideline as it does not necessarily capture a

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\(^{74}\) I am aware that a religious person might interpret this move as a trick or as a deliberate maneuver to secularize education. I will just say that if we accept education as a public endeavor that sees humanity as a whole as its horizon, the onus is on the religious person to justify why education should be subordinate to the metaphysical or to worship God; God, for our discussion here, can be considered another external force (in a similar move, in chapter 5 I reject ‘Being’ as an educational guideline or educational goal). Of course, she might advocate different educational systems as we saw in chapter 1, but then education becomes instrumental.
wholeness that is required for education as a distinct human endeavor. In contrast, the proposed guideline “we are all human beings” does not attempt to frame or to characterize human existence. Biesta (2006) expresses a similar tendency as he argues that we need “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” (p. 4-5). However, Biesta, drawing on Arendt, frames his openness to being human within an individualistic approach and being a unique subject. Although within an acknowledgement for intersubjectivity, he defines the goal and the responsibility of education in terms of “coming into presence of the subject as a singular being, as some one” (p. 47) and “coming into presence of unique, singular beings” (p. 148). I am not denying the potential for uniqueness of the individual human being, of course, but I am also not overly committed to it. Admittedly, every human being and every student is a unique story that has never been told and will never happen again, but we should be careful not to see education as a guarantee for uniqueness (philosophically or practically). Like other possible characteristics of being human, I claim that we should leave uniqueness open for discussion within the scope of meanings we create (see next chapter). Unlike Biesta, my starting point is not becoming a unique and singular being but what we share by the mere fact of being human. My proposal for the fundamental fact “we are all human beings” as an educational guideline points to the common ‘identity’ (not specific characteristic) of the beneficiaries of education by ‘lumping’ them together, that is, pointing to their belonging to the same group which education serves. Here we realize one sense by which this grouping is

75 Over commitment to student’s uniqueness, even if it stems from good intentions, might slip into irresponsible neoliberal maxims such as “you can be whatever you want,” “everyone can succeed,” and “everyone has a special thing, you just need to find it and you will make it.”
key in protecting students from the instrumental approach: instead of considering students as potential future members of a distinct external force, education that is based on being human considers students as members of the humankind community.\textsuperscript{76}

In emphasizing students’ belonging to the same group there is a suggestion of unconditioned inclusiveness and acceptance: one does not need to ‘sign in’ in any form that proves loyalty (such as buying a product or enrolling in university) in order to join. However, this ‘lumping’ of students (and all human beings) together should not be taken as dismissing diversity. Indeed, putting all human beings in the same ‘basket’ runs the risk of superficial blindness (or ethical “view from nowhere”) to their differences. Let us examine as a paradigm example the case of color blindness. This sociological phenomenon, which Bonilla-Silva (2006) identified as “a new racial ideology” (p. 2), is referred to as meta-ignorance ideology and can be generally understood as insensitive denial of the presence or influence of race (Medina, 2013). It can take a mechanical or functional form of disregard of racial characteristics or racial data (for example, in processing admissions for higher education institutions) or personal forms such as in the claim “When I look at you, I do not see color” (Medina, 2013, p. 40). Thus, color blindness is not an unbiased neutrality regarding race. Mills (2007) explains one important aspect of color blindness that is relevant for our discussion, that of ‘racelessness’:

If previously whites were color demarcated as biologically and/or culturally unequal and superior, now through a strategic “color blindness” they are assimilated as putative equals to the status and situation of nonwhites on terms that negate the need

\textsuperscript{76} Thus, education as a sphere intends—at least in terms of meanings—to exceed the boundaries of the political community within which it is hosted. This perception of education is different from Walzer’s (1983) who sets his analysis within the local political community. He acknowledges, though, that the entirety of humankind is an alternative to the national setting, although in practice a global community does not exist: “The only plausible alternative to the political community is humanity itself, the society of nations, the entire globe. But were we to take the globe as our setting, we would have to imagine what does not yet exist: a community that included all men and women everywhere” (p. 29).
for measures to repair the inequities of the past. So white normativity manifests itself in a white refusal to recognize the long history of structural discrimination that has left whites with the differential resources they have today, and all of its consequent advantages in negotiating opportunity structures. If originally whiteness was race, then now it is racelessness, an equal status and a common history in which all have shared, with white privilege being conceptually erased. (p. 28)

Thus, color blindness plays an important role in the maintenance of white hegemony. Bailey’s (2007) analysis of the ignorance inherent in color blindness is helpful in clarifying how racelessness can become a fabricated and dangerous amalgamation of human beings. As Bailey refers exactly to the statement I take as an educational guideline, it is worth bringing forth her argument at length:

A central feature of white ignorance is the ability to ignore people without white privilege. White ignorance is a form of not knowing (seeing wrongly), resulting from the habit of erasing, dismissing, distorting, and forgetting about the lives, cultures, and histories of peoples whites have colonized. Consider the all-too-common, color-blind responses to racism, such as: “We all bleed the same color,” or “We’re all human.” The logic goes something like this: People who are prejudiced see color and make unfair judgments based on color. To be absolutely certain that we are not making unfair judgements based on color, we should ignore accidental properties, such as color, and just see people. Color blindness is essentially a form of ignoring that equates seeing, naming, and engaging difference with prejudice and bigotry, and not seeing, naming, noticing, and engaging difference with fairness. Purity is at work here. To be color blind you must learn to split and separate race from humanity. Color blindness relies on the cognitive habit of training the multiple (racial diversity) into a fictitious unity (we are all human). (p. 85)

In response to these serious charges, it is important to make it clear that by “we are all human beings” I do not mean to advocate racelessness and I do not deny unjust differences between human beings that are caused by racism. In other words, I do not imply that “we are all the same”, either with regard to history or with regard to who we are. Rather, I seek to emphasize and strengthen a common dominator of humanness that has been deteriorating and weakened by the violent operation of particular forces in society and their instrumental approach to education. Nevertheless, I am aware that without careful attention educators might use the proposed educational guideline within a color blindness ideology (or any other
sociological blindness such as gender blindness) or might interpret it as encouraging color blindness. But this possible misconception of the proposed educational guideline should not prevent us from adopting it but rather should encourage us to make sure that it will not transform into “fictitious unity”. Indeed, it is a major task for educators to guard against this kind of pretense of harmony, but facing this challenge is exactly what is required in order to address and capitalize on both diversity and genuine unity. The danger of “fictitious unity” should not discourage us from seriously considering what unites us.

Not unrelatedly, I would also wish to clarify that by proposing to found education on “we are all human beings” I do not mean to take “humanity” as an unreachable abstract or to romanticize, glorify, or mythicize it; nor do I imply any hopes for unity and homogeneity of humankind. Such concerns are raised by Sharon Todd (2009) in her book Toward an Imperfect Education where she examines the tension between the universal and the particular with regard to human rights. By considering everyone who participates in education as human beings I do not mean to promote cosmopolitanism or world citizenship, or to step over cultural particulars and local contexts, and also do not mean to blur the universalist/pluralist tension; I certainly do not mean “to hide behind appeals to cosmopolitan harmony or a shared humanity” (p. 5) as one might suspect. Rather, I argue for acknowledging that we are all involved in such a tension and through inviting and allowing every teacher and every student to share her unique experience of being human from her own point of view as well as to be nurtured by the experiences of others.

Todd (2009) calls to shift from an education that ‘cultivates’ an ideal of humanity “to a position in which education concerns itself with the more concrete—and difficult—work of ‘facing’ humanity” (p. 9), to see “humanity as an educational problem” (p. 16). In responding
to a review of her book, Todd (2011) also notes that “it is by reintroducing thinking (not learning) into education that I seek to re-engage with the specificity of human interaction” (p. 312). In the next chapter I take up this crucial aspect of facing humanity and ‘thinking’—instead of mere learning—by offering the consideration within education, alongside the curriculum, of basic human features that start with teachers’ and students’ particulars and then lead to insights in the form of meanings. I believe such a proposal is loyal to Todd’s (2009) “plea for developing a perspective of specificity in which humanity reveals itself as a sometimes very difficult aspect of our work as teachers in our encounters with students.” (p. 19)

2.3 Exceeding the Human Territory

The external forces that attempt to influence education involve, of course, human beings (among other beings), but the forces themselves are or reflect spheres, systems, entities, or constructs that as such are non-human beings (such as the state, economy, religion, academia, and the army). Thus, a significant implication for perceiving education as a human endeavor is that instead of these forces, the prime actor and the truly active ingredient in education will be the human being: as individual, as a whole (humankind), and as an idea (being human, humanness, but without idolizing or mythicizing this idea as I clarify above following Todd (2009)). In other words, teachers and students, instead of passively serving non-educative forces, will become a self-motivated, active, and creative power, a power that relies on its own existence. Another important implication is that by being a human endeavor education

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77 Todd’s (2009) work can be seen as an example of the examination I propose in section 5.7 as an educational goal, that is, examining the meaning of being human. In chapter 5 I claim that this kind of examination needs to take place inside education, inside the class as an educational act, not just within philosophical circles and not just by philosophers who would then convey their conclusions to educators.
becomes open to everything, or to the total human phenomenon available to students and teachers, and hence human experience in its entirety constitutes education’s conceptual source. It is not just realms associated with external forces that are legitimate sources for educative consideration and educative thought, but any human phenomenon is welcome to take part in thinking about education. An immediate result from these implications is that any student’s and teacher’s experience is relevant for educational consideration; whatever students and teachers undergo in their lives is a basic source for education. Considering this result from the opposite side of the human scale, the meaning is that the total human phenomena, the total human experience, is the educational playground. The human territory as a whole is a reference for education.

Education, when it is truly a human endeavor, explores and tests the known human boundaries, the limits of everything that human beings are occupied with. But these boundaries themselves, which delimit the human territory, are not fixed; the human territory changes in time and place. This territory, covered by human experiences, understandings, and meanings, changes its area and shape throughout history and is also sensitive to societal factors: scientific discoveries, political revolutions, wars, philosophical ideas, and natural disasters, among other events, all have the potential to change the span and form of the human territory. As education takes this territory as some kind of reference to begin its adventure (although is not entirely committed to it), it is transformed together with the topography and contours of the human territory; it stretches and shrinks according to the human picture we hold, a picture that its existence or its details are at times revealed and articulated informally or indirectly through norms and conventions.
However, while education always tries to cover as much area as possible so as to overlap with this human territory, and while it always lags behind and is unable to be on par with the total human experience (after all, education is only one human endeavor), education—as I envision it—should simultaneously challenge the accepted borders and to try to exceed them in certain ways and directions. Therefore, assuming or accepting a specific human territory—that is, specific experiences, understandings, and meanings—as fixed or “true” will degrade education and eventually transform it to something else: a doctrine, or training in a broad sense of preparing for a specific something that follows. For, if the current human picture is perceived and exhibited to students as a given portrait that is here to stay, indeed there is no point in education other than studying this fixed picture in detail, memorizing it, and making an effort to penetrate it and be integrated and assimilated within it. This is another aspect of subordination to external forces when education is dictated and is not worth its name. Taking orthodox religious education as an example, such an education that revolves around a divine entity and sees its goal as committing students to it, follows a certain worldview and prepares students for a specific picture of the world and the human beings in it (and thus, for a specific lifestyle). But following devotedly the secular capitalist world is not much different—if not worse—as it is constantly deceiving: preparing for achieving a job—through sanctifying individual achievements based on acquisition and mastering—narrow human experience and meaning to a specific kind of success that ignores and does not leave time for (in a bad case) or degrades (in the worst) other kinds of achievements and

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78 This character might seem somewhat vague. It will became clearer in the next chapter when I will discuss in details meaning making as a means to exceed the human territory.
other kinds of experiences and meanings that are not based on achievements at all.\(^79\) In other words, there is more to human life than to succeed or fail.\(^80\)

Encouraging the examination of the human territory’s boundaries and even exceeding them is not a new idea for education as a thought-provoking endeavor. This disrupting character is exactly what bothers the forces that attempt to maintain their power and hence wish to mitigate the unruly conduct of education. As Masschelein and Simons (2012) argue with regard to the social ‘corruption’ within education: “[T]he school facilitates subtle mechanisms that reproduce social inequality… We do not deny this corruption, but we argue that the ever-present attempts at co-option and corruption occur precisely to *tame* the distinct and radical potential that is unique to the scholastic itself” (p. 16, emphasis in original). This radical potential, that is in essence restrained, should be set free so as to allow students to embark on adventures by imagining alternatives to the world they live in.\(^81\)

I am describing considering alternatives by the term ‘imagination’ and not by ‘creativity’, and it is no coincidence. For, creativity is used in our complex world within a discourse of managing the world and notions such as problem solving, technological efficiency, social efficiency, and success in arranging things differently. However, within an adventurous

\(^79\) Transmitting a fixed picture that is presented as and becomes sacred can be also seen with regard to the specific content of the natural sciences and technology. After all, the status given in some classes to laws of nature, mathematics, logic, and technological procedures posits them as beyond human lives, much like a god. As a result, students understand that assimilating into the professional world in these realms requires submission to the current scientific or technological infrastructures.

\(^80\) Current education virtually barely refers to failure outside the educational context, that is, beyond referring to students’ achievements in school in relation to expected results. The fact that life outside school (physically) and life after school (post-graduation) is full of failures, and as such failure is part of the human territory and a repeated experience, is almost totally overlooked. Failures, as other uncomfortable experiences, are an important source for meanings that should not be ignored (I discuss meanings in the next section).

\(^81\) In Heideggerian terms we might say that if Being presents itself or is revealed as a series of ontotheologies that stipulate how we perceive everything, including education, so a radical and adventurous education will step out of or escape from this history of ontotheologies, that is, the current ontotheology characterized by Nietzsche, and will take upon itself to examine and challenge the ontotheology according to which we perceive and live. Indeed, in that sense education will take a task that is currently done by (but not solely) by philosophy, but as I stress below this does not mean to turn education to philosophy.
educational context what is required most (beside courage) is the imagination to envision a world that does not exist, an ability to create in one’s mind a new world. Creativity, at least the one that just improves the setting of current arrangements, is not enough as it lacks the aspect of disconnecting from the conditions we are attached to. This detaching is required in order to leap beyond the existing world to another one. This is the same leap we are able to make when engaging with stories told in children books, movies (not just science fiction), and the theatre, stories that require our imagination in order to be somewhere else.

The discussion thus far leads to an education that is based on human experience in the broadest sense. How should education address experience and what it should do with it? In the next chapter I offer an epistemological structure of what I call “human features”—experiences, understandings, and meanings—to guide an adventurous education that begins with students’ and teachers’ experiences. In addition, in order to strategically and systemically enrich students’ and teachers’ experiences, it will be useful for education to look around it and search for available existing maps that describe the human territory, at least for maps that draw the contours of this territory. Where will education find these maps? I will argue in section 4 that these maps are everywhere, including the important area of philosophy and other academic and non-academic fields. Philosophy is important for education since historically it has dedicated itself to the drawing of fundamental human maps (or maps about the human).  

To be sure, this is not the only appropriate discipline, it has its own disadvantages and limitations, and it would be a terrible mistake to recruit only philosophy for assistance here. However, while, in a sense, philosophy always wishes to educate in one way or another, education as practice (schooling) usually avoids philosophizing, that is, it

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82 In section 5.1 I define ‘philosophy’ as a rigorous inquiry of the fundamental.
usually avoids *saying something fundamental*. This avoidance is, of course, not surprising; after all, under the instrumental approach education is not just unexpected to express ideas, but it is not allowed to do so. Education is prohibited from thinking, as it is just expected to do what it is told. Saying something fundamental, producing insights, forming meanings, are a dangerous threat for the external forces that use education for their own interests. Any creative authority, and thus any independence and freedom to initiate, is considered a deviation from the role assigned to education, educationalists, and students. I see this situation, in which saying something fundamental by education is considered a deviation, as a great deficiency of education, one that leads to narrowing of education and eventually results in the degeneration of the creative forces within education. Again, education should not be reduced to philosophizing (in a narrow or a broad sense of ‘philosophy’), but philosophy must be a sphere towards which education looks in its search for educative sources in order to probe the human territory, examine how to be aligned with it and, then, how to go beyond it.

2.4 Education as an Agent for Humanity

I call for an education that is a human agent, and I have already addressed ‘education’ as if it is – or should be – an agent, that is, with agency, consciousness, and its own volition. It is important to clarify that this personification or anthropomorphism of education is deliberate and it is more than a metaphorical style.

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83 Education today does not discourage students from creating, but this creation is mostly in the form of developing or building: within technology and engineering studies, students are praised for and encouraged to initiate, invent, and construct ideas and devices that ultimately serve the non-educative forces or optimize social systems (usually perceived or presented as solutions for problems. See my critique against the systemic model in section 1.4 and against education as problem-solving in chapter 5). We rarely hear about students who come up with new ways to see things, let alone to see the way they live.

84 In chapter 5 I expand on the relationships between education and philosophy and discuss how education should retrieve ideas originating from philosophy.
I realize that ‘education’ is not a person, and that education, as a human construct, does not have wishes or intentions. People do. However, we regularly tend to personalize other human constructs and many times do not find that problematic. Specifically, the other social spheres that embody or represent the forces that use education for their needs are usually allowed to hold agency: the state ‘protects’ its citizens, the economy ‘is in depression’, the church ‘refuses to acknowledge’ same-sex marriage, universities ‘look for’ extra resources, the army ‘is trained and ready’ for war, the Democratic/Republic party ‘betrays’ or ‘is loyal’ to its voters, democracy wants to defend itself (Cohen-Almagor, 1994; Weinblum, 2015), and, yes, the government ‘wants’ to raise taxes or to cut budgets. However, when it comes to education, it seems strange to consider this sphere as entitled to its own agency, even in metaphorical terms.\(^85\) I find this special treatment of education as a very telling double standard that testifies back to the instrumental approach and how deeply rooted it is: as education is perceived as a means for other social units it is not supposed to have its own consciousness. Much like slave, it just needs to do what others tell it.

It is important to note that I use anthropomorphism as more than just a writing style. By attributing consciousness to education, especially will, I intend to stress that this social sphere should be given more freedom to establish what it is, to set its goal, and to manage itself. This freedom includes its relationships with other social spheres and other bodies of knowledge. Integrating Todd’s (2009) ideas with Walzer’s (1983), we can think of schooling as one particular sphere (or culture) within which a “\textit{perspective of negotiation and translation in appeals to universality}” (Todd, 2009, p. 86) is promoted through relationships

\[^{85}\text{When we do find personification of education in the popular discourse it is usually in a negative or instrumental sense. For example: “the failure of education,” “education needs to be more rigorous,” “in the past education served us better”.}\]
with other spheres. At the end of the day, of course, there are teachers, administrators, and educators in general that ‘run’ the education system, but they do not and will not be able to do what they find right if education as a whole – and students with it – is perceived instrumentally. I discuss in more detail my ideas for a more sovereign education in chapter 4, but before that in the next chapter I lay the groundwork for the content structure I perceive necessary for an adventurous education that is rooted in being a human being.

2.5 Conclusion

Education is one social sphere among others, and it is entitled to its own agency and sovereignty. Any theory of the place of education in the multi-spherical space should take into consideration the destabilizing actions of neighboring spheres and the asymmetric relationships between education and these spheres that are served by education but do not serve it in return.

As a result of the encompassing instrumental perception students’ hermeneutic horizon—the area of the human territory they cover, or, in terms of the next chapter, the scope of the meanings they create—becomes limited and both students’ and humanity’s conceptual enrichment is threatened. In order to protect students and enable a better chance for devising alternative ways of life, I propose in this chapter that education should be an adventurous agent for humanity grounded on the fundamental fact of being human.

In contrast to instrumental education that serves only those forces that compel it to provide them what they want, as an agent for humanity education works for students and for humankind as a whole. But education does not serve whatever students want; if this were the case, external forces could use students as their proxy in their pursuit after exploiting education by instilling their own interests in students (as actually happens today). By serving
students education serves their humanity, that is, if it is committed to and follows the fundamental fact that they are human beings. Students benefit from education that protects and nurtures their humanity because such an education keeps the question of being human open for them. In turn, this openness enables the adventurous characteristic of education, which means the freedom to explore the mere fact that they are human: the freedom to explore every domain within the human territory and the freedom to exceed the human territory in any direction.

But education as an agent for humanity does not just serve human beings. By protecting and nurturing students’ humanity it also serves the idea of humanness, that is, being human. By serving this idea, however, education does not express any position regarding it; education does not commit to any specific quality that makes us human or to the existence of such quality. Thus, serving students’ humanity (each and every student), serving human beings as a whole (mankind), and serving humanness (the idea) are inextricably linked.

The guideline of being human serves as a compass for education but it does not provide a substantial framework for educational content. In the next chapter I propose a complementary epistemological structure that refers to the human territory and intends to expand it.
3. Basic Human Features: Towards Meaning Making as Educational Goal

I believe that vision for education needs to include not just a guideline that serves as a general orientation apparatus but also substance, that is, material that fills the educational activity. To be clear from the outset: I do not offer to replace the traditional disciplinary curriculum that is based on subject matters but I seek to add to it a layer that will better connect it with the guidelines and characteristics discussed in the previous chapter, namely, education as an adventurous agent for humanity that is founded on being human. The proposed substance is offered also because education with its own agency is not enough. In fact, granting education freedom—or sovereignty, as I argue in chapter 4—without establishing a supporting content that develops and enhances the human-based guidelines and characteristics, might result in undesired outcomes and intensifying rather blocking or reducing instrumentalism. As Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1990) argue, it might be that education’s relative autonomy “enables it to serve external demands under the guise of independence and neutrality, i.e. to conceal the social functions it performs and so to perform them more effectively” (p. 178). Wesselingh (1997) explains the problem with relative autonomy, as Walzer (1983) suggests, from a sociological point of view:

not only the economic situation and the production process are important, but also the culture of society and the transmission of culture via education in a rather subtle and indirect way… In sociological theory of reproduction, school autonomy has a remarkable role to play and should not be regarded as a counterpart to the reproduction function… when compared with other social spheres, schools quite paradoxically are in a better position to perform their reproduction function when appealing to their internal functions and logic and their relative autonomy. Its relative autonomy enables the education system to operate according to its own internal principles of knowledge transfer, selection and evaluation, and thus legitimately to serve selective and reproductive functions” (Wesselingh, 1997, p. 189)

Therefore, “the increasing relative autonomy of the sphere of education is not very likely to provide a counterpart to reproduction but forms a necessary element of it” (ibid). Thus, the
substance proposed in this chapter aims at addressing the concern of disguised independence in the service of external demands by providing human-oriented internal principles.

As additional substance for education that is human-centered—and as such treats students as human beings instead of instruments—I propose an epistemological structure that is composed of basic human features through which teachers and students work together and eventually say something. I suggest three basic human features or three circles of involvement with regard to being human: experiences, understandings, and meanings. Using these features is aimed at referring to the fact of being human. What I mean by these terms is not far from the common meanings they carry in regular use. However, it is worth spending some time in clarifying them and their relationships before moving on and using them later in this work. In the first three sections of this chapter the essence of these basic human features is described, mostly technically, and I propose to establish awareness and sensitivity to meanings as an educational goal. Afterwards I compare my view to two others: in section 4 I compare my epistemological structure to Dewey’s, as we both base our framework on experiences; and in section 5 I focus on meaning making and compare my view to Mackler’s (2009) proposal for hermeneutic education. These comparisons will better clarify the notions of experiences, understandings, and meanings, and will also explicate how the guidelines introduced in the previous chapter and the substance introduced in this chapter are not separated but are intertwined with one another.

3.1 Experiences

When education is not committed to external forces, its ultimate ‘product’ is not students with specific designated characteristics (such as content, skills, and values) that are delivered from teachers to students or conferred (if not embedded) by teachers on students. There is no
objectified material that represents a fixed truth or human picture to be passed on to students. The current human territory is indeed used as a reference, but its boundaries are constantly examined and at times are exceeded. The origin or source for examining the human territory—and ultimately to go beyond it—is not a ready-made content; rather, the starting point is what teachers and students bring by themselves into the class. This origin is called ‘experiences’. The meaning of experiences is what students and teachers undergo in their lives inside and outside schools.

One might think that the proposed education, as it is not aimed at transferring content from teachers to students but relied upon experiences, is lacking a curriculum, that is, that nothing is taught and hence nothing is learnt. This is a mistake; curriculum does exist, and teachers do teach subject matter. However, the content in the curriculum is not the end of education but just another means that serves as a source for creating experiences. In other words, the curriculum is not delivered but experienced. As such, it is not objectified and there is the opportunity that each student will experience the learnt differently. As a matter of fact, instead of decreasing variance in perceiving the material, education will encourage differences in encountering it. The curriculum becomes something unique for each student and as such constitutes a source for different understandings and different meanings. It is the responsibility of the teacher to teach in a way that the content will be experienced, will be alive.

But the curriculum is only one source for undergoing experiences. Another source is students’ own lives, which might or might not associate with the curriculum. Here is where students are allowed and encouraged to bring into lessons what happen to them and what they do at school, at home, at the playground, in the movies, during family vacations, and
every other place. As implied, students are not taken as passive spectators but rather as active players in the drama of life, and they are invited to bring and to share with peers and teachers what they saw, heard, smell, felt (as a touch or emotion), thought, did, and said in different circumstances. Students can also share their motivation for doing what they did. They can also share inactivity for not doing and the reasons for that too. There is no limitation in including relevant occurrences; as education is open for any disciplinary source, so any experience that students had undergone, whether in the near past or much earlier in their life, is relevant.

Including students’ experiences as a legitimate source bestows on them authority over that specific channel of experiences. Therefore, and as students’ own experiences in their lives are very different from each other, it is probable that for some students this source will be much more significant for gaining understanding and forming meanings. For, as student’s experiences are only hers and she manages when and how to share them, she has control of in what way—if any—letting others have access to her own experiences. Thus, students’ experiences become an important and valuable source for generating personal voices. Other students, but especially teachers, should be aware of the significance and importance students give to their own experiences.

As students’ experiences are a unique source, so is what teachers undergo in their lives. Unlike teachers’ lack of control regarding sharing students’ experiences, teachers do have authority over their own experiences, and they need to be very considerate and very cautious about what and how they share in class. On the one hand, teachers’ experiences are very important because they may bring into class experiences that are essentially very different from those of their students; for example, for some at least, experiences of parenting or their
own conduct against formal authorities. These experiences that bring the adult world into class hold great potential to enrich the students’ arsenal of examined experiences. On the other hand, teachers’ experiences might not be appropriate to be shared with students, or it might be too overwhelming. Hence, sharing teachers’ lives and experiences must be well thought out in terms of whether, what, how, and when to share, and with which students.

Experiences are the entirety of the occurrences that people live through and are not limited to physical sensory experiences of events. Thus, experiences can be dreams. Moreover, mystical experiences are not excluded either, for example, the kind that are characterized by Stace (1985) as having no thoughts at all and that “transcends our sensory-intellectual consciousness” (p. 79). Also, religion-associated experiences and those during meditation are legitimate for educative consideration.

A final source for experiences is the world outside education itself that is not represented or reflected in the curriculum. As such, the overlooked parts and aspects of the world are exposed to students mostly thanks to teachers’ initiative to embed external resources. One important resource is the media, in the most general sense of public information sharing. The Internet is, of course, an important and accessible option in this regard with many available online news websites, as well as print media such as newspapers. Another kind of resource that might significantly contribute to opening a window for the world is documentary film. Of course, many documentaries are to be found online, but many more are available only offline. The important thing to remember here is that the experience is not the specific textual item (e.g. online article or a movie) but what the students and the teachers undergo while encountering the artifact during reading or watching.
It is important to be careful not to treat experiences as texts, that is, as an object to be encountered or examined which could potentially be stripped from its author or its context. In this case texts might undergo a Barthesian “death of the author” and thus their destiny rest totally in the hands of the readers. Therefore, students’ and teachers’ experiences should not be converted and considered as mere stories. If they do, they become yet another curricular item. Instead, an experience must be kept alive and must be kept associated with its origin, the specific person who has experienced it and preserves its context. Otherwise, the experience loses its ‘owner’ who has charged it with liveliness. That does not mean, however, that experiences should not be scripted and converted to physical texts (recorded in visual, audio, or writing). But, in engaging with the experience that has been written into text, the person who has lived it should take part in order to provide her original take on it. As long as what was undergone is still considered an experience being told and not an understanding (see the next section), the person who lived the experience is still in command of adding, removing, or modifying, yet still owning the experience.

Experiences are to be used and told in the most rudimentary way, that is, without adding judgments, interpretations, or analyses. This is in order to allow the original owner as well as others ‘clean’ access to them so that each person could generate her own unbiased understanding, or unbiased understanding as much as possible.\textsuperscript{86} In this sense, we can say, perhaps by stretching the term, that referring to and sharing the experiences is methodologically \textit{phenomenological}. This is not necessarily the pre-theoretical, pre-reflective examination that is employed in philosophical phenomenological investigation in which a phenomenon is examined ‘as is’ while bracketing subject/object divide and from a

\textsuperscript{86} Of course, what students and teachers share is already filtered as each person chooses what to tell (and thus what to not to tell) and how to tell, but ideally there would be no judgmental additions.
mind/world unified perspective. However, there is still an effort to keep it a *descriptive* enterprise so that future possible understandings and meanings will not be erased from the start. In this sense, the descriptive enterprise in education attempts to be a Husserlian one (‘Back to the things themselves!’), that is, it adopts a methodological approach as explained by Thomson (2004): “phenomenologists since Husserl have sought to describe experience without pre-filtering it through metaphysical lenses. Indeed, Husserl’s characterization of phenomenology as a *descriptive* enterprise refers precisely to this attempt to explicate our most basic experience without recourse to artificial theoretical lenses” (p. 384). It should be noted that in the educational context as is used here, this approach is considered *methodological but not positional*, that is, it does not take a philosophical (or any socio-political or other) stand regarding things in the world, the world, or human beings as spectators or participants. In other words, taking this approach does not mean a complete or inherent capacity of neutrality, or some kind of omniscient view, or an experience that is out of just any context, but an honest attempt to ‘tell the story’ as is was experienced. Anything that the student or the teacher has undergone while experiencing is relevant, and any way of conveying it is legitimate. One can think of Heidegger’s (2002) descriptions of the Greek Temple, Meyer's poem, and van Gogh's paintings in *The Origin of the Work of Art* as paradigmatic examples for such honest attempts. Such descriptions are not ‘subjective’ but also are not ‘objective’, they try to convey or express experience but without a commitment to a specific way of seeing things. This is why this descriptive enterprise is also not scientific as science is already entrenched within specific conceptual and communal conventions. And indeed, Heidegger’s descriptions—as with much of his philosophy—are on the border
between prose and poetry. And education should allow students and teachers to explore new ways of articulating their experiences to themselves and sharing them with others.

3.2 Understandings

An understanding is what one makes of an experience as a result of directly reflecting on it, that is, how one sees things. As such, an understanding is an insight that includes the person who makes it (the student or teacher, in this context). In other words, when one forms an understanding about what happened she embeds herself in the understanding, in one way or another; the understanding reflects one’s view on what has happened. Here is where judgments, evaluations, and assessments are integrated into the epistemological structure. As such, an understanding is not an explanation, at least not in the mechanistic cause-effect sense, but more of a label that is given to an experience or a category to which an experience is attributed. Although an understanding includes one’s perception, the content of an understanding is not necessarily about that person. In other words, the owner of an experience might form an understanding that is not about undergoing the experience but has to do with a component within that experience. For example, while watching a soccer game a spectator might create an understanding about how much the game is boring or exciting (which means boring or exciting for her), or an understanding about the quality of the grass on the field or pitch.

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87 In *The Origin of the Work of Art* (2002) Heidegger writes that science “is not an original happening of truth but always the cultivation of a domain of truth that has already been opened” (p. 37). Using Kuhn’s (1970) notion we can say that scientists usually work within closed paradigms and by that walk on an already paved road. A paradigm shift, to continue with Kuhn’s perspective, when scientists breach beyond the conventions and pave new ways of thinking, can be said to correspond with Heidegger’s notion of science that goes beyond affirmation of theory: “If, and to the extent that, a science transcends correctness and arrives at a truth - i.e., an essential disclosure of beings as such - it is philosophy” (ibid).
It is important to stress that an understanding is not a meaning (explained in details below) in a local scale and therefore its distinct conceptualization is not superfluous. In other words, understanding is not a minor meaning, since first, it is still closely attached to a specific context in which an experience took place and, second, it still involves the person creating the understanding. We will see below that unlike understanding, meaning moves away from the specific experience as the origin of the meaning and detaches the person from itself.

While it might be argued that every experience leads to an understanding, in most cases the process stops here; meanings are rarer than understandings. Usually we do not even attempt to create meanings, or when they do emerge we usually do not invest in reflecting on them. This is exactly where education should intervene and push students to venture beyond understandings.

3.3 Meanings

As I use it, meaning making, or gaining meanings from experiences and understandings, is not a scientific endeavor in which meanings are “out there”, waiting to be found. Meanings, as part of human features and as an ultimate goal for education, are not theories that predict results or explain particular phenomena; they are not truths nor are they facts. The meanings gained are also not perceived as models approaching truth by being more and more refined and exact. They do not attempt to express some kind of mechanistic cause-and-effect regularity with regard to how things are or how things operate. Rather, meanings are overarching interpretations or insights of experiences that humans undergo. By ‘interpretation’ I mean making sense or synthesizing what one experiences and understands (or a series of experiences and understandings) from which a picture of being human being
emerges, beyond the specific experience one has undergone. The interpretation is not a ‘reading’ of an already created message, as if the world (or life, or God) has something to say to us (or to imply), but an independent and original (at least in the private sense) creation of the author of the meaning. As such, forming a meaning is a hermeneutic act, and setting it as an educational goal is in a sharp contrast to the predominant delivering characteristic of current education as manifested in the instrumental approach. Similar to understandings, the content of meanings can be anything, but as education is a human endeavor, students should be mostly encouraged and directed to form meanings that have relevance for their own lives.

As the kind of meaning I designate as educational goal is based on experiences, it is essentially different from uncontextualized or decontextualized semantic meaning, that is, meaning of signs that are given outside of context; it is not what a specific sign means for a student but what was actually experienced in her life. For example, there is a difference between asking a student to explain what does the word “disappointment” mean for her and asking her to reflect on cases where she was disappointed and from this reflection to say something about being human. Of course, a sign can trigger an experience, as a word might evoke memories or feelings, but in that case one ‘lives’ the sign within a context and this experience in turn might yield a meaning.

Meanings are built upon experiences and understandings, but they are essentially distinct from them because as deep or profound hermeneutic insights that exceed personal orientation

Appealing to meanings is based on rejecting a nihilist view according to which reality, humanity included, lacks meanings. Denying meanings might stem from a specific philosophical stand. For example, Thomson (2004) explains that meaninglessness is associated with the subject-object divide, according to which “intrinsically-meaningless objective realm (‘nature’) is separated epistemically from – and so needs to be mastered through the activities of – isolated, self-certain subjects” (p. 382). But an educator that perceives her students as human beings and is free to take a non-instrumental approach to education will find meanings necessary even without dwelling into ontological arguments.
or the human-wide territory, meanings surpass the local context of experiences and understandings and involve different kinds of qualities. Let us examine three examples in order to clarify the distinction between understandings and meanings. A first example is a student getting a result of an exam she took few days ago. She might create an understanding of the result as a success, or a failure, or perhaps neither if she is indifferent to the result. In the case she sees the result as a success or a failure (or after a series of exams) she might extract a meaning that in human life there are successes and failures, or that one cannot always succeed in one’s projects, or that if one makes an effort one will eventually succeed. A second example is a student hesitates asking another student to go out, and eventually does it and is responded to affirmatively. The requesting student might create an understanding of the case as an invitation that was done easily or as a mission that was difficult to be completed, or an elevated view of herself (‘of course he agreed to go out with me, I am so smart and funny!’) or perhaps as questioning (‘Oh my god! He agreed to go out with me! Is it because he wants me to help him with math?’). A meaning that the student might come with is that the good things in life come only to those willing to take a chance or that people only care about themselves and will do everything in order to get what they want. A third example is a student’s beloved dog is dead. The student might create an understanding that it was the dog’s time or perhaps that the dog’s passing is not fair. A meaning might be that nothing is forever or that there is no reason to develop emotions for someone. In all these examples the understandings reflect how the experiences themselves are perceived but the meanings exceed the context of the experiences and might be relevant to other experiences.

Thus, meaning making is taking a qualitative leap from the level of understanding, as it has characteristics of a whole comparing the contextual level of understanding, like looking
upon earth from space comparing a view from a summit of a mountain.\textsuperscript{89} Meaning making requires from the student much more creative participation and much more initiative, but also—and more important—responsibility, willingness, and especially courage to attach oneself to an idea that declares something, an idea that is committed to something. As such, meaning making emphasizes a shift from seeing students as products towards producers, and even goes further than perceiving education as “a process of asking difficult questions” (Biesta, 2006, p. 150) such as "What do you think about it?," "Where do you stand?," and "How will you respond?" (p. 28). These questions, while they require students to face challenging phenomena or disturbing events and require a response that enhances students’ involvement, do not necessarily demand a broader thinking beyond the specific case in question and do not necessarily ignite contemplation about interpretations of the examined case. Admittedly, questions of ‘taking sides’ might arouse deeper thinking about a matter, but without exploring and committing to ideas that lie at the base of the matter, students can avoid the deeper significances available from the matter at hand, such as unexamined assumptions or biases. In other words, difficult questions that ask for students’ positions in relation to a matter still allow an escape route from saying something profound about the student and about human beings. In contrast, forming meaning demands and signals commitment—like the one an artist makes to her work—as opposed to the mere grasping and mastering that are exerted upon curricular content as well as upon the lower basic features of experience and understanding. Thus, setting an educational goal that is directed towards meaning is essentially different than educational goals that emphasize the living or the experiential character of experiences or the intellectual-epistemological character of

\textsuperscript{89} In “Awareness to Wholes: The Ontological Difference as an Educativa Source” (forthcoming) I expand on this leap of perceiving a whole.
understandings (as, for example, Dewey perceives education. See in the next section and in chapter 5 where I compare my view to Dewey’s). Therefore, meaning as an educational goal is not in the sense of arriving at a designated destination, but more in the sense of revealing, inventing, and expanding. This is what gives education the adventurous characteristic of disrupting or interrupting existing arrangements and exceeding the known human territory.

In the context of education, the meaning of meaning making is first (chronologically and psychologically), being aware of the possibility of seeing things differently and, second, creating new meanings. This attitude towards and sensitivity to meanings is different from becoming informed about what is not yet known to the individual, since in this latter case that to which one is to be informed is already known somewhere and just needs to be passed on. Thus, obtaining awareness and generating meanings constitutes an approach that stands in contrast to acquiring objectified content; this proposed approach, as it is both an attentive and ingenious approach of meaning making, stresses the importance of meaning as the higher form of educative ‘substance’. It is distinguished from curricular content by not serving as a means for advancing future designated achievements (usually in the form of a social role) but rather by constituting an achievement right now, in and of itself.

As an educational goal, meaning making requires considering what one undergoes but furthermore exceeding it in order to take a broader view. This view introduces or reveals something new that was not originally intelligible, something that was neither part of the experience nor of the understanding.⁹⁰ From the aforementioned examples we learn that

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⁹⁰ This new insight that is revealed in meaning is similar to the new insight acquired by a ‘picture’ as Mackler (2009) finds in Gadamer's distinction between a copy and a picture. Unlike a mere copy, a picture (for example, painting of water lilies in the park) reveals something about the original (what is depicted, in our example water lilies) that we could not see without it. Thus, the original experiences an "increase in being" (p. 75), an increase that we can attribute also to the leap from experience and understanding to meaning.
discoveries might take the forms, for instance, of ‘connecting the dots’, ‘seeing the forest’, or seeing something that earlier was hidden or blurry. The discovery in meaning, as I develop the concept here, is not anymore directly about the experience, but it is a ‘lesson’ that becomes internalized and is carried with us such that it shapes who we are and how we see the world; as such, it is a lesson that resembles insight acquired following an ‘aha moment’. The lesson is not one as in ‘she learned her lesson’ but as in ‘it was a good lesson for her’, that is, an insight that grows out of an experience and says something about the way things are outside the original context. Here is where a combination of diverse sources of experiences together with creating meanings is a response to the instrumental approach to education: when education is perceived as tool, its function is reduced to shaping specific identities of the students by conveying content and creating experiences that are relevant for these specific required identities. These experiences are supposed to generate specific understandings and meanings ‘ordered’ by the self-interested forces. However, when education is free to allow students and teachers to consider their own experiences and free to engage students with a broad spectrum of experiences from different domains, meanings do not just make sense of experiences in a novel way, but they also open the door for envisioning a different way of managing our lives; when you see things differently, imagining of new opportunities might emerge. As such, meanings become the ‘special ingredient’ that turns education from a servant of others that is designed to capitalize on the young to an endeavor that perceives students as human beings.91 For allowing and encouraging students to form meanings without the control and filtering of the external

91 One might take meaning making solely as an existential project that corresponds to our mortality. However, appealing to meanings does not necessarily derive from existentialism or from philosophical deliberation. In other words, the motivation for meaning making is not necessarily philosophical in the sense of studying the fundamental.
forces is a clear threat on these forces’ influence on students as potential members as on education as a whole as a tool for advancing their interests.

Of course, not always meanings will open doors wide enough, and not always students will have the tendency to go through an open door towards an alternative way of thinking or living. Surely there are personal and cultural factors involved in this journey. But education that prioritizes students over external interests will at least expand the hermeneutic horizon available for students and will enable and allow them the opportunity to take the adventurous step towards this horizon. This journey might enrich their meaning arsenal and through them humanity’s arsenal as a whole.

The adventurous sense of meanings that I advocate aligns with Kompridis’ (2006) notion of ‘reflective disclosure’ as a source of significant ethical, political, and cultural transformation. Drawing on Heidegger's insights into the phenomenon of world disclosure, and highlighting the work of thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Charles Taylor, Michel Foucault and others, Kompridis explains his terminology:

disclosure involves both receptivity and activity, both openness to and engagement with, what is disclosed. What is disclosed may concern the background structures or conditions of intelligibility necessary to any world- or self-understanding, which I’ll refer to as prerreflective disclosure (Heidegger called them Existenzialen); or it may concern the ways in which these background structures of intelligibility are reopened and transformed through novel interpretations and cultural practices, which I’ll refer to as reflective disclosure (or redisclosure). (p. 34)

Elsewhere Kompridis (1994) describes the pre-reflective disclosure as first-order disclosure and the reflective disclosure as second-order disclosure. Second-order disclosures can produce either unifying-repairing or decentring effects. A unifying-repairing disclosure of the world can “increase our awareness of previously hidden or unthematized interconnections, semantically unifying or repairing our self-understanding and social practices” (p. 30). In such disclosure, “our shared (pre)understanding of the world is…
uncovered and articulated” (ibid.). A decentering disclosure is a novel disclosure of the world that “can introduce meanings, perspectives, interpretive and evaluative vocabularies, modes of perception, and action possibilities which stand in a strikingly dissonant relation to already available meanings, to already existing ways of speaking, hearing, seeing, interpreting, and acting. Such a dissonance disturbs our self-understanding and our social practices” (ibid.). Thus, adventurous meaning making can take both forms of reflective disclosure in order to reopen and expand the “space of possibility” (Kompridis, 2006), the place in which resides “what can show up as significant and relevant” (p. 74).

Kompridis (2006) adds on this space: “Since possibility is a function of vocabulary, only a new vocabulary or new style of reasoning can expand the logical space of possibility, by which expansion something previously unintelligible can become intelligible” (p. 137). For Kompridis, this transformative character from unintelligible to intelligible is linked and leads to imagining the utopian that is ignored by portions of critical theory. This imaginative consideration of what might seem impossible is required for a critical attitude: “the possibility of imagining a utopia with content is a necessary condition of the practice of critique. And that is because the practice of critique, unlike the practices of science or theoretical reason, is not normatively guided by ‘cooperative quest for truth’” (p. 251-2). Thus, imagination is crucial for thinking about “meaningful alternatives to the current moral and social order” (p. 153) and “our capacity to envision confidence-regenerating, hope-inspiring alternatives to the current social order” (p. 248). This attitude challenges modern reason as it reflects “the need to rethink our commitments to certain ideals and practices, perhaps to break free of them, by imagining previously untried or uncovering previously suppressed possibilities. This very particular need is the need to begin anew” (p. 3).
As educational goal as I see it, meanings are extracted within reflective disclosure, and when they reopen and transform existing structures or arrangements they offer new interpretations for experiences and understandings (as defined above). As implied above, students are not expected to always create meanings that are utopian or transformative from the unthinkable to the imagined, but they should be encouraged to seek this kind of meanings. It is important to stress, however, that I am not using Kompridis’ terms as an ontological foundation, that is, as a structure that characterizes human beings. Rather, I apply his reflective disclosure in order to clarify my use of meaning for education as an adventurous endeavor; I am not arguing that unifying-repairing or decentering disclosures are ontological world-disclosures that characterize human beings as such, but rather, propose to nurture these hermeneutic aspects as tendencies in students.

Going back to the discussion at section 1.1 regarding a desired change as educational goal, the change that I propose as a goal is not in terms of ‘who will be our graduates’ or ‘what characters our graduates will carry’, that is, not in terms of specific identities or specific qualities, but more in terms of awareness of and openness to different ways of perceiving. The instrumental approach misleads us in thinking about education as an endeavor that is designed to ‘create’ graduates with defined specifications, a view that is translated to focusing on our temptation to give something concrete to our students, our desire to pass on something we hold and we want them to have. While this passion to offer to students from our own possession might be noble, once it takes over education the result is that the educational process stops there at delivering content, and it precludes students from coming with their own ideas about themselves and about the world. To be sure, content from which to draw meanings and guidance on how to do it is indispensable, but these teaching
aspects are worthless without an explicit and clear goal of meaning making. Setting meanings as an educational goal allows students to offer their own insights and to develop sensitivity to their experiences without being committed to a specific life path. If students do acquire this awareness and sensitivity to meanings, they are not prepared for taking a role in society but they are ready for whatever is about to come in their life.

It is important to note that meaning making is not just an individual enterprise; each individual within education as well as the entire endeavor as a whole are involved in forming meanings. A meaning a student creates is contribution not just for herself as a human being but for education as a human endeavor, and as such, to humanity. Meanings that students generate exceed the schools’ walls and permeate society, whether while they are still students or afterward when they leave school. As carriers of new meanings they disseminate them whenever they go. In this regard, teachers are collectors and preservers of their students’ new meanings and also act as disseminators to the next generations of students and to society as a whole. Thus, the human territory is exceeded and expanded.\(^{92}\)

In closing this section I wish to compare my idea of meaning making that takes the whole human territory as its reference (section 2.3) to Portelli and Vibert’s (2002) notion of a ‘curriculum of life’ with which it shares several features. This comparison will stress the adventurous characteristic of meaning making.

\(^{92}\)Freire sees the connection between meaning making and experiencing in a political way, as Portelli & Konecny (2013) note: “Freire asserts the transformative power of praxis, arguing that human beings are radically capable of changing their condition, of doing away with what has come before and giving the world new meaning through reflective action” (p. 103). While I am not refuting political meanings, I reject perceiving the educational project as a whole as political and turning the school into a site that focuses on such meanings, as other meanings exist and they are at least as important for human beings. As I claim in chapter 5, not everything is political.
Portelli and Vibert (2002) identify and propose a curriculum of life as an unusual view of curriculum as “a dynamic relationship among teachers, students, knowledge, and contexts” (p. 36). They explain this view as follows:

By "curriculum of life" we mean a central, organizing stance that informs pedagogy, knowledge, school and classroom procedures and dispositions, evaluation, and how students, teachers, administrators and staff engage in the school. Curriculum of life is an approach to pedagogy that informs and gives coherence to often disparate aspects of school life. It is implicit in curriculum content and planning, in school organization and policy, in discipline, in school/community relations, in classroom and school-wide pedagogy. Grounded in the immediate daily worlds of students as well as in the larger social and political contexts of their lives, curriculum of life breaks down the walls between the school and the world. It is an approach that presupposes genuine respect for children's minds and experience - without romanticizing either” (p. 39)

We can easily identify similarities between this description and my own account regarding the human territory as a reference for education. In both cases students’ lives and their experiences, as well as the world outside school, are important sources for educational material. In addition, both in meaning making as I see it and in curriculum of life the students are creators of ideas. However, a closer examination reveals that there are also significant differences between the two approaches. For example, in curriculum of life the focus is on students’ lives while in my approach other peoples’ lives are equally important source for experiences and meaning, and in curriculum of life the insights gained remain attached to the events that have ignited them while in my approach meanings are meant to break away from the original experiences. But the crucial difference, as I see it, consists in the motivation for the lessons learnt and the insights acquired. As the above quote says, in the case of curriculum of life there is a “central, organizing stance that informs” a school’s life and the approach is managed in such a way that it “informs and gives coherence to often disparate aspects of school life”. In other words, there is a specific predefined local organizer that explicitly or implicitly governs and directs the ideas that students produce. This organizer,
according to the quote and examples given by Portelli and Vibert, is linked to or stems from a specific central aspect of the school or the community, and can be, for example, social, ethical or political. This channeling or guidance is perhaps most evident when Portelli and Vibert tell us about a specific discipline event that was used in order to encourage students to learn about relevant issues: “the incident became an opportunity for reinforcing the school values of responsibility and community-mindedness” (p. 38). Thus, the event is used in order to reinforce, support, or underpin the organizer of specific school values. In contrast, in my idea of meaning making there is no local organizer but a general one: being a human being. This is a much more broad organizer that does not limit the potential insights into what the school administration prioritizes or to what the school community advocates. This wider openness to ideas and insights that are created by students allows and encourages a more adventurous and unexpected meaning making that is not ‘invited’ by an already defined set of tenets.

In the next two sections I conduct a more detailed comparison of my ideas to two views that share some similarities with my own. As we will see, several of the differences I identified above appear in various forms.

3.4 Comparing the Proposed Epistemological Structure to Dewey

As the basis for the proposed structure of human features is experience, I compare my view to Dewey’s and by pointing to the differences between them I hope to give a deeper explanation and justification for my proposal, especially in light of the instrumental approach to education and the threatening forces that attempt to recruit students as members. But I will begin with two clarifications.
First, it should be stressed that the basic human features are not separate content, parallel to the subject-matter curriculum; the attention to experiences, understandings, and meanings does not mean a ‘basic human features class.’ The three basic human features are to accompany the curriculum and the other schooling components. They are supposed to interweave with each other.

Second, students are not explicitly requested and do not need to be aware of the expected sequence or chain from experiences to understandings to meanings, at least not before the advanced stages of schooling (high school). Teachers and students do not need to even use these terms in their teaching and learning. But all teachers and all educators must be aware of this chain and the ultimate goal of meaning making, right from the beginning of schooling. And all teachers must encourage students to refer to and share their experiences, reflect on experiences so as to produce understandings, and when students find it right, to generate meanings that say something. The particular way and the extent of calling students to pay attention to what they undergo and how they interpret it is in the hands of each and every teacher, while considering her students, the circumstances, and her own life.

How is the picture of the three human features – experiences, understandings, and meanings – is different from the one depicted by Dewey? How is my understanding of experiences as an educational foundation is different from his? Admittedly, there are several similarities. In *Experience and Education* (1997/1938), more than two decades after his most influential work *Democracy and Education* (2004), he justifies progressive education as he sees it by offering a theory of experience and by comparing progressive education to traditional education. In stating the place he destines to experience in education, he assumes “the organic connection between education and personal experience” and asserts that “all
genuine education comes about through experience” (p. 25). I agree with Dewey in this regard. However, I differ from Dewey with regard to three major aspects: the status of science in education, the scope of relevant experience for education, and the meaning of meanings.

The Status of Science as a Method

Dewey (1997) takes as his point of departure a biological and evolutionist paradigm that is coupled with pragmatic-experimental framework of a cyclic process of action and consequences in order to better “control future experiences” (p. 26) and “enriched growth of further experience” (p. 73). Thus, education is perceived in terms of the growth of further experience, both of the individual and of society as a whole, by transmission through communication and based on the principle of continuity (Dewey, 2004). But Dewey takes experience as experimentation: “Experience… is a deliberate control of what is done with reference to making what happens to us and what we do to things as fertile as possible of suggestions (of suggested meanings) and a means for trying out the validity of the suggestions” (2004, p. 294). In doing so, Dewey bestows on science a privileged status. In Democracy and Education (2004) he acclaims science as “the chief means of perfecting control of means of action” (p. 242) and as “the sole instrumentality of conscious, as distinct from accidental, progress” (p. 246). In Experience and Education (1997) he argues that thinking must be done by: “scientific method is the only authentic means at our command for getting at the significance of our everyday experiences of the world in which we live… scientific method provides a working pattern of the way in which and the conditions under which experiences are used to lead ever onward and outward” (p. 88). From seeing science as a proven means in achieving control, including control over societal matters, he calls for
adopting science as a model for learning in education. In *Experience and Education* (1997) he argues that “education must choose if it is not to drift aimlessly” in “systematic utilization of scientific method as the pattern and ideal of intelligent exploration and exploitation of the potentialities inherent in experience” (p. 86). He adds:

We are told almost daily and from many sources that it is impossible for human beings to direct their common life intelligently. We are told, on one hand, that the complexity of human relations, domestic and international, and on the other hand, the fact that human beings are so largely creatures of emotion and habit, make impossible large-scale social planning and direction by intelligence. This view would be more credible if any systematic effort, beginning with early education and carried on through the continuous study and learning of the young, had ever been undertaken with a view to making the method of intelligence, exemplified in science, supreme in education. (1997, p. 81)

Although Dewey does not advocate a positivist approach, that is, he does not claim that science is the exclusive source of all meaningful propositions or that science can provide answers to all the questions,\(^93\) he gives a clear and unquestioned preference to scientific paradigm within his educational experimentalist approach. The problem, as I see it, is not in preferring science as a framework for discovering, but in the fact that Dewey, so it seems, adopts (or even imports) science for the educational realm without questioning a need for adjustments or modifications from the university’s lab to the school’s classroom. This direct adoption of science into science prevents Dewey from posing science itself as an educational object of examination, that is, encouraging students to reflect about science as a way of thinking. The price is diminishing other ways of thinking and reflecting about ourselves and about the world.

My view, in contrast, following the openness I suggest in forming understandings and extracting meanings, is that the ways students process their experiences should take different

\(^93\) See also in Biesta and Burbules (2003), p. 14-16. See also Quay (2013) for how Dewey uses Peirce's structure of experience that includes not just experience as interaction but also experience as a whole.
forms according to different ways of thinking or creating (for example, art). In fact, I argue, teachers should encourage students not just to examine and challenge scientific thinking and the scientific method (including learning about the philosophy of science and discussing ethical issues with science), but also to examine implications for the hold of science in our society and to examine alternative ways of knowing and their importance. This examination might open the door for examining and imagining alternative ways of life. Moreover, the mere measures for appreciating knowledge should be on the proverbial educational table, that is, an issue for discussion in school, instead of a situation where measures are set in advance. To be sure, I am not accepting contingent thinking or unserious argumentation, and I do not think teachers should encourage their students to pursue random argumentation. However, bestowing upon science a monopoly for intelligence or for decision-making, surely with the emphasis on action-consequence experimentation, serves specific forces in society that are rooted in the scientific paradigm. Even within the academic world, experimentation as Dewey describes it only fits for the natural sciences departments and departments of engineering, and excludes other areas on campuses. The bias towards economic forces that put pressure on education is clear.

The Scope of Relevant Experience for Education

Beyond adopting science as a paradigm, and from the way he perceives experimentation, Dewey emphasizes as relevant experiences for education a specific type of experiences that limits the breadth from which students and teachers are expected or encouraged to draw experiences. Dewey limits the experience space in several dimensions. First, out of the

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94 Heidegger’s critique of technological thinking, as he understands it, is only one example of an interesting examination of the dominance of science. See Heidegger, (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*. Considering Heidegger’s work, Dewey indeed seems to be captivated within technological perception.
action-consequence cycle, he stresses or prioritizes experiences that are composed of the
coupling of the learner’s own activity and observed consequences of this activity. This is
evident, for example, in *Democracy and Education* (2004):

> All our experiences have a phase of “cut and try” in them—what psychologists call the method of trial and error. We simply do something, and when it fails, we do something else, and keep on trying till we hit upon something which works, and then we adopt that method as a rule of thumb measure in subsequent procedure (p. 157)

Dewey adds that “experience is primarily practical, not cognitive—a matter of doing and
undergoing the consequences of doing” (p. 299). In *Experience and Education* (1997) Dewey
describes his experimentation in terms of “analysis and synthesis” and “relation of
consequences to means” (p. 84), which implies a requested active association between the
learner and the environment. Admittedly, at one point in *Democracy and Education* (2004)
he refines his analysis and gives more weight to experiences in which the learner does not
play an active part:

> thinking originates in situations where the course of thinking is an actual part of the course of events and is designed to influence the result. Only gradually and with a widening of the area of vision through a growth of social sympathies does thinking develop to include what lies beyond our direct interests: a fact of great significance for education. (p. 160)

But even in this case, even when he acknowledges the potential contribution of experiences
in which the learner does not manipulate the environment, he gives only minor attention. In
any case, Dewey does not include teachers’ experiences as an integral part from which
students can learn, and also does not refer to proactive exposure of students to the lives of
others. Therefore, my understanding of “experience” widens Dewey’s as it gives at least
equal importance to what others undergo, and with regard to examining and exploring new
ways of livings and new meanings, I actually see the lives of unfamiliar people an invaluable
source that cannot always be matched by direct experience.
To explain this last point of considering strangers’ lives as a non cause-and-effect experimental sources for meaning, let us look at how Dewey (1997) expects action from the learner in response to witnessing: “observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and touch. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon” (p. 68). He brings forth as an example the case when a baby perceives significance of a flame not by seeing it but only by getting close to it and feeling its power to burn; the baby acquires the needed significance only when she directly acts upon the fire, coming in touch with it and as a result experiences its force. However, can we apply the same process of internalizing significance when a student is exposed to a remote tribe or even to a different ethnic group in her city? Even if we could overcome the ethical and practical difficulties and bring the student to manipulate the alien population and create ‘consequences’, these results do not guarantee learning that might yield the same significance (or meaning) as it would by studying the people through watching a movie on them or reading their founding texts. Experiencing a remote tribe or an ethnic group in another neighborhood cannot be done in the same manner we experience fire or any other inanimate object we test in order to learn about it. In the former cases of social and cultural ‘objects’ or phenomena, some meanings are available or accessible only by taking the role of a (present or non present) spectator and not as an actor who participates in and influences people’s lives. To be clear: I am not denying the value of lived experience, but point out that not all meanings are obtainable through direct physical experimentation.

But the more severe problem with Dewey’s perception of experience is that—under his experimentation—he gives little or no room at all for experiences that we undergo and for which we can not anticipate the consequences, whether because what happened to us was
caused by chance or because we were not aware of our actions. We all experience such events, they constitute a significant part of our lives, and we derive from them substantial amount of insight. Actually, life would not be the drama that it is (at times happy, at times sad, at times irritating, at times interesting, at times arousing) if we were not at the mercy of luck, surprise, and coincidence; partners who meet by chance and also those who live healthy lives and fall ill know it. But we do not need to go that far as this kind of experiences is part of everyone’s life. However, Dewey, so it seems, underestimates the accidental or at least excludes it from his experimentation. For example, in *Experience and Nature* (1929) Dewey’s says: “the scientific procedures of disciplined civilization… consists in the fact that scientific inquiries reach objects which are better, because reached by method which controls them and which adds greater control to life itself, method which mitigates accident, turns contingency to account, and releases thought and other forms of endeavor” (p. 70). And in *Experience and Education* (1997) he asserts: “Impulses and desires that are not ordered by intelligence are under the control of accidental circumstances” (p. 64). But perhaps his most explicit rejection of considering happening by chance as an experience is given in this passage from *Democracy and Education* (2004):

> many things happen to us in the way of pleasure and pain which we do not connect with any prior activity of our own. They are mere accidents so far as we are concerned. There is no before or after to such experience; no retrospect nor outlook, and consequently no meaning. We get nothing which may be carried over to foresee what is likely to happen next, and no gain in ability to adjust ourselves to what is coming—no added control. Only by courtesy can such an experience be called experience. To “learn from experience” is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction—discovery of the connection of things. (p. 152)

Indeed, Dewey discusses experience here within a specific and deliberate pursuit of knowledge, and as such argues for the scientific method. However, as a result, perhaps
unintentionally, he narrows the span of experiences relevant for organized learning. After all, not every orderly learning that evaluates “backward and forward” connections is scientific. Adopting Dewey’s approach and his scope of relevant experiences for structured learning in school in a strict manner, and focusing on experiences that incorporate “prior activity of our own”, might lead to focusing on “what we do to things” and on “trying” and consequently to underestimating experiences that do not fall under these categories. This worry is strengthened by the ubiquitous and rooted tendency for control which is based on the consideration of everything as “standing-reserve” we mentioned in section 1.4, a tendency that governs the interests of many if not all of the external self-interested forces. Thus, Dewey’s emphasis on “an experiment with the world”—although he contextualizes it within what is to be considered as legitimate evidence for any scientific knowledge and although he does not advocate it—might even result in ignoring any experience students undergo which is not in their control (or ignoring any other’s accidental experience) or even preventing students from reflecting on and sharing their accidental pleasures and pains. I see this disregard as another distortion of Dewey’s teachings that ends up in great mis-education.

In conclusion, the limited scope Dewey allows for educational experience allows us to question his suggestion that “[e]very recitation in every subject gives an opportunity for establishing cross connections between the subject matter of the lesson and the wider and more direct experiences of everyday life” (2004, p. 176), and might lead to undesired situations in which “[s]ave by accident, out-of-school experience is left in its crude and comparatively irreflective state” (2004, p. 177).

The Meaning of Meanings
Interpretations for experiences appear in Dewey’s discussion with regard to what he calls in *Democracy and Education* (2004) “reflective experience” as part of experimentation. Dewey links the result of the reflection on activities to the action-consequence cycle. When “mind or consciousness is severed from the physical organs of activity”, so “[t]he intimate union of activity and undergoing its consequences which leads to recognition of meaning is broken” (p. 152). We have also already seen that in Dewey when he links ‘significance’ to evaluation of consequences and science, as when he asserts that “significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon” (1997, p. 68) and that “scientific method is the only authentic means at our command for getting at the significance of our everyday experiences of the world in which we live” (1997, p. 88). The link Dewey makes between experience (as activities), consequences, and evaluating their connection becomes stronger when he considers the future as the measure of this link:

> While all thinking results in knowledge, ultimately the value of knowledge is subordinate to its use in thinking. For we live not in a settled and finished world, but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective, and where retrospect— and all knowledge as distinct from thought is retrospect—is of value in the solidity, security, and fertility it affords our dealings with the future (p. 164)

Thus, it seems that Dewey keeps interpretation of and reflection on experience closely tied to the experience itself, while specific reflection is associated with a specific experience. The clear and always strong link between experience and consequences does not let the interpretation going beyond the context of the experience. Moreover, for Dewey, interpreting the experience is always in relation to an expected result, desired consequences, or designed future. He calls “to acknowledge responsibility for the future consequences which flow from present action” as “[r]eflection is the acceptance of such responsibility” (2004, p. 159). In other words, reflection on experience should be done with concern or commitment to
upcoming events and the unfolding sequence of events: interpreting experience has a controlling-the-world aspect.

In contrast, in my view on meanings, the interpretive character is not required in order to achieve something; there is no necessity for taking things into our own hands. Reflection on experience is not limited or reduced to a ratio between results and expectations but is open to any interpretation on what one undergoes. Dewey’s perception of what is significant seems to be guided by an accomplishment mentality that does not allow the learner to take the experience away from its local context and create from it a meaning that says something far beyond what has just happened. When Dewey is strict with his experimentation, the meanings he attaches to experience do not go much farther beyond what I referred to as ‘understanding’, local interpretation of the experience. Put differently, using my structure of human features, Dewey’s experimentation prevents exceeding the safe boundaries of the experience and taking the leap from understandings to meanings, as it lacks the extent of imagination and courage to think beyond the terms of the experience and extend the interpretation of the experience beyond the experience borders. While Dewey advocates a structured order of intelligence and drawing conclusions, I call for restraining the thinking leash and for encouraging the speculative and the adventurous.

I see this inventive character of meanings, as I perceive them, a needed addition to today’s education in the face of forces that attempt to influence education and restrict students to the forces’ own interest and projects. As a matter of fact, it seems that Dewey’s experimentation is followed today by these forces that adopt the accomplishment mentality and try to instill it in students and parents. After all, these forces portray membership among their ranks as a success and as a desired future with its fruitful consequences: to wear “Nike”
will make you successful like Mike, drinking “Coke” will make you sexy like that model, to
go to church will save your soul, and to join the army will give you social status and financial
stability. This accomplishment mentality can be seen as part of what Norris (2011a),
following Baudrillard, identifies as a transformation of a commodity into a sign and a
separation of the signifier from the signified which results in “association of the sign with a
lifestyle and its integration into the social life of people” (p. 124). ‘Church’ (or ‘faith’ or
‘prayer’) and ‘military service’ are marketable signs like “Nike” and “Coke”. The danger,
both educationally and socially, is when one sacrifices imagining the unthought for an
attempt to secure an advertised future, when one prefers pursuing membership in an
arrangement she did not create over questioning this arrangement or examining or imagining
alternative arrangements.

Despite the differences between Dewey’s theory of knowledge and his experimentation
on the one hand, and my structure of human features as an additional or broader foundation
for educational content, when Dewey talks about the nature of philosophy, especially
compared to science, his ideas become closer to my perception of meaning making. In
*Democracy and Education* (2004) he says that “the wholeness characteristic of philosophy is
a power to learn, or to extract meaning, from even the unpleasant vicissitudes of experience
and to embody what is learned in an ability to go on learning”, and adds: “Finality does not
mean, however, that experience is ended and exhausted, but means the disposition to
penetrate to deeper levels of meaning—to go below the surface and find out the connections
of any event or object, and to keep at it” (p. 351). Here, Dewey does not attach experience or
meaning to a deliberate action or evaluated consequence, and also allows “any event” to
partake in going deep, that is, he does not limit the scope of experience to a specific
experimental type. This deepening is crucial because it opens the door for leaving the local context of the experience and travelling toward meaning – Dewey prefers in his metaphor “to penetrate to deeper levels of meaning” while I use terminology of leaping. When a bit later Dewey distinguishes between thinking and knowledge he asserts:

Thinking, on the other hand, is prospective on reference. It is occasioned by an unsettlement and it aims at overcoming a disturbance. Philosophy is thinking what the known demands of us—what responsive attitude it exacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Hence it is hypothetical, like all thinking. It presents an assignment of something to be done—something to be tried. Its value lies not in furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Philosophy might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself—which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience. (p. 351)

While he still integrates pragmatic and experimental terms (such as “overcoming a disturbance”, “something to be tried”), his tone shifts toward the speculative as Dewey identifies philosophy with “an idea of what is possible” and perceives it as “hypothetical”. Moreover, Dewey even entertains the possibility of granting philosophy agency, as it is tempting to see it as “thinking which has become conscious of itself”; this recalls my own call to grant education agency and the needed freedom to create meanings that exceed the available human territory. Does this proximity, or affinity, between ‘philosophy’ and ‘meanings’ imply something about how I perceive the latter? As Dewey makes it clear that he associates philosophy with addressing social problems (“responsive attitude”, “defining difficulties and suggesting methods”) 95, my sense of meaning does not relate to troubles that need to be solved. However, it is fair to say that the interpretations made while forming meanings do bear philosophical aspects as they pull toward the abstract. Nonetheless, within the educational context we are conducting our discussion – let us not forget the educational –

95 In section 5.6 I discuss the role Dewey designates for philosophy, especially in relation to education.
the philosophy ingrained in what I call ‘meaning’ is not the one in the formal or academic sense but in a broader sense of pursuing the fundamental that enables imagining new ways of thinking and living. This aspect of enabling, allowing, opening, points to an ontological meaning of meanings, that is, that which creates the conditions for possibility. With regard to education as I propose here, the ontological character of meanings allows the possibility for imagining alternatives for the existing individual and social ways of life.

In closing this comparison with Dewey, it is interesting to examine one passage in *Democracy and Education* (2004) in which he refers to non-educative interests:

> an education which acknowledges the full intellectual and social meaning of a vocation would include instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production, and study of economics, civics, and politics, to bring the future worker into touch with the problem of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement. Above all, it would train power of readaptation to changing conditions so that future workers could not become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them. This ideal has to contend not only with the inertia of existing educational traditions, but also with the opposition of those who are intrenched in command of the industrial machinery, and who realize that such an educational system if made general would threaten ability to use others for their own ends (p. 343)

While clearly there are instrumental references here – students are identified as “future workers” – the passage as a whole demonstrates an anti-instrumental approach: Dewey identifies the situation where students “become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them” and consequently they are used by “others for their own ends”. Dewey is even aware of the objection by “those who are intrenched in command of the industrial machinery” – factors I identify as forces threatening education, and what Dewey expects will be threatened in the face of aware students. It is important to note that Dewey also uses a language of agency for education (“education which acknowledges”). However, while Dewey identifies instrumentalist aspects, he is not fully aware of the systemic level of the phenomenon, that is, perceiving education as an effective provider of future members for the next systems in line.
Moreover, Dewey’s analysis does not exceed the economic domain and he does not recognize the same abuse of education and of students by other types of forces, including the state.

3. 5 The place of Hermeneutic Education: Comparison to Mackler

After comparing my epistemological structure to Dewey’s and identifying gaps in the ways that we perceive meanings, it will be useful to compare my ideas to existing educational ideas that from the outset are centered around meanings and meaning making. There is a growing interest in examining and proposing alternative goals for education that allude to meaning making, usually as a reexamining of liberal education and mostly with direct or implicit emphasis on the university (for example, Arcilla, 1995; Collini, 2012; Nussbaum, 2012; Wolff, 1997). It is beyond the scope of this work to examine this preference in favor of higher education over K-12 education with regard to hermeneutic plans. I suspect that this preference has to do with thinkers’ general priority in dealing with higher education over the earlier stages of institutionalized education, following a false assumption that in school, as opposed to the university or college, there is a more limited latitude for offering nontraditional educational ideas that exceed the regular pedagogy of teaching and learning of specific content, whether material, skills, or values. In other words, it seems that this is another influence of the instrumental approach held by education scholars, especially by philosophers of education: school is perceived as being designed for learning content that is delivered from teacher to student, so it is not the place for offering programs that focus on conceptual infrastructures and not on ready-made content. As such, schooling is perceived as less a ‘sexy’ educational site for theoretical scrutiny and for innovative ideas, less appealing than higher education for revival. This preference of higher education is also probably linked
to a more urgent sense of crisis that is associated with the university, and a need for new thinking regarding the goals of this institution but not of K-12 education. Thus, hermeneutics is another area that falls under the category of areas that are not considered ‘qualified’ for K-12 students.

One relatively recent contribution to the discussion about meanings in education is Mackler’s (2009) book *Learning for meaning's sake*. Although she aims her ideal of hermeneutic education for the university (and higher education in general), it is worth comparing it to my vision of K-12 education that is aimed at meaning making based on being human. As we will see below, several elements in the two proposals are equivalent and some of Mackler’s ideas strengthen or broaden mine. But the differences between us highlight and clarify some key principles in my thinking about meanings and education in general. Specifically, comparing my vision to Mackler’s will assist in honing my ideas about the place of education in one’s life.

Mackler motivates the need for hermeneutic education by situating it within the crisis of meaning in late modern society at large. The fact that many people search for meaning, she argues, should encourage the university to take up the task of advancing awareness of and skills related to meanings: “higher education in the 21st century should renounce its obsession with job training and knowledge production and should, instead, turn toward questions of meaning—hermeneutic questions” (p. xix). Mackler’s analysis of meaning and meaning making draws on and synthesizes several “philosophers of the art of living” (Hadot, Nehamas, and Shusterman) and “philosophers of hermeneutic education” (Oakeshott, Macintyre, Kronman, and Arcilla). She borrows from Arendt the notion of ‘natality’ and grounds her call for hermeneutic education on a distinction between ‘banality’ and ‘natality’.
While ‘banality’ is “disposition to rely unthinkingly on pre-given interpretations” (p. 26), ‘natality’ is “a disposition to attend to questions of meaning. It is an attunement toward, appreciation of, and interest in meaning. Natality is a type of relationship to meaning that includes sensitivity to the place of meaning in human life, as well as an aptitude for knowing when and how to suspend the assumed interpretations that ordinarily guide our lives and to consider alternatives” (p. 25).

Following Gadamer’s distinction between ‘copy’ and ‘picture’, Mackler argues that banality and natality are not separated but associated with each other: “natality and banality exist in dialectical tension with each other… Natality interrupts banality but ultimately becomes banality again. The inherent particularity of the world will call on natality again, and the dialectic continues” (p. 36). This link makes hermeneutic education possible: “meaning exists in the back-and-forth movement between banality and natality, from taking interpretations for granted to thinking about and creating new ones” (p. 99). Drawing on this insight about the “interaction of old and new interpretations” (p. 71) we can identify the locus of education with regard the human territory introduced in chapter 2: education is located or based on the border between the known human territory and the uncharted area. It is as if meaning making is skipping back and forth between the two zones. Education is like a camp located on the border of the already discovered territory, a camp from which adventurous journeys are embarked upon. Ones new meanings are created, the human territory expands and the camp moves to the new border, ready for new journeys.

Mackler makes a more delicate distinction between dangerous banality and rich banality. In dangerous banality, “abstractions are too far removed from particulars, and language cannot carefully relate to the objects to which it should refer” (p. 41). In rich banality, on the other hand, “the understanding would be created through relation with natality” and “it would be less fixed and capable of being informed by experience with natality” (ibid.). By hermeneutic education Mackler aims at fostering rich banality, a banality which is “inspired by natality” (p. 101).
Mackler structures ‘pedagogy’ for hermeneutic education on two pillars. The first one, ‘apprenticeship’, means “learning from exemplars” (p. 67) of meaning making and aims at raising awareness of meanings themselves. Apprenticeship “teaches deliberate attentiveness to meaning and meaning making in order to arouse students to the very existence of interpretations” (ibid). This component aligns with and stresses the social aspects of meaning making I discuss above, especially with regard to one’s relationships with other meaning makers. The second component, story-telling, refers to the meaning making itself and focuses on the way Mackler perceives the notion ‘meaning’ itself and the process of meaning making. As such, this component is more relevant for our discussion and for comparison with my own proposal.

In response to “the abundance of accessible information” (p. xx) and in the face of what she sees as the danger of meaninglessness, it seems that in “meaning” Mackler gives significant weight to what we can refer as the ‘meaning of life’, that is, some comprehensive rationale or explanation for one’s life. Meanings are supposed to serve as “satisfying explanation of the complex, multifaceted world in which we live. We are compelled to ask and answer, ‘Why?’” (ibid). Moreover, “Beyond convenience, interpretations provide peace of mind that life makes sense. They provide the feeling that there is a reason for what happens” (p. 26-7). Mackler makes it clear that she does not want to give up “the search for a unifying whole picture” and “coherent narrative” (p. 64), although not in a positivistic manner that assumes the existence of final answers. It seems that Mackler’s dissatisfaction from the fact that many turn to ‘popular’ (including religious) procedures for gaining meaning leads her to offer the university as an appropriate site for the hermeneutic task. Therefore, story-telling implies some kind of a comprehensive plot to be uncovered, as if the
world or our lives are actors in an already written script. It seems that this assumed infrastructure is evident also in her emphasis and insistence on not settling with raising questions of meanings but also to pursue – as part of hermeneutic education – answers to these questions. As such, Mackler’s notion of meaning is different than mine. While Mackler sees meanings as offering explanations acquired through hermeneutic education as some kind of a progressive, authoritative, and reliable alternative for explanations offered by self-help books and churches (and other religious institutions)—and as such they come close to scientific theories—I do not attach to meanings an explanatory power that uncovers alleged reasons or motivations responsible for what is going on. As I have explained above, for me ‘meaning’ suggests interpretation without necessarily a commitment to cause-effect relationships. Although Mackler is cautious not to talk in metaphysical terms and keeps away from metanarratives, her notion of meaning is still begging for the answer to “why?” and she is uncomfortable when an answer is unavailable. My sense of ‘meaning’—although it does not reject them—does not necessarily assume reasons and does not seek them.

In addition to expecting an explanation from meaning, Mackler attributes some kind of urgency to story-telling and suggests for a need in meaning making. In her discussion on what spurs meaning making, Mackler grounds this event in language and uses Lyotard’s notion of the ‘differend’ to explain the origin for new meaning. She quotes Lyotard:

In the differend, something "asks" to be put into phrases... human beings... learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom), that they are summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms [genres] which do not yet exist (p. 37-38)

This characteristic of the differend as a challenge to exceed what is already phrased resembles my notion of exceeding the known human territory and stresses the significance of
language in venturing ‘to go when no one has gone before’. But Mackler stresses the agonizing aspect of the differend and turning its call for exploring to a demand to fulfill a duty:

we experience it as a suffering… We feel compelled to respond in language to a differend but are pained by our initial inability to do so. Once we are struck by the event, there is no undoing its blow; there is only moving forward. In the attempt to flee the feeling of trauma, we realize something has happened for which we have been made responsible… Understanding is not a choice, but rather a response necessitated by something that occurs to us (p. 38)

As such, meaning making becomes a commitment, a response to a suffering, a need to escape distress, even a misery to be saved from. But this way, meaning making is far from an invitation to an adventure, as I see it, but rather closer to being a lifeline, an apparatus to save us from agony. In contrast to an encouraging and exciting exploratory potential that I seek to realize in educational meaning making, Mackler finds in hermeneutic education a necessity to be released from a shock.

This discussion on aspects of story-telling suggests that Mackler’s hermeneutic education is an endeavor aimed at answering questions of meaning as part of education itself. This expectation for answers suggests a significant difference between Mackler’s vision and my vision of education, not just with regard to what meanings are and the process of meaning making but moreover with regard to education’s role in one’s life: while Mackler’s emphasis on answers suggests perceiving education as a phase in life during which a student realizes insights and embarks on her life equipped with these insights, I set for education a more ‘modest’ goal and perceive it as a time when students ‘discover’ the power of meanings and appreciate its potential in imagining alternatives to familiar ways of living. Admittedly, Mackler does acknowledge the power of meaning to “create a world” (p. 91), but it seems to me that by her high expectations for answers that explain and provide relief—at least in the
context of education—she restrains the potential of meanings to go further and offer not just new interpretations but also courageous ones.

It might be that the difference between Mackler and me in perceiving education’s role in one’s life stems from the fact that Mackler aims her hermeneutic education for the university while I focus on K-12 education. But I suspect that this is not the case. Mackler does not provide a reason as to why to house hermeneutic education in the university in particular. She claims that “there is something inherent in the idea of the university that speaks to human flourishing” (p. xx) but admits that “it need not be the university that teaches us about meaning” (p. 104). Therefore, it is unlikely that Mackler’s perception of hermeneutic education is significantly sensitive to the level of the institutional education. I think that a better explanation for the differences between Mackler and myself with regard to the hermeneutic character of education is rooted in the different ways we perceive education itself as a preliminary stage in one’s life and the extent of the ‘risk’ each of us is ready to take when we discharge students from institutional education.

It seems that Mackler is less committed to ‘sending’ students to the world with open questions and is worried by graduates who struggle with questions of meaning. An evidence for this worry is demonstrated while she discusses Arcilla’s ideas for hermeneutic education: “Whereas Arcilla talks about what it is like to get lost, I am also interested in the process of finding one’s way again” (p. 65). In contrast, I do not see institutionalized education (both in K-12 and in higher education) as responsible for students’ hermeneutic content, that is, committed to graduates who actually possess meanings that are acquired during studying, and therefore I am not concerned that these graduates will be in some way ‘lost’ in the world once they face it. As Todd (2009) puts it:
the real potential of education lies in its capacities to provoke insights that help youth live well with ambiguity and dilemma, where freedom, justice, and responsibility cannot be dictated at them, but are tough decisions that must be made in everyday living. For, to my mind, this is a significant aspect of the project of facing humanity itself (p. 67).

For me, in ‘training’ students to face humanity and then sending them to face humanity and “human complexity” (p. 14), education is not about acquiring content, or even a hermeneutic content. This view on education aligns with rejecting the idea of education as a provider—an idea inherent in the instrumental approach—whether in the broader social sense of providing for other social spheres with ‘cooked’ graduates ‘filled’ with specific ‘ordered’ content qualities (e.g. knowledge, values, tendencies, and now we can also add meanings) or in the more narrow individual sense of transmitting content to students (or creating content within them) so they will be able to choose for themselves where they want to navigate their lives after graduation. It is my contention that it is not education’s job to be a distribution or production site for content, whether by direct delivery or by just providing the conditions for appropriate production of content. In principle, the actual significant creation of this content—including meanings—is the purview of life beyond institutionalized education, surely beyond K-12 schooling, whether outside school’s walls or after graduation. One’s life is her own responsibility, and by extension, people’s destiny is their own concern. It is not education’s role to make life clearer or easier, nor to disentangle the messiness of life.97

97 This also means that education is not a simple, clear, or ‘clean’ endeavor, but, as human life is, complex, ambiguous, and “messy” in itself. These qualities will be reflected through teachers’ and students’ experiences. Education, as I see, is not meant to paint life in bright colors or to make things easy. Accordingly, as implied above, education that involves in human features does not exclude instruction and acquisition of content such as knowledge and skills, but also does not stop there, aiming at intertwined substance of structured curriculum and meaning making. The structured curriculum, of course, should be adjusted in order to integrate human feature in schooling, for example by reducing its volume and designing it such that it will encourage experiences, understandings, and meanings.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter expands on and gives a more tangible feeling of the notions ‘adventurous education’ and ‘exceeding the human territory’ that were introduced in the previous chapter as it shows how one’s life (teacher or student) leads to thinking about what we can or what we dare to say about our lives or about a world that does not exist but which we venture to imagine. Discussing the proposed basic human features also reveals that the term ‘epistemological’ that is chosen for characterizing the features’ structure should not be understood as the traditionally ‘how we know what we know’ but more in the sense of how far we are willing to go with our imagination, to what extent we are willing to take a risk when we are sharing experiences, creating understandings, and especially forming meanings. The risk is not physical, of course, but nonetheless it is a risk as it involves exploring unknown and uncharted conceptual areas.98

From the comparison with Dewey we have learnt or emphasized that science is not taken up as a paradigm for thinking, the scope of relevant experience for education is broad and includes events that happen to us by chance, and that meanings depart from the context in which experiences occur. Examination of Mackler’s proposal stresses my call for hermeneutic education already in K-12 education as well as the not necessarily explanatory character that I attribute to meaning. Looking closely at Dewey’s and Mackler’s views is also helpful in understanding that according to my vision, education’s role in life is not simply to address issues that are currently on the table, whether collectively as Dewey sees it through

98 Together with the ‘risk’ I accept in sending students into the world without answers, my vision resonates with Biesta’s (2014c) claims in The beautiful risk of education about teaching as relational and uncertain and for weakness, insecurity, and unpredictability in education. In my vision the adventurous nature of education is also designated for students.
his pragmatic lens\textsuperscript{99} or personally as Mackler proposes through her pursuit of answers. Rather, institutionalized education, schooling, aims at the student’s life ‘after school’, the life the student will face when he is no longer a K-12 student any more.

The proposed adventurous character of education—however exciting it might seem as it was introduced in the previous chapter and however possible it might seem through the proposed epistemological structure as discussed in this chapter—faces a challenge in the form of a dominant instrumentalist discourse with regard to schools. This discourse is supported and nurtured by a social perception of education that is rooted in the formal political infrastructure by which the important endeavor of education is governed. Given this political governance over public education, it is very difficult to escape the strong temptation to navigate the discourse about education—what is it and what its goal should be—deep into the political sea and instead to shift this discourse towards non-political shores. However, in the next chapter I propose such a (rather unusual) maneuver.

\textsuperscript{99} I expand on the collaborative social problem-solving role Dewey designates for philosophy and education in section 5.6.
4. Towards a Sovereign Education

In chapter 1 I portrayed the instrumental approach to education and characterized it in terms of intervention by external self-interested forces in the perception of what education is and what its role in society should be. These forces attempt and manage to turn the education system into a means for their own interest of recruiting students as members in their ranks and as such damage students’ humanity since the latter are treated as a tool for the use of someone else. As an alternative to the instrumental approach I offer in chapters 2 and 3 conceptual guidelines that re-center students’ humanity. However, a structural problem remains: the conceptual guidelines by themselves, even if they were to be accepted by educators, will not prevent the self-interested forces from attempting and succeeding to penetrate education, directly or indirectly, since education is still exposed to their influence. If education is still a defenseless target for influence by external forces, how can it apply the conceptual guidelines? How could educators address the guiding principle that we are all human beings and direct their students towards adventurous meanings while they are under constant pressures from the economy, the academia, the state, parents, and other forces? How can we buffer between the negative influence of external forces and the education system? In other words, how can we create, at least to some extent, a formal and physical agency for education? In this chapter I examine ideas for separating education from politics and propose conceptual and practical frameworks to advance the idea of apolitical and sovereign education.

In the first section I review philosophical calls for separating education from politics, those of Arendt (1961) and Masschelein and Simons (2013). As these thinkers do not suggest an operative program for buffering between education and its environment, I introduce in
section 2 my proposal for a sovereign education that carries the characteristics of autonomy and independence. Next, I examine one specific particular way to realize my call for a non-politicized education, namely a governing body. I review the operation of national education councils as a source for ideas how to address several key issues with regard of central educational governing body that is not subordinate to the general political authority. Finally, as separating education from general politics does not imply operation in a vacuum, I examine the need for education to look around itself in the multi-spherical space and propose general implications for educational research.

4.1 Separating Education and Politics

Allegedly, the way to block or buffer external forces from negatively using education is simple: in order to prevent pressure from influence, one needs to uproot education from the systemic model, that is, to separate education from the ‘outside world’ and selectively allow input into education. This sounds, of course, impossible; institutionalized, publicly funded education is an integral part of society and cannot simply be detached, removed, and then reattached in a new way. The ties of education with its environment are so tangled that removing education from its environment will seal its fate. There is no clear boundary between education and society. Although the systemic model within the instrumental approach portrays education as social sub-system with its definite ‘place’, in reality the educational system ‘diffuses’ into other areas in society just as these areas naturally or artificially penetrate into education, according to the specific local political and social features. For example, as financial resources are scarce, educational jurisdictions might allow access of economic powers in order to cope with deficits. Or, in Israel, where military service

100 The metaphor of a cell, surrounded by a membrane, might be helpful here.
is obligatory and constitutes the next phase in most peoples’ maturation, the army is an integral and important part of non-orthodox Jewish graduates such that it would be irresponsible to ignore this imminent experience. Moreover, as education is a contested notion, it is not clear how separating or even distancing it from the state or from party-politics aligns with democratic principles.

Indeed, the difficulties here are immense. However, they should not discourage us from looking for and examining ways to alleviate the negative pressures put on education, at least those created by the instrumental approach. In fact, proposals in the spirit of segregating education from its ‘environment’ are available. In this section I examine two philosophical suggestions for such segregating: one of Arendt and one of Masschelein and Simons (2013). In the next sections I propose my own conceptual and practical framework for a sovereign K-12 education system.

Arendt (1961) offers a philosophical grounding for disconnecting education from other realms, based on a separation she makes between children and adults. For Arendt, children, as young people, are what the Greeks called οί νεοι, “the new ones” (p. 176), who entered a world of already educated adults. For the newborns the world is always already old. Arendt rejects seeing education as a tool with which adults pass on to the children the “responsibility for the world into which they have brought the children” (p. 190), and calls for an education that leaves in the hands of the children the possibility to establish “something new, something unforeseen by us” (p. 196). By examining and analyzing historical developments she identifies and criticizes the perception according to which “education became an instrument of politics” (p. 176). She observes:

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is
neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition. That means, however, that not just teachers and educators, but all of us, insofar as we live in one world together with our children and with young people, must take toward them an attitude radically different from the one we take toward one another. We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life, in order to apply to it alone a concept of authority and an attitude toward the past which are appropriate to it but have no general validity and must not claim a general validity in the world of grown-ups. (p. 195)

Recalling Arendt’s appreciation of the ‘political’ deed as included within Action, the highest type of activity above Labor and Work (see section 1.3), her call to divorce education from ‘political life’ seems problematic: does she disassociate education from the importance of the political behavior? However, the context of the passage within an essay that critiques the American public school system suggests that by “the realm of public, political life” Arendt means the realm of the state. In other words, Arendt actually calls to separate education from the state’s control.

Although in this passage Arendt refers to ‘education’ in general, the context of the essay implies that she does not mean just education in the abstract sense but aims specifically at the institutionalized system as she mentions “school system” several times and discusses “schooling” and “compulsory school”. Arendt adds: “In practice the first consequence of this would be a clear understanding that the function of the school is to teach children what the world is like and not to instruct them in the art of living” (ibid.). The call to prevent education from imposing or directing students towards a specific future is clear. Of course, any teaching “what the world is like” is not neutral, as the curriculum scope is limited and choices need to be made regarding what will be included. However, Arendt’s plea for an education that is not in the service of other forces, especially the political one, is important in challenging the perception that education is naturally and legitimately a political tool.
Adopting Arendt’s view of the need to separate the private from the public, Topolski (2008) echoes the call for uprooting education from the political:

How can we bring children into this world, a momentous responsibility, and then as soon as we put them into schools transfer this responsibility to an anonymous political realm in which we ourselves feel alienated and refuse to participate?... What Arendt makes crystal clear is that education should not be conceived of as a political tool. Children are ends in themselves, not the means to ‘save the world’ from itself. The latter is our responsibility whether we accept it or not (p. 275).

Topolski’s question resonates with my own call to protect education from the self-interested forces that wish to use it.

More recently, Masschelein and Simons (2013) take Arendt as a point of departure for their proposal to (re)turn schools to being a place for creating and granting “free time” for developing what they term “the experience” (p. 38) through the subject matter, in contrast to the external productive-oriented world that demands results:

Forming and educating a child is not a matter of socialisation and it is not a matter of ensuring that children accept and adopt the values of their family, culture or society. Nor is it a matter of developing children's talents. We do not say this because socialisation and developing talents are not important - they certainly are - but rather because forming and educating a child has to do with something fundamentally different. It is about opening up the world and bringing the (words, things and practices that make up the) world to life. That is exactly what happens in 'scholastic time'. (p. 83)

In order to truly prevent the school from reproducing social inequality, Masschelein and Simons call for schools to be a place of suspension from society:

School as a matter of suspension not only implies the temporary interruption of (past and future) time, but also the removal of expectations, requirements, roles and duties connected to a given space outside the school. In this sense, scholastic space is open and unfixed. Scholastic space does not refer to a place of passage or transition (from past to present), nor to a space of initiation or socialisation (from the household to society). Rather, we must see the school as a sort of pure medium or middle. The school is a means without an end and a vehicle without a determined destination. (p. 36)
Therefore, “the school must suspend or decouple certain ties with students' family and social environment on the one hand and with society on the other in order to present the world to students in an interesting and engaging way” (p. 15). Thus, “society is in some way kept outside” (p. 38). Masschelein and Simons do not call for separating the school from society; on the contrary, “[w]hat is dealt with in school is rooted in society, in the everyday, but transformed by the simple and profound acts of (temporary) suspension and profanation” (p. 39). As a result, the roles between society and school are somewhat reversed:

if we are to take the scholastic model seriously, we need not ask what the function or significance of the school is to the community, but, on the contrary, what significance the society can have for the school… It is not about keeping society (or the labour market) outside the school or about making the school into a kind of island in order to protect against pernicious influences. (p. 77)

But this is only if “(professional) competencies” do not become “the fundamental objective of the school” and “start functioning as learning outcomes that must be produced as output” (p. 78). Although Masschelein and Simons (2013) do not see a need “to protect against pernicious influences” as I do, they still call for untying links with society and specifically from politics. As “[p]olicymakers are often tempted to look to the school for solutions to societal problems” (p. 93), they stress:

we make a clear distinction between school and politics, between educational responsibility and political responsibility, between the renewal made possible by pedagogy and political reform. In one way or another, politics is about negotiation, persuasion or a struggle between different interest groups or social projects. The table at school is not a negotiating table; it is a table that makes study, exercise and training possible. (p. 94)

Masschelein and Simons (2013) claim that there has been a “shift of emphasis from employment to employability” (p. 95). The former means “preparation without a pre-

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101 Walzer (1983) has a similar view on schools under the notion of relative autonomy: “The students are granted a partial moratorium from the demands of society and economy. The teachers, too, are protected from the immediate forms of external pressure” (p. 199).
determined purpose other than to be prepared and 'in form', or, in a more traditional sense, to attain a well-educated, purely skilled (or practiced) maturity” (p. 80), while the latter means “maximising education's productive potential” (p. 76-77), “being competent” with “the orientation toward productivity” and “efficiency” (p. 77), and it is “the word around which the discourse and thinking about the school is oriented today” (p. 76). Thus, in the past, “[a]gainst the background of employment, education still retained relative autonomy in relation to society and in particular in relation to the labour market” (p. 95). However, with the discourse shift towards employability and towards a type of utilitarianism in general that advocates designed and ready-made graduate, the instrumental approach eroded and constantly erodes this autonomy that, as I see it, should be restored and fortified.

4.2 Autonomous and Independent Education

Both Arendt (1961) and Masschelein and Simons (2013) do not suggest an operative program for keeping education away from its environment. However, in the spirit of their offers, I want to suggest a conceptual framework to address the instrumental approach. In chapter 2 I called for perceiving education as an agent with its own consciousness, similar to other human constructs. I believe this perception is necessary in order to assist in fending off influences that attempt to harness education and students in the service of self-interested forces. One of the ways to reduce education’s vulnerability to external influence is to reduce as much as possible the direct access of the self-interested forces to formal positions from which the people who hold them can make decisions about education or directly impact

102 Callahan (1964) also talks in these terms as he observes “the extreme weakness and vulnerability of schoolmen, especially school administrators” and “the extent and degree of capitulation by administrators to whatever demands were made upon them” (Preface, second page). The governmental pressure on American schooling following the launch of the Russian satellite ‘Sputnik 1’ in 1957 to place great emphasis upon science and mathematics is taking today the form of aggressive pressures from a variety of external self-interested forces.
such decisions. In today’s democratic societies, the formal control and the authority over education in the broad jurisdictional level is given according to political power and political power struggles. Put differently, the authority over strategic policymaking is located in the hands of politicians; much of the attempts to influence education are challenged through them and the formal and informal political mechanisms they govern. This is evident from the entanglements between politics and other realms as we saw in section 1.2.\footnote{A support for addressing politics in defending education comes from Walzer (1983) who acknowledges that “political power is a special sort of good” since “it is unlike all the other things because, however it is had and whoever has it, political power is the regulative agency for social goods generally” (p. 15, footnote). Walzer adds that in being the regulative agency “state power itself will become the central object of competitive struggles… Politics is always the most direct path to dominance, and political power (rather than the means of production) is probably the most important, and certainly the most dangerous, good in human history” (p. 15).} Therefore, the possibility of granting education agency is to remove the sole authority over education from the political level and to entrust it into the hands of non-politicians. In other words, the alternative I propose is to take the authority over strategic thinking about and governing of education out of the political game and rendering it a social-organizational unit in and of itself.

It will be immediately stressed: according to my proposal education is still run by the state and is still publicly funded, but while the state collects the taxpayer money it will be stripped of the power to decide what to do with it with regard to K-12 education. The state’s responsibility for providing institutionalized education is still in place, including recruiting and supplying the required human and material infrastructure. However, I separate the responsibility to establish and maintain education system on the one hand, and the authority over what this system is aimed for, its goals, and the means to meet these goals (including how to use resources), on the other. As these two aspects are currently concentrated in the hands of politicians and civil service, I see it as being vital to hand over the authority to
people whose primary affiliations and commitment are not political. It is important to note that in the specific practical proposal I offer in the next section for governing public education, these people who possess the authority over education, although they are not elected through the general political process—they are not ‘professional’ politicians—they are still nevertheless elected, but through a separated and designated election mechanism. Therefore, they are considered officials and the legitimacy to make decisions and to spend tax money is still granted by the public. I return to practical matters in my proposal below, but first let us expand on the abstract foundation of education as an agency.

Education is under the comprehensive responsibility of a jurisdiction that runs and oversees it (e.g. state, province). However, under the instrumental approach, as education is perceived as a crucial means in order to recruit students as members, education becomes an arena where forces (including the formal political authority) battle to have a foothold and make their mark. This battle is articulated in the form of struggles, whether explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, over controlling or influencing matters within the education system. Thus, as forces aggressively attempt to penetrate and influence education, education becomes a battlefield of interests, ideologies, and worldviews. As Apple (2006) observes:

Education is a site of struggle and compromise. It serves as a proxy as well for larger battles over what our institutions should do, who they should serve, and who should make these decisions. And yet, by itself, it is one of the major arenas in which resources, power, and ideology specific to policy, finance, curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation in education are worked through. Thus, education is both cause and effect, determining and determined. (p. 30)

Thus, together with Ball’s (1993) analysis of policy as discourse that occurs within and outside the formal decision making circles, we can understand the political nature of education as a struggle of interests that is manifested in who controls schools and what happens in them. Apple (2006) assists us to understand that this political nature of education
results in a dynamic that limits education to the broader societal struggles in which it is located, a limitation that is demonstrated in a reflection of a dominant power or some compromise between interests that represents the power structures outside education. This dynamics, as it based on existing paradigms, makes it difficult for education to realize its potential as a renewal engine and precludes an adventurous characteristic for education such as I propose. The problem is that the political nature of education is so entrenched in people and it is so intensified by the instrumental approach that, indeed, it is perceived as nature, as inevitable quality. Thus, taking for granted the struggle about education— the perception that in education ‘everything is political’—explains why citizens understand and even expect that educational goals and contents change when there are changes in political power relations.  

However, I reject the notion that in education ‘everything is political’, that education’s essence and goals should be navigated by and follow political power struggles and that what happens in education needs to reflect political relations. As counterintuitive as it might seem, education can and should be something else, that is, navigated according to non-political forces. I am aware that in general the current situation is that education is political, if not in the sense that politicians directly decide what is going on in schools (although, at least partially or indirectly, that also happens) than in the sense that political forces significantly influence the curriculum and schools’ conduct. But I neither accept it as a natural situation that necessarily has to come about, nor as a desired situation that appropriately continues and represents struggles and differences between constituencies and citizens in general. Accepting education as such is submission to the instrumental approach in the sense that

\[104 \text{ Frequent political turnovers might lead educators and perhaps the public to consider new educational goals as passing fads, and as a result lead to a diminished confidence in the political system as a reliable source for educational ideas.} \]
education is perceived as a legitimate tool for pursuing interests. As a result, education is not a domain that is able to truly examine, question, and challenge existing societal arrangements and ways of life and to constitute a place for imagining alternatives, but rather it is a mere reflection of the political arena, some kind of microcosm of the political realm outside school. In order to escape the reflection of the political, I suggest that education will have its own place outside (although not disassociated from) the formal political realm with its own agency to conduct itself.

Being a separate social-organizational unit, education will be sovereign over its own conduct. By ‘sovereignty’ I mean that education will have its own autonomy and independence (elaborated below), and will be subordinate as little as possible to political institutions or political powers that operate whether in the party-politics state arena or beyond the state’s formal reach (I address several policy issues in this regard below). When education is subordinated to the political domain the result is an education that replicates the political power relations, that is, the current political landscape. Thus, there is little chance that what education produces exceeds the political conceptual space, little chance for students to exceed the limits of the current political boundaries, and little chance for them to come up with new views about themselves, about the world, and about their place in the world. By this application (and replication) of the political to the educational we find another exemplification of societal regeneration. In contrast, non-political status of education liberates it from clinging to political thought and opens it to other ways of thinking, a shift that will better allow students to be exposed to and come up with non-existing ideas, including alternatives to the prevalent societal arrangements. The shift from political to non-political status of education is a result of a shift from perceiving education as a social
instrument to perceiving it as a human endeavor or an agent for humanity (chapter 2), that is, from perceiving students as potential members or candidates for social roles to perceiving students as human beings who are expected to undergo a variety of experiences in the future through which they will acquire understandings and meanings. In other words, the proposed shift in education’s status means a shift from perceiving students as competitors and rivals who seek and are trained to achieve identities to perceiving students as protagonists of a story to be written, from being ready and designated to being aware of their humanity and richer in experiences, understandings, and meanings.

Put differently, and perhaps more sharply and radically, the shift from a politicized education to a non-politicized education (that is, education that is not politically driven) means education that works for the public good by focusing on students’ humanity while the authority to prescribe education’s essence is expropriated from the public’s leaders. Education serves the public good, but is not the public’s leaders servant. However, removing the public’s leaders from deciding about education does not mean removing the wider public from the decision making process. As I explain in the next section, civic engagement is required and encouraged in order to facilitate a sovereign education.

Education that is autonomous and independent bears two aspects of sovereignty. As autonomous, this social sphere essentially operates by itself without being controlled by others (e.g. the state), it has the capability of formulating its own goals and designing its own plans; autonomous education is a self-governing entity that has its own nervous system. As independent, education has the legitimacy of having its own considerations and making its own decisions without necessarily considering other matters; independent education is a self-determining entity that has its own mind or consciousness. The two capacities are not the
same, as, for example, a robot which might be autonomous by having its own sensory, decision-making (programming) and movement systems, is still not independent as all these features were designed and built by someone else with her own goals for that robot. Thus, endowing education independence is crucial in order to prevent a situation in which the body of authority over education is indeed separated from the political realm but the political powers still control what happens in schools. Critics of neo-liberal policies identify such manipulation from afar of schools by the political policymakers through means of accountability (Apple, 2001, 2006). For example, Yonah et al. (2008) argue that many educational reforms implemented around the world and articulated against neo-liberal ideology, “actually promotes a Janus-faced political entity in the field of education” (p. 199). They explain:

while the state seemingly withdraws from educational affairs through decentralisation and privatisation policies, it increases its involvement in these affairs in dictating the goals of education; in setting uniform standards of scholastic achievements; in the cultivation of children possessing the values and skills required by neo-liberal globalisation; and in imposing a national value system intended to render them loyal citizens of their patria. In promoting these contradictory goals, the state often operates indirectly; it develops a tight but elusive regulatory system operated from a distance (ibid.)

Thus, the state pulls the strings of education from afar, simultaneously while removing responsibility from itself. While schools do earn some autonomy in managing their affairs, they are not independent as they are committed to meet the criteria set by the state.

As implied above, it is important to stress that being autonomous and independent does not mean that the state has nothing to do with education. The state bears the responsibility of allowing and making sure that education is indeed sovereign in the sense of its autonomy and independence, but also to technically establish the infrastructure that constitutes the human and physical means needed to manage a nation-wide education system (or an equivalent
system given the specific comprehensive jurisdiction). For example: building schools, allocating funding, and recruiting maintenance personnel. A detailed description of the education-state relationships under my vision of education is outside the scope of this work; however, it seems that under the current model for governance of a state by separation of powers in which the state is divided into branches, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility, granting education a separated status so it will be a sovereign social sphere requires education to be a separate branch, alongside a legislature, an executive, and judiciary branches (or a unified version of them). As interesting as this idea might be, it entails a fundamental change in the notion of the state, a path I will not take further here (of course, if one is interested in exploring this idea, one needs to address the question what about granting a separate status to other realms). While I am not ruling out elevating education to a unique status in society, I wish to consider and briefly explore existing efforts to buffer education from the elected political realm, which, as we saw earlier (mostly section 1.2), is a key channel or focal point through which attempts to influence education occur and where self-interested forces operate in the broad jurisdictional level.

4.3 Governing Body for Education: National Education Councils

In several places around the world operate executives or advisory bodies within or alongside the Ministry of Education that point to the idea of a non-governmental decision-making body that holds authority over public education. Such a body is only one idea how education might be more autonomous and more independent, but it seems that for a comprehensive education system that seeks to keep some coherence and efficiency across the board, and as a result keeps some major aspects of centralisation, some form of a central governing or decision-making body is required.
Below I examine few features of this kind of body. But first, it is important to stress that this governing body will hold the authority to discuss and decide regarding the strategic aspects of education (e.g. vision and goals of education) as well as particular major educational issues (e.g. curriculum, teacher education) in the spirit of the idea of education as a human agent and the offered basic human features (sections 2 and 3). This body will be composed of educators—people who dedicate their lives to working with students or for studying education—as well as people from other areas. The state and government too will be represented, but overall this body will not depend on elected political institutions or politicians. I am aware that the people participating in the decision-making body will have their own political and ideological opinions. However, adopting a basic human approach to education is required to be placed above political and ideological differences. This does not mean, of course, that there will be no arguments, but these arguments will not be based on or aimed at promoting worldviews or narrow and sectorial interests.

This last point of arguing about education without promoting worldviews might seem impossible; how can it be avoidable, one would ask, not to draw on your worldview and as such to advocate it when you are claiming something about an educational issue, for example, whether a specific learning unit is appropriate or whether a specific teacher education qualification is insufficient? However, education that is not dedicated to promoting worldviews seems impossible only if one perceives education as a site where worldviews are in contest and their proponents’ task is to impose, instill, or market them. Indeed, here the distinction between missioner’s (broadly understood) and educator’s (as I see it) perceptions of education is evident: while the former perceives education as another (but important) place

\[105\] Of course, establishing such a governing body for education will require legal or even constitutional procedures that must be approved by the local political mechanisms.
to promote her vision of the good, the latter perceives education as a place innocent of a
competition about the good. In other words, politicized education welcomes school as a
legitimate political battlefield and non-politicized education leaves the battle over the good
outside the school premises.

A distinction used in political morality might be helpful here. Sandel (1984) describes,
following Kantian liberals, “a distinction between the 'right' and the 'good' - between a
framework of basic rights and liberties, and the conceptions of the good that people may
choose to pursue within the framework” (p. 3). Sandel adds that “the commitment to a
framework neutral among ends can be seen as a kind of value - in this sense the Kantian
liberal is no relativist - but its value consists precisely in its refusal to affirm a preferred way
of life or conception of the good. For Kantian liberals, then, the right is prior to the good” (p.
4). Using this distinction we can say that non-politicized education should be a “framework
neutral among ends” where the prevailing right is treating students as human beings and
promoting “a preferred way of life or conception of the good” is considered crossing a line,
for then students (and education as a whole) are perceived as a tool, a means for a self-
interested end. It should be clear, though, that within the vision of education I advocate in
this work, perceiving education as a “framework neutral among ends” does not mean
allowing rival ends to compete fairly within it in order to allow a winning end (that is,
allowing external forces to fairly influence education) but forbidding any promotion of the
good in schools. Nevertheless, this prevention of political contest does not entail silence
about political issues. On the contrary, contested matters are a vital source for students’ and
teachers’ experiences to create meanings.
A sovereign education that is governed by apolitical\textsuperscript{106} or non-governmental body does not mean closing the door to civil society to participate in a debate regarding education and to bestow the right for decisions over education to a closed club of ‘educationalists’; on the contrary, my proposal intends to strengthen civic engagement and access of different interest groups to the discussion about what education should be and to the policy-making process. However, this civic engagement needs to be as devoid as possible of self-interested forces that perceive education instrumentally and seek to capitalize on students—a population which they consider a potential ‘captive audience’—so that a true and honest debate about education would happen on the grounds of being human, that is, away from an instrumental approach. Screening out political influences is a vital step in realizing candid thinking about education.

The idea of a formal body that addresses educational issues and is not directly linked to the elected political powers is actually a reality in several places around the world, in the form of national councils for education (or a similar name such as National Education Board) (Brans, 2010; Van Damme et al., 2011; Weissblei, 2013). Weissblei (2013) defines national education council as “a state body comprising citizens (as experts, public representatives and representatives of organizations) which is involved in the formulation of policy and legislation in the field of education” (p. 1). A national education council operates, in some countries (for example in the United States and in Europe (e.g. Spain, Denmark, France, and

\textsuperscript{106} If one insists on considering the kind of education I call for ‘political’ because of unchaining education from the shackles of politicians and party-politics, I will claim that her argument is terminological and not substantial. Removing the decisive authority over education from politicians has to do, of course, with attitude towards the arena in which political struggles over power take place, but once education leaves this arena its considerations are not political per se. By analogy, when a filmmaker decides to not shoot her movie in color but in black and white, of course this decision has to do with color and says something about the filmmaker’s attitude towards colorful cinematography, but once the decision has been made and the film is monochrome, the cinematic and artistic considerations are not polychromatic anymore.
Finland), within or alongside the Ministry of Education. Its structure, functions, authorities, and the level of its involvement and influence in the education system vary from country to country and depend on the unique structure of each country's education system, the country’s dominant political traditions, and the unique social-political climate within which it operates. However, in most cases, national education councils have no substantial authority and function only as advisory bodies. The following is a brief review of relevant features of these bodies – mostly with regard to the councils’ goals, roles, and composition – after which I discuss how the idea of national education council might contribute to our discussion regarding a sovereign education and an apolitical governing body.

National education councils with authority regarding compulsory education exist in several jurisdictions, including many countries in Europe, United States (in the State level), and the province of Quebec in Canada. Typical of a number of councils is that they were established during times of political turmoil and served as vehicles supporting education-policy reform. In each jurisdiction, the council has a statutory status, and its existence is sometimes enshrined in the country’s constitution. Among the primary goals of national education councils are: creating dialogue between different stakeholders in the education sector and providing a platform for as wide a range as possible of positions and perspectives on the relevant issues, with the goal of reaching a broad consensus; mediating between different parties and government representatives with varying levels of involvement in the work of the education system; and establishing policies in the field of education based on as broad a perspective as possible, including applicable research and knowledge.

107 In several countries, among them Australia and Great Britain, education councils operated in the past and were disassembled for different reasons.
In most countries in Europe and in Quebec, Canada, the education council is an advisory body, and its role is to provide recommendations to the education minister, the government, or parliament on issues of education, at the request of the minister of education or of its own initiative. In certain countries, including France, Belgium and Spain, the minister or government are required to consult the council as part of the process of approving policy, government bills, or regulations. Decision-makers are not obliged to accept the council's position, but because the council's opinions are usually detailed, reasoned, and disseminated to the public or to members of parliament, they carry weight in public or parliamentary hearings on the issue. The education councils in Quebec, Spain, Denmark, and France fill, alongside their roles as advisory bodies, the role of an evaluation body, and publish periodical reports on the state of the education system and the problems it faces. Sometimes this aspect of the council's work focuses on a particular area.

In the United States and in Finland, the education council has a very wide range of executive authority. Education councils in the United States are often involved, among others activities, in appointing the heads of state education departments, establishing the targets and vision for the education system, formulating curricula and determining requirements of students at the various stages of the education system, licensing teachers and educational institutions, and assessment and evaluation. The Finnish National Board of Education is an independent authority that works alongside the Ministry of Education, and has authority primarily in planning and development (including the formulation of curricula) but also in assessment, evaluation and oversight and more.

With regard to the composition of educational councils, the literature distinguishes between councils whose members are representatives of organizations and bodies that are
stakeholders in the education system (such as pupils, parents, teachers, school principals, local government officials, owners of educational institutions, institutions of higher learning, organizations that represent various religious and ethnic communities, and social organizations) and education councils composed of experts and public representatives (people of public standing, not necessarily in the education sector). In most of the countries studied by Weissblei (2013), most council members are representative of bodies and organizations. The status and strength of education councils of this kind are derived from the status of the organizations represented in them and their ability to express a broad consensus, and most of them have a large number of members (the numbers run from a dozen to more than 100). In a few countries, including Denmark and Spain, experts appointed by the education minister are represented. In the United States there are differences between the states as to the composition of the council, but in most of them there are members who are representatives of organizations alongside experts and public representatives appointed by the governor or elected directly by the public.

From the literature on national education councils (or their equivalents, as State Boards of Education in the United States) we can conclude that none of the existing bodies that hold roles with regard to the education system alongside the politically held authorities is indeed a genuine independent body with executive powers, that is, a body that is not subordinate to political powers. In most cases the councils operate only as advisory bodies. One might think that this fact is telling and will take it as evidence for the avoidable nature of non-political bodies in education and the inescapable situation in which education has to be politically controlled. However, this is exactly the TINA (There Is No Alternative) perception we saw in chapter 1 that convinces us that the existing procedures are natural and consequently
inevitable. As for councils with executive authorities, despite a rhetoric of independence and freedom from political influences, politicians have significant direct or indirect weight in influencing their work, whether by appointing their members or by reducing their authority.

A telling example is the United States. The state board of education is meant to serve as an independent body in the decision-making process (Weissblei, 2013). The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) states in its publication: “State board independence from direct political pressure and from the political rhythms of gubernatorial and legislative elections was firmly established in the years after World War I” (NASBE, 2011). However, Weissblei (2013) notes that “the relationships between a state board of education and the political leadership of the states are complex and not always smooth” (p. 16). Shober (2012) reviews several State boards and finds that there is a growing gubernatorial influence in state education policy, including intervention in boards’ work. In some cases, sometimes through changes in legislation, governors have increased their influence over the selection of members of the boards and have provided them with increased authority – sometimes while limiting and even revoking the authority of the head of the state’s department of education. In contrast, in other cases, the governors have preferred to limit the authority of the state boards of education and to increase those of the head of the state department of education. In any case, despite NASBE’s statements, State boards’ independence is doubtful.

Following the apparent dependency of existing education councils on political powers, it is important to note that by examining national education councils I do not intend to promote my proposal for sovereign education that is governed by an apolitical body by looking for some kind of ideal mix of characteristics out of the existing education national councils.
While many of these bodies do carry encouraging features of lessening the power of politics, they are all still fundamentally vulnerable to political influence and in their core they are problematic since they do not truly renounce instrumental approaches to education. Footprints of instrumentalism are evidenced in being subordinate to the political realm as having the last word. Even the councils with executive powers actually serve the political sphere. In cases where politicians felt these councils hold too much power for their taste, such as in several American States, politicians took political measures to divert this perceived extra power and make the councils less relevant. In some cases political inconvenience from the councils led politicians to take actions as far as dissolving the councils (Weissblei, 2013). Therefore, a truly civic governing body for education must be rooted in a perception of a sovereign education system.

Examining national educational councils around the world leads to the conclusion that realizing a sovereign education system as I characterize above, with a central governing body, requires removing any decisive political intervention in education decision-making, whether intervention by the government or through the legislatures; in both cases, education is at the mercy of the people in power or in the hands of the dominant public discourse. Any governmental or parliamentary authority over education, even if it is in the form of approving a program shaped by an independent body, means giving decisive power to politicians and rendering meaningless any attempt for a genuine non-politicized education able to face self-interested influences. Therefore, as long as there is no mechanism to prevent the influence of self-interested forces thorough the general political system—and currently there is no such mechanism and it is questionable whether such mechanism will ever exist—a sovereign education results in transferring the major powers over public education from the Ministry of
Education (or the Minister of Education) to a non-governmental governing body under the responsibility of the state. Handing the authority over public education to a sovereign governing body instead of a political power means that public opinion and public influence on the major matters of education are mostly not exhibited indirectly through the political mechanism of general elections but by a more direct appeal to a body whose sole interest is K-12 public education. This body will have the power to make binding decisions to which the state and governmental bodies will have to abide and of which to apply. As a strategic thinking and executive body, it will establish a vision and goals for education, and as such will be entrusted in the long-term planning of education, a prerogative that is kept today for the political authority in power. To paraphrase Georges Clemenceau, the French statesman: "Education is too important to be left to the politicians". Any other situation in which politicians have the ultimate authority over public education is inconsistent with the notion of a sovereign education that is grounded on being human as portrayed above.

But eliminating the political process from its key influential position in shaping education might immediately raise a criticism that as such education becomes undemocratic. Discussing and rejecting this claim in a broad manner is beyond the scope of this work, but it does provide an opportunity to further explain and justify my proposal with regard to the question who ‘owns’ education. Defining democracy is a contested matter, but it seems to me that in the context of the criticism against my proposal for non-politicized education as being undemocratic, and in today’s representational political mechanisms, it would be fair to say that those who charge my proposal as being undemocratic mean that it lacks the first component formulated by Diamond (2004) in his definition of democracy: “A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections” and as
“political system of competition for power”. Put differently, democracy, at least formally, is one in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by their elected agents, and thus there is an available political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections. If this general picture is accurate enough for our needs, the charge against my proposal as undemocratic is probably along the following lines: the fact that the elected public representatives are not those who decide about education renders education an endeavor outside the broad public’s business, outside the people’s control, and as such the people is devoid of the right to choose and replace the ones who make the decisions for it.

However, the main problem with this argument is that it maintains education as a realm for public control through the political mechanisms and through politics, that is, through “competition for power”. If the argument for undemocratic management of education is based on allegedly inappropriate removing politically elected representatives from governing education, I find it irrelevant under my view of education. As I call for a sovereign education that is not controlled by politicians, a claim for impinging democracy on the grounds of removing politics is nullified. Put differently, a sovereign education based on the proposed conceptual framework prevails over an education that is democratic when ‘democratic’ means being controlled by the elected people in power. A claim in favor of democracy should not push aside other goals or values that we might find superior to this specific political method. Thus, similar to my argument for a sovereign education that is preferable to
a political democratic rule over education, one can reasonably argue for a preference of justice over democracy, in the case that the latter prevents the former instead of serving it.\textsuperscript{108}

Those who accuse an apolitical governing body for a sovereign education of being undemocratic actually miss the point: the matter at stake is not about democracy, or which kind of democracy or which kind of participation, as increasingly discussed in the political science literature (for example Blaug, 2002) or specifically with regard to education (for example Pinto & Portelli, 2014). What is stake is how to perceive education and its place and role in society and in humanity as a whole. The discourse, I argue, should shift from ‘power’ to ‘education’: from how to manage the powers that have interest in education to what education should be and what we need to do in order to establish and protect it as such.

It is important to stress that although my proposal removes politicians from deciding about education, it does not eliminate democratic values from education governing. Going back to Diamond (2004), the other three components he suggests for democracy are: “The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life”; “Protection of the human rights of all citizens”; and “A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens”. I believe my proposal, as based on being human, strongly protects and advances human rights for all\textsuperscript{109} as well as is not problematic in terms of legal equality. However, I would like to focus on the element of civic life. Removing politicians from being the deciders does not eliminate civic participation in education decision-making; on the contrary, using principles that guide the establishment of national education councils we can

\textsuperscript{108} See also Walzer’s (1983) argument that a great danger of democratic government is that “it will be weak to cope with re-emerging monopolies in society at large… democracy is, as Marx recognized, essentially a reflective system, mirroring the prevailing and emerging distribution of social goods” (p. 15-16). This claims resonates with my argument that Dewey’s picture of growth is too fragile in the face of the aggressiveness by forces that distort the idea of social renewal for their own interests, as I describe in chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{109} As Todd (2009) argues, this educational consideration of human rights should be aware of the universalist/pluralist tension in mind. Attention to teachers’ and students’ experiences will address this tension.
devise ideas that promote civic involvement and increase public legitimacy of the governing body. A key aspect in this regard is how decision-making will take place, and specifically the way the governing body will be manned. In other words: how people will be appointed? In many existing councils the membership style is of self-representation when a political person appoints the council members (Van Damme et al., 2011; Weissblei, 2013). For example, in many US states it is the governor and in several European states it is the Minister of Education. In such cases the council members are individuals expressing their own personal views. However, as I call for reducing as much as possible political influence, and in order to prevent a political bias in appointing members, it is better that the power to appoint them – or at least most of them – is not in the hands of a specific person, as politically neutral or as widely accepted as such a person might be. One alternative is electing the members by the public, as exercised in several US states (NASBE, 2011). This option is problematic as it again makes the council exposed to the broad political struggles around education, and does not guarantee that most of the members have a real interest in education, that is, a non-instrumental one. Another alternative, which I find most promising among the existing options, is a delegation membership style in which members represent relevant interest groups and are bound by certain organizational instructions. In this case the interest groups elect their representatives. Van Damme et al. (2011) point out that when there is high legitimacy awarded to delegations and support from societal organizations represented in the policy process, bodies composed of delegates (what Van Damme et al. (2011) call also ‘neo-corporatist structures’) have the potential to be quite functional from the perspective of both government and elite stakeholders. On the other hand, there are the risks of ‘‘capture’ of the
policy domain by one or more key players and of backroom-dealing” and that these “neo-
corporatist structures guard the status quo” (p. 140).

It seems that in order to address these concerns, at least partially, several existing
councils are composed of delegates of many interest groups. Usually, the common
represented groups are of teacher unions (of different education levels), the government,
legislators, and experts in education from academia. Among other represented interest groups
mentioned in the literature are higher education (in general), school administrators, social
groups (for example, agencies that support people with disabilities), students (high school
and higher education), parents, employers, employees (the last two groups within the broader
economic industrial sector), and local government. According to the local social fabric,
there might be representatives of additional groups (for example religious, environmental,
and minorities). The important point for our discussion of sovereign education is that from
this variety of represented groups we should consider not limiting representation in the
governing body just to groups that are ‘in’ the education system (e.g. teachers, students,
administrators) or groups that are related to the system in different ways (e.g. parents,
experts), but also to stakeholders who are ‘close’ to the system in the sense that students’
future experiences are probably going to be connected to these stakeholders (e.g. employers,
employees, higher education, the army in places where military service is common).

Although it seems that representation of these ‘close’ groups is allowing the self-interested
forces to influence – and this time by entering through the front door – their input and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{110}}\text{These identities, of course, are not mutually exclusive. One can be, for example, both a parent and a school administrator. And there are also the rare cases where high school students are also parents.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\text{It might be seen as if this invitation to different stakeholders may open up a slippery slope; one might argue that education is connected to everything, so it will be difficult to manage a potentially much broader spectrum of representation. However, it seems to me that for most issues discussed in the governing body this list of possible represented groups is quite exhaustive.}\]
participation in the decision-making process should be considered; preventing their instrumental use of education does not mean ignoring their part in the societal life. The same goes for the government representatives: their presence and input is important in order to ensure coordination of the council’s work with the government and cooperation of the government. This interaction with government is especially important with regard to the available funding for education.

This last point about funding is crucial. Even advocates of a sovereign and non-politicized education cannot expect unlimited funding, an “open cheque” from the government to use for any educational project, even if there is a consensus about it. A sovereign education raises the problem of how money will be allocated for public education when the government has no power over education itself? In thinking about this difficulty it is important to understand that a call for sovereign education does not mean free access to state funding or to tax money. There is a distinction between decisions about education (which many times surely have financial implications) and the total amount of money designated for education. In other words, one possible model for funding a sovereign public education by the government might be that the government will still have the power over the budget, but the power to use it—that is, how to distribute the money—is kept to the council. Thus, there will be two levels of prioritizing is the decision making about education: the government will have the authority to decide on the priority it gives to education in the general budget among the different issues, and once the budget for education is set it is the council’s authority to prioritize who get what within education. However, as public education is not an isolated matter among societal issues, and the government will seek efficiency in allocating money, it is important that it will be in close contact with the council. Van Damme
et al. (2011) find that involvement of governmental representatives in advisory bodies discussions can be characterized by ways of informing (one-way communication) or interacting (two-way communication). It is preferable that a governing body over sovereign education will conduct an interactive communication with the government to better align its decisions with what the governmental funding enables.

An encouraging example for the suggested funding model is the funding given to the Israeli public committee responsible for deciding which treatments and medications will be granted to citizens as part of the publicly funded medical insurance. While the government sets the overall budget for these medical services, the committee has significant latitude in prioritizing the requested and offered items by patients, doctors, and medicine companies. Indeed, although this committee deals with matters of literally life and death, in some senses allocating the total amount for it is rather much simpler than allocating money for the public education system, since generally for medical services more is better: larger governmental budget means more funded medical services, and in turn more lives saved and better quality of life for patients. This one directional relationship is not necessarily true for education as in this domain there is no clear relation between money invested (or any resource) and results. Moreover, proposals for reducing public funding and allowing more private funding are not uncommon (see, for example, Gingrich’s call in section 1.2). Nevertheless, this model of double-phase prioritizing—first between areas by the government and then within education by the governing body—seems to yield some balance between a sovereign education, on the one hand, and the democratic government’s authority to rule over the taxpayer money, on the other.
The delegation membership style is expected to address, at least partially, the concern that the pressures that are currently channeled through and influential within the political realm will not just shift to the governing body and will have the same impact or even a stronger influence on public education. The reason to believe that such a proposed body will be more immune to self-interested pressures and to instrumental exploitation of students and the education system as a whole stems from the fact that the interests of the major represented groups, especially those that are ‘in’ or ‘related’ to education, do not necessarily overlap with the ideological or political views that motivate the self-interested forces. Van Damme et al. (2011) suggest that distance between advisory councils and the government can “allow for the councils to provide more independent policy advice, sometimes even to act as a countervailing force” (p. 141). Similarly, there is good reason to believe that being part of the education system or closely related to it mitigates adopting the instrumental perception of education and increases an opposite tendency. Of course, teachers, students, administrators, parents, and researchers of education certainly might think that public education should be a tool for goals that render teachers and students an instrument and damage their humanity (especially as we saw with regard to parents who adopt the instrumental approach). However, having a personal or professional involvement in the daily conduct of the education system probably reduces accepting instrumental principles and policies with regard to what one considers a major part of her life.\footnote{Although I do not have a direct empirical support for this claim I think it is fair to say that people act differently wearing different hats: it is not uncommon for parents to make decisions for their own children that they would not make for a population of students by virtue of the formal office they hold. By being a representative or acting in the public domain people have a different kind of responsibility and weigh a different set of considerations as they are feel committed to the ‘original’ or ‘natural’ interests of the institution or the community of which they represent.}
The aforementioned Israeli public committee for funding medical services is also an interesting example for a composition of a civic decision-making forum as I propose for education. This committee includes representatives of many groups, the majors ones being: the general population (the parliament and the Ministry of Health representatives), the general patient population, patients with specific illnesses, the general healthy population, the general medical doctors population, medical doctors and experts in specific medical areas, experts in other relevant areas (such as ethics and welfare), medication companies, and companies that market medications and medical equipment. It is clear that although everyone, in principal, wishes to save lives, cure patients, improve patients’ quality life, and in general to provide a better medical system, there are enormous conflicting interests, but still every year the committee succeeds in formulating a list of recommended medical services to be provided by the state (of course, not everyone happy and people lose their lives as a result of the decisions made).

Israel provides also examples for civic engagement through delegates in other areas, including politically charged ones that are more similar to schooling. One forum is the Judicial Selection Committee that appoints judges to Israeli courts. The founding of the committee was intended to prevent outside political pressure, and so ensure the independence of the judges. The committee has nine members and includes governmental representatives, politicians, and court professionals: the Justice Minister, as Chairman; a Cabinet Minister, chosen by the Cabinet; two parliament (the Knesset) Members, chosen by the parliament (usually one from the coalition and one from the opposition); two members of the Bar Association; and the Chief Justice, and two other judges of the Supreme Court. Again, it can be argued that the task of this committee is much more narrow than determining vision,
goals, and major decisions for an education system, but the political conflicts in this case are not necessarily less complicated compared to those involved in schooling. A final example deals with the public teaching-learning system that follows K-12 education – higher education. The Council for Higher Education in Israel supervises universities and colleges in Israel. This body is the only organization with the authority to award academic educational accreditation. According to the Council website, the goal in establishing it was “to establish a public, apolitical, independent and professional body to stand between the Government and the institutions of higher education and to deal with all issues connected with higher education in Israel, including setting policy in fundamental issues while ensuring the independence of the higher education system” (http://che.org.il/en/). Among its duties, the Council is responsible for the establishment of new universities and the expansion of existing universities. The total budget of the council is set by the government and is then transferred to the public universities and colleges. By virtue of the law, the head of the council is the Minister of Education, and at least two-thirds of its members should hold a “status in the field of higher education”, of which their appointment the Minister of Education recommends after consulting the recognized higher education institutions. Although it is not under the council’s purview to decide in matters of curriculum, teaching, and faculty appointing, it still very influential as it holds authority in matters of research, establishment of new universities, and the expansion of existing universities. Indeed, in this case the Minister of Education has a power regarding who sits in the Council, but on the other hand there is a majority guaranteed to people ‘in’ higher education and politicians are almost totally absent within the Council’s composition.113

113 One should not conclude from these examples, and I do not bring them in order to suggest, that Israel is
The above ideas and examples regarding the structure and conduct of a governing body that will be responsible for an apolitical sovereign public education do not, of course, address many complicated issues that need to be examined and are most likely to be a subject for a political struggle as well as posing technical difficulties. For example, how to decide which groups will be represented? What are the appropriate proportional sizes for each represented group and how many representatives for each group? What is the appropriate decision-making mechanism within the governing body that will ensure that a diverse representation will not lead to stagnation and will not prevent required decisions for the operation of the education system? Alternatively, how could “tyranny of the majority” be prevented? Who should have voting rights and who should not? How could the public which is not part of the represented groups and individuals voice their concerns and ideas? What is the required workload for the council and should its members be paid? And perhaps one of the most problematic areas is the legal one, with regard to which pressing questions are what is the status of the council’s decisions (are they considered laws?) and what is the legal liability of the council and its members (is, and which kind, the council a legal entity?)

Tackling these issues requires both a deep conceptual examination and a discussion within local contexts. However, the most challenging step in considering an idea for a sovereign education is in the hands of the acting politicians who are required to give up formal power over public education, and this waiver probably will not happen without a wide public campaign in favor of removing politicians from the decisive authority over public

an ideal place for representative bodies, or that Israel is structurally or formally more democratic than any other country, or that Israel has found the trick to a perfect political system. In bringing these examples I just wish to show that alternatives for the fully political governed model do exist.

114 In Israel, the public committee for funding medical services makes recommendations to the government about which service to fund. Once adopted by the government, the recommendations become government policy.
education. Arendt’s (1961) call should be carried clearly and loudly in leading such a campaign:

And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (p. 196)

4.4 Looking Around: Educational Research

When education is not political, that is, when it is not subordinated to any external self-interested force, it is free to shift from what the public as a consumer wants to what students as human beings need. And this need is based on the simplest but also the richest fact that they, and we all, are human beings. Once education is attentive to this fundamental fact and is not distracted by alien factors, it becomes clear that any human endeavor is a relevant domain from which to draw educative ideas. Acknowledging the fundamental fact opens the door to all human worlds—not just the scholarly ones—to constitute a resource for education; not just academic fields of inquiry such as sociology, physics, philosophy, and history, but also practical areas such as sports,^115^ arts, and politics are appropriate sources of experience from which to derive questions and themes in order to discover or create human understandings and meanings. As Postman and Weingartner (1969/2009) encourage exploring sources outside education: “within the educational establishment there are insufficient daring and vigorous ideas on which to build a new approach to education. One must look to men whose books would rarely be used, or even thought of, in education.

^115^ As a phenomenon that many young people experience and become emotional and enthusiastic about, by watching or by playing, sports holds a great potential from which to draw on elements that students might identify with. Sportsmen and sport fans undergo a host of experiences and feelings, beyond winning and losing, which have the potential for educative use. For example: tradition, beauty, sacrifice, persistence, planning, and cooperation.
courses, and would not be listed under the subject 'education' in libraries” (p. xiv). My call exceeds books and libraries as educative sources and incorporates any establishment and any endeavor that is not textual. This openness to a variety of disciplines and activities also enables students to take a more active role in shaping what happens in schools, as they are encouraged and welcomed to bring and share from their own experiences, and together with their peers and teachers to examine them in order to discover and create new meanings.

Looking around and considering any endeavor as a potential contributor for education is different from a dominant thinking about curriculum as a representative body of knowledge. Under the instrumental approach, a subject matter to be learnt is perceived as content to be mastered as an essential part of becoming fit to take a social role. In contrast, for an education that is ultimately aimed at examining experiences and drawing understandings and meanings, a subject matter is a means through which to expose teachers and students to human endeavors, a resource through which to think about the fundamental fact of being human. In other words, education as an agent for humanity is not aimed at learning subject matters, but learning from them. This ‘learning from’ includes studying the relevance of the specific subject matter so that new meanings arise. Thus, content (knowledge, skills, dispositions, and even values) as is objectified (Vandenberg, 1971) and presented as teachable curriculum is not the ultimate goal of education but is removed from its central or highest position in favor of human themes and questions (and perhaps also insights) that this content stimulates.

In contrast to Postman and Weingartner, however, I do not see education mainly as a means to deal with contemporary problems. Biesta’s (2014c) criticism of what he terms “learnification” supports my idea of ‘learning from’ in the sense of students’ activism in going beyond the curricular content. However, it should be noted that Biesta uses ‘learning from’ in another sense, a negative one of consuming from the teacher.
Education that is autonomous and independent from political struggles has removed its shackles of commitments and obligations to alien factors and is free to focus on what is really important: students as human beings. A release from political powers also means we stop seeing education as a means to address contemporary problems, both local social ones in the state arena (e.g. lack of patriotism or low economic competitiveness) and broader problems that threaten humanity (such as hunger or climate change). Education’s role is not to deal with problems, as important and perilous as they might be and as much hardship they cause to students as they might do (I oppose here Deweyan pragmatism as presented by Arcilla, 2002\textsuperscript{118}). However, not taking an active and direct part in addressing problems does not mean an isolated education system that operates in a bubble, unaware of the world, indifferent to the betterment of humanity or ignorant about the culture of instrumentalism that surrounds students in the social-political space; on the contrary. There is no intention to nurture students who are alienated or estranged with relation to instrumental attitude, whether with respect to education or in general. Such an education will be irresponsible as it does not inform and does not make students conscious of an important characteristic of society. However, promoting students’ awareness of the instrumental attitude does not mean preparing them to be assimilated in it uncritically, but rather developing their disposition towards challenging this culture.

An autonomous and independent education looks incessantly and curiously around itself and takes interest in everything that happens, close and far. However, the direct motivation is not training and producing problem solvers that will design and build solutions, but to allow students to develop as human beings in the richest of ways. The interest in what is going on

\textsuperscript{118} In section 5.6 I closely examine and reject the pragmatist Deweyan approach.
in the world, including current problems, is rooted in discovering human experiences, understandings, and meanings that regularly are unavailable to the teacher and her students. This is not a cold and technical interest aimed at establishing a catalogued ‘library’ of these basic human features. These features are learnt from both students’ and educators’ lives, on the one hand, and events and others’ lives outside school, on the other, and are meant to be acquired and internalized by students so they will be better aware of the fundamental fact of being a human being and of human lives. Their own practical involvement in addressing problems once they leave school, however, is in their own hands.

It is common to raise the objection of ‘detachment from reality’ against an education that does not see addressing society’s problems or needs as its goal, at least not its goal directly or explicitly. However, looking through the instrumental approach, the charge for detachment is understood as an intentional strategy on behalf of those self-interested forces whose business is to address these problems or needs. These forces are concerned that education that is not problem-driven will not provide them with the expected future members that are designated – by the instrumental perception – to deal with problems. Thus, any accusation that education is distanced from ‘reality’ or ‘the true life’ is actually an attempt to use education, to bend it, to take advantage of it for a specific agenda, to align it with interests, to politicize it in favor of a specific cause. It should be stressed that I am not implying that education should not be concerned with the world and that any such concern is instrumental submission. My argument is that an accusation of detachment is not honest and is raised against education when education does not serve the interests of the accuser. Therefore, there can be no accusation of detachment without an aspiration to recruit education for something. ‘World’ for the accusers is their world of interest.
The distancing from focusing on problems is not just because of the problematic and political nature of deciding what is considered a problem and then prioritizing those problems; after all, considering a phenomenon as a problem depends on gathering facts, interpretations of these facts, and weighing these interpretations against a long set of other concerns and interests. An urgent problem for one might be put in the bottom of another’s problems pile or even not be considered a problem at all. Refusing to address problems as a goal for education is inherent in rejecting the instrumental approach, in the perception that education is not a means for something else, as positive and agreeable as this cause might be. In other words, consensus around an issue is not necessarily a guide for education. But education that is really sensitive to what happens around it and enables students to be critically familiar with experiences, understanding, and meanings will allow students to develop a deep and honest awareness of the world which will be translated later into authentic involvement, not an enforced and implanted involvement motivated by alien forces.

Philosophy and other areas of inquiry and practice are crucial for developing this sensitivity.119

An important tool in exposing students and teachers to the world is academic research. By looking at domains outside education, researchers (professional academics) can identify and offer ideas to be used as a source for new experiences many of which students and teachers most likely will not have the chance to undergo. The challenge in such research is to offer ideas that bear the potential to stimulate understandings and meanings that will not emerge through the learned bodies of knowledge (or the familiar content within these bodies of knowledge) or the close environment in which students and teachers dwell. Thus,

119 In chapter 5 I deepen the examination of education’s status in society vis-à-vis its relationships with philosophy.
researchers will seek to appropriate relevant elements from a variety of areas of practice and inquiry such as psychology, art, sports, and philosophy. It is important to note that the sources found by research are not to be handed down to practice as is; researchers have the task to examine and modify their findings for educative use, that is, to offer ideas that eventually might yield meanings with regard to being human. A similar modification is needed in the practitioners’ side: curriculum designers and teachers must examine the ideas from research before putting them into practical action, whether in writing a curriculum or in discussing matters with students in class. In each point, offered ideas are to be treated as a raw material to be processed in the local context so that students and teachers will have better conditions to extract meanings. In schools, teachers will use research ideas and insights not as ‘programs’ but as proposals (or suggestions, or possibilities) and will weigh them against their students’ and their own experiences, understandings, and meanings. Teachers will be given much more latitude to navigate and to adjust research contribution to the unique features of their communities and students.

But research’s role is not limited to be suggestive, that is, research is not merely aimed at pointing out or informing what there is outside education to which educators should pay attention as a source for educative ideas. I see research also as having a protecting role, guarding schooling from being instrumentalized by external forces. Researchers need to turn their gaze not just inside education in order to examine education as their object of study but also and at times mostly outside of education in order to identify, warn, and fend off threatening forces. While economic forces are currently indeed a common target for protective research (e.g., as we have already mentioned in section 1.2, Norris, 2011a), research should also turn its criticism towards other self-interested forces that their influence
or their instrumental approach might be less explicit or less aggressive, such as the state and academia.

In taking this dual role of both suggesting and protecting, research will be the sensitive eyes and ears for education; research will be the watchman and sensor for practitioners. In other words, research purpose is not just to make education better in terms of meeting expectations but also to make education more aware, knowledgeable, and richer.

To better understand how the suggested relationships between research and practice are significantly different than other current or new ways of thinking about the research-practice connection, it is useful to compare it to an emergent paradigm known as ‘Knowledge Mobilization’ (KM or KMb; in the health sciences it is common to use the term ‘Knowledge Translation’ (KT)). According to this dynamic, there is a distinction between knowledge creators, users, and mediators, and Knowledge Mobilization occurs when knowledge is moved “into active service for the broadest possible common good” (The Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), 2006). Mobilization is conducted by increasing “‘connectivity’ or the multidirectional pathways for knowledge discovery, exchange and uptake” (Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship, University of Guelph, http://www.theresearchshop.ca). Knowledge is understood to mean any or all of “1) findings from specific social sciences and humanities research, 2) the accumulated knowledge and experience of social sciences and humanities researchers, and 3) the accumulated knowledge and experience of stakeholders concerned with social, cultural, economic and related issues” (SSHRC, 2006). Within these types of relationships, knowledge is some kind of a static statement about state of affairs and is in the center of research-practice dynamics. It seems that according to Knowledge Mobilization knowledge needs to be found since in its original
state it is hidden or covert, and then it is given to those who are supposed to use it by turning it from a passive to an active state as if something is to be turned on, put into action. The creators that find the knowledge are doing something that the users do not, whether since the users cannot or are not supposed to. The major difference between this picture and the one I suggest is that in Knowledge Mobilization one side passes a needed or vital element for another side as a required input (at least as the providing side sees it), whereas in my proposal research results are only one available contribution to be considered vis-à-vis other contributions from other sources as well as teachers’ and students’ contribution stemming from their own lives. Although less robust than strict top-down structures, Knowledge Mobilization is still a delivery mechanism that objectifies knowledge and prioritizes the production capabilities of research over those of practice, and as such leaves little room for critical and interpretative examination by teachers and students. In contrast, in human-based education research contributions might be significantly changed, adjusted, modified, or even—in case it is found unusable or inappropriate by practitioners—completely ignored.  

4.5 Conclusion

Following the argument in chapter 2 to grant education an agency (or to restore it), I call in this chapter to release education from the political grasp and to grant it sovereignty to conduct itself according to human guidelines. Rethinking the political dimension of education is part of a wider desired shift of reestablishing the essence, status, and goal of education in society and within humanity in general.

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120 In terms of the systemic model (section 1.4) and similarly to the use of standardized tests, in Knowledge Mobilization research is part of the social machine that feeds practice with input to be processed and to be used while in human-based education research is in the service of practice.
In order to be a truly basic human endeavor and serve as an agent for humanity, education has to be an autonomous and independent social sphere that has the legitimacy for self-governing and self-determining. I examine in this chapter the idea of a governing body and propose several key features of such a body. Reclaiming sovereignty, however, does not mean to render education isolated and does not mean closure, distance, or indifference towards the ‘outside’ world. As a basic human endeavor education will look at everything around it in order to find sources for the basic human features.

It is important to stress that the autonomy and independence for education means also immense responsibility. Although operating an educational system is a huge task, educators today, in a sense, “enjoy” the “exemption” from the need to think fundamentally; overall, they are doing what they are told to do by visible and invisible forces that manipulate education. But sovereignty over the goals of education comes with the responsibility—not ‘accountability’ as the neoliberal terminology applies false autonomy on schools—for students’ humanity. Thus, education and educators who are liberated from being a servant for others need at the same time to acknowledge the weight of the task and education’s crucial place in shaping societies and humanity.

It should be clear, though, that by pointing out the responsibility for students’ humanity I am not imposing a sole liability on teachers. Although some ignorance exists with regard to teachers’ work, any serious examination of the teaching profession under neoliberal scrutiny reveals that most teachers are overworked, over-managed, under-led, and under-supported. Although in class it is ‘one woman show’, it is mostly so only with regard to how to transmit readymade content with little or no substantial involvement in the organizational infrastructure of school or any leeway about what to teach and how to manage the
educational timeline. In other words, teacher leadership is focused mainly on improving the regular delivery of content through notions such as ‘distributed leadership’ (Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2008) and ‘instructional leadership’ (Graczewski et al., 2009; Neumerski, 2012) and less on devising new ways of perceiving the school in general or teaching in particular. In order to demand and allow teachers to carry some of the responsibility for protecting and nurturing students’ humanity, the first requirement is that the organizational level and the bureaucratic aspect of the educational system as a whole and of the school be ready for such human-focused education and supportive of teachers’ requests and initiatives. The responsibility is first on systemic and organizational change, not on what teachers need to do in their classrooms.

Following my call for a shift from education that is a social servant to education that is an agent for humanity, one idea that I propose to consider at the systemic level is lowering teachers’ curricular teaching workload. As currently some parts of the curriculum are there in order to serve the external self-interested forces (see for example section 1.2 for the example regarding Ontario Grade 12 mathematics curriculum), I argue that under my view on education they can be significantly reduced without damaging required skills for graduates. This cut will allow teachers more mental availability and more time to dedicate for addressing the fundamental fact of being human and the basic human features. It might seem that this proposed curriculum reduction is almost solely relevant for subject matters that (as they are currently constructed) are mostly directed to meet economic demands (e.g. mathematics and sciences). However, since academia is also a key player in influencing education it seems to me that revision can be taking place across the curriculum.
As advocates of sovereign education that is an agent for humanity can only claim for a different status for public education but cannot actually change by themselves the status and role of education in society, the power to bestow on education this freedom is to a great extent in the hands of those who use education as an instrument to advance their own agenda. However, a plea has to be made to the public to explain that what education is today is not what it has to be, and that an alternative perception of education will benefit students as human beings and humanity as a whole. This vision for education cannot be realized without the state—the authority responsible for educating the young—giving up its power to control education and allowing education to be a self-governing social sphere. The state needs to take this brave step of handing over education to educators, and stop seeing it—through the political realm—as a tool to promote political and ideological agendas. Education that is politically driven, as is today, incorporates only a narrow and manipulated area of issues and hence has a limited potential of encountering human features. Politicized education precludes an education as an agent for humanity.

Following the call for a sovereign education that needs to look around and examine what is happening in other spheres as a source for the human features, I closely examine in the next chapter the relationships between philosophy and education and propose a particular way education should benefit from looking at the philosophy sphere.
5. The Relationships between Education and Philosophy

Thus far, I focused in this work on education as a social sphere and discussed important features that are required in order to protect it: I analyzed a central threat to its agency, proposed guidelines for its identity and operation, and argued for its sovereignty in political terms. I claimed that instead of submissive relationships with other spheres education should have its own discretion in considering how to manage itself and its interaction with others. In this chapter I take a close look at education’s relationships with one central sphere that shares a long history with education: philosophy. This issue is, of course, not new. However, in the context of the status and role of education in society and in light of my argument for a sovereign education and a protecting educational research, I would like to examine how the call for education with agency and for a politically sovereign education is to be articulated in the relationships of education with philosophy and in the mixed area of philosophy of education.

The crisis in education—as it is reflected through the instrumental approach—is well demonstrated in the area of philosophy of education that suffers from a continual multifaceted crisis concerning its identity, belonging, attractiveness, recognition, and resources. This predicament is not only in reference to the general, non-academic public that is usually unfamiliar with and uninterested in academic endeavors; the predicament has hit severely within university walls (See Biesta 2014b, 2015a). For a few decades now there has been a debate regarding its appropriate affiliation and ties with what traditionally is considered its parent discipline, philosophy. In addition, interest in and resources for this area are diminishing. This is evident by closing departments and programs of philosophy of education, shrinking classes and faculty, rare calls for positions in the field, and a growing
battle against social sciences in providing theoretical frameworks for education, a battle in which too often it finds itself defeated. The crisis is rooted both within and outside education itself. Humanistic areas in general and liberal education in particular are under attack and struggling (Nussbaum, 2012). Philosophy always struggled to receive recognition and moreover, funding. And education is under attack of scientism and a demand for measured results for decades. Indeed, philosophy of education takes a hit from many directions.

I open this chapter with clarification as to how I understand philosophy. Next, I review and analyze developments in the philosophy-education debate in the last few decades, and identify two major types of associations (or lack thereof) between the two domains: either disconnection or alternatively a complete commitment of education to philosophy. Then I argue for a different kind of association according to which education examines philosophical discussions in order to retrieve or distill educative ideas. After addressing a charge that challenges my proposal—namely, that any philosophy of education is actually biased towards a specific philosophical and political standpoint—I compare my view on the philosophy-education link to Dewey’s. Finally, I demonstrate the distilling process of educative ideas from philosophy by examining the work of Heidegger and propose the educational goal of examining the meaning of being a human being. Within this section on Heidegger I also discuss several policy and pedagogical implications. Throughout the chapter, through the lens of the philosophy-education relationships, I hope also to clarify and strengthen some of the major claims for agency and sovereignty I put forward in previous chapters.
5.1 Philosophy as a Sphere of Rigorous Inquiry of the Fundamental

Before examining the relationships between education and philosophy, I wish to clarify what I mean by “philosophy”. By this clarification I do not intend, of course, to give any exhaustive review of what philosophy is, but mainly to explain how I take up philosophy so it will assist us later in distinguishing it from education and proposing principles for their relationships (and for philosophy of education).

It is important to note that in this chapter I follow and maintain the spherical picture that was introduced in section 2.1. I used in this work this spherical picture in order to support my claim for granting education an agency, that is, a sovereign identity. As I consider education as a sphere (that is, as an area of endeavor), I will also consider philosophy as a sphere. This way of addressing philosophy is different from a holistic consideration that is spread across social spheres. For example, seeing philosophy as a ‘life practice’, as Bai (2006) characterizes Confucian philosophy as “this life-practice of establishing and integrating the self in ever-expanding concentric circles of communities, all the way from household to cosmos… for Confucians, philosophy is understood as a comprehensive art of life-long self-making.” (p. 16). Although I appreciate and acknowledge the contribution of viewing philosophy in this way (as indeed Bai demonstrates), perceiving philosophy and education as two different spheres is preferred here because it is in line with the fact that the institutionalized (and consequently also the conceptual) forms of these two enterprises have separated from each other (as I explain in the next section).121 Moreover, considering them as

121 One might argue that this segregation to spheres makes it a Western conception of our lives. However, as this compartmented view (and within it the instrumental approach to education and the predicament of education) is prevalent today also in non-Western societies, I take it as the given societal framework to which this work addresses. Still, admittedly, it is fair to say that I am taking ‘philosophy’ here as it has been developed
spheres better allows examining their relationships in terms of power relations and their actual and possible mutual influence.

Considering philosophy as a sphere does not tell us what philosophy is, that is, what distinguishes it from other spheres. Some might be satisfied with the statement that “‘what philosophy is?’ is a philosophical question” and thus are content with just pointing out the self-reflective character of philosophy. Although this is an important quality of philosophy, for our discussion here—a discussion that is also expected or required to shed some light on ‘philosophy of education’—I am looking for a more specific answer to “what philosophy is?” in the sense of philosophy’s relationships with or attitude towards the world, that to which philosophy relates to, that towards which philosophy’s intentionality is directed.

It is common to mention that literally, the word philosophy means love of wisdom. Smith (1964) tells us that “[s]ome of the early philosophers were fond of pointing out that they did not claim to be wise men—merely lovers of wisdom” (p. 1). Thus, philosophers were different from the sophists, a word which means literally one who is wise. Both early philosophers and sophists were teachers, but while the philosophers “believed their role was one of helping others in the search for wisdom”, the sophists had a more focused end in mind: “Many sophists viewed teaching not so much as a process of assisting the student in a search for wisdom but rather as a matter of telling or giving the student, for a fee, certain information, skills, and conclusions, that made up the content of the education of a wise man” (ibid.). Indeed, the influence of external economic forces is by no means new. The instrumental approach for teaching goes back at least 2500 years.

in Western thought and that I am following its tradition as a intellectual endeavor. But this, by itself, does not undermine my analysis and proposal regarding the relationships between the two spheres.
This initial characterizing of philosophy in terms of ‘love’ might suggest that originally philosophy is just a tendency, an appeal, an attraction. However, this love is by no means platonic: the lovers of wisdom do not leave their subject of love in a distance, but they actually approach it, they are courageous enough to do something about it. In other words, I am adopting here the sense that originally and essentially philosophy is an activity. This characterization is faithful to the original sense of the phenomenon philosophy, as opposed to what the term might mean as a ‘late’ result, a sense that is just an instance of the original one, such as holding a position of ‘philosopher’ or possessing a general view about something (such as in the colloquial declaration ‘my philosophy is…’, ‘the coach’s philosophy of game is…’). Thus, by perceiving philosophy as an activity we are seeking to understand what the one who we will consider as ‘philosopher’ does. Put differently, a philosopher is one who philosophizes as a distinct activity. As Wittgenstein (2010/1922) argues in the *Tractatus*, although by referring only to a specific ‘tool’ of the possible philosophical arsenal: “Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of ‘philosophical propositions’, but to make propositions clear” (4.112, p. 44).

As I ruled out above ‘non-active’ meanings of philosophy, I wish also to eliminate activities that are not necessarily truthful to the spirit of original philosophical activity or do not necessarily reflect pursue after wisdom. In other words, I exclude phenomena that are just a late consequence or side-effect of the attraction, such as becoming familiar with philosophy as a body of knowledge in order to pass an exam. This more narrow understanding of philosophy clarifies why the sophists are not considered philosophers: as we saw above, they

122 Studying the history of philosophy is an interesting case here, as it might lead to philosophical insights or clarification of philosophical arguments.
just teach ‘words of wisdom’, they are not involved in creating these insights. Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that philosophy is a special activity in the form of inquiry.\(^\text{123}\)

If ‘philosophy’ is some kind of inquiry, which kind of inquiry is it? After all, ‘science’ is today a leading paradigm for inquiry, but we surely do not mean that philosophy is a member of the sciences, whether the natural or the human-social sciences (and not because of the fact that by this classification we might offend many philosophers and philosophy students). It seems that what is unique for philosophy as an inquiry (as arguably for any inquiry) is a combination of the specific content it deals with and the manner it does so.\(^\text{124}\) Let us look at several common characterizations of the matter that philosophers, as philosophers, find interesting. Smith (1964) claims:

Great philosophers… though most of them have devoted endless study to the work of other philosophers, each has struggled to state anew what seemed to him to be the most fundamental problems of man, and then, in his own terms, to develop a comprehensive and systematic body of speculative answers” (p. 2).

Joll (http://www.iep.utm.edu/con-meta/), in his entry of ‘Contemporary Metaphilosophy’ for The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP), writes: “According to Aristotle, philosophy begins in wonder, seeks the most fundamental causes or principles of things, and is the least necessary but thereby the most divine of sciences”. And Teichmann and Evans (1999) state: “Philosophy is a study of problems which are ultimate, abstract and very general. These problems are concerned with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, reason and human purpose” (p. 1). Of course, as in any case of selective collection of textual ‘evidence’ such as

\(^{123}\) Perceiving philosophy as an activity of inquiry allows us to include long-term or constant comportment of inquiry; philosophy is not limited to a limited event in time and space. Therefore, philosophy that is enacted as a way of life (as Socrates lived, see Smith (1964), p. 2) is considered here philosophizing.

\(^{124}\) Thus, although alchemy and chemistry both inquire the same content of matter, chemistry is considered modern science and alchemy is not since they use different modes of inquiry. As another example, painting and photography are both visual arts that inquire and experiment with light, shapes, colors, and capturing of a moment, by they do it using different tools and different techniques.
this, I might be accused for being biased in my selection. However, I believe that the aforementioned characterizations are fairly representative and faithful to both what philosophers think about their discipline and to what distinguishes philosophy from the sciences. If this is so, we can say that philosophy, in general, is an inquiry of fundamental issues and fundamental problems, which means, *inter alia*, that philosophy studies things that natural science is not able to explain.

What about the way philosophy studies fundamental issues and fundamental problems? It seems that here things are more complicated, as philosophy is not the only way humans use in order to examine the fundamental and to offer answers to questions about which science is silence; art and religion are defiantly two of the most popular alternatives to which people turn. However, philosophy does achieve a unique status among other ways of ‘thinking’, understood broadly. We saw above that Smith (1964) characterizes the philosophical inquiry as “comprehensive and systematic” (p. 2). Quinton (1995) explains how philosophical inquiry is different from potential non-philosophical alternatives:

philosophy is rationally critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind about the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). Each of the three elements in this list has a non-philosophical counterpart, from which it is distinguished by its explicitly rational and critical way of proceeding and by its systematic nature. Everyone has some general conception of the nature of the world in which they live and of their place in it. Metaphysics replaces the unargued assumptions embodied in such a conception with a rational and organized body of beliefs about the world as a whole. Everyone has occasion to doubt and question beliefs, their own or those of others, with more or less success and without any theory of what they are doing. Epistemology seeks by argument to make explicit the rules of correct belief-formation. Everyone governs their conduct by directing it to desired or valued ends. Ethics, or moral philosophy, in its most inclusive sense, seeks to articulate, in rationally systematic form, the rules or principles involved.

Although it is possible to argue that Quinton’s list of the major philosophical areas is not exhaustive, I think that it is adequate to say that from Smith’s and Quinton’s
characterizations, and from taking philosophy as a serious inquiry as it is practiced in the Western culture, in general philosophy follows standards of rational, critical, and systematic inquiry. I will term this way of inquiry ‘rigorous’. Indeed, the scientific method is also entitled to such a label, but science is differentiated from philosophy by the content and the scope of its inquiry as it studies phenomena within an already given fundamental frameworks. These frameworks are established, for example, by the major philosophical areas that Quinton mentions (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics), and questioning these frameworks is the business of philosophy. As Dewey (2004) observes:

> When science denotes not simply a report of the particular facts discovered about the world but a general attitude toward it—as distinct from special things to do—it merges into philosophy… It is for the sciences to say what generalizations are tenable about the world and what they specifically are. But when we ask what sort of permanent disposition of action toward the world the scientific disclosures exact of us we are raising a philosophic question” (p. 349-350).

Nothing in this discussion, including the claim that ‘a philosopher is one who philosophizes’, implies that by ‘philosopher’ I suggest a professional philosopher, that is, one who philosophizes for money. This might make such a professional more of a sophist than a true philosopher. However, in the current context of our discussion—the relationships between philosophy and education as spheres—the bulk of available philosophy (that is, outcomes or records of philosophical thinking that can be used for education) is concentrated almost exclusively within institutionalized philosophy and specifically within the academic

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125 Compare to Bai (2006): “For Confucians, philosophy is not mainly an intellectual exercise but, as Li Zehou puts it, ‘pragmatic rationality’ that works out the ‘mutual penetration and merging of sensuality and rationality, individuality and sociality, physiology and sociology, from consciousness to unconsciousness.’ ” (p. 15)

126 Despite this quote, Dewey sees philosophy differently than me as he designates it a social pragmatic role and consequently he holds a different view about the relationships between philosophy and education. I compare my approach to his in section 5.6.
discipline. Hence, by referring to philosophy in this chapter I will limit the discussion to philosophy as it is practiced in higher education institutions.

5.2 All or Nothing

In *Democracy and Education* Dewey (2004) offered a powerful model for the relationships between philosophy and education as he claimed that “if we are willing to conceive of education as the process of forming dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education” (p. 383). But doubts and concerns have consistently kept arisen regarding the link between the two domains. As Biesta (2014a) shows, in the English speaking world philosophy of education as an institutionalized area in universities reached prominence only in the mid twentieth century when teacher education programs were integrated into universities.

An attempt to map the possible types of associations between them was taken by Smith (1965) who claims that “[i]f there are many ways of conceiving philosophy and many ways of conceiving education, it follows that there must be many, many, ways of conceiving philosophy of education” (p. 51). Thus, he offers and analyzes ‘philosophy and education’, ‘philosophy in education’, ‘philosophy for education’, and ‘philosophy of education’. Peters (1966) points to a vague understanding of ‘philosophy of education’ by both philosophers and educators:

the philosophy of education has not been rigorously explored since the 'revolution in philosophy' because, to a large extent, there has been a widespread misunderstanding about what it is. Philosophers, on the other hand, treat it with mild contempt either because they assume that its exponents regard it as a *sui generis* branch of philosophy or because their bent is to pursue fundamental questions in ways dictated by the

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127 In section 5.6 I review in depth and critique Dewey’s view on the relationships between philosophy and education. I explain how I see education different from philosophy.

128 And we can think of other ways to connect the two, such as philosophy as education (and vise versa).
history of the discipline itself and not as they arise from concrete issues; educators, on
the other hand, formulate principles in ignorance of the detailed discussion by
philosophers of the fundamental assumptions presupposed by their principles (p. 18)

In the 1970s Suttle (1974) had already identified an “identity crisis in philosophy of
education” (as the title of his article announces). He argued that philosophy of education is
different from other “mixed disciplines” (p. 277) such as philosophy of science and
philosophy of history, because these disciplines are not self-reflective as philosophy and
philosophy of education are. Thus, according to Suttle, since “[u]ltimately there is no
significant difference between so-called pure or formal philosophy and philosophy of
education” (p. 282), the fundamental problem of philosophy of education is “what is
philosophy of education?”.

These attempts to analyze the relationships between philosophy and education led to an
increased confusion about the linkage of the two and to a dispute regarding the role and place
of philosophy of education. In this section I identify two major attitudes that emerge from the
discussion about the relationships between the two spheres and the appropriate understanding
of philosophy of education.

5.2.1 Divorce

As two major domains, both philosophy and education exist from the dawn of humanity. As
it is implied in the previous section, in their inceptions their ways frequently crossed if not
overlapped. The cave allegory is a prominent example of a philosophical-educative text and
the ancient Greek academy are an example of philosophical-educative institution. However,
in time, philosophy and education more and more went their own separate ways, mainly
since education adopted a social identity that has distanced itself from the fundamental
character of philosophy and philosophy became an abstract and higher learning discipline, education turned its back on philosophy since it found better partners within the social sciences. As Arcilla (2002) states, “in looking for convincing social theory to guide their communicative work, most educators turned, in the course of the twentieth century, away from philosophers, and toward social scientists” (p. 9). Specifically, as discussed in previous chapters, education—both as a practical endeavor and as an academic discipline—has become a social service that follows other’s dictation (especially politics, economy, nationality, and religion). As a result, education as an academic field can be seen as another science that has departed from philosophy when its practical arm (schooling) becomes a comprehensive institutionalized social endeavor (or sphere) in itself (and became mass education) together with the maturation of education as an independent area of inquiry (like physics and psychology). This area of study lives its own life without philosophy’s patronage, a separation that followed the development of empirical research tools that allowed the academic field (and thus also schooling itself, as we saw through the instrumental approach and the systemic model) to be based on empirical research. An accompanying trend was a curriculum whose content and the way it is taught has moved away from pondering the fundamental and instead its reputed part focuses in subject matters that are the interest of the external non-educative forces, mainly the sciences in the broad

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129 In spite of emergent trends such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) and teaching philosophy at high schools (especially in Ontario, Canada), philosophy is still mainly an academic enterprise done in universities. But even within these emergent trends the philosophical thinking on the fundamental is concentrated in a specific learning unit and is not spread across the educative process or across the curriculum.
130 See, for example, Goldin & Katz (2008) for the role education played in the American economy.
131 To be sure, I am not diminishing the value of the social sciences or empirical methods for researching education, but intend to stress that they have taken the place of philosophical thinking in serving as the conceptual framework and the methodological tool through which education is studied.
sense for economic reasons and issues that are close to national identity such as history and religion studies.

Significant concerns about a rift between philosophy and education began to emerge in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Soltis (1983) observed that while professional twentieth-century philosophers like Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Brameld have written primarily with regard to the public dimension of education, “many contemporary philosophers of education don’t mine that particular seam at all” (p. 16). He urges philosophers in general and philosophers of education to adhere to the claim that “relevance of what we do to education must be the sine qua non of our professional commitment. It cannot be otherwise if we are honestly to call ourselves philosophers of education” (p. 19). Siegel’s (1983) response to Soltis reflects a willingness to depart from education as a practical endeavor and is indifferent to whether philosophy’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 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” (p. 34). He makes the same point for any area of educational practice: “If educational policy benefits as the result of the work of professional philosophy of education, fine. Similarly for classroom practice, or teacher training” (ibid). For Siegel, the professional philosopher “need not justify her philosophical activity in terms of its payoff for educational practice” (ibid). Almost two decades later, in response to Arcilla (2002), Siegel (2002) was even more blunt:

\[132\] The problem is not with these subject matters per se, but with using them to serve the external forces and embed in students specific identities.
Philosophy of education, like its parent discipline, philosophy, has a dignity and integrity of its own and its survival as a worthy scholarly pursuit is not dependent upon conversation with anyone… conversation with education is desirable, but hardly necessary; its absence may be regrettable, but does not doom philosophy of education to extinction. (p. 279-280)

However, when this approach that accepts isolation as a possible situation is coupled with the external self-interested forces that lurk waiting to take over education, the result is a detachment between philosophy (and philosophy of education) and education. For, the indifference about philosophy’s impact on education enables these non-educative forces enter the vacuum created regarding what education is and what should be its goals. Their influence is increasing also because, unlike philosophy, they are in direct and constant contact with schooling, the political domain, and the broad public. As education is under attack, philosophers of education who (directly or indirectly) discharge themselves from being concerned what is happen in schools actually risk education’s essence and education’s identity and damage education itself by allowing non-educative forces taking over. It is absolutely philosophers of education’s business that important educational ideals that were established to serve students and humanity are being eroded and being replaced by ideals that are designed by self-interested external forces, and it is absolutely philosophers of education’s business that education is losing its identity as a unique sphere and is becoming a subordinate one. Even Siegel’s clarification that “I am not arguing that we should not do philosophy in the public sphere, but only that we need not do so” (ibid) does not remove the concern that in reality philosophy of education, and with it philosophy in general, will not contribute at all to practice. Thus, the attitude that Siegel presents is blind to the broader context of education and its status within society and within humanity.

No wonder, then, that in our time the separation between philosophy and education has reached an atmosphere of perplexity and bewilderment within philosophy of education, an
area that is supposed to link or to bridge the two but instead includes voices that announce a crisis between them. For example, Arcilla (2002) talks in terms of “divorce” about “the established silence between philosophy and education” (p. 2) and Thompson (2002) in terms of an “unhappy marriage”.

It will be useful to pay heed to an analogy Soltis (1983) raises between a philosopher of education and a medical practitioner which Siegel (1983) picks up and modifies to an analogy between philosopher of education and the medical researcher, arguing that the latter is not bound to practice her art in the public sphere. Siegel adds that “research must be distanced, or autonomous, from practice… theory, if it is to aid practice, must be autonomous from that practice” (p. 35). However, I argue that the analogy is not appropriate at all; education is essentially different from medicine. There is no scientific “theory” to follow for education as there is for medicine and other practical fields. And as argued above, it is not just theory that should be autonomous but education itself, the whole human endeavor that includes both practice and theory (including philosophy of education) working together in the service of students as complete human beings. Thus, Siegel’s approach gives rise to and reinforces the theory-practice divide and lets non-educative interests to come between them. The Soltis-Siegel dispute serves the external forces, not education.

The distance between education as a designated social function or sub-system and philosophy and the fact that educators—practitioners and scholars—usually do not perceive

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133 A telling example for the rupture between philosophy and education is the literature discussing the potential contribution of philosophy to educational policy. Much of the discussion focuses on the tensions between the two domains and their contradicting goals. See Conroy et al., 2008; Fielding, 2000; Martin, 2011; McLaughlin, 2000. An encouraging sign in this regard, however, might be the launch of a new center at the University of Illinois at Chicago for incorporating philosophical thinking into educational policy and practice (http://www.news.wisc.edu/23337?utm_content=buffer99ee0&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer).
philosophy as a relevant resource for educational ideas prevent philosophical ideas from being considered useful for education. Closing the door on philosophy and refusing letting it in into the educational sphere (or making it difficult for philosophy to enter) results in losing philosophy’s unique potential contribution to education in the form of rigorous thinking about and of the fundamental, and hence closing doors on human understandings and meanings that might emerge from philosophical deliberation. Put differently, while, in a sense, philosophy always wishes to educate in one way or another (that is, to inform, influence or change fundamental perception), education per se—not philosophy of education—usually avoids philosophizing. I see this situation as a great deficiency of education, one that leads to narrowing of education and eventually contributes to the instrumental approach towards education.

5.2.2 Hierarchical Relationships

The lack of direct and substantial communication between education and philosophy, or more directly between educators and philosophers, does not mean that scholars do not use philosophy for education. On the contrary, philosophical worldviews constitute a starting point and a guide for scholars—mostly those with a philosophical background—as they draw educational implications. Actually, this use of philosophy as a directive for education is another expression of the distance between philosophy (and philosophy of education) and education. Depaepe (2007) well articulates this distancing when he observes that much like the area of history of education, “the philosophy of education, too, has evolved out of a philosophy for education into a philosophy of education, in which process—just like the history of education—it has ceased to be the handmaiden (ancilla) of education” (p. 34). Depaepe suggests, so I understand his analogy with the history of education, that philosophy
of education has distanced itself from education and at the same time got closer to philosophy. Indeed, I argue that philosophers of education are becoming more committed to philosophy than to education, and that they constitute the field as another branch of general philosophy rather than keeping a focus on education to serve the needs of the practical endeavor (which can be done also indirectly through enhancing education research).

In arguing that philosophers of education are more committed to philosophy than to education I mean that many studies under this title are anchored too deeply in philosophical positions, span too much time in the philosophical world and not enough in education, or start from philosophy and just in the end are kind enough to pay a courteous and glimpsed visit in the educational fields, usually under the section of “implications”. As White (2013) argues regarding contemporary philosophers of education, “in an endeavour to show that they are not second-class philosophical citizens, but genuine members of that community, some may turn too far inwards, trailing brief and unexciting ‘educational implications’ from their in-depth studies of Leibniz or the nature of pragmatism” (p. 297). Therefore, White calls to “stop modelling ourselves, if we do, on a template based in philosophy departments” (ibid). As Bredo (2002) claims, for the philosopher of education “it is often easier to retreat into an analysis of some esoteric philosopher’s thought, or debate about research methods and epistemology, than to propose solutions to the educational difficulties of our time” (p. 270). Similarly, Laverty (2014) observes: “Today it is more common for philosophers of education to mine the work of Jacques Derrida, Emanuel Levinas, and Gilles Deleuze for the educational implications of contemporary philosophical discussion” (p. 112). In a sense, this is another case when education is being told what to do, this time by general philosophy.
The application of philosophical ideas to education is in itself, of course, not a problem. Philosophy and education are both spheres that focus on the human and as such they at times overlap. But this proximity should not make philosophers of education think that there can be a direct and unmediated translation or transformation from philosophy to education. The problem I am pointing to is not the mere offering of implications for education; this is welcomed. The problem is that education is regarded as a passive or submissive sphere into which it is easy or convenient to ‘pour’ philosophical conclusions and that education is a sphere ready to absorb philosophical conclusions without any modifications or adjustments. Seen this way, what philosophers of education are offering as implications can hardly be considered a genuine contribution to the field of education but more of as orders, as if the philosopher of education says to the teacher or to the policy maker: ‘I have checked the matter and consulted with the great philosophical minds, and I have come to a conclusion that what you should do is…’. Bredo (2002) expresses a similar worry, although he sees philosophy of education as an area in itself and is concerned about orders given to it also by practice. Referring to “philosophy of education’s own unique problems” he states: “If these are addressed well the field may even alter philosophy and educational practice in small ways rather than taking its marching orders from them” (p. 270). Bredo adds that philosophy of education should take the task of “proposing better ways to educate” and that is should “do so on its own terms rather than on those dictated by current philosophy or educational practice” (p. 271). Indeed, what is at stake here is education’s sovereignty (and in it, philosophy of education’s sovereignty).

My concern about philosophers of education offering educational implications might be seem to be in tension with my ‘divorce’ argument above, namely, that philosophers do not
speak to educators. However, we should not confuse a respectful, meaningful, and fruitful conversation between philosophers and educators with an inquiry that goes deep into philosophical arguments but offers quick one-way inferences from philosophy to practice. With Curren (2010) I argue that the problem of such an inquiry that gives over-emphasis to philosophy over education is that it often examines education itself in only a superficial manner, as he expresses a worry about the over-fragmentation of the field:

philosophy of education is exploding in so many directions away from its historic core that one may wonder whether it is simply disintegrating. It seems intent on leaving no far-flung theoretical stone unturned, on what often appears the merest supposition that so important a theory would naturally have some educational implications. To write about Derrida or Dualism, Wittgenstein or Whiteness, Levinas or the Other, may be thought so obviously rich in practical implications that education need not be mentioned at all. (p. 3)

We should take seriously Curren’s (2010) conclusion that “[i]n order to flourish in the years ahead, philosophy of education must recommit itself to its central problems and find the patience and resourcefulness to do philosophically sound and interesting work on fundamental and controversial aspects of education” (p. 4-5).

We can see another example for prioritizing philosophy over education in Kitcher’s (2009) interesting analysis of contemporary education, including the role of philosophy of education. Kitcher takes Dewey as his point of departure and he is insightful regarding global economic challenges that threaten Western countries. He also sees in these challenges the business of philosophy, including philosophy of education, instead of general philosophy matters: “The crucial questions for philosophers today have very little to do with consciousness and qualia, with the analysis of epistemic justification, with internalism or externalism about reasons, or with any of a multitude of other subjects that fill the pages of professional journals that attract a tiny, but oddly devoted, readership” (p. 314-5). However, while I agree with Kitcher’s call “to place the general theory of education at the center of
philosophy” (p. 314), I oppose his claim that the crucial task of philosophy of education is to reconcile the conflict between Deweyan education and capitalism. A stand that argues for reconciliation with capitalism—and with any other self-interested force—ignores the aggressiveness of the forces that seek to exploit schooling. Thus, Kitcher’s analysis does not leave room for education itself to imagine alternatives to the current political and especially economic realities; for him, education is still something that needs to be adapted to shifting realities, a social tool that follows global trends in order to address needs. Kitcher’s loyalty to a Deweyan conception of philosophy and education precludes him from bestowing education an independent status that will challenge political and economic arrangements, including democracy itself.

A striking evidence for the hierarchical top-down treatment of philosophy to education can be drawn from examining publications that are categorized under the title ‘philosophy of education’. White (2013) has done just this as he examined one of the most comprehensive collections recently published, The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education (2009) edited by Harvey Siegel (the same Siegel who rejected commitment to practical relevancy in the early 1980s). The problem with Siegel collection is not that most of its contributors are general philosophers; this is welcomed. The problem, as White (2013) argues, is that most of the papers barely deal directly with education itself:

several of the non-educational philosophers, after a paragraph or two on the importance among educational aims of, say, critical thinking, or rationality, or knowledge, then seem more in their element discussing more purely philosophical complexities in epistemology, or the work of a particular philosopher. Their essays do not breathe the passion for educational issues of the day that we see in some other contributors. Topped and tailed, they could well be published as standard philosophical pieces in their own right. (p. 298)

By claiming that the reviewed essays could be published “as standard philosophical pieces in their own right” White is not complaining about the contribution to the philosophical
discussion (that is, to the philosophy sphere), but about the lack of significant contribution to education. I believe White is not alone with this impression, as might be felt while attending philosophy of education conferences or sessions. Siegel (2009) writes in the introduction to the *Handbook*: “the pursuit of philosophical questions concerning education is partly dependent upon investigations of the more familiar core areas of philosophy… This sort of dependence on the parent discipline is typical of philosophical questions concerning education” (p. 4). Similarly, in response to White (2013), Siegel (2014) says that

unlike White, I think it vital to the health of philosophy of education that it continue to engage in, cultivate relationships with, and see itself as part of the parent discipline – as ‘part of philosophy’s portfolio’, as White quotes me… Being such a branch, it is of course connected both to the core areas of philosophy – epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and so on – and to the world of educational practice. Philosophy of education is in this way Janus-faced, simultaneously looking inward to the parent discipline and outward to the world of education… And it is clear why this is how things must be with so-called ‘practical’ sub-disciplines of philosophy: without the outward-looking stuff it isn’t practical; without the inward-looking stuff it isn’t philosophy. (p. 121).

Siegel clearly places philosophy of education in the philosophy sphere and not in the education one. This residency is problematic because it allows philosophers of education to prefer commitment to philosophy over commitment to education, despite some nominal ‘outward-looking’ toward education. Put differently, although I agree with Siegel that “we should resist the urge to limit philosophy of education to the improvement of educational practice or to questions of broad social policy” and that “[w]e should avoid a ‘one size fits all’ conception of our legitimate professional activities” (p. 122), I argue—following the call in chapter 4 for a sovereign education—that we should make sure that the dependence of philosophy of education on philosophy will not turn to dependence of education itself on philosophy or to pushing education away from philosophy. Thus, Siegel’s view might
contribute both to a distance between philosophy and education as well as to a subordinate status of education in its relationships with philosophy.

The divorce between educators and philosophers, on the one hand, and the excessive weight given to philosophy over education in the area of philosophy of education accompanied by subjecting education to philosophy, on the other, create between the two areas a situation of ‘all or nothing’: an almost disregard of each other or conversely a one-sided traffic route from philosophy to education. In this situation, education is less likely to be perceived as a field with its own uniqueness and its own needs that might be served by philosophy, and also less likely to be considered as an human endeavor that is focused on human experiences, understanding, and meanings without a predefined position. Moreover, the traffic route from philosophy to education might engender such an education and even serve an instrumental approach as philosophies might be recruited for non-educative forces. For example, raising flags of individual freedom and individual autonomy are strategies for proponents of neo-liberalism in education or advocators of vocational education, elements that represent alien forces to education as I portray in this work. To demonstrate advocating vocational education by subjecting education to philosophy one should consider Winch (2000) who assumes that “one cannot disentangle a particular conception of education from particular conceptions of economic and political life” (p. 3). He argues that vocational education is not conditioning, “development of a set response in an organism to a stimulus” (p. 82), but training, teaching students how “to respond flexibly and under their own volition, to a variety of stimuli” which “involves varying degrees of autonomy” (p. 83). As such, Winch sees what he calls a formation aspect in vocational education in “making of a person into a worker, that is a human being with particular skills, attitudes and virtues” (p. 86-87).
The articulation of the instrumental approach here is evident (see also Billett (2011) for advocating vocational education based on philosophical arguments).134

5.3 Towards Non-Committal Relationships

As a response to the ‘all or nothing’ relationships between philosophy and education, education (including the branch ‘philosophy of education’) should execute two parallel and complementary movements with regard to philosophy: to open itself to philosophical thinking but at the same time to break free from philosophy’s grasp, that is, from the perception that using philosophy can be done only by adopting it as a binding guide. In other words, when philosophy is considered, education should change its relationships with it from hierarchical and committed to balanced and flexible. Openness to philosophy means acknowledging the special contribution in studying and examining the fundamental and basic human notions and domains such as reality, language, existence, knowledge, and reason. Through philosophical terms, topics, and methods education can access a vast and diverse hoard of ideas and thereby augment and enrich the experiences, understandings, and meanings available for educational use. But this openness should not turn into a commitment; education should not necessarily embrace and adopt a philosophical standpoint and make it an educational one. In this sense, education should liberate itself from philosophy, not because there is no guarantee that the specific philosophical standpoint is the right one or the most comprehensive, but because education does not strive for any comprehensive or final understanding; it is not the business of education to reach somewhere, as it is not its business to bring students to some

134 See also Biesta (2011b) who critiques “instrumentalist tendencies within philosophy for children” (p. 311) and other uses of philosophy in educational programmes. He finds that in such programmes “[p]hilosophy 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” (p. 310).
targeted specific situation in which they carry designated material (e.g. content, skills, and values). This last statement is not used, as it might seem, as a philosophical argument, but as an educative one that originates in the way education should be perceived.

Applying the non-committal approach to philosophy of education means that in addition to perceiving philosophy as an arbiter (whether ethically, analytically, or in any other way) that holds (at least some) authority in addressing educational questions and problems, philosophers of education should also consider philosophy as an inspiring source for ‘doing’ education, that is, a source for ideas from which to devise meanings. In other words, and aligned with the idea of ‘looking around’ proposed in section 4.4, philosophers of education will see philosophy as a text to be read that holds opportunities for reviewing and exceeding the human territory. As such, philosophers of education are operating on behalf of the education sphere while visiting the philosophy sphere in order to mine raw material for education. According to this strategy, educational-philosophical research steps outside or deviates from education into philosophical thinking but without losing sight of the educational and with a sooner than later reaching point of returning to educational considerations, with or without useful insight found in the philosophical explorations. The wandering and exploring in the ‘general’ philosophy sphere is done with a clear intention to temporarily put education on hold, to learn from the philosophical sphere, and in the case that something useful is found to ‘borrow’ it, but with required modification and adjustment in order to suggest possible use for education.

Philosophy investigates the fundamental and attempts to say something about it. As a rigorous process, philosophical deliberation is usually aimed at developing arguments, that is, articulating statements that express conclusions, the result of considering relationships
between what are considered axioms and assumptions on the one hand and inferences on the other. However, from a sovereign educative point of view that looks around at other areas of inquiry, the main interest should not necessarily be the philosophical conclusions, that is, the bottom line of the philosophical thinking (e.g. “the human being is a rational animal”, “the ethical action in this situation is to allow wearing Hijab”, “there is no private language”). Instead, education should look at philosophical discussions and retrieve from them a relevant and appropriate content that will serve goals of education as an agent for humanity, goals that stem from identifying, exposing, and considering human experiences, understandings, and meanings. The material originating from philosophy is traced back from philosophical discussions and philosophical results, and yields themes and questions that are either explicitly introduced during the philosophical discussion or are formed by examining and interpreting the philosophical discussion through educative eyes.\textsuperscript{135} It is important to note that the examined philosophical deliberation might encompass texts of the same author or texts revolving around a topic, and as such these texts can be created in different times and in different circumstances. The ultimate goal in discussing and responding to these questions is not finding the answer; there is no expectation in education to come up with an answer for fundamental questions.\textsuperscript{136} The importance is not in the response a student comes up with in relation to existing responses, but in exploring new possible responses and more importantly in carrying the questions forward for the rest of the student’s life, that the questions will remain in the human’s mind as a reference to his future considerations and actions. This

\textsuperscript{135} In section 5.7 I show how Heidegger’s philosophy can lead to deriving the question “what is the meaning of being human?” and the educational goal of examining the meaning of being human.

\textsuperscript{136} By this I do not imply that there is expectation in philosophy to come up with answers for practical (or other) questions. However, in section 5.7 I reject a Deweyan view that designates for philosophy a role of solving social problems.
emphasis on carrying the questions forward reinforces the stance stated in section 3.5, namely, that the questions of meaning produced by students are more important than answering them.

To be sure: Nothing here implies that education should avoid answers whatsoever; it is important that students will be able to be equipped with answers, or guidance for answers, for specific bothersome questions or questions to which there is a clear and human consensus, if there are such answers. I also accept supplying answers (or at least satisfying responses that respect the inquirer) to matters that specifically interest local communities or responses for vexed and curious students that struggle with community-defining questions (such as “is there a god?” in religious communities or for pensive students). However, school must not be seen primarily as a site where students go in order to acquire answers to social questions or solutions to problems (collective or private). Moreover, school must not be seen primarily as a site where students go in order to acquire content from the existing reservoir of cultural or scientific achievements that is reduced to curriculum, although this reservoir and the curriculum are to be used for encouraging examining and expanding the basic human features.

Here philosophy can assist education when it examines fundamental questions regarding different disciplines. As Soltis (1983) explains: “For the subject matter teacher, there are the various philosophies of (of science, of math, of art, of history, of language, etc.) that can provide exciting philosophical perspective on his/her field. Study of this sort often serves to generate new ideas and approaches to teaching not only content but also the ‘structure of the discipline’” (p. 20). But ‘philosophies of’, or what Suttle (1974) terms ‘mixed disciplines’, can provide much more than that; education should see them as bridges to other spheres and
as such as an insightful source for experiences, understanding, and meanings. For example, philosophy of mathematics that explores origins of that domain and humans’ relationships to it is an appropriate source for educative questions about experiencing mathematical manipulations and the nature of mathematics (as an invention or natural reality) or about meanings for being human (as inventors or discoverers of abstract entities, accordingly) (Livio, 2009). This, in turn, might lead to questions regarding humans’ relation to their world. An important implication here is that not just ‘general’ philosophy (the core areas such as metaphysics and ethics) is relevant to education but also—and in the case of specific subject matters even especially—‘regional’ philosophy that studies specific human enterprises. Thus, this intersection of philosophy as fundamental inquiry and bodies of knowledge is a specific place where educators from specific disciplines can focus their search for educative themes and questions originating in philosophy. Moreover, this regional philosophy is an important tool for both curriculum designers and teachers of specific subject matters as they strive to move away from the instrumental approach, to go beyond transmission and consumption of knowledge, and to get closer towards education that critically examines and challenges basics conventions.

The educative retrieving eye, looking at the philosophical sphere and examining discussions there in order to identify questions and themes instead of focusing on answers and conclusions, leaves the door open for a fresh and creative response for the issues originating in philosophy. When the questions and themes are appropriated and modified for educational use, teachers and students are not committed to ready-made answers or solutions.

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137 This ability to review mixed disciplines requires some general philosophy background. I think this background needs to be provided within teacher education programs and should be part of shifting the weight in teacher education from ‘how to teach’ to ‘what education is’ and ‘what to teach’.
Moreover, they are not even committed to the same directions followed and techniques used by philosophers. Thus, as part of the quest for new meanings and expanding the human territory, teachers and students have the freedom to *address questions originating in philosophy in non-philosophical ways*. For example, students might address ethical questions through art or by telling a personal story, without a rigorously rational process of conceptualization. It should be clear: considering philosophy as a source or a reservoir of ideas and using philosophical questions as educative resources does not necessarily mean training students to be philosophers, or to teach philosophy as a subject matter, or even to teach philosophically. In line with avoiding and refuting imprinting any social identity, education as is portrayed here, that appropriates content originating in philosophy, has no intention of leading students through scholarly philosophical paths. Nevertheless, addressing matters that touch on philosophical issues or that bear philosophical aspects can yield philosophical insights (taking mathematics again as an example, learning geometric shapes might lead to discussing the concept ‘perfect’ and to the question whether there is a perfect thing). As such, there might be contributions to philosophical thinking itself. Thus, the education-philosophy relationships have the potential for dialectics; education might create feedback into the philosophical domain. In such cases, there will be a *mutual contribution* to both areas and both will benefit from each other. This is a broader dialectics than the one Siegel (2009) envisions: “the pursuit of fundamental questions in more or less all the core areas of philosophy often leads naturally to and is sometimes enhanced by sustained attention to questions about education” (p. 5). While Siegel anticipates some kind of clarification of

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138 Some aspects in the OISE (University of Toronto) course “Big questions: philosophical inquiry across the curriculum”, as they intend to provide “skills for recognizing and maximizing the philosophical potential within non-philosophy courses across the curriculum” (2014 course syllabus), hold potential for encouraging philosophical insights by (K-12) students and teachers.
general philosophical issues once examined philosophically “in the context of education” (ibid), I call to see education itself—including its practical arm—as a potential resource for philosophical insights.

As education is not committed to already paved roads in dealing with issues originating in philosophy, as well as being liberated from the task of providing definite answers, education bears a *speculative* characteristic. This is, of course, in contrast to the modern aspiration to reach exact, absolute, and universal responses to problems and questions. The speculative nature of education does not just mean accepting wonder, encouraging exploration of new meanings, and tolerance of mistakes, but also accommodating hypothetical ideas and admitting to not knowing. Such an education will even be inclusive of a conclusion that suggests an answer is not available or does not exist. However, not everything goes; speculative thinking or a no-answer result are encouraged and acceptable only in the case that the educator is convinced of their contribution to acquiring new experience, understanding, or meaning for the evolving student(s).

### 5.4 Facing the Charge that Any Consideration is Philosophical

As educators survey the philosophical domain for relevant and appropriate material, they are selective in their examination; the philosophical world is sampled according to educative and personal principles and preferences. In different times, places, circumstances, and communities different matters originating in philosophy will be picked, and educators will modify the same matters differently depending on their own background and tendencies. For example, one might choose to look at limits of freedom through an ethical lens while her colleague in the same school might address the issue through social constructs. This is not a problem for an education as an agent for humanity; by all means, this variety in modifying
and shaping philosophical topic into educative practice promotes richness of possible meanings. However, the mere procedure of choosing and sampling content originating in philosophy raises an anticipated objection regarding the integrity of this process: isn’t it that any appropriation from philosophy to education is contaminated with collective or individual inclination? Isn’t it that using any philosophical framework or philosophical conceptualization for education, that is, any philosophy of education, actually biased towards a specific philosophical and political standpoint? Isn’t it that any conversion or adaptation of philosophical discussion for educative use already assumes a specific opinion or perspective, and posing a question essentially dictates not only a way of thinking but also specific forms of answers?

The charge is a serious one and threatens the whole theoretical project laid out here, as it might undermine the call for education’s right for autonomy to consider and decide its own way. However, this criticism does not hold if educators (whether practitioners or scholars) are truly faithful to non-instrumental perceptions of education, that is, they do not surrender to alien forces and do not see education as a means to promote any particular model of the good life. In such a case education is immune to biases created by the inappropriate use of philosophical results. When educators approach philosophical insights in order to derive educational material from them, they bear the (indeed heavy) responsibility of ‘distilling’ the philosophical statements from political or ideological characteristics and bringing to students

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139 This is why it is recommended that for an education as an agent for humanity students need to encounter a variety of teachers who come from different backgrounds and provide a variety of viewpoints.

140 It is possible to argue that any inquiry and any question presupposes a certain background of opinions or perspectives, and hence the concern I am posing here is not unique for philosophy (or for appropriation from philosophy). Although generalization of the problem is valid, it does not obviate addressing it specifically with regard to philosophy within the discussed context of its relationships with education. Moreover, it is important to note that I am interested here in dealing not with a background that enables the inquiry (and hence is unavoidable) but with a background that channels the inquiry and as such makes it biased.
questions and issues as ‘clean’ as possible. This is not an easy task, as at times philosophers do subordinate their philosophies to their worldview, or conversely their conclusions have a political or ideological component (for example, Descartes’ Meditations, undoubtedly a candidate from which to draw educative questions, concludes the existence of God). What educators should strive for is not a balance of opinions such as ‘both-sides-objectivity’ (continuing Descartes’ example, accompanying the Meditations with a text that aims at disproving the existence of God); rather, educators should discover a fundamental human feature that motivates and propels the philosophical project (as explained in detail in the next section) and can be modified for educative use such that students and teachers will be able to discuss and identify human feature, those experiences, understandings, and meanings (from the above examples, one simple possibility is the limitations of human knowledge, an issue that can be used in a variety of subject matters such as sciences, history, and literature).

To be sure: an education as an agent for humanity does not refute the expression of opinions by teachers or students and nor does it exclude political discussions. Indeed, as explained in chapter 4 the education I call for is not politicized and is outside politicians’ reach (as a political tool), yet it does not avoid politics as a source for experiences and meanings. As a matter of fact, in contrast to regulations in many educational systems—including democratic states—education that strives to reveal such features will encourage expression of personal preferences and worldviews, including regarding current controversial political issues; encountering a variety of adults in school with different opinions is recommended for that matter. However, this political discussion need to be conducted with the human educational goal in mind and ultimately should serve discovering new human understandings.
5.5 Distilling Philosophy into Educative Ideas

Education is not committed to philosophical conclusions or positions, but is seeking to derive from philosophical discussions themes and questions that have the potential to enhance educative thinking, that is, themes and questions that summon experiences, understandings, and meanings under the overall perception of students as human beings. As this move from philosophical insights to educative ideas withdraws from the philosophical results to a preliminary stage of the philosophical deliberation and finds ideas concealed there that have ignited the philosophical pondering and are now designated for educative use, we will call it “distilling” in order to emphasize the aspects of searching and purifying that are inherent in this process. Since the idiosyncratic features of distilling depend on the specific philosophic discussion from which it is derived, it will suffice here to provide only general guidelines for this process.\textsuperscript{141}

In order to find an educative theme or question from philosophical discussions, we need to “purify” and extract it from the philosophical deliberation. This finding might be, for example, the trigger for the philosophical investigation, or any other content that is found along the way, or a modification of those. In looking for an appropriate educative material we should trace the philosophical thinking back far enough so that the educative content that is formed will be “clean” such that minimum of philosophical conclusions are left. Admittedly, there is no guarantee that the formed educative idea will be ‘spotless’, that is, cleansed from philosophical position or philosophical tendency, especially when the philosophical environment we are looking at has been established, at least partially, as a reaction or critique to an existing argument or way of life. Indeed, a heavy task faces us, not

\textsuperscript{141} In section 5.7 I demonstrate such a distilling process in detail.
necessarily because the required educative content is concealed or disguised, but because we
are seeking a fundamental core within an already fundamental inquiry, and it seems that we
do not have much leeway in our distillation process.

Finding or producing an educative content out of the philosophical realm is problematic
also as a result of the process by which the philosophical content is built. Forming educative
content originating in philosophy that is aimed at advancing basic human features of
experiences, understandings, and meanings is essentially different from designing a
curriculum. Curriculum designers modify a body of knowledge into a sequence of material—
mostly in the form of statements—that represents the insights reached by historic processes
of research or cultural development. The adherence to the early Wittgenstein’s is clear here.
As the body of knowledge is already very detailed and advanced, its modification for K-12
education (but not solely) usually takes the forms of simplification, removal, and dwindling;
students will not face the front of what is known, but some kind of adjustment according to
their level of development (age), ability (skills), and familiarity (phase in the learning spiral)
with the field studied. Thus, the curriculum is designed such that students will be able to take
the next step in learning the field and specializing in it, as part of perfectionism dictated by
the instrumental approach. This engineered attitude leads to a curriculum that is aimed at
predefined, specific, and measurable outcomes. As Standish (1992) observes: “the method of
testing then feeds back into the initial intention to determine content: we teach only what we
can test. In curriculum planning of this kind, instrumentalism is built into the system: the
content becomes a means towards the achieving of the performance which is the objective”
(p. 91). This instrumentalist and technological process produces a linear learning logic in
which the curriculum is based on previously learnt material. In contrast, forming educative
content originating in philosophy is not shaped for students at a specific point in their development, whether this growth is intellectual, emotional, or relates to any other domain. Rather, the educative content required here seeks to define a basic platform for human awareness. The formed content does not epitomize, denote, or sample the results of human thought (e.g. science), but reproduces and appropriates a rudimentary theme or question; it is designated more for looking backward in historical human thought than looking forward, more towards a common human character than to a specialized or focused understanding. The educative content originating in philosophy is less a representation and more a retrieving, recovering, or releasing.

Creating ideas for education originating in philosophy, or philosophy-inspired educative ideas, is aimed at the original thoughts that constituted the impetus for the philosophical thinking. However, reaching this educative content, the starting points of the philosophical deliberation, is not a reversal of the philosophical deduction or at least it is not just going back to the original ideas. Educators need also to be aware of the hermeneutic characteristic required from the generated educative content. In other words, educators must ensure that what is produced from examining the philosophical discussion is not a dead end, that is, an idea that does not allow students and teachers to go forward by using their experiences. The idea originating in philosophy should be open enough such that it holds the potential to ignite meanings. It should be an invitation. Therein lies another difference from curriculum design: the idea that is originating in philosophy does not demand mastering or consuming but serves more as an opportunity, a challenge, like a side road discovered in a journey, a new road that does not appear on the map and the tourist has no idea where it will lead her. Again, we see how education as an adventure is promoted by an approach that seeks to introduce the
student to unpaved roads, or to encourage her to look for and take such roads, or to venture to tour uncharted territories.

It is important to stress that the ideas originating in philosophy are not to stand by themselves, detached from the regular learnt curriculum. As is clarified in chapter 3, the kind of education I call for does not obviate curriculum, that is, does not remove subject matters from schooling. Instead, awareness and the generating of experiences, understandings, and meanings should be integrated within the curriculum for any subject that is learnt. Thus, the ideas originating in philosophy are not a parallel curriculum or a parallel material to be dealt with, independently from the designed content; the two should be in constant discussion. This dialectic and empowering conversation between the structured and the adventurous has to be in teachers’ mind in order to allow and facilitate the mutual contribution between philosophy and education, as discussed in section 3.

Following these aforementioned general characteristics of distilling, we are now in a position to propose three ‘movements’ within this process of retrieving ideas from the philosophical discussion, in more practical terms. These movements do not occur separately but are taken simultaneously in order to decide what and how to use the ideas found in philosophy.

The first movement identifies ideas that are found within or retrieved from the philosophical discussion but are not appropriate to be used as central ideas around which to construct education. These ideas, although they might be major philosophical ones, do not—to the judgment of the educator—fit to serve as educational directives, guidelines, or goals. There can be different reasons for this rejection, but generally what will lead the educator to discard them from taking a central role in planning education is that they are more
appropriate ideas that hold a greater potential to contribute to education as a human endeavor or to advance the fundamental fact that we are all human beings. Again, such an idea might be fundamental in philosophy (or fundamental in a major philosopher’s work) and even might assist us in understanding education—and consequently might seem a worthy candidate on which to establish education (or educational units). But at the same time this idea can be rejected from serving as an idea that education should follow or should aim toward. What is central in philosophy is not necessarily a focus for education. This line of thinking allows me to agree with Siegel (2004) as he writes: “can a sharp line be drawn between either general philosophy and philosophy of education or between those contributions that enhance our understanding of education and those that enhance our understanding of general philosophy? I doubt it… I am for this reason doubtful of any attempt to declare general philosophy, or large tracts of it, irrelevant to a deep, synoptic understanding of education.” (p. 124-125). So while I acknowledge the potential contribution of any general philosophy to shedding light on education, I reject a sweeping adoption of philosophical ideas as educational guidelines. In section 5.7 I exemplify a process of distilling on Heidegger’s work and explain why I find the notion of ‘Being’ too remote from teachers’ and students’ lives as to serve as an educational goal.

The second movement identifies ideas that are found within or retrieved from the philosophical discussion and they are relevant for education but not as directives or goals. These ideas are appropriate to serve as central pillars for education in general or for specific curricular areas but not necessarily as guidelines according to which education should be planned or practiced. Using these ideas, the educator (or the philosopher of education) should screen out conclusions that—to her judgment—inappropriately commit education to
positions. Moreover, within this movement, as the educator examines relevant philosophical ideas, she needs to make sure that these ideas have been not or are not being distorted in favor of other social spheres (for example, as Dewey’s notions of ‘growth’ and ‘renewal’ are distorted by the external self-interested forces). As such, scrutiny of relevant philosophical ideas within this movement has an important role in protecting the adventurous aspect of meaning making and defending education from being perceived instrumentally or from being submissive to other spheres. In section 5.7, as part of examining Heidegger’s notion of Being, I find ‘language’ as a central concept to be considered in education but I reject—from an educational point of view—taking it for granted as a definitive characteristic of being human.

The third movement identifies ideas that are found within or retrieved from the philosophical discussion and are appropriate to be used as educational directives or goals. These ideas are not just significantly relevant for education as they are closely related to the fundamental fact that we are all human beings, but they also hold potential to contribute to the adventurous feature of meaning making. As such, they are able to provide themes and questions that can be used across the curriculum. However, the educator still has to carefully examine them in order to modify them for the education sphere. In section 5.7 I find Heidegger’s inquiry into Dasein as an appropriate starting point for educative modification and propose as an educational goal examination of the meaning of being human.

The educator that reviews philosophical discussions will probably not find in them suggestions for educational implications or suggestions of how the discussed notions are relevant for education. Therefore, the educator will need to speculate on how the philosophy might be proposed for educational use. In other words, she will need to predict hypothetical
moves from philosophy to education, moves according to which she will assess the relevance of the original ideas for education and the possible ways to modify them. As such, the philosopher of education becomes a *gatekeeper* that guards the entrance of the education sphere by questioning those who seek to enter.

Understanding distilling as retrieving from philosophy for education enables us now to better explain in what way the education I envision is different from philosophy. In section 5.1 I defined philosophy as a rigorous inquiry of the fundamental. Expecting education to look carefully at philosophy in order to retrieve ideas from it and then to examine them might seem as if I designate education to do philosophy, or to take the role of philosophy of education. This impression is perhaps intensified by the fact that waiving finding answers to questions of meaning (chapter 3) is similar to philosophy’s avoidance from commitment to final and absolute answers (in contrast to the way religion, usually, addresses questions regarding the fundamental). In order to clarify how education is separate from philosophy, let us recall Plato’s important claim that "philosophy begins in wonder" (Theaetetus, 155d), a view which is echoed by Aristotle: "It was their wonder, astonishment, that first led men to philosophize and still leads them" (*Metaphysics*, 982b12). This characterization of what ignites philosophical inquiry (although, arguably, not just philosophical one) is important because it allows us to identify where and how—in my vision—education takes a different route from philosophy.

In chapter 2 I characterize education as an adventurous endeavour, that is, an endeavour that is willing to take the courageous journey outside the known and safe human territory. When the process of distilling is considered through the lens of this adventurous feature of education, it becomes clear that in its relationships with philosophy education actually looks
for the wonder that sparks philosophy and seeks to identify and preserve it. In looking at the philosophy sphere and searching for ideas, what educators (or philosophers of education) wish to recover is the wonder that is frequently concealed in the philosophical debate beneath a volume of text or behind technical terminology. Thus, education seeks that students will relive the ‘magic’ that initiated the philosophical pondering. Indeed, at times, in reading philosophy, one feels that this ‘magic’ has been lost. Perhaps that is what Smith (1964) means in criticizing the British analytical movement of the ’60:

Many contemporary students of philosophy believe, however, that the followers of this movement are doing philosophy in a much too limited way, for their activity is restricted largely to an analysis of language as used in ordinary discourse and in the more technical discussions of science and philosophy. Such linguistic analysis tends to become quite technical and to focus on the minute complexities of problems of limited scope. The works tends, therefore, to take on an esoteric quality that is likely to discourage the uninitiated. (p. 3).

While Smith’s aims his arrows of critique toward an easy target, I think that the danger of being “with esoteric quality that is likely to discourage the uninitiated” is real for any philosophical text, including the continental ones that keep away from focusing on “linguistic analysis” and “minute complexities”.

Thus, by the process of distilling, philosophers of education should take the role of ‘the guardians of wonder’ by awakening the wonder and the amazement and keeping them from slipping into something too technical, too strict, too sophisticated, perhaps even too ‘serious’, as well as keeping them from becoming too narrow. We can even say that philosophers of education have the task of keeping philosophy from being ‘too philosophical’ in its methodological aspect, that is, too rigorous. As it deals with the young, education should allow them to stop at the wonder stage and to remain there, to be playful, to speculate, to rely on intuition without necessarily being careful or exact. The model of some visual art, perhaps such as early impressionist or abstract painting, seems adequate here, as while this kind of
painting still addressed deep human feelings it ‘violated’ strict rules of academic painting of its time and gave precedence to freely brushed colours over lines and contours.

This call to stay in the wonder is different from Dewey’s perception of the relationships between philosophy and education and the tendency for societal problem solving. In the next section I take another comparative look at Dewey in order to examine how my view on the philosophy-education link is different from Dewey’s.

5.6 Comparing Distilling to Dewey’s Vision of Philosophy and Education

The place of philosophy within my vision of education is rooted in keeping education’s sovereignty and refusing to commit to philosophical conclusions. As we saw in section 5.2, in the last few decades the relationships of education and philosophy are much debated in the literature. To better understand my argument regarding the desired relationships and the status of education in general it is worth comparing it with other views regarding the interactions of these two domains. Since in chapter 3 I compare my proposed epistemological structure to Dewey’s, and since Dewey’s epistemological structure is based (at least partially) on his own perception of the philosophy-education relationships (as described in Democracy and Education (2004)), I will only compare here my view on the matter to his in order to fill this specific missing part of the comparison picture between us. As my aim is not to discuss Dewey’s view in and of itself but rather to compare it to mine, I will not examine it in length but just the aspects that are most relevant to my proposal. While it is certainly true that, as Siegel (2002) says, “Deweyan philosophy of education is not the whole of philosophy of education” (p. 273) and that “we must not be fooled into thinking that the Deweyan view of philosophy of education is the only, let alone the obviously correct, one” (p. 280), it is important and useful to compare my approach to Dewey’s not just because the latter is still
dominant (as Dewey’s philosophy is in general) but especially since, as I hope to show below, it can be understood today as a conceptual foundation for the instrumental approach to education. Through contrasting with Dewey’s view on the philosophy-education linkage, my intention is also to better explain my vision for education in general.

In comparing my approach to Dewey’s, I will use René Arcilla’s (2002) paper that discusses philosophy-education relationships in general and Dewey’s proposal in particular. In his 2002 paper *Why aren't philosophers and educators speaking to each other*, Arcilla examines the relationships following his observation of the current situation of philosophy of education and the disinterest among philosophers and educators to address the other discipline, a situation that created a disconnection between them.142 Hence, his paper is useful not just in thinking about the relationships but also in navigating us toward an understanding of this mediation area of philosophy of education. Moreover, Arcilla’s interpretation is useful for un concealing aspects in Dewey’s approach that I see as contributing to the subordinate status of education.

Although Arcilla’s paper is not the most recent in the discussion regarding the crisis of philosophy of education, it is valuable in tracing back the roots of this crisis, especially in North America, to Dewey who constitutes a major founder of the area as was developed during the 20th century. The Deweyan approach is described through Arcilla’s eyes as a background to the current predicament of philosophy of education and as such to Dewey’s perceived relationships of education and philosophy. However, Arcilla does not just interpret Dewey but also adjusts it to our time; he develops Dewey’s ideas beyond their original

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142 Arcilla’s paper was published in issue 52(1) (2002) of *Educational Theory* and inspired a symposium issue in that journal later the same year. In the 2013 Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society (OVPES) Annual Meeting, a Plenary Session was dedicated to this paper to which several scholars have responded.
pragmatic approach, although he remains within a noticeable practical attitude. While Dewey’s vision is modified, the basic architecture of the relationships remains intact. As such, this perception is a contemporary and fit candidate to compare with my own vision. The comparison will assist in refining and sharpening the ideas presented thus far.

Dewey (2004) claims that there is an “intimate connection between philosophy and education” (p. 353), but for him the two are not equal. With regard to philosophy, and following the scientific paradigm he adopts (as we saw in chapter 3), Dewey designates to philosophy roles with respect to science’s goals and outcomes in order to ensure utility for society: “Philosophy thus has a double task: that of criticizing existing aims with respect to the existing state of science… and also that of interpreting the results of specialized science in their bearing on future social endeavor” (p. 354). Philosophy is characterized as an agent that decides what are the relevant issues and what are the appropriate ways to address them. In this sense, philosophy sets the discursive framework: “Its value lies not in furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Philosophy might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself—which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience” (p. 351).

Arcilla (2002) analyses these components of Dewey’s view on philosophy together with Dewey’s pragmatic perception of social renewal. He explicitly talks about ‘problems’ and emphasizes the connection between philosophy and social problems, saying that for Dewey the philosopher is “[r]esponding to contemporary problems experienced in society” (p. 4). He argues that for Dewey philosophy bears the double task of analyzing current social problems through understanding of the social world and coming out with a guide or a plan
(“theoretical attitude”, p. 8) for how to overcome them: “philosophy is committed not only to comprehending the social world, but also to cultivating a consistent attitude, or disposition to act, toward it” (p. 5).

In contrast to the way Dewey characterizes philosophy, he (2004) does not characterize education in terms of agency but rather through its relation to philosophy: “The educational point of view enables one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice” (p. 354). Thus, education is a continuation of philosophy as it connects the problems identified by philosophy to practice. Moreover, for Dewey, “the business of schooling tends to become a routine empirical affair unless its aims and methods are animated by such a broad and sympathetic survey of its place in contemporary life as it is the business of philosophy to provide” (ibid). Philosophy defines for education what its place in life is and as such education becomes subordinate to philosophy. The servile—or instrumental—role of education becomes even clearer when Dewey likens it to a laboratory: “By the educative arts philosophy may generate methods of utilizing the energies of human beings in accord with serious and thoughtful conceptions of life. Education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested” (p. 355). Education is not an approving authority of philosophical ideas but more a site where these ideas are run, as programming software is the environment by which a computer programmer tests her ideas.

Arcilla (2002) takes Dewey’s view on the social roles that philosophy and education are supposed to fulfill (and as a result the architecture for their relationships) as his starting point for exploring the rift between philosophers and educators. Arcilla describes the modern relationships between the two areas as a cooperation that originates in a shared goal of
sustaining a democratic flourishing social life: “Philosophy is conceived as a response to its society’s present problems, education as a response to its society’s perennial need for regeneration. Both express a devotion on the part of practitioners to keeping their own, contemporary society alive” (p. 4). Within this inter-disciplinary teamwork, philosophy and education do not just need each other in order to fulfill their responsibility but they also complete each other to ensure societal survival: “Where philosophy ends, education begins” (p. 7). Education, as a continuation of philosophy, has the task of shaping and modifying the results produced by philosophy: “In the educational laboratory, as it were, philosophies do not get applied so much as refined and broadened” (p. 7). Thus, although in interpreting Dewey it seems that Arcilla gives to education a little more latitude or freedom to act, this freedom is still within the boundaries set by philosophy; education is entitled to professional liberty but philosophy is the one who calls the shots and decides which ideas are legitimate enough to be polished. Education is still deprived significant agency. Arcilla concludes: “without philosophy, educators will be in the dark about what they ought to be daring to build, with respect to what principal impediments their society has to overcome if it is to regenerate itself at a higher state of happiness. And without education, philosophers will never see their work bear fruit” (p. 7). Again, although according to this understanding of Dewey’s view education does hold a crucial role, this role is prescribed and navigated by philosophy and society at large.

From characterizing philosophy, education, and the link between them, Dewey concludes the role of philosophy of education: “‘Philosophy of education’ is not an external application of ready-made ideas to a system of practice having a radically different origin and purpose: it is only an explicit formulation of the problems of the formation of right mental and moral
habitudes in respect of the difficulties of contemporary social life” (p. 356). Although the beginning of the quote (“not an external application of ready-made ideas to a system of practice”) gives the impression that Dewey bestows upon philosophy of education some autonomy in relation to philosophy, the remainder of the quote makes it clear that Dewey actually designates for it only the role of making explicit problems that already have been identified, or selected, by philosophy.

Dewey’s view on education itself and its relationships with philosophy (as well as Arcilla’s as it is reflected in his interpretation of Dewey) is significantly different from the one introduced in this work. First, Dewey’s architecture ties philosophy and education together under one social-political umbrella; neither education nor philosophy are endowed with autonomy to decide for themselves what they are, their goals, and their relationships with each other (and with other areas). Philosophy is imposed to take a theoretical problem-solving assignment dictated by and committed to (worldly) social problems, and education is channeled into the philosophical outcome in order to review and revise it according to practical conditions. In more than one sense, the systemic model in particular and the instrumental approach to education (chapter 1) are evident in this pragmatic picture. In contrast, I suggest an independent status to education that severs its obligatory binding to philosophical insights, conclusions, or positions (but not to philosophy in general or philosophical themes, questions or insights). Actually, in a sense, I support the divorce of education from philosophy that Arcilla laments, but I also support a divorce of education from—or at least refute committal relationships with—any social science. The demand or

143 The discourse of problem-solving has already penetrated the educational arena. For example, it is a prominent conceptual framework for educational policy making. Problems to be solved are usually not presented as the origin of policies, but are at least the implicit factor or catalyst for policy making (see mention of problems in Anyon, 2005; Bascia and Fredua-Kwarteng, 2008; Taylor et al., 1997).
expectation from education to take part in some specific overarching social goal and to contribute to social growth might lead, as usually happens, to perceiving it as a system that needs to be coordinated with other systems and therefore to at least provide them with sufficient results in the form of graduates with expected and predefined features, attitudes, and loyalties. But education need not provide designated means to other systems in the social line, even if it relies on philosophy (for example as in the case of vocational education that was mentioned in section 5.2.1).

It is worth noting that we should distinguish between using the term ‘problem’ as an indicator for a conceptual difficulty (as in the sentence: ‘Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with reality and existence’) and an indicator for a practical difficulty (as in the sentence: ‘Houston, we have a problem’). By addressing social problems, Dewey (and Arcilla) refers to or at least tends to the latter implication (in a broader scale). In using philosophy as a resource for educative ideas, conversely, I refer to or at least tend to the former that strives to address more basic issues, although not necessarily just abstract ones.

A second difference between Dewey’s view and mine is that Dewey’s perception of education, as the continuation of philosophy, is limited to what Arcilla (2002) terms the “contemporary society” (p. 8), that is, the present—here and now—issues. Actually, the problem-solving approach (of both philosophy and education) reduces matters to problems and is inclusive only of problems—that is, deviations from some kind of normal or expected situations. Navigating philosophy—and also education as a devoted follower—by using social problems contradicts my a-political vision for education. For, deciding what is considered a problem is itself controversial and political in the first place. Leading and
planning education through a problem-solving lens ignores matters that are not considered problems, not just politically—that is, ontically—but also ontologically or metaphysically. A whole world of philosophical thought is excluded from educational considerations. Moreover, the Deweyan perception of the education-philosophy relationships does not offer philosophy for education as something to be considered and critically analyzed but just portrays education as a “filter” or modifier of philosophical ideas. These ideas are not presented as an overall philosophical guide or a general framework for understanding our lives, but function as pragmatic solutions to problems. In that case, how will education be able to create original and creative insights when philosophy conceptually restricts it? For, when philosophy’s comprehension of the social world is transformed into a “consistent attitude, or disposition to act, toward it” (Arcilla, 2002, p. 5) in order to be delivered to education as a starting point to work with, the education that Dewey suggests is still an instrumental one, even if it is instrumental in the service of philosophy.144

Third, despite Arcilla’s (2002) attempt to portray some kind of feedback from education to philosophy, there is not a real dialectic connection between the two. Arcilla says that “the disciplines do belong together, and should listen to each other”, that they share a “mutual concern” (p. 3), and that they even “complete each other” (p. 4). However, the influence seems to be more one-sided than mutual. As education refines, broadens, and expands philosophy “by practical experiments to modify other extant attitudes accordingly” (p. 8), there is no strong impression that education plays an equal part in devising insights regarding

144 Regarding higher education, Thomson (2011) identifies the problem with directing students to what society wants, but still adheres to directing students to address social problem: “the way our institutions of higher education increasingly seek to remake students into whatever society currently values, rather than helping students identify, cultivate, and develop their intrinsic skills and capacities and yoke these to serving their generation’s emerging needs” (p. 103).
our lives and who we are; for, Dewey does not propose that philosophy will refine, broaden and expand education. In fact, education becomes secondary to philosophy because it is considered a site where philosophy’s insights are just put into a test without real legitimacy to create its own ideas.\textsuperscript{145} When education just experiments with “theoretical attitude” (Arcilla, 2002, p. 8) generated by philosophy, it cannot initiate its own views. In this sense, education is deprived of the agency advocated in chapter 2 and the sovereignty promoted in chapter 4. The result is an education that blocks both students and teachers from coming with new understandings and meanings that will question, challenge, and constitute real alternatives to the dominant ones or those supplied by philosophy. We should not settle for a subordinate education that functions as a laboratory, but should aspire to education that is a greenhouse where teachers and students grow and are equipped with new meanings, understandings, and insights—whether originating in philosophy or from any other source.

The subordinate status that Dewey (2004) designates for education becomes even more explicit when he stipulates reform of education in changes in other spheres: “The reconstruction of philosophy, of education, and of social ideals and methods thus go hand in hand. If there is especial need of educational reconstruction at the present time, if this need makes urgent a reconstruction of the basic ideas of traditional philosophic systems, it is because of the thoroughgoing change in social life accompanying the advance of science, the industrial revolution, and the development of democracy” (p. 356). The problem with conditioning educational change in other social changes becomes clear when society is saturated—as it is in our time—with competing aggressive and self-interested external forces

\textsuperscript{145} See also Bredo (2002): “Philosophy would supply the theory of a democratic life, while education would provide a field for its practical expression and testing” (p. 266). One might think that education is proposed here as a testing site to check whether philosophy’s ideas (as a theory) work, and that students are some kind of Guinea pigs.
that threaten to take over education and intervene with what education is and what its goals are, as then there is no control over what education becomes. It seems that Dewey ignores the possibility of such a situation. Similar to Blacker’s (2000) hope for a balanced inter-spherical social space (section 2.1), Dewey also hinges his architecture on some kind of a stable array of forces that operate on education: “experience consists of a variety of segregated domains, or interests, each having its own independent value, material, and method, each checking every other, and, when each is kept properly bounded by the others, forming a kind of ‘balance of powers’ in education” (p. 347). But we have already seen that for the self-interested forces “balance of powers” is not a major concern as each force attempts to pull experience in its own direction. This dynamics is not symmetrical and is not balanced as economic forces are usually stronger than others, but it also leaves education as a pawn moved from place to place and sacrificed in the service of what might be considered more powerful ideals.

Indeed, the antagonistic dynamics is not what Dewey wished for and it is not his ‘fault’ that self-interested forces violate the social picture he envisioned, including the laboratory-like role of education. As I have already explained in section 1.2, the idea of social renewal through education has become distorted and ‘hijacked’ by forces that hold their own idea of renewal. But it seems to me that Dewey is to be blamed in constructing a view that is socially too ‘fragile’, that is, too sensitive to forces in society that are able to bend it for their own interests and exploit education. That is why in my own view I emphasize the protective aspect needed in order to guard education from external influences. This protection will be achieved, at least partially, by governmental measures (section 4.3) but it is also required from scholarly work, both from educational research (section 4.4) as well as from philosophy.
of education. The process of distilling has a central role here in identifying and filtering out ideas that threaten education’s agency and sovereignty.

The Deweyan approach to the relationships between philosophy and education leads to philosophy of education which, in Arcilla’s (2002) presentation, is a “forum where philosophers and educators can talk to each other about their common interest in improving social life” (p. 7) within democratic settings. This vision for philosophy of education as a coordinated discussion to improve social life takes education too much for granted as social instrument and presupposes or designates for it a social role. This role, although rooted in good intentions, not just goes against the original goal for education as a remote or separated experience from society and the current social-life (including the current social order; see Masschelein & Simons, 2013). As a result of the secondary position given to education compared to philosophy—as education just experiments with what philosophy devises—the instrumental role given to education might also subordinate education and philosophy of education to a conceptual governance of philosophy. Recalling Ball’s (1993) insights (section 1.4), we can say that in this conceptual ‘rule’ of philosophy over education and philosophy of education, notions and ideas created by philosophy dictate the way education and philosophy of education are managed, as the discourse created by philosophy sets the boundaries to what can be thought and what is unthinkable.

In order to prevent this potential hierarchical power structure between philosophy of education and philosophy and to prevent such discursive dictation, I suggest that philosophy of education should not just be regarded as a channel through which philosophy’s insights are examined and tested, but should also serve as an independent site for a discourse about education itself: its essence, its goal, its role. In this case, ideas from the mother discipline are
an important source for analysis and conceptualization, but they do not dictate or limit ways of thinking about education or about life in general. What (general) philosophers might consider as “social problems” or “difficulties of contemporary social life” (Dewey, 2004, p. 356) should not force philosophers of education (or educators in schools) to take them as such and should not block or deflect philosophers of education (or educators in schools) from fundamental exploration of education or of human experiences, or from taking a broader view on life. This would leave more room for them to think about education in ways that are denied or ignored by general philosophers but would also enable them to conduct a more critical reflection on social orders, including ‘settled’ issues such as democracy, from an educational point of view, even ‘settled’ issues (if there are such issues) are legitimate for educational scrutiny.

This is the space opened by distilling. While distilling requires philosophers of education to seriously consider and to be versed in philosophical discussions, at the same time it allows the freedom not to commit to the conclusions of these discussions. In this sense, indeed “where philosophy ends, education begins” (Arcilla, 2002, p. 7). But this sequence is not because philosophy and education are “understood as a coordinated reform effort” (ibid.) where philosophy hands down to education a ready-made general solution in order to address social problems. Rather, education (and philosophy of education as part of education and in the service of education) follows philosophy by looking at the philosophy sphere without feelings of inferiority but with the intention to carefully examine and assess what philosophy

146 I do not object to democracy, of course, but for educative reasons even democracy needs to be examined critically, for example its linkage with less admired social-economic phenomena (such as neoliberalism) and whether it fits with any society (such as traditional, tribal or religious ones). This critical examination needs to be done with an intention to yield basic human features.
has come up with in order to recover and recapture the wonder and thus to retrieve ideas for educative use.

Arcilla (2002) finds the Deweyan framework responsible for the current separation of philosophy from education since it requires education to pay attention to and cooperate with philosophy while in reality education had found other disciplines to draw on. Siegel (2002) has a clear idea about what should be the solution: “The remedy seems obvious: give up the Deweyan picture of both philosophy and philosophy of education… reconceive of philosophy of education, and philosophy itself, as enjoying a dignity and integrity of their own, in which theoretical problems and concerns, rather than practical ones, drive the scholarly agendas of their practitioners” (p. 279-280). But Arcilla wishes to save the Deweyan picture and to this end he points to two options in dealing with this rift between philosophy and education. The less desirable option, but unfortunately the one that seems more probable according to him, is that philosophy of education will surrender to the social sciences, adapt to and be assimilated by them, as “if you can’t beat them, join them”: “philosophy of education will eventually mutate into social theory for educational practitioners and policymakers” (p. 11). The alternative is adopting another philosophical foundation or another goal for philosophy other than dealing with social problems, which the social sciences seem to address better anyway (or at least in reality they have more appeal). Arcilla prefers this option: “The other possibility is that we discover how to make those parts of philosophy which are precisely not featured in the social sciences pertinent to educators… something which would not replace the contributions of the social sciences but which also could not be reduced to them” (p. 11). We should consider Arcilla’s recommendation

\[147\] As mentioned above, educational policy-making is already largely based on problem-solving approach.
seriously. He himself casts his lot on skepticism and suggests it as a philosophical area that was not integrated into or modified to a social science and as yet one that holds educational relevance. But interestingly, he shifts from the classic skepticism to existentialism:

How could skeptical questioning possibly be of help to educators? One way would be if this questioning deepened our understanding of our individual mortality, such that, ”What do I know?” led ineluctably to, “How do I exist?” Cultivating this understanding in educators might then help them stay in touch with another meaning of learning: that it is necessary not only in order for social regeneration, but because we exist as individual mortals by learning, we are learning beings (p. 11)

Arcilla’s call to open more widely the philosophical world for educational consideration is a step in the right direction, but an insufficient one. Although I am sympathetic to the existential lead, and following the principles of educational sovereignty and distilling, I reject an inference from existentialism to education, that is, managing education according to existentialist conclusions (or any philosophical conclusions). Existential thinking does hold an important contribution to education as an agent for humanity that seeks out experiences, understandings, and meanings; however, it must be examined in such a way according to which these are not existential positions or answers that are borrowed for education but rather themes and questions that were processed from the existential discussion. In the next section I take this task and explore how Heidegger’s work can be distilled into an educational goal.

5.7 Example: Retrieving an Educational Goal from Heidegger’s Philosophy

As 19th and 20th centuries existentialism—broadly speaking, and at least in a sense—considers the (late) modern human predicament (or the nature of the human condition) as its point of reference, it is an exciting area to look at as a potential source for educative ideas. As such, existentialism (shall we say ‘the work of existentialists’) draws increasing attention
within educational circles in general and in philosophy of education in particular. However, it is important to note that taking existentialism as a philosophy that focuses on human existence does not mean that other philosophies or philosophers who are not considered existentialists do not address this existence. What we can see as existential ideas already appear, of course, in ancient Greek thought. However, the importance of the philosophical existential movement that is referred to here as a source for education is in looking at human life as emerges during modern times and perhaps especially during the twentieth century, human life that is blurring or concealing what lies beneath it. And as this human life gives rise to the kind of instrumental approach to education that we encounter, existentialism seems a fertile ground for extracting educative ideas and questions. This is not to say that other philosophies are less relevant for educative thought; as discussed in section 5.3 and in line with the open outlook at other spheres, any philosophy is to be considered as a potential educative source. Existentialism, as a philosophical approach—and within it Heidegger’s work that will be examined here—is only one source for education, and referring to human existence as an educational starting point does not mean rendering education an existential philosophical project. Thus, while we can accept Vandenberg’s (1971) call for “[s]eeking the basis of education in human existence” (p. ix), it would be a mistake to interpret this call as ‘the basis of education is in existentialism’. Considering existentialism as a source for educative thinking—important as it might be—is not to begin any educational thought from existentialism or from existentialist insights. Vandenberg’s

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148 Kneller (1958) and Morris (1966) are early works that mostly took existentialism as a whole as an educational interest. With the increased interest in this area of philosophy within education, and realizing the differences between ‘existentialists’, scholars look more and more at specific philosophers. White (2014) claims that from the later 1980s onwards there is a general trend in philosophy of education to focus on philosophers.

149 And, as explained in chapter 2, the fundamental fact of being human is not taken as a philosophical starting point but an educational one. This does not deny, of course, that it is used also as a philosophical starting point.
suggestion fits my perception of education as an agent for humanity only if it refers to the factual situation of being a human being and not to a philosophical standpoint.

As existentialism is both a broad and loose bundle of ideas (not unlike other philosophical areas, but perhaps more than other areas such as rationalism or empiricism), I will focus here on one thinker who is usually considered an important part of this philosophical tradition: Martin Heidegger. Looking at Heidegger’s philosophy as well as at literature that discusses his philosophy yields a specific proposed educational goal: examining the meaning of being human. Although the specific reviewed philosophy is optional from an educative point of view for drawing themes and questions, it is nonetheless much in line with many features in this work that outline my educational vision. One of the most prominent aspects within Heidegger’s thought that is aligned with my vision of education has to do with discovering and keeping or sustaining a wonder (or mystery, in general and particularly about life and about the world, or, better, about human lives in this world), an aspect that is demonstrated in the lack of commitment to (or necessity in or non-urgency for) answers or solutions, or even—at times—prevention of answers or solutions (see sections 3.3-3.4 and 5.6). Heidegger (2002) refers to this aspect in the Epilogue to The Origin of the Work of Art: “The foregoing considerations are concerned with the enigma of art, the enigma that art itself is. They are far from claiming to solve the enigma. The task is to see the enigma.” (p. 50).\textsuperscript{150} We will see below that this aspect of wonder appears in relation to key notions in Heidegger’s philosophy. As such, the proposed educational goal retrieved

\textsuperscript{150} In Poetry, Language, Thought (1971) the translation is: “The foregoing reflections are concerned with the riddle of art, the riddle that art itself is. They are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle.” (p. 77. See also Thomson (2011), p. 104, where he refers to ‘riddle’ as ‘mystery’).
from these notions and major required elements in my educational vision mutually reinforce each other.

This section is structured as follows. In the first two sub-sections I demonstrate the distilling process from Heidegger’s philosophy into the proposed educational goal; the first sub-section (5.7.1) focuses mainly on the first two movements described in section 5.5 and the second sub-section (5.7.1) focuses mainly on the third movement. In sub-section 5.7.3 I compare between the proposed educational goal and other similar goals. Finally, in sub-section 5.7.4 I offer few policy and pedagogical implications which stem from the proposed educational goal.

5.7.1 Rejecting Being as an Educational Goal

As a prominent twentieth century philosopher whose influence is felt in a variety of fields, as well as the increasing interest in his work within education itself\(^\text{151}\) and his own writing on education, the relevance of Heidegger to educative thought is self-evident. Most of the literature that considers Heidegger’s work in the educational context uses his critique of modernity and his ontological analysis of late-modern life in order to envision an education that opposes or confronts contemporary phenomena, for example in relation to technology or art (a comprehensive collection in this spirit is edited by Peters (2002), *Heidegger, education, and modernity*). Within this current work that revisits the place of education in society and its relationships with philosophy, however, Heidegger’s thought is not taken as an alternative for modernity that education should promote but as a source for educative ideas and specifically for educative goals. In other words, using the terms laid down throughout this work, I do not

\(^{151}\) See the forthcoming issue of *Educational Philosophy and Theory* dedicated for Heidegger and education.
take Heidegger’s ontological structures and start from them as a philosophical position to be applied in education, but rather consider how Heidegger’s work might lead to themes and questions worth reflecting upon that have the potential to generate experiences, understandings, and meanings. For this purpose, we need to go back to some of the roots of his philosophical thinking.

This task of distilling Heidegger’s philosophy into educative ideas in mind, it is important to make clear that the meaning of using this philosophy for education is not to simplify it and translate it for non-philosophers. The task is not to take Heidegger’s difficult writings and couch them in everyday language so teachers can use them for teaching and students could have them as reading material. This would be to force philosophy on education. Instead, the mission is to find in Heidegger’s work or to generate from it ideas that can serve for educative use in light of the guidelines portrayed in previous chapters (especially chapters 2 and 3). Hence, this sub-section and the next one follow the general outlines provided in section 5.5 for deriving educational ideas from a philosophical source. Specifically, I will show how from Heidegger’s philosophy and the literature that interprets it we can and should conclude an educational goal of examining the meaning of being a human being. As the said section does not provide and does not intend to provide exact instructions how to distill (or retrieve) philosophical discussions into educative ideas, the process of deriving these ideas from a particular philosophical discussion depends on the specific issues explored and the specific methods used within the philosophical discussion, as well as where one looks within the philosophical discussion for educative ideas. Such is the case when we look for educative ideas at Heidegger’s philosophy and the literature that debates its meanings and implications.
Distilling Heidegger’s philosophy for educative needs will be done here following his pursuit or quest after Being, or his treatment of the question of Being that, according to him, was forgotten (or perhaps better ignored) during history in general and within the history of philosophy in particular. Explicating the notion or the meaning of ‘Being’ in general or even just in a Heideggerian sense is beyond the scope of this work. It is important to note, however, that for Heidegger exploring Being means exploring the history of Being, that is, the history of philosophy, or, in other words, the origins of how we think about existence, that things are. In that sense, one way of introducing Being is through Heidegger’s early emphasis on the ontological difference, the difference between beings (or entities) and Being. As a text that explains the meaning of thinking about Being quite clearly, at least in some central sense, I find Wittgenstein’s (1965) *A Lecture on Ethics* useful (although he does not explicitly use the label “Being”), especially the passage: “I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it I wonder at the existence of the world. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as ‘how extraordinary that anything should exist’ or ‘how extraordinary that the world should exist.’” (p. 8). The notions of ‘wonder’ and ‘amazement’ that are mentioned in section 5.5 as the element we are looking for are salient here. Moreover, in *Basic Questions of Philosophy* (1994) Heidegger claims: “everyone knows what ‘Being’ means, especially since it is the most general and most empty determination of everything. In this wasteland of utter indifference, what in the beginning produced the highest wonder has been lost.” (p. 168. See also Ehrmantraut, 2010, p. 68).

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152 Different translators treat differently the question of whether to capitalize ‘Being’ given the possible confusion with a ‘being’ in the meaning of a thing (in German all nouns are capitalized). For clarity, I will use ‘Being’.

153 There are, of course, different ways to examine Heidegger’s work but starting with Being follows his own earlier thinking.
Heidegger argues that the question of Being becomes accessible through an examination and an analysis of that entity, Dasein, which in its being—that is, as what makes it what it is—is concerned with not only its own being but also with Being itself. Thus, there is a strong and intimate link between Dasein and Being. This link is explicit in Heidegger’s early writings, and although it is less obvious later, it does not disappear when Heidegger changes his vocabulary and almost abandons the term ‘Dasein’. *Being and Time* (2010/1927) is the text where this link is most tight.154 There, for example, Heidegger discusses ‘The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being’ (§3) and ‘The Ontical Priority of the Question of Being’ (§4). In ‘Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking’ Heidegger (1966) opens by stating that “the question concerning man’s essence is not a question about man” (in *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 58), alluding to the needed inquiry into Being.155

Similarly to the wonder that is associated with Being, wonder (or mystery) is also associated with Dasein. Ehrmantraut (2010) argues that this link is demonstrated in Heidegger’s university teaching, as it aimed to awaken or to stimulate students’ tendency toward the wonder that ignited philosophy: “In the lecture course, *Die Grundfragen der Metaphysik* (1936/37) Heidegger turns to the attunement that governs the first, Greek, inception of philosophy. Through the fundamental attunement of wonder (Erstaunen), the Dasein of Greeks was arrested by the unconcealedness of beings as a whole.” (p. 68). Ehrmantraut adds that Heidegger’s goal of “introducing philosophy” (p. 79), that is, bringing students to an “enacting philosophizing as a possibility, a way of existence, a historical

154 For our discussion here, we will focus on Heidegger’s early inquiry into Being, that is, the Being of beings, and will not expand the educative distilling for the later notion of being-as-such. However, seeing being-as-such as a historical expansion of Being as it was originally pursued within the ontological difference, it seems that for most if not for all of the discussion in this section the educative process also fits for being-as-such.

155 In a similar move, in ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1977) Heidegger claims that “the essence of technology is by no means anything technological” (p. 4).
occurrence” (p. 31, Quoting from *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*), involves allowing the human being that “something like a mystery of his Dasein can be encountered” (p. 79). Therefore, we can say that Dasein is a good place—educationally—to start looking in order to awaken a wonder.\(^{156}\)

As Dasein is concerned with its own being, it demonstrates a quality of self-awareness or self-reflection. As Polt (1999) explains, Dasein is “an entity whose own Being is an issue for it” (p. 166). But as such, it also aware of or reflects on Being: Dasein, by being Dasein, examines not only itself but actually at the same time also refers to Being. In other words, Dasein’s defining character of self-reflection is also reflection upon Being. This double reflection, which is actually one compound or unified reflection, is suggested in *Being and Time* (2010) by statements such as: “The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its ownmost possibility” (p. 42/42).\(^{157}\) This awareness also means that Dasein is aware of and must confront such issues as mortality and the existence of others.

We referred to Dasein above as an agent and brought some of its features as derived from its linkage to Being. But is Dasein an agent in the sense of an embodied agency, that is, an entity that holds some kind of ‘personhood’, or just some kind of (special) ‘experience’ of Being? In other words, can we also ask ‘who is Dasein?’? Heidegger provides enough evidence for an affirmative answer. For example: “This being [Seiende], which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being, we formulate terminologically as *Dasein*” (p. 7/7). However, it is not clear whether for Heidegger the

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\(^{156}\) Similarly, through the notion of natality Arendt (1998) also associates between the human being and a sense of wonder or marvel: “the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle” (p. 178).

\(^{157}\) In the citation form ‘p. x/y’, x denotes the page number in the 2010 *Being and Time* translation, and y denotes the corresponding page number from the German *Sein und Zeit* edition.
group of beings that is composed from all the entities that are Dasein overlaps exactly with the group of the human beings, that is, whether Dasein are equivalent to human beings, or whether there are some Dasein that are not human beings (perhaps a potentially extraterrestrial alien?), or whether there are some human beings that are not Dasein (perhaps a human body in a vegetative state?).

Indeed, Heidegger’s work is frequently ambiguous. But we should not forget what we are doing here: our main task is not clarifying Heidegger’s philosophy and disentangling its perplexities, but rather finding ideas for education. Therefore, for our discussion here, the ambiguity regarding who exactly is considered Dasein is not an obstacle as long as it does not block us from finding appropriate themes or questions for education. Similarly for the ambiguity regarding the use of ‘Dasein’. Therefore, in continuing our attempt to retrieve ideas, we will consider Dasein both as the experience of Being (or the being of the one who experiences Being) as well as the one who experiences Being. Moreover, since it is clear that in inquiring into Dasein Heidegger is interested (at least also) in those agents to which we commonly refer as ‘human beings’, we will take it for granted that those who take part in education are Dasein, without any additional stipulation of their features. In the case that the discussion about Dasein is limited to human beings—as in our case—Dasein can be seen as the being of human beings, or the experience of Being that is peculiar to human beings.

Several commenters explore the link between Being and education and by offering interpretations for the elusive nature of Being they (directly or indirectly) propose Being as an educational guideline. Götz (1983), for example, draws parallels between Heidegger’s philosophy and education, equates teaching to ontological openness, and thus, learning to ontological discovery: “Teaching, then, like art, is making the way open for the Being of
beings to unconceal itself as truth — which after all, is what teaching is all about. When authentic, teaching is a mode of being through which unconcealedness—that is, truth—takes place” (p. 7). Similarly, Ehrmantraut (2010) identifies in Heidegger’s ‘courses’ “the pedagogical task of assisting others to participate in the question of Being” (p. 10). In discussing Dasein’s relation to Being through ‘nearness to the essence of all things’ or ‘nearness to the world’, Ehrmantraut argues that “[t]he attainment of such nearness (Nähe) is identified as the ground of philosophy and, at the same time, is posited as the goal of education itself” (p. 122). Thus, it seems that education is an appropriate ‘environment’ for addressing Being, or for Being to ‘show up’. Moreover, Being seems to be a promising organizer of education. But, if we, as educators, were to follow Götz’s or Ehrmantraut’s interpretation and were bound to commit to Heidegger’s general thinking within his investigation after Being, then Being itself—and not Dasein or the human being—would be the focus or goal of education. In other words, devout commitment to Heidegger—at least the early Heidegger—means defining education and education’s goal in terms of Being and not in terms of the human being. But this move violates the non-committal approach and is also in contrast to perceiving education as a human endeavor as is discussed in chapter 2, thus leading to distancing from the fundamental fact that we are all human beings.

Turning away from the human being might take place, for example, if we would insist on the question ‘what is the educational equivalence for Being?’ Or, another option that might keep education at a distance from the human being is to draw an educational conclusion from Heidegger’s pursuit after Being and dedicate education directly to an ontological ‘object’ or goal that surpasses all beings, some kind of an educative adaptation of the philosophical goal of Heidegger’s project in Being and Time as is explained by Polt (1999): “With the
overcoming of metaphysics, we can enter a new era that involves responding to Being rather than dominating beings” (p. 163).\footnote{Poltrack (1999) explains that ‘metaphysics’ is for Heidegger "metaphysics of presence": “It dulls us to the depth of experience and restricts us to impoverished ways of thinking and acting. In particular, if we identify Being with presence, we can become obsessed with getting beings to present themselves to us perfectly and in a definitive way - with representing beings accurately and effectively. We try, by means of philosophy, science or technology, to achieve complete insight into things and thereby gain complete control over them” (p. 5). As such, metaphysics is in opposition to the ontology Heidegger seeks to develop, a philosophical account of Being that does not view Being as presence.} This is perhaps what Goldberg (2009) suggests when he interprets Heidegger’s use of ‘horizon’: “education is essentially a transcendence to a world, i.e., is the human being’s going beyond all beings towards Being, without any reference to a distinction between narrower and wider horizons” (p. 257). But on the other hand, Goldberg is skeptical regarding the actual contribution of the notion of Being to education. He asserts that Heidegger’s inquiry into Being is not practically relevant for beings, the items—living or not living—that we find around us: “the understanding of Being that Heidegger associates with philosophizing is of absolutely no use for a knowledge of beings” (p. 261); hence, inquiry into Being is also not relevant for a practical endeavor such as education. Goldberg’s skepticism is, of course, understandable; taken as it is used by Heidegger, the notion of Being is indeed too remote from students’ and teachers’ lives (or experiences). But that in itself does not make it irrelevant for education; after all, the participants in education, as Dasein, do take part in pondering about Being. So we face this dilemma: on the one hand, we are witnessing an association between Heidegger’s philosophy and education, and specifically toward a possible equivalence between Being and an overarching existential goal for education, but on the other hand we do not want to aim at Being itself since then we might step away too far from the human being as the focus of education.

But not just taking Being in itself as an educational guide is problematic. The literature offers interpretations of Being through discussion of other notions that by themselves might
be proposed as educational guidelines instead of Being. In such cases, as we will see below, the interpretations include specific philosophical stands about the nature of these notions. We should remember that according to education’s sovereignty in general and the process of distilling in particular, education is not committed to philosophy and to philosophical positions and that education should not take a specific philosophical stand as an educational guideline, in which case it will be channeled into a pre-defined path that might result in instrumentality and will limit its adventurous aspect (see also section 5.4). In some cases, philosophical positions are integrated or concealed within the interpretations of Being themselves and are not easily identified, as they are disguised as a specific ontological understanding. Let us consider two examples of notions that are discussed in the literature in relation to Being: ontotheology and language. For each case I present an interpretation offered in the literature and consider a problematic hypothetical adoption or implication for education. By this I hope to show why taking Being as an educational guide violates the non-committal approach.¹⁵⁹

The term ‘ontotheology’ is a combination of ‘ontology’ and ‘theology’ and is used by Heidegger to denote the traditional metaphysical perception (or, the “metaphysics of presence”) that has governed Western philosophy since Plato. As such, ontotheology is the way Being is historically understood by metaphysics (or the way Being shows itself through metaphysics).

Thomson (2011) refers to Heidegger’s understanding of ontotheology within an historic analysis of Being:

¹⁵⁹ Biesta (2011b) has a somewhat similar critique against educational philosophy programs for children that are inherent in traditional humanism and impose a specific philosophical standpoint about being human.
Heidegger’s philosophical critiques of the modern age follow from – and so can only really be understood in terms of – his conception of the history of Western metaphysics as a series of ontotheologically structured ways of understanding the being of entities, that is, different ways of understanding what and how entities are… “the history of being,” [is] Heidegger’s name for Western humanity’s changing sense of what it means for something to be at all (p. 3)

Thus, for Thomson, ontotheology is a conceptual framework for perceiving Being:

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an ontotheology is what puts the parentheses around an epoch, temporarily shielding a particular sense of what is and what matters from the corrosive sands of time… an ontotheology provides a temporarily unshakable understanding of what and how entities are, and thereby doubly anchors an epochal constellation of intelligibility (p. 9)
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One might, hypothetically, take this interpretation as an educational foundation and by this to base education on the relationships between human beings and beings, for example education as some kind of training in appreciating and prioritizing entities around us, human and non-human. But taking Thomson’s interpretation as an educational foundation already announces a specific relation or attitude towards beings in the form of a structure or hierarchy, that is, that there is a characteristic of “mattering” at all and that some things are more important than others. Thus, Being itself becomes an educational guide. Instead, rejecting Thomson’s interpretation as an educative guide (not as a philosophical insight) will leave this issue open for educative discussion and by this will enable teachers and students to raise pertinent issues such as power relations regarding who or what decides what is important. To be sure, I do not deny the relevancy of Thomson’s understanding of ontotheology to education, as I do not deny the relevancy of any interpretation of Heidegger’s ontology to education (or interpretations in general). Thomson’s view on ontotheology (and thus indirectly on Being) is appropriate to be used as an interpretation. However, according to the non-committal principle between education and philosophy this

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160 Thus, for example, Thomson (2011) argues that “Nietzsche thus gives us, in Heidegger’s terms, an ontotheology of will-to-power eternally recurring.” (p. 14)
interpretation should not be perceived as a directive for education but as a source to be processed and distilled for educational needs, keeping in mind the fundamental fact ("we are all human beings") and the required basic human features (experiences, understandings, meanings). Acknowledging "a sense of what is and what matters" is another philosophical idea to examine, modify, and appropriate in the service of education. It is another philosophical idea that serves as a check point or a relay station in transforming a broad philosophical approach and narrowing (or purifying) it down to be used by a human endeavor that is focused on students as human beings. The narrowing is done by passing the philosophical ideas through a funnel of distilling philosophy into educative themes and questions originating in philosophy, as is done in the next sub-section.

The same cautious treatment should be given to Heidegger’s view on language. For Heidegger, language, in a sense, characterizes human beings and as such articulates, indicates, or implies Being. In Letter on Humanism (1998, in Pathmarks) he expresses this view by saying that “[l]anguage is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell” (p. 239) and “language is at once the house of being and the home of the human essence” (p. 274). Commentators interpret language as some kind of mediator between human beings and Being. For example, Standish (1992) discusses “the relation between language and Being” and says that “[t]he Being of things, their appearing as things, is not separable from our speaking about them” (p. 234), and that “[t]he analysis of language clears the way for the acknowledgement of Being” (p. 241). Again, hypothetically, one might adopt Standish’s interpretation of the language-Being relationship as an educational guide and propose posing the use of and the inquiry into language at the center of education as an avenue to Being. However, although there is no doubt that language is an important and dominant part of a
human’s life, for educative needs language cannot be taken as an educational guide, that is, taken for granted as a path to Being or as a defining element of being human. Instead, education should refer to language as another component in the richness of being human. It should be clear that I am not advocating here a mechanical learning of language. On the contrary; as an aspect that crosses social roles and political forces, language must be a central part of education and needs to be taught beyond vocabulary and technical matters of grammar and punctuation. But the philosophical insights that emerge from Heidegger should not lead education to take a position regarding the ontological or social status of language.

5.7.2 Formulating an Educational Goal

Instead of defining education and education’s goal in term of Being, I suggest distilling Heidegger’s philosophy back to the being that ponders about Being. But since this distilling is for education’s needs, it will not take Heidegger’s Dasein as the pondering agent because this agent is already ontologically characterized. The ontological framework that is associated with Dasein prevents education from centering education around it or formulating its goal in terms of Dasein.

‘Dasein’ is the Heideggerian replacement for the notion of ‘human being’ that is designated to avoid traditional humanism. Heidegger chooses Dasein in order to avoid what he perceives as the mistakes or distortions of traditional metaphysics regarding the human being, among them the distancing from Being and the pursuit after beings, and in the modern context controlling and mastering them. Dasein, in contrast, ‘recalls’ Being, asks about Being (and its own being), and consequently becomes ‘charged’ with ontological ‘qualities’ (as described in *Being and Time*, for example, being-in-the-world, ‘care’, and ‘temporality’). But by this choice Heidegger already characterizes Dasein, that is, situates the human being
within an ontological framework, or—philosophically—actually makes (or forces) the human being to be ‘committed’ to this ontological framework. Heidegger indeed takes a route other than (traditional) metaphysics in explaining the human being (or the human predicament), but in taking Dasein as his agent he still takes one way among many possible ways; Heidegger’s description is just another description of being human. From the educational point of view I advance in this work, Heidegger is mistaken if he thinks that by taking Dasein as a non-metaphysical agent of his analysis he escapes a predisposed or partial view about being human, that is, a position that declares a specific priority on how to perceive our existence. To be sure, Heidegger’s ontology is incredibly important, but educationally speaking his work should not be perceived as discovering truth about our existence that education (and arguably any sphere) should follow; education should not commit to the Heideggerian framework. Instead, I propose to bring his ideas to the educational table for examination and even to see them as possible ideas for discussion in class, but not to adopt them as an educational guideline. In other words, it is worthy to study Dasein but not to take it as the paradigmatic agent of being human in general or the recipient (or beneficiary) of education in particular.\(^{\text{161}}\)

Instead of taking Dasein as the focus of education, I propose to take the agent that Heidegger rejects—the human being—but without the metaphysical characteristics about

\[^{\text{161}}\text{Heidegger, of course, is not the only philosopher that—on behalf of human beings—commits to ontological or pre-philosophical framework. For example, Levinas does the same when he assigns responsibility to the other as the pre-philosophical experience of being human, and Sartre commands radical freedom to the human being. This kind of ascribing commitment or ‘imposing’ an obligation on the shoulders of human beings is philosophically appropriate, but not educationally. To be sure, rejecting these commitments as educational guidelines does not mean rejecting commitment to basic human rights (as the right for dignity) since these rights are not based on ontological frameworks (i.e. how reality is or what the human being is) but on ethically political and social values, that is, ways of life we choose to have. Even the fact that our political arrangements and our education system have (among others) philosophical foundations does make education committed to philosophy or to philosophical positions. This is one important result or meaning of educational sovereignty.}\]
which Heidegger is concerned. In this sense of taking this ‘uncharacterized’ agent, the distilling does not ‘stop’ at Dasein but goes all the way ‘back’ from Being to the notion of the ‘human being’. The educative withdrawal from Being to the human being, however, is not to take metaphysics’ side; it is to *reopen the question of the human being* while keeping Being in mind. Couching education and education’s goal in terms of the human being after retreating from Being is also not forgetting Being as Heidegger describes in *Being and Time* because first, centering on the human being originates from the thinking about Dasein, and second, this focusing is not done for philosophical reasons but for educative needs. In other words, there is no ontological position taken here but an educative invitation to explore ourselves in the widest way possible. Heidegger’s Dasein and the association to Being is one path to explore, even an important one (as it challenges dominant perspectives), but it is not the only one.

In fact, reopening the question of the human being is also a reaction to a broader anticipated objection that goes as follows: any retreat or regression backwards from Heidegger’s fundamental and radical ontology misses the point of his revolutionary work. Critique in this spirit is directed by Goldberg (in review) towards Thomson’s analysis of what the latter considers as Heidegger’s educational perfectionism. Goldberg asserts that Heidegger’s “own version of *paideia*, like his philosophy generally, rejects the concepts that turn, in Plato’s wake, into the basic assumptions of metaphysics and humanism” (p. 29). Thus,

> Without a clear appreciation of his challenge to these traditional assumptions, we won’t be able to evaluate how Heidegger’s reflections on education fit within his

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162 In this spirit, we can adopt Rocha’s (2014) assertion that “the radical must not succumb to ideology”. But even within a critical approach, radicalness in the name of radicalness cannot be considered a legitimate reason for change.
overall philosophical project and, concomitantly, how that project might require us to reassess our own notions about education. By taking him as generally in line with a long and diverse tradition of perfectionism rather than as the most insightful critic of its implicit ontological commitments, Thomson’s interpretation does more to conceal than clarify the educational significance of Heidegger’s philosophy. (ibid.)

Similarly, one could claim that not explicitly exposing Heidegger’s pursuit after Being (or any other part of its fundamental ontology) and keeping it away from direct use for education actually emasculates Heidegger’s whole philosophy and fails to recruit its power for a profound revisiting of what education is and for an educational reform that will cut deep into our perception of what education should and could be. However, this move will be to subordinate education to a specific philosophical approach and to strip education from its much needed sovereignty. Directing education to the human being is not abandoning Heidegger’s originality, for example his novel perspective on ourselves and the world in which we act (as being-in-the-world, always a being engaged in the world) or his understanding of the place of death (as being-towards-death). Rather, it is taking up the philosophical challenge he raises in an educative way; it is appropriating his questioning of traditional views and his fresh look at philosophy and human lives in general for the educational context. And education that seeks to reveal basic human features of experiences, understandings, and meanings and as such insists on leaving the question of the human being open, should follow in Heidegger’s footprint not in adopting his specific ontological architecture but in being inspired by his search after new ways of perceiving who we are. This is a much more promising strategy to maintain a critical approach and to discover how different and rich being human might be than we currently think.

Being is not forgotten and is not left behind by the suggested educative distilling also in a historical sense. Thomson (2005) interprets Heidegger’s association of Being with history, that is, history of being, as doctrines of change. According to ontological historicity,
“ontology, our bedrock understanding of what is, changes with time”, and ontological epochality “just further specifies that Western humanity’s changing sense of reality congeals into a series of relatively distinct and unified historical ‘epochs.’” (p. 9). Broadening this historical interpretation for educative needs will yield that focusing on the human being and the different ways to understand it implies that this understanding is not fixed but is contextual over time, place, and consequence. In another words, different people in different times and in different places understand the human being differently, or what it means to be human. But this modification bears an additional twist that shifts this—in a sense—sociological or anthropological insight into an educative distilling: understanding the human being is not just a communal or collective quality but can also be an individual one. In other words, this understanding changes also over different human beings. As such, each student and each teacher is a source for examining the question of the human being.

Serving as a potential spring for addressing the question of the human being, each student and each teacher (and also each educator in general, including researchers) takes part in raising awareness of this question and for possible responses to it. Combined with the ultimate educational destination of forming meanings, the goal of examining the meaning of being human emerges. As discussed in chapter 3, meaning making bears a hermeneutic characteristic and requires the student to take an active and creative role, accompanied by an inclination for responsibility, willingness, and courage. In the context of the question of the

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163 Heidegger (2010) suggests such a goal in Being and Time: “It was intimated in the introduction that a task is furthered in the existential analytic of Dasein, a task whose urgency is hardly less than that of the question of being itself: the exposition of the a priori which must be visible if the question ‘What is human being?’ is to be discussed philosophically.” (p. 44/45). In a later lecture Heidegger (2009; the lecture series was delivered in 1934) revised the question so to avoid metaphysical associations: “the question reads, not ‘What is the human being?’ and not ‘Who is the human being?’, but ‘Who are we ourselves?’” (p. 33). As explained above, as education refers to human beings, for educative use we can see “ourselves” as human beings. The self-reflective aspect here is clear.
human being, this dynamic and initiatory involvement by the student means attaching oneself to an idea that tells something about the human being, a readiness that indicates commitment to what does it mean to be a human, and as such a sense of commitment to a way of human life.164

The educative pursuit after meanings, and hence also the quest after meanings for being human, is to be done both at the individual level (by any individual, whether a student, a teacher, or a researcher) but also at the collective level. Education as a whole, as a human endeavor and as a social unit, should seek to examine and discover meanings of being human. As such, the Nietzschean will-to-power is replaced by educative will-to-meaning; the hegemony of external forces that uses teachers and students gives way to a strategic search after and scrutiny of meanings in which teachers and students take an active and creative part. But this educative will-to-meaning is different from Frankl’s (1985) who uses it more as a clinical or therapeutic term. For Frankl, will-to-meaning is the primary human motivational force that strives “to find a meaning in one's life” (p. 121). Unlike Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome the crisis of modern nihilism by a philosophical answer that provides an ultimate meaning to life in general, Frankl addresses an individual form of nihilism—the “existential vacuum” (p. 128)—through a practical answer which is personal and most likely unique for each person. Both approaches are different from the educative one I call for as they seek an explanation for our being or existence, that is, an answer for the “why” raised by Nietzsche’s claim that: “He who has a why to live, can bear with almost any how” (as quoted by Frankl, 1985, p. 126). But the educative distilling as it is done here alters the pursuit after meaning in

164 The examination of being human being does not mean to characterize a fixed and ‘objective’ entity as an entity but rather to testify about the experience of being human being or the experience of “serving” as a human being. Hence, the proposed educational goal is couched in terms of “examination” and not “finding” or “reaching” as it is done in school with respect to ‘discerning’ natural laws through experiments.
life to meaning in being human, as education does not address a lack or a vacuum; on the contrary, education approaches the matter of meaning from a point of view of richness, not void. Education is not a philosophical endeavor (as might be drawn from a Nietzschean perspective)\textsuperscript{165} but neither a therapeutic one (as might be drawn from Frankl’s logotherapy, or existential psychology). Thus, for educative needs, pursuit after meaning is indeed primary as Frankl suggests, but not regarding life as in “the meaning of life” but rather regarding the mere fact that we are humans.

The proposed educational goal seems to be aligned with and supported by a later view of Heidegger (1976) that was expressed in an interview given to the German magazine Der Spiegel.\textsuperscript{166} In an answer to a question about the power of the individual and of philosophy to influence the “network of inevitabilities”, to make a significant change, Heidegger said:

philosophy will not be able to effect an immediate transformation of the present condition of the world. This is not only true of philosophy, but of all merely human thought and endeavor. Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in the time of foundering (Untergang); for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder. (p. 277)

Heidegger laments our godless world—the disappearance of gods, in general, from our lives. He does not express despair here but rather hope. This is not a hope for God, that is, the religious God, or any metaphysical God, or any specific god. This is not a god in the sense of an organizing entity that is in control, takes care, and has its own reasons for the world (and our lives) to be what it is. This god is not the provider of the ‘why’, but more an idea to

\textsuperscript{165} For this reason education is also not supposed to focus on “the still unthought” (Heidegger, 1969, p. 55) Nietzschean ontotheology as found by Heidegger and that might be set as an educational concern, a possible move if one adopts Thomson’s (2005) link between ontotheology and education. As education is not a tool for solving social problems, it is also not an answer for the current prevalent and indeed disturbing ontotheological form of enframing (see section 1.4). While raising awareness of enframing as problematic “epochal constellation of intelligibility” (p. 19) is welcomed, from an educative point of view it should not be considered a way of being to be dissolved but as another source within the general goal of gaining meanings about being human.

\textsuperscript{166} The interview itself was given in 1966 and published May 31st, 1976, five days after Heidegger’s death.
which we will be committed, something beyond what we experience that motivates us (not explains or orders). If ‘god’ is to be understood that way, then I see the proposed educational goal, as it aims at meanings about ‘us’—those who need to be saved—a part\textsuperscript{167} of this pursuit after a god (or gods). Meaning making about ourselves is crucial in preparing or inviting a god to show up, in challenging what seems as inevitability. It is only we who can save us, and by looking for meanings about us we keep the door open for different gods to emerge.

Considering the meaning of being human as an educational interest is not, of course, something new. For example, as mentioned in chapter 2, Biesta (2006) argues that we need “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” (p. 4-5).\textsuperscript{168} However, Biesta refers to the meaning of being human as a general philosophical and abstract background or infrastructure for education, and in addition he takes a philosophical stand regarding this question when he advocates a specific approach of being human based on being a unique subject (the event of ‘coming into presence’).\textsuperscript{169} Instead, what I call for is explicitly setting the examination of

\textsuperscript{167} Education, as philosophy and “all merely human thought and endeavour” as Heidegger claims, is only a part in this project of calling for gods. In other words, this is beyond the inter-spherical space itself but rather has to do with what constitutes or motivates it.

\textsuperscript{168} In criticizing the notions of autonomy and rationality, Biesta expresses his concern for “those who may never be able to achieve autonomy or rationality. Are they beyond the scope of education? Are they outside of the sphere of politics? Are they beyond the scope of what it means to be human?” (In Winter, 2011, p. 538). Educators as well as students should grapple with these questions as they examine the meaning of being human within the context of challenging (late) modernity and (late) modern way of life.

\textsuperscript{169} Admittedly, similar to my rejection of shaping identities in students, in ‘coming into presence’ Biesta is interested in an “event rather than an essence or identity, and one that expresses an interest in who comes into presence rather than that it tries to define what is to come, ought to come or is allowed to come into presence” (in Winter, 2011, p. 538). However, whereas this interest is linked and limited to “the question of subjectivity, that is the question of how we can be or become a subject of action and responsibility” (ibid., p. 537), I propose as an educational goal an examination that is not necessarily committed to the subject or does not necessarily take the subject as the starting point. Even Biesta’s shift to ‘coming into the world’ that stems from “the fact that the event of subjectivity can only happen in a world of plurality and difference” and that means,
being human as an educational goal, a goal that teachers and also students (to some extent, at least) are aware of.

Through the fundamental fact (we are all human beings) and meaning making, the proposed educational goal of examining the meaning of being human might not seem much. However, this goal is not just a simple combination (or adding) of the educational guideline with the epistemological hermeneutic concept, or ‘stacking’ of one over the other. It is product of a careful scrutiny and modification of a philosophical work, including the analysis of possible alternative ideas and concepts as candidates for educational use, rejection of those that are found inappropriate, and a delicate modification of those that are found holding potential to significantly contribute to an adventurous exploration of ourselves.

5.7.3 Comparing to Other Educational Goals

The educational goal to examine the meaning of being human being aligns with Heidegger’s pursuit after a common and unified goal for the university that will be philosophically grounded and oriented. Specifically, as Heidegger sought to revolutionize the academy by first awakening faculty and students to a basic foundation (whether it was “fundamental ontology” for the early Heidegger or Enframing ontotheology for the later Heidegger) and then encouraging them to think in relation to or beyond this foundation (or even to contest and challenge it),\(^\text{170}\) so the educational goal of examining the meaning of being human seeks to unify K-12 schooling by calling teachers and students to first identify and discover current meanings of being human and ways of living and then to challenge them and imagine other

\(^{170}\) See Thomson (2005) for a detailed account of Heidegger’s vision of the university.
meanings and other ways of living.\textsuperscript{171} Moreover, as Heidegger wishes to formulate a unified goal beyond the fragmented ontic disciplines that is based on ontological or ontotheological questioning, so meanings of being human should be in the background of any subject taught in school, in order that education will transcend beyond transmission of information and develop skills towards humanistic-existential questioning and understanding. Both the later Heidegger and the proposed goal do not commit to any philosophical framework of how to perceive ourselves and our world and leave the door open for envisioning new ways for such perceptions. However, as schooling lacks (or is released from) the research component crucial for the academy, teachers and students in school can reduce the importance of specific content and focus more on the human experience itself.

A somewhat similar educational goal to the proposed here is found by Ehrmantraut (2010) within Heidegger’s courses. Ehrmantraut characterizes Heidegger’s philosophic pedagogy by “the pedagogical task of assisting others to participate in the question of Being” (p. 10) by “‘awakening’ attunements” that leads to “initiation of a living philosophizing’” (p. 11). Thus, the suggested goal of examining the meaning of being a human being is a modification of Heidegger’s philosophical goal to ignite and encourage self-awareness towards “possibilities of existence” (p. 53). This modification keeps the self-reflective aspect inherent in Heidegger’s philosophy but focuses it on the collective as well as the private experience each of us share as a human being.

\textsuperscript{171} This educational goal can be adopted, of course, beyond K-12 schooling. However, I find it specifically suitable for K-12 as while it is inspired by the question of Being and Dasein’s relation to Being it still can stand by itself and constitutes a basic existential understanding that is important to all human beings. Later educational stages will be able to build on this ontological understanding (or on the mere examination within the educational goal) towards ontical ones (e.g., in nursing studies the central examination will be ‘what does it mean to be a nurse’).
It is also worthwhile to compare the proposed goal to the one Thomson (2005) suggests following his analysis of Heidegger’s ontotheology. He too concludes that awareness is a central notion in education that derives from Heidegger. Instead of schooling that focuses in “educational ‘outcomes’ to be ‘optimized’” (p. 158) as part of Nietzschean will-to-power, Thomson—through Heidegger—envisions education that exposes and critiques this imperative:

the education Heidegger seeks to impart – the fundamental attunement he seeks to awaken in his students – is itself an attempt to awaken us from the ontological education that we have “always already” received from the metaphysical tradition… Heidegger seeks to educate his students against their preexisting ontotheological education (p. 162)

But from this Thomson deduces education that should conceive students “as human beings with intrinsic talents and capacities to be identified and cultivated” (p. 158). Although developing students’ tendencies is important in and of itself, a fuller ontological education and one that fits better with Heidegger’s quest after Being—i.e. beyond beings—should not stop there; education that aims at encouraging students to investigate their own and others’ meaning of being human goes beyond the ability to seeing themselves and others differently toward seeing wholes rather than perceiving partial pictures.

Introducing an educational goal that is not directly associated with the ontic world outside school (e.g., one that does not stem from political or economic requirements) is in line with educational visions that call for increased separation between school and society. For example, commenting on Ranciere’s critique regarding the Ignorant Schoolmaster, Bingham and Biesta (2010) portrays today’s school as a metaphor for or just another site within society in which the “practice of explanation” (p. 3) prevails. Instead, Bingham and Biesta introduce the alternative of an emancipatory school that takes equality instead of inequality as a point of departure. More recently, and closer to the picture I draw in this
section, Masschelein and Simons (2013) also advance an equality approach, but through creating and granting “free time” (p. 9) for teachers and students in order to re-establish school as a site that explicitly suspends or decouples students' ties with their families, social environment, and society, such that a “scholastic experience” (p. 38) is developed in contrast to the external productive-oriented world that demands results.\footnote{Similarly, Brighouse (2005) argues that school must be a place that is different from the rest of students’ lives and to follow the ‘discontinuous ethos’ according to which it has an ethos “that is noticeably discontinuous with that of both the home and the mainstream culture” (p. 540). This principle supports the anti-commercial principle regarding popular commercial culture, stating that “because children have ample opportunities to take up the values it offers without it being endorsed by the school, the school should not endorse it” (p. 541).}

Unlike these and other mostly contextual-related (social- or cultural-focused) separations of school, the education that I call for is different from the outside world by its existential awareness; whereas Bingham and Biesta emphasize student’s emancipation and Masschelein and Simons emphasize scholastic experience (through subject matter), an Heideggerian-inspired education starts from and strives for ontological reflection about being a human being. As such, the starting point of equality and egalitarianism—that is, that we all should be treated fairly—is moved all the way back to the humanistic existential situation. School is a place that allows and encourages examination of the most fundamental (human) experience.

\textbf{5.7.4 Policy and Pedagogical Implications}

The proposed goal of examining meanings for being human, although it draws on philosophical sources, does not mean solitude, or an isolated immersion, away from other human beings. Unlike the image of an individual that ponders alone, in the educational context pursuing meanings for being human is a social enterprise. The social aspect stems from considering teachers and other students as crucial sources for suggesting meanings of
which the specific student is not aware. For, every other human being is a potential source for meanings as she has her own life, her own perspective on being human. Hence, each student and each teacher can contribute by sharing her own experiences, understanding, or concluded meanings to be examined by others. Moreover, forming meanings, as any construction of knowledge, might benefit from collaboration. Teamwork can be helpful in a variety of ways, for example by sharing skills (such as assisting in finding the precise vocabulary) or encouraging thinking while discussing implications of experiences. The important point here is that in school, gaining meanings for being human is essentially different from content acquisition in which predefined content is ‘out there’ (curriculum) ready to be delivered and to be digested. Students must be encouraged to constantly look at their lives and at others’ lives in order to come up with new understandings and new meanings. The studied curriculum, i.e. subject matter, has a part in creating experiences and implying understandings, but working together with teachers and other students bears an added value, a human value that is demonstrated when human beings face each other.

The social aspect of constructing meanings for being human, however, does not necessarily mean that these meanings are all collective or universal. As part of the educational endeavor, the question of the validity of a meaning—that the same meaning is gained or agreed to by different persons—remains open for discussion. For, a predetermination that meanings are common, even for specific groups of people, is actually imposing meanings on those that did not take part in forming these meanings, and thus the distance for misperceiving them is short. In that context, an interesting component that can be helpful in enhancing the educative discussion is language. As it is usually acceptable that
there is no private language\textsuperscript{173} (see Standish, 1992), integrating the issue of language into meaning making in school might encourage students to assess how communicating with each other influences forming and gaining meanings for being human, and as a result, perceiving their peers, teachers, and others outside school.

Another important implication of the proposed educational role has to do with the relationships between teachers and students. As curriculum that is supposed to be transmitted is removed from its central place, the teacher holds a different responsibility than the one who is charged with handing over a ready-made content. The teacher, an adult with more life experience—at least in absolute terms of span of time—has more ‘expertise’ in being a human being: she encountered vast cases in which she had the opportunity to draw meanings about being human, much more than her students and presumably in a much more diverse fashion. As such, the teacher has what we can call an ‘existential authority’. This authority stems not just from the fact that she is older, that is, has lived longer, but also should be based on attunement or tendency to think about and produce meanings from experiences. In a sense, a teacher holds not just a capacity for coming up with meanings but also an acknowledgment for its importance in being a human. It is life wisdom that one acquires through life and through living. That means that a teacher has to have the availability and the desire to live, to experience, to encounter new things that serve as the source for continual meaning making. Moreover, being a teacher also means to exercise this life wisdom in class and inspire students to appreciate it, as a springboard towards developing this orientation and faculty in the future. Thus, the teacher is a role model not necessarily by virtue of the quality

\textsuperscript{173} Of course, this in itself can be brought as a question for debate.
of her behavior but in light of her willingness to project the importance and significance of students’ own lives in gaining meanings.

The implications regarding teachers and teaching lead to implications for teacher education. The necessity that the teacher will have both availability and the desire to live as well as life wisdom means that the teacher has to hold significantly more ‘expertise’ in being a human being. Indeed, teachers are older than K-12 students and come from different cultures and from a variety of backgrounds. However, for an education that sets an educational goal of examining the meaning of being a human teachers should bring more than just older age and formal teaching certification;\(^{174}\) a teacher needs to bring her own ‘take’ on being human in the world, the world her own students will experience and confront as adults, so she can serve as a role model and as a source for continual meaning making, especially when the meanings are attributed to being human. In other words, the teacher has to be an adult with a distinguished life experience compared to her students, life experience through which she has acquired considerable and substantial knowledge about being human being in the world, beyond being a student. In more practical terms, I suggest that candidates for teacher education programs will be required to prove substantial continuous personal responsibility for significant period of time. A result of meeting this requirement is a school with teachers who have ‘stories’: teachers having different substantial life experiences from different areas, fields of occupation, and social arenas.\(^{175}\)

\(^{174}\) Basic familiarity with foundations of education is, of course, a welcomed component of teacher education. The literature has already pointed to the necessity of including philosophy. As Kazepides (1989) observed: “The insistence on the putative curriculum objectives in teacher education has shifted the emphasis away from the study of the nature of the educational enterprise and the disciplines of thought and action through which we can understand ourselves and the world” (p. 58). See also Portelli & Konecny (2013), Soltis (1983).

\(^{175}\) I believe educational research will benefit from a similar requirement from candidates for graduate studies in education.
A substantial continuous personal responsibility is a commitment that occupies the human being and contributes to her development as a mature human being, a commitment that constitutes the major task of the human being beyond her own personal life, and demands dedication of time and effort. A period of time that allows for acquiring a significant life experience is a time required to be familiar with a specific responsibility and to be immersed in it as a routine, as well as a period of time that shows persistence and endurance in the face of difficulties. In most cases, I suggest a period of at least a year in order to gain a significant life experience. In any case, I find it very problematic that often student teachers are human beings whose only significant experience as adults—that is, beyond secondary education—is being a student. To be sure: I do not doubt the intelligence of undergraduate students; nor am I suspicious of their motivation to teach. However, in most cases they lack the non-education experience needed in order to lead students in examining the meaning of being human in a fuller sense. There are things in life one will encounter and is able to learn only outside the safe and protective place of school or university, even if she is highly socially connected and knowledgeable about what is going on in the world.\textsuperscript{176}

The specific possible life experiences that will be accepted as part of the admission criteria to be eligible for entry into teacher education programs should be decided by local authorities or the programs themselves; this kind of consideration might be under the purview of the independent educational authority in each state. As a starting point, I suggest including formal roles as significant experiences, as such positions—especially when they include relations or commitments to other human beings, but not exclusively to human beings.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{176} See also Biesta (2013) who uses the Aristotelian 'phronesis' to argue that "such wisdom comes with age or better: that it comes with experience and more specifically that it comes with the experience of engaging oneself in the exercise of such judgements" (p. 45).
beings—indicate responsibility and discretion. Formal roles are also relatively technically easy to be monitored, that is, to be documented as meeting the requirements. The most common kind of formal roles that most of adults seek is a professional one. That is to say that most if not all jobs are probably fit to be considered as providing significant life experience, especially if they are full-time and even part-time. However, I would not rule out some other formal roles that are not paid, for example voluntary roles. Moreover, significant life experience might definitely be acquired through informal responsibilities that people are required or choose to take or difficulties they are forced to confront such as parenting, taking care of sick relative, nursing their parents, or fighting a severe disease. I feel less inclined, though, to consider popular personal adventures as providing life experience; as I see it, most of travels are actually well-planned trips that do not cater for opportunities to demonstrate responsibility or to grow up (as I argue in the preface). But, this kind of decisions is better to be made locally, considering the demand for teachers and the specific student population.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter can easily be categorized under the label “philosophy of education”. However, unlike most voices in this area that draw on philosophy, the call coming out of this chapter is for revisiting the relationships between education and philosophy without being loyal to philosophical conclusions. If one does see this chapter as part of a philosophy of education discourse, she might question the structure of the whole work and wonder whether this chapter should come first in the order of things as it discusses the mere nature of the link between the two domains. However, to argue that the question of the education-philosophy relationships should be settled before we know what we want from education would be to misunderstand my overall claim. What education is and its goal precedes and stipulates
education’s connection with other spheres, including philosophy (even when philosophy is defined as inquiring about the fundamental).

It would be a mistake to think that the main issue here is the question of whether philosophy of education should be classified under ‘philosophy’ or under ‘education’. This is just a symptom of the real issue: the relationships between education and philosophy, and specifically educators’ sovereignty to use philosophy as they see fit. As I suggest throughout the previous chapters and as I have just suggested above, we should look as much as we can at education from an educational point of view so as to follow the educational guideline of being human and nurturing students’ humanity. This principle should be applied also to the education-philosophy relationships. Thus, I argue in this chapter that the educator who looks at philosophy (or the philosopher of education) should take the role of a gatekeeper that guards the education sphere’s doors and intelligibly screens and modifies philosophical ideas for educational use. I propose the process of distilling as the means by which to reject or alternatively to accept and adjust philosophical ideas in order to find and sustain the wonder at the heart of the philosophical thinking. Heidegger’s work serves as a platform for exercising the distilling process towards formulating a possible educational goal.

Revisiting the relationships with philosophy is part of a wider desired shift of reestablishing the essence, status, and goal of education in society and within humanity in general. Philosophy is one important source for gathering, examining, and exceeding human features, as it inquires about the fundamental and addresses fundamental issues. But as for any other possible source, philosophical ideas are not carved in stone. Education should treat carefully the philosophical results and retrieve from them educative themes and questions that will assist in revealing and discussing experiences, understandings, and meanings.
Philosophical ideas should be considered contributions to the educative deed and not a binding guide. Philosophy of education should be less one-way traffic from philosophy to education, that is, applying philosophical positions to education, but rather a fundamental thinking about education.

The call for education that does not see itself committed to philosophical positions but rather sees philosophy as a source for educative ideas originating from philosophy through a process of distilling needs to be taken as part of a broader move to consider more seriously and more strategically sources for the foundations of education, that is, using basic disciplines as a motivation or impetus for thinking about the basics of education: what it is, what it can be, what we want it to do, what its influence on our lives. In this sense, it is perhaps more useful and more appropriate to think about the educational orientations of basic disciplines not as sub-areas or branches of them that apply the insights of the mother discipline but as a foundational thinking about education. Thus, fields such as philosophy of education, sociology of education, economics of education, psychology of education, and history of education will be considered meta-education. This is not just a label; this kind of consideration will bring these ways of thinking back home to education and will allow it more flexibility in appropriating the ideas generated in other areas of inquiry for educative needs.

The proposed educational goal of examining the meaning of being human makes the journey from Heidegger’s initial ontological starting point of Being to the educative central component of meanings. Under the guidance of a human principal it arrives at the quest of examining who we are, that is, raising awareness of our existence. This emphasis on existential awareness rather than on gathering content is part of shifting education from being
a supply system for the next systems in the social line to a system that focuses on students’ humanity and on humanity as a whole. It is important to note, however, that this educational goal is a long-term one: as students probe existing meanings for being human and seek new ones, it is crucial that they will not cease doing that once they graduate but that they will internalize this examination and develop an orientation toward it for the rest of their lives.

But this educational approach cannot be applied without acknowledging its implications: as new meanings for being human are sought, educators need to be prepared and to expect the unexpected. The invitation to discover fresh new meanings might be responded to by claims and insights that will surprise the teacher, as the teacher has no assurance where the search for new meanings will lead. Hence, taking this educational road and adopting this approach, although recommended, it must be accompanied with a willingness to walk into uncharted territory.

At times it might seem that the educational treatment of philosophical discussions I am looking for takes the form of meta-philosophy (or philosophy of philosophy), that is, evaluation of the philosophical process itself. Although the distilling process I propose does indeed carry aspects of examining the philosophical thinking, there is no intention that it will be meta-philosophy but rather examination for educative needs. If there are some similarities or overlaps between the two kinds of investigations, there is no problem. Actually, the look of education at the philosophy sphere in general, and at Heidegger’s work in particular, enables education to be familiar with features—beyond specific philosophical ideas—that education should consider adopting. One important feature that is characteristic both of meta-philosophy and of Dasein is self-reflection (see section 5.7.1). As education acquires consciousness as part of its agency, it should also develop self-consciousness and as such
should examine itself. Thus, it will be critical not just of ideas in other spheres but also of in-house ideas. In other words, as meta-philosophy can be considered an inherent part of philosophy, meta-education should be considered an inherent part of education itself. This will be an expansion of Suttle’s (1974) argument regarding the similarity between philosophy and philosophy of education that we saw in section 5.2. Thus, education will follow philosophy in being “necessarily and fundamentally self-reflective” (p. 283).
6. Conclusion: From Vision to Reality

In this chapter I take a ‘bird’s eye’ and comprehensive—and hopefully fresh—look at several of the ideas I raised up to this point by putting them together and linking them to each other. In this way I wish also to suggest some speculative ideas and to offer how to move forward. After a brief summary of the arguments thus far, I juxtapose arguments that are made separately in chapters 1-5 and discuss results of their linkage. Then I take a step backward and make connections to starting points from which I set out in the introduction. In the last sections, I discuss few practical measures to translate my vision to reality, address general theoretical challenges of this work, and propose ideas for next steps in thinking about sovereign education. Throughout this concluding chapter I point to several significant contributions of this work.

6.1 Recap

In chapters 1-5 I presented my vision for K-12 public education. In chapter 1 I started with the problem of the broad and prevalent instrumental approach to education, according to which external self-interested forces perceive students as potential future members in their ranks and schools as sites to recruit students from and prepare them for future designated roles in the social fabric. I showed that this approach is taken not just by economical and partisan politics forces but also by other forces such as academia, religious institutions or leaders, and the army; the identity of the external self-interested forces and their relevant influence on education depends on local political and social circumstances. Thus, public education is perceived as a system in the service of other systems in society that define its
essence and prescribe its goals. This perception trickles down to parents as students and as such perceiving schooling as a training and recruitment site is enhanced.

As a result of the instrumental treatment of public education, education’s agency is denied and students’ humanity is damaged. As a response, I proposed in chapters 2-4 my vision for education that both argues for protecting public K-12 schooling as well as offers an alternative human-based perception of its role. In chapter 2 I proposed to acknowledge education not as a serving sphere but rather as one that operates as an agent for humanity, as an endeavor with agency that is able to think of itself and for itself and is founded on the fundamental fact “we are all human beings”. Being free from instrumental chains, this agency allows education to develop an adventurous character and explore beyond the territory allocated for it by others. In chapter 3 I added basic human features that will guide schooling—from curriculum design to the teaching-learning dialectics—alongside curricular considerations toward the goal of meaning making. In chapter 4 I proposed to realize education’s agency in terms of sovereignty that is independent and autonomous, and as such to liberate education from politicization. I argue for practical measures to advance sovereignty in terms of a governing body that allows for civic engagement and an educational research that looks around and both protects and informs practice.

In chapter 5 I explored the implications of my vision to the relationships between education and philosophy. Following the argument for agency and sovereignty, I argued for non-committal relationships between these two spheres and propose doing it through a process of distilling in order to retrieve ideas from philosophy. I exemplified this process using Heidegger’s work and made a case for the educational goal of examining the meaning of being a human being.
6.2 Making links: Uniqueness of the School and Self-Defending Education

Ignoring or underappreciating the attempts of self-interested forces to influence the public K-12 education is dangerous since the probable result is allowing them a foothold in education. It seems that the instrumental attitude towards education suggests that the *laissez faire* ideology that governs capitalist economies has spread and seized control over the interspherical space: relationships between spheres are founded on transactions free from interference or involvement by external authority. The traditional organizing authority—the state—has become one of the spheres with its own interests. In this situation each sphere is for itself with its own abilities to manage its interests: A ‘dog eat dog’ situation in the interspherical space. But this situation puts education in an inferior position. It is not just a matter of resources; education enjoys significant portions of national budgets\(^\text{177}\) and usually schools do not need the assistance of other spheres in order to survive. Rather, the instrumental approach to education turns it into a lower player that is forced to serve others and as such its agency is worn out and weakened. A view that education is essentially an engine or a renewal apparatus for society—although, in a sense, it flatters education and acknowledges its power and importance—leaves education fragile and exposed to exploitation if it is not accompanied by a way to allow education a consciousness or awareness that it is being manipulated. Forces in society find this breach and take advantage of it for their own interest.

A Deweyan view on education that is based on social renewal and designates it to solve problems is such a fragile view that within a *laissez faire* ideology and Nietzschean will-to-

\(^{177}\) For example in Ontario, Canada, education is one of the biggest costs in the budget, together with health care and infrastructure ([http://www.ontario.ca/government/ontario-budget-basics](http://www.ontario.ca/government/ontario-budget-basics)). In Israel, the funding for K-12 education in 2015 is about 16% of the total budget (about 37% of the social services), second only to security (about 17.5%) ([http://mof.gov.il/BudgetSite/statebudget/BUDGET2015/Documents/MainBudgetFull_2015.pdf](http://mof.gov.il/BudgetSite/statebudget/BUDGET2015/Documents/MainBudgetFull_2015.pdf)). Nevertheless, admittedly, it is reasonable to assume that public K-12 education is not as attractive as a workplace as other sectors, which results in quality personnel that prefers other options such as the industry.
power leaves education unguarded against forces that recognize the potential hold within education as a source for future members. Thus, an attitude of taming education that was prominent throughout history and left it with some autonomy (Masschelein and Simons, 2013), in today’s social functioning atmosphere has escalated and become systematic instrumentalism while intentions for an education that contributes to a general and individual growth are distorted in favour of inter- and intra-spherical competition.

However, in response to the *laissez faire* ideology that governs the inter-spherical space I do not call for a counter Marxist response\(^\text{178}\) or some kind of nationalization that would appoint the state as an arbiter or regulator of inter-spherical matters; as it should be already clear at this point, and as mentioned above, the state is a key exploiter of education and hence should not be responsible for guarding education (although I argue that it should take the task of ensuring appropriate infrastructure for public education). Instead, what is needed is restoring education’s agency, that educators will take the lead with regard to what education is and reclaim authority over its essence and goals.\(^\text{179}\) Educators should be the guardians that protect education and speak for it. In this protective sense, education should be what it never really was: a guild, a closed association of artisans who control the practice of their craft with their own standards, their own ethics, even their own secrets, broadly understood. As guild-like entity, education will not function just as trade unions (or labour unions) that operate mostly in the employer-workers domain and are concerned with the members’ benefit; guild oriented education will also—if not primarily—consider the interests of the education craft

\(^{178}\) Similarly, I do not think that human education needs to wait for a comprehensive social revolution that will change the inter-spherical conditions. After all, even in a socialist society a sovereign education will not serve the state.

\(^{179}\) An argument in spirit is raised by Biesta (2013) who calls “to give teaching back to education, that is, to reclaim a proper place for teaching and the teacher in our educational endeavours” (p. 36)
itself.\footnote{180} Of course, as a broad human endeavour that is open to and requires civic engagement, education will not be really closed to the broad public and will not manage its matters away from the public eye, but nonetheless it will guard the dignity and integrity (borrowing Siegel (2002) terms with regard to philosophy of education) of the profession against instrumentalism and other threats.\footnote{181}

I portray education as an endeavor that looks around at other spheres and examines what is going on there in order to selectively pick ideas for its own use.\footnote{182} Specifically, I gave a detailed explanation and exemplified the process of distilling ideas originating from philosophy in such a way that the wonder from which philosophical pondering grows will be preserved and sustained. This exploration of the philosophy-education relationships raises the questions: what will characterize the equivalent processes of producing educative ideas from other spheres? is there something unique in philosophy that requires a unique process for retrieving ideas for education? One way of addressing these questions is by claiming that philosophy is not the only discipline that begins with wonder. Put differently, not every

\footnote{180} Walzer (1983) reports on such a case in Japan: “What has made for equality in Japan is that the union has been led by its ideology to resist the (inegalitarian) pressures of government officials, pressed themselves by the elite of corporate managers” (p. 204).

\footnote{181} The idea of governing public education as a guild resembles, in a sense, Walzer’s (1983) principle for the justification of distributive norms according to which each of the heterogeneous goods in a society is associated with a distributive norm that is contained in the socially shared understanding of that good: “Domination is ruled out only if social goods are distributed for distinct and ‘internal’ reasons” (p. xv), “it is the meaning of goods that determines their movement. Distributive criteria and arrangements are intrinsic not to the good-in-itself but to the social good… All distributions are just or unjust relative to the social meanings of the goods at stake” (p. 8-9). Specifically, Walzer’s picture of an unordered plurality and an internal regulative principle for each sphere (autonomous ‘local monopoly’ within ‘complex equality’) matches my argument for an education that is governed by educators; as Walzer argues: “Monopoly is not inappropriate within the spheres” (p. 19). However, in my vision the shared understanding of education is not social (in the political sense) but is human-based and negotiated mainly among educators (not the whole political community through general politics). I also do not necessarily argue for a comprehensive guild structure of public goods. To be sure, by suggesting perceiving education as a guild and putting its governance in the hands of educators I do not mean to propose tyranny over education, that is, owing and controlling it in order to exploit its dominance (See Walzer, 1983, p. 10-11, 17-20).

\footnote{182} This educational use in not a reverse-instrumentalism since education does not exploit other spheres and does not subordinate them for its own advantages.
wonder develops into philosophical thinking, at least not an academic one or in relation to what is considered as the philosophical body of knowledge (whether according to the definition I propose in section 5.1 or any other definition). Perhaps there are different kinds of wonders that lead to different kinds of inquiries. Or perhaps wonder is navigated in different directions—academic and non-academic—according to the idiosyncratic personalities and conditions of the individual child. This kind of thinking about wonder will lead to different ways of finding, releasing, and keeping the wonder.

Another way of addressing the question of using other spheres for education is to claim that it is not wonder in the narrow sense that leads to inquiry but a broader interest in a phenomenon that is the origin of an involvement in a discipline: some kids want to play soccer just because they like the game, or because they are good at it, or because they think they can be rich and famous by being a professional athlete. This line of thinking will probably produce other processes of retrieving educative ideas—perhaps fundamentally different from distilling as described in section 5.5—that do not necessarily focus on thinking in the form of intellectual inquiry but nonetheless find other avenues toward meaning making.

In any case, from this initial exploration of possible ways to produce educative ideas—themes and questions—from other spheres, an important characterization of education emerges: an endeavor that offers a unique combination of working with the young together with an interdisciplinary environment that is strategically and systematically enriched by the myriad of spheres around it.\textsuperscript{183} This characterization can be seen from different angles. For

\textsuperscript{183} There are, of course, many non-school activities that offer the young involvement with other spheres and domains (such as sports teams, arts classes, and science clubs), but none of them consider the potential hold in interdisciplinary integration in a strategic and systematic manner.
example, from the professional point of view, teaching as an activity that encourages students to explore the world and to find what is interesting in it. Or, from an organizational perspective, the school as a site that invites and allows an interdisciplinary cooperation between teachers from different disciplines. Yet another way of looking at the same portrayal is through curricular considerations by which curriculum design examines the foundations of other spheres—whether those that lean towards the theoretical or others that are aimed at practical outcomes—in order to devise teaching units based on these spheres such that the teaching-learning dialectics will be enriched and have better conditions for creating meanings. Thus, by offering this characterization of education as a dynamic bringing together of the young and an interdisciplinary environment, this work goes beyond Masschelein and Simons’s (2013) idea of using subject matter “in order to present the world to students in an interesting and engaging way” (p. 15; see section 4.1) and contributes to a revival of the aged sphere of education by breaking the disciplinary wall that separates subject matters, class, teachers, and students.

Another possible contribution that stems from a unique link of the young with the world has to do with aiming at meaning making and touches on what might happen outside school when students return to their homes. The (perhaps somewhat old-fashioned) question “what did you learn today at school?,” often asked by parents, illustrates the problem with contemporary public education insofar as it requires the child to reiterate the subject matter content as found in the curriculum. Answering this question properly is taken as evidence for the success of the school in transmitting the curriculum and/or success of the student in meeting the expectations of visiting school; failing to answer implies failure of the school and/or waste of the time the student has spent there. My vision of education aims, in a sense,
to revive this question so it will be understood as or lead to “what did you come up with today at school?”: children will speak about the new idea they had and of which they shared with teachers and peers. Thus, perceiving education as a sphere where students create meanings will contribute to a more meaningful and engaging discourse between parents and children about the schooling experience and as a result will lead to an increased serious parental involvement in public education.

I call in this work to grant education agency and to also to protect education. A combination of these two components of consciousness and a shield for a social construct is not new as it is used for democracy in the terms ‘defensive democracy’ or ‘self defending democracy’. A defensive democracy is a democracy that takes special measures in order to protect itself. The notion of self defending democracy is perhaps most prominent in Israel where issues of national security and fighting terrorism (Gross, 2003; Weinblum, 2015), on the one hand, and extreme political groups (mostly from the Right wing) (Cohen-Almagor, 1994), on the other, challenge the very existence of the state or the (already contested and problematic) democratic character of Israel. These threats might and at times result in a necessary limitation of some rights and freedoms.

Similarly, advocates of human focused education should think in terms of ‘self defending education’. Admittedly, there may be no life and death matters here, but threats such as those posed by the instrumental approach indeed impact the essence of education and as such endanger the mere existence of education as a human endeavour in the service of students’ humanity and humankind as a whole. Depolitizing education in the sense of removing it from the general political mechanism, as proposed in chapter 4, might be a central measure in allowing education to protect itself. In addition, the idea of defensive education might
contribute to defending democracy. In chapter 4 I discuss the accusation that apolitical education in the form I suggest is not democratic and argue that beside the irrelevancy of the accusation in the context of my argument, apolitical education as I see it actually meets other democratic features. Continuing this line of thinking, self-defending education that centers students’ humanity holds the potential to stress human rights and as such to deepen understanding of democracy and to ignites meanings of and about democracy (of course, without a taken for granted commitment to democracy and with an appropriate critical view of democracy). This will not be a direct education for democracy but an education that incorporates some crucial aspects of democratic thinking. Thus, those who wish to protect democracy—that is, all those who advocate democracy—should advocate self-defending education.

6.3 Beyond the Traditional Constructions

Following the above integrative consideration of several matters discussed in chapters 1-5, let us take a fresh look at the two constructions of educational studies discussed in the introduction. As a reminder, Biesta (2011a) distinguishes between the Continental construction that perceives educational studies as a discipline in its own right and claims for a disciplinary autonomy on the basis of a particular interest in childhood, on the one hand, and the Anglo-American construction according to which educational studies is conceived as an interdisciplinary field that is composed by contribution of other disciplines, on the other. We saw that the Continental construction supports the notion of an educational way of thinking while the Anglo-American construction denies such agency from educational research. With this distinction in mind, we can comment more broadly about several issues discussed in this work.
The disciplinary approach to education that governs the Anglo-American construction suggests that hierarchical relationships might not be just between philosophy and education. Biesta (2014a) explicitly points to an inferior position of education as a result of the disciplinary approach, when in contrast to the Continental construction it is “subordinated to psychology, sociology, history and philosophy” (p. 71). We saw that Depaepe (2007) observes a similar concern specifically with regard to history (see sub-section 5.2.2). If indeed academic consideration of education is dictated by other disciplines and consequently scholars adopt positions and frameworks from other domains, there is a more pressing need to consider the questions above regarding changing the relationships between education and other disciplines and retrieving ideas for education from them. Moreover, scholars in education should consider how ideas that are drawn from different disciplines can support or reinforce each other. This path seems promising following McCulloch’s (2002) analysis of the disciplinary approach. He claims that although in one sense the educational disciplines became established in Britain separately,

In another sense, the disciplines were established together, as complementary approaches to the study of education. It was the combination of their different forms of expertise that was taken to be the most effective means of addressing the problems and processes of education. The disciplines thereby signalled a pluralist vision of educational studies that sought to draw on a wide range of human knowledge and experience. (p. 103)

The same strategy should be adopted for retrieving ideas from the disciplines such that ideas that originated from different spheres and different research paradigms will complement each other but without commitment to positions that might accompany them, in an attempt to develop a sovereign educational way of thinking. One way to enhance such thinking with the help of other disciplines is to consider how these disciplines are different from education: the philosopher of education will find how education is not philosophy, the sociologist of
education will find how education is not sociology, and similarly for any other discipline. This technique will assist in distinguishing education from other spheres and in defining its place and identity within the human territory or within the multi-spherical space. As this work draws—although in a limited way—on different areas of inquiry, I hope it will contribute toward such an interdisciplinary retrieval.

Thus, the strategy I propose here in considering other disciplines tends to merge the Continental and the Anglo-American constructions, or connects elements from each. This is not an easy task; the two are quite strange to each other. Biesta (2001) claims that “the two traditions are, to a certain degree, incommensurable as they operate on the basis of fundamentally different assumptions and ideas” (p. 176), suggesting that there is a qualitative difference between perceiving education as a distinctive way of thinking and a result of a multi- or inter-disciplinary ways of thinking. However, the two ways of perceiving education are not, of course, totally separate. As Biesta himself admits: “This is neither to suggest that communication between the two is impossible, nor to suggest that the two traditions have developed independently from each other” (ibid.), and that “I do not see such incommensurability as the end of communication” (p. 190). I see non-committal relationships with the disciplines as a promising way to achieve a fruitful synergy of the two constructions. Through this idea, this work contributes to the fertile conversation between the two constructions.

As the instrumental approach denies agency for education, we can speculate that it plays a role in the emergence of the disciplinary approach. If the instrumental perception—that schooling, in its essence, is perceived as a tool in the service of the next social systems in line—penetrates and has a hold also in the academic domain, it is reasonable that scholars
adopt instrumental paradigms and design and conduct their studies—whether conceptual or empirical—according to these paradigms. In this case, they will adopt theoretical frameworks, from other disciplines, that follow instrumental understandings of schools, teaching, and learning. By this method the scholars actually prevent or reject the possibility of an autonomous educational way of thinking. A consequence is considering as relevant phenomena (e.g. teachers’ organizational behavior, learning outcomes) for study only those that promote students’ qualities aimed at filling a role in the societal fabric, and ignoring other phenomena in schools that might have a significant impact on students’ lives. A focus on grades is an obvious example; a more complex example might be a study of bottom-up educational innovations in schools that identifies only curricular grass-roots initiatives and ignores other initiatives, for example those that are concerned with the physical appearance of the school.

From this chain of consequences, leading to a narrow look at schooling, we can conclude that a key step in facing instrumental influences and constructing a human-focused education as I propose in this work might be reconsidering the frameworks at the base of educational research. Scholars of education, in different areas of education research (such as administration, curriculum, and teaching), should be aware of the dominance and the many faces of instrumentalism. This awareness will enable them to better acknowledge how the frameworks they use are influenced by instrumental demands upon and expectations from

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184 Using instrumental paradigms in research might not necessarily stem from a genuine identification with it but from surrendering to pressures, for example in a case when such paradigm increases chances for publication or for funding.
185 These instrumental qualities can be quantifiable or non-quantifiable. That is why using a qualitative methodology is not a guarantee against instrumental framework.
186 Although I consider here the influence in the direction from the instrumental approach to the disciplinary approach, I do not rule out a dialectic dynamics: perceiving educational studies as an intellectual mix of other disciplines, as it allows the discipline to be subordinated to other theoretical and conceptual frameworks, might serve as a fertile ground for growth of instrumental attitudes towards education.
public education. As a result, the scholars will be able to remove the instrumental aspects from their research design or to add aspects that are missing. An example—quite a simplistic one but not far-fetched and one that hopefully will clarify my intention—is the way schools are perceived as organizations. In the area of educational administration, researchers might adopt a business-like framework according to which schooling is a competitive domain and schools compete against other schools in order to be ranked higher in tables and to draw prospective students (which is supposed to lead to more legitimacy and more funding). This theoretical framework, adopted from a capitalist paradigm of organizations and fits to a Nietzschean will-to-power ontotheology, leads to perceiving graduates as products and to the school’s goal to manufacture products with specifications defined by the market and with maximum efficiency. As a result, researchers will design their studies, collect data, and analyze findings under these perceptions; the instrumental footing here is clear. Instead, awareness of the assumption that schooling is an arena of competition can lead researchers to critically question this perception and to integrate within their studies examination of its origins and the extent to which it is willingly adopted by administrators and teachers. The outcomes of their studies might be significantly different: instead of concluding, for example, that a school is failing to meet standards defined by the ministry or expectations of parents, the researchers might stress the subversive agenda of the administration in prioritizing anti-violent and social justice programs.

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187 Similar to my claim that the instrumental approach distorts what education is, Biesta (2015) alludes to a “technological” approach in educational research and claims it twists the essence of education: “the general tendency to conceive of education in technological terms, to have technological expectations about education and to suggest that technological questions are the only legitimate questions for research and practice, ultimately amounts to a distortion of what education is ‘about’ and of what it ought to be ‘about’… Problems arise when practical questions about relationships between actions and consequences morph into research questions about relationships between causes and effects, and into the general belief that when education fails to ‘produce’ such effects, there must be something wrong” (p. 13)
But it is important to understand that operating in the academic world—even by adopting the Continental construction—is by itself not enough against the instrumental approach. As the instrumental approach threatens the essence of schooling itself and intends to aggressively redefine what public education is in terms of social functionality and subordination—and as such blocks any other perception of education—it also threatens the ability of the academic discipline of education to play a significant role in shaping public education. Even if the academic discipline maintains its own way of thinking, its relevance for schooling becomes questionable when what really interests parents and students (and as a result, eventually, implicitly or explicitly, willingly or unwillingly, also administrators and teachers) is what the K-12 school can do in order to better prepare the student for the next competition. This is not a question of geography or about academic construction anymore; the instrumental approach is prevalent everywhere, in both sides of the English Channel and on both sides of the pond. This is why it is crucial to consider education’s agency in terms of a sphere and to see practice and theory together: academic autonomy is not sufficient in order to protect public education. Thus, in stressing the sovereign spherical status of education and including in it both practice and theory this work contributes not just to bridging them but also to bringing them together and highlighting the need for their cooperation.

I said in the conclusion of chapter 5 that this chapter can easily be classified under philosophy of education but that it is important to understand that the call to carry from this chapter is of revisiting the relationships between education and philosophy without being exclusively loyal to philosophical conclusions. We can now broaden the call for this whole work along the same lines: thinking about the essence of education and its goal(s) is not just a non-philosophical project but it is also not an inter-disciplinary endeavour in the sense of
mixing ideas from different domains. Educationalists—scholars and practitioners—need to work together in order to define what does ‘education’ mean beyond the frameworks and insights offered by other disciplines.

As such, what I offer here is a different strategic way of thinking about educational renewal: not in terms of ‘reform’ or ‘change’ that imply matching or adjusting education to dominant phenomena in the world according to market forces. An example for such adjustment we can see in attempts to align schools—especially the teaching-learning dialectics—with technology in general and with technological developments in particular, attempts that took form in the massive insertion of computers into schools, then integration of the internet, and recently in the increasing use of portable devices. The problem, of course, is not with the mere use of technology but with the approach according to which ‘the school should not left behind the rest of the world’. Such an approach is a clear embodiment of the instrumental approach, in this case in the service of forces that rely on technology.\textsuperscript{188} The problem is with the (fundamentally political) perception that education needs to chase after other phenomena and after other spheres so it will not be considered failing in its role of shaping graduates with qualities attuned for these phenomena.\textsuperscript{189} This perception creates a sense of urgency that blocks any possibility for autonomous thinking about education.

\begin{footnotesize} 
\begin{enumerate}
\item Such technological reforms and changes fall nicely also under a Heideggerian technological attitude, although this attitude is broader than the mere using of technological equipment.
\item Such a perception might emerge from viewing educational change a necessary result of a social change (or social needs), a view Dewey holds as discussed in section 5.6. In “The school and social progress” (1913) he expresses a similar idea: “The modification going on in the method and curriculum of education is as much a product of the changed social situation, and as much an effort to meet the needs of the new society that is forming, as are changes in modes of industry and commerce.” (p. 20) Dewey adds that "New Education" is "part and parcel of the whole social evolution" (p. 21) and claims regarding the fundamental industrial changes that they result in “great inventions that have utilized the forces of nature on a vast and inexpensive scale… That this revolution should not affect education in other than formal and superficial fashion is inconceivable.” (p. 21-2). There are social economical “radical conditions which have changed, and only an equally radical change in education suffices” (p. 25).
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Instead of this rushing after phenomena, I propose to base educational renewal on a more stable principle of fundamental thinking about education. In this work I specifically offer exploring meanings regarding the fundamental fact of being human as a guideline for such thinking about educational renewal. As I suggested in section 2.2, our times, saturated with technology that challenges being human, might be an incentive to discovering meanings about being human. This will be a more appropriate ‘integration’ of technology into education.

In more speculative terms, instead of being a sphere whose renewal aspect is based only on the familiar human territory and adopting innovations originated in other spheres, education should take a leading role as a strategic headquarters for humanity by striving to exceed the known boundaries and show the way for others. As staffing this headquarters, educationalists in different areas and in different positions will draw on their own experiences and on different other spheres. It should be noted, though, that what I envision here as a leading role for education as a sphere is not to be translated to a defined role of the educationalist but to a feeling she has about her identity as an educationalist.

6.4 Practical Measures

I acknowledge that my comprehensive proposals within my vision for education are not easy to implement, especially since they require politicians to waive their power over public education as well as the doubts as to whether educationalists are able to manage their sphere on the grounds of being human without a quarrel about what it means to be human (instead of turning this examination to an educational goal by itself, as I propose in section 5.7). I also acknowledge that there are no magic bullets and that even depoliticizing educational governance will not completely halt external influences on schooling. As Callahan (1964)
argues, “the influence of powerful social movements can never be stopped so quickly and permanently even by violent revolution” (p. 248). However, I would like to briefly discuss two practical measures that I believe are crucial if a move towards the education I envision is to take place. One is in the area of teacher education and the other concerns the public sphere.

The central role of teaching is noted throughout this work (see for example section 3.3 with regard to meaning making) and specifically in sub-section 5.7.4 where I claim for stricter acceptance criteria for teacher education programs. Here I want to explicitly emphasize the importance of teacher education as the first line—and in many cases also the last—where future students are deeply and systematically exposed to theoretical notions and frameworks about public education in general, foundations of education, and the richness this concept holds. To be clear, I am not suggesting a preference for theory over practice but to the fact that when teachers turn to full time teaching they are barely available for thinking about education that exceeds their local context. Therefore, the weight of teacher education in instilling acknowledgment of and tendencies towards thinking beyond the curriculum and the teaching-learning dialectics is immense. Removing instrumental and political dictations and diverting at least some of the educational focus from curricular concerns to basic human features and especially to meaning making give the teacher a totally different status in the classroom. This status bestows much more room for discretion but also more responsibility for students’ humanity. Although the skills of how to educationally use the ‘expertise’ in being a human being are acquired over years, teacher education is the crucial starting point for awakening the general awareness toward this expertise and inclinations to use and to

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190 For example, the largest school board in Canada, the Toronto District School Board, offered in the 2014-2015 school year six Professional Development days. Out of these six days, two days are dedicated for report card writing and four days are designated for workshops on enhancing teaching skills such as integrating technology, learning about special education students, and some subject based curriculum workshops.
enhance it. Moreover, as teachers’ experiences—alongside students’ experiences—are the key sources from which students generate understandings and meanings (section 3.1), teachers’ lives become essential for learning in general and meaning making in particular. Teacher education is the place where the importance of teachers’ lives is conveyed in the first time. Thus, teacher students are a key audience in marketing a perception of education that centers teachers at the heart of the educational process.

In a note in sub-section 5.7.4 I mention the significance of studying foundations of education in teacher education. It is important to add the importance of scholarly work in the area of teacher education, and especially—in our context—scholarly work in foundations of education that examines teacher education. As teaching is beyond transmitting material, teacher education is more than teaching how to teach (or worse: a place where students get teaching certificates, a definition that turns these programs only to a funding source for universities). Therefore—and further to the points made in the previous paragraph—scholars should not treat it only or even mainly as a curricular area or an area of teaching strategies. This sense of teacher education and the importance of foundations of education were acknowledged in a collection edited by Christou and Bullock (2013) titled *Foundations in Teacher Education: A Canadian Perspective*. The editors note:

> The Foundations have often been dismissed—by teacher candidates and sometimes by faculty—as irrelevant to the preparation of new teachers. Foundations courses have sometimes been eschewed in favour of more practically/vocationally oriented ones such as curriculum methods courses or courses in classroom management. (p. v)

In contrast to the practical/vocational orientation, education that removes curricular content from the center of public education and focuses on basic human features encourages scholars from a variety of areas to be more involved in teacher education. This is not just a call to study teacher education but perhaps more importantly a call to teach in teacher education
programs, to address teacher students and to discuss with them what public education means. In the spirit of this work, such involvement in teacher education should not stem from a hierarchical attitude but from an approach of offering the area of teacher education and teacher candidates a variety of sources from which to retrieve ideas relevant for pre-service teacher education.191

Teacher education is a crucial site in selling the vision I develop in this work. But a vision that calls for changing the fundamental place and role of education in society—and as such the authority over education and the involvement of the public in public education—cannot ignore marketing public education as proposed here to the public. Hence, educationalists (practitioners and scholars) that advocate such education must address the public and be visible and heard in an effort to explain what is at stake and influence the way education is perceived. As I discuss throughout this work, a heavy task ahead as the ‘There Is No Alternative’ attitude governs the public sphere. This is why those for whom public education is close to heart must make a joint effort. In section 4.3 I suggest the need for a public campaign in order to convince politicians to waive their formal power over public education. In such a campaign public intellectuals in education should take a key role. In examining the relationships between philosophy of education and educational policy among philosophers and policy makers, Griffiths (2014) finds practical ways in which philosophers can influence educational policy-making: to become involved with wider educational research; to become one of the policy makers; and, by “contributing to the ideas circulating in a culture” (p. 555). With regard to the latter, Griffiths points to using the media as an influential tool in the hands of philosophers in order to reach a broad audience. I think the

191 Similar claims can be made in relation to other programs that are offered to practitioners such as M.Ed. and M.T. programs.
same strategy should be used by educationalists from any area in order to disseminate ideas about the dangers of the instrumental approach, on one hand, and the potential hold by human-based education, on the other. Those who care about education should reach outside the ivory tower and speak to the public in hopes that the public will put pressure on the political circles so that education will be acknowledged as a sovereign sphere.

6.5 Limitations and General Challenges

As any program for education, the proposed one is not innocent of limitations or general challenges with respect to the core foundations of the suggested plan. It seems to me that one of the most sensitive points in this work is relying on spherical architecture of human endeavors and in society. The problem is not so much with the spherical picture itself; after all, it is difficult to deny that our lives’ interests belong to different areas. Rather, one might question whether or to what extent these spheres are really separate: can we meaningfully say that the sphere of art, for example, is clearly distinguished from the sphere of sports? Or, taking Blacker (2000) own examples in his paper on education as a sphere, can we say where politics ends and religion or journalism begins? And for our discussion, what are the boundaries of politics with regard to education? Indeed, one might argue that this is exactly the difficulty in claiming for an encompassing spherical sovereignty of education: in contrast to the relatively defined boundaries of education as an academic discipline, it is much more difficult to observe the borders of the whole sphere. In other words, the sphere of education—and arguably of any fundamental sphere—overlaps and is entangled with many other spheres in such a manner that an account of what is included under ‘education’ is virtually impossible, not to mention a claim for sovereignty that becomes just a slogan with reference to an ambiguous endeavor. However, these claims miss the real object of
sovereignty here. While education is indeed a vague concept with extensions and branches into other endeavors, and even institutionalized education is enmeshed with many other social structures, the formal public K-12 schooling is quite a defined and orderly structure: the organizations and the people who are formally involved in it, at least directly, are well defined. In a broader scope, the overlaps with other spheres do not necessarily prevent sovereignty with regard to internal matters of public education or discretion with regard to matters that affect other spheres. At any rate, excluding extreme or special occasions when public education might be needed for a comprehensive social project, public education can be sovereign in negotiating with others parties in society such that actions will not be forced upon it. Nevertheless, it is possible that an adjustment of the claim for sovereignty needs to be adjusted according to local features of the educational system and its connections with other systems.

Another aspect of the argument for education’s agency that might be problematic is its close association with the claim to protect public education from the instrumental approach. In other words, it might be seen that the claim for sovereignty is just a response to instrumentalism and therefore does not hold value or legitimacy in itself. Indeed, in the order of things I introduce the instrumental approach as a problem and education as an agent for humanity and a sovereign education as a solution, even an urgent solution as I note in the introduction. I also show throughout the work how different aspects of my vision address or face the instrumental approach. However, I do not see a fundamental problem with justifying my call for education with agency on the grounds of protecting education from the threats of instrumentalism. If these threats are real, I hope I am successful in showing why they are

192 Such as national voting or a war that require many gathering sites.
changing the essence of education and why this change is dangerous for students’ humanity and for humankind in general. But as I implied above, I do not suggest that my proposal depends on instrumentalism: it is not the case that if the instrumental approach disappears so there is no need for a sovereign education. My argument is that a sovereign education is vital in itself, regardless the hegemonic paradigm and regardless whether in specific point in time there is not a threat to use public education (although this is highly questionable given the temptation of external self-interested forces to use education). We should remember that—much like democracy—education must be on guard all the time and therefore protecting education is a constant need, similar to the constant need of democracy to be aware of threats as discussed above with regard to self defending democracy. After all, instrumentalism can wear many faces that change over time and as a result of changing political and social circumstances.

But this is not all; protecting education from instrumentalism is not the only reason for sovereign education. As we saw in several places throughout the work, an important rationale for education that thinks for itself and says something is the possibility for new meanings, that is, to open the door and to encourage students to imagine alternative ways of thinking and alternative ways of life. Logically, this goal does not necessarily require an hegemonic power that seeks to distort education for its own interests; it might be that a dominant way of life is just a result of historical events without putting pressure on education to serve it (in the less likely case) or that there is no one dominant way of life but several ways of life in which case education is an avenue for further alternatives (in the more plausible case in a plural society, although a careful examination might reveal that such a case is only an illusion since there is a prevalence paradigm that is so rooted such that it is difficult to notice it, as in the
case of capitalism). Yet, I agree that in order to make a better case for a sovereign education and in order to make it more marketable it should better stand on its own feet and be more explicitly founded on grounds that are independent of social phenomena. This leads us to ideas for future examination.

6.6 Further Research

Perhaps one obvious way to support an argument for a sovereign education would be to examine its possible contribution to established qualities that are acknowledged as desirable. One such quality is autonomy. We saw that the Continental construction grants autonomy for the academic discipline of educational studies and I propose to grant autonomy to education as a sphere (that is, including practice), but I have not considered the possible contribution of sovereign education to the autonomy of the individual. A link with individual autonomy is plausible through the idea of protecting students’ humanity. It seems quite obvious that damaging one’s humanity in the sense of using her as a tool damages her autonomy but a deeper examination of the difference between humanity or humanness—what makes us human—and autonomy is required in order to establish how they relate to each other. However, we also must be aware of criticism of autonomy (for example, Standish, 1992) when we attempt to link it with sovereign education.

Another possible contribution of sovereign education as portrayed in this work is to social justice. The link in this case can be done through the guideline “we are all human beings”. As I clarify in section 2.2, this guideline does not mean that we are all the same but rather that we share belonging to the same group and as such we participate in the same story of humankind. In other words, there is much in common for us to which we should pay attention, albeit that we can learn a lot from others about being human. I think that the
tension revealed in this dialectics between commonality and variance of human beings might contribute to thinking about notions associated with social justice such as equity and diversity. After all, social justice does not mean equal treatment for all but a just one, and treating people as human beings has a potential for treating them in an ethical manner that contributes to a just society.

Beyond considering specific notions, another suggestion for further examination is the educational look at and cooperation with other areas of inquiry. I stressed in section 4.4 the need to look around and consider every human endeavor—scholarly or practical—as a potential resource for educative ideas, themes and questions that might lead to experiences, understanding, and hopefully new meanings. But beyond being a source for the teaching-learning process, other areas of inquiry might be helpful in discovering or clarifying issues relevant for establishing a human-based and sovereign education. For example, the (explicit and implicit) influences of the instrumental approach and possible ways of managing a sovereign educational system need to be further examined using theories of social dynamics. (Biesta’s (2010b, 2015b) use of systems theory and complexity theory seem promising in this regard, especially his characterization of the school—as a social system—as an open, recursive, and semiotic system and political aspects of complexity reduction); my argument for the seemingly ‘unfair’ role of the state—that public education should remain funded by the state which also has the responsibility to maintain its infrastructure but without an authority over governing it—needs to be examined by political science; perceiving parents as an external force and rejecting their authority over their children’s education should be examined through ethical and legal lenses; in order to better address instrumental arguments for the necessity of K-12 education in addressing economical pressures, advocates of non-
instrumentalism have to delve into economy and sociology so they will be able to propose how economical functions carried out by schools will be diverted to other spheres or endeavors, such as post-secondary education or on-the-job training; and finally, the different constructions of education teach us that we have much to learn from the history of education and from history in general when we think about alternatives for education as we know it today. This assistance from other areas should be done, of course, without commitment to adopting positions and with careful attention to keeping education’s agency and educationalists’ discretion.

One interesting area of inquiry that specifically should be considered vis-à-vis sovereign education as portrayed here is ethics. I characterized sovereign education as an adventurous endeavor that seeks to exceed boundaries of the human territory by meaning making and imagining alternative ways of life. A concern might arise with regard to ethics: is it not the case, one might worry, that encouraging crossing boundaries might stimulate students to cross ethical boundaries towards what we—as educationalists or as human beings in general—consider as unethical? It seems that there is an inherent tension here between the aspiration to go further, explore the unknown, and examine the new, on one hand, and the need to maintain clear ethical standards we—as educators—refuse letting students to violate, on the other. However, it is important to stress that I do not advocate crossing boundaries merely for the sake of crossing boundaries; the new meanings and the new ways of life entertained by students are not part of an exercise in fiction. As they stem from an education that follows the fundamental fact of ‘we are all human beings,’ educators should make sure that the new meanings and the new ways of life do not violate this guideline. Nevertheless, a problem remains with regard to how being loyal to the fundamental fact indeed prevents
suggesting unethical meanings and unethical ways of life. Will ethical sensitivity emerge by
exposure to diverse experiences and ultimately from encountering diverse meanings of being
human? Or, perhaps alternatively, is ‘ethics’ another separate sphere with its own standards
from which education can and should distill ideas? If, as typically it is done, we will consider
ethics as a branch of philosophy, what are the implications for a sovereign education that is
supposed to decide for itself? Is following the fundamental fact (or protecting from
instrumentalism) indeed enough in order to formulate rules and means that ensure students
do not go where it is ethically dangerous? If not, are we doomed to circularity between ethics
and some understanding of humanity? Can the notion of ‘human rights’ provide us an
appropriate escape from such circularity or will it be a philosophical prescription enforced on
education? A close examination of ethics and perhaps of meta-ethics is required in order to
create a conceptual framework to address these questions.

I will end with what I began with in the introduction: this work might seem utopian, too
ambitious, too naïve, too romantic. You may say I'm a dreamer. But I believe that in response
to the threats public education faces today we must change the way we think about education
and take brave steps forward.
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