



Towards A Philosophy of Education for the Contemporary University: Thinking in the face of the Dehumanization of Knowledge

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Abstract

This article addresses, from the perspective of the philosophy of education, the crisis of meaning currently affecting the contemporary university, characterized by technological acceleration, the hegemony of performance, and the progressive delegation of thought to algorithmic devices. It argues that this configuration has eroded academic rituals and weakened the formative experience, displacing questioning, silence, and intersubjective encounter as fundamental conditions of thinking. Using a qualitative, hermeneutic-reflective approach, a documentary analysis of key philosophical sources from the Western tradition was conducted to establish a critical dialogue between categories such as autonomy, thinking, otherness, ritual, and pedagogical resistance, and the current challenges of higher education. The analysis reveals that intellectual autonomy is not limited to access to information or technical mastery, but rather requires an ethical disposition toward doubt, listening, and the responsibility for one's own judgment. The results suggest that reclaiming silence, presence, and empathy constitutes a form of pedagogical resistance against the technologization of knowledge and the dehumanization of the classroom. Within this framework, the university is conceived not as a mechanism for efficiency, but as a space of vital metamorphosis, where education involves accompanying processes of human development, mutual care, and the creation of meaning. The article concludes that the philosophy of education offers indispensable critical tools for reconfiguring the university as a place where thinking once again becomes a way of inhabiting the world autonomously, sensitively, and collaboratively.

Keywords

Philosophy of Education; Thought; Autonomy; Silence; Otherness; Pedagogical Resistance; Contemporary University.

Introduction

In contemporary times, the university is undergoing a profound crisis of meaning that cannot be reduced to issues of management, coverage, or technological innovation. Rather, it is an ontological and formative crisis stemming from technical acceleration, the logic of performance, and the subordination of thought to criteria of productivity, efficiency, and constant measurement. In this scenario, higher education runs the risk of hollowing out its formative vocation, becoming instead a functional apparatus oriented toward the rapid circulation of information and the certification of competencies—thereby displacing reflective experience, dialogue, and the fundamental question regarding the purpose of education. As [1] warns, we inhabit a fragmented and exhausting continuous present, in which informative hyperactivity nullifies the possibility of lingering (*Verweilen*), depth, and critical thought.

The erosion of academic rituals—the classroom as a space of encounter, reading as an exercise in attention, and conversation as

a practice of mutual recognition—has transformed the university classroom into a setting for standardized procedures governed by indicators, rubrics, and quantifiable results. Within this context, the philosophy of education cannot be understood as ornamental or supplementary knowledge, but as a form of critical resistance that interrogates the very essence of human formation (*Bildung*), questions the assumptions that organize educational practice, and opens the possibility of rethinking the university beyond the instrumental logic that currently dominates it.

One of the most urgent challenges in this conjuncture is the irruption of Artificial Intelligence into educational processes—a phenomenon that intensifies the delegation of judgment, the automation of thought, and the outsourcing of cognitive responsibility. This situation reactivates, through new technical mediations, the Kantian warning regarding the human tendency to remain in a state of intellectual “tutelage” (or minority) due to comfort and the fear of thinking for oneself [2]. In the 21st

century, the “tutor” who promises security and speed is no longer a visible authority, but an algorithm offering immediate, closed, and apparently infallible answers. In response, to educate philosophically implies recovering the courage to use one’s own reason, reclaiming doubt as a condition for knowledge, and accepting that autonomy does not emerge from technical ease, but from the ethical and existential effort of inhabiting questions that offer no instantaneous solutions.

From this perspective, the school and the university must be understood as webs of lived experiences rather than simple spaces for the transmission of content. The educational act is, above all, an experience of subjective constitution. In this sense, the teacher is not a finished subject possessing closed knowledge, but a being in permanent becoming who is constituted within the very process of teaching. Under a Sartrean reading, the classroom experience confirms that no one “arrives ready-made” to education: teachers and students make themselves in that “perpetual making” that defines human existence—marked by freedom, responsibility, and openness to the Other [3].

This construction of the self necessarily requires recovering the dimensions of silence, listening, and openness as fundamental conditions for thinking. For [4], authentic thinking is not reduced to calculation or the technical resolution of problems; rather, it implies a “reverent disposition toward what is given to us,” an attitude of waiting, welcoming, and attentiveness toward the world. However, this disposition is constantly threatened by the informative noise, the saturation of stimuli, and the pressure to produce without pause that characterizes the contemporary academy. Thinking requires pausing; educating requires creating the conditions for that pause to be possible. Only from this openness is it feasible to recognize the Other not as an object of evaluation or a statistical datum, but as a subject of experience. As [5] argues, empathy constitutes the phenomenological key that allows access to the lived experience of another, inscribing knowledge within a web of relationships that make it ethically significant and humanly shared.

Within this horizon, this article proposes understanding higher education as a process of “vital metamorphosis” rather than a linear trajectory of knowledge accumulation. Inspired by [6], it is suggested that the academic spirit needs to move beyond the figure of the “camel”—which docilely carries institutional mandates, metrics, and external demands—to become the “child,” recovering creative power, play, the capacity for wonder, and the invention of new meanings. Analogous to the Platonic banquet, the university can be conceived as a space for dialogue, dissent, and hospitality, where thinking together is not a competition of egos, but a gesture of mutual care and a form of ethical resistance against the technical dehumanization and spiritual poverty of the present [7].

Methodology

This study is situated within the qualitative paradigm, employing a hermeneutic-reflective approach. Research is understood here not as a technical operation of verification, but as a situated interpretive exercise that seeks to understand the meanings underlying the contemporary educational experience.

Consistent with the article’s philosophical perspective, the methodology assumes that rethinking the university requires engaging in a dialogue with the intellectual traditions that have historically problematized formation (*Bildung*), autonomy, and the relationship with the Other.

The methodological strategy employed was the documentary analysis of primary sources, conceived not as a cumulative review of texts, but as a critical and dialogic reading aimed at actualizing the conceptual power of philosophy in the face of current challenges in higher education. This choice stems from the conviction that the issues pervading the contemporary university—academic acceleration, the technification of thought, the irruption of Artificial Intelligence, and the erosion of formative rituals—cannot be addressed solely through instrumental lenses; they demand a profound interrogation of the very meaning of education.

The documentary corpus comprises fundamental works of the Western philosophical tradition, selected for their capacity to illuminate, from various perspectives, the formative crisis of the modern university. The analysis included texts by Immanuel [1-7]. The convergence of these authors allows for an articulated reflection on autonomy, thought, alterity, rituality, and pedagogical resistance. The selection of these sources adheres to criteria of theoretical relevance, critical currency, and conceptual fecundity within the field of the philosophy of education.

The analytical process unfolded in three interconnected stages. In the first stage, a conceptual mapping was conducted to identify central categories within the original texts—such as autonomy, thinking, silence, alterity, empathy, and rituality—while attending to their philosophical meaning and their historical conditions of emergence. In the second stage, these categories were put into dialogue with specific problems of contemporary higher education, establishing resonances and tensions between the philosophical proposals and phenomena such as the automation of knowledge, the algorithmic management of academic time, and the logic of performance. Finally, in the third stage, an interpretive synthesis was carried out to construct a pedagogical narrative that understands resistance not as reactive opposition, but as an ethical, embodied, and transformative formative practice.

The validity of this analysis is grounded in the internal consistency of the theoretical framework, the rigor in the use and citation of primary sources, and the commitment to honoring the authors’ original intentions while actualizing their critical potential within the context of the 21st century. Rather than offering closed conclusions, the methodology embraces the open-ended nature of philosophical thought, proposing a reading that seeks to raise questions, provoke shifts in perspective, and contribute to the reconfiguration of the meaning of university education as an experience of care, encounter, and human formation.

Results

The hermeneutic analysis of the philosophical sources allowed for the identification of a series of “thematic nodes” (*núcleos de sentido*) that critically illuminate the experience of the contemporary university. These results are not presented as closed

empirical findings, but rather as interpretive configurations that enable an understanding of current formative tensions and the sketching of alternative pedagogical horizons.

The Resistance of Reason: Autonomy in the Face of the Algorithmic Tutor

One of the study's most significant results is the enduring relevance of the Enlightenment ideal of autonomy within the context of artificial intelligence and the automation of knowledge. A reading of Kant reveals that intellectual "tutelage" (*minoría de edad*) has not disappeared; instead, it has assumed new forms mediated by technology. In today's university classroom, the immediate availability of answers generated by algorithmic systems fosters a passive relationship with knowledge, where the exercise of critical judgment can be easily delegated.

The analysis demonstrates that intellectual autonomy is not reducible to the accumulation of information or the instrumental mastery of digital tools. Rather, it emerges from a conscious engagement with uncertainty, doubt, and the incompleteness of knowledge. In this sense, reason is configured as an ethical and formative practice that demands presence, effort, and responsibility. From this perspective, university pedagogy is challenged to problematize the uncritical use of technology and to create conditions for students and teachers to distinguish between automated responses and reflective thought, reaffirming the centrality of the subject in the act of knowing [2].

Thinking as Disposition: From Calculation to Listening

A second result of the analysis highlights the persistent confusion between "thinking" and "calculating" in contemporary higher education. Drawing on Heidegger, the study identifies that the dominance of performance-driven logic has reduced thought to a process oriented exclusively toward utility, efficiency, and rapid problem-solving, thereby displacing its contemplative and open dimension.

From this perspective, thinking is revealed not as an automatic operation, but as an existential disposition that requires pausing, listening, and opening oneself to what manifests. The study suggests that pedagogical practices valuing inquiry, wonder, and lingering (*demora*) do not constitute a waste of academic time, but rather a profound exercise of thought. Within this framework, silence emerges as a fundamental pedagogical condition: not as an absence of activity, but as a space of welcoming that enables an encounter with the world and with others. Recovering silence in the university implies resisting information saturation and reinstating the classroom as a place of listening and meaning, where knowledge ceases to be a data transaction and becomes a formative experience [4].

The Metamorphosis of the Academic Spirit

The analysis of Nietzschean categories allows for an understanding of the tensions traversing academic subjectivity within the current institutional context. Much of university life is observed to unfold under the figure of the "Camel," characterized by

obedience to external mandates, the accumulation of administrative burdens, and the uncritical internalization of performance indicators. This condition produces a subjective exhaustion that hollows out the meaning of the educational experience.

However, the study identifies the possibility of a transformation of the university spirit through the affirmation of freedom and creativity. The transition toward the figure of the "Lion" represents the capacity to question established imperatives and to reclaim a margin of agency in the face of the bureaucritization of knowledge. This rupture paves the way for the figure of the "Child," understood as the possibility of an affirmative relationship with knowledge based on the creation of new meanings and the reinvention of educational practice. From this horizon, the university is configured as a space of creative potential rather than an apparatus for the reproduction of productivist logics [6].

The Teacher's Ontology and the Encounter with the Other

A fourth result of the analysis focuses on the relational and ontological dimension of the educational act. Through a Sartrean lens, the teacher is understood not as the bearer of a fixed identity or a predefined essence, but as a subject constituted through the very exercise of teaching. Pedagogical practice thus appears as a space of freedom and responsibility, where every decision, gesture, and word contributes to the construction of the teacher's own being.

Complementarily, Edith Stein's phenomenology of empathy allows for the recognition of the educational encounter as an intersubjective experience that resists technical dehumanization. The analysis shows that understanding the student as a subject of experience—rather than as a data point or a performance metric—enables a pedagogy of care and mutual recognition. Empathy is thus configured as an ethical condition of shared thinking, allowing access to the lived experience of the Other without nullifying their singularity, thereby sustaining education as a deeply human and relational process [3,5].

Discussion

The crisis of the contemporary university, as revealed by this analysis, cannot be understood solely in technical, administrative, or pedagogical terms. It is, above all, an ontological crisis that compromises how the subject relates to themselves, to knowledge, and to others within the educational space. The results show that academic acceleration, the pressure for performance, and the technification of knowledge have progressively displaced the center of the formative experience, eroding what has historically given meaning to higher education: the possibility of thinking, lingering, and encountering alterity.

In this context, the disappearance of academic rituals—shared readings, unhurried conversations, fruitful silences—is not a marginal phenomenon but a structural symptom of how the university has been captured by the logic of optimization. As [1] warns, the loss of ritual fragments time and impoverishes experience, transforming the classroom into a space for information

consumption rather than a place of formation (*Bildung*). The results confirm that, without rituals, knowledge is emptied of symbolic density, and the student is reduced to a data manager, unable to inhabit knowledge as a vital experience.

This situation becomes particularly problematic when contrasted with the Heideggerian conception of thinking as a disposition of listening. In a university organized around the premise of efficiency, the analysis shows that thought has been progressively reduced to calculation, planning, and immediate response. The irruption of artificial intelligence intensifies this trend by offering quick solutions that promise to eliminate uncertainty. However, from the philosophical perspective developed here, authentic thinking does not consist in suppressing doubt but in sustaining it. Silence, far from being unproductive, appears as an essential pedagogical condition that allows for an opening to the world and the Other, resisting the informative saturation that characterizes the contemporary academy [4].

The results also allow for a problematization of the notion of autonomy in the digital age. The reading of Kant, placed in dialogue with the phenomenon of the algorithmic tutor, reveals that intellectual tutelage has not vanished but has been reconfigured into more sophisticated and seductive forms. The delegation of judgment to automated systems evidences a form of cognitive comfort that threatens the formation of critical thought. In this sense, autonomy emerges not as a technical competency, but as an ethical attitude requiring courage, effort, and a willingness to confront the discomfort of “not knowing” [2].

From an existential key, this renunciation of one’s own judgment can also be read as a contemporary form of “bad faith” (*mauvaise foi*). As the Sartrean reading suggests, teachers and students cannot elude their responsibility by appealing to technological or institutional determinisms. If the human being is defined by their choices, abdicating thought in favor of the machine implies a renunciation of one’s own freedom. The university, in this sense, does not merely transmit knowledge; it configures modes of existence, either enabling or foreclosing the possibility of assuming oneself as a subject responsible for one’s own formation [3].

The discussion acquires a deeper ethical and political dimension by incorporating Stein’s notion of empathy. Faced with the growing technical dehumanization of the classroom, the results show that empathy constitutes a fundamental pedagogical principle for sustaining education as an intersubjective encounter. Recognizing the Other as a subject of experience, rather than a performance metric or indicator, allows for resistance against the instrumental logic pervading the current university and recovers the relational meaning of the educational act. In this horizon, knowledge ceases to be individual property and becomes a shared construction rooted in mutual care and pedagogical hospitality [5].

Finally, Nietzsche’s metaphor of the metamorphosis of the spirit allows for a synthetic articulation of the tensions identified. The figure of the “Camel,” subjected to institutional mandates and productivity metrics, represents the predominant state of

contemporary academic life. Nevertheless, the results open the possibility of rethinking a transformation toward more affirmative ways of inhabiting the university. The transition toward the “Child” symbolizes the recovery of creativity, play, and the invention of new values—indispensable conditions for a pedagogy of resistance that does not limit itself to denunciation but proposes alternative modes of existing and thinking within the university [6].

From this perspective, the ethics of the Platonic banquet remains fully relevant as an educational horizon. Thinking together, dialoguing without the urgency of defeating the Other, and sustaining difference as a source of meaning appear as radical gestures in a context dominated by competition and academic ego. The university, more than a space for the accumulation of merit, can be reconfigured as a community of thought, where formation is a shared experience and pedagogical resistance is expressed as care for oneself, for the Other, and for the world [7].

Conclusions

The philosophical journey undertaken throughout this study allows us to affirm that, within the context of the contemporary university, thinking has ceased to be a self-evident practice, becoming instead an act of ethical and political resistance. In an era marked by the proliferation of algorithmic responses, the acceleration of academic time, and the illusion of total efficiency, thinking implies sustaining the question, inhabiting doubt, and accepting slowness as non-negotiable conditions for autonomy. Defending thought does not mean opposing technology (technics), but rather resisting its absolutization, reaffirming that human formation (*Bildung*) cannot be reduced to information management or the immediate resolution of problems.

From this perspective, university education appears as an irreplaceable space of presence and encounter. Formation does not occur through the mere transmission of content, but within the intersubjective relationship woven between teachers and students. As suggested by the existential and phenomenological readings integrated into this analysis, the presence of the Other—with their fragility, history, and singularity—constitutes the ethical core of the educational act. In the face of the machine’s promise of neutrality and efficiency, the classroom is revealed as a place where meaning emerges from the bond, the shared word, and the mutual responsibility that no technology can replicate.

Within this horizon, it becomes urgent to recover a new academic ritual that sustains the time required for thinking. Attentive reading, reflective writing, unhurried dialogue, and shared silence are not obsolete or romantic practices; they are symbolic structures that allow the educational experience to acquire density and meaning. Without rituals, time becomes fragmented and knowledge ephemeral; with them, the university can once again be a space where learning implies transformation rather than just the accumulation of data.

Finally, this work invites us to rethink teaching as a process of continuous becoming. The teacher is not a technician applying methods, nor a manager of results, but a subject who is constituted

in the very act of teaching, recognizing themselves as unfinished and open to the encounter with the Other. Within this condition of shared fragility lies the ethical power of pedagogy: accompanying others in their process of intellectual emancipation requires, in turn, assuming one's own responsibility toward the world. Educating, in this sense, is an act of care and love for the common—a way of inhabiting the university as a space of sensitive resistance against technical dehumanization and the impoverishment of meaning [8-10].

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