

Translation

Radim Palouš on Perception as Belonging

Palouš, Radim. 2010. *Filosofická reflexe několika pojmů školské pedagogiky* (Philosophical reflection on several concepts of schooling pedagogy). Praha: Karolinum, pp. 69–71.

We are buried in a modern tradition. We seek things that are, such as objects, items, imaginations. How else may we find them! We place that which is “available” before ourselves like that which stands across from us and across this we pull ourselves, to the imaginative. This imagining that objectifies essence and, in doing so, lends things a “seal of being,” is a characteristic of modern-age metaphysics; it is subjectivism, it is self-assertion, it is “Ego” – the centre and recourse, it is a will longing for ruling. It is this will that predestines the manner in which the world is allowed to appear to us, namely in the form of objectification. Objects may be handled in such a way that (a) will discovers space for its own development. **To overcome this metaphysics means to ontologically overcome subjectivism** and turn to (a) being itself, not however, as to a dimension given by the coordinates of subject-object. An important regard of this term is human openness to the world.

“Pure” staring (*vision*) is fiction. It is expected that everything inside is silent. It is as if it were about a total receptiveness, which is only an optical function of a blind photographic apparatus (regardless of the fact that a certain projection is attributed to that which has been seen). Pure staring could be more likely to mean a demand on the one staring not to insist on a given perspective and open up to suspected and unsuspected perspectives. **Henceforth, purity means that the one staring, “belonging”, is ready to sweep all already prepared perspectives in favour of other possible ones, hence “to belong” to them, not to none.**

The relatively long addiction of an infant on an educator is truly very important for the human ability to perceive. A person is born very much incomplete. The eyes remain loose, they are not overly captivated by instincts or pressure of self-preservation so their legacy does not exceed elementary needs. Since the dawn of time, animals have been too captivated by events in their surroundings. Their attention is depleted by a lurking anticipation of danger, nourishment, etc., simply an anticipation of what an animal is as such. From birth, a human’s belonging is open for the world especially thanks to mal-equipment, incompleteness, boundness: for a long enough time a child cannot independently behave regarding self-preservation. Yes, similarly to other species, it builds its opinion on its surroundings by looking out for functional phenomena – due to its basic instincts. However, human perception is “belonging”, it has the ability to step out of confinement into a certain register of schemes.

A person also has various inherited behavioural traits, but not to the extent to which it dominates with animals. Before it is made applicable by thought, human sight perceives a lot of events that are meaningless, mysterious. It asks for their meaning. A question creeps into staring. In doing so it leaves an autonomously functioning surrounding – and steps into the world of human “opinion”.

This open seeing has a chance of fulfilling itself not only with prefabricates, which ease our functioning by the mechanization of activity, but also has the chance to become the intention of attention, which self-forgettingly pulls towards perception itself, and accepts it with neither defence nor limitation, leaving it if possible to itself.

Attention can be forced either by the world and the things in it or by the focus of him who stares. Humanly, the most significant is the middle ground, where neither things nor the ones staring impose themselves. An experience of this nature is the meeting of looks between a child and a loving mother. It is a moment when the behaviour of the child is not filled with instinct and when the meeting is one of mutual openness (“you perceive me, therefore I am”). Staring is a process of maturing which is increasingly dependent on behaviour. The more it serves, the less it “belongs” to that at which it stares. The seen “occurring” world is pulled into human purposes; things become “at disposal”. Speech gives meaning to that which has been perceived and easily can accommodate a tendency to be finished with ones surrounding. To name a previously perceived thing means to know it and to know it in a certain way. That is how a person deals with a provocative uncertainty of meaningless things, which then means that the amount of things attracting attention decreases, so it is increasingly determined by the interests of the one perceiving (by his “opinion”), by that which is important to him, what HE means. The field of view, in which things primarily have announced themselves individually, changes into a field of objects for a person. They then sort them into objects of current attention according to subjective living arrangements, and into that which is “there” as well, but does not currently require immediate attention.

This is how a person is wired and overcoming such an enclosure cannot be done by simply scratching implemented mechanisms. An opening is possible only by overcoming these. Belonging can be carried by effort not only to see an object as it is in the interest of him who perceives (it is impossible to be fully rid of subjectivity), as it may be accepted only as one point of view, one of the perspectives, which enables space for other angles and perspectives. This way perceiving is open to the full extent of what the object itself is for perceiving, which overcomes the current “subjective” opinion.

However, it cannot be imagined that an opening viewing would abstract from “this here” in such a way as to gain “objectivity”, a sort of “clear” picture of the world, a world “about itself”. That would not mean anything other than looking out with a sort of unconscious seeing, perceiving without perspective, a complete breaking free from a situation in which a person always is.

Viewing is always knowing. A participation of knowing which has previously been established cannot be determined generally, because knowing itself enters the game during an opening: boundaries are overcome, of not only that which is at our disposal (and that due to

dissatisfaction), but also of heralds of things and the world. He who perceives makes his eyes an organ of that which is shown to him in his perception.

Perceiving is an act of an entire personality. Human sight is not only an irritation of a retina by light stimuli, but observation, in which is an entire activity of the perceiver, his acts – actions. If one detaches objects from their environment, then they do so due to their subjectivity. It is impossible to be rid of activity, it would not be human sight. However, it is possible to put this activity into the service of things and the world.

If that is the case then human education does not only take place there, where perceiving is already present. Not only the “inner” is then educated, not only that which a person thinks of what has been seen, but even that which a person sees at all, what a person is able to perceive.

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