

Chapter 8

The Pedagogical Relation in a Technological Age

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There is no doubt that modern technology has changed education, but these changes bring with them questions and challenges. How should educators respond to the widespread technological changes that herald the demise of the conventional school (Masschelein and Simons 2013)? Not only does school look rather 19th century, the figure of the teacher appears to be a quaint anachronism whose days are numbered. When students have access to the total(ized) knowledge of the Internet what kinds of educational authority are legitimate? Are we, indeed, witnessing what Postman, nearly half a century ago, called *The Disappearance of Childhood*?¹ More insidious yet are the widespread effects of a technological culture that render educational systems accountable exclusively to the reductive pressures of the bureaucratic iron cage (Dunne 1997). Education as the “production of learning outcomes” (Masschelein and Simons 2013, 18) appears as inescapable as it is alienating as it has become *mass* production. National or international school and university league tables have become a ubiquitous feature of our efforts to “improve” education, even if such improvements are not unequivocally “good” (Biesta 2011; Flint and Peim 2011). Most relevant to this essay, however, is the conflation of education and learning, and the consequent erosion of the figure of the teacher who is able to exercise appropriate educational judgement (Biesta 2017)

Following Heidegger (1977) it seems to me that the worst excesses of our technological culture are expressed not only in the way things are set upon and organized as “standing reserve,” but also how human beings are themselves subject to technological enframing.² From this perspective we can see that the reduction of education to the efficient production of learning outcomes vividly illustrates Heidegger’s analysis in the domain of contemporary educational relations (Lewin 2014a). Here lies a danger that the “pedagogical relation” is masked by a “technological relation” whereby educational subjectivity becomes rationalized and instrumentalized. The goal of education is dominated by a notion of efficient learning, a notion which almost entirely occludes the broader aims of education: to develop subjectivity. Enter Ricoeur who addresses many pertinent issues: the formation of subjectivity through recognition theory, narrative identity, and affirmation of subjectivity (and potentiality). I argue

that these themes are best understood within the structure of the pedagogical relation; that is, the relation between an educator and a student.

This chapter principally concerns anthropology, the concept that most obviously connects the educational and the philosophical, and invites us to consider how technological thinking in the Heideggerian sense, conditions the anthropological ideas of contemporary education. While education has long sought a “more explicit theory of human nature” (Peters, 1983, 51) many educational theories have assumed autonomy as a key educational aim (Marples 1999). In the terms of Ricoeur’s philosophy (1984-1988; 1992; 2005), the formation of subjectivity is defined as something like autonomy: by the capability to act in the world. In what follows, I offer an ontological account of the pedagogical relation between the teacher and the student.³ I agree with Biesta as well as Masschelein and Simons (2013) that, although under threat from forms of technologization (where educational relations are reduced to measurable outcomes), the figure of the teacher is educationally essential. Moreover, the process of “becoming a subject” through education, what Biesta calls *subjectification* (Biesta 2006; 2011), is shaped by a pedagogical relation which involves three elements: a student, a teacher, and a world (content). The breadth of this theoretical triangulation – between philosophy, education and technology – demands a certain circumspection. I now turn to some contextualisation of Education Studies as a discipline followed by a discussion of Ricoeur’s thinking in the context of this discipline.

1. Ricoeur and Education Studies

It should be noted that, by comparison with other major twentieth century continental philosophers (notably Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida, Levinas, Heidegger and Arendt), Ricoeur is not regularly drawn upon in theoretical or philosophical discussions of education.⁴ It is true that Ricoeur does not offer a systematic or lengthy discussion of education,⁵ but also education as a theoretical discipline is often poorly conceived and its disciplinary status underdeveloped.

I cannot explore the many reasons for this here, but certainly it seems related to the diverse contexts and traditions in which educational concepts have emerged.⁶ The application of Ricoeur to education is typically rather piecemeal: where his ideas are taken up it tends to be without reference to significant theory of education (Moratella 2015) or only to particular ages (Farquhar 2012) or subject fields (Streib 1998). A more general and wide-ranging analysis of Ricoeur’s relevance to Education Studies is harder to find though we see some indications here and there (Gallagher 1992; Kerland and Simard 2011), more particularly around general

educational questions of pedagogical relation (Hoveid and Hoveid 2009), of understanding, and of hermeneutics (Leonardo 2003). My intention in this short chapter is not, of course, to develop such a wide-ranging analysis, but to focus attention on the educational significance of a central issue for Ricoeur: philosophical anthropology.

Before all else, education is a matter of anthropology: every intention to positively influence a person implies a normative anthropology.⁷ Educational influences, more or less consciously assume answers to the following questions: What kinds of formative influence are desirable and legitimate? How do we justify formative influence? How are desirable influences achieved? Difficulties arise when we acknowledge that answers to these questions most often entail some more or less stable idea of what it means to be human in terms of, for instance, rational autonomy or moral agency (Peters 1966). This can be difficult because we don't all agree; such ideas about what education should be also risks denying personhood from those considered "ineducable." These issues requires a mediation between an essentialist position that excludes many from being (or becoming) human, and the postmodern negation of anthropology that gives little direction for educational practice. As a figure that stands for mediating between polarities, Ricoeur's contribution here could be considerable, especially because Ricoeur's anthropology is so central to his philosophy. For Ricoeur, personal identity is neither fully stable or self-transparent, nor incoherent or self-alienated: our self-relation is essentially one of active interpretation, rather than fully autonomous self-authoring. Thus, Ricoeur seems to have a desire for, as Anderson (1993) has neatly put it, "having it both ways," that is, both affirming and denying identity at the same time. In the realm of subjectivity that means that Ricoeur has been prepared to face off the attacks on the concept of subjectivity that claim it is either incoherent (*pace* Hume) or illusory (*pace* Nietzsche). Ricoeur seeks a post-critical, or *reconstructivist* (Romele 2014, 108), conception of narrative identity that does not avoid these attacks but absorbs them. It is, I would argue, the concept of narrative identity that offers educators something significant. As educators offer students ways to understand their world and their own selves, so students come to form their own narratives. Through encounters with history and culture, the child comes to terms with their own story. Furthermore, the recognition offered by the teacher is a critical component of the student's formation of narrative identity. Thus, the educator both presents and represents the other through which the child comes to form herself. In addition to the formation of self through narrative, educators also rely on certain assumptions or affirmations to undertake their work: that the student before them is educable and that education has an influence on an enduring, self-same subject. If there

were nothing like the *subject* – an identity that endures over time – there would be no one to educate. With the subject in *position* – affirmed or posited rather than established as a foundation – the possibility and necessity for education arises.

In positing that the subject (in this case the student) is interpreted as a person capable of learning, the ipseity of the subject is affirmed. This is in contrast to an inert object like a stone, or an entity to be trained according a limited horizon of outcomes (i.e. a wild horse being “broken”⁸ or a dog being trained). This indicates that the positing of a particular kind of subjectivity is a condition for what is normally called education (rather than *training*), as well as being an outcome of education (Hoveid and Hoveid 2009). This projection of ‘educability’ (German: *Bildsamkeit*; French: *plasticité*) takes on a particular hue in the context of the modern bureaucratic, technologized state: it is in this context that we consider how far pedagogical relations between educator and student – themselves constituted by the projection of an educable subject – then replaced by a technological relation between a producer and consumer of learning. In other words, how much do the present conditions (of the technological culture we live in) reduce pedagogy to a technical process: “the production of learning outcomes”? (Masschelein and Simons 2013, 18; see also Dunne 1997, Introduction).

2. Technological Thinking

By *technology* I mean something quite broad, “by no means anything technological” (Heidegger 1977, 4) in the sense of the devices that surround us in the present age. Rather, technology here is understood in terms of the *technological thinking* that constitutes those devices, and that underpins the technical processes just mentioned. Although a rather vague notion, allow me to offer the guiding approximation: technological thinking is a way of seeing things and people only in terms of their apparent utility. This way of seeing has three implications: first, through this focus on utility, we are encouraged to overlook reflection on the telos, or final purposes to which such utility may be put. Indeed, in the technological milieu, or device paradigm as Albert Borgmann (1984) called it, reflection of final purposes is (perhaps systematically) obfuscated, by, ironically, the achievement of user functionality (preliminary ends). Second, the capacity and agency of a person may not be measurable or even visible in the terms currently available. This brings me to the third point that renders the first two problematic: the technological mediation (or technological hermeneutic) appears absolute such that any other mediation becomes unthinkable. Like instrumentalism or efficiency in general, seeking to measure and to use are not, in and of themselves, problematic: they are essential for

the continuation of life. Yet, as Heidegger and many others have long argued, if these ways of seeing (or *disclosing*) become all-encompassing or totalising, then we risk losing touch with the world and ourselves (Heidegger 1977; Lewis 2001). So, this concept of technological thinking points to the reduction of the world and others to nothing more than functionality determined by users who are encouraged to avoid reflection on the final purposes to which their use is aimed. In the context of education, this can mean a failure to consider subjectification: what it means to become a subject. Rather learning outcomes can be determined by technical needs of society: e.g. to service economic needs; to gain competitive advantage and so forth. Again, these are not unimportant considerations, but when they become totalizing, they encourage us to overlook the significant responsibilities of educators to recognize and support the development of the subject.

The concept of education derives etymologically from two terms, one emphasising the forming or moulding of the student (*educare*), the other emphasising the idea of drawing out or bringing forth what is latent or innate within the student (*educere*) (Bass and Good 2004). To apply popular metaphors for the figure of the teacher, we see here the sculptor (*educare*) and gardener (*educere*) views of education, though neither metaphor is entirely adequate (Buber 1997; Veck 2013). Education suggests a mediation between forming, putting in, and releasing, drawing out, which should be kept in view since the reduction of education to the production of learning outcomes risks losing sight of an essential aspect of formation: that educational influence works upon something – a human with innate dispositions, tendencies and capacities. And that, therefore, “good” education must pay some attention to those tendencies and capacities in contrast to a more technical view of education which sees a transaction take place between the educator and educated that ignores such questions of human relation and formation.

3. Education: Becoming Who We Are

Philosophical anthropology refers both to what it means to be human as well as to *become* human. Although the latter is a fundamentally educational concern, both are of central significance to Ricoeur’s considerations of identity and capability (Ricoeur 2016). Yet the idea of *becoming* human introduces various questions: what (or “who”) is the being before it has become human? What unifies the identity of the person who is changed, formed, or transformed by education: what is this ipseity that defines self-identity in the context of change? Is human identity ever something to be realized? What about those people who never realise the attributes

of human identity that are settled on? These aporias reveal something of the inevitable instability of the concept of human nature. Nevertheless, it seems that no education can do entirely without such a concept. Speaking educationally, human beings are neither just preformed objects to be uncovered (*educere*), nor only matter to be formed (*educare*), but beings *in potentia*. That potential can only be realized by the interaction between a student and something other, a hence the self is not autonomous in the sense of being fully self-authoring. As potential, we are capable of being brought about, achieved, or formed, through education in the widest sense (von Humboldt 2015). Important aspects of human formation can be understood as our capacities to speak, to act and to narrate, capacities that are formed through the recognition of our agency (first by others and then our own recognition) as well as our own attestation of it (Ricoeur 2005; Hoveid and Hoveid 2009). But we must learn to narrate ourselves. The question of how human beings become what they are lies at the heart of the human sciences and has encouraged the development of what has been termed *human science pedagogy* (Friesen 2017b) which highlights the activities of the pedagogical relation that are essential to human formation.

This pedagogical relation is hermeneutical insofar as it takes different forms depending on how we interpret the concept of education as well as how we interpret the figures of the student and the teacher: whether we see education as the transmission of data from the active knowing agent to the passive ignorant patient, or as creating conditions for active growth, is a matter of interpretation. To describe education in one or another way is to inscribe certain assumptions about pedagogical relations that ought not to be naturalized, but to be made visible (and perhaps put into question). What it means to be a teacher or a student requires mutual interpretation or projection between two figures and the relation they enter into.⁹

The particular interpretation of the pedagogical relation in much contemporary educational discourse, at least at the level of general policy and practice, presumes to simply describe neutrally, reaching for language derived from a certain scientific view of the world that does not take account of what Luhmann and Schorr (1982) have helpfully described as the *technology deficit* fundamental to any educational process: the absence of a linear relationship between causes and effects in education. One could make a case for saying that it is the very absence of a causal relation in education that actually makes the education of *persons* possible, for otherwise we would not be engaged in education, but programming. Of course, this also suggests that education cannot be entirely controlled or predicted (Biesta 2011). From this point

of view, it is the fact (or rather, interpretation) that we are not machines that can be programmed that allows for the possibility of (a human) education and a pedagogical relation.

4. The Pedagogical Relation

The notion of the *pedagogical relation* attempts to delineate the distinctive characteristics of the relation between persons whose relation is defined not (only) by kinship or friendship, but primarily and distinctively by education.¹⁰ This definition of the relation is not meant to be exclusive: parents will inevitably be educators and these identities (parent; educator) often interact in complex ways. What, after all, is the role of the parent when reading a bedtime story, or the schoolteacher who acts *in loco parentis* during playtime? Although the pedagogical relation may be something of an abstraction, it is a useful one because it describes the conditions in which we try to influence others.¹¹

This pedagogical relation is formed by the intention of the educator to influence the student in certain ways that improve the student's knowledge, skill, or capability in some respect. If this is to be truly relational, then the student must, in some sense, allow herself to be influenced by the educator. On what basis does the student allow herself to be influenced? Initially at least, children trust their parents or educators and so a relation of trust justifies influence.¹² Indeed, the simple act of listening is a form of basic trust, as is the decision to accept a promise of some future reward for doing something that is not immediately desirable (e.g. practising piano). Both sides must engage with and sustain such a relation. An established tradition of German pedagogical theory, from Friedrich Schleiermacher, to Wilhelm Dilthey, to Hermann Nohl understands this relation to imply interdependency within the relation; there is a dyadic structure to the pedagogical relation which means the relation constitutes the identity of both as distinct but also united in their distinction (Mollenhauer 1972; Friesen 2017b). This means that there is no educator or student before they come into a pedagogical relation for it is the relation itself which constitutes the identities of both. For many educational theorists in this tradition, this dyadic structure also implies the rather unfashionable view that there is a fundamental asymmetry between educator and student, not because the educator knows more or can do more than the student (they may or may not be qualified in these senses), but because the educator is concerned to improve the relation of the student to some object (the "content"). What makes the relation educational is that the educator is not concerned with the life of the student in general, but with the student's knowledge or capacity: in other words, with the student's relation to some "content." The "relation to the relation" (see Kenklies 2020) that

the educator takes up is enacted by way of creating conditions for growth, as John Dewey (1916) famously defined education, by, for instance, the processes of selection of “content” for optimal learning that the educator engages in. Figure 1 illustrates these relations in the form of the pedagogical triangle.

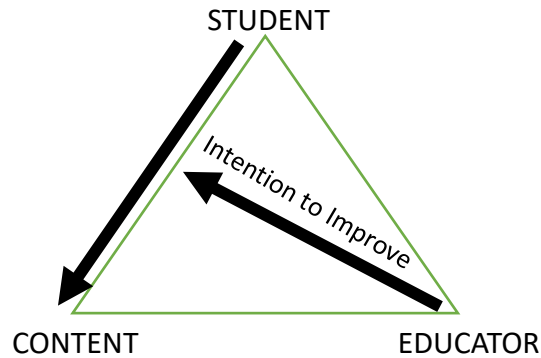


Figure 1: The Pedagogical Relation

Having presented the pedagogical triangle in descriptive terms I now turn to the interpretive dimensions of these pedagogical relations for these relations are not simply “present-at-hand,” but are themselves the product of a formative and interpretive process.¹³ I have already noted that the educator must speculatively project (or perceive) the student as *educable*. Here we find a point that intersects strongly with Ricoeur’s interests in the imputation and attestation of personhood: the educator sees the student as educable because they interpret the student as a person, not a thing. This “projection” of personhood is a kind of imputation that expects something of the student: that they are educable. Furthermore, this imputation of educability is not certain, but forms an extension of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the self (Ricoeur 1992), what we might call the *hermeneutics of the pedagogical relation*. Educators employ this kind of interpretive “prejudice” constantly to guide their activities: they form learning objectives on the basis on the projected educability of the students; they enact the lessons *as if* the children can absorb lesson as intended. This remains speculative since, insofar as we understand that education is a human rather than a purely technical process, there is no secure knowledge that the child is indeed able to learn and, despite efforts to be inclusive, there will always be circumstances in which the educator’s projections go awry. It is this interpretive prejudice that makes education possible while simultaneously giving rise to certain problems. One might say that all education entails a wager (Lewin 2014b).

Approaching the question of technology in terms of a basic educational relation indicates that technology is here interpreted as a way of seeing, what I have called a “technological hermeneutic” (Lewin 2014a, 34): that in the wake of Heidegger’s analysis of technology, the manner in which things show up is shaped exclusively by the imperatives of modern technology. It should be acknowledged that the so-called empirical turn in the philosophical of technology (away from ‘classical’ philosophy of technology)¹⁴ has roundly criticized scholarship that remains focused on this rather pessimistic and “substantivist” if not “essentialist” (Feenberg 1999, Chapter 1) interpretation of our relation to technology (see Achterhuis 2001; Verbeek 2005) though one could argue that the empirical turn simply considers different things: raising empirical questions rather the conceptual issues, an approach in which the nature of technology must be assumed in order to proceed empirically. An adequate discussion of classical versus empirical approaches in the philosophy of technology is beyond my scope, but I raise it here to draw attention to a virtue of the classical approach: that it encourages us to consider how our interpretations of the world are just that, our interpretations. This interpretive condition is crucial to consider in education if we want to avoid the idea that the educational process is really only a matter of quasi technical enhancements of humans that might just as well (or even better) be undertaken by implants, smart drugs (Bostrom and Sandberg 2009), or technical exteriorisations of human beings, what Stiegler (2011) calls technical prostheses.

Yet and discussion of the technological hermeneutic does not provide criteria for deciding which technologies are good or bad since the devices themselves are consequent upon the technological revealing of things. We might argue, therefore that this approach avoids the undecidable question of which technologies are educationally good or bad (e.g. should we employ tablet computers or mobile phones in classrooms, or ban their use?), even if we might wish to posit explicit policies regarding their educational use. So, we are encouraged to consider the question of technology in education by way of its broader influence on how human beings are interpreted (as educable) and how educational processes are ‘technologized’ such that they seek to produce learning outcomes as effectively as possible. This concept of technologization is expressed in the idea that the relation between the teacher’s input and the learner’s outcomes, for example, can be interpreted as a simple ratio: a measurable proxy for educational efficiency. If this is established in explicit terms, then certain dimensions of education are at risk of being lost. The goods of education (as well as technology) are concealed by attempts to ameliorate consumers: the desire to satisfy the student, for instance, may very

well be inimical to the experiences of disruption or alienation that many argue are central to education in the tradition of transformation or *paideia* (English 2012). Through technological enframing, education might be reduced in other ways such that it can seem justified, for instance, to pay teachers in proportion to their efficiency, whereby bonus payments for high levels of satisfaction are considered (Burgess 2018). The idea that we should minimise educational inputs and maximise outputs reflects the dominance of the concept of efficiency which, as Jacques Ellul showed in the 1960's may be characterized as the only value in a technological society, and one that obfuscates reflection of ends (Ellul 1973). Paulo Freire's critical account of the banking model of education illustrates this reduction of education to efficient transmission: "[t]he more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (Freire 2007, 72). From the perspective taken in this chapter, the banking model is a consequence of certain ways of seeing students, educators, and education itself, conditions which I have characterized in terms of 'technologization' and the technological hermeneutic.

Not only does this transformation of the pedagogical relation result in the power imbalance between educator and student that so exercises critical pedagogues like Freire, it can also lead to the withdrawal of the figure of the teacher which, in fact, has been widely identified within educational theory as a problematic feature of education in technological society. The process of learning is interpreted not in relational terms, but as a discrete function residing within the student only, and to be optimized through any number psychologically informed interventions that increasingly appear to not require the figure of a teacher. Biesta (2006; 2011; 2014) has developed one of the most sustained critiques of the notion that contemporary education is becoming dominated by a narrow notion of learning in which the figure of the educator is starting to look redundant. After all, learners are said to construct their own knowledge. In the Information Age learners access all the information necessary for that construction without the intervention, interruption, or cost of a teacher-figure. Models of online learning are often presented as providing learning opportunities without the encumbrances, inefficiencies and questionable authority of the traditional pedagogical relation. Frictionless learning is celebrated without due consideration of what might here be lost.¹⁵

All of this makes something properly defined as the pedagogical relation itself virtually invisible. The technological organisation of education as the efficient transmission from educator to student is an interpretation that has become naturalized and so appears just to be descriptive (see figure 2).

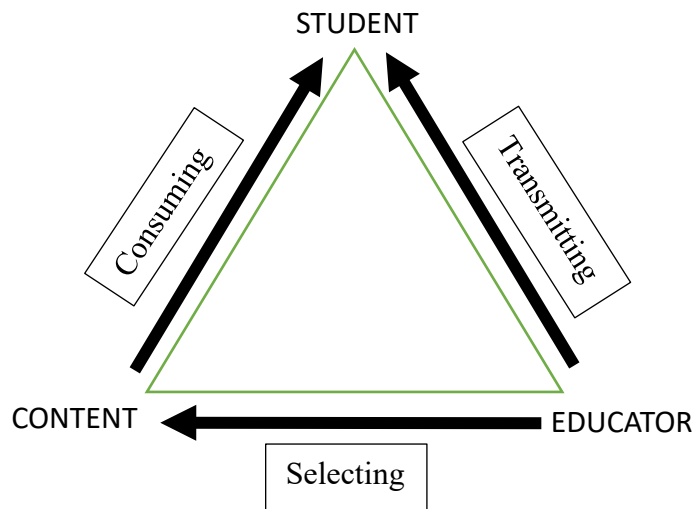


Figure 2: The technological structure of education

What is forgotten here is that pedagogical processes and relations entail interpretations of what it means to be a person, and what it means to become a person, interpretations of an anthropological nature. We return to thinking about what kind of anthropology is implied in our projections of education, and so we turn to Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity.

5. Ricoeur and the Educational Subject

The self of self-knowledge is the fruit of an examined life...one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives, be they historical or fictional, conveyed by our culture. So self-constancy refers to a self instructed by the works of a culture that it has applied to itself. (Ricoeur 1988, 247)

Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity suggests something educationally significant: that the self is *instructed* (or formed) by narrativization. But, as this chapter has argued, that process of instruction entails the influence of another: the educator. Thus, students do not instruct themselves: they do so through the works presented to them by those who seek to influence them. Even where in the end, all education is self-education, there is still a role for another. Here we discover the main significance of Ricoeur for education: that students become themselves by learning to tell their own stories, through developing identity in relation to the many and varied narratives presented to them by others: specifically educators. To be sure, there will inevitably be the incidental influences of daily life that allow for various imaginative reconfigurations of the self, and surely the opportunities to engage imaginatively is what school

ought to be able to offer (Masschelein and Simons 2013). Moreover, one might speculate that the concept of narrative identity and Ricoeur's (2005) considerations of recognition are directly illustrated in the context of the classroom where the child's capacity for action in the world may be significantly affected by the recognition conferred to them by the educator, and the corresponding self-recognition that ensues. Such self-recognition is essential to educational subjectification.

I have presented a hermeneutic account of education which rests upon the idea that what we know about ourselves and others is a matter of interpretation: of affirmation and (re)configuration. Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self justifies the speculative move made by the self who, through attestation or imputation, sees the other as a *person*. Attestation or imputation are kinds of assurance or confidence, kinds of faith or belief in which persons are interpreted as agents capable of acting and suffering. It is a belief that the self has the capacity to act and to suffer, to do and undergo things that it can attest to itself (Ricoeur 1992, 21-22). It is on the evidential validity of attestation that Ricoeur can insist that persons are irreducibly different from things. This kind of distinction between persons and things is central to the account of pedagogical relations discussed above: it is an imputation made by every educator that the student is the kind of thing that is educable. To fully develop this idea would take time, but for now it is sufficient to recognize that, as a basic condition for thinking educationally at all, education involves speculative acts on the part of both the educator and the student. Moreover, Ricoeur's philosophy provides some account of how it is that the self-same 'person' can exist over time, that is through (educational) change and development. Clearly this is an aspect of narrative identity: that time is understood through narrative, and that therefore our self-same existence through time is to be conceptualized through narrative identity. However we choose to define education, it is certainly something that entails change, and normally over extended periods of time (courses) and so a notion of self-sameness through time is also a basic condition for education.

But this essay attempts to go further by thinking through this educational narrativization in relation to technology. It is worth keeping in mind that technology really concerns the means, that is, *how* a thing comes to be (or in the case of technological thinking, how a thing comes to appearance). There have always been techniques and technologies involved in educational formation, from the most basic tools of reading and writing, to the printing press, to new media (Postman 1994; Friesen 2017c). While pedagogy has also described the various techniques and technologies to realise educational aims, something else is at stake in contemporary

technological culture: human beings are themselves subject to technological enframing to such an extent that education is interpreted as nothing other than a technique of enhancement. Enhancements could reasonably be defined as recognized features of improvement (hearing; eyesight; muscular power; memory), while leaving aside more complex dimensions of subjectification. As a form of what Bostrum and Sandberg have called “conventional” enhancement, education is rather slow and inefficient by comparison with recent *unconventional* human enhancements such as “nootropic drugs, gene therapy, or neural implants” (Bostrum and Sandberg 2009, 312). Why not replace teaching with some form of implant? The danger of the technological hermeneutic applied to education is that we find ourselves without any criteria to distinguish conventional and unconventional enhancements. The dominance of the notion of efficient learning commands us to abandon the apparent niceties of the pedagogical relation and its reliance on complex human capacities such as pedagogical tact (Friesen and Osguthorpe 2018) in order to bring about the most effective enhancements. If learning outcomes can be produced through cheaper and easier online education, then how is it to be resisted?¹⁶ Educational philosophers have also begun to wonder whether “knowledge insertion” is possible, desirable, or ethical and whether such a process will be tantamount to “cheating education” (Aldridge and Tillson 2018). Although not longstanding (see Ricoeur and Changeux 2002), Ricoeur’s engagement with artificial intelligence demonstrates a commitment to understanding human identity as an interpretive process in light of technological change and suggests there may be further fruitful inquiries in this vein. So the question of the relation between education and anthropology in contemporary society opens further complex issues that I cannot develop more here. But what Ricoeur really offers us is a language with which to defend a richer conception of human identity in the face of technological reductions: narrative identity. We come to ourselves through a variety of longer routes: through recognition of parents and teachers, through the detours of the ‘text,’ and through the mediations of technologies, ancient (wax tablets) and modern (iPads).

6. Conclusion

Technological devices and processes are transforming education and not only for the good. But the technological enframing of education is more totalizing and insidious, and requires, I argue, a philosophical response. This essay has elaborated something of Ricoeur’s potential to reframe the formation of narrative identity in education. But I have only been able to scratch the surface and have left many large questions unresolved. How exactly is self-understanding mediated by

the figure of the parent, teacher, or other educators in our lives? Who initiates the processes of narration that allow narrative identity itself to form? If education is the intention to influence, where does this leave other informal influence upon children's lives and how are we to discern the outcomes of these fragile human processes. Where does any of this leave us when faced with the pressing issues of whether, or to what extent, we can allow modern technologies into the classroom? If education has always employed some kind of technical mediation, then what really defines the difference of our current technological milieu? Why is it that so many educators today look with suspicion at the creeping influence of modern technologies, and seek, in their stead, an educational environment free of any such influence?

I hope to have shown that education assumes certain basic conditions: the presence of the educable subject; the function of recognition in formation; the formation of the self through narratives offered to the student. It is in the places of human formation that we find opportunities to catch sight of the limitations of technological revealing: for our (self) making seems to require the activities of interpretation that form the self through narrative. In recognising this process, we may see beyond the one dimensional structure of the technological hermeneutic.

Notes

¹ Postman (1994) was first published in 1982. The thesis of the book, that new media (particularly broadcast media like television) are eroding the distinctions between adults and children, seems only more relevant in an age of mobile devices and social media.

² Heidegger's defines "enframing" (*Gestell*) as follows: "Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological" (Heidegger 1977, 20).

³ This relation is conceived ontologically rather than optically: what makes a teacher is not age, professional status, or knowledge, but, as I argue later, a capacity and desire to influence someone's relation to some "content." The student is therefore defined in terms of their capacity to be influenced (*Bildsamkeit*).

⁴ For instance, a major recently published International Handbook of Philosophy of Education (Smeyers 2018) includes sections devoted to each of these figures (along with many others) while Ricoeur does not appear.

⁵ The Fonds Ricoeur has gathered papers and sections in Ricoeur which discuss education: <http://www.fondsriceur.fr/uploads/medias/doc/education-bibliographie-des-textes-de-paul-ricoeur-1.pdf>. Accessed on September 1, 2019.

⁶ Education Studies has only relatively recently been located within Higher Education and has remained primarily (and with some justification) framed by the needs of the profession of school teaching. In Germany the discipline has a more established history through figures like Wilhelm von Humboldt, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Herbart, Fichte and so on. Simplifying, this tradition could be read as viewing the formation of a person as a fundamentally educational as well as philosophical question, making education intrinsically philosophical, and philosophy intrinsically educational. Whereas in Germany philosophical discussion of education as formation (*Bildung*) is commonplace and exists not as a sub-field of 'philosophy' but in its own right, things look rather different in French and English-speaking nations (Westbury, Hopmann, and Riquarts 2015).

⁷ The tradition of humanistic education that reflects such a view is captured in Mollenhauer (2013).

⁸ Wittgenstein uses the concept of *Abrichtung* which can be translated as training (Friesen 2017a).

⁹ The idea that the small child actively enters into a pedagogical relation may sound odd, since typically young children are born into a set of relations and processes that cannot be called chosen. However, on the whole children begin trusting their parents. Why this should be the case is a complex and interesting question.

¹⁰ Although hardly a new idea (Klafki 1970), the notion of the *pedagogical relation* as something worth systematic conceptual attention is not, at least in Anglo-American educational theory, widely recognized (Friesen 2017b; Friesen and Osguthorpe 2018).

¹¹ It is possible for the pedagogical relation to be formed from a relation of self to self, as can be found in the German tradition of *Selbstbildung* (self-formation or self-education) (Schäfer 2005), but in general the pedagogical relation is defined in terms of a relation between different people: an educator and a student. As Herman Nohl puts it “the unique (*eigene*) creative or generative relationship that binds educator and educand [...]”, see Friesen (2017b).

¹² This does not mean, of course, that the trust cannot be abused or that the abuse of trust would be justified, but only that trust is often a necessary condition for a pedagogical relation for only then will the student allow themselves to be influenced.

¹³ From the perspective of Ricoeur’s philosophy, where phenomenology and hermeneutics belong together, there is no simple description of these relations apart from the interpretive dimensions developed here, so this distinction is only an abstraction.

¹⁴ Classical philosophy of technology refers to the ontological or metaphysical approach of philosophers after Heidegger such as Marcuse, Ellul, Arendt, Borgmann, and others (see Verbeek 2005, 4-9; Lewin 2011).

¹⁵ See Friesen (2011) for an excellent and balanced account of the subtle losses (and gains) involved in online learning in relation to face-face.

¹⁶ This chapter was completed during the lockdown that followed the Coronavirus pandemic (April 2020), a period during which all university teaching staff were faced with the prospect of transferring all teaching online for the foreseeable future. At the time of writing it is unclear how universities will use the crisis to reshape educational activities in order that they may be available without the risks of human contact.

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