



Book Reviews

Bruno Ćurko, Josip Guć

Odgoj za životinje
[Education for Animals]

Razvoj kritičke misli i bioetičkog
senzibiliteta kod djece
[The Development of Critical
Thinking and Bioethical
Sensibility in Children]

Mala filozofija, Zadar 2022

Once, during my philosophy of education lectures for preschool teachers, the discussion led us into questions of animal ethics. Most of the time these are related to the question of moral vegetarianism or veganism. This time was no different. As the debate unfolded, one student said that a psychology professor had instructed them not to tell children the real reason for moral vegetarianism. Obviously, this could cause stress and shock in young, preschool children. I could not help but protest. First of all, it seems very suspicious to instruct people to hide from the truth and to lie in educational settings, no matter what beneficial reasons are. If we lie in these institutions, which are supposed to be the source of sound information and knowledge, whom should we trust? But perhaps even more importantly, major ideologies, which are responsible for the worst abuses, usually rely precisely on the mechanism of hiding from the truth. Ideologies fixate the unjust world order along with the privileges of the oppressors, and any exposure of injustice leads to frustration and even trauma for the abusers. But unfortunately, this process is necessary, if social progress is to be achieved. To put it bluntly, yes, exposing the reality of the meat industry may cause discomfort and fear, but imagine the suffering of the animals in the industry! Human discomfort pales by comparison into insignificance.

Is conflict inevitable? Can we achieve moral progress in the field of animal ethics only with discomfort, trauma and fear? The book by Bruno Ćurko and Josip Guć testifies to the fact that there is a middle way between being complacent and perhaps too radical, by immediately exposing all facets of reality connected with human abuse of animals to the most vulnerable: children. As Ćurko and Guć show, the child's question about the origin of meat should not be avoided or radicalized, but taken as a starting point for critical reflection. One of the most important emphases of their work is that confusion is not a bad thing in education; on the contrary, it testifies to the fact that our standard norms are being questioned, which is a hallmark of philosophical education. And since true education is always to some extent philosophical, one could say that such questions are a cornerstone of education as personal and social transformation. The emphasis should not be on the conflict, but on the opportunity to learn. For both: the student and the teacher! Indeed, as Ćurko and Guć show, education is a mutual endeavor, and to be a true teacher means to be ready to learn from one's students.

The book begins with a reflection on the need for education and the foundations of human moral responsibility toward animals. The authors draw on various sources, such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, and ultimately show that the moral relationship with animals is something that education should not neglect. They also refer to perhaps the most important Croatian philosopher of environmental and animal ethics, Nikola Visković, who claims – in line with Gene Myers and other contemporary studies – that children have a special closeness to animals. An important variable here is the educational style of parents and their attitudes toward animals, which must be addressed by educators. However, as the authors convincingly point out, the elders should rather learn from the children in the sense of being aware that some of our actions towards animals require moral attention. Indeed, the

sheer will to educate young children may turn out to be a silencing of their sensitivity to the animal question.

An important focus of the book is also the problem of critical thinking. Although critical thinking has become a buzzword today, or perhaps because of it, its nature is difficult to define. In fact, the reference to the need for critical thinking itself seems to have become uncritical. Therefore, it seems appropriate to examine this central concept of contemporary education. After examining some definitions, Ćurko and Guć finally refer to Dewey's remark that thinking should focus on the assumptions and consequences of our beliefs. But perhaps most importantly, in an educational setting, critical thinking must be distinguished from manipulation and mere memorization. Again, the authors show that children's attitudes toward animals can be seen as an excellent starting point for critical thinking, as their questions often expose unwarranted adult beliefs and values. But again, to recognize this as a starting point for education, teachers themselves must be open to discussion and willing to learn.

A part of the book is also dedicated to the analysis of the curricular results of the subject "Nature and Society" for Croatian elementary schools. As the authors show, the curriculum provides a good starting point for critical reflection of our moral attitudes towards nature and animals, if the teaching is carried out with quality. This is not to say, of course, that other subjects should not be involved in addressing the animal question. The arts are certainly one way to foster bioethical sensitivity. Moreover, it seems important to foster not only critical but also caring thinking when addressing animal issues in education.

The short book, whose importance far exceeds its length, ends with some practical examples of activities for children related to questions of animal ethics. These range from workshops on the protection of the Croatian sea (titled "Ecotopy") to the protection of animals, and the question of how far we should extend our moral responsibility (to all animals, including insects, or only to certain animals?). The workshop titled "Making Story" ("Stvaranje priče"), which requires dedication, individual exploration, autonomous creativity, critical thinking and openness, also addressed numerous issues, mostly related to pollution and the endangerment of animals. However, readers should not expect Ćurko and Guć to offer recipes for education in animal ethics and bioethical sensitivity. In fact, as readers will hopefully understand from what has been written about this small but influential book, this would be contrary to its main message and goal of education. On the contrary, in the

true spirit of educational philosophy, or rather philosophical education, the authors prefer to pose problems rather than solve them, admitting that children may ultimately be better at this than adults. So the question of how to talk to children about animal abuse seems to have a fairly straightforward and simple – albeit demanding – answer: start listening to them when they talk about it! The book is not only a welcome contribution to the philosophy of education, philosophy for children, and education for environmental and animal ethics, but also a necessary beacon in these days of dark ecology.

Tomaž Grušovnik

Katherine Withy

Heidegger on Being Affected

Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge 2024

Katherine Withy's *Heidegger on Being Affected* (2024) offers a clear and insightful account of Martin Heidegger's philosophy of affectivity, emphasizing how *Befindlichkeit* ("Disposedeness", finding) and *Stimmung* (attunement) shape our existence as beings entangled with the world. By rooting Heidegger's ideas in Aristotle's concept of *pathē* and connecting them to other fields like psychology, psychiatry, and artificial intelligence, Withy reveals the enduring importance and relevance of Heidegger's thought. The book argues that affectivity, our capacity to be moved by entities, grounds our understanding of Being, from everyday experiences to existential moments and experiences like angst and boredom.

The book is structured in four chapters: (1) "Introduction" (pp. 2–7), (2) "Befindlichkeit" (pp. 7–23), (3) "Stimmungen" (pp. 23–46), and (4) "Uptake" (pp. 46–54).

Withy adeptly navigates Heidegger's notoriously dense lexicon; she starts the book by rejecting the misleading conceptualization and translation of *Befindlichkeit* as "intentionality", "Disposedeness" or "state-of-mind", opting for "finding", to emphasize our situatedness and vulnerability to being affected. This choice underscores Heidegger's departure from Cartesian subjectivity, framing