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Andrzej Wierciński & Andrej Božič (eds.):

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REVIEWS | RECENZIJE

Małgorzata Przanowska: LISTENING AND ACOUOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2019.

ISBN: 987-83-235-3735-9 (print).

UDC: 37:1

Without listening, there would be no education; it not only centrally co-constitutes the traditional processes of the transmission of knowledge in a classroom setting, but also, in the wider sense, in an almost all-encompassing manner, fundamentally—from (before) birth to (after) death—co-determines human existence, insofar as, as beings of language, of word, we dwell within the communicatively and communally shared (life-)world. Listening—as the opening of being, as an experiential openness towards the other—is a medium, the inter-mediative midst of inter-personal, inter-worldly mediation. We (can) learn, and learn to teach, and teach, (only—or, at least, primarily—) through—and by—listening.

The recently published book entitled *Listening and Acouological Education* by the Polish philosopher and composer Małgorzata Przanowska, assistant professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of Warsaw, attempts to think and rethink the (basic, basal) problem(s) of pedagogy from the perspective of a discussion of listening as one of the essential phenomena defining the human(ness of) being-in-the-world. Whilst, on the one hand, the author, following the foundational hermeneutical and phenomenological

precepts, attentively and minutely discloses the variously differentiated, yet mutually interconnected dimensions of the phenomenon in question, she, on the other hand, upon such a detailed deliberation, outlines the principal traits of a theoretical and practical reconsideration of education grounded in the dialogical and dialectical—in itself always already educational—experience of listening. In the concluding chapter, the “coda” of the book, the author, therefore, thus succinctly circumscribes the proposed concept of “acouological education,” of education—as the prefix suggests—that finds itself anchored, that finds its own anchor in listening: “Acouological education is the education that is immersed in and directed by the *akroatic logos*. It realizes itself in the task of learning to listen to the wor(l)d, to others, and to ourselves.” (278)

Although the present review cannot exhaust the extensive wealth of Przanowska’s analyzes—nor could it ever endeavor to do so—I would like to, nonetheless, if only through a brief and rough sketch, tentatively denote the main thematic emphases offered by the author.

356 Upon the “overture” of the introduction, leading the reader—by a preliminary discussion of preceding approaches towards the issue in comparison with the presented stance—to the heart of the (“subject”) matter, the book consists of two parts, linked by an “interlude” devoted to a deliberation upon the Greek notion of *mousikē*: the first part is dedicated to “The Phenomenological Hermeneutics of Listening,” whereas the second part bears the title “Toward Acouological Education.”

Delving more and more profoundly into realms binding listening and education, concentrically expanding horizons of the reciprocal relation between them, the first part, its three chapters, commences, taking as a departure point, as an inspiration, the juxtaposition of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s and Jean-Luc Nancy’s contrasting, but compatible philosophical thoughts, with an elaboration of the dialectics of question and answer: supplementing Gadamer’s idea of a hermeneutical conversation, where crucial importance is entrusted to understanding, with Nancy’s descriptive exposition of ontological tonality, the author underlines the audibility of things within what she comes to call “the wor(l)d” expressing thus the meaningful mutual permeation—the belonging-together and the co-appurtenance—of word(s) we utter and

world(s) we inhabit, “we,” who partake of them, participate in them. The approximative movement of the second chapter delineates, on the basis of the debated hermeneutic priority of the question, the ontological and existential layers of listening imparting onto education the character of transformative experience that correspondingly, insofar as it, on both parts, evokes the necessity to respond and to cultivate the ear, engages students and educators alike, the learning and the teaching, the taught and the learned: “The *event* character of questioning is hospitable and receptive to the advent of the unexpected. It enables teaching and learning, in the to-and-fro of conversation, to become more open to the transformative promise.” (82) The subsequent chapter concludes the first part with a comprehensive hermeneutical-phenomenological explication of the various(ly) inter-related forms or aspects of listening, ranging—to enumerate merely a few—from the comparatively simple unconscious receiving of surrounding sounds in unwitting listening, through the intentional or attentive listening to the content of what is being heard and said, which finds its hermeneutical variation in the understanding or interpretive listening, through instrumental listening, through critical or interrogative listening, which accurately analyze and radically question what gives itself onto them, to the remarkably complex modalities of (psychologically or philosophically) therapeutic listening that—akin to listening to music, akin to musical listening—lead to the ultimate recognition of “the musicality of the wor(l)d as an invitation to participate in the wor(l)d differently.” (172)

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Before venturing a closer reflection upon the concept of acouological education in the second part of the book, Przanowska interpolates a chapter on the meaning of the ancient *mousikē*: such a re-actualization of certain notions of the great Greek philosophers—especially in the struggle to grasp the revolutionary trends of the Athenian “New Music”—, on the one hand, not only proffers a historical backdrop for the author’s own efforts, but also, on the other hand, points to the trans-formative harmonization—the unity in the diversity—of all the human being’s (bodily, intellectual, and spiritual) faculties through listening effectuated in (the pedagogical) practice.

In accordance with the contemplation upon the manifold dimensions of the listening phenomenon, the two chapters of the second part represent at once a further convolution and a final evolution of the book’s topic exemplifying

the theoretically elaborated with the practicality of realized educational courses. Whereas the author, first, as a metaphor for the performativity of the pedagogical process, discusses the experience of translation, parallelizing—and critically assessing—the myths concerning translation (in the translational studies) and education (in the academic pedagogy), in order to, confronted with the dilemmas of decision-making that each translation endeavor entails, contour the—to a certain degree “ideal(ized)”-figure of the “Meaningful Translator-Educator” (221 ff.), whose diaretical, diagnostical, and dialogical capabilities of listening illustrate a true (hermeneutic) dialectician, the following, penultimate chapter culminates, on the pathway(s) towards the sense of acouological education debating the relationship between philosophy and pedagogy, which, strained by numerous reductionisms, may find (final) resolution in the dynamics of the “in-between,” entrusted to a hermeneutics of education, in the reappraisal and reevaluation of the tactfulness of taste as an intellectual faculty of differentiation and a moral judgement guided by formative educational listening: “Taste is cultivated in the community spending time together. More critical than acquiring rules or the knowledge in advance and taking it for granted is the *sensu plenus* being-with-others. Education as the cultivation deprived of the sense of taste, *sensus communis*, sound understanding, tact, and right judgment is instead an instruction and senseless, technical socialization.” (270)

The concluding “coda” of the book entitled “Acouo-Educator”—closing, in a similar manner as the introduction had been opened, *in medias res*, open-endedly: with a parable—briefly summarizes the undertaken voyage towards a re-thinking of education from the perspective of listening as a way of being: “Thanks to listening, everything that resides in language – in our wor(l)d – can be understood.” (277)

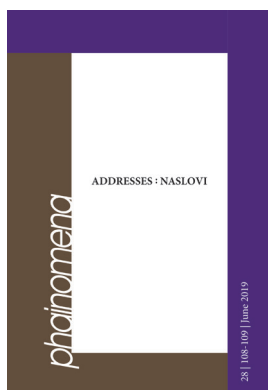
Małgorzata Przanowska’s treatise on *Listening and Acouological Education* is a thoroughly researched and masterfully written work that presents, with its undeniable underlying interdisciplinary nature, taking into account not only the fields of philosophy and pedagogy, but also of musicology or psychology, an invaluable, original contribution to existing and subsequent considerations regarding listening and education and (also) the inter-twining of their inter-relation.

Adhering to the principle of the hermeneutic circle, I would like to conclude the review of the book with a citation, binding its ending with the beginning, binding its beginning with the ending, appealing to potential readers, inviting them to participate in the conversation: “Questions and answers are audible in ourselves; they resound in us. We are listening.” (58)

Andrej Božič

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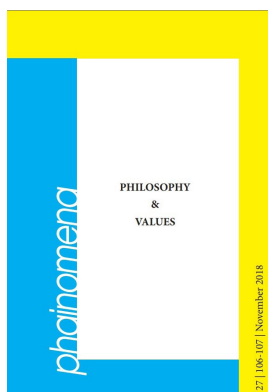
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