

Human Nature and Condition: Conceptual Reflections from Arendt, Gadamer and Thinkers on the Topic of Hope

María Dolores García Perea

Research Coordination, Higher Institute of Educational Sciences of the State of México, Toluca, México

Email address:

dolgarper@att.net.mx

To cite this article:

María Dolores García Perea. Human Nature and Condition: Conceptual Reflections from Arendt, Gadamer and Thinkers on the Topic of Hope. *International Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 11, No. 4, 2023, pp. 96-100. doi: 10.11648/j.ijp.20231104.11

Received: May 25, 2023; **Accepted:** October 9, 2023; **Published:** October 28, 2023

Abstract: This paper reflects on the notion and structural components of two concepts: the human condition and human nature. Likewise, it is proposed that both concepts should be included in the basic themes not only in the field of Educational Philosophy, but also in all disciplines where the human being occupies a privileged place. Human condition is understood as a state of subjection to everything with which human beings interact and represents the starting point to ascend to three natures that correspond to human beings. Hegel emphasizes two natures of man. The first is characterized by having a biological structure governed by instincts. The second is culture and to ascend to it requires processes of intellection that can be objectified through consciousness. The third human nature proposed in this paper is rooted in Ernst Bloch's principle of hope. It is materialized by human actions tending to the construction of the future from the discovery of what is not-yet-conscious that, when identified, is achieved through actions.

Keywords: Human Condition, Training, Hope, Desire Impulse

1. Introduction

In Truth and Method, Gadamer [5, 6] affirms that Hegel is the German philosopher responsible for the expression: man "is not by nature what he should be". With the purpose of understanding the meaning of this expression, in the present work, the human condition and the alternatives to ascend to the natures of the human being will be reflected and proposed as teaching topics for the subject of Philosophy of Education.

Hegel proposes culture as the second nature of the human being which differs from the biological nature of living beings through the concept of *bildung* or training. In this paper, a third human nature is proposed, which could well be called the nature of the future since it is determined by the principle of hope.

The concept of human condition is reflected considering that, through it, it is possible not only to rise to human natures, but also the conditioning of such natures from processes: instinct, training and hope.

Some of the arguments presented below are part of the results of previous research such as "Training, a concept vitalized by Gadamer", "The notion of training in Ernst Bloch", "The concept of perception in George Berkeley" and "Learning to apprehend hope" which have been presented in works prior to this one.

In the present work, I will focus on highlighting the processes through which human beings not only become rooted in the natural world that represents the first human nature, but also I will be highlighting the processes considered as a way of ascent to the cultural world and to the future world.

Some of the chosen literature for the conceptual discussion of the human condition, training and hope is: Arendt [1], Gadamer [5-7], Ferry [3, 4], Ernst Bloch [2], De Sebastián [12], Ganne [8], Laín [9], Moltmann [10] and Royo [11].

Furthermore, the questions to be resolved are: What is being understood by the concepts: human condition, training and hope? What are the three human natures? What are the structural components of the concept of nature? And why should the subject of philosophy of education include condition and human nature as a teaching topic?

The sections of the work are: Human condition, Training, alternative to access the second nature, Principle of hope, guiding axis of the third nature and Desire Impulse.

2. The Human Condition

Arendt [1] defines the human condition as a state of conditioning, being tied, rooted to all the things with which the

human being has contact and that immediately become a condition of their existence: "everything that enters the human world for its own accord or that is drawn into it by human effort, becomes part of the human condition" [1].

The human condition is determined by the contact it has with the natural world, becoming its first nature, one that is not exclusive to the human being, since all living beings have it. The natural world, then, is the habitat where his finite life goes through, the space where human beings satisfy their basic needs and where their biological instinct comes to life by leaving its mark on other living beings and on the natural world itself.

Being in contact with the natural world is the original experience of existing since without the natural world the existence of living beings is unthinkable. The human condition roots living beings to the natural world, which is presented with a double meaning: on the one hand it could be thought as a habitat and a house, and on the other hand as the liberating potential of the earth.

Due to its biological structure, the human being possesses instinct as all living organisms. But unlike them, human beings have the ability to overcome, abandon, escape and distance himself from what ties him to the natural world, even if only momentarily, due to the impulses of desire that are generated within him.

The instinct from its biological structure helps it not only to overcome moments of uncertainty, anxiety, and extreme situations where life is in danger, but also to generate changes in the forms and ways of establishing contact with the natural world to satisfy natural needs and pursue its desire impulses.

The impulses of desire that inhabit the depths of the biological body do not prevent mankind from continuing to be tied to the things with which he comes into contact, but they allow him to be tied to other things because life does not depend exclusively on the work to satisfy basic needs, but also of work and actions that are structural components of the human condition.

For Arendt, work is the activity to produce lasting objects that allows that the state of conditioning of the human being can change when interacting with things that are not from the natural world and that have generally been created as a result of tradition, customs, ideologies, the market, sensations, sublimations, symbolisms, ideals, desires, affections, among other things.

The action, in this case, is the developed moment of the capacity that is proper to the human being for emancipating himself from the state of subjection of the original experience occurred by biological instincts in order to satisfy social and non-basic needs. Plurality, the author tells us, is the condition of action because all people, in addition to being humans, are different from other people who have lived or will live. Both the state of conditioning and the ways of coping with what they come into contact with depend on people.

3. Training, an Alternative to Access Second Nature

The second human naturalness is the cultural world. In order to access and ascend to this world, it is essential that the human being distances himself from the immediate instinctive experiences of basic and survival needs so that, by remaining aware of his actions, the state of conditioning with the things with which he comes into contact have a historical and human meaning, feeling, intentionality, direction.

Training represents one of the alternatives to overcome the human condition that comes from the natural world and to foster new human conditions characterized by acts of consciousness, attached to universalized and hermeneutic experiences, less fragmented and biased, immediate, and personalized and, among other aspects, that social acts are tinged with cultural patterns such as tradition, language, customs.

Work, suggested by Arendt as structures of the human condition, prevail in the second human nature because through it, the human being learns to unlock what is below, it is the source of all greatness, both material and spiritual, it is a way of achieving dependence on the natural world.

However, in capitalist states, work has served to manipulate and alienate human beings, because the alienated human being is not aware of himself and his reality. An example: a person works for a company not to create a product but to obtain a salary, which means that he is not aware that he is the owner of the product, even if he receives a remuneration. The product does not belong to him, it becomes the property of the owner of the capital called the entrepreneur.

There is another form of alienation and this one is as serious as the previous one, it is religious alienation. Here the man is subordinated to the images constructed by himself consisting of the representation of the divinity or divinities.

Training is an alternative to recover freedom and human dignity because it allows mankind to access the world of culture, recognized by Hegel as the second human nature. In this case, training is a process of dialogue where the knowledge horizons of the cultural world merge with the knowledge horizons that human beings have constructed by moving within them.

In order to show some interpretations of the concept of formation that highlight the sense of culture, I refer to four notions. The first notion is based on Ferry [5 and 6], considered a classic of training in the field of pedagogy. It refers to training as individual work, freely imagined and desired, based on the devices that others and oneself provide. I agree with the author in the idea that the responsibility for training lies exclusively with the person interested in training. The commitment of educational institutions is to provide training processes, scenarios and devices.

The second notion of the formation concept comes from Gadamer [7, 8], author of philosophical hermeneutics. At the age of 54, the German philosopher and philologist conceived it as the ability to think what others and oneself think. From my point of view, the notion expresses the depth and

dimension that training encompasses.

The third notion is also by Gadamer [7], who came up with this concept at approximately 94 years of age and is about strengthening the forces where one perceives weak points and not leaving them in the hands of parents who provide gifts to their children for obtaining grades of 10 or to institutions that award diplomas for memorizing. This way of understanding formation forces us to ask about people's weaknesses but also about the formation experiences achieved throughout our existence.

The fourth and last notion is from Hegel [6] and is about reconciling with oneself in the second nature: culture. The principle of the notion is that to form ourselves its necessary to recognize the need to be trained. This can be explained through the analogy of the stone in the shoe: only by discovering that it is in our shoe and causes damage to us, we can take responsibility for it.

4. Principle of Hope, Guiding Axis of Third Nature

The third nature of the human being is circumscribed in the future that will be built in a conscious way, detached from the desire impulse, and from making conscious what is not yet conscious and from its character of possibility.

To ascend to this nature, it is not enough to be aware of the historicity of the cultural world and of the human condition coming from the first and second human nature. There is no need to look at the past to understand what is now, the important thing is to look to the future and build it from actions that go from making conscious what is not yet conscious, to making the desire impulses come true.

Bloch expresses that there are several authors who have hope for a promising future, among them are Freud and Marx. However, one thinks about it from the structures of the unconscious and the other from the structure of production. However, their error lies in not considering the future and the hope that lives in the depths of the human being. Hope is the last to die and is the cause of the movement of human beings.

Humanity has to be built from the present and not from the past. To build a promising future, it is necessary to learn hope [2], but from my point of view, we must turn it into a banner of existence, make it our own, apprehend it. Within the notions about the concept of hope there are elements that characterize the third human nature, a set of these are presented below.

Alberoni [13], De Sebastián [12] and Ganne [8] coincide in affirming, that hope is the most important virtue in life, since without it, no one would dare to carry out actions focused on achieving ends, such as starting a company or having the courage to face the unknown, uncertain, and unforeseeable future. Ignoring hope is impossible because it is immersed in our lives, motivating daily activities to achieve specific goals, and those goals are undoubtedly the projection of life.

Recognizing such a principle in hope has to do with understanding it as an attitude of life due to a dual action: life consists precisely in opening towards the possible and the

possible can only be achieved when looking towards the future horizon. In other words, life can only be built by that inner force called hope.

Furthermore, for the author, life and hope are inseparable structures: life is built on the possibility of acting in the future and, therefore, on hope. Life, in its deepest nature, is access to hope. Hope destroys the certainty of the ineluctable and of death, reopens the horizon of possibility and collides with existential uncertainties. From my point of view, it is precisely this openness that gives us joy, confidence, faith, and the impulse to reinvent actions aimed at achieving what is wanted.

Hope is also considered as vision of the future. According to De Sebastián [12] on the link between hope and future: hope is presented as a direct force towards the future, as a goal, a vision of what can be, of what we can do, and that we must pursue with our will, assuming the risks that it entails. The future corresponds to human beings as they are the bearers of the impulse that goes from our interior to the exterior, as a powerful vehicle due to their capacity heuristics and the motion of the cosmic evolution that makes us ascend to ever-higher strata of being. Imagining a serene future, opening to the future, the desire to live and fight, is a light that destroys the darkness, it is a wave of heat that comforts us and makes us reborn.

On the other hand, the theological notions, besides the direction and intention they have, contain elements to understand the importance, transcendence, and future of hope. With the purpose of showing what has been said, I present below the notion made by Royo [11] hope, in addition to being the ultimate goal desired, longed for and wanted by the human being, is a theological virtue that drives us to look towards the eternal homeland giving us the full guarantee of reaching it one day, not by our own human forces, but with the omnipotent help of God, who is kind and merciful.

Other interesting notions of hope due to their content are: "dynamism of human demand", "virtue with the worst press", "depth and [...] universality of its implantation in the heart of man", "bittersweet need to live, it is one of the habits that most deeply define and constitute human existence", "a state of mind that pleases oneself in the possession of something that fills you with happiness and peace", "imagining a serene world", "light that destroys the darkness, [...] warm wave that comforts us, that makes us reborn", "direct force towards the future, as a goal, a vision of what can be, of what we can achieve, of what is incubated and what we must to pursue with our will, assuming the risks that it entails", "projection towards the future, as an intuition of the possibilities that germinate in reality, and that we must cultivate and carry out", "to be almost sure of something", "whatever is expected", "attitude of prudent reasonableness, as a being, through the intellect, in the middle of two alternatives that in neither case is true", "intuition that comes from an internal movement and that establishes again a relationship of trust with the world, which reintroduces us into the vital impulse of our vital continuity with the cosmos, an affirmation of our substance of being", "ability to wait, to fight for a goal without giving in to discouragement or despair", "ability of always keeping an eye on the future", "confidence of achieving the result even when all the

circumstances are adverse, even when we lack the essential capacities to obtain it", "Anticipated experience" and "movement of the appetite that results of the apprehension of the future" [14].

5. Desire Impulse

Bloch [2] affirms that hope is an ontological structure that lives in the depths of the person and, therefore, can be conceived as the desire impulse. This impulse is the cause of the movement of human beings and generates meaning to their existence. The origin of the popular expression: "man does not live to live, but "because" he lives, he can feel", according to Bloch, has to do with both ontological structures.

In this sense, the impulse of desire is considered as an experience that originates the path of formation in human beings, I consider it pertinent to describe the very nature of the impulse before configuring itself as an impulse of desire or as an impulse of will.

The impulse is part of the human being from its birth to the death of the biological body and remains in it generating movement and the achievement of what is wanted. Therefore, that the impulse pushes, incites and throws the human being into the world to seek not only something that remains unknown, but also to identify what is wanted and strive to obtain it.

The impulse cannot be perceived by the human senses; however, it fosters bodily experiences and mental experiences such as reflexive, analytical, interpretative, comprehension, logical experiences. No human being can escape the impulse because it is independent of the human will, it manifests itself incessantly creating an agitation that, even if it is perceived or not, generates some aspiration and desire.

Feeling pushed by the impulse implies a diversity of sensations similar to what a human being experiences when the bee's sting penetrates between the cells of his body. Anxiety is such that the movement arises as a reaction of the body itself.

Generally, the content of the impulse goes unnoticed in the human being, even its corporeal manifestation, for this reason it is impossible to name what it evokes while what it expresses cannot be satisfied as it is a biological and instinctive need. Its content is demarcated in the first instance by the desire manifested in nocturnal dreams and, later, when it acquires the character of a daytime dream, it becomes a desire that displays a range of alternatives to transform what is aspired.

The denial of the impulse is one of the most disastrous and destructive situations for human beings and humanity because in the end, what is canceled and excluded is the same hope that lives in them. For this reason, reflecting on the impulse, in its manifestation of desire, means thinking about the original experience of the human condition and, consequently, of the formation and training paths.

It is necessary to mention that the impulse is the cause that the human being lives the experience of agony, aspiration, appetite, longing, and desire, which will disturb his life until its life can be promoted to the future. This requires both will, interest, perseverance, and human conviction as well as

favorable social, cultural, historical, religious, conditions.

The desire impulse, also called daydream, is the initial component of hope due to the following aspects: it is inalienable, it lives inside the person, it is made up of social, cultural, historical and symbolic components which have the effect of fighting, persecution, as well as constant, gradual and consecutive work while pushing, throwing, putting the person in motion to achieve what they do not have and that is feasible to achieve, regardless of the time elapsed to achieve or possess whatever is desired.

While the desire impulse disrupts the present pushing, inciting the search, the conquest, the fight, the pursuit, the achievement of what is likely to be found and that lies in the realm of the not-yet- conscient; the impulse of desire, by not becoming a need, survives as an ephemeral illusion and not achievable because it is located in the field of fantasy.

The desire impulse makes the task of training susceptible to being carried out due to the principle of hope that it contains, and training becomes a human condition, for which only those who live it themselves are responsible.

6. Final Considerations

In sociological, anthropological, pedagogical, and even philosophical works, the term subject is frequently used to refer to the human being without providing any justification for its use. Few are the works that offer a brief and succinct explanation of the term subject, and, on rare occasions, the concept of the human condition is used.

The term subject and the concept of human condition are related because both are part of the original experience of existing and, consequently, of the natures that are proper to the human being.

In order to assess the implications between the expression and the concept and reflect on the bases that they offer to understand human natures, it is necessary that the Philosophy of Education incorporates them as a teaching topic, considering their original meanings in order to understand the roots of man in the worlds and in their own becoming.

The aspects that justify the relevance of the subject are, on the one hand, the restricted and reduced meanings of what man means and the ways in which man has been classified in modern societies, and on the other hand, the challenge faced by the Philosophy of Education to teach the human condition without falling into reductionism, restrictions, paradoxes, and utopias.

The central issue is to debate the three human natures and privilege the human condition built from training and hope, since the first one allows to access the cultural world, and the second allows the access to the future.

References

- [1] Arendt, Hannah (1998). *The Human Condition*. Paidós, Barcelona.
- [2] Bloch, Ernst (1979). *The Principle of Hope*, volume I.

- [3] Ferry, Gilles (1990). El trayecto de la formación. Los enseñantes entre la teoría y la práctica. Paidós Educador, México.
- [4] Ferry, Gilles (1997). Pedagogía de la formación. Ediciones Novedades Educativas del Centro de Publicaciones Educativas y Material Didáctico y Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires.
- [5] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1993a). Truth and Method volume I. Ediciones Sígueme. Salamanca.
- [6] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1993b) Elogio de la teoría. Discursos y artículos. Ediciones Península. Barcelona.
- [7] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2000). Educación es educarse. Paidós Asterisco, Barcelona.
- [8] Ganne, Pierre (1973). Esta esperanza que hay en nosotros. Ediciones Morova, S. L. Madrid.
- [9] Laín Entralgo, Pedro (1984). La espera y la esperanza. Alianza, Madrid.
- [10] Moltmann, Jürgen (1969). Teología de la esperanza. Sígueme, Salamanca.
- [11] Royo Marín, Antonio (1976). Teología de la esperanza. Respuesta a la angustia existencialista. Biblioteca de autores cristianos, Madrid.
- [12] De Sebastián, Luis (2003). Razones para la esperanza en un futuro imperfecto. Icaria-Intermón-Oxfam, Barcelona.
- [13] Alberoni, Franceso (2001). La esperanza. Gedisa, Barcelona.
- [14] García, Ma. Dolores (2013). Aprender a aprehender la esperanza. Castellanos Editores, México, D. F.