Posthuman pedagogy. Basics of a new critical approach to teaching and learning

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Abstract

Posthuman theory has gained improved attention and further development roughly in the last two decades or so. Several scientific disciplines contributed and still contribute to the discourse, namely but not exclusively sociology, philosophy, geography and education. Mainly departing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie II" (1980), contemporary posthuman theory features different strands of approaches: assemblage theory (Manuel DeLanda 2006), socio-material learning (Estrid Sørensen 2009), actor-network theory (Bruno Latour 1996), non-representational theory (Nigel Thrift 2008), the production of space (Henri Lefebvre 1991).

The core point of these theories is the decentering of the human for the analysis of social phenomena. Depending on the theoretical approach, the arguments for the need of this shift of perspective can differ: critics of humanism (as old as humanism itself) as a hierarchical and excluding concept of what it means to be human, critics of (socio)constructivism, discussion of persisting social realities despite mass movements and others.

Another core point is the refusal of any categorization and conceptualization, because concepts and categories create the reality that they anticipate through imposing preexisting assumptions. The knowledge that they create bears the phenomenon in the first place (Bayley 2018, 30ff.)

Contributions in posthuman pedagogy are as diverse as the above-mentioned arguments. The spectrum covers ethical aspects, research approaches as well as teaching and learning methodology. Regarding the topic of global learning and the related requirements of understanding of and engaging in entanglements in global issues, posthuman pedagogy provides interesting and promising new approaches to move towards real social transformation through learning.

Traditional approaches of global learning use shifts of perspective through "learning from" (Ceder 2016, 30ff), an approach that strengthens forms of Aristotelian contradictions (Bayley 2018, 41) and of a mirroring attitude (reflection) which is contra productive. This attitude only underlines the search for the real, the fact, the "how it is", the hard knowledge instead of comprehending the own being as entangled in a world of relations between equal human and non-human (e.g. nature) actors.

Based on these assumptions, I will show concrete aspects of posthuman pedagogy that provide conceptual and methodological approaches to a new definition of critical global learning for higher education and schools.

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