

ELEMENTS OF BYUNG-CHUL HAN'S WORK

FOR ETHICAL TRAINING IN THE PERFORMANCE SOCIETY¹

Elementos de la obra de Byun-Chul Han para la formación ética frente a la sociedad del rendimiento

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Suggested citation: Silva-Carreño, Wilmer Hernando, Zamora-Jiménez, Carlos Hernando & Guerrero-Aponte, Manuel Alejandro (2023). Elements of Byung-Chul Han's work for ethical training in the performance society. *Sophia, colección de Filosofía de la Educación*, 34, pp. 175-196.

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Abstract

The starting point of this research focuses on the study of the crisis of humanities in a hegemonic market economy driven by profit and exploitation. In the project from which this article is derived and which has hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach, as presented by Max van Manen (2016), the scope and contribution of contemporary ethics is shown in the face of these two movements and, likewise, from a critical reading of the whole, the variants of ethical training in the face of the current crisis in the humanities in which the person is reduced to a subject of performance. The article is structured in four parts: first, the research and the publication itself are contextualized; second, the methodological process is detailed; third, the state of the question is briefly shown; and fourth, the theoretical sediment is specified and the variants that make up the answer to the problem question of the project are presented, that is: to base the importance of attending to temporality as a substantive ethical problem; the need to deconstruct freedom as a neoliberal control strategy; the sense of deinstrumentalizing emotions; and the need to cultivate the capacity to be indignant and to promote a contemplative life as experiential practices of the world of life.

Keywords

Ethics, citizenship, humanities, temporality, liberty, emotions.

Resumen

El punto de partida de esta investigación se concentra en el estudio de la crisis de las humanidades en una economía de mercado hegemónica, movida por el lucro y la explotación. En el proyecto del que se deriva este artículo y que tiene la fenomenología hermenéutica como enfoque metodológico, conforme lo presentó Max van Manen (2016), se muestra el alcance y el aporte de una ética contemporánea frente a estos dos movimientos; asimismo, desde una lectura crítica de conjunto, las variantes de la formación ética frente a la crisis actual de las humanidades en la que se reduce la persona a sujeto de rendimiento. El artículo se estructura en cuatro partes: primero, se contextualiza la investigación y la publicación misma; segundo, se detalla el proceso metodológico; tercero, se muestra brevemente el estado de la cuestión; y cuarto, se precisa el sedimento teórico con variantes que integran la respuesta a la pregunta problema del proyecto, esto es: fundamentar la importancia de atender a la temporalidad como un problema ético sustantivo; la necesidad de deconstruir la libertad como estrategia neoliberal de control; el sentido de desinstrumentalizar las emociones; y, la necesidad de cultivar la capacidad de indignarse y de promover una vida contemplativa como prácticas experienciales del mundo de la vida.

Palabras clave

Ética, ciudadanía, humanidades, temporalidad, libertad, emociones.

Introduction

This article is a collaborative research project, with a qualitative nature because its subject of study is ethical education from an interpretative perspective, which implies the construction of discursive variants from the critical reading of a phenomenon and a contemporary theoretical approach.

This project assumes as a development basis the emergence of the role of ethical formation in the current era, particularly, in response to what Silva & Arbeláez (2017) have stated as -the so-called 'putting humanities on edge' - which is understood as the crisis of humanist values



in a hegemonic market economy driven by profit and exploitation, i.e., the deployment of a society of fatigue and performance: These issues are extensively thematized by the South Korean Byung-Chul Han in works such as *The Transparency Society* (2013), *The Agony of Eros* (2014a), *In the Swarm* (2014b), (2015a). *Psychopolitics* (2015a), *The Society of Weariness* (2015b), and *The Scent of Time* (2018).

The research project followed as a methodological approach the phenomenology of practice developed by Max van Manen (2016) in his work *Phenomenology of Practice: Methods of meaning-giving in phenomenological research and writing*, specifically from reflexivity, thematization and construction of meaning, in order to identify and thematize the contemporary scope of ethical formation of this movement. In this way, the theoretical variants that Han's (2015a) philosophical approach can offer for ethical formation in the face of this crisis in which the person is reduced to a simple instrument or subject of performance and fatigue were thematized.

In the face of this reductionist mercantilism, the research question of the project was: *what perspectives and theoretical variations can Byung-Chul Han's philosophical approach offer for ethical formation in the face of a dehumanizing performance society?*

The aim of the project was oriented to identify the theoretical variants offered by this author for ethical formation in the face of the contemporary society of dehumanizing performance, i.e., to understand what constitutes ethical formation as a project of human indeterminacy and reciprocity between human development and education. In short, the issue itself is the person and his ethical formation in a context that becomes a hegemonic market economy driven by profit and exploitation. Hence the importance and novelty of the project - inasmuch as it strengthens, from a current perspective of philosophy, the theoretical bases of ethical formation in the face of the performance society.

The article is structured in four parts: first, the research is contextualized; second, the methodological process is briefly shown; third, the state of the question is specified; and fourth, the theoretical frame and the conceptual variants that integrate an answer to the project's main question are presented. Each of these sections is developed below.

The crisis of the humanities as a context

When speaking of humanities it usually refers to several scenarios. As Silva and Arbeláez (2017) say, on the one hand, it is related to a lack of

resources for research in this field, given the governmental disinterest, or the decision of governments to reduce or eliminate spending on social projects. On the other hand, it is related to the little or no humanistic training of young people, given that in recent decades education has come to be circumscribed to the acquisition and development of technical skills, so that the best people are - the best employees who have high technical training and are easily integrated into the labor market - but lack creative thinking, self-reflection, imagination and memory, capacities that are also necessary for true integral development.

This crisis is also related to the growth of operative strategies such as costs reduction of the personnel in charge of humanistic areas, or in curricular adjustments -eliminating courses considered impractical, unnecessary, such as literature, philosophy, arts and ethics- an example of this is the renewal of the school curriculum of basic secondary education in Colombia, which has reduced the number of class hours in areas such as philosophy and has eliminated arts as an obligatory subject. However, the crisis may refer especially to a tendency in which 'anything goes' is affirmed, in which, as Han (2015a) argues, what is important are the ends, the fulfillment of objectives, in which the power to do has no limits (p. 12).

However, it is understood that such a crisis of the humanities has a concrete basis: the excessive unfolding of capitalism in terms of economic growth, not human development. In this deployment, the person has lost his place and meaning, so the crisis of the humanities is the crisis of the person, since he ends up being - following Han (2015a) - a mere subject of resignation and, consequently, a subject of weariness. Hence, it is worth investigating the role of ethical formation as a distinctive variant of the humanities that will allow the foundation of social and educational dynamics to revert the subject of performance into a subject of human development.

The phenomenology of practice as a method

As indicated above, the phenomenology of practice was assumed methodologically from the approaches of Max van Manen (2016), as the route of development.

The phenomenology of practice becomes a methodological path, centered on the semantics that arises from the interpretative interaction between the texts and the reader, i.e., the reader can give meaning. The gift of meaning implies that hermeneutic phenomenology is a method, in the words of van Manen (2016): "to inquire not a method to answer or



discover or sketch determined conclusions” (p. 32), this is why it requires reflexivity, to be perspicacious, sensitive to language and constantly open to any interpretative attitude.

Van Manen (2016) believes that writing is key for com-prehending a lived experience, as it forces an individual to cultivate a self-reflective attitude, i.e., “the process of phenomenological inquiry occurs - to a large extent - when writing” (p. 34). Hence, in this process, a subject analysis approach is followed. States van Manen (2016): “thematic analysis refers to the process of recovering the meaning structures that are implied and dramatized in the human experience represented by a text” (p. 364).

Thus, three general stages were developed for analyzing the thematic senses:

- 1°. Pre-reflexive characterization of the phenomenon. In this stage, the crisis of humanism was conceptualized from the deployment of current capitalism, or, in other words, the research problem was thematized from the lived experience.
- 2°. Thematic or category configuration. In this stage, the variations of ethical and moral formation were identified from the postulates of the capabilities approach, moral theology and Ricoeurian hermeneutics.
- 3°. Thematic analysis or variations construction of meaning. In this stage, the meaning of ethical and moral formation was thematized in the face of the development of capitalism - as a hegemonizing power - that configures a subjectivity and a society of fatigue. A further development of the implications or the steps of this methodological approach are detailed in Silva (2018).

Ethics in the face of the crisis of humanities: state of the question

Some variants of study derived from the project should be specified: (1) The disengagement of ethics is part of the crisis of the humanities, as a consequence of the unfolding of a society centered on biopolitical and capitalist performance; therefore, in this panorama; (2) The person ends up constituting himself and discovers himself (pejoratively) as a vulnerable subject; (3) Prone to cohabit and naturalize tiredness and fatigue as common phenomena of his human and social constitution. In the following lines we refer to some works that have thematized, in part, these issues.

Regarding the question about the crisis of humanities, the work edited by Silva and Arbeláez (2017) *El humanismo del Otro: la puesta en vilo de las humanidades* stands out, in this work diverse and multiple phenomena that hinder and abrogate the place and meaning of the humanities in today's world are subjected to study, or what is - the humanity of the other appears due to the painful and apparent apotheosis of dehumanization: as the starting point, the right place and the means to understand the validity of the humanities. Although this work criticizes technique as an instrumentalist mediation, it is worth mentioning a different perspective, as Hernández and Pérez (2020) do, for whom the development of technique must call for anthropological reflection on what is implied in the vital well-being of people.

In the case of vulnerability as a human condition, Gazmuri (2022), in his publication *Afectivity, vulnerability and limits of scientific reason*, proposes the recovery of the emotional or affective dimension from a cognitive approach to support the deployment of a humanistic moral action. In this sense, vulnerability -from the approach of human development and capabilities- becomes an ethical category of the emotional life of the person that asks for a political consideration and for a condition of possibility of intersubjective life.

In relation to the performance society, it can be pointed out that, in general, the works developed are framed in a perspective and study of public or social life and/or from a psychological or psychiatric point of view. Thus, fatigue is the particular characteristic of present-day society, it does not become suffering, since it is assumed as an effect of a responsible and laborious life, and in this way, it becomes adapted or naturalized to the human condition.

On the one hand, Lachman (2016) analyzes how fatigue, or the so-called Burnout syndrome, is camouflaged in labor practice through compassion, so that, in some way, fatigue is a choice that people make and justify in the exercise of solidarity towards others. Otherwise, the society of performance and fatigue inhabits university spaces. Florelle and Tyson (2015) analyze this phenomenon: in what they call a biopolitics of university research, characterized by the desire to 'publish or perish', which ends up becoming a kind of imperative to perform better and optimally, leading to a general economy of fatigue.

The study conducted by Enns et al. (2018), from a psychiatric viewpoint evaluated the association between pain, fatigue, depression and anxiety, as main elements of the work disability phenomenon. It was concluded that this affects the scale of work productivity and increases a



worker's activity impairment. With thematic affinity, the study of Bayeh (2016) stands out, in which the role of civic education and ethics in the construction of good behavior of citizens is examined, establishing some principles to make them active participants in the development of democratic governance.

Regarding the importance of ethics training, the work of Uvalle (2014) entitled *La importancia de la ética en la formación de valor público* - in which the meaning of ethics training is reconstructed as a starting point to encourage social conduct and institutional performance - and therefore, the cultivation of legality, responsibility and the sense of belonging to community life (far from being configured as a mercantile or managerial issue). In this same line of study, it is worth mentioning the work of Vilerá (2004) *Formación profesional y ética en la sociedad del siglo XXI*, which restates the professional practice of teaching, taking as a starting point social sensitivity and responsibilities, with a view to building a democratic society.

Likewise, in line with ethical education, Guato (2008) in his article *Education and ethics in a liquid society*, warns of the risks of ethical education in the university environment in the face of instrumental reason and the technology that inhabits it. In turn, Gahona (2008) in his article *La persona humana, el valor central de la educación* (The human person, the central value of education) stresses the importance of preserving the value of the person in the postmodern world through ethics education.

These studies, although they have approached the problem of the crisis of humanities as the very crisis of the person, focus their interest on diverse issues such as education for citizenship or professional practice and the pathologies linked to it. However, they show that it is necessary to decide what sense awaits ethical formation in the face of this panorama, which has been mentioned as a society of performance. In this lies, in part, the novelty of the project, insofar as the emphasis is placed on showing those challenges that, especially from the work of Byung-Chul Han, emerge as a basis to promote an ethical formation that resists the empire of the reductionist productivity of the human.

Ethical and moral training in the face of the performance society

At this point and because the research is oriented to show the possible perspectives or theoretical variations that can sediment, from the work of



Byung-Chul Han, a project of ethical formation capable of resisting the paradigm of dehumanizing performance, these variants of study will be enunciated. However, it should be specified that in the development of the project -a subject capable of resisting performance or deconstructing such a paradigm must be able to develop his capacities and, within these, interpretation and care of oneself and of the other appear as relevant. For this, first this theoretical base is thematized and then these theoretical variations are decanted; it should be specified that this emerges as a development of the third methodological stage of the research, i.e., to carry out the thematic analysis or construction of the variations of meaning.

Deconstructing the performance society

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What is the basis for this concern of ethical formation? On the one hand, we have used Han-Nussbaum-Ricoeur conceptual tripod, insofar as the theoretical frame - taken as a basis for thinking about ethical formation - is what narrative or argumentative capacity makes possible: the cultivation of human development in the face of a society burdened with performance and fatigue. On the other hand, it is considered that moral theology also serves as a basis for reconstructing the meaning of moral formation in the face of the crisis of the human, particularly in relation to the possibility of founding an ethics of universal care, which implies in the human the question for the natural, the cosmos, the earth. In this sense, the ethics of care developed by Leonardo Boff in works such as *Essential Care* (2002) and *Necessary Care* (2012), serve as a basis for this reflection. Following, some lines of understanding of these perspectives are presented.

1º. It was pointed out that the crisis of the human occurs, as mentioned by Han in his work *The Tiredness Society* (2015b), in the midst due to a performance society (pp. 71-79). Indeed, this South Korean philosopher suggests that a paradigm shift is currently underway, which is nothing other than the emergence of a society dominated by an excess of positivity, and characterized by a pathological panoply that includes diseases such as depression, attention deficit, exhaustion, etc. This panorama is denominated by Han in his work *Psychopolitics* (2015a, p. 12) as a society characterized by fatigue. Hence, Is this a bleak picture? We believe that if humanities still make sense; and we believe so, this is the fertile ground for their development, so that it is the task of *humanitas* to cultivate every project and immunological prophylaxis and defense technique against this *positivity*.

If hospitals, factories and prisons are institutions that discipline us in the society described by Foucault (2002) in *Watch and Punish*, Han

(2015b) describes the society of performance as the society of prestige, where everything is possible, i.e., we no longer discipline the subjects, nor are they disciplined, but rather we obey the best artists, or performers: 'the entrepreneurs'. As suggested by Vargas & Guerrero (2017), the institutions of our time are fitness studios, offices, hotels, commercial centers, among others. In this context, what is the role of ethics in this society? It is estimated that its main horizon is the formation so that the human does not succumb surrendered and obedient to this positivity, i.e., as Reeder et al. (2010) say, to glimpse the sense of formation as humanization.

2°. In this panorama, the human condition is vulnerable, and as such, it is a nuclear matter of study of the human development and capabilities approach, presented by the philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum, especially in works such as *Landscape of thought: The intelligence of emotions* (2008); *Creating capabilities: proposal for human development* (2012); and, in *Political emotions* (2013). This author has developed a moral and political philosophy capable of renewing the understanding of justice and the role of emotions in human development. Particularly in *The Fragility of the Good* (1999) - one of her first books - she deals with ethics from a relational approach based on a serious reflection on the vulnerability of the good life (p. 125).

In the aforementioned work, Nussbaum (1999) addresses the notion of vulnerability starting from the problem of rationality. Human beings are both active and permeable to the events that unfold in the world through emotion. How can we design a rationality that is in action without making human beings highly vulnerable? Vulnerability is a fact in the present as it appears at the heart of democratic concerns in rejecting any transcendent order of sovereignty, which is why Nussbaum (2013) states, "Democratic equality leads to vulnerability" (p. 171).

3°. Perhaps an orthodox premise is to affirm that ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the reflexive exercise that is at the basis of human behavior; and for this reason, is not possible to formulate value judgments in the field of ethics but to explain the reasons and provide reflection on human behavior. This specifies that ethics is a particular human act: that of interpretation; therefore, this does not integrate one more discipline of philosophy, but the very understanding that ethics is nothing other than interpretation and consequently is practical.

Thus, ethics is practical in a double sense: it deals with human practice, and it investigates about the good of it. But this orientation towards practice does not mean that ethics is simply an instrument, i.e., a conception of ethics that detaches it from its philosophical roots on the grounds

that ethics must figure or construct techniques for solving problems; for example, the tendency to solve problems through consensus among as many people as possible. Such doctrines reduce ethics to an instrument.

In contrast to these perspectives of ethics, a hermeneutic ethics of human experience can be proposed, which would have no other object than the articulation and interpretation of moral experience and the enrichment of this experience through deliberative refinement. In this approach it is estimated that Paul Ricoeur approach on hermeneutics in *Finitude and Guilt* (1969); and, in *Itself as Other* (2006), end up founding an ethical perspective that has human action as its foundation.

Such consciousness is expressed in the relationship with the other, i.e., a way to recognize otherness. This recognition of otherness has as its foundation on the dialogical constitution between the self (ipse) and the selfhood (idem), which Ricoeur (2006) has categorized as the little ethics, especially for the studies presented in the work *Sí mismo como otro*. Of course, this is not a new issue in this work, but it is a marked transition from hermeneutics to ethics.

4°. The crisis of the human has as its effect the crisis of the earth. The theologian Leonardo Boff in *The essential care, ethics of the human, compassion for the earth* (2002) has reflected on how care and sustainability go hand in hand, as bases for the vindication of the Christian humanist project. Likewise, in *The Necessary Care* (2012) Boff points out that to face the world's problems caused by uncontrolled globalization and the desire for power - which embody and cultivate violence and domination - it is necessary to reintroduce the idea of care linked to ethics, values, spirituality and affection in human decisions and actions.

In the works referred to, it is claimed that the concept of sustainability is partially monopolized by economic development, so it is important to reconstruct it from the notion of care as a divine inheritance. Now, this theological and social perspective of the principle of care as a foundation of the human must be developed through education. Hence the importance of founding perspectives or edges of understanding of a sedimented ethical formation in the care of the 'other'.

Variants of ethical and moral formation in the face of the performance society

Having shown the above, we return to the question of the theoretical perspectives or variations of ethical formation in the face of this approach of performance. It seems that at least five variants of study emer-



ge: 1) considering and attending to temporality as an ethical problem; 2) deconstructing freedom as a neoliberal strategy of control; 3) forming indignation as an ethical capacity; 4) de-instrumentalizing emotions; and 5) cultivating the contemplative life as a natural practice of the world of life. The following will expand on these issues.

TEMPORALITY AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

What characterizes an *ethical temporality*? How can ethics *sustain* time? How can ethics *construct* history? these are questions that emerge. Han (2018) gives clues in this regard, since some practices that allow us to construct or reconstruct a living temporality are commitment, narration, duration or the capacity to delay, contemplative capacity and leisure.

Especially in the work *The Scent of Time* Han (2018) constructs a symptomatic panorama of the present that shows the crisis of the human. This panorama is characterized by the development and progressive advance of the empire of transience and the ephemeral, in which nothing lasts, everything lacks duration, everything has a dizzying end. The so-called zapping has permeated people's daily lives as a normalized action that reveals the need and ease of being permanently *changing*, without stopping the attention, or what it is: to contemplate.

According to Han (2018), this discontinuity is a consequence of the emergence and reduction of human time to working time, or what is the constriction of time to the function of work - to overwork - consequently, the person ends up configuring and considering himself as a subject of tiredness, or as mentioned by Han (2015b), it falls into a daily hyperkinesia oriented to production. Because of this need to produce or to be permanently producing, there is the feeling that everything happens quickly but the truth is that the person remains busy in the hustle, dispersion and haste; there is no time to finish, nothing is decisive, nothing is definitive. According to Han (2015a), the serious problem is that one falls into the cultivation of an atomization of time. Roughly speaking, for Han (2018) such atomization is typical of this desynchrony, acceleration, the imperative of work and the configuration of an ahistorical time.

The fact that people's current time is dyssynchronous means that there are continuous temporal alterations or paresthesia (numbness) in people's daily life because of the reduction to work, i.e., they lose the notion of time, they fall into a meaningless -doing- in a doing that lacks a present and living end. The time or the action of people wanders aimlessly; therefore, all moments are the same; nothing differentiates

them, everything is 'what is always done'. Paradoxically, at the same time that we lose the notion of what we are doing, we want to finish quickly, even without knowing what we want to finish; so acceleration is another symptom of this desynchrony, since it is caused by the inability to finish or conclude.

Para Han (2018), "las cosas se aceleran porque no tienen un sostén" (p. 67), porque se carece de un sentido de la acción misma; porque, de un lado, se pierde el sentido y el conteo del tiempo, y de otro, las acciones se reducen a momentos desarticulados; es decir, lo que hago no tiene un entronque con lo que antecede o con lo que sobreviene. Esta falta de una articulación del tiempo da lugar a la necesidad y sensación de que todo debe transcurrir con rapidez. En complemento, según Han (2018), el "exceso de velocidad destruye el sentido" (p. 76), es decir, como en una autopista, demasiada velocidad conduce y produce riesgos, pero se prefiere correrlos—se antepone el fin de llegar por el fin de avanzar rápido— con lo cual se pierde la capacidad de tomarse un tiempo, detenerse; se privilegia la prisa y con ello la dispersión y la ausencia de un punto de llegada.

Pero Han (2018) también advierte que "una velocidad demasiado baja, genera un atasco" (p. 98), por lo que la acción de demorarse tiene que ver, no con la capacidad de hacerse hacerse lento, sino más bien, con la capacidad de atender al tiempo de las cosas, al tiempo del hacer.

For Han (2018), "things speed up because they have no support" (p. 67), because there is a lack of a sense of the action itself; because, on the one hand, the sense and counting of time is lost, and on the other, actions are reduced to disarticulated moments, i.e., what I do is not related with what precedes or with what comes. This lack of an articulation of time gives rise to the need and feeling that everything must happen quickly. In addition, according to Han (2018), "too much speed destroys meaning" (p. 76), i.e., as on a highway, too much speed leads to and produces risks, but it is preferred to run them - the aim of arriving is before the aim of moving quickly - losing the ability to take time, to stop; privileging haste and the dispersion and the absence of a point of arrival.

But Han (2018) also warns that "a speed that is too slow generates a traffic jam" (p. 98), so the action of delaying has to do, not with the ability to make oneself slow, but rather, with the ability to attend to the time of things, to the time of doing.

The reduction of time to the imperative of work, to the need to produce, degrades the person to *animals laborans* and, in the words of Boff (2012), to *animals demens*; and this constitutes a major problem insofar as the *animals laborans* only knows pauses, but not contemplative



tranquility. The pause is nothing more than an intermission to recover the labor force, far from the possibility of not doing or leisure -not inactivity- but the relaxation and disconnection of such desynchrony.

It was mentioned in previous lines that another symptom of the time of performance is its ahistoricity, which means that this time lacks history and that in the life of people and communities no longer chain together to form a story; there is neither support nor end, there is no goal that binds them. Everything happens without a meaning that holds them together or contains them. In general, time becomes like the repetition of the same, like the 'reproduction of what has already happened', so that, according to Han (2018), time no longer advances but rather: everything traps it in a meaninglessness, in an endlessness. As Ricoeur (2006) had already indicated, this is the end of the narrative, there is no plot to tell, only a succession of facts without any concatenation; and the narrative requires just that, a link and an end.

DECONSTRUCTING FREEDOM AS A CONTROL DEVICE

What are the self-exploitation mechanisms in times of neoliberalism? For Han (2014b), neoliberalism is a very efficient, indeed intelligent system for exploiting freedom itself. Everything that pertains to practices and expressions of liberty, such as emotion, play, and communication, is exploited. It is not efficient to exploit someone against their will as the return is very low with alien or directed exploitation. As Han (2014b) argues, only the exploitation of freedom yields the highest return (pp. 11-15).

Thus, what we are currently experiencing as freedom is creating more and more restrictions. The freedom to create produces even more restrictions than the disciplinary duty, which dictates what to do and what not to do. Such a capacity for creativity becomes a self-demanding productive function. If the individual fails in the neoliberal performance society, then shame and feelings of inadequacy are the inevitable consequence: they also lead to a generalized or mass depression. Hence, it is not the current constitution of our social situation that is being questioned as the main cause, but, rather, one's own responsibility.

For Han (2014b), mental illnesses such as depression or burnout express a profound crisis of freedom. They are a pathological sign that freedom often turns into coercion (p. 11). The subject of performance believes he is free, but in reality he is passionate about exploiting himself until he collapses. Fatigue assumes the character of success, of achievement, of optimization, but never of an end. For this reason, Han (2015a)

states, the first stage of burnout syndrome is euphoria (p. 21). I rush to work with euphoria, and in the end, I collapse and fall into depression.

This constitutes one of the problems for the performance subject, since this strategy strengthens the production method and makes it increasingly intangible. Particularly, for example, the voluntary and free exposure of data increases productivity, speed and, therefore, economic growth: the more information and communication, the higher the productivity and the greater the market success. The more people reveal information through continuous communication, the more data will be available that can be directly converted into commodities and profits. According to Han (2014b), this absolute, unrestricted transparency is sold as freedom of information (p. 20). Hence, the elimination of everything that means strangeness, otherness, secrecy and mystery is always sought. All this means important obstacles and a deceleration for unlimited communication.

However, such a paradigm of transparency ends up configuring two undifferentiated subjects: viewers and consumers. And at this level, transparency politically imposes the democracy of the spectator. In this regard, Han (2014b) states: "Neoliberalism turns the citizen into a consumer. The freedom of the citizen yields to the passivity of the consumer" (p. 23). The voter as a consumer today has no real interest in politics, in the active formation of the community; he is neither willing nor able to do so, there is no common political action. He only reacts passively to politics by complaining, like the consumer, about goods or services he does not like. In other words: complaining does not constitute any action, rather, it is a depoliticizing attitude of the consumer that is supported by a digital psychopolitics, which leads to a crisis of liberty. Such crisis consists in the fact that freedom becomes an instrument of domination and control; surveillance that proclaims freedom is much more efficient than surveillance directed against or in the face of freedom.

The relationship of the entrepreneur with his peers is an example to analyze this instrumentalization of freedom. The neoliberal subject, as an entrepreneur, is incapable of relating to others outside an entrepreneurial purpose. There is no purposeless friendship between entrepreneurs, so that you feel free only in a successful, or better, instrumentalized relationship. But this apparent relationship, far from uniting, isolates the subjects, as Han (2014b) suggests, reduces them to means. Therefore, it is worth asking whether it is not necessary to redefine freedom, to reinvent it, in order to escape from the fateful dialectic of neoliberal freedom, which turns it into a satisfying restriction.



DEINSTRUMENTALIZING EMOTIONS

As seen, the society of transparency and performance does not use biopolitics but psychopolitics. Through diverse and continuously improved methods, numerous possibilities are opening to influence the mind of the individual at a pre-reflective level. It is becoming increasingly accurate and easy to predict how individuals behave, what they prefer, what their needs are and indeed how they feel. This is not achieved through imposition, but through voluntary performance. Users voluntarily make their own cell phones available, and these function as a ubiquitous and effective monitoring tool - because it does not mediate goods, but emotions - making it easier for capitalist consumer interests to use emotions, which are even more specific to generate more stimuli and purchase needs. Thus, an emotional way that creates emotional patterns to maximize consumption is permanently created and recreated. As Han (2014b) points out: today we do not consume goods or merchandise, but emotions (p. 65).

In the disciplinary or biopolitical society, in which the subject has to function under the regime of rules and punishments, emotions are disorders, it is important to eliminate them. In the disciplinary society the subject must act as an insensitive machine, and as such, functions best when emotions or feelings are completely muted or suppressed. In contrast, emotions become important in the society of productivity and transparency: they are used as a raw material to optimize production.

In fact, the current economic cycle of emotion is due to the new intangible way of production, in which communicative interaction is becoming increasingly important. It is not just a matter of cognitive competence: it is emotional.

Disciplinary power that uses force as a technique to force people to work is inefficient, whereas the technique of psychopolitics (which is presented as success, optimization, improvement) ensures that subjects subordinate themselves to the context of power, and is thus much more efficient. This technique wants to activate, motivate, optimize and not inhibit or suppress. Its particular efficiency comes from the fact that it does not work through prohibition, but through pleasure and satisfaction. Therefore, to generate more productivity, the capitalism of emotion also appropriates the game as a dynamic strategy and as the role of the worker, i.e., the worker becomes a player. The game mobilizes the world of life and work, Han (2014b) says “the game emotionalizes” (p. 77), even dramatizes work, thus generating more motivation. The player, driven



by the desire for achievement and reward system, generates more performance and production.

Thus, what is taking place is a paradigm shift from disciplinary and rational control (without annulling it) to emotional control. This paradigm shift transforms even current corporate management in such a way that rational management is replaced by emotional management. The subject is forced to move away from the principle of rational action and becomes more and more a subject of motivation. Motivation is linked to emotion, which is why positive emotions are brought into play, because they are the elements to increase productivity.

This integrates a radical utilitarian reduction of emotional life, as Nussbaum (2012) states: “the urgent need for a good explanatory theory of the emotions of citizens in a decent society” (p. 120). Hence the importance of vindicating the field of the emotional life of the person, since it becomes a key scenario to investigate and reflect on the essential (educational and social) practices that promote a good life. Indeed, for Nussbaum (2008) “if emotions are imbued with intelligence and discernment and if they contain in themselves an awareness of value and importance, they cannot, for example, be easily left aside when accounting for ethical judgment” (p. 21). In this sense, from the approach developed by Nussbaum, the ethical constitution of the person and the minimum threshold of a communitarian quality of life necessarily involve actively linking emotions.

CULTIVATING THE CAPACITY FOR INDIGNATION

The imperceptibility of positivity makes the subjects give themselves in an integral and complete way to performance. Body, thought, emotions, and everything that constitutes the subject as a person, are voluntarily and obediently directed to production. There is no room even for questioning, critical thinking, let alone indignation. Hence Han (2014a) writes: “the current indignant crowd is very fleeting and dispersed” (p. 22).

From Han's (2014b) perspective, in this activist- and performance- society there is no room for critique, for rebellion, for resistance. In the best of cases, there are temporary displeasures and grievances against the system, but these disappear as soon as possible: there is no trace, no history, no continuity. For this reason, to be indignant must be one of the first practices necessary to reconstruct, for the subject, for public life. Hence, this also reveals a challenge: to orient pedagogically and praxeologically the capacity to be indignant.



Dussel, in his famous work *Carta a los indignados* (2011), introduces a critical and political reflection on the phenomenon of social indignation that has emerged in recent decades. Although in that work he presents a stimulating study about the various social protest movements that have occurred from 2011 to 2016 in different countries, a substantive contribution of this study focuses on showing the responsibility of any citizen towards the current political situation of his context -especially in the face of adverse phenomena such as corruption and social inequality- For Dussel (2011) such movements embody and exemplify the possibility of the individual becoming the determining political actor in the “creative construction of history” (p. 36), since, as he adds in the same work, “only in this way can we [...] give rise to real (representative) and critical (participatory) democracy” (p. 20).

For this reason, this capacity to become indignant requires an in-depth study, since a perspective on the relation with emotions is necessary, especially because of the associative emergence of anger, as the apparent radical expression of indignation. It is not at all unknown that acting with anger, as anticipated by Judith Shklar (1990), is harmful not only for health, but especially because it negatively affects others. However, it can be pointed out that depending on how anger is manifested, it can be counterproductive, and this is because the mere development of this emotion in the public sphere is already a good indication of feeling committed to a situation or a phenomenon.

In the face of a public event, for example, is it advisable to remain indifferent, without reacting to anything? Consider in principle that our feeling of indignation is what reveals what really matters to us. If we are not bothered by things going wrong, what will drive us to correct them? But what this shows is that it is necessary to delve deeper into the possible and necessary differentiation and connection between indignation, discontent and anger, a matter for further study.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

The possible variants of response that have been raised from the ethical formation involve the development of a fundamental and complementary capacity, it is about cultivating the contemplative life. Han in his work *The Scent of Time* (2015a), develops what he calls some genuine temporal practices, namely: the promise, commitment, the contemplative capacity, the capacity to linger, narration and leisure. These are practices that can base any resistance that claims the subject as a person



capable of constructing a history: not data or isolated events. It is worth specifying that leisure, as Han (2015a) states, “opens a space without need or concerns, free, outside the necessities of life” (p. 124). Thus, leisure is not inactivity, nor relaxation, nor disconnection; it is rather the capacity to develop a contemplative tranquility that allows the *animal laborans* to free himself from the imperative of work. In the words of Han (2015a), “the worker knows only pauses, but not the contemplative capacity” (p. 144), in his work Boff (2012) suggests “the society of entertainment, of spectacle, of simulation predominates” (p. 19).

This contemplative capacity consists in the cultivation of the slow gaze. Han (2015a) argues, “the delayed, contemplative gaze does not disalienate” (p. 93), but rather binds. It is about not reacting to every stimulus immediately, but resorting to pausing, taking time to stop; for by pausing, the person can evade the activity or can redirect it, mediate it, charge it with meaning. This is how this fatigue of exhaustion can be transmuted into a friendly fatigue, a fatigue that connects, that does not separate the subjects from each other and that, ultimately, does not lead to depression, but to recognize the other and the context.

However, faced with this phenomenon that Han (2013) calls “*positivity*” (p. 11), because of the marked reference to the pragmatic, which includes the isolation of the other, the emergence of a subject turned to a solipsistic life by the desire for performance, we ask again: how to deal with this excess of positivity? In this positivity, everything that belongs to the practices and forms of expression of freedom, such as emotion, play and communication, are exploited and instrumentalized. Han (2013) proposes the paradigm of negativity and what is shown in this section indicate practices of resistance that are linked to this negativity or, as Boff (2012) suggests, to the need to address the discomfort or “phenomenon of neglect, indifference and abandonment, i.e., the lack of care” (p. 18).

Conclusions

The study of Byung Chul-Han's work allows us to reflect that in this performance-driven, positivity-driven society most ethical systems and intuitive ethical sensitivity focus on our responsibilities to those close to us, in the belief that they are the ones who may be directly affected by our actions, so there is an apparent forgetfulness of the global. In addition, the technical power of humans is now immeasurable, as is its negative impact on the world. There are different challenges to such ethical systems, so



ethical formation must focus on the challenges that emerge in the face of the imminent reduction of the world to the performance paradigm.

Thus, in response to the research question and, consequently, to the objective of the study, it can be concluded that the five variants of study presented can be the foundation of a project of ethical formation that allows the development of a subject capable of resisting and reducing the deployment of a reductionist mercantilist paradigm, i.e., capable of promoting the person as a subject of capabilities. A person who promotes and cultivates in himself and in his environment a renewing and humanistic view of time, a transposition of freedom as an ethical principle, a differential approach to emotions and the promotion and experience of contemplative life.

Thus, in the face of a paradigm based on performance, in transparency, in fatigue, in the mercantilist exposition of the world, what is the basis for an ethics in the face of this performance society? This research shows that ethics (and ethics education in particular) can use the (reflexive and pedagogical) vindication of practices such as narrative, otherness, transcendence, contemplation, among others, to promote an alternative ethical paradigm based on a sustainable society that does not yield to the morality of the market, but attends to the sense of the human.

In a society of fatigue, in which work is the core of life and all that matters, people have little time to take care of themselves, let alone those around them. Far from being a discouraging panorama, this is a challenge for ethical formation to cultivate care for others, in other words, the school must be fertile ground for cultivating capacities such as astonishment, contemplation, imagination, dialogue (among others), essential for the formation of the person in the face of the paradigm of performance.

This interest in the meaning and place of the school in ethical formation is an issue that emerged in this research and that requires further and deeper study. Indeed, it is so because the results discussed above show that the variants of study presented -which in fact become capabilities- are not given or naturalized in people, but need to be cultivated and mediated. It is up to the school to contribute to fostering and promoting the praxis and experience of these capacities in people, considering that, in a general sense, training is any act or experience that has a formative effect on people. While such effect is in the cognitive order or in the physical condition of a subject, it is also in the character and in the development of capacities, especially deliberative ones. In this aspect, the research asked other questions such as: why ethics is important and why should it be taught in schools, or what kind of ethics should be taught in schools?



These are questions that emerges and deserve further study. The latter, i.e., it is a function of the State, indicates that it is necessary to base and create public policies capable of promoting this purpose, i.e., to enable people to develop their capacities, especially those that are sustained.

Thus, how to cultivate a humanistic temporality, how to promote freedom as a principle and not as a means, how to sediment the capacity to be indignant, in what sense or way to link emotions, for what purpose and in what sense to contemplate the world, these are questions that emerged and are necessary to develop. It can be anticipated that these variants of study, paradoxically, are not invariant, since they only mark a reflexive and practical orientation for the ethical formation in the school, since they do not exhaust its content, method and horizon. For this reason, an expanded interest must go through an inquiry into the possible variants that can be constructed or forged - in pedagogical perspective - for the ethical formation of such capacities today.

Ultimately, what emerges is the very issue of what characterizes a pedagogical encounter in ethics, without forgetting the uncertainty and unpredictability inherent to it. Therefore, it is worth asking, what makes ethics possible in pedagogical settings? This means exploring the day-to-day details or the very experience of teaching ethics. It also implies analyzing how and in what sense pedagogical encounters promote, prohibit or condition ethical capacities. In other words, the various questions mentioned above make it clear that there are various issues that are considered pressing today for thinking about and cultivating ethical formation, particularly in schools. It is therefore Interesting to problematize the meaning and the way in which ethical formation takes place in order to cultivate, from a liberating and humanist perspective, temporality, freedom, indignation, emotion and indignation, as ethical capacities of a subject to respond to the world, without succumbing to performance, fatigue and commercial productivity.

Note

- 1 This article is derived from the research project “El enfoque de las capacidades como fundamento de una formación ética y moral contemporáneas frente a la sociedad del rendimiento”, conducted at Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Bogotá, 2020-2021.

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Document reception date: July 22, 2022
Document review date: September 20, 2022
Document approval date: October 25, 2022
Document publication date: January 15, 2023