Stud Philos Educ (2016) 35:463–476
DOI 10.1007/s11217-015-9489-9

Educating Citizens for Humanism: Nussbaum and the Education Crisis

Melina Duarte[1]

Published online: 29 August 2015

Abstract "What (Whose) purpose does your knowledge serve?" In her book, Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities, Martha Nussbaum states the difference between a democratic education for citizenship and an education for profit, and draws attention to the current education crisis caused by an overvaluation of the latter over the former. An education for democratic citizenship aims to develop three key abilities: critical thinking, the capacity to understand and to transcend parochial attachments, and empathy. An education for profit, however, requires the training of specific skills in order to produce the economic growth of a certain group, company or country. While the first, in accordance to a Socratic education, focuses on the foundation of perennial structures of thought related to human dignity, the latter, following the sophistic model, simplifies these structures according to economic priorities. In this paper, I critically explore Nussbaum's manifesto by reformulating two key arguments to show that: (1) education must always aim at creating knowledge, and (2) education must always be focused on the development of humanism as the greater goal, regardless of the emphasis on arts and humanities or on exact science.

Keywords Education for democratic citizenship · Education for profit · Exercise of autonomy · Socratic method · Sophistic method

✉ Melina Duarte
melina.duarte@uit.no

[1] Department of Philosophy, Arctic University of Norway – University of Tromsø, Universitetsveien 31, Breivika, 9037 Tromsø, Norway

Introduction

In 2008, a student of social sciences, Juliane Furno, used a wall of the Institute of Literature and Philosophy at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, in Brazil, as a ground for an interesting graffiti on Bubble Style.[1] The graffiti contained the following sentence: "What (Whose) purpose does your knowledge serve?"[2] Furno's act considerably disturbed a student of Accounting Sciences and member of the Freedom Student Movement (MEL), who, ignoring the difference between vandalism and artistic political act, sued the Social Sciences student, accusing her of damaging public property. The university, however, closed the case considering the graffiti as "an act of extreme instigation of critical thinking, riddled with philosophical inquiry that did not diminish the public patrimony."[3] Unable to delete the provocative phrase through legal means, supporters of MEL, without any aesthetic concern, loosely covered it in ink. The outcome of the painting suggested that it was not their intention to revitalize the public patrimony, nor were they concerned about a potential vandalism of the student of social sciences. It was the sentence in question that placed a discussion between two very different conceptions of education justified in divergent political-economic beliefs. Later, the inscription spread to other universities such as the Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, PUCRS, in Brazil,[4] and several academic and non-academic events were organized to discuss the issue.

Why am I bringing this intriguing event here? How interesting is it for our discussion about education for humanism? At least two reasons make me believe that it is relevant: first, because the question about the purpose of knowledge and education contained in Furno's graffiti is on the basis of Martha Nussbaum's reflection in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), a book that because it discusses the tensions of different conceptions of education, will be the main focus of this article; and second, because, instead of thinking of the cases in India, Europe,[5] and the U.S., used by the American author in the book, this event will expand our discussion to other places since the event took place in another large and upcoming niche of ideas that is Brazil.

My starting point is a reflection on the possible answers to Furno's question regarding the differentiation that Nussbaum makes between education for democratic citizenship and education for profit (e.g. 2008: 1–3, 2010: Ch 2); and her denouncement that the current education crisis is caused by the overvaluation of the latter over the first (see 2010: Chapter 1). As an alternative to overcome the crisis, Nussbaum proposes a mixed model of education in which not only education for citizenship, but also education for profit, would be important for the proper functioning of the democratic state and therefore, both should be proportionally distributed in the curricula of schools and universities (e.g. 2008: 5, 2010: 7, 9–10). However, when we look closely at this relationship, we see that a mixed education that combines both models is not a viable alternative, since admitting profit as the ultimate purpose of education means to educate for economic growth and material

[1] Style of graffiti which is characterized by containing text in simple, elementary, round letters. This style is one of the most widely used today.

[2] Author's translation. Original sentence in Brazilian-Portuguese: "Para que(m) serve o teu conhecimento?"

[3] Angelo Ronaldo Pereira da Silva, Secretary of Student Affairs in office in 2008, SAE/UFRGS. Quoted in the newspaper Zero Hora on 26/08/2008.

[4] At PUCRS, the sentence can be read in front of the Student Union in building five.

[5] In *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum focuses attention on the cases of India and the US, making the examples on education in Europe scarce. To read about the author's critique of the European model of education, see: Nussbaum (2002).

wealth. Thus, a vicious circle is generated, and the search for a just society becomes unreachable due to the finiteness of resources.

Noting that schools and universities withdraw the disciplines of arts and humanities from their curricula with the justification that they would not bring a significant financial return for the institutions, Nussbaum relates the education crisis to the economic crisis. States aim to maximize their profits as though they could fight the economic crisis by doing so. However, if this were true, an education for economic growth should contribute to reverse the crisis of education. And—as Nussbaum defends that education should aim at human development, not economic growth—it is a noteworthy fact that she did not question more deeply the role of the political-economic system as the current crisis enhancer. Furthermore, we will see that Nussbaum connects education for citizenship with education in the arts and humanities and, in contrast, suggests the connection between education for profit with education in the sciences. This procedure results in an author's attempt to offer a practical, simple and consensual diagnosis and solution to the education crisis, since understanding what education for citizenship is and what it consists of is not an easy task. Thus, the goals to overcome the crisis of education could only be set after the concept of education for democratic citizenship was sufficiently understood. Although this complexity applies to the definition of education for citizenship, everyone easily understands what the humanities and arts are, and from then, they derive the importance of maintaining humanities and arts in the curricula of schools and universities. However, an education for citizenship cannot be identified with humanities, or education for profit with sciences, except in very general terms. This is, as we shall see, a simplistic distinction that will wrongly point the solution to the education crisis in the reform of teaching for the humanities rather than for humanism.

In this article, I intend to critically explore Nussbaum's manifest by reformulating two key arguments in order to show that: (1) education should always aim at creating knowledge, and (2) regardless of the emphasis on arts and human or exact sciences, education should always be directed toward the development of humanism. Such education may only legitimately *serve* to make it possible for citizens to exercise autonomy through the development of skills that allow them the Socratic examination. In order to achieve these objectives clearly, the article will be divided into two main parts corresponding to the addressed arguments.

What (Whose) Purpose Does Your Knowledge *Really* Serve?

"What (Whose) purpose does your knowledge *really* serve?" is an especially provocative question because it demonstrates a deep concern for the usefulness or utility of knowledge, as if it were no longer possible to say that knowledge may not serve any known purpose too. It is as if, in order to define knowledge, we no longer need to ask what knowledge is, but what purpose it serves. The risk of this procedure is to arrive at a concept of knowledge that does not match its substance, but its accidents. If, for example, we define what a hammer is for its usefulness, it is likely to be defined as a weapon by some, because a hammer does not have the same usefulness in the hands of a killer as that in the hands of a carpenter. Thus, it is important that we step back and realize that there are two possible types of response to this question. On the one hand, knowledge can be used to achieve material wealth, and/or social status, and/or anything else that is connected to usefulness and purpose, and that may turn knowledge into an instrument. On the other hand, one can

say that the only justified usefulness of knowledge is to make it possible for human beings to lead the examined life of Socrates, that is, allow the exercise of the human ability of critical thinking about themselves and about others. In these terms, knowledge has intrinsic value and cannot be regarded as a mere instrument to achieve anything but itself. The only legitimate reward to be desired as a purpose is the delight and frustration caused simply by the act of knowing.[6] Produced in schools and universities that emphasize vocational education, knowledge serves to meet the demands of companies and institutions able to turn it into consumer products. The institutions that excel in the full development of human personality demonstrate that the knowledge acquired there serves to nurture each individual entered as a member of a plural group, either firstly from the small community, or directly from the large global community.

In *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum notes the difference between education for human development and education for economic growth and draws attention to the current global crisis of education caused by the overvaluation of utilitarian education for profit at the expense of education for democratic citizenship. Education for democratic citizenship requires the development of three essential skills: critical thinking, the ability to understand and transcend the local problems, and empathy (see 1997: 9–11, 2008: 16–19, 2010: 2).[7] Education for profit, in contrast, requires specific training skills, linked to the generation of income and, consequently, to the promotion of economic growth of a particular group, company or country. While the first, in the manner of a Socratic education, emphasizes the foundation of enduring structures of thought related to human dignity, the second, in the manner of a Sophist education, simplifies such structures and reduces them to a strategic format to fit the relative economic priorities. With such overvaluation, knowledge for knowledge—free knowledge—quickly begins to undertake a commitment that negatively affects its nature: it begins to be submissive to its immediate and contingent use. Thus, the search for truth, learning, and the ability of speech become conditioned to what is convenient. And as what is appropriate for one may not be suitable for another, in order for someone to obtain profit, another one must necessarily lose. At the limit, individuals will not see each other as conjoined learners, but as rivals or as business partners at the best.

However, since ancient times, philosophy and basic sciences have opposed this strategic approach of learning and stressed the importance of speculative intellectual activity rather than technical activity of production. But then, what is original about Nussbaum's complaint? To confirm that the complaint is old, it is enough to see that in Plato's *Republic*, rulers and artisans received a distinct education (see 1973: II–III: 376 E–412B; VII: 521c–541b). Rulers received an education for autonomy and leadership and artisans, an education for labor. In *Politics*, Aristotle also makes his position clear on the value given to the types of education by stating that "the one who can predict things by intelligence is lord and master by nature; the one who is able to execute with the force of their body is, by nature, a slave" (1999: 144). If the novelty of Nussbaum's complaint is not in the distinction between the types of education, then would it be in the focus of vocational education geared toward profit only? A vocational education is not necessarily intended for profit. It can be motivated by another purpose, such as the development and improvement

[6] Obviously, this does not mean that someone who desires this kind of education cannot, by his or her knowledge, obtain any gain such as financial gain. This would preclude the existence of researchers who have, somehow, to ensure their livelihood and would, therefore, hinder the progress of science. It is only required that such gain occur accidentally, and it should not be the main purpose of education, i.e., the researcher should become a researcher because of his or her love for discovery and not for anything that is foreign to it.

[7] For a discussion on the principles grounding a civic education, see also Alnes (2015: 95–112).

of a specific skill that enables the citizens to better exercise their tasks and thus provide society with better services. Still, we can unsurprisingly find profit-driven focus also in Plato. In the dialogue *Hipparchus* (see 1882: 275–306; Bruell 1999: 3–6), Socrates asks the young son of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus (prominent example of a lover of gain), to find out whether or not the so-called lovers of gain (profit) should be censored.

The novelty would then be to say that the crisis of education reported by Nussbaum relates to the fact that the democratization of access to education was not enough for an education for citizenship to be available for all? Due to the demands of the current economic system and population growth, the fact is that profit is pursued in any activity in order to meet the high demands of maintaining quality education accessible to everyone. Reversing the crisis of education would then imply making an elite education accessible to everyone. However, since the social division of labor, there has always been a difference between an elite education and education for the working class, which tends to correspond respectively to education for citizenship and for the market.

In *Cultivating Humanity* (1997: Caps. 1–3), Nussbaum argues for the importance of Socratic education for the development of the individual as a citizen. In *Not for Profit*, she extends the focus of analysis to encompass the importance of such education to the state and democracy (Gregory 2011: 419). She warns that the future of democracy is at risk when states, concerned only with economic growth, neglect the education of its citizens discarding skills necessary to maintain the democratic system alive (Nussbaum 2010: 2). Without a free education that encourages critical, autonomous, universal, and imaginative thinking, citizens would be unprotected from the possible (re)establishment of totalitarian regimes. Being voluntarily characterized as a manifesto, as a call to action (see 2010: 121–122), it is expected that the text has a unique appeal, enthusiastic and passionate, to inspire the reader to mobilize for the changes necessary to overcome the current crisis in education and thus ensure democracy. All these adjectives can be enumerated, for example, concerning the text of Adorno, *Erziehung nach Auschwitz*[8] (1970: 92), who stated that the primary and absolute objective of education is to prevent totalitarian regimes (Nazism in particular) from being established again.

However, the demanding reader who expects to find these characteristics in *Not for Profit* coupled with a rigorous and systematic reasoning will be disappointed. To avoid this, we must explain that the book is intended for the general public[9]: parents, educators, politicians, and all those who somehow are involved in activities related to teaching. The aim of the manifesto is to alert the public to the risk of favoring a vocational education geared only toward financial success. Then, one must keep in mind that Nussbaum has no pretensions to be original in her complaint. Nonetheless, her book is not less interesting or less important because of that. Rather, she uses the lack of originality in her complaint to compose her manifesto with distinction. If there is nothing new in her differentiation between an education for democratic citizenship and for profit, and if history has shown us how bloody the consequences of totalitarian regimes might be, what are we doing, after all, when we focus on education for financial success? When one realizes the limitations of knowledge geared for utility, one sees that an individual educated for citizenship will be more able to adapt to potential changes in the political-economic system and build new concepts to govern the society when necessary (note that in times of crisis, this might be a fundamental skill). From then it becomes difficult to understand why the education for knowledge has been set aside. Why do parents fear for their children when they are not

[8] English translation: *Education after Auschwitz*.

[9] This is also what the collection, *The Public Square*, where it was published, suggests.

directly educated to compete in the labor market? Why is education for profit the most prominent model currently? It is as if, between freedom and submission, we were deliberately choosing to be submissive. It is as if we were no longer able to connect the past with the present.

Still, despite the current prominence of market-oriented education, elites continue appreciating the fundamental values of the teaching for citizenship. In the upper-class, parents keep on sending their children to study abroad so that they will learn other languages and cultures. They continue to pay extra for music lessons and spend small fortunes in books of poetry in order that their children are educated to gain universal knowledge, and more likely, become leaders in society. In the lower class, accustomed to the submission of being employees, parents want their children to work to increase their chances of getting enough resources for survival. They fear that a possible misconduct, which may lead them to be less passive, might poison them to death, like Socrates, or have them be sold as slaves, like Plato. Thus, it appears that the democratization of access to education has not really been enough to allow an education for citizenship to all as Nussbaum points (see 2010: 11).

The main reason for this to occur is, according to Nussbaum, the belief that in order to maintain or achieve the desired democracy it is necessary that a state grow economically, i.e., increase the country's GDP. Thus, there is nothing more obvious than waiting for the citizens to contribute to this end. In this case, the role of education would be to maximize the specific potentialities of the citizens in order to enable them to achieve financial success (2010: 17). When it is necessary to indiscriminately increase production and reduce costs to increase GDP, laborers, docile enough not to question their own subordination are produced, rather than citizens who understand how free they are and who fight for their rights. Such an education requires basic skills in language and mathematics and, perhaps, advanced skills in computing and various technologies (see other suggestions 2010: 19). Therefore, the democratization of access to education and its quality are, according to Nussbaum, aspects that need not necessarily be considered since a nation can grow economically while maintaining various outsiders on the margins of society, such as the rural population, for example. It is enough that an elite be created, an elite that is competent enough to positively move up the numbers of the state's economy (2010: 20). Broadly speaking, the democratic access to education has been so far restricted to vocational education. This is because if workers were educated for autonomy, they would complain of exploitation and generate less profit for companies which, in turn, would corroborate less to the economic growth rates in the country.

What Nussbaum proposes then is the democratization of access to an elite education, which requires more than mere preparation for work. The exercise of citizenship includes more than the training of workers, capable of meeting the goals of economic growth in a country without paying attention to inequalities. For Nussbaum this kind of education geared for profit does not consider key aspects of the relationship between the individual and the state, i.e., it is unable to promote the personal and national progress in the full sense of the word. To achieve personal progress would require an education capable of developing critical thinking, awareness, political and social engagement, the ability to recognize and respect the others as citizens with equal rights regardless of which country they come from, and at least, the ability to worry about the availability of equal opportunities extended to all citizens of the globe (e.g. Nussbaum 2002: 293, 2010: 25–26). In practice, education for democratic citizenship should develop logical reasoning, analysis of complex arguments and the accuracy of judgments (see Nussbaum 2002: 293). As far as national progress is concerned, one should consider as a fundamental task of governments the

development of factors related to human dignity and prosperity of every citizen: life, health, integrity, freedom and capacity of political participation, education, etc.[10] (Nussbaum 2010: 24), or rather, factors related to "what people are really capable of doing and being" or "the real opportunities available to them" (Nussbaum 2011: Preface x).

Although the book is a defense of education for citizenship, in several passages of her text Nussbaum insists that education for profit is also relevant, and therefore, both should be equally distributed in institutional curricula. In addition, she insists that education for citizenship could also contribute effectively to the improvement of profit-making (see 2010: 7, 9, 10, 52–53, 112). Ironically, perhaps the book should be called *Not Only for Profit* or *Not Primarily for Profit* and not *Not for Profit*. Such statements seem very problematic to me when they contradict not only the work's title, but also important theses of the author, such as critical models of human development toward economic growth, systematized in her recent publication *Creating Capabilities—the Human Development Approach* (2011) and the critique of contractarianism developed in detail in *Frontiers of Justice: disability, nationality, species membership* (2007). If we seek to address the economic inequalities and distribute resources fairly with focus on the development of equal opportunities, it seems inappropriate to encourage profit as the ultimate goal by any means, let alone by education. It seems that at the end of the day we have to content ourselves with an approximation to justice in the sense that seeking education not only for profit, would be our best. However, this resigned move would end up by generating a vicious circle where the pursuit of justice would become more and more unreachable. The partial redistribution of resources is also a strategy used to maintain the current economic system in vogue—the largest promoter of injustice. It is performed in order to return the purchasing power to a portion that was excluded and make the market move again. Thus, conceiving an education not only for profit means at that point to conceive an education for the exact purpose we try to deny.

Perhaps she is assuming that all vocational education aims at profit, and therefore she does not see how she could deny it altogether. But, as we saw in the reflection on the issues raised from Furno's graffiti and from Nussbaum's work earlier, vocational education can have a different prime motivation than profit. Among them can be the development of specific skills that allow citizens to exercise their tasks better and consequently offer better services to society, for example. Empowering citizens to focus exclusively on profit and on a profession are very different things. By aiming at profit, citizens act mainly in pursuit of satisfying their individual interests. The relationship they have with other persons is that of a contractor. Thus, as long as contracts are respected, they are allowed to resort to their selfishness, and since it is necessary to maximize the conditions for obtaining a profit, they are also allowed to set aside sympathy for others in a sense. In contrast, by training for a profession, citizens will tend to seek to get qualified in order to provide the society with better services. They are not merely contractors, but responsible members of society. If they end up getting financial success or if a higher social position is achieved as a result of the recognition of the society for their good work, it happens by chance. They want to be and do something good to society and the purpose of their knowledge might not be external to it.

In *Frontiers of Justice*, Nussbaum criticizes the contractarian conception in detail because it reduces the individual to a contractor position and does not consider his or her dignity and prosperity. This leads us to believe that such equality may have been used by

[10] For more details on factors that are considered by Nussbaum as inalienable and must therefore be respected and guaranteed by laws and institutions, see the list of Capabilities in: Nussbaum (2011: 33–34).

the author as an argumentative strategy in order to win her first adepts in large scale, since, according to her, her thesis is still seen as unusual even by renowned educators (2010: 5). However, when we see that Nussbaum does not totally deny contractarianism when its focus on capabilities can be reconciled with the contractarianism through the moral philosophy of Thomas Scalon[11] (see 2007: Cap. 2), one suspects that her position is really ambiguous. Would it be so hard to deny that knowledge must not be dependent on any known purposes and that education should avoid to be trapped to its usefulness, be it profit or something else?

Economic Crisis: The Origin of the Education Crisis?

Nussbaum argues that an education geared to the economic growth of a country is neither sufficient to guarantee the quality of education of citizens nor the equal access to opportunities. She says that the financial difficulties, accentuated with the crisis of 2008, oblige extensive cutting in the curricula of the humanities disciplines, which, supposedly, do not bring the institutions the same financial return as many of the exact sciences. Thus, states, hungry for profit, focus on disciplines that offer short-term profit to the institutions (Nussbaum 2010: 2). Does this mean that if states were richer, there would be no education crisis?

It may be noted that never in human history have we had such an abundance of resources caused by the technologies of production as nowadays (see Chomsky 1997: 25). The problem of resource scarcity is not with production, but with the manner by which those resources are distributed. Thus, it seems that the crisis of education is not directly related to a certain economic downturn, but to the political and economic system itself that is now approaching a kind of totalitarianism and producing both crises simultaneously. If a totalitarian regime seeks to nullify the feelings of the citizens making them capable of snitching or even killing their neighbors in the name of the country, what can we say about a system that makes the citizens' capacity for empathy languish, making them even ignore the hunger of their neighbors?

However, Nussbaum's thinking is so engraved on a certain conception of liberal state that she is unable to challenge the failures of the economic model in its foundation. Consequently, she is convinced, and seems to have convinced others (e.g., Lefkowitz 2011: 368), that the United States are the best environment for a Socratic education to develop and obtain the space it deserves worldwide, since it would require citizens to have time and willingness to long-life learning. This statement, however, sounds extremely problematic to me. Rethinking education in the Socratic manner also requires rethinking the structure and purpose of individuals and society in relation to the economic system and the model of government. Thus, in a country like the United States, where the primary economic values are so deeply rooted to a particular conception of democracy, it seems difficult to demand that citizens have a genetic view of themselves and of the environment around them. I believe the answer might not be found in any more local or national context. This is because only when facing different forms of organized societies are we able to better evaluate our own. It is only when knowing the other that we are able to understand ourselves. So by being able to have this genetic view of the self and of the society we are embedded in, is the most important of the skills that a Socratic education aims to develop.

The crisis of education, unlike the economic crisis, progresses, according to Nussbaum, unnoticed and as seriously and silently as a cancer (2010: 1–2). It is then relevant to ask:

[11] For more details see: Fitzpatrick (2008: 83–100).

why is the education crisis silent? It seems clear that in the short term it has less harmful effects to the population, and therefore it is also less noticeable in comparison to the economic crisis. When, for example, we realize that even by devoting more time to work we are no longer able to maintain the same quality of life as before and/or when we and those around us lose their jobs and take significant time to reenter the market, it is easy to see that something is wrong and that we are facing an economic crisis, right? However, as to the education crisis, the clearest evidence we have that something is wrong is the testimony of our parents, nostalgically remembering the days when studying at home was a necessary condition to obtain good results and a passing grade in school. The impression for my generation is that the kids are now smarter, not exactly that the education is weaker.

Anyone who has watched the publicist and obnoxious movie by Woody Allen, *Midnight in Paris*, repeatedly understood the idea that we humans, tend to always find that the past was better than is the present. However, this is not what Nussbaum refers to, when she envisions changes in the educational system based on the Socratic method. This is not to say that in ancient Greece education was an example model, and that the current crisis of education is the result of the crisis of modernity, as MacIntyre, for example, argues (2002: 291). Education in ancient Greece, she says, had problems, many of which are the same we face today, such as the passivity of learning, for example. And that is precisely what made and makes the proposal of Socrates so important to be carried forward (see Nussbaum 2002: 294).

Nussbaum's argument does not use a narrative of decline either as you might think on the first reading. Believing that people, well educated in the humanities of old times, produced the desired democracy and that now we are putting it at risk when we give preference to the sciences that generate financial return at the expense of the humanities, is not part of her argument. In the past, there was no greater number of well-educated citizens, nor was there the actual desired democracy in relation to the present. Nussbaum makes her position very clear when she quotes a few examples of how she, as a woman and convert to Judaism, would be treated at the university a few years ago. Democracy is, for Nussbaum, a process, and good education is essential to make this process move forward in the right direction continuously. Nor is it to say that the education crisis is silent because no one in the world, or at least in the US and India, knows that it exists. (Frankly, this would already be too *clichê* even for a manifesto aimed at the general public). The essential point to consider is that the education crisis is silent because in large-scale we may have had an education geared primarily to profit or utility in a long time, which does not allow us to clearly and unanimously recognize the failures of the educational system anymore. It is possible that, in general, we no longer have access to the categories of thought necessary to point out such flaws and to propose something entirely new—at least not to those who were not educated in elite schools and universities. This would also explain why, unlike the economic crisis, the educational crisis might not be to us, immediately evident.

Now, why do we have successive economic crises if our education is geared to this purpose? As experts in this area, should we not be able to not only diagnose and remedy the crisis, but also to cure it for good? Here we have arrived at a fundamental question: education for profit is not intended to cure or prevent economic crises, but to produce them and remedy them just to make it possible to produce them again. There is no need to read Marx to realize that substantial flaw. This is because, when profit is a goal of education, it is easy to see that all the rest—respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and human dignity (see 2010: 14—Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), appears to be secondary. Considering this, it becomes very difficult to accept the solution that Nussbaum

presents to the education crisis: a hybrid model that reconciles the education for democratic citizenship and education for profit.

Arts and Humanities: Solution to the Education Crisis?

Nussbaum relates the forms of education to the focus given to the arts and humanities, and in opposition to the exact sciences and technology. Thus, her book is a defense of the importance of the arts and humanities in institutional curricula. The problem of this relation is that, even though one may suggest that the arts and humanities often contribute more easily to the "examined life" that Socrates demands, i.e., to develop the fundamental skills that allow citizens to exercise autonomy, one cannot say that good courses in sciences do not do the same. A student of vocational education in the sciences may have as much or more to contribute to democracy as a philosophy student. It is not because one has read Plato that we will defend the values of the Athenian democracy. Moreover, defending the values and disvalues seems to be quite arbitrary when one takes into account only the area from which they come. So even with a background of reason, this division seems to be too pragmatic and ultimately conceals the true solution to the crisis in education: a defense of education for humanism, regardless of whether it occurs in the humanities or in the exact sciences. Nussbaum says that studying history, for example, is fundamental to the development of individual consciousness, and the recognition of this individual as part of the globe (2010: 21). Through knowledge of history, individuals would be able to reflect on their own condition today. I agree with that, but one has to admit that history or the humanities do not carry in themselves the privilege of critical thinking, of understanding the part-whole relationship, or of imagination. Physics, for example, has proven to be very speculative to try to clarify the origin of the universe. Plenty of exercise in these three key skills is necessary to formulate hypotheses that are proven or not.

In an interview with *Prospect Magazine* on *Not for Profit* and the education crisis, Nussbaum was asked if the teaching of the humanities would be enough by itself to achieve positive results such as those expected by teaching history. Obviously, the question sounded like a provocation, since the interviewer did not intend her to confirm this thesis, but to clarify what appears diffuse in *Not for Profit*. In chapter IV, she states that the Socratic examination will not be taught well if its teaching spirit is not well informed (2010: 55). Thus, if part of the education crisis is caused by the lack of content in the humanities and arts, another part comes from the failure of pedagogical method (2010: 139–140). A positive result, therefore, depends much more on the way history or any other subject-matter is taught than in the transmission of knowledge itself. But then, what is the use of doing a good campaign to keep the humanities and arts in the curriculum if they are often taught dogmatically? The core of the problem has more to do with the confusion between training and formation[12] in education intensified by the current political-economic system than with the kind of science studied. Regarding training, it does not matter whether you are studying *Phaedo* or geometry, democracy would still be at risk. The focus of education for democracy (government by discussion), has to be "self-examination", not the humanities, the arts or any other branch of science. Training a student in philosophy does not mean to form him or her as a thinker. Forming him or her as a thinker responsible for his/her arguments and aware of the arguments of others means to humanize him/her, not just educate him/her in the humanities, which is very different.

[12] See e.g. differentiation between *Ausbildung* and *Bildung* in Critical Theory.

In *Erziehung—Wozu?*[13] Adorno argues that "an effective democracy can only be imagined as a society that is emancipated (1970: 111)." This statement reminds us that education for democracy is one that turns the individual into an autonomous being, and has nothing to do with the mere transmission of knowledge and memory, regardless of the area from which it originates. Thus, it is clear that the education crisis, unfortunately, cannot be resolved only with the maintenance or increase of humanities in institutional curricula. This is because the crisis is not only caused by the lack of the humanities and arts in the curricula of schools and universities, but also by a modification of the approach of the humanities that now need to adapt to market requirements for funding, and remain, somehow, in the curricula (2010: 128). There is focus on training instead of formation also in the humanities and arts. Nussbaum is obviously aware that the problem is not that simple and this becomes clear when in the last chapter of the book in question, she tells the amusing story of a young philosopher who cynically, in order to increase the chances of approval for financing his research project, indiscriminately included the word "empirical" six times in his proposal (2010: 129). But then why simplify the argument? I wonder whether she needs to be so pragmatic in order to achieve tangible positive results just because the text is a manifesto aimed at the general public.

If the identification between education for democratic citizenship and human sciences and education for profit and sciences is too simplistic, denying this may bring about some complications, one of them perhaps the dearest one for her purpose with this text. Confusing the general public toward the actions that should be taken to reverse the education crisis would undermine the central purpose of the complaint. From this simplistic division, Nussbaum has at least a real starting point, and despite her own doubts that a less detailed philosophical investigation have much practical relevance (2006: 5), perhaps she did not have any philosophical claim in this book, but a political one. In an interview with *O Globo* newspaper on *Not for Profit*, Nussbaum said that, although she has no vocation for public life because of the peculiar characteristics of her temperament, she really has political ambitions that can be fulfilled through the academic life. She says that she often gives preference to projects that allow her to exert politics to promote the public good. In this context, of course, one can say that *Not for Profit* is one of those projects for this purpose. As for us, we must bear in mind that we must invest in a humanistic education and not simply in an education in the humanities in order to overcome the crisis of education effectively.

Conclusion

In the introduction to *The Greatest Adventure* (1974: 1–7), Isaac Asimov shows not only how an uncompromising education may inadvertently be useful, but how a strategic education may be limited. Asimov, as a great writer, masterfully recounts how the question about the usefulness of knowledge was treated by three major figures throughout the history of thought: Plato, Faraday, and Thomas Edison. The first report is the case of a student of the Academy who asked Plato what purpose those complex and abstract theorems that he was teaching served. In response to the question, Plato gave the student a few coins as a reward to the time he had devoted to the study of such abstract theorems and straightaway dismissed him. Plato paid the student so that he would not think he had wasted time studying subjects that had no immediate utility. In the case of Faraday, after he

[13] Author's translation: "*Education, what for?*"

had demonstrated the electric current through a peculiar operation of a magnet and a coil connected to a galvanometer, he was asked by the audience what purpose it served. Faraday, shrewdly, responded with another question: "Sir, what good is a newborn child?" Thomas Edison, the known owner of several patents—whose case could be in principle identified as a counterexample, by arguing that science guided by utility can be even more promising than pure science—makes the limitations of knowledge-driven utility finally clear. After failing one of his patented inventions (the calculator votes), Thomas Edison became a pragmatic scientist who decided to guide his projects according to the utility that they could have as long as they worked as expected. At one point Edison was so discredited about one of his projects being recognized of any use by the market, that he gave up his investigations concerning what was later called the "Edison effect." Incidentally, that was just what would later enable the most incredible discoveries of humanity: the rectifier current (John Ambrose Fleming in 1904), and the radio valve (Lee De Forest in 1906), which also made possible the invention of television.

With this, Asimov wanted to show that "not even the most discerning of men can always judge what is useful and what is not" (1974: 7). Thus, guiding knowledge for its usefulness—whether it be in the humanities or technology—is to limit it to the scope of what is already known or expected and deprive it of the most amazing discoveries, those capable of suddenly changing the history of humanity. Therefore, education should be uncompromising and primarily seek nothing more than the discovery, i.e. the knowledge itself. Importantly, educating to find a cure for AIDS or to find a war explosive is still an educational discovery. However, if a scientist wants to discover the cure for AIDS to save millions of infected people, or if a scientist wants to invent an explosive to eliminate thousands of people s/he considers enemies, one must keep in mind that the purpose and motivation of both projects are different. While the motivation has to do with justification (personal) action, the purpose is directly related to the objectives. Free education may be either directed for good or evil. Critical thinking, awareness of the self and of the other, and imagination, also have their dark side. But it is in order to avoid this perversion that I advocate that education should concomitantly always be geared to humanism.

Therefore, in this article I intend to have demonstrated that the current crisis of education reported by Nussbaum in *Not for Profit* can be overcome if: (1) education aims at nothing beyond the knowledge itself, and thereby (2) in practice, it is directed toward the development of humanism. To reach this conclusion, in the midst of minor criticisms, two fundamental tenets of Nussbaum were criticized and reformulated here: (1) the proposition of a mixed model of education that combines utilitarian education with uncompromised education, and (2) the solution the author proposes to the education crisis based on the increase or maintenance of the arts and humanities in the institutions' curricula.

In Brazil, Furno's graffiti raggedly awoke this "old-age" argument between education for citizenship and education for profit due to the unconventional way she used to express discontent over the way the university was being organized. Graffiti are illicit marks on public walls. Artists who use this form of expression usually take serious risks to widely and effectively deliver a message. It is almost like screaming loud in the middle of the street. Nobody capable of hearing can avoid listening to the screams as nobody literate can avoid reading the big and colorful graffiti on the wall. The authorities will most likely come to restore the public order. This is because these artists are not only making a statement in which they are protected by freedom of expression, but also radically denying the rules of a whole system to which they have lost the capacity to communicate by the usual means. In this sense, Furno's graffiti was an attempt to reestablish communication and draw our critical attention back to a fundamental question on *how the educational*

institutions should be organized today. The style chosen for the graffiti fits perfectly with the nature of the claim. Bubble style is the most ordinary type of graffiti in use at the moment. The one that enlarges the content, making the message more visible and striking; Furno's graffiti is, in this sense, ordinary, but as striking and powerful as Nussbaum's manifesto.

Acknowledgments For important contributions to earlier versions of this paper, I would like to thank L. F. Barbosa, A. Frainer, F. Domingues, M. S. da Silva, G. Goldmeier and J. H. Alnes. The paper also benefits from comments of members of the Development and Justice Research Group from the UFRGS in Brazil and from the Pluralism, Democracy, and Justice Research Group from UiT in Norway.

References

Primary Literature

Nussbaum, Martha. 2010. *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2008. Education for profit, education for freedom. *Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, IDSK Special Lecture* 1: 1–25.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2002. Education for citizenship in an Era of global connection. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 21: 289–303.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1997. *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2011. *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Secondary Literature

Adorno, Theodor W. 1970. Erziehung nach Auschwitz. *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, Vorträge Gespräche und mit Helmut Becker 1959–1969, 92–109. Frankfurt am Main: Gerd von Herausgegeben Kadelbach.

Alnes, Jan H. 2015. Civic education and the resonable religious citizen. In *Contrastes*, ed. Postigo, Marta and Rosário Lópes, Vol. 20, 95–112.

Aristotle, 1999. *The politics: The thinkers*. Cultural: New York.

Asimov, Isaac. 1974. Introduction. In *The greatest adventure—Basic research that shapes our lives*, eds. Kone et al., 1–7. New York: Harper and Row.

Bruell, Christopher. 1999. *On the socratic education: An introduction to the shorter platonic dialogues*. Lanham: Littlefield Rowman Publishers.

Chomsky, Noam. 1997. *The common good*. Berkeley: Odonian Press.

Fitzpatrick, Tony. 2008. From contracts to capabilities and back again. *Res Publica* 14: 83–100.

Gregory, Maughn Rollins. 2011. Review of Martha Nussbaum, Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30: 419–427.

Lefkowitz, Mary. 2011. Martha C. Nussbaum, Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities. *Soc* 48: 367–368.

Plato. 1973. *The Republic*. Translation by Benjamin Jowet, Anchor Books Edition.

Plato. 1882. Hipparchus. Translation of Lamb, WRM, William Heinemann Ltd & Harvard University Press, 275–306.

Consulted Websites

Ronaldo Pereira da Silva Angelo, the Secretary of the Department of Student Affairs Office of UFRGS in 2008. Quoted in the newspaper Zero Hora on 26/08/2008. Accessed in April 201. http://zerohora.clicrbs.com.br/rs/noticia/2008/08/fui-muito-ingenua-diz-aluna-autora-de-pintura-em-parede-da-ufrgs-2142436.html

Interview with Martha Nussbaum Prospect Magazine January 5, 2011. Accessed in April 2012. http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2011/01/martha-nussbaum-interview-podcast-alain-de-botton-value-of-humanities-university/

Interview with Martha Nussbaum to the newspaper O Globo on May 16, 2011. Posted by Miguel Conde. Accessed in April 2012. http://oglobo.globo.com/blogs/prosa/posts/2011/04/16/filosofa-martha-nussbaum-fala-sobre-not-for-profit-375101.asp