



External Examiner Report on Doctoral Dissertation submitted by Luiz do Valle Miranda
Unveiling Educational Potentials: On Post-Critical Affirmation, Non-Formal Practices and Online Technologies, Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Education, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, 2024

The aim of the dissertation is to propose ways for an affirmative engagement with technology in education. The author contends that the replication of practices and imaginaries that originated in onsite education overshadows the truly pedagogical potentialities of online technologies. He proposes an affirmative approach to technologies understood as constitutive elements of an educational process.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. First, the author describes how current online education replicates existing educational practices and how this is conditioned by the current socio-economic system. Second, he explains different theories of technology and their relation to education arguing for a post-critical approach to educational research. Third, the author presents some of the ideas of Bernard Stiegler and conceptualizes his approach as essentially educational. Fourth, he analyzes non-formal online educational practices in an attempt to indicate, fifth, the educational potentialities of online technologies.

The author draws heavily on Stiegler's philosophy, but he claims that Stiegler "fails to explain and exemplify what kind of online collaborative practices are educational and how they can actually lead to changes in formal education" (53). The author puts emphasis on the "non-formal online educational practices" conceptualized, following Stiegler, "as practices of attention formation involving online technologies that contribute to the formation of a

particular relation to time and space” (66). Drawing on Vlieghe and Zamojski’s thing-centered pedagogy, the author then attempts to show how digital technologies can help develop a caring relationship to the world.

The chosen topic is highly relevant and the author basically succeeds in achieving the main goals of the dissertation. However, I would like to mention some of its weaknesses.

1) The author wants to connect Stiegler’s approach with the thing-centered understanding of education. Accordingly, he puts a lot of emphasis on technologies as things. But, as far as I can see, he pays no attention to technologies as technological *things*. What exactly are digital technologies in their thinghood? How is the thinghood of digital technologies to be understood in contrast to, say, other things “used” in education, such as books? More specifically, what is “the multiplicity of aspects that make up a thing” (Abstract) in the case of digital technologies? Instead of paying attention to such questions, the author immediately turns to our practices with technologies, or “the rehearsal of various practices” (64), rather than to the technologies themselves.

2) In depicting our practices with technologies, the author describes cases and examples and does not really go beyond these individual descriptions to show how we can generalize them. Similarly, he usually offers a review of the literature, and too often quotes rather long passages from the works of other thinkers, while his original contribution to the problem remains unclear. This is problematic both stylistically (or formally) and factually: What exactly do we gain, both in theory and for our pedagogical practice, by reporting the case studies and the analyses of other thinkers?

3) To put it another way, the author claims, e.g., that “despite the algorithms that limit the Internet experience, the anecdotes presented in this chapter suggest that educational experiences enabled by online technologies are indeed possible” (75). But the real question is: what should we do to realize such possibilities? The author rightly asserts that, in a Stieglerian framework, “the basis of education ... is the interiorization of a certain relation to space and time, a certain form of attention or thoughtfulness” (64). What does it mean to interiorize digital technologies? How can we do that, both individually and collectively?

4) As the author rightly mentions, Stiegler is rather skeptical about how digital technologies condition us and the world. But is it not fully understandable? Are the ways of using digital technologies that the author mentions in the last two chapters really capable of renewing the “long circuits of individuation”? More specifically, are they capable of

overcoming the destructive power of the current technological system? Or, to be even more precise, do we not need a social transformation, i.e. a transformation of the relationship of society, not of individuals, to technologies, in order to be able to make technologies educative in a positive sense? In my opinion, such questions should have been explicitly addressed in order to achieve the goal of the dissertation.

Despite these critical remarks, I believe that the submitted work meets the requirements for a successful dissertation.

Prague, 16/08/24

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. Ritter', is centered on the page.

Assoc. Prof. Martin Ritter, PhD.