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The Role of Education in the Formation of Values in Our Time

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Harmonious Coexistence: From Nice Slogans to Real Steps

As sociodynamics processes are getting relentlessly fast and the issues of human rights are becoming even more prominent, in the context of military conflicts excellent preconditions have been created for disinformation and propaganda, violation of human rights and discrimination. In this dramatically altered social and cultural situation, moral education and non-discriminative approaches have acquired special value.

In last few decades it was a big shift in legislation and other documents concerning human rights. Sadly, reality and practice (including atmosphere in educational settings) is not catching up. Educational institutions it is supposed to be a key environment where young people learn to understand and appreciate differences in culture, belief and perspective, gain attitudes, knowledge and skills for creating harmonious coexistence. They are supposed to, but are they really serving that purpose?

In this presentation I will explore a philosophical fundamentals of (non)violent and (non)discriminative behaviour and impact of moral objectivism, moral subjectivism and moral relativism.

Also, I will analyze psychological aspect of phenomenon - group dynamics, the sociodynamic processes of individuals and groups, interconnectedness between psycho-emotional state and learning outcomes, reasons of alienation and discrimination, cases and reasons of overlooked discrimination. Besides the theoretical background I will reflect on my personal role as a university teacher and share my experience of changes I see in the academic space (especially in student groups) both as a lecturer who has been working at various universities for about thirty years and as a psychotherapist.

And, lastly, I will tackle pedagogical aspect. How we, as educator, can help to create a community, based on harmonious coexistence? While politicians and strategists of education are creating a model of future society, whereas practitioners of education are given the task of bringing this model to implementation. A question arises not only regarding the attitudes and values to be instilled, the skills to develop, or the knowledge to be gained, but also it is necessary to consider what ways and methods should be used that the present-day students should become proactive agents of nonviolent and nondiscriminative behaviour.

BIOGRAPHY

Rasa Aškinytė is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy (Vilnius University, Lithuania). With a career of more than 25 years in various universities, 11 years in Council of Europe (Pestalozzi program) she has gained experience as a lecturer and researcher on national and international levels. Her primary research focus revolves around didactics of philosophy and philosophy of didactics, possibility to teach/learn ethics following the rules of logical thinking, intercultural education.

She co-authored General Education curriculum, authored the national textbook for 7-9th grades ethics, textbook for primary school kids and book for teachers „Philosophy for the little ones“, various other textbooks for school and university students.

Beyond academia, Rasa Aškinytė is psychotherapist and writer.

Renata Bikauskaitė

The Formation of Moral Agency in the Age of AI: A Care-Ethical Approach to Education

This paper addresses a philosophical question that has become increasingly urgent in the age of artificial intelligence: what becomes of human autonomy, judgment, and responsibility when education is shaped by technologies that mediate thinking, interpretation, and decision-making? In current debates on AI in education, ethical reflection is often organized around concerns such as fairness, transparency, privacy, and academic integrity. While indispensable, these approaches tend to frame the problem largely in technical or individualistic terms and leave unexamined a more fundamental educational issue: how the growing incorporation of AI transforms the formation of the subject.

I argue that this issue is best approached through feminist care ethics, understood as a normative framework for analyzing practices of agency. Against conceptions of autonomy that identify it with independence, self-sufficiency, or freedom from dependence, care ethics conceptualizes autonomy as relational, situated, and sustained within practices of attention, responsiveness, and shared responsibility. From this perspective, a central ambiguity of AI in education becomes visible: technological support may either deepen the learner's agency or erode it by fostering forms of epistemic passivity in which judgment is outsourced, reflection is weakened, and responsibility becomes diffuse.

The paper argues that the educational task in the age of AI is therefore not merely to equip students with digital competence, but to cultivate forms of relational autonomy capable of resisting the seductions of technological delegation. This requires pedagogical practices that do not simply permit or prohibit AI use, but that preserve the student's relation to their own judgment by demanding reflection, discernment, and answerability.

BIOGRAPHY

Renata Bikauskaitė holds a PhD in Philosophy and is an Assistant Lecturer and Researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University. Her academic interests include ethical theory, care ethics, feminist philosophy, environmental ethics, and the value-related implications of contemporary technologies. In recent years, her research has increasingly focused on the ethical challenges of artificial intelligence, particularly in education and learning environments. She is currently a researcher in the international project “EmpowerAId: Empowering pre- and in-service teachers to harness the potential of AI for designing creative and ethical digital education ecosystems”, which aims to strengthen educators' competencies to apply AI in an ethical, responsible, and value-sensitive manner.

Giambattista Bufalino

Walking as a Transformative Educational Practice: Situated Learning, Vulnerability, and Higher Education

In a time marked by social fragmentation, environmental challenges, and moral uncertainty, higher education is increasingly called to engage with the development of ethical awareness, responsibility, and relational understanding. This contribution explores walking as a transformative educational practice that fosters situated forms of learning grounded in lived experience, attention, and encounter.

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, walking challenges conventional, disembodied models of knowledge by foregrounding experience, movement, and relationality as conditions of knowing. In this sense, it can be understood as a way of knowing-in-the-world, where perception, affect, and interpretation are deeply intertwined. Drawing on phenomenological and place-based approaches, walking enables learners to develop forms of perception that are attentive, relational, and ethically responsive. Methodologically, walking is conceived as a situated and process-oriented inquiry that integrates slow observation, sensory engagement, field annotation, and guided reflective practices. It includes moments of silent walking, individual noticing, and collective interpretation, allowing participants to engage with space not as passive observers but as situated subjects. Such practices foster processes of environmental attunement, understood as the capacity to become receptive to places, others, and the conditions of shared existence.

The paper presents selected experiences developed within the *Laboratory of Walking*, an inter-university network in Italy promoting walking-based educational practices. Particular attention is given to urban walking experiences conducted with university students in the city of Catania (Italy), especially in the San Cristoforo neighborhood, a context marked by social vulnerability. Through structured walking activities, students are invited to observe, interpret, and reflect on spatial conditions, social interactions, and forms of marginality encountered along the route, engaging with questions of responsibility, justice, and coexistence in concrete and situated ways. Alongside these urban experiences, brief reference is made to Summer Schools held in 2025, in the Madonie province, where walking in rural and ecological landscapes supports forms of environmental attunement through direct engagement with natural environments. Across these contexts, walking functions as a pedagogical device that supports reflective and critical engagement. Learning emerges through encounters involving perception, emotion, and judgment, enabling students to question assumptions and attend to what is often overlooked. Based on these premises, walking is proposed as a meaningful educational practice that repositions higher education as an embodied, relational, and ethically engaged process. In this perspective, it calls for renewed attention to situated forms of learning, capable of responding to contemporary challenges while fostering attentiveness, responsibility, and respect for human and environmental dignity.

BIOGRAPHY

Giambattista Bufalino is a Senior Researcher in General and Social Pedagogy at the Department of Education, University of Catania. He earned his PhD in Educational Research and Development from the University of Lincoln and collaborates with the Institute for Education (Malta) as a Dissertation Supervisor and External Examiner. He has conducted research and teaching activities across several European countries, fostering international collaborations in intercultural education, educational leadership, and environmental education. His work has been recognized with several awards in Italy, including the Italian Pedagogy Award (2020), the Basile Award Excellence Mention, and the Riccardo Massa Award (2024/2025). He is the Principal Investigator of the *EDUWALK project* and Coordinator of the Green Education Lab at the University of Catania. In 2025, he edited the volumes *Navigating Learning, Culture, and Identity in Island Education* (IGI Global) and *Creare legami. Percorsi progettuali per educare alle relazioni, Creating Bonds: Educational Pathways for Relational Education*, PensaMultimedia).

Marius Daugėla

From Multidisciplinary Education to Embodied Values: A Phenomenological Analysis of Scholar's Academic Identity Development

In today's higher education, characterized by accelerating change, the blurring of disciplinary boundaries, and increasing complexity, the question of how the values of the academic community are formed is becoming increasingly relevant. A multidisciplinary education, which offers the opportunity to integrate knowledge, methodologies, and ways of thinking from different disciplines, not only broadens the scope of understanding but also fundamentally transforms the formation of a scholar's academic identity and value orientation. In this context, values do not emerge as abstract principles, but reveal themselves as embodied meanings that are constantly created and recreated through lived experience.

This presentation introduces and analyzes the findings of a doctoral dissertation, revealing how multidisciplinary education helps shape embodied values and academic identity—understood as a dynamic, existential process shaped by personal experience, institutional context, and inner values.

This dissertation research is grounded in a qualitative approach using an integral phenomenological perspective. The analysis of the research data integrated two approaches of phenomenology: the phenomenological-hermeneutic research method and practical phenomenology. The data analysis focuses on how scholars with multidisciplinary education experience the development of their academic identity and how their values are revealed in these experiences. The study involved 17 university scholars who have acquired multidisciplinary education at various levels and represent different fields of science. Data for the research was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing participants to reflect in detail on their experiences of developing their academic identity. The interviews sought to reveal not only specific career stages or events, but also the meaning they held for the participants, allowing for an understanding of how a multidisciplinary education serves as the foundation for the development of embodied values and academic identity.

The findings of the research reveal that a multidisciplinary education shapes a complex and dynamic field for the development of academic identity, in which scholars experience a constant existential tension between different disciplinary epistemologies, academic norms and institutional evaluation systems, and their personal value orientations and professional aspirations. This tension is particularly evident in situations where traditional academic structures privilege disciplinary "purity," while scholars with multidisciplinary education seek to integrate different systems of knowledge and develop a holistic perspective. Such experiences reveal not only the instability of academic identity but also its creative potential.

The analysis of the research revealed that this tension becomes a productive space for the formation of values: scholars actively reflect on their academic activities, critically re-examine institutional expectations and their place in the academic community, and deliberately construct an authentic academic "self." Values manifest themselves through relationships with colleagues and the academic community, through time while changing career trajectories, through disciplinary and institutional spatial contexts, through specific scientific and pedagogical activities, and through a constant search for personal and professional meaning.

This research contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge by conceptualizing multidisciplinary education not only as a form of knowledge integration, but as a fundamental prerequisite for the formation of values and the development of academic identity in higher education. This presentation invites a rethinking of higher education practices—from doctoral studies to the shaping of academic culture—emphasizing not only the cultivation of knowledge or competencies, but also the conscious, reflective, and values-based development of academic identity.

BIOGRAPHY

Marius Daugela holds a PhD in Education, with a research focus on the development of academic and professional identity in contemporary higher education. He works at Vytautas Magnus University in teacher training. Since 2025, he has been a member of the Board of the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE). His scholarly interests are situated at the intersection of professional identity, existential and phenomenological inquiry, and higher education studies. His research focuses on the development of professional identity among researchers and teachers, the process of becoming a researcher during doctoral studies, and qualitative research methodologies. Through this work, he contributes to broader discussions on interdisciplinarity, academic integrity, and the human dimensions of scholarly practice.

Lilija Duoblienė

Response-ability and Responsibility in Education: Following Donna Haraway

This presentation examines the specificity of the Anthropocene and argues for a new onto-ethico-epistemological approach, particularly in education. Reconsidering the notion of responsibility through Donna Haraway's concept of *response-ability*, it highlights the ethical and ecological urgency of coexistence in a world marked by the interdependence of human and nonhuman forms of life. The discussion emphasizes biodiversity, care, and attentiveness to the fragile conditions that sustain life, suggesting that meaningful human existence depends upon responsiveness to other species and planetary life more broadly.

The presentation argues that, although Donna Haraway develops a posthumanist rather than an existential philosophy, she nevertheless extends, in certain respects, the philosophical perspectives of Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Heidegger by broadening the ethical relation to the Other beyond the human sphere. While Levinas and Heidegger foreground attentiveness, responsibility, and openness to the World and to the Other primarily in relation to human existence, Haraway and her followers expand this ethical orientation toward all living beings and multispecies coexistence. In this sense, *response-ability* becomes an ethical practice of recognizing nonhuman life as equally significant within shared planetary existence. So the presentation further explores how attentiveness to everyday encounters with nonhuman others may reshape understandings of responsibility, coexistence, and care in the Anthropocene.

Finally, the presentation considers the implications of this paradigm shift for teacher education. It examines the value orientations promoted by international organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, focusing on their influence on teacher education, and professional development. The presentation compares these educational directions with contemporary theoretical perspectives and onto-ethico-epistemological turn.

BIOGRAPHY

Professor Lilija Duoblienė is Head of Educational Theory and Culture Department at Institute of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Vilnius. Her research topics are in philosophy and ideology of education, creativity and cultural encountering. Her works are based on theories of critical pedagogy, postmodernism and posthumanism. She is an author of many articles and few monographs, among them *Ideological Territories of Educational Change* (2011), *Rhythm and Refrain: In between philosophy and art* (2016, with co-authors), *Posthuman Education. Decoding* (2018), *Multimodal education: philosophy and practice* (2022, with co-author) and *Lithuanian School Futures: Drifting Through the Anthropocene* (2023, with co-authors).

Sayed Hassan Hussaini (Akhlāq)

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The Ontology of Learning: Love, Liberation, and Relational Being in Rumi and bell hooks

This article offers a comparative study of two major intellectual figures—a medieval Sufi mystic and a contemporary cultural theorist—who each articulate an educational vision grounded in love, critical thinking, and ethics: Jalaluddin Rumi and bell hooks. Despite their different eras and traditions, both advance a liberatory model of education that awakens critical consciousness, challenges dominant ideas and stereotypes, empowers students to transform themselves or society, nurtures the whole person (mind, body, spirit), and creates participatory classrooms that honor individual and collective identity. In their view, education becomes a site of resistance and self-creation, especially in an age dominated by big data and the reduction of humanity to consumerist self-interest.

Both Rumi and hooks insist that education must be holistic and never neutral. They emphasize human dignity, relationality, and the formative power of love. Love, for them, is not sentiment but a transformative force that reveals and directs human capabilities. Both reject the reduction of humanity to rational agents, valuing emotions as central to learning—hooks viewing emotions as political forces, Rumi as liberatory energies that reconnect the individual with life itself.

Liberatory education, in their shared view, frees students from domination by dismantling oppressive systems (racism, patriarchy, class hierarchy, ideological idols), healing emotional wounds, transforming relationships and communities, and cultivating ethical love. Liberation is collective, relational, emotional, and ethical; it requires transforming both society and the self. hooks emphasizes justice, arguing that political change is impossible without ethical renewal and shared moral commitments. Both place love at the center of education—as a revolutionary force, a political power, and the foundation of freedom—though Rumi focuses on individual spiritual liberation while hooks foregrounds collective freedom and social justice.

Both thinkers reject the liberal theory of education that limits its purpose to transmitting knowledge, developing rational autonomy, and preparing individuals for economic and civic participation. For hooks, education should transform society, not merely help individuals navigate it. Together, they call for a shift from liberal educational theory to a transformative pedagogy in which students cultivate critical consciousness, emotional awareness, ethical maturity, community, and collective liberation.

The study also examines how love functions in their philosophies as a verb and an ethical practice. Love is an action and a disciplined commitment—a form of spiritual and moral “gardening” that fosters growth and transformation. While hooks identifies six pillars of love—care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust—Rumi expresses similar qualities through a mystical and poetic lens. In both frameworks, love is a radical ethic that restores dignity, emotional wholeness, and healing through self-examination and self-realization.

Although their styles differ—hooks writing analytically and pedagogically, Rumi poetically and ecstatically—their phenomenological approaches converge. hooks emphasizes horizontal transformation (social and interpersonal), while Rumi envisions vertical transformation (spiritual ascent and ego transcendence). Yet both affirm that love in education is a transformative practice that reveals people to one another, strengthens community, and enables authentic living. This study draws on hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress* and Rumi’s *Masnawi* and *Divan-i Shams* to explore their complementary visions of liberatory education.

BIOGRAPHY

Sayed Hassan Akhlaq is Professor of philosophy and ethics at Coppin State University, Baltimore, USA. Former professional lecturer in philosophy and religion at George Washington University for graduate programs. Authored: *Intellectuals and Spiritual Debates in Islam* (Cluj University Press, 2023) and *The Making of Shia Ayatollahs* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2023). Co-edited: *Exiled Scholars in Western Academia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), *The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary and/or Conflictual?* (CRVP, 2017).

Adomas Kačiušis

Beyond Knowledge and Skills: Revaluating the Value and the Values of Education

In discussions on the formation of values through education, the key question is: which values should be formed today, and on what grounds? Contemporary schooling operates on factory-like and banking logics, shaped by ready-made knowledge, measurement, and usefulness. At the same time, social life is mediated by screens, algorithms, AI-generated simulations, and fragmented attention. It is also marked by abundance: too much information, stimuli, choices, and overloaded curricula that lead to exhaustion and weaken attention, reflection, and meaningful striving. Under such conditions, the question of educational value returns: whom should education serve, and what should it cultivate in the human being?

Nietzsche's figure of the Last Man offers a lens for reading tendencies toward passivity, conformity, comfort-seeking, and the weakening of creativity, uniqueness, and the desire to strive for something beyond convenience. His reflections on cultural overload, together with Byung-Chul Han's exhaustion society, illuminate a world in which human beings become tired, overstimulated, and vulnerable to managed pleasure and conformism. *Idiocracy*, *Wall-E*, and *The Matrix* serve as metaphors for a humanity increasingly satisfied with simulation, convenience, and self-forgetting. Revaluating educational values against such a scenario means renewing and rearranging them in light of present conditions.

Drawing on Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia*, Hannah Arendt's understanding of education as responsibility for a common world, and Gert Biesta's distinction between qualification, socialization, and subjectification, the argument is that schooling remains valuable only when it does more than prepare individuals to function. Qualification remains necessary, including the ability to adapt and act effectively in the world. Education becomes fully valuable when subjectification is not crowded out and human beings become not only useful and capable, but also responsible, attentive, creative, and capable of shaping themselves. From this perspective, education's value lies primarily in helping future generations move away from Nietzsche's Last Man, first by clarifying which values should guide curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture.

BIOGRAPHY

Adomas Kačiušis is a PhD candidate in Educology at Vilnius University and a teacher of Physics, IT, and Life Skills for grades 5-8. His pedagogical career began in early childhood education, where he worked as a kindergarten teacher from 2010 to 2016. His academic background includes a BA in Physics, a teacher qualification, and an MBA. His doctoral research focuses on the role of teachers in contemporary education in Lithuania, with particular attention to educational values, teacher agency, and teaching against passivity and conformity. He presented his doctoral project at the 2024 Doctoral Winter School in Druskininkai, the 2025 Three Minute Thesis competition, and the 2025 Doctoral Conference on Public Education and Public Pedagogy, organized by Gert Biesta. He is also a researcher in an Educology project on the impact of mindfulness practices on teachers' work.

Simona Kontrimienė

Ultimate Meaning in Life As a Faith-Inspired Value: How Do Students Perceive God?

The concept of ultimate meaning in life as the highest ontological value largely determines how one interprets the most important questions of life and its extreme situations—the nature of life and death, the meaning of suffering and pain, and what truly matters. This concept depends on the extent to which the sacredness of experience unfolds within the person, which can be defined as a sense of unity of opposites, the dissolution of dichotomies, and a deeply felt “invisible order” which penetrates human consciousness through mystical peak experiences or deep inspiration. One’s meaning in life begins to take shape from the very moment of birth as an internal cognitive schema, and psychological development and theistic beliefs often follow the principle “as with parents, so with God,” whereby a person’s concept of God or the Higher Power is largely a projection of feelings experienced toward parents (Frielingsdorf, 2003, 2017; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008; Kontrimienė, 2022).

Our content analysis study reveals the traditional, atheistic, postmodernist, and metamodernist conceptions of a Higher Power (i.e., God) among students (N = 514) from five Lithuanian universities, which suggest that the image an individual has formed of the Higher Power reflects the matrix of internalized relationships with significant others—individuals project these templates onto divine figures for existential security. In the long run, this translates into one’s understanding of ultimate meaning in life as a fundamental value.

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Simona Kontrimienė is as an Associate Professor of ESP (Psychology) and Quantitative Research Methods at Vilnius University, Lithuania. Her research interests cover methods in social science research, spirituality, parenting, romantic love, etc.

Roma Kriaučiūnienė

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Fostering Critical Thinking and Values through the Action-Oriented Approach in Collaborative Learning

This study examines students' perceptions of a collaborative, problem-based assignment –the Team Research Project–implemented within an English for Academic Purposes and Research course for Childhood Pedagogy students at the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University. Drawing on the Action-oriented Approach (AoA) (Piccardo and North, 2019; Fischer, 2021, 2022) and the CEFR Companion Volume (2020), the course was designed to support the development of communicative competence alongside critical thinking (CT), academic skills, and the development of values as they emerge and are enacted through collaborative relationships.

Adopting a qualitative design, data were collected from 32 first-year students through structured written reflections. Content analysis identified four key thematic areas: perceived advantages, limitations of the task, learning outcomes, and recommendations for improvement. Overall, students responded positively, emphasizing gains in teamwork, communication, research abilities, and CT, as well as increased awareness of relational values such as responsibility, respect, cooperation, and accountability as experienced within group work. Many also noted enhanced motivation, personal development, and a more nuanced understanding of the role of CT and values in educational contexts.

Overall, the findings affirm the effectiveness of the AoA-based collaborative tasks in enhancing language, critical thinking, value-oriented relational competencies and engagement within group settings. The study supports broader implementation of such methodologies in tertiary-level foreign language education to meet 21st-century educational goals, including the integrated development of CT and value-based engagement in social learning contexts.

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BIOGRAPHY

Professor Roma Kriaučiūnienė is doctor of social sciences (Educational Sciences), director of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University. Her professional interests include: plurilingualism and intercultural communication, foreign language didactics, personality development in teaching/ learning process at universities; development of value attitudes and moral democratic competence.

Juozapas Labokas

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'I Want to Go to School': Values Shaping Positive Student-Teacher Relationships

This presentation draws on doctoral research investigating students' experiences of school alienation. The study was conducted in 2023–2024 across three general education schools in Lithuania and focused on twelfth-grade students as the target population. Employing a qualitative research design, the study was grounded in the school alienation framework developed by Morinaj and Hadjar (2023), using their validated questionnaire to examine both the prevalence and the specific characteristics of alienation in the selected school contexts.

While the broader research addresses multiple dimensions of alienation, this presentation concentrates specifically on the dialogical relationship between student and teacher, as well as between the student and the learning process itself. These relationships are conceptualized as antithetical to alienation, providing a lens through which more positive educational experiences can be understood. The analysis presented here seeks to identify the value-based models that contribute to the development of constructive, dialogical interactions in these domains.

The findings suggest that a positive or dialogical student-teacher relationship, from the student's perspective, is strongly influenced by intrinsic motivation to learn, a sense of responsibility, a genuine desire to understand academic content, and the ability to communicate these intentions effectively to teachers. These student-related factors appear to play a crucial role in initiating and sustaining meaningful educational engagement. From the teacher's relational perspective, dialogical relationships are characterized by intentional openness, active communication, and a willingness to accept and recognize the student as an active participant in the learning process. Furthermore, the study indicates that students' motivation to learn is often shaped by their family environment and may, in many cases, be described as "inherited" through familial values and expectations. Teachers who demonstrate openness and strong communicative competencies are more likely to recognize this motivation and respond by allocating additional resources—such as time, instructional materials, and personalized attention—to support student learning. This combination fosters mutual acceptance between student and teacher, or a dialogical relationship, which in turn exerts a positive influence on the student's relationship with the learning process.

Overall, the findings highlight the interplay between student dispositions and teacher practices in fostering dialogical relationships that counteract alienation. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how value-oriented educational interactions can support student engagement and reduce experiences of alienation in secondary education settings.

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Juozapas Labokas is a Senior Lecturer and researcher at Vilnius University, Institute of Educational Sciences. His research focuses on relational pedagogy, alienation in education, and the educational philosophy of Martin Buber. In addition to his academic work, he serves as a civics teacher at a secondary school. J. Labokas is currently an advisor on education policy in the Lithuanian national parliament.

Rūta Petkutė

Levinas and the University: Ethical Encounter and Democratic Possibility

Discussions of value formation in education tend to focus on schools and on the early years of life, where character, citizenship, and moral judgment are thought to take shape. Yet much of the work of education continues afterwards — in universities, where adults encounter texts, ideas, and one another, and where what they thought they knew may be unsettled. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas, this paper asks how the university might be understood not as a place of one-way value transmission, but as a place of ethical encounter and relational intellectual inquiry. It also asks how such an understanding speaks to democratic life under contemporary conditions.

For Levinas, ethics begins not in the cultivation of virtues but in the face-to-face encounter with the Other, who interrupts my world and calls me into responsibility. This is not a pedagogy of formation: those I encounter in inquiry are not material for my purposes but others to whom I am answerable. Knowledge, on this view, is not transmitted but emerges in the relation to the Other, in an encounter that exceeds what one already contains.

Although Levinas's ethics has shaped a substantial body of work in philosophy of education, it has rarely been brought into higher education. Through a close reading of Levinas in dialogue with higher education studies, the paper argues that under conditions of neoliberal policy transformation and democratic decline, when the university is framed as an instrument for the production of human capital, the formation of citizens, and the delivery of measurable competencies, a Levinasian reading offers different conceptual resources. On this reading, the university appears as a place where knowledge, responsibility, and democratic life take shape relationally. They are not outcomes engineered by curriculum but practices of encounter, inquiry, responsibility, and exposure to otherness.

Democracy here is not a settled state to be reproduced. It emerges unpredictably in the relations that the university makes possible. Responsibility — Levinas's central category — names a value that the university does not produce but to which it can call those who study and teach there. This call, the paper argues, is one of the conditions under which democratic life can be reimagined and sustained amid democratic decline.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Rūta Petkutė is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Vilnius University working in higher education studies. Her research examines the relationship between universities, democracy, and knowledge under conditions of neoliberal policy transformation and contemporary democratic decline. Her work integrates philosophy and sociology of higher education with critical policy studies.

Jolanta Saldukaitytė

Between the Other and the World: Rethinking Teacher Authority with Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt

In my paper I am going to reconsider an educational approach grounded in equality, collaboration, and democratic learning. Within this framework, the student is understood as an equal partner, while the teacher is seen not as an authority but as a facilitator. The question is whether such student-centered education remains responsible for the student's development as an engaged citizen and adequately introduces them into a world that is not yet familiar. This perspective is developed through the introduction of Levinasian asymmetry and Arendt's concept of authority. At the core of Levinas's philosophy is the ethical face-to-face relation, which emphasizes proximity and vulnerability, while also asserting that the relation to the Other as irreducible alterity is fundamentally asymmetrical. The "I" is always more responsible for the Other. In the educational context, this means that the teacher bears greater responsibility for the student. Arendt, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of authority as a form of responsible guidance into the world. She argues that pre-political authority – once grounding the durability and continuity of the world and structuring relations between adults and children, teachers and students – is no longer secure. While for Levinas the teacher-student relation is asymmetrical and therefore ethical, for Arendt authority arises from responsibility for the world and its representation to youth. Together these perspectives challenge purely egalitarian models of education by showing that responsibility and authority cannot be fully grounded in symmetry and equality.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Jolanta Saldukaitytė is an Associate Professor and Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy, Vilnius University, Lithuania. Her research is situated within contemporary continental philosophy and phenomenology, with particular emphasis on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and the problem of evil in contemporary thought. She also teaches at the Faculty of Philology and the Institute of Educational Sciences, contributing to the education of future philosophy teachers.

She is currently a member of the research group *Breakthrough in Educational Research: Assessment of Philosophy Teaching in High School Education* (P-EDU-23-19), and a programme developer and implementer for the National Programme *Development of Subject-Matter and Didactic Competences of Philosophy and Ethics Teachers*. Her recent projects include *Reception of Emmanuel Levinas' Thought in Contemporary Philosophical Discourse* (S-LIP-22-62, 2022–2024) and *Modernity and the Holocaust in Lithuania* (S-MOD-21-8, 2021–2022), where she served as principal investigator.

Emilia Śmiechowska-Petrovskij

One class – many paths. How formative assessment supports every student

This presentation discusses formative assessment as a practical and ethical strategy for teaching in heterogeneous classrooms and for building high-quality education for all learners. Its starting point is a shift that is now well established in inclusive education: instead of treating special educational needs as a problem located in a small group of individual students, contemporary pedagogy increasingly views learner diversity as a constitutive feature of every classroom and as a challenge for the whole school system, not only for specialists or separate forms of provision (Dycht, 2021; UNESCO, 2020; Zaorska, 2019). From this perspective, inclusion is not simply a matter of placement, but of designing teaching, assessment, and school culture in ways that reduce barriers to learning and participation for all students (UNESCO, 2020).

Against this background, the paper argues that formative assessment should be treated not as an additional teaching technique, but as one of the key mechanisms through which inclusive and high-quality education becomes possible in everyday school practice. In diverse groups, students differ not only in diagnosed needs or disability status, but also in learning pace, prior knowledge, self-regulation, emotional resources, motivation, and self-perception. Traditional assessment, especially when it is selective, comparative, and strongly grade-oriented, often reinforces hierarchy rather than learning. It tends to reward those who fit dominant expectations most quickly and makes it harder for other students to recognize their own progress. Formative assessment changes this logic because its central aim is to provide feedback that helps learners understand where they are, what they have achieved, what still needs work, and how they can move forward (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The presentation also places formative assessment within a strengths-based framework, drawing on the Reflected Best Self perspective, which emphasizes the developmental value of recognizing competence, effort, and potential rather than focusing exclusively on deficits (Roberts et al., 2005). In this sense, formative assessment is not merely descriptive feedback. It is a way of supporting the learner's developing sense of agency. When students receive constructive information about what they can already do, what strategies helped them succeed, and what their next step should be, they are more likely to develop persistence, self-efficacy, responsibility for their own learning, and the capacity for self-regulation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Panadero et al., 2019). This is particularly important in mixed-ability and inclusive classrooms, where students may reach similar educational goals through different pathways and at different times.

The empirical background of the presentation draws on research conducted within the *Psychological and Pedagogical Support Programme for Students and Teachers*, funded by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science and implemented by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and its partners in 2021–2022 (Śmiechowska-Petrovskij et al., 2022; UKSW, 2021). The findings form part of a broader mixed-methods study developed in response to the educational consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study showed that many students perceived school and assessment negatively: as mechanisms of discipline and control, as practices that produce and reinforce inequalities, and as systems that encourage learning for grades rather than for understanding or personal development. Students also pointed to the relational costs of such assessment practices, describing them as harmful to trust, classroom climate, and student–teacher relationships. The central claim of the presentation is that formative assessment supports every student not because it lowers expectations, but because it makes development visible, values individual progress, and strengthens responsibility, perseverance, self-knowledge, respect for difference, and meaningful participation in a shared learning community (Dycht, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

BIOGRAPHY

Emilia Śmiechowska-Petrovskij, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education at the Faculty of Education, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland. She holds a PhD in Social Sciences in the field of Education, an MA in Special Education with a specialization in the education and rehabilitation of blind and visually impaired persons, and an MA in Polish Studies in the fields of Polish literature and language in European civilization, with a professional specialization in editing and publishing. Her academic and professional work focuses on special and inclusive education, disability studies, educational accessibility, and support for learners with diverse developmental and educational needs. Her research interests include visual impairment, Braille education, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, reading initiation, the accessibility of culture and visual arts, as well as the broader pedagogical and social dimensions of inclusion.

Julija Tuleikytė

The Role of Formation in Paulo Freire and Zygmunt Bauman's Philosophical Conceptions

The presentation focuses on the phenomenon of formation as construction of social reality. The term “formation” is interpreted in two different ways – both as formal education and as formation of culture in general – and the relation between the two meanings is analysed in the philosophical conceptions of Paulo Freire and Zygmunt Bauman. In addition, the relation between the theories themselves is analysed.

Paulo Freire criticized the banking model of education as the one that objectifies people. In contrast, he found critical pedagogy to emancipate human beings – and to thus humanize them. Humanization being the core value of not only formal education, but also culture in general, it plays a pivotal role in Paulo Freire’s conception of formation. He puts culture under the umbrella of pedagogy, considering pedagogical principles to be the main principles of a person’s relation to the world and other people.

Zygmunt Bauman, in contrast, regarded education to be a part of a broader phenomenon of culture. After the “liquid turn” in his writings in 2000, much of his attention focused on the contemporary form of culture which he named “liquid modernity”. He found globalization and individualism to be the core features of culture nowadays, and he considered objectifying and commodifying treatment of the self and other people to be the features of “consumer society”. However, his critique of consumer society by using a method that Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Sophia Marshman have called “humanization through metaphors” can be regarded as an alternative proposed in the face of dehumanizing consumeristic formation of values in contemporary society.

The presentation dwells on a thesis that Bauman’s “humanization through metaphors” is a formation model that functions as Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy in favour of retaining or getting back the core human values in the liquid times of consumer society.

BIOGRAPHY

Julija Tuleikytė is a lecturer of philosophy at Vilnius University, the Faculty of Philosophy. After BA, MA and doctorate studies in philosophy, the postdoctorate research was done in an interdisciplinary field of education philosophy. Current research focuses on ideas of Paulo Freire, Zygmunt Bauman and critical theory.

Žilvinas Vareikis

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The value of responsibility in Paulo Freire's Theory of Critical Pedagogy and Philosophy

This presentation analyses how the concept of responsibility—a relatively recent emergence in Western European literature—is conceptualized in the critical pedagogy of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who emphasizes pupil's liberation from a rigid educational system. Traditionally, in the continental philosophical tradition, the concept of responsibility is linked to the notions of freedom, duty, and guilt, which reveal different aspects of responsibility as a central category. In contrast, P. Freire's pedagogical theory examines responsibility as a direct outcome of the process of *conscientização*—critical consciousness. Unlike the continental tradition, which tends to prioritize theoretical reflection on responsibility, P. Freire's approach foregrounds the social engagement of the educator. In Lithuanian school system, this commitment may manifest itself as educator's readiness to transform educational content and strategies aiming to effectively educate citizens who would be able to bear civic responsibility for their own country.

BIOGRAPHY

In 2012, **Dr. Žilvinas Vareikis** earned master's degree in philosophy from Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania. In 2017, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Since 2020, he has been a researcher at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. In 2013, he conducted a research internship at Albertus Magnus University in Cologne, Germany. In 2015, he participated in the international project "Inclusive Education in the Nord and in the Baltic States" at Akureyri University in Iceland. His main research interests include continental philosophy, philosophy of culture, ethics, philosophy of morality, and climate change. He is the author of one monograph and more than 40 articles in the scientific journals of philosophy, including several in the English and German languages. He has published several translations of German philosophers, notably a compilation of essays by Max Scheler. He contributes to organizing conferences at Lithuanian Culture Research Institute.

Joao Vila-Cha

Facing the Other: Education, the Person, and the Formation of Values: Martin Buber, Romano Guardini, and Emmanuel Levinas on What It Means to Teach and Be Taught

The paper addresses the formation of values in education by returning to three thinkers whose work converges on a single demanding insight: genuine education is not the transmission of a moral code but the cultivation of a capacity for encounter. Romano Guardini opens the inquiry with a prophetic diagnosis. His notion of the *un-human* (*das Unmenschliche*) – a being dispossessed of interiority and exposed to pure power – suggests that the crisis of value formation in our time is inseparable from the crisis of the person itself. Education cannot address the former without confronting the latter. Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue offers the first constructive response. Against the reduction of human relations to the I-It mode of use and measurement, Buber argues that genuine formation requires I-Thou encounter: a space in which the student is met not as a set of competencies to be developed, but as a centre of the world in their own right. His account of "one-sided inclusion" – the educator's imaginative entry into the student's experience – models a pedagogical responsibility that is both humanly demanding and philosophically rigorous. Emmanuel Levinas, born in Kaunas and formed in the intellectual tradition of Lithuanian Jewry, radicalizes this account. For Levinas, it is not the teacher who first addresses the student, but the student – as Other, as face – who first addresses the teacher, posing a question that precedes all content: *do you acknowledge me?* His distinction between *le dire* (the living act of address) and *le dit* (the content transmitted) maps directly onto the difference between education as genuine formation and education as mere information transfer. The argument is that person, dialogue, and responsibility form a constitutive triad for all authentic value formation – one that contemporary educational theories, focused on complexity and communicative rationality, tend to overlook. Values are not constructed or negotiated; they are received, in encounter, from the face of the Other. The presentation shall conclude by reflecting on education as *hospitality* – a concept whose full weight I strongly associate with places such as Vilnius and Lithuania, a city and country whose history embodies both the cost and the dangers of mis-recognizing the Other and the human capacity to rebuild authentic communities grounded in sustainable processes of education.

BIOGRAPHY

João J. Vila-Chã, studied Philosophy and Theology in Portugal (1982-1987), Germany (1987-1991) and the United States (1991-1997). Concluded his PhD. in Renaissance Philosophy at Boston College (USA) in 1998 with a Thesis on Leone Ebreo and the Intelligibility of Love. At Boston College, taught in the Programs Philosophy of the Person (1992-1993) and Perspectives on Western Culture (1993-1996). From 1998-2008 taught History of Contemporary Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion at the Catholic University of Portugal (Braga) and since 2008 has been teaching Social and Political Philosophy at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana, in Rome (Italy). Was Editor-in-Chief of the *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* (2000-2009) and served as member of the Editorial Board of journals such as *Concilium* (2012-2019), *Síntese* (Brasil), and *Pensamiento* (Spain). Was President of the European Association of Jesuit Professors of Philosophy (2002-2008) and of the *Conférence Mondiale des Institutions Catholiques Universitaires de Philosophie* (COMIUCAP, 2013-2022). Since 2011, functions as Vice-President of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (U.S.A.) and as Director of the Post-Graduate International Seminar that the same Council offers yearly to chosen Scholars from different parts of the world. Member of University Senate of the Pontifical Gregorian University between 2010-2018 and again since the Fall of 2024. In 2017, received the International Karl-Otto Apel Prize for Philosophy. During the World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing, China (2018), was elected Member of the Steering Committee of FISP–International Federation of Philosophical Societies; in Rome, during the XXV World Congress of Philosophy, was reelected for another 5 year term (2024-). For more information, please, access [here](#).

[Brief CV](#)

Viktorija Voldogaitė

Not Everyone Hurts, Hates, Arrests: Education as a Humanizing Space for Value Formation

In contexts of displacement, control, and exclusion—where individuals experience what Agamben (1998) describes as *bare life*—education can become one of the few spaces where human dignity and moral meaning are restored. This presentation explores how education contributes to the formation of values such as empathy, justice, and solidarity in dehumanizing environments. Drawing on the notion of education as humanization (Freire, 1970) and action as affirmation of plurality and humanity (Arendt, 1958), it discusses the transformative potential of teachers' practices in migrant camps. Based on qualitative reflections from Lithuanian camps, the presentation shows how teachers create safe spaces, offer socio-emotional support, and advocate for children's rights—turning pedagogy into an act of moral resistance. As one teacher expressed, “I wanted the children and families in the caravans to understand that not everyone in Lithuania is like this—not everyone hurts, hates, arrests”. This stance reflects education's capacity to challenge dehumanization and cultivate values grounded in care and recognition. The presentation argues that in times of moral fragility, education's task extends beyond instruction toward rebuilding trust, affirming humanity, and forming ethical consciousness.

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BIOGRAPHY

Viktorija Voldogaitė is an Assistant Professor at Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Educational Sciences, and a postdoctoral researcher at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum). She holds a PhD in Education. Her research focuses on education in crisis contexts, value formation, and the humanizing role of teachers. Her recent work examines teachers' experiences with migrant children in Lithuania.