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## European Philosophers Radim Palouš and Jozef Piaček on Phenomenological Themes of Education, Syncriticism and Philosophy of Concordance

Radim Palouš i Jozef Piaček, dwaj filozofowie  
o fenomenologicznych wątkach edukacji, synkrytycyzmie  
i filozofii zgodności

**Abstract:** In the present article, the possibilities of teaching the philosophy of syncriticism and life of concordance as *conditio humana* and mediation of philosophical thinking to youth (students) and teachers in the era of ignorance (Paul Liessmann) are discussed. Using the philosophical concept of syncriticism, the author attempts to open and defend the otherness of philosophy in the system of education, justify its enriching and provocative dimension, its free-teaching time (Jan Patočka), life practice in building relationships and the authentic life of our everyday existence (Radim Palouš). In the philosophy of syncriticism and competence of concordance (Jozef Piaček) and in

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indifference to the future, we see the meaningfulness of philosophical education and find its new possibilities and challenges concerning *homo educandus*.

**Keywords:** syncreticism; perichrony; homo educandus; concordance; philosophy of education.

**Abstrakt:** W przedkładanym tekście przedstawiamy refleksję z zakresu filozofii wychowania, rozumianego jako *conditio humana*, która może stać się refleksją nad możliwościami myślenia filozoficznego (kultywowania myślenia) wśród młodzieży w dobie ignorancji (Konrad Paul Liessmann). Prezentujemy filozoficzny projekt synkrytycyzmu, w którym autorzy odsłaniają wątki filozofii daru i akceptacji inności w filozofii wychowania i w systemie edukacji filozoficznej, w przestrzeni czasu wolnego od pracy (niedzielnego – wolnego dla nauczania, Jan Patočka) i budowania relacji w autentycznej codzienności (Radim Palouš). Filozofia synkrytycyzmu wraz z możliwościami, jakie daje zgodność (Jozef Piaček), pozwala nam dostrzegać sensowność filozofii wychowania; odnajdujemy w niej nowe możliwości i wyzwania dla człowieka jako *homo educandus*; niejako „źródło „świeżej wody” (*aqua vita*).

**Słowa kluczowe:** synkrytycyzm; ponadczasowość (perichronia); *homo educandus*; zgodność (konkordancja); filozofia wychowania.

## 1. Introduction

Currently, that is, in the post-factual period, or rather, in the ‘late period’ (Bělohradský), philosophy is constantly trying to define the space for uncovering the truth, trying to create conditions for its manifestation. In the background of a lively philosophical discourse on the importance of philosophy in the field of citizenship education, several current and inspiring topics can be discovered. An important finding of contemporary philosophy is that education and its functions always refer to a certain understanding of the world, while ‘this understanding is our horizon, it is inscribed in our language and our cultural tradition, although we cannot precisely, once and for all, define the structures of this horizon’ (Pinc, 1999, p. 96). Horizon has an elusive and non-manipulatable metaphysical basis, perhaps also as a necessary fundament for justifying the need for metaphysics (Braque, 2011). The theme of the Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), introduced to our philosophy in the interwar period by Jan Patočka, was further developed at the beginning of the 1970s in the post-war interest in the work of

Comenius, also in the context of the philosophy of education (Palouš, 2007). At the same time, today, we are conscious of the classical question of the relationship between education and philosophy calling for a new reflection (Svobodová, 2005). The media and the possibilities of the information society also contribute to the fundamental change in understanding the meaning and purpose of the natural world. The impact of this change can also be seen in the relationship of citizenship education to making civic attitudes mature amidst participatory democracy. However, by changing the functions and requirements of the world of education, its actor – the pupil, the student – is also fundamentally changing. After all, according to Liessmann, ‘young people grow up in a world in which they have to meet certain standards from an early age. Tests are standardised, so is the form of secondary school work’ (Liessmann, 2010, p. 34). The definition of the term education in educational institutions of today’s information society also reflects the **crisis of the natural world**, the crisis of authority and education that accompanies our current situation of technologisation of information reality. With Liessmann, we believe that the informatisation of society is not a self-saving solution to the crisis of education today. The economic order and the proclamations of the political order too promise a lot from investments in the so-called knowledge economy, under which, however, it understands investment in technical modernisation of schools, internetisation, provision of schools with multimedia facilities, etc. Nevertheless, the technologisation of education may be perceived as an acute danger, too. Information (from the Latin *informare*: to create, educate, form) is quickly being technologised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is also proved by the progress of cybernetics. Education is becoming principally a technological and bureaucratic process, no longer a preparation for life (*Lebenslehre*) because such education is not open to nature (*φύσις*). However, originally, *informatio* is associated with education and only consequently, as an improvement of the ability to perform an activity, it leads to a qualification. Technologisation of the notion *information* makes even qualification become the technology, which technologises the entire education. According to Zdeněk Kratochvíl, a significant example of technologisation of education is the notion of the process of education that simulates a technological process. The paradigmatic change in the function of education occurred because ‘contemporary education has not been expected to provide education for a long time ..., however, foremost, to grant such qualification that is needed for the technological and bureaucratic

side of the flow of society – and which, moreover, can be tested and verified’ (Kratochvíl, 1995, p. 155).

## 2. Crisis of postmodern education

By searching for a solution to the utilitarian capitalisation of knowing, as well as for social hopes invested in the cure-all of building the so-called knowledge economy and the resulting situation of the ‘bleak state of spirit’ (Liesmann, 2006), education must be addressed. If the times have changed radically, ‘it is impossible to overlook that European education is perhaps the main “culprit” of the current educational form’ (Palouš, 2008, p. 8). Where Radim Palouš sees room for Patočka’s concept of the ‘opened soul,’ another topic opens up simultaneously, which is the denaturation of the natural world. The initiative of rediscovery of the sense of *φύσις* could represent a response to the factual state of denaturation. The author of the paper believes that education is co-responsible for whether the ability of natural metabolic (in the sense of maintenance of unity in the whirlwind of changes) thinking will develop further in culture or whether it will become a mere utilitarian-based sophistication for reaching partial goals (career growth, technological management of a profession or social roles, defence of social status and efficiency of performance). The postmodern plurality of possibilities does not have to be just an influx of entertainment products, which are supposed to create an illusion of new freedom for a while so that we can apply it again in a new choice. The postmodern diaphora (difference) can also become a challenge for education. The rationalist, enlightenment and technocratic reforms of education forget about the **transmission of the secret** which is what characterises education the most. They forget about the unspeakable, which cannot be thematised by calculating technical reasoning, but is always present in education as a claim of the unconditional. Education is ‘an event, a magical wonder (*thauma*)’ (Palouš, 2008, p. 11). And *scholé* is not primarily an institution, a hatchery of education, an institute of productivity of knowledge, but originally it is the opposite of busyness (*ascholia*), a release from the activities and worries of everyday life; it is **an event**, a festive moment of concentration in the gap between the humdrum activities of everyday rush and duties. This **festivity** stands in the very depth of education. If *paideia* is, in essence, a feast, a Sunday, then to educate means ‘to be in sun-day’ (Palouš, 2008, p. 11).

Postmodern education for life (Lebenslehre) reveals, above all, the possibility of becoming and **the possibility of how to be**.

The educator, as a teacher of life, teaches together with what they pass on as known at the same time and, above all, what they do not know, about what they do not know. What they do not know and can never turn into some knowledge, they learn primarily from those they teach (Michálek, 1996, p. 88).

As mentioned, education is, above all, the transmission and reception of the secret of being. What we do not positively know, but is important for our being, what we carry within us and what we pass on to others and learn to accept from them, we must not suppress in ourselves, because this is what makes education a true 'mountain education' (Palouš, 2008) to an open society. 'The path that the educator and the educated walk together in life leads so to say across a forest with no paths (prepared paths); thus, it is necessary to find one where no paths lead after all' (Michálek, 1996, p. 88). However, this opens humans to responsibility for every step. Walking up the hill and down the dale, we never know in advance all human possibilities, the possibilities of how to *be*. We grow into them, we learn to be ready to recognise them and to think where they emerge. The secret of education resides in the fact that we learn something that we as teachers do not know ourselves.

### 3. Perichronosophy as syncritical education

Syncritic education offers a specific way of grasping the possibilities of how to educate citizens in terms of sun-day in the *late period*. It is based on the assumptions of the syncritic philosophy of timelessness, that is, perichronosophy (Piaček, 2003). This unique way of philosophical thinking, impacted by phenomenology and the thoughts of Jan Patočka in many aspects, as an original contribution of Slovak philosophy, was introduced and elaborated by the Slovak philosopher Jozef Piaček. *Perichorésis* is the basic notion used by classical theology of the Western type, or more precisely, the Jewish-Christian tradition, which denotes a dynamic relationship of persons, existential relationality, mutual penetration, onto-theology and the metaphysical concept of eternity in the works of Heidegger and Lévinas, giving oneself as a gift.

Classical theology uses the notion of *perichorésis* to metaphorically describe what is otherwise defined by the Trinitarian model of Christian theology (Piaček, 2004, s. 11). Etymologically, the notion *chorea* can be interpreted as singing; however, singing is associated with visibility, somatic expression and dance, while *perichorésis* means penetrating each other by dancing, co-dancing, dancing together with the rhythm of life. In this way, early Christian theology envisioned the Trinity of God. The mystery of faith was described by the Church Fathers as a dance, the mutual intertwining of persons, with the existential unity that arises and persists between them. Such attunement or tuning of intimacy can also be perceived in relationships, in marriage, in intellectual and spiritual communities, in upbringing and in self-giving.

**Perichrony** is at the same time penetration through several types of time. As is known, it is possible to perceive the category of time from various viewpoints—physical-mathematical, existential-personal, from the intimate experience of temporality to the mystical experience of timelessness. *Perichrony* would then mean the penetration of several types or versions of time into our consciousness. Perichrony is a transcendence of timelessness over time, it is a maintenance of time in its happening, in its rhythms, forms and shapes. Husserl too described the perception of time in our consciousness uniquely in his *Phenomenology of Consciousness and Inner Time Experience*. So, Husserl, as it is well known, talks about retention, protention and the actuality of temporality. However, we perceive time as a continuum, as a continuous course of events in the medium of consciousness; we perceive time as passage, duration. Nevertheless, there are at least three different natures of perception of temporality: the temporality of advance—I am thinking of something awaiting me, a kind of expectation. Then the current presence is largely illusory because it is something that I no longer have in my hands. This is *timelessness* in perichrony. And at the same time, it is the past that is also no longer quite a time, that owned time, because it is already something that does not concern me, already behind me, and has passed irretrievably. So, even what we perceive as a continuous time happening, is not a continuum anymore. There is hence something we can call *timelessness* (Piaček, 2004, p. 12; Petříček, 2018, pp. 212–214).

Timelessness constantly penetrates us and attacks us. We always remain the heirs of the times past, which unmistakably affect our perception of the present, while this timelessness is a condition of happening as such. Thus, things happen because they have a correlate, a kind of relation to this basal

timelessness, to the eternal continuation of the fruits of the human spirit, or the reality of God. Thus, both finite and infinite time is a product of timelessness. This timelessness permeates everything, connects, echoes in the contemplative silence of meditation sounds like the sound of a bell expected at noon at a set family table, a bell that has not yet begun to ring, but it is heard in the hospitable atmosphere of the gift of home as a familiar invitation. Such timelessness is the basis of all possible healing effects, which relieve a person of physical and mental suffering. It is a great invitation to immerse oneself in meditation and prayer. It is a path of seeking inner harmony, not only mental and intellectual but also psychosomatic balance. Timelessness is an event of peace, tranquillity, silence and well-being (Piaček, 2014, pp. 124–125).

*Perichrony* is thus an authentic understanding of the relationship of our perception of time with a certain timelessness that is a condition of any time event. Timelessness is never absent here; it is we who lose access to it. In our everyday happenings of meaning and duty, overwhelmed by technology and the mechanical methodology of managing everyday life, we lose contact with this meaningful timelessness. The din and rumble of thoughts, events, processes, administrative actions, career expectations, the world of procurement and responsibilities, but also our passions, desires, trauma, injuries ... all these keep us away from the possibility of immersing ourselves in timelessness, into this basic setting of our life, which has its origins indeed in timelessness. Timelessness, *perichrony*, is what coordinates change, although it may not be recognisable itself in that change. Timelessness is what organises and structures every possibility, but it is, at the same time, articulatable and, therefore, recognisable within certain limits.

A new teaching of temporality that would develop such a specific understanding of time is *perichronology*. Though perichronology could be a positive science, it is closer to philosophy. According to Piaček, becoming a journeyman of perichronosophy, i.e. a practitioner of perichronology, means cultivating the teaching of this particular wisdom (*sofia*). Perichronosophy is not *sapientia per se*, nor a theoretical knowledge for a kind of intellectual self-satisfaction; rather, it is wisdom in the form of an invitation to the world, a call of the practical life. It is an invitation to organise one's life, *praxis* of our everyday life. It is a practical teaching of eternity, a teaching of how eternity addresses us and permeates us, how it enters our everyday temporality. At the same time, **perichronosophy** is, in the best sense of the word, a theory. If *theoria* refers

to *bios theoretikos*, then it is a life based on knowledge and, at the same time, practically lived.

The perichronic, that is, where the time of eternity permeates us, is recognisable – often in myths, art and eschatology. In the philosophy of transcendence, because the perichronic is always non-objectifiable, that is, what escapes us, a kind of horizon of all experiences. We are in the world, but we come from this eternity, while there are archetypal mental traces in our minds that invoke this memory in the way of feeling the need and desire for eternity. Ancient cultures and civilisations offer us a specific understanding of this perichrony. In their religious cults, in rituals and mythical narratives, in images (*eikones*) and metaphors, it is possible to obtain an insight into this specific dimension of temporality, which penetrates us in the way of desire and curiosity with which we approach, for example, art. This penetration of time is both perichronic and, in a way, simulacral. The path to knowing the truth presents itself as a challenge, a deed, a relationship and an event.

The historical understanding of perichrony is exemplary in various systems of religious mysticism. They are great statements about the events of love and generosity in our lives. Although mysticism often speaks on the verge of intelligibility about the elusive states of the human mind, although necessarily incomplete and allegorical it is always a message of loving people, a message of the event of love, of penetration of the loving into our lives (Piaček, 2014, pp. 120–121).

A good teaching of time penetration, that is, good perichronosophy, is, above all, a practical retreat from our ego. It is de-egoisation, that is, a lifelong work on our selfish needs. Mystics write here about the necessity of self-surrender and the emptying of a self-centred life. *Anegoity* is the only way to open up to perichrony, this penetration into our lives. *Anegoity* is the enablement of the eternal happening of time in life, while it is simultaneously the entry of otherness, alterity into our lives. **Syncretistic education** as perichronosophy is teaching to mature citizenship and a practical step towards the perception and acceptance of otherness in our lives. Above all, however, it is stepping forward to the otherness of time, which is not entirely available for our needs alone – the time we have to adapt to, which we can actively usher into our lives; possibly, also the otherness of God, the absolute or otherness of the other, the specifics of our life partner, the specifics of our colleagues and friends, the otherness of our neighbour (Lévinas, 1977). Perichronosophy is also a report on the end of



philosophy and the beginning of thought and on the apocalyptic of our times (Heidegger, 1969).

Perichronosophy is then a distinctive education, a syncriticistic education that teaches us what we have already forgotten, but what children still know: it is a step into the void, a commitment to the moment of trust, reception of help when someone offers their hand and we take the step into uncertainty. It is, in the true sense of the word, a creation of the space of trust, of home, and generous closeness. Perichronosophy is a step into the unknown, an opening to trust. It becomes a stepping out, a loving giving and accepting of the gift, while it always remains a step into the unknown. In perichronosophy, we have no choice but to call for the courage to step into the unknown: to jump and swim in unchartered waters. Perichronosophy is a challenge to practice, a challenge to the everyday living of reality. It is a challenge to swim in the ocean of being, being aware of balance and caution (Piaček, 2004, p. 13).

We face the problem of timelessness today because we have a problem with time—a problem with how we perceive the temporality of our lives. According to Piaček, we are looking for a way to timelessness (perichrony) because we are stuck in time. We are stuck in everyday procurement, in which we constantly reproduce time, wanting to catch up with it and replace it. We plan to put it by and return to it later. However, we may merge with the events and thus enter into timelessness only with the cessation of objectifying thinking and limitation of desires.

#### 4. Syncriticism – the way to concordance

Syncriticism is a medium of our lifestyle, a way of our life in which perichrony takes place (Janko & Janková, 1989, pp. 113–117). Perichrony, in turn, works in syncriticism. Syncriticism as special education, syncritical education, is an urgent challenge to contemporary education. It is the ability to perceive the world together with others (*Mitsein*), without the ambition of any manipulation and introduction of uniformity – To be thinking-with (*syn* = to be together), to be walking-with along the path. This walking-with along the path is not narcissism or mutual admiration; it is rather a perception of a common perspective, looking in a common direction. **Syncritical education** (*paedagogia syncritica*) proclaims a willingness to accept otherness in our life—it is creating

of time for the other, and it is open availability for our neighbour who remains irreducible. The desired consequence of syncritical education, which manifests itself as openness to the penetration of another time into our temporality, is *concordance*. This con-cor-dantia (lat.) is the willingness to accept the other in their uniqueness and distinctiveness. Concordance is the maximum of love. Humans, in their highest form, *homo-concordance*, is man capable of this concordantial (lat.). However, it is always a concordance of the other, the different, and it could be described as generosity – the willingness to meet the other, to leave one's dwelling open and accept the other as a guest and the willingness to share their time in our life of daily responsibilities. **Concordance** is the way for the community – it is the creation of an environment of support and acceptance.

## 5. Conclusion

Creativity is the creative attribute of concordance. It is literally a virtualisation, a challenge to become better–concordance as a challenge to make life a work of art as the most proper way of *epimeleia tes psyches*. The event of prayer points to the possibility of penetration by the otherness of time in a special way. Life is woven from the cloth of time, while the phenomenology of temporality reflects life in its essence, in the happening and passing of time.

Our everyday time, rhythmically renewed by festive events, may manifest itself as a time of mutual listening, teaching and education. It is a special time of celebration that has the power to transform. It is a time of *ascholia* and Sunday atmosphere—a specific time that interrupts everyday worries and allows us to discover a new beginning. This synchronisation, swimming in the ocean of being, is something that may become *chorea* that invites the other and thus takes them seriously. Syncriticistic education is a shared stepping, hand in hand, on the path of mountain education to mature **humanity and citizenship**. This can be recreational for not only ourselves but also all those who accept the invitation and enter the common path – with determination and trust – in concordance.

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The study is carried out as part of the VEGA Slovakia – Central European Perspectives of Thinking, No. 2/0078/21.