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Education and the Future of Human Identity According to Edgar Morin

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Abstract

This study revolves around the educational project of French philosopher Edgar Morin, in which he seeks to explore a better future for humanity. He worked on establishing foundations that should be present in every educational system. His book, "Education for the Future," stands as one of Morin's significant contributions to education, recognized by UNESCO, as it represents a deep inquiry into the field of education. Through this book, Morin attempted to theorize a global educational system based on a set of essential principles that every future-oriented education should possess in order to gain legitimacy. In his view, the educational system goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it aims to achieve human dimensions, namely the formation of individuals capable of keeping pace with the demands of the era and confronting its diverse and multifaceted problems.

Keywords: : Edagar Morin; Education ; Understanding; Future; Identity; Human.

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1. Introduction

The civilizational project of French thinker Edgar Morin (1921-?) emerges from his criticisms of classical philosophical paradigms, characterized by a reductionist and flawed perspective of the world and humanity. These criticisms resulted in significant epistemological gaps that necessitate a reevaluation of their key concepts and intellectual applications, particularly in various areas of life, including education. Morin arrived at proposing a new philosophical model known as "complex thought," recognizing that both the world and human beings possess a compositional and intricate nature. His works and research in the field of education served as practical applications of the results he achieved, aiming to theorize the establishment of an educational system. This system represents a human dimension that paves the way for building a better world for humanity, regardless of ideological, cultural, or belief-based differences in ideas. Edgar Morin, through his civilizational project, aspired to search for a comprehensive and better future for humanity. He worked on developing reforms based on fundamental principles and foundations that should be followed and implemented by human societies, with education being the

fundamental basis for shaping individuals ready to meet the demands of the era. So, how can education and its principles become a wager for a future of a better human identity?

Beginning, Edgar Morin emphasizes that every education seeks to acquire legitimacy, and every teaching aims to acquire authority. This necessitates surpassing the reductionist and reductive view of knowledge. Moreover, it must recognize the complex nature of the human being. This is the conclusion that the thinker has reached through a long period of research in the field of education. "Education, as an essential human right or, more precisely, a human need that an individual cannot fulfill on their own, completes their humanity. The human being has multidimensional aspects. We speak of education as a comprehensive and integrated growth process that encompasses physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and social growth. All of these aspects are integrated in a way that aligns with the society, ensuring its stability, continuity, and positive development." (Morin, *Challenges of the 21st Century*, 2001, p. 110).

Morin puts forth a set of conceptions regarding the objectives of the educational system. One of the most important conceptions is the establishment of a new educational system based on interconnected specializations, while simultaneously enhancing the mind's ability to think about individual and collective problems. From this perspective, Edgar Morin presents his philosophy of education as one of the most important approaches in contemporary Western thought, calling for a discourse of self-development through an optimistic vision. This philosophy can be defined as the study of education and its essence, as well as the problems it faces, making education its subject matter. (Morin, *Path for the Future of Humanity*, 2019, p. 214). This philosophy emerged as a result of and an implementation of the global dialogue initiated by UNESCO on redirecting education towards achieving sustainable human development. It aims to address central and fundamental issues that have been neglected in education. Edgar Morin, who dedicated a significant part of his research to the problems of knowledge, was asked to express his ideas on future education in relation to "the reform of thought," which he considers necessary and urgent. He believes that it provides the major landmarks for this project, which he has been advocating for years.

Here we find Edgar Morin proposing fundamental knowledge for education, ensuring a future without dangers for the younger generation and future generations. This knowledge is applicable in every society, without any exclusion or exception, following the rules and methods specific to each society and culture. This is done in order to build human identity and unify the fragmented destiny of humanity, which is a fundamental challenge for future education. In this approach, there is a connection between knowledge and awareness of the common existential conditions for all humans, as well as an awareness of the necessary richness represented by the diversity of individuals, peoples, and cultures. "Understanding the Human Condition: The Challenge of Future Education," 2009, p. 124).

Future education, in Morin's view, is a necessity that should be based on three fundamental principles and foundations. These principles must be taken into consideration in all global educational systems. They are as follows: education of the human condition, which aims to

achieve the humanity of humankind; education of understanding, which supports mutual comprehension among human beings; and education of earthly identity, which seeks to establish the concept of a shared destiny for all of humanity.

1- Teaching the Human Condition.

Morin considers the human condition as the fundamental principle in education. He believes that any future education must be directed towards a primary and comprehensive teaching that is based on understanding the conditions of human existence. This is because we live in a historical stage characterized by globality, where we experience a shared adventure that concerns humans everywhere. This is a reality that must be acknowledged in its common human dimensions, while also recognizing the distinctive cultural diversity of humanity. However, Morin observes that the human condition is entirely absent in our educational systems, which were originally established based on a fragmented and compartmentalized approach to knowledge, resulting in a failure to understand the human being as a whole. (Morin, 1999, p. 11). According to Morin, knowledge of the human condition is entirely absent in our educational programs due to the reductionist approach that subjects everything related to the human realm to specialization within the fields of humanities and biology. The brain is studied by biology, while the soul is studied by psychology, and so on. This compartmentalization has resulted in a fragmented understanding, leaving the knowledge of the human condition shrouded in mystery. Hence, the human being is a complex entity that encompasses physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions simultaneously. However, this integrated unity of the human nature is not adequately incorporated within specialized education systems, resulting in an inability to comprehend the essence of the human being. It is essential to correct these systems in a way that enables each individual to know and be conscious of their individual identity as well as their shared identity with others. (Morin, enseigner a vivre, 2014, p. 96).

Moran has been interested in researching the origin and roots of humanity, where he has studied various aspects and dimensions of its formation throughout ages until reaching its current state. Moran states, "We must recognize our pure human rooting. We live simultaneously within nature and outside it." (Moran, 2002, p. 46) Accordingly, he divides the roots of humanity into:

1. Cosmic rooting:

Moran believes that it is not appropriate to understand humans in isolation from the cosmos but rather to determine their position within it. He states, "Until the middle of the twentieth century, we never truly realized the forces that created us, produced us, and carried us along. The first lesson that the universe teaches us is that the particles of our cells appeared within the first few seconds. Our carbon atoms were formed under a sun that preceded our sun, and our large molecules united during the early convulsions of the Earth. These large molecules merged within whirlwinds, one of which turned into a structure with a new pattern in relation to the exclusively self-organizing chemical structure." (Moran, 2009, p. 34). We need to recognize that human being, rooted in the cosmos, is initially composed of particles of our cells that appeared within the first few seconds. Those particles came together, resulting in self-organization within them.

On this Earth, there was a dynamic thermal regularity through a small amount of physical matter during a primordial sea soaking, slow chemical cooking, and electrical discharge. This matter eventually became living matter.

2. Physical rooting: The human organism is not merely physical in its particles and large atoms. Its self-organization arises from a physical-chemical arrangement that gives rise to properties that manifest as life. All its activities, therefore, involve self-organizing physical-chemical processes. The interaction of physical and chemical particles and their self-organization has produced the conditions for life to emerge. Thus, all self-directed activities require physical-chemical processes for life to exist and emerge. Moreover, this physical arrangement from which we have emerged does not adhere strictly to a deterministic law nor to complete chaos and randomness. According to Moran, it is "engaged in a grand game between order and chaos, interaction and organization. Organizations arise through chance encounters and are subject to a set number of principles that encourage the binding of elements in each encounter... They occur according to one part of the loop complementing and counteracting the other." (Moran, 2009, p. 35). Therefore, through the interplay of organization, chaos, and interaction between particles and atoms, circular encounters occur. In the exchange of integration and repulsion between these encounters, the human physical world emerges and takes shape.

3. Biological rooting: If humans have a cosmic and physical origin, they also have a biological origin. Moran states, "We must add to our cosmic origin and our physical formation our earthly rooting. Earth produced itself autonomously and self-regulated itself in accordance with the sun, forming a biophysical entity in the moment its biosphere emerged. Life indeed emerged from the Earth, and from the diverse flourishing of multicellular life, the animal kingdom emerged, and from the latest evolution of a branch of the animal world, humans came into being." (Moran, 2009, p. 38). Therefore, the origin of all living beings can be traced back to the origin of the Earth, which self-regulated and aligned itself with the sun. From the Earth, life emerged in its diverse forms, and one of its greatest creations is human being. Furthermore, humans have an animal origin and share many aspects with animals, such as eating, drinking, and reproduction. In this regard, the human being remains an animal, belonging to the class of vertebrates. Humans are less efficient in many performances compared to aquatic vertebrates and birds, but they have managed to surpass them through unique technology in various fields. While it is true that humans resemble other animal organisms in multiple traits, this does not make them purely and entirely animals. Humans surpass them through their intellect, which allows them to engage in activities that animals are incapable of. The human world is founded upon a being that possesses the ability to think, be conscious, and communicate through language, thereby demonstrating the skill of symbol production and the ability to convey signs through movements and sounds. (Al-Khuwailidi, 2013, p. 1410). Edgar Morin emphasizes that we need to be attentive to the fact that the developments in human individuality, enriched with thought and consciousness, should not reduce humans solely to their individuality. Instead, it should shed light on their social aspect as well. Humans are a combination of relationships that comprise a

trinity: the individual, the community, and the species. "Individuals are the product of the reproductive process of the human species... The species produces individuals, and individuals produce the community, which, in turn, produces individuals. Each of these entities, the species, the community, and the individual, produces and sustains the others." (Morin, 2009, p. 66). In light of this dialectical relationship among the three entities, human integration is formed, and they mutually enhance and vitalize each other. Indeed, there can be a relationship of conflict and contradiction between these entities. The community suppresses and stifles the individual, leading the individual to seek liberation from social oppression. Similarly, the species dominates individuals by compelling them to serve their reproductive purposes and dedicate themselves to multiplying their offspring. However, the individual can escape from reproduction and satisfy their sexual instincts while sacrificing their own offspring for the sake of their selfish desires. Here, we observe the inherent contradiction between the individual, the species, and the community, as each seeks self-assertion and the pursuit of their own interests. In the same context, Edgar Morin affirms that human composition presents us with another trinity: the brain, thought, and culture. The brain develops through thinking and nourishes itself with culture, and it is the role of education to elucidate this reality. We cannot separate the mind from the brain, nor can we separate the brain from the mind. Furthermore, we cannot separate the mind/brain from culture because without culture, including language, skills, and accumulated knowledge, human thought would not thrive and would be limited to primitive existence. Therefore, Morin emphasizes that the humanity of humans is fully realized only within culture, and there is no culture without the human brain — the biological machine responsible for knowledge and learning. Likewise, there is no thought without culture, considering thought as the capacity for consciousness and thinking nurtured by culture. (Morin, "Education for the Future: The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2002, pp. 49-50).

2- Education for Coexistence:

Understanding is both the means and the goal of human communication, yet education for understanding the other is largely absent from our various forms of education. Our planet requires forms of mutual understanding at all educational levels and across all age groups. The evolution of understanding necessitates a reform of mentalities, and it is one of the major challenges for education in the future. According to Morin, it has become necessary to study the roots, patterns, and consequences of misunderstanding. It is essential to delve into the roots of racism, xenophobia, and contempt. Such studies can provide the most secure foundations for education to achieve peace and transform human relationships from their bestial state dominated by lack of understanding. (Morin, "The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2009, p. 78). Moran emphasizes the necessity of considering understanding in future education, as it is considered one of the pillars of humanity and one of its prominent tools for social communication. Its absence is considered one of the main causes of fragmentation, conflict, and the absence of peace. Understanding is a means for developing dialogical awareness and consensus. It is "the process through which a certain agreement is reached based on assumed

claims of validity recognized through mutual agreement" (Habermas, *Ethics and Communication*, 2012, p. 153). Understanding has become a fundamental issue for people, as Moran states, "Our planet requires various forms of mutual understanding at all levels and across all dimensions." Considering the importance of education for understanding at all educational levels and stages of life, the evolution of understanding necessitates a reform of mentalities." (Moran, "Education for the Future The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2002, p. 18) The mechanism of understanding is essential to human nature; it is needed by individuals in various aspects of life. It serves as a means for individuals to coexist and communicate with others on a shared basis. Moreover, it is a method capable of reforming different patterns of opinions and serves as a window for openness to others and accepting their viewpoints.

There is a paradox in Moran's perspective that individuals experience today, which is that technological advancement has the advantage of faster communication, but at the same time, lack of understanding prevails and dominates relationships between people. According to Moran, no technology, whether it's phones or the internet, inherently possesses the quality of understanding. Digitalization cannot be equated with understanding. There is a difference between educating for the acquisition of understanding in mathematics or other subjects and educating for the acquisition of human understanding. Here, the pure spiritual message of education becomes evident: it is about teaching understanding among people, which is the condition and guarantee for achieving the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. (Moran, "Education for the Future: The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2002, p. 88) The purpose of communication is to achieve understanding among people, which means reaching a level of conviction and interaction to achieve both intellectual and moral solidarity.

Moran believes that there are two levels of understanding: the first level is intellectual or objective understanding, and the second level is human understanding, which is intersubjective. Intellectual understanding implies that we collectively reach a grasp and comprehension of something. It requires clarity and explanation. However, human understanding goes beyond the boundaries of explanation. Explanation may be sufficient for intellectual or objective understanding related to abstract or material things, but it is not enough when it comes to human understanding. Human understanding refers to self-knowledge for the self. Indeed, the first level of understanding relies solely on interpretation. It focuses on explaining events based on rational and logical reasons. The goal is to reach logical and objective conclusions. On the other hand, the second level of understanding is broader, deeper, and more vital. It involves experiencing and feeling oneself in relation to others. It entails sharing their joys and sorrows, being open to them, and engaging in emotional empathy, compassion, and solidarity. In this level, the self becomes the other, and the other becomes the self, meaning the sharing of the self's experiences, no matter what they may be.

Regarding the relationship between understanding and interpretation, we can say that Dilthey deserves credit for transferring hermeneutics to the realm of spiritual sciences and considering it the methodological foundation on which spiritual sciences should rely. Hermeneutics is the

closest tool to understanding human beings and studying them with the aim of finding an interpretation for all their actions. Dilthey states, "We interpret nature, but we must understand human beings" (Mustafa, 2007, p. 130). This led him to rebel against prevailing opinions in his era, which emphasized the necessity of studying human phenomena in a situational manner without paying attention to the differences between the two sciences. It was as if situational study was the only approach that could make humanities a science because, according to Dilthey, humanities "seek to understand the human experience and its various creations in religion, philosophy, and art." Therefore, their subject matter lies in the human being itself, in contrast to natural sciences that deal with perceptible phenomena in the external world.

However, on the other hand, Moran warns us of some obstacles that hinder both types of understanding, especially in the first type, which is intellectual or objective understanding. These are external obstacles that arise when others are not constantly threatened with misinterpretation of their words, failure to understand their ideas, or failure to understand their worldview. There is also the noise that interferes with conveying the message and leads to misunderstanding, as well as a lack of listening, which can refer to all behaviors, values, and beliefs specific to an ethnic group or nation. It can also encompass all the customs, arts, and philosophies produced by humanity. Additionally, there is ignorance about the rituals and customs of others, which can unintentionally lead to attacking others and underestimating our respect towards them.

Edgar points out to obstacles that may impede understanding the others' ideas or perspectives on the world include:

1. The principle of exclusion and self-centeredness:

This is a form of self-deception results from resorting to self-justification, self-validation, and the tendency to make others the source of all evil, whether they are distant or close. This leads to a lack of understanding of oneself and consequently a lack of understanding of others. Concealing one's own flaws and shortcomings prevents tolerance of the flaws of others. "The tendency towards self-centeredness grows stronger when we set aside the constraints that previously imposed relinquishing individual desires conflicting with the desires of parents or spouses. Today, misunderstanding is undermining parent-child relationships and spousal relationships, spreading everywhere, resulting in attacks and psychological eliminations of others. Even in the intellectual world, which is supposed to achieve greater understanding, we find it corrupted due to inflated self-importance that grows because intellectuals have a need for sanctification and glory" (Moran, "Educating the Future: The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2002, pp. 90-91). As such, it has become a prerequisite for educational systems to enlighten individuals the tendency of centeredness, which require cultural and social dialogue .

2. Reductive Thought:

Based on this, it can be inferred that Edgar Morin emphasizes the necessity of achieving human unity. To achieve this unity, we must draw from the human past or the common origin, i.e., the inherent diversity, and reintegrate and revive that qualitative diversity in the present, with the aim of betting on a better human future and striving to build a common earthly identity. This

human revival and foresight became the primary task of education, which in turn is considered a means and tool for civilizational politics, as it operates within the framework of ethics. Ethics serves as its highest guide in its work on reform, change, and construction, and it outlines a unified and humanistic project. To overcome these obstacles, understanding must be consciously aware of the complex nature of the human being and the nature of individual coexistence with others. The "other" is an extension of the self, the missing and lost piece that life cannot be complete without. Therefore, it is necessary to be open to the other and enhance values of tolerance, solidarity, and love towards them. The constant endeavor is to strengthen the relationship with the other by sharing cultural and societal belonging, and even belonging to the human species itself. Moran says, "Understanding can only emerge through the relationship with the other. Often, in the relationship with the other, there is direct and quasi-intuitive understanding, based on signals that are invisible to consciousness. It occurs when empathizing with another person, creating a quasi-psychic echo. We know that when a deep relationship is formed between two individuals, there is an unconscious imitation: mimicking laughter, facial expressions, and so on. Our need for the recognition of others is an integral part of our self-affirmation needs. If a person is unknown, they are wounded, disabled, and in pain." (Morin, 2009, p. 95) The language of understanding is the deepest language for conveying and exchanging ideas with others, and the best form of it is dialogue or, more importantly, communication. Therefore, understanding necessarily involves a process of trying to know the other person and seeking alignment with them. Since understanding is always a matter between the self and the other, it is necessary to be open and empathetic towards others, thus recognizing the other's self and independence.

3- Education of Earthly Identity:

Morin has shown interest in the shared destiny of humanity on a planetary scale, and he believes that education must address this and delve deeply into the concept of an earthly identity. We all live the same problems and go through the same fate, such as life and death. Morin says, "Human identity alone, which is acknowledged by everyone, is not sufficient to unify us. Rather, it is the identity that arises from belonging to a maternal and paternal entity, making the word 'homeland' tangible and carrying the sense of fraternity to millions of citizens who do not share a blood relationship with us." (Morin, 2009, p. 284) Morin expands the concept of identity to encompass the entire universe. He removes identity from its self-centered and selfish expectations. The stronger the connection to this broader identity, the stronger the relationships between humanity become. This is what he advocates for in future education and what it should strive for in order to create an advanced and unified human civilization. Morin rejects the notion that human unity is a useless unity, and he also rejects the idea of fragmented and scattered plurality. Instead, he emphasizes the unity in plurality and the plurality within unity. He understands identity as a multi-sourced and multi-originating integrative identity that includes the constant and the dynamic, the static and the changing. It is produced through diversity and renewal. (Al-Khuwailidi, 2013, p. 1424).

The essence of identity lies in the fusion of the whole into the one and the one into the whole. It is the responsibility of education to awaken this consciousness that resides dormant within systems. Education seeks to teach individuals to embrace their plurality and differences with various cultures of the world. In order for future education to achieve its goal of shaping an earthly identity and consciousness, it must build a cosmic vision that is not abstract, but a conscious vision of unity within human diversity. This requires a mindset that draws nourishment from diverse world cultures. The singular identity must draw from and be open to every culture, engage in mutual sharing, and maintain constant communication in order to achieve its cosmic purpose.

Morin's call for this cosmic identity is not driven by a desire for control over the world, as pursued by globalist thinking, but rather to provide ways of living in and improving it. Here, he presents a set of principles that we should internalize:

1. **Anthropological awareness:** Recognizing our unity within our diversity.
2. **Ecological awareness:** Being conscious that we live as finite beings within the same biosphere. This principle encourages us to abandon the unrealistic dream of controlling the universe.
3. **Earthly civic awareness:** This refers to awareness of responsibility and solidarity with the children of the Earth. It entails a constant sense of responsibility towards the problems and challenges facing others and a commitment to help them.
4. **Dialogical awareness:** This is acquired through the practice of thinking, which allows us to simultaneously engage in criticism of others, self-criticism, and understanding of one another. (Morin, "Future Education: The Seven Essential Knowledge for Education," 2002, p. 70) It is a call to change the savage and barbaric state in which humanity finds itself today. Future education, by adhering to these principles, paves the way for a sacred path for all of humanity, preserving its planetary unity. In doing so, education becomes the savior and the means to confront and solve these problems.

What we can conclude is that the future of identity is linked to the extent to which people respect the demand for achieving a planetary identity. This demand can only be realized through the transformation of the individual into a person aware of belonging to the cosmos, as do others, and the transformation of communities into a global circle. It requires reaching a post-human moment by returning to the qualia of humanity and unveiling the human secret that has been concealed since its appearance in prehistoric times. Therefore, we must learn how to coexist, reconcile, cooperate, communicate, and share ideas, things, and cultures among ourselves in order to be able to face difficulties and challenges together, and achieve peaceful coexistence on this planet. However, all of this is contingent upon the level of understanding among humans, which is of crucial importance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Edgar Morin's educational philosophy reveals a brilliant critical perspective that represents a long trajectory of research in this field. He viewed education as the key to accessing a world governed by a better future for humanity. Through his educational studies, he aimed to

apply his complex philosophy, where future education should be based on teaching human condition. The goal is to make the ultimate purpose of education truly human, thus eliminating tendencies towards centrism, bias, and extremism. Furthermore, education should teach understanding, as it is the foundation of cohesion within communities and nations. Communication allows diverse peoples and cultures to come together in one village characterized by solidarity and peaceful coexistence, without disregarding the importance of considering the issue of planetary identity. This approach helps counterbalance the dominance of regional identities, which often fuels nationalism and, ultimately, leads to wars and crises. On the other hand, an earthly identity makes people aware that the destiny of humanity is shared because human identity is both individual and cosmic simultaneously. The philosophy of education in this project is based on a profound understanding of the composition of the unique and complex human being. It emphasizes teaching the art of living and imparting a conceptual understanding of life. It aims to cultivate noble citizens and develop individual formation by instilling in them the responsibility for the human condition. This involves learning to live as responsible citizens with values of solidarity, responsibility, tolerance, regardless of their affiliations.

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