Solidarity

Solidarity is an essential aspect in our everyday life as it is one of the factors that makes humans a cooperative and a rapid development species. Last year (2016) I participated in two activities whose foundation is solidarity: a "philosophical café" in which I was able to discuss its meaning with other students and, previously, in a project to help the students with lower school performance, which, later that same year, allowed me to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange program between Portugal and Poland.

In November 17, World Philosophy Day, some colleagues of mine and from other classes and myself we attended the "philosophical café", an esplanade organized in the library of my school. We began to discuss solidarity with the following question: "What is the definition of solidarity?” There was a big diversity of responses to the question and from these we tried as much as possible to clarify the concept, although we didn’t reach complete consensus on this because of its abstractedness. Some ideas saw solidarity as an act of giving without receiving anything back, others as the need of helping so that we feel more accomplished and some as a more sentimental act of compassion.

Through this confrontation of ideas and by placing new questions, we deepened our knowledge on this theme and after some time we came to the point where we could divide solidarity in two: the mechanical one and the organic one. The first is based on feelings, essentially on empathy, like when we help someone because our feelings tell us to do so, while the second covers a mutual aid in a more rational and organized way, such as the structuring of the human species as a society.

Meanwhile, we began to discuss what form of solidarity had more value and to answer this question we used one of the most important instruments of philosophy, exemplification. One of the examples that helped clarify this doubt was this: "If you had to choose between saving your mom or a group of 20 people from being hit by a train, which one would you choose?". By the answers given we noticed that the choice depends deeply on the answerers’ sentimental or rational personal perspective.

This theme, solidarity, was also the same that got me to develop cooperation work with a schoolmate with lower school performance, from May to June (2016), in the creation of a detailed work for presenting as a lecture about pollution, its causes, its effects and how to reduce it, with the primary aim of helping to overcome her difficulties and getting her to achieve higher standards in presenting lectures. This project was the one that later allowed me to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange program.

During the classes I used for this project, Catarina, the one being helped, and I, we divided the work in different tasks, with me making each task first so that I could explain the various important aspects of transmitting ideas with clarity and organizing them in a correct form for presenting in the most appropriate way. I transmitted various concepts and strategies such as the integration of documents in the context of the oral presentation, the implementation of strategies for better focus of the lecturer, how to present with more natural body language, the ability to memorize ideas instead of just reciting previously memorized phrases and the articulation of ideas using common elements in them.

Catarina was very receptive to all thses ideas I provided her with and worked hard to try to apply the strategies mentioned above. She always had a very relaxed attitude, was always ready to work and interacted very easily, which made the transmission of these ideas easy.

Unfortunately, I was unable to achieve all the objectives I had in mind to improve her presenting skills due to certain limitations like the little time we had to work together and not being capable of explaining her all the ideas associated with these concepts and strategies because of her previous difficulties which had a certain influence on her learning.

In conclusion, in the "philosophical café" I managed to dissect the concept of solidarity (one of the many functions of philosophy) which I had already previously applied in the low performance student help project. Both these experiences surely influenced me and will influence my future in my capacity of adaptation and cooperation as well as in my openness of thought, very important factors to succeed in the globalized world we live in.

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