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Beyond Human Rights Education: Re-Imagining Sociality for Participatory Striving

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a theoretical elaboration based on the thesis that the UN Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) is not sufficient to realize co-creative

practices for a (world) society based on the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. We argue that these goals are not a legal but a social task and responsibility rooted in a deeply social concern. In addressing the difficult implementation of UNDHR, the article turns to notions of the fellow human being and relatedness as the foundation of a society. Philosophical concepts and anthropological perspectives are used to demonstrate how education as "coming into practice" (Biesta, 2006) plays a central role in preparing individuals for sociality, understood as a way of getting to know different worlds, seeking diversity, striving for understandings, and finding connections to oneself by embracing "otherness."

Introduction

On December 10, 1998, José Saramago formulated the following lines in his banquet speech on the occasion of winning the Nobel Prize for literature:

> "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed today exactly 50 years ago. [...] In this half-century, obviously governments have not morally done for human rights all that they should. The injustices multiply, the inequalities get worse, the ignorance grows, the misery expands. [...] To go to Mars seems more easy than going to the neighbour. [...] We citizens are not fulfilling our duties either. Let us think that no human rights will exist without symmetry of the duties that correspond to them. It is not to be expected that governments in the next 50 years will do it. Let us common citizens therefore speak up. With the same vehemence as when we demanded our rights, let us demand responsibility over our duties." (Saramago, 1998, p. 21).

Saramago's timely analysis can also be transferred to today because ceremonial commemorations have been repeated for the 75th anniversary of the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* (UNDHR) in December 2023. Discussions about the implementation of human rights have been ongoing, and still "governments [and also citizens] have not morally done for human rights all that they should" (Saramago, 1998). The gap between the demands of human rights and their realization remains highly debated. Controversies about the appropriate

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implementation of human rights can be observed in many countries, for example in the case of the implementation of Article 24 (Education) of the U*N Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (e.g., Gasterstädt, 2021; Zahnd & Oberholzer, 2025) or with regard to global migration movements in the context of forced migration and flight (e.g., Funck & Karakaşoğlu, 2022; Martinsen, 2019). Reports of the Human Rights Committee and research of the scientific community simultaneously show how human rights violations and threats against its defenders are a widespread phenomenon (e.g., Koula, 2024; UN, 2024). Referring back to Saramago's words, human rights may be present in actual debates and in ceremonial commemorations, but when it comes to their realization, too few actors seem to be aware of their duties.

In the light of Saramago's speech, the relation between rights and duties is a key factor to "turn the world a little better" (Saramago, 1998). Legal issues are definitely of high relevance to the implementation of human rights, though usually non-binding. At the same time, focusing too much on the legal dimension can also pose a problem because human rights are at risk of being reduced to a foremost legal understanding. This entails the problem of forgetting that human rights have a deeper meaning that goes much further than simply guaranteeing legal protection. The emergence of human rights is directly rooted in the atrocities of the Second World War and rooted in a vision of a peaceful and secure world, allowing all human beings a life in dignity (Morsink, 1993; Rittberger, 2013). Taking this history and current challenges into account, this article advances with a provocative thesis:

> The UN Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) offers necessary but insufficient conditions for creating communities based on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice since their creation is not merely a legal task but an educational and social endeavor deeply rooted in human interactions and interdependency.

We justify this thesis by way of elucidating the central role of education in promoting not only human rights but also these overarching dimensions of human lives, concerns and possibilities. Indeed, in the aftermath of World War II,

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education was assigned an important role in this respect. This becomes particularly clear when we examine the statement of a contemporary witness. In a widely cited radio talk he held in the 1960s, Theodor W. Adorno (1971) framed the prevention of the repetition of the atrocities in Auschwitz as a task for education. Indeed, cultivating fundamental social values and norms in children is a fundamental tenet of education, as it always has been (Graf & Lamprecht, 1991). However, there is a lack of emphasis on how societies can cultivate the necessary social norms and values to ensure human rights in educational debates—despite a growing awareness for the issue (e.g., Graham et al., 2020). Human Rights Education encompasses currently diverse approaches—from legal literacy to transformative learning—and is increasingly seen as integral to democratic and civic education. While we value approaches in Human Rights Education that address "learning about human rights" and "learning for human rights" (United Nations, 2011; Flowers, 2000), we pick up on the transformation perspective that rethinks social relations with human rights (e.g., Tibbitts, 2017) but push it beyond the human rights as subjective right of individuals. Our task on sociality will instead advocate to rethink the ethical foundation of human relations. Accordingly, we will introduce a philosophical understanding of sociality first that links to education as "coming into presence" (Biesta, 2006)—an account putting emphasis on the mutual educational exchange embedded in social relations. Education understood as "coming into presence" and the development of subjectivity (Biesta, 2006) enables a critical analysis of society, which entails the (renewed) legitimation and possible critique of socio-political and sociocultural living that needs knowledgeable and educated citizens—which education claims to provide. In social science and educational discourse surrounding this fundamental principle, it becomes evident that rights, in and of themselves, are insufficient to ensure comprehensive commitment from all stakeholders. Furthermore, it is evident that merely raising awareness about rights does not adequately address the transmission and transformation of values and norms.[1] In the context of human rights debates, it can

1 This can be exemplified by the above cited research of Graham et al. (2020) on the case of inclusive education. In analyzing 423 articles in international journals, they show "that they [the salamanca

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be posited that the establishment of a peaceful and inclusive society is predicated on the concept of participatory, co-creative world-building, which again is predicated on a "world of common action, speech, and understanding" (Löwith, 1949, p. 176). What this means—and this reiterates the perspective offered by Saramago—is that human societies flourish only where people live well together. Following this perspective, educational discourse, particularly within the context of human rights issues, should prioritize the inquiry into how this participatory world-building process can be transformed into a collective endeavour to enable and help all people live in dignity and free from threats to their human rights.

Considering these premises, this article argues that to realize human rights necessities educational activities that aim at more than generating awareness of these rights. Instead, building on Saramago's speech, we show how the demand for human rights not only addresses the legal relationship between different people but, above all, how we live together, approach and treat one another.

As we argue for the importance of moving beyond regulating and shaping society legally, we will turn to critical framings of (human) rights and include a philosophical and anthropological perspective. Hence, we will not base our arguments on debates about human rights (education) but predominantly on the theoretical reflections on sociality of authors who were contemporary witnesses to the events surrounding the genesis of the UNDHR. We ask for the philosophical understanding of the human being in relation to Karl Löwith and the socio-political emergences of society, as Hannah Arendt puts it. With this, we frame education as preparing all human beings for sociality by getting to know different worlds, seeking diversity, striving for understanding, and finding connections to one's own by embracing 'otherness'.

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statement and the UN CRPD] are being are [sic!] typically used as a general policy context for the work, rather than being taken up as an integral part of the research and reporting process" (p. 136).

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In turning to sociality as aim of education referring to philosophical and anthropological accounts likewise, we emphasize it as a "boundary concept" reflected by many authors building on different epistemologies. In turning to sociality as onegoal of education, we refer to philosophical and anthropological accounts that conceptualize it as a "boundary concept" (Beck et al., 2012)—a notion reflected across diverse epistemologies. Drawing on Beck et al.'s (2012) understanding of boundary concepts as dynamic sites of negotiation between disciplines and knowledge systems, we propose sociality as a generative intersection for rethinking human relations. By emphasizing sociality as a boundary concept, we foreground its capacity to mediate between legal frameworks and the lived realities of human dignity. Educational practices, then, must move beyond the transmission of rights awareness toward cultivating the relational and dialogic capacities necessary to enact those rights—through recognition, mutual care, and the embrace of diversity.

We acknowledge that the philosophical and anthropological foundations of our argument are rooted in Western epistemologies. This presents a limitation in terms of the underrepresentation of perspectives from the Global South. However, this deliberate focus enables us to trace how the core ideas of our thesis—particularly the emphasis on sociality and human dignity—were already present in the intellectual climate surrounding the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). By engaging with thinkers such as Karl Löwith and Hannah Arendt, who were contemporaries to this historical moment, we aim to illuminate how foundational concepts of coexistence, plurality, and recognition were embedded in early human rights discourse. Importantly, framing sociality also as a boundary concept allows for future critical foundational refinements that better reflect and include voices from the Global South, pushing current debates toward more inclusive and dialogic understandings of human rights and education. We will outline our arguments in three steps. Firstly, we look back to the implementation of human rights in 1945 to emphasize their concern for a peaceful society and frame the limitations of UNDHR regarding social inclusion of human beings. Secondly, we turn toward the understanding of human beings as social beings and sketch a foundation for this understanding. It will become evident that instead of inquiring about one's neighbour's legal status, collective living is about

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caring for his/her well-being and supporting each other. Thirdly, we reflect on the role of education based on our philosophical and anthropological foundation and highlight the importance of sociality and participatory world (re-)building to ensure peaceful societies based on human rights. In a globalized world, recognizing others as neighbours—usually defined by their shared geographical proximity—emerges as a fundamental prerequisite for cultivating (new) relationships. This recognition encompasses the immediate community and extends to a broader environmental responsibility and the pursuit of sustainable living.

(Human) Rights Striving for a Peaceful Society

We turn now to address the roots of the UNDHR to frame its original concern to discuss the relevance of rights in societies. Regarding our thesis, this will help to clarify why rights are necessary but not sufficient to guarantee a peaceful and inclusive society.

Debates on human rights can be traced back as far back as ancient philosophy (Horster, 2016). While this is an important fact to highlight the deep roots of human rights, it is also important to remind ourselves that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has its roots in World War II:

> "The Third General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December of 1948, three years after the end of the Second World War. In their final comments, the delegates to that Assembly made it abundantly clear that the Declaration was born out of the experience of the war that had just ended. Mr. Malik, the representative from Lebanon, said that the document 'was inspired by opposition to the barbarous doctrines of Nazism and fascism.' [...] Indeed, all the delegations generally agreed that the pattern of gross human rights abuses which occurred during World War II was the major impulse behind the drafting of the Declaration." (Morsink, 1993, p. 357).

Recalling this historical context, human rights implicitly also are a reminder of the cruelties of World War II. The hope for a peaceful society rooted in the experiences of this war led to the formulation of the UNDHR. While the memories of World

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War II seem to fade away (e.g., Wigger, 2019), current human rights violations are present in media and reports of the United Nations (e.g., BBC, 2025; Frankfurter Allgemeine, 2025; New York Times, 2025; UN, 2024). Many people globally still live in dehumanizing, exploitative, and oppressive conditions caused by wars, the exploitations of a global economy forcing people into precarious work situations, and other factors, such as having a disability. The UNDHR, from this perspective, usefully provides a critical tool for evaluating the state of our world but does not, by itself, advance the realization of a more just and peaceful (world) society based on the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion, and justice. This leads to the question of the role that (human) rights can play in a society—or, more specifically, what can and cannot be achieved through rights.

The discourses on political philosophy and democracy point to rights as fundamental for societal living in modern times (Horster, 2016). Rights are integral to forming human sociality, providing the framework for collective existence. With the emergence of modern states, rights are seen as an expression of common will for coexistence as Jean-Jacques Rousseau argues in *The Social Contract* (1762), emphasizing that rights are essential in maintaining order and justice in society. Without laws, power dynamics would dictate human interactions rather than mutual respect and equality. Subsequently, Immanuel Kant theorized in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) that rights guarantee the conditions for human freedom and dignity and serve as a safeguard against arbitrary rule. However, while rights became more important in a society moving away from traditional living forms in smaller communities, they cannot cover all aspects of communal life. Today's discourse on the nexus of (human) rights and ethical, social, political, and cultural conditions of coexistence places different emphases in its argumentation, each of which plays a specific role in our reasoning.

The common perspective is that rights serve as foundational principles that shape social developments and act as educational tools in raising awareness of ethical and civil order, a perspective that is reflected in the "learning about Human Rights" discourse. Legally institutionalized rights help to internalize societal norms and enforce obedience (Foucault, 1975). In this sense, institutionalized rights (laws) construct belonging through legal assessments. This means we turn to our

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neighbours and ask for their legal status instead of their belonging to the community. Instead of going along with the disciplining and limiting aspects of Foucault, we look at enabling the shaping of society with Nussbaum and Sen, who connect (human) rights discussions with (socio-)political and ethical discourses.

In *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Nussbaum (2011) argues that legal rights are fundamental in shaping human agency and dignity. She builds on Sen's (1985) capabilities approach to emphasize that legal structures provide individuals with the necessary conditions to develop and exercise their full potential. According to Nussbaum, education is not limited to formal schooling; rather, it extends to legal and political structures that enable individuals to lead meaningful lives. She writes, "Legal rights and constitutional guarantees play a pedagogical role: they educate citizens about their own worth and the obligations of justice that society owes them" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 30). This suggests that laws serve not merely as deterrents against wrongdoing but actively shape how individuals perceive their rights and responsibilities within a democratic framework.

While there is a consensus that rights influence the capacity for political engagement, John Rawls offers further elaboration on the ethical underpinnings of rights and law in his scholarly work. Human rights, in their ethical essence, transcend political and cultural differences. In his earlier book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls establishes a nexus between society, rights, and justice, associating justice with fairness. In his perspective, human rights establish the moral minimum for all societies, which must be respected to consider the society a legitimate member of the international community, regardless of the political or cultural system of the respective country. Within the respective countries, fundamental principles of justice should govern society, even when the political system is not a liberal democracy. In *The Law of Peoples* (1999), Rawls asserts that "human rights constitute a distinct category of paramount rights that safeguard individuals from profound political repression and religious persecution" (Rawls, 1999, p. 79). The nexus between rights and justice, as articulated by Rawls, has been a recurring theme in ethical and moral interpretations of (human) rights,

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particularly in the context of advocating for groups of people considered vulnerable.

When legal rights present a framework, being accepted and socially included in a community cannot be ensured by a law (Felder, 2012), but must be grounded in practices of acknowledgement like in democratic structures. Following Sen (1999, p. 10), "the practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities." In the context of a democratic system, this practice is absolutely needed because of its fundamental value for democratic decision-making and participatory democratic practices. Learning from each other is somewhat closely linked to social inclusion—or, as Saramago said, going to the neighbour. Social inclusion and especially its opposite social exclusion, again, have consequences far beyond the political/legal system and is crucial for social human beings: "Political and social participation has intrinsic value for human life and well-being. To be prevented from participation in the political life of the community is a major deprivation" (Sen, 1999, p. 10). Nussbaum's (2010) critique of the social contract theories points directly toward this problem. The focus on building a society through shared practices also makes outsiders, those who do not share or are not allowed to share the practices. As a paradox of our time, this deprivation can even happen under the banner of inclusion as it becomes, for example, visible in the context of inclusive education (e.g., Migliarini et al., 2018; Zahnd, 2023).

While this section showed the importance of rights to provide a framework for collective existence and help individuals perceive their rights and responsibilities, it also showed the limits when it comes to the practice of democracy—especially regarding social inclusion. To tackle the question of how social inclusion and the practice of democracy can be strengthened, the following section will pick up anthropological references for socio-political living and build the argument that "the human being is essentially a relational being whose being is constituted by the relationship to others." (Löwith, 2022, p. 169) The situated collective and co-productive agency that derives from the understanding of being relational is then, we argue, a cornerstone of democratic shared rights/life.

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Re-Imaging Social Human Beings

An understanding of human beings as social beings is crucial to our guiding thesis. Framing the creation of communities based on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as an educational and social endeavour only makes sense, if humans are understood as social beings. In this section, we sketch the foundation of such an understanding and the consequences on the level of social coexistence and social action. The complimentary use of different epistemological standpoints as described for boundary concepts will allow us to imagine sociality as inclusive setting interweaving philosophical (3.1), social or socio-political (3.2) and educational (3.3) perspectives.

Foundations of the Social Human Being

Returning to the social human being, we aim to reposition the discourse on Human Rights beyond its legal imposition to the philosophical premise of equality of all. The anthropological view of humans brings to light the social relationship between people: the human being is fundamentally defined by "being-with," which allows for a philosophical critique of contemporary society. In the philosophical view of the human being, the relationship to other human beings is a central theme.

Hannah Arendt (1954) reminds us in *The Crisis in Education* of the socio-political implication of the anthropological fact of natality. Natality bears the potential to renew society as it is the beginning of something, of somebody who will live with other human beings. The open question for Arendt is how the new is placed in relation to the existing social structures. If too much space is given to the new, there is a danger that the existing society will perish. However, if the new is simply ignored, the potential of the human being in its being is done an injustice because it is reduced to fitting into the existing society. Referring to Arendt, it is evident that human beings are always in relation to other human beings and that the socio-political task can only be to find and establish ways to recognize and take up the newness of human beings and the potential therein and yet to create a common sociality in relation to others. With this, we need to look closer at the relation human being always have.

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According to Löwith, being an individual "already presupposes a relation to fellow human beings and social structures" (Thonhauser, 2016, p. 122). In Löwith's anthropological definition, it is impossible to think of a human being without others; a reference to others is always woven into the everydayness of action. The distinctive self only becomes plausible in being with others and acting with others, as can be seen in the everyday nature of a "with-world" as a shared world. The legal relationship to one another—assumed in the UNDHR—and the collective intentionality is placed into the human being in Löwith's anthropology: "The human being is essentially a relational being whose being is constituted by the relationship to others. This relationship is not a mere relation, but the *precondition* for his selfhood." (Löwith, 2022, p. 31; emphasis added) In Löwith's interpretation, the relationship to the other is conceivable in different ways. It differs in the proximity/distance of the other to the self: In the basic constellation of human life, for example, in the family, togetherness is also defined as caring for others. If the other is more distant, e.g., part of a public, this does not exclude a relationship of care but generalizes it as care for a being-with-one-another. Nevertheless, here, too, we can speak of living together as it is "synonymous" with being with each other and therefore entails a care-relation (Löwith, 2022, p. 31). With selfhood emerging through ethical relations, turning to your neighbour becomes part of the fundamental educational process of "coming into being" (Biesta). The way I approach and respond to others—the way of being-with—shapes self and constitutes future relations.

The with-world is a spatially and temporally given "world of common action, speech and understanding" (Löwith, 2022, p. 44). Moving to another city or country, the with-world becomes different, challenging the subject to rebuild the with-world with others. As a consequence of Löwith's thinking, this also means that with a changed with-world, the people bound to it change. Changed ways of acting and interpretations of actions are created in the newly shared possibility of action and acting together; living together becomes different and becomes a constitutional act of recognizing or neglecting the new. Regarding Saramago's opening statement, two "duties" for human beings emerge from these descriptions: first, to face this realization of the with-world and how it becomes and renews itself. Second, to reflect on the distinctions between fellow human

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beings and how to reframe specific (and ascribed) social roles. Thus, turning to our neighbours and *asking* how we want to live here together and how *we* want to make our neighbourhood better.

Collective (Participatory) Human Striving

Assuming that the emphasis on participation directs our attention to the with-world, we must ensure that fellow human beings participate equally in participative world-building as the self only becomes intelligible in the context of its relationship with others. In the with-world, individuals are permanently embedded within a shared world, forming the context for meaning, action, and existence. Löwith critiques the alienation caused by modernity, which strategically isolates individuals from each other as well as their communal and existential ties. The challenge, following Löwith, is the social roles in which we have always encountered each other and that are deemed misleading in with-worlds. As Thonhauser summarizes: "For one thing, even though social roles have constitutive function in human interaction, they also need to be thought of as constituted by human interaction" (Thonhauser, 2016, p. 131). The concept of social roles is intricately linked to the phenomenon of social inequality, with the feeling of community (Anderson, 2006) acting as a counterbalance. This dynamic interplay gives rise to a sense of positioning, which is the focal point of this analysis.

At this nexus, a converging point emerges among Saramago, Adorno, and Löwith's thought. Assuming the inevitability of social positioning, the responsibility of individuals to engage with it reflexively can be examined within the framework of Saramago's assertion and Adorno's contributions. Such reflections entail a critical stance toward the current state of (self-) positioning and may encompass a commitment to ensuring the visibility of all. In the context of Löwith's work, it can be proposed that an open approach to the with-world offers the potential to suspend pre-reflective empirical findings and to construct new ethically grounded conceptual frameworks based on the outcomes of critical reflections.

And while we pick up Löwith's with-being to remember the *social* anthropos, Sheila Jasanoff's (2004) concept of co-production complementary underlines the

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processes through which co-produced worlds are built and maintained. In her analysis of the intertwined fields of science and society, Jasanoff outlines four key themes in establishing co-production: emergence and stabilization of new framings, resolution of controversies, making cross-boundary use possible, and adjustments in response to the context. Ultimately, Jasanoff's work helps us to think about possible co-productions of with-worlds that emerge between contextualized social interactions, their refinements and the ordering of Human Rights. Berkes (2009) and Armitage et al. (2011) further develop Jasanoff's approach to collaborative learning, also categorized as "co-production as knowledge democracy" (Bandola-Gill et al., 2023, p. 287). Co-production is discussed as a practical strategy for "social learning" across different groups, including stakeholders, and aim to link experiential and experimental learning.

Using both perspectives, Löwith's philosophical and Jasanoff's practice oriented, enriches the notion of sociality: the "with-world" is not merely a given, it is co-produced through collective action, discourse, and material practices and can, therefore, never be taken for granted or used as a static entity (what the UNDHR might suggest?). Turning to the neighbour, then, is an enactment of the constituent, its mode and aims become a choice. It is evident when reading Jasanoff that the co-production of the "with-world" involves both normative and material dimensions. Normatively, it requires a commitment to values such as equality, care, and solidarity as stabilizing elements and guiding help in controversies—here, Löwith's and Jasanoff's thinking align. Materially, it depends on creating institutions and practices that enable collective action and mutual recognition across boundaries and in response to the specific context, bringing in Wendy Brown's critical theoretical perspective.

Brown's critical reading of the "demos" in *Undoing "demos"* (2015) adds another layer of meaning with an emphasis on the political of sociality and brings in worries about the alienation of human beings in the neoliberal world order, expanding Löwith's concerns about modernity. In the neoliberal order, the governing of people follows a management logic and is not oriented toward the democratic participation of all. The increasing and desired neoliberal individualization, along with the shift of responsibility for one's own being and becoming into the realm of

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the subject, facilitates the implementation of market logic and hinders the capacity to collaborate as a *demos*: "Neoliberalism thus does not merely privatize…what was formerly publicly supported and valued. Rather, it formulates everything, everywhere, in terms of capital investment and appreciation, including and especially human rights themselves" (Brown, 2015, p. 176). Brown's concern about the "undoing" of the demos mirrors Löwith's worry about the fragmentation of the "with-world." For both, modern frameworks that prioritize individualism over shared existence and living with lead to a depoliticized and atomized society. Löwith's focus on relationality aligns with Brown's call to reclaim collective agency and democratic deliberation, which she sees as central to countering neoliberal individualization.

Echoing through Education for Participatory Striving

According to Arendt, the anthropological openness and indeterminate newness that enters the world is socialized into social and legal relations. With Löwith, this newness is with the world. Various ethical, social, and political institutions play an essential role in this process and have an educational character, as was shown above with the example of law. However, as Arendt further elucidates, this anthropological indeterminacy does not merely enable socialization; societal life essentially demands an education that fosters active engagement and the capacity for critical and situational re-creating and (co-)shaping of the communal. The co-production of knowledge, as Jasanoff notes, is contingent on a creative utilization of knowledges to shape a situationally appropriate coexistence. In the encountering one's neighbour, it is imperative to acknowledge that the encounter implies not only a comprehension of one's own role in the community and its objectives but also a cognizance of the legitimations of knowledge and its social justifications. Only within this framework can the encounter with the neighbour unfold in an open manner that fosters the participation of oneself and others in a collaborative endeavour, thereby facilitating the emergence of novel concepts and collaborative spaces.

Within the context of socialization in a given society, the *educational objective* is to challenge the perceived self-evidence of established knowledge experienced in the

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first instance in coming into presence. It is to expose and actively question social norms, roles and established world views as historically contingent and, to a certain extent, arbitrary. Understanding of how knowledge becomes into being and adopting a critical stance toward it can render social positions vulnerable. It also calls for an openness toward renegotiation based on shared principles of legitimacy. In the context of human rights and duties, the following demands are considered fundamental to sociality as an open pursuit: the ability to recognize and reflect one's own status, the capacity to refrain from one's own status, a willingness to be open to/with others, and the collaborative effort to co-generate new framings and knowledges. However, upon closer examination of the disparities in people's present life circumstances, that is, the stark disparities in conditions under which the recognition of others and the relinquishment of one's own status are expected to occur, it should be evident that the process of unlearning privileges must differ significantly across societies and that societies also possess distinct unlearning processes at the global level.

And while we stand with Sen, claiming that "In fact, the reach and effectiveness of open dialogue are often underestimated in assessing social and political problems" (Sen, 1999, p. 10), we also acknowledge the difficulties from a practical perspective. In order to establish an open dialogue—fostered through educating questioning, critical and open minds—and enable the steps of co-production elaborated by Jasanoff, several hurdles have to be overcome: First, the gaze must be directed inwards, i.e., a reflexive understanding of one's own self must be fostered to develop a self-understanding of what to bring to the table. Second, communicating one's own standpoint and parallel emphasizing openness and turning toward not only acknowledging or celebrating but becoming part of diversity is a challenge because it has to be done in a way that no (colonizing) overpowering occurs. Third, there can be a silent coexistence, the quality of which cannot be judged from the outside (Krause, 2014). The pedagogical work required to facilitate truly participatory co-production and an open attitude toward others thus varies depending on the individual's point of view and the value they place on open conversations. Often, these processes of coming to terms with one's own positioning and stepping back from familiar beliefs are framed as unlearning, which can become a painful moment of realization. It is painful because it is

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intimately tied to the lived experience of individuals and the specific needs that arise from their situated contexts, leaving status in limbo for the moment.

What (socially reassuring) role can rights play here? As Meekosha and Soldatic (2011) argue for the case of disability, the inscription of rights can have a massive impact on status recognition and mode of opening up for a questioning stance. In line with the UNCRPD, for example, they argue: "This positioning of disability within the broader human rights family seeks to identify *historically* how disability has always been part of the human experience. As nation-states are increasingly called upon to recognise the UNCRPD, disability activists have been able to *radically challenge* citizenship status and practices." (2011, 1386, emphasis added). However, they also see a threat to over-globalized approaches when they state that: "[t]he language of universalism assumes developing countries will evolve to the 'higher' standards of Western human rights, such as the recognition of individual rights" (ibid., 1388). Given that substantive issues of survival and productivity often overwhelm the time and space for negotiating discourse, sometimes leaving the feeling of not being enough behind, the recognition of one's own pace, power, commitment, stance, like disability or other issues, as human rights cannot be underestimated.

The distancing stepping back as educated gesture can also lie in the abstraction from tangible circumstances. So, individuals in the Global North frequently engage in theoretical critiques (like this paper does), with their actions often less influenced by material urgencies experienced by those in the Global South. Because social complexity is so multifaceted and power relations are vowed into those complexities, it is tempting to retreat to a philosophical approach and advocate radical philosophical approaches. Like Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2020) in *Of Hospitality*, where they start from a radical concept of hospitality: In the act of genuine hospitality, they argue, we are completely open to the stranger. We eliminate everything we call our own to do justice to the strangeness of the stranger. However, this absolute hospitality is impossible to hold up because we cannot ignore who we are and the tradition in which we stand—we deny reciprocity of sociality and lose ourselves. Yet, we need this absolute idea to conceptualize hospitality relationally and evoke creative ways of living it. This phenomenon is

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further compounded by the pervasive Eurocentrism (Spivak, 1988) that permeates epistemological framings, knowledge systems, economic structures, and legal frameworks that collectively shape global understanding. Despite offering self-declared pathways for true systemic alternatives (Escobar, 2018), the South's knowledge traditions, indigenous epistemologies, and local resistance strategies are frequently marginalized. But even with less audacity than Escobar shows here ("true systemic alternatives"), theories and concepts from the Global South challenge others to reevaluate their legitimacy demanding an equal place alongside others. This observation underscores the necessity of critical situated analysis, as articulated by Saramago, who emphasizes the imperative to *consider the situatedness* of others and the adoption of pluriversal thinking to achieve with-worlds. Those grappling with the challenges of survival in oppressive or exploitative contexts, and who are urgently focused on meeting fundamental needs, may find it challenging to engage with theoretical deconstruction or abstract thinking (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2011).

Education and Human Rights

With our line of argument and the educational echoes in mind, we now dive deeper to the role of education for creating communities based on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. In this light, we reconsider the human rights debates examining the consequences for the social human beings and the relation between education and human rights as it is discussed today.

Within the framework of the UNDHR, education and human rights are interlinked in two distinct ways. Firstly, article 26 states, "everyone has the right to education." Secondly, human rights are seen to be an important subject of education to ensure their realization. This is also stated in article 26: "Education shall be directed [...] to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Again, the Declaration on Human Rights Education offers a more precise framing of this task. According to Article 2 of this declaration, human rights education and training enclose:

> "(a) Education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that

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> underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection; (b) Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners; (c) Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. " (United Nations, 2011)

Looking at this program through the lens of our argumentation, the dimension of participatory world (re-)building is absent. While Günnewig et al. (2022) emphasize the significance of a rights-based human rights education in empowering individuals to advocate for their rights, we contend that this approach understates the structural and political impediments and is overly constrained in its capacity to facilitate collective action. A more thorough examination of the discourse surrounding human rights education reveals the pressing need for collective action as a crucial element in this framework (e.g., Becker, 2021; Duffy, 2024). Despite the somewhat limited scope outlined in the UN Declaration, human rights education, in its comprehensive nature, encompasses the dimension of participatory world-building. According to Zajda (2020) human rights education "also empowers individuals to participate in a broader community and in authentic democratic processes which promote inclusive citizenship, equality and advancement of the rule of law" (p. 6)—a thought which is close to Arendt's idea of critically (co-)shaping the communal.

However, Zajda (2020) also identifies challenges in the translation of human rights education into local action. These challenges become even more evident when we think about the global context where participatory world (re-)building would, in fact, address local contexts and the world as a whole. Saramago's "neighbour" transcends the person living next to me but can be anyone in the global community. This is particularly important given that global inequality is a major problem regarding human rights violations in the Global South e.g., as a consequence of the profit maximization of multinational corporations situated in the Global North (Ullah et al., 2021), or because of the so-called externalization of migration control of nation-states of the Global North (Pijnenburg, 2024)—and calling for a decolonization of thinking and acting. Taking this into account, *unlearning* colonial

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world orders is a significant concern as it enables a participatory world (re-)building, not only in the context of nationalities, ethnicity, or race but also regarding other oppressed groups, such as disabled peoples (Goodley, 2024) or any other minority. We argue that participatory world (re-)building is a crucial element to creating and establishing a peaceful (world) society based on the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. This assertion is supported by philosophical and anthropological arguments and findings in research on human rights education. In this context, education should and could find its role to support the needed processes in a way that goes far beyond human rights education as it is outlined by the United Nations. In the light of the enfolded notion of sociality—with (human) rights again as element of ethical openness (Arendt, 1954 and 1958; Rawls 1999; Adorno, 1971) instead of just lawful governing, with the with-world as precondition of an uncertain self (Löwith, 2022; Arendt, 1958) instead neoliberal individualism, with self-distancing and critical elements for fresh looks on the becoming of the presence (Jasanoff, 2004; Biesta, 2006) instead of traditional referencing—education as coming into presence (Biesta, 2006) embraces the uncertainty, openness and possibly transformation. Biesta argues for a "weak" concept of education that, building on Löwith here as well, allows for space for the emergence of the self (i.e., subjectification) in the relational with-world. Acquiring knowledge and skills (e.g., knowledge about human rights) and being socialized into norms and values must go hand in hand with the responsible emergence of a self that relates to others in the with-world—hence being able to turn to the neighbour as a social act.

Given the actual situation of insufficient implementations of human rights, our philosophical and anthropological arguments point to the relevance of a commitment to put sociality and participatory world (re-)building center stage in education—of course, this would go along with far-reaching implications for the design of curricula, educational institutions, teacher training and many other aspects of education. Even though we only sketched the challenges, it is evident that, particularly in the global north, these processes entail an unlearning of "colonial worldly orders" by rethinking the coming into the world of ordering concepts, legal rights, and human rights declaration. It calls for a broad societal commitment to revitalize the *with* (not against) in with-world. To understand the

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power relations, it is crucial to stand up for shared rights and engage with unheard voices of "the others." However, this is only possible if we "know the others," relate to their challenges, and initiate a process of participatory world (re-)building.

Conclusion

The recourse to philosophical and anthropological conceptions of what it means to be human (Löwith, 2022), including their sociality and the capacity to take a reflexive and distanced view of the possibilities of shaping human striving *together*, make it possible to design a united social life beyond a purely legal dimension. The criticism that human rights reduce and re-shift social relations and their forms to the legal level and ignore their impact on people's concrete lives cannot be invalidated. However, other possibilities for thinking about what the social and social worlds could be become clear. Our argument also underlines the relevance of (human) rights and understanding initial motivations for how they came into the world and the underlying core. Yet, while implementing a legal basis as a framework is helpful for all people in many ways, it does not automatically establish equity, inclusion, and (social) justice, as suggested in the initial statement. Reframing the social beyond legal or capitalist structures and linking it to education and educational tasks can contribute to suggesting their application in communities in addition to legal principles. We drew on Saramago's speech and repeatedly used the figure of the neighbour—how and when is it possible that the social encounter with the neighbour is closer to us than the way to Mars? With current political shifts and increasing distances between opinions and ideas of communal good lives, it seems that Mars seems closer than some neighbours. It goes without saying that Saramago's saying is an excellent metaphor today of how the richest of rich lived realities move beyond the imagination of the societal living of most.

Our contribution has to be understood as a fundamental reflection and reminder of the nexus of rights and sociality, supported by education. Above all, our reflections can help to see the power of education for participatory world (re-)building. Education, especially when it comes to implementing human rights, should not hide behind a legally binding framework. Instead, education can and must play an

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active role in engaging with sociality and participatory, co-creative world (re-)building. Of course, the need for this can also be derived from human rights, but participatory world (re-)building is an important foundation to fully actualizing human rights. The situated and co-operative rebuilding implies much unlearning and decolonized re-learning is needed. We see a tremendous educational task in opening the possibility for that, it needs education that is more than informing of rights and status. We ask for an education that is as inclusive as possible to co-produce knowledges tackling unjust political issues and finally understanding education as an inclusive endeavour preparing all humans for sociality in getting to know different worlds, seeking diversity, striving for understandings, and finding connections to one's own by embracing "otherness."

We further picked up on the diverse rights dimensions (legal, moral, social) reviving them in communal practices to pace ways to dialogue with the neighbour. However, what does all this mean to education? For one, knowing about rights is needed but insufficient, which means that education must be more than initiation. The empowering through rights ought to be underlined by learning to unlearn privileged positions and to "come into presence" (Biesta) to contribute to situated collaboration. While Löwith asked us to value sociality to bring the with-world to life, Arendt reminded us to understand societal life as socio-political, which, bringing in Brown's critical view on the politics of living, entails the critical analysis of living in—or better fighting—neoliberal conditions. This also hints at a simple and plain fact: Such kind of education requires well-trained teachers and settings where learners and teachers do not feel threatened. So, in the process of re-implementing human rights into education, parallel efforts to train communities and teachers need to be made.

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