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## **New Concepts of Authority and Citizen Education**

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, Emile Durkheim identified three key factors of successful socialisation: teacher authority, the concept of educational community and the role of community norms (1973). From these, through the process of disciplination, the individual meaningfully constructed his or her internal ethical code. Behind all three factors lies the concept of authority (of the teacher, the community, the norms), and the success of this authority is the basis of successful citizenship education.

These factors have radically changed in the intervening century: respect in society for the position of teachers has declined, the school community has lost the societal cohesion with the rise of individualisation, and the ethical foundation of society's norms has been replaced with a conflict-based legal discourse, in particular the discourse of human rights. A gap has opened between the individual and the factors of socialisation; on one hand reducing the repressive aspects of socialisation and on the other leading to the negative effect that Durkheim termed 'anomie' (1969, 1984). This term refers to two closely intertwined pathological phenomena:

- of industrial society, which has (particularly in the area of economy) lost effective moral regulation of the central social processes;
- of the individual, whose unregulated conscience leads to the 'disease of infinite aspiration' (Kanduč 1999, p 118); many late 20th century authors suggest such an orientation has become the norm of the consumer society (Lasch 1986, Bruckner 2004).

Underlying these changes is a change in the concept of authority. Cultural and political changes have led to the classic idea of authority from position (apostolic) being replaced by a hidden authority of supervision in the educational environment; but because of the impossibility of transferring this from the family environment to the institutional one (school), this endangers the authority and social valuation of the institutions, the teachers and society's norms.

The success of education for active citizenship therefore depends on a reconceptualisation of pedagogical authority, that would enable the school, the teacher and the systems of discipline to regain their status and pedagogical strength without endangering the basic pedagogical objective: forming an autonomous and critical personality who accepts the processes of active democratic and open-minded negotiation within an inclusive society.

To understand the reasons for the decline of education effectiveness and the nature of the measures to reduce anomie, let us first examine the fundamental characteristics of pedagogical authority.

### **How should pedagogical authority be defined?**

Taking a broader view that disregards the border between disciplining with force and with authority which envisages 'voluntary submission', authority can be defined as:

- any power of influence,

- a special form of asymmetrical/hierarchic relationship, which prepares the subordinate pole to internalise knowledge communicated by the superordinate pole (Kroflič 1997).

Such a broad definition poses a number of questions to which the public – and often the experts – respond with commonsense arguments, which are often wrong. Let us examine some of the most important facts regarding the pedagogical application of authority.

Although the power of authority is often attributed to various personality features of the leader, as early as the mid-sixteenth century La Boetie (1976) showed that the social power of the ruler arises mainly from the powerlessness of the subordinate masses who refuse to seize their own freedom (for which they have an anthropological predisposition). The theory of object relations suggests that this is even more true for the child, who because of his or her libidinal desire for safety, acceptance and love, attributes to the adult the status of the object of identification – and consequently authority – regardless of parental wishes (and later those of teachers) (cf. Kroflič 2000).

It is the child's powerlessness – defined by Lacan (1988) as *manque-à-être*, a lack of being – that confers on the parents the status of authority, so the phenomenon is not necessarily connected with explicit repression or a father figure in patriarchal education. The authority of primary objects can also be based on maternal love and kindness, so the adoption of a more permissive relationship does not abolish the authoritarian aspects of education; the authority is merely hidden, so that the child and the adult – who may subscribe to the permissive model of education to protect the child's spontaneous development – are often unaware of it (Kroflič 2000).

Authority is not necessarily a matter of interpersonal relationships; we can also talk about the authority of societal norms as symbolic law, and of the role of substitute objects of identification assumed by objects (such as toys) or imaginary characters (such as fairy tale heroes, or from Hollywood). The authoritarian relationship does not always remain external; it is as a rule at some stage internalised, and begins to function as a key moral factor in the form of conscience, internalised values, categorical imperative and the super-ego.

These presuppositions show that the concept of authority in education cannot be avoided. The concept of authority originates in Roman law, where it did not mean the maintenance of hegemony, but assistance in the acquisition of autonomy (and this can be seen in the etymology of the Latin concepts of *augeo*, *auxi*, *auctum*, meaning to multiply, to increase, to raise, to stimulate growth) (Kroflič 1997). This prepares the ground for the liberating potentials of education. The possibility of encouraging individual autonomy with education based on authority was anticipated by the Enlightenment philosophers: it was Kant who proclaimed that one of the basic problems of pedagogy was to combine the cultivation of human freedom with education, which is a form of submission, disciplinarian and enforcement (Kant 1988).

The real nature of Kant's paradox of enlightened education is made even more clear in Rousseau's observation in *Emile*, that natural, non-authoritarian education does not lead to an autonomous individual because it is based on 'false freedom' and 'treacherous manipulation'. He notes in the conclusion of the fourth book of *Emile* that 'the heart only accepts its own laws; if we attempt to enchain it, we give it freedom; if we give it freedom, we enchain it' (Rousseau 1959). This theoretical idea was empirically tested by

psychoanalysis in the 1920s, which showed that permissive education could produce neurotic effects; these do not therefore always emerge from patriarchal conflicts suppressed in the unconscious (Freud 1989).

If we wish to continue to hold to the possibility of a liberating education for personal autonomy, that can support the democratic resolution of societal conflicts and active citizenship, we need to find a form of authority that encourages the individual's potential for independence. Attempts to abolish authority in education have not developed critical thinking, individual autonomy or more humane social relations, as can be seen clearly Durkheim's concept of anomie.

UNESCO's strategic study *Learning: The Treasure Within* shows how the theoretical and practical dilemmas of the position of authority in education for freedom remain topical even today:

In order to protect the independence of conscience, education must from early childhood continue to develop the capability of critical judgement which enables free thought and independent action ... This poses the question of balance between the individual's freedom and the principle of authority, which pervades all teaching. It reveals the role of teachers in the formation of pupils' independent critical thinking, which those who wish to participate in public life will inevitably need.

(Delors *et al.* 1996, p 56)

### **The relationship between anomie, the demise of apostolic authority and the abuse of the mechanisms of hidden authority**

In the twentieth century – an era marked by processes of individualisation and increasing anomie – the classic patriarchal form of authority (which I term apostolic authority, in the spirit of Kierkegaard's treatise *The Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle*) declined, and new forms of social repression appeared (such as the concept of repressive tolerance (Marcuse, 1964)), linked to the hidden authority of consumer society.

Kierkegaard bases the structure of apostolic authority on its being unrelated to the real personal qualities of the authoritarian. Biblical characters were endowed with special powers and social positions through their divine calling, which was unrelated to their intellectual, moral, aesthetic or communicative powers, as is the case with a genius. Since God of the Old Testament and Jesus of the New Testament chose their missionaries according to criteria which were not comprehensible to mortals, we cannot judge or doubt the justification of their authority, even when this mystical mission materialises in the role of the family father, the church priest or the school teacher. To doubt their authority is morally intolerable (Kierkegaard 1991); the fundamental goal of education as moral development is the obedient citizen (Kroflič 2000).

The bearer of apostolic authority has one further structural feature, according to Kierkegaard. To fulfil the 'orthodox mission', the role must be restricted to being the transmitter of knowledge, and must denounce the 'the strength of one's own personality' (Kierkegaard 1991). The more the teacher protects himself with the symbols of positional power bestowed upon him, the more he restricts himself to the being role of the transmitter of ideological messages, and the smaller is his ability to influence pupils

through a personal relationship (Kroflič 1997). What gives him the unquestionable apostolic authority is his position, but this at the same time *reduces* his personal authority.

The demise of apostolic authority in the twentieth century can be attributed to a range of cultural changes:

- the critique of traditional education and its neurotic consequences, strengthened by the 1930s and post World War II critique of the authoritarian personality (supposedly a major culprits in the emergence of the totalitarian movements of Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism);
- the emergence of the information age, which allows subordinates to criticise and verify the authoritarian truths of social authorities;
- the increased awareness and respect for human rights and the rights of the child, including the right to develop one's own beliefs and life orientations;
- the emergence of a permissive model of education in the family and (unsuccessful) attempts to transfer hidden authority to school and other social institutions (Kroflič, 1997, 2000).

These processes democratised social relations and enabled individuation, but theorists in the 1960s also became aware that new forms of social repression and hidden authoritarianism were beginning to grow on the 'cinders of the old forms of authoritarianism'. These led to new forms of educational repression in the emotional abuse of children and adolescents. The slogan of the 'spontaneous development of the child' is in surprising agreement with the ideal of the consumer society – an individual who is internally bound to the imperatives of pleasure and the unhindered satisfaction of needs. The fundamental structure of the new form is of hidden authority based on the structural principle of 'repressive desublimation' or repressive tolerance. Mass culture's message of hidden ideological pressures is, when faith in the educational value of punishment is lost, supports emotional conditioning as the most effective educational method.

Because the fundamental structure of this hidden authority develops in a dyadic, emotionally closed, maternal family relationship, it seems logical idea that such form of authority, based on love and emotional closeness between the child and the mother, could be transferred to educational institutions to create a kind and conflict-free education. But it is soon apparent that such a dyadic emotional relationship cannot simply be transferred to the teacher as the 'important third person'. The paternal demand for obedience had been conferred on the teacher since the Enlightenment, and this had led to the decrease in the social status and authority of the teacher, school, and social norms (ibid.).

This crisis of the authority of school and social norms can be attributed to certain misplaced theoretical solutions and social expectations:

- Influenced by the current critique of permissiveness, many teachers still hope that there will be an improvement in their social status and a return to classic (apostolic) authority (though in my opinion it is impossible to restore this in Western culture);
- As referred to earlier, the new forms of hidden authority that are typical of permissive family education cannot be simply transferred to educational institutions. If institutions wish to fulfil their educational and socialisation mission they need to

maintain an at least minimal normative framework; but a child educated mainly on the basis of imaginary identification cannot accept these as a sensible object of identification;

- In the development of human rights and the rights of the child, the discourse of rights has emerged as a discourse of conflict, which divides members of the community more than it unites them. Neither does it provide a substantial connection between rights and duties or responsibilities, and such a connection is essential for making ethical judgements, and the educational and disciplinary mission cannot be successfully accomplished without it. The awareness that the discourse of rights does not encourage accepting responsibilities at the level of world politics (Kroflič, 2004) has been accompanied by a realisation that discourse between different peoples needs to be strengthened with the values of a world ethos (Kung, 2001);
- Impotence in the worldwide implementation of human rights has been joined by the impotence of the liberal concept of tolerance, if it remains at the level of passive forbearance. This can be seen in the emergence of religious and racial intolerance in the exemplary liberal Netherlands (Scheffer, 2004);
- The communitarian critique of liberalism highlights the crisis in the classic Enlightenment concepts of the autonomy of the individual and of the community (Kroflič 2004). This critique is similar to Durkheim's depiction of the negative effects of anomie: it demands that educational philosophy finds new models to form school communities to strengthen the individual's capacities for ethical, responsible response to conflict (Strike, 1998, 2003).

The effects of these new mechanisms for socialisation in the late 20th century have been described by many global theorists. Lasch (1986) describes them as Narcissist culture which structures Narcissist personalities, somewhere on the border between pathology and a socially desirable personality type. Bruckner (2004) extends the analysis with his thesis of the social torture of the individual with the imperative of pleasure and the compulsory pursuit of personal happiness. Beck (1986) writes about life in the risk society, in which Marcia (1994) finds forms of diffuse identity related to borderline disturbances, including pathological Narcissism, and the phenomenon of postponed identity among the young, who refuse to assume responsibility for independent life (summarised from Ule, 2000). Beauvois (1994) shows that the generations who succumbed to the liberal cult of internality have a specious independence and a lack of critical reflection. Ule Nastran summarises these points:

It is about the choice of identity, not the individual's inevitable destiny arising from his or her national, social, racial or ethnic origin, gender or age. The identity of the individual is seen as increasingly unstable, unclear and [a] changeable *network of partial identities*, which fits well in the presently unstable, unclear and changeable social circumstances. We can assume that the more the world community will show its global, impersonal character, the more transitional and conditional all local links between the individual and the surrounding society will be.

(Ule Nastran 2000, p. 314)

Regardless of whether we see these effects of permissive education and liberal Narcissist culture as normal and desirable or as pathological, these new personal competences are

in conflict with international documents setting out the goals for education in the 21st century (European Resolution: *Learning: The Treasure Within; World Ethos, Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations*, etc.). Various empirical studies in Europe (for example the IEA's 1999 Civic Education Study) show an alarming decline in respect for the fundamental institutions of the state, and this particularly so in the transition countries (Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001). There are two strategic preconditions for socialisation that support the common European values of active citizenship, inclusion, solidarity, autonomy, democracy, tolerance, and human right and liberties:

- respect for social institutions needs to be strengthened, but not so as to deny the importance of basic values of humanity or citizen's capacities for critical thought;
- new forms of authority, which we shall call 'self-limiting authority'.

### **Self-limiting authority and modern proposals in theory of education**

The values of democracy, tolerance, autonomy and critical thinking can be seen as threatened by the effects of modernisation if we do not change the conception and methodological forms of citizenship education.

K. A. Strike, a philosopher of education who has defined himself as a liberal communitarian, has striven to find a relationship between the individual and the community that would increase the credit (and authority) of school as an inclusive community, without neglecting the importance of local culture or the autonomy of the individual. He argues that the institution of the school must renounce the rigid and all-embracing ('thick') construction of cultural values, so that the individual is able to cultivate his/her own autonomy and personal construction of meaning. At the same time it must defend a minimum consensus on fundamental common values of coexistence; while it must allow and encourage pupils to maintain culturally specific personal values, it should get them to connect these to common values in a coherent whole. Strike envisages founding a school community on the model of *Gesellschaft or congregation*, encouraging critical communication between the individual and the community as a combination of ethical pidgin, hermeneutical understanding and harmonisation of the moral values originating in the individual's personal culture (Strike 1998, 2003, Kroflič 2004). He notes:

Choosing (or more likely changing) a framework of appraisal, a religion or a comprehensive doctrine, is usually not to choose or change one's way of life... Such schools might seek to promote a shared framework of appraisal, but this need not amount to seeking a shared way of life and does not assume a picture of liberal society as a union of quasi-autonomous subgroups.

(Strike 2003, p. 176 and 178)

Strike also attempts to facilitate ethical argumentation between teacher and pupil so that it is more sensitive to the particular context of the conflict, using ethical principles drawn from various theoretical approaches: utilitarianism, with its principle of the greatest good; liberalism, with its principle of equality and the golden rule; the ethics of care, with its principle of the protection of relationships and personal growth, and communitarian ethics, with their principle of the protection of community values (Strike and Soltis 1998, Strike and Moss 2003).

A similar logic seems to be at work in Kung's *World Ethos* project, which proposes not so much a new universal ethics as a cross-section of various particularistic ethical systems which enable negotiations between civilisations; every civilisation promotes its members ethical orientation within a culturally-specific religious or philosophical system, or some other subjective construction of meaning for itself. In Kung's address *To the General Assembly of the UN* he uses different values and ethical principles to strengthen the meaning and active role of the discourse of human rights, which is, as described above, increasingly turning into a discourse of conflict and division.

The common core of all these efforts is *the idea of strengthening the authority of the teacher, school, and social norms while at the same time not hindering the cultural diversity or personal autonomy of the individual*. In studying historical forms of authority within the European tradition, I have found elements of a new form of self-limiting authority, which may allow such a goal to be achieved. The following paragraphs outline some of its fundamental characteristics.

At important turning points in European history there is an evident need for a new form of authority: a new form of justice and solidarity between the individual and the community. This was formulated in ancient Greece in Socrates' address to his students: he said that while he appreciated their loyalty and trust, he expected them to be more loyal to the authority of truth than to their teacher. The attitude of Aristotle to his teacher was similar: *Amicus Plato, magis amica veritas*.

A similar point occurred at the beginnings of Christianity, when Jesus refused to descend from the cross to provide clear evidence of his divine nature, because this would negate the freedom to choose faith; in the Renaissance, when La Boetie appealed to humanity to reject blind obedience to rulers whose authoritarian power only originated from those they ruled; in the Enlightenment, when Kant argued for the gradual withdrawal of the teacher's authority in order to make room for the authority of the pupil's mind; and finally, in postmodernity (or late modernity), when theoretical psychoanalysis and Kohlberg's cognitivism combine to give a theory of moral development that hypothesises that through submission to symbolic law and the norms of conventional morality one rises to a position of (post-conventional) moral autonomy (Krofljč 1997). Studies over the last three decades prove the early development of the child's ability to link empathic potential to developing appropriate cognitive strategies, pro-social behaviour, decentred thinking and the emergence of a theory of mind, all of which are accelerated if the child has the opportunity to establish quality social relations with adults and peers in a community that he or she sees as safe and encouraging (Krofljč 2003).

Educational theorists have contributed to this, such as Gogala (1972) in Slovenia and Hirst and Peters (1970) in the United Kingdom; the latter defining the developing relationship between teacher and pupil in the maxim: *the good teacher is therefore a person who is always working himself out of a job*.

If teachers wish to find a conceptual basis for achieving the general consensus of educational goals they must accept some general rules of pedagogical authority:

- authority cannot be abolished in a pedagogical relationship; in permissive approaches it is merely hidden, and in this form successfully thwarts the processes of moral autonomisation and critical reflection;



- although there can be no personal pedagogical relationship, and thus no educational effects without authority, the latter is a phenomenon which makes education possible but also hinders the achievement of the highest educational goals;
- the teacher is therefore responsible for maintaining the authority of the school community, his or her person and the agreed norms, and is at the same time responsible for its gradual limitation to support the processes of autonomisation;
- theoretical and practical directions to develop practical methods of citizenship education should be drawn from:
  - the 3P theory and the objections to the paternalist pedagogical position, which originated in the movement for the rights of the child;
  - anthropological, philosophical and psychological findings which confirm that human autonomy is related to all levels of human personality (cognition, emotions and will);
  - ethical theories which strive to overcome ethical exclusivity, employing various forms of conflict solution;
  - newer concepts such as those of empowerment, of personal commitment and active tolerance, Hoffman's (2000) model of inductive education to encourage pro-social empathic competences, McLaughlin's (2002) concept of citizenship education as a project of heavy burdens, Strike's model of ethical argumentation and hermeneutical negotiation of personal values with the fundamental norms of civilisation, negotiating models of school parliaments, and the involvement of pupils in humanitarian voluntary work;
  - and, last but not least, political movements which strive for more humane living conditions, characterised by justice, solidarity, inclusion and democracy.

If Durkheim called for a moral and political (rather than technological or economical) reforms to overcome anomie (Durkheim 1984), we must today emphasise the importance of the critique of global capitalism and of educational efforts that strengthen civilised values and those basic personal dimensions that encourage individual ethical responsibility.

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