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NEW CONCEPTS OF AUTHORITY AND CIVIC EDUCATION

In the beginning of the twentieth century, E. Durkheim (1973) defined three key factors of successful socialisation: teacher authority, the concept of educational community and the role of community norms, from which the individual by means of disciplination meaningfully constructs his or her internal ethical code. In the background of these three concepts is the concept of authority (of the teacher, the community, the norms), and its success if the base for the success of citizen education.

In the last hundred years, these factors have radically changed: the society's respect for the formal position of the teacher declined, the school community lost the aspects of societal cohesion to the processes of individualisation, and a deeper ethical foundation of society's norms was replaced with the conflict-based legal discourse, particularly the discourse of human rights. A gap has opened between the individual and the factors of socialisation, which on one hand reduced the repressive aspects of socialisation processes, but on the other caused a negative effect termed anomie by Durkheim (1969, 1984). The term refers to two closely intertwined phenomena:

- a pathological condition of the industrial society which has (particularly in the area of economy) lost effective moral regulation of the central social processes;
- a pathological condition of the individual whose conscience is insufficiently regulated, which causes him or her to suffer the "disease of infinite aspiration" (Kanduč 1999, p. 118); many authors of the second half of the twentieth century even believe that this orientation became the social norm for the consumer society (Lasch 1986, Bruckner 2004).

Underlying these changes is the change of the concept of authority. Under the influence of cultural and civilisational changes, the classic positional (apostolic) authority has been replaced by the hidden authority of supervision over the educational environment; but because of the impossibility of its transfer from the family environment to the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 which would enable the school, the teacher and the systems of diciplination to regain the valued status and pedagogical strength, without at the same time endangering the basic pedagogical objectives: the formation of an autonomous and critical personality who accepts the processes of active democratic and open-minded negotiation in 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.

1. How to define pedagogical authority?

According to a broader view which disregards the borderline 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 broad definition poses a number of questions to which the general 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, La Boetie (1976) as early as the mid-sixteenth century showed that the social power of the ruler arises mainly from the powerlessness of the subordinate masses which refuse to seize their own freedom, for which they have all anthropological predispositions. According to the theory of object relations, this is even more true of 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 whether the parents and later teachers wish that or not (cf. Kroflič 2000).

Since 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, the phenomenon is not necessarily connected with the explicit use of repression and the father figure in patriarchal education. The authority of primary objects can also be based on maternal love and kindness, which means that 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 relationship; we can also talk about the authority of the societal norm as a symbolic law and the role of substitute objects of identification which is assumed by objects (toys) and imaginary characters (heroes from fairly tale or from Hollywood, etc.). Also, the authoritarian relationship does not always remain external; it is at some stage internalised as a rule, and then begins to function as a key moral factor in the form of conscience, internalised values, categorical imperative, super-ego and similar (ibid).

The above presuppositions show that we cannot avoid the concept of authority in education. The awareness that in Roman law, where it originates, the concept of authority did not originally mean the maintenance of hegemony but rather assistance in the acquisition of autonomy, which 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), indeed prepares the ground for the liberating potentials of education. The possibility of encouraging the individual's autonomy with education based on authority was anticipated by the Englihtenment philosophers, and Kant indeed proclaimed the question of how to cultivate human freedom with education, which is a form of submission, disciplination and enforcement, to be one of the basic problems of pedagogy (Kant 1988).

The reality of Kant's paradox of enlightened education is even clearer if we note Rousseau's observation in *Emile*, namely that natural, non-authoritarian education does not lead to an autonomous individual, since it is based on "false freedom" and "treacherous manipulation". As he notes in the conclusion of the fourth book of *Emile*, "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 nineteen-twenties, when it was discovered that permissive education produces neurotic effects as well; they therefore do not always emerge from patriarchal conflicts suppressed into the unconscious (Freud 1989).

If we wish to keep the faith in the possibility of a liberative education for personal autonomy, for democratic resolution of societal conflicts and for active citizenship, we must find such form of authority which encourages the individual's potentials for independence. The attempts to abolish authority in education did not contribute to increased critical mind and autonomy of the individual neither to more humane social relations, as can be clearly seen in Durkheim's concept of anomie mentioned above.

The following thought from UNESCO's strategical study *Learning: The Treasure Within* shows how topical the theoretical and practical dilemmas of the position of authority in education for freedom remain 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)

2. 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 (I call it 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 (e.g. Marcuse's (1964) concept of repressive desublimation), linked to the hidden authority of consumer society.

Kierkegaard bases the structure of apostolic authority on its unrelatedness to the real personal qualities of the authoritarian. The Biblical characters were bestowed a special power and social position through a 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 incomprehensible to mortals, we cannot judge or doubt the justification of their authority, event when this mystical mission is materialised in the role of the family father, the church priest or the school teacher. Moreover, every doubt in 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", he must restrict himself to the role of the transmitter of knowledge and 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 role of the transmitter of ideological messages, the smaller his ability to influence the pupils through a personal relationship (Kroflič 1997). What gives him the unquestionable apostolic authority in his position, at the same time reduces his personal authority!

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

- the critique of traditional education and its neurotic effects, strengthened in the nineteen-thirties and after World War II with the critique of authoritarian personality, which was supposed to be one of the main culprits behind the emergence of the totalitarian movements of Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism;
- the emergence of the information age, which enables the subordinates to critically verify the authoritarian truths of the bearers of social authority;
- the increased awareness and respect for human rights and the rights of the child, which also include the right to develop one's own beliefs and life orientations;
- the emergence of the permissive model of education in the family and (unsuccessful) attempts to transfer the model of hidden authority to school and other social institutions (summarised from Kroflič 1997 and 2000).

Although these processes democratise social relations and enable processes of individuation, the theorists of the sixties began to be aware that on the "cinders of the old forms of authoritarianism", new forms of social repression and hidden authoritarianism began to grow. These led to a new form of educational repression, seen as a form of emotional abuse of children and adolescents. The slogan of "spontaneous development of the child" agrees surprisingly well with the ideal of the consumer society – the individual who is internally bound to the imperative of pleasure and unhindered satisfaction of needs, which reveals the fundamental structure of the new form – hidden authority based on the structural principle of "repressive desublimation". The hidden ideological pressures of the messages of mass culture are, when the faith in the educational value of punishment disappears, supported by emotional conditioning as the most widespread educational method.

Since the fundamental structure of hidden authority develops in a dyadic, emotionally closed maternal family relationship, it is a logical idea that such form of authority, based on love and emotional closeness between the child and the maternal object, should be transferred to educational institutions in the form of a kind, conflict-free education. But it would soon be revealed that a dyadic emotional relationship cannot simply be transferred to the "important third person" – the teacher, as the paternal demand for obedience had been conferred on the teacher since the Enlightenment. This has led to the decrease of the social status and authority of the teacher, school, and social norm (ibid.).

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

- Influenced by the strong present critique of permissivism, many teachers still hope for an improvement of the social status and for the return of the classic (apostolic) authority, which is in my opinion impossible to restore in the Western culture;
- As mentioned above, the new forms of hidden authority, typical of permissive family education, cannot be transferred to educational institutions. If these wish to fulfil their educational and disciplinary (socialisation) mission, they must maintain at least a

minimal normative framework; but a child educated mainly on the basis of imaginary identification cannot accept these as a sensible object of identification (ibid.);

- In advocating human rights and the rights of the child, the discourse of rights is revealed as a discourse of conflict which divides members of the community more than it unites them. At the same time, it does not provide for a substantial connection of rights on one hand and duties and responsibility on the other. Such connection is vital for ethical judgement; the educational and disciplinary mission cannot be successfully fulfilled without it. The awareness of the fact that the discourse of rights does not encourage thinking about responsibility (Kroflič 2004) was at the level of world politics joined by the awareness that civilisational efforts for negotiation between different peoples must be further strengthened with the values of a world ethos (Kung 2001);
- The impotence of the processes of worldwide implementation of human rights has recently been joined by the awareness of the impotence of the liberal concept of tolerance if it remains at the level of a passive forbearance. This was corroborated by the emergence of religious and racial intolerance in the exemplary liberal Netherlands (Scheffer 2004);
- The communitarian critique of liberalism draws attention to the crisis of the classic Enlightenment concepts of both the autonomy of the individual and of the community (Kroflič 2004). The critique is similar to Durkheim's description of the negative effects of anomie and demands of philosophy of education to find new models for school communities formation and for the strengthening of the individual's capacities for ethical, responsible response to conflicts (Strike 1998 in 2003).

The effects of new socialisation mechanisms at the end of the twentieth century are described by many world theorists. Lasch (1986) described them as the state of mind in a Narcissist culture, which produces the structure of a Narcissist personality somewhere on the borderline between pathology and a socially desirable personality type. Bruckner (2004) takes this analysis further with his thesis of the social torture of the individual with the imperative of pleasure and the compulsory pursuit of personal happiness. Beck (1986) talks about life in a society of risk, in which Marcia (1994) finds various forms of diffuse identity related to borderline disturbances, including pathological Narcissism, and a massive phenomenon of postponed identity among the young who long refuse to assume responsibility for an independent life (summarised from Ule 2000). Beauvois (1994) reveals the specious independence and the lack of critical reflection in the generations who succumbed to the liberal cult of internality. Ule Nastran summarises this view in the following statement:

> "It is about the choice of identity, not the individual's inevitable destiny arising from his or her national, social, racial or ethic origin, gender or age. The identity of the individual is seen as increasingly unstable, unclear and 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 the described effects of permissive education and liberal Narcissist culture as normal (desirable) or pathological, the new personality competences disagree with the international documents defining the goals of education for the 21st century (European Resolution, Learning: The Treasure Within, World Ethos, Agenda for Dialogue

Among Civilizations, etc.). Certain empirical studies in Europe (IEA's 1999 Civic Education Study) reveal an alarming decline in the respect for the fundamental institutions of the state, which is particularly typical of the transition countries (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). We can note two strategic socialisational preconditions to support the declared common European values of active citizenship, inclusive and solidary society, autonomy, democracy, tolerance, and human right and liberties:

- the respect for social institutions should be strengthened, but not in a manner which would deny the importance of basic values of humanity and the capacities of citizens for critical thought;
- this calls for a new form of authority, which we shall call self-limiting authority.

3. Self-limiting authority and modern proposals in theory of education

The still declared values of democracy, tolerance, autonomy and critical thinking can then, in view of the effects of modernisation processes, be seen as threatened values, if we do not adopt certain essential changes in the conception and methodological forms of citizenship education.

One of the more interesting philosophers of education, K. A. Strike, who in an interview defined himself as a liberal communitarian, strives to find such form of relationship between the individual and the community which could increase the credit (and authority) of school as an inclusive community, without neglecting the importance of local cultures or the autonomy of the individual. In his opinion, the school institution must renounce the rigid and all-embracing (»thick«) construction of cultural values in order to enable the individual to cultivate one's own autonomy and personal construction of meaning. But at the same time, it must defend a minimum consensus on fundamental common values of coexistence; while allowing and encouraging the pupils to maintain the culturally specific personal values, it should make them to connect these with the common values into a coherent whole. In this context, Strike envisages founding school community on the model of *Gesellshaft* 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 in 2003, Kroflič 2004). As he notes himself:

> »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 in a manner which makes it more sensitive to the context of the particular conflict situation, utilising ethical principles of various theoretical approaches: utilitarianism with its principle of the greatest good, liberalism with its principle of equality and the golden rule, ethics of care with its principle of protection of relationship and personal growth, and communitarian ethics with

its principle of protection of community values (Strike and Soltis 1998, Strike and Moss 2003).

A similar logic seems to be at work in H. Kung's project *World Ethos*, which is proposed not so much as a new universal ethics but rather as that cross-section of various particularistic ethical systems which makes negotiation between civilisations possible; in this context, every civilisation promotes the ethical orientation of their members in the culturally-specific religion, philosophical system, or other subjective construction of meaning for itself and in its own way. We should note Kung's thought from the address *To the General Assembly of the UN*, that he wishes to use different values and ethical principles to strengthen the meaningfulness and active role of the discourse of human rights which is, as I have already mentioned, increasingly turning into discourse of conflict and division.

The common core of all these efforts is therefore *an idea of strengthening the authority of the teacher, school, and social norm while not hindering cultural diversity or personal autonomy of the individual.* While studying the historical forms of authority in the European tradition, I have come across fragments for a theory of a now form of *self-limiting authority*, which promises the realisation of this goal. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to outline its fundamental characteristics.

It seems that during at any important turning point in the history of European civilisation, when a new form of just and solidary relationship between the individual and the community is sought, the need for a new form of authority appear becomes evident. In ancient Greece, this was formulated in Socrates' address to his students; he said that he appreciated their loyalty and trust, but that he expected them to be more loyal to the authority of truth than to their teacher. Similar was the attitude of Aristotle to his teacher:

> *Amicus Plato, magis amica veritas.*

The story was similar at the beginning of Christianity, when Jesus refused to descend from the cross to provide a clear evidence of his divine nature, which would abolish the free choice of faith; in the Renaissance, when La Boetie appealed to humankind to reject blind obedience to the ruler whose authoritarian power only originates from those that he rules; in the Enlightenment, when Kant argued for a gradual withdrawal of the teacher's authority 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 combined to provide theories of moral development subscribing to the hypothesis that through submitting oneself to the symbolic law and norms of conventional morality, one rises to the position of (post-conventional) moral autonomy (Kroflič 1997). In the last three decades, we read studies which prove early development of the child's potentials to link empathic potentials to the development of appropriate cognitive strategies, of pro-social behaviour, decentred thinking and the emergence of one's own theory of mind, which is 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 (Kroflič 2003).

Theorists of education have joined these processes, such as Gogala (1972) in Slovenia and Hirst and Peters (1970) in the United Kingdom; the latter defined the developing relationship between teacher and pupil with the following maxim:

> *The good teacher is therefore a person who is always working himself out of a job.*

If the teachers wish to find a conceptual basis for achieving the educational goals which are a matter of general consensus in today's Europe, they must be prepared to accept the following general rules of pedagogical authority:

- authority cannot be abolished in the pedagogical relationship; in permissive approaches it can only be hidden, and in this form it thwarts the processes of moral autonomisation and critical reflection even more successfully;
- although there can be no personal pedagogical relationship and therefore no educational effects without authority, the latter is a phenomenon which on one hand makes education possible, but on the other hinders the achievement of the highest educational goals;
- therefore the teacher is responsible for maintaining the authority of the school community, his or her person and the agreed norms, and at the same time for its gradual limitation in active support to the processes of autonomisation;
- theoretical and practical clues for the development of practical methods of citizenship education should be drawn from:
    - the 3P theory and the objections against 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 exclusivism and to employ various approaches to find suitable forms of conflict solving;
    - certain newer concepts such as, for example, those of empowerment, of personal commitment and active tolerance, Hoffman's (2000) model of inductive education encouraging the development of 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 civilisational norms, the activation of the negotiational model of school parliaments, and the encouragement of the humanitarian involvement of pupils in voluntary work;
    - and, last but not least, the political movements which strive to achieve a more humane living conditions, characterised by justice, solidarity, inclusion and democracy.

If Durkheim called for a moral and political (not technological or economical) reforms to overcome anomie (Durkheim 1984), we must today emphasise the importance of the critique of global capitalism, as well as of those educational efforts that strengthen civilisational values and fundamental personal dimensions which encourage the individual's ethical responsibility.

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