STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS OF CIVIC AND MORAL EDUCATION

Abstract:

As the starting point of thinking about the basic aims of moral and civic education in public schools, the author first the presents M. Warnock's views on the relations between personal morality, public morality and human rights as a legally regulated concept; he then proceeds with the theory of social domains and the political ideas of H. Arendt to provide further argumentation for the basis of the central thesis of this article: moral and civic education in the spirit of human rights and moral responsibility toward fellow human beings should be provided in accordance with ethics and emancipatory political ideas. The author's considerations of the main goals of moral and civic education in public schools are founded on the assumption that – although a great many concepts are relevant to morality (e.g. virtues, values, a sense of duty, ethical principles) – there is no personal morality without a trace of altruism rooted in sympathy and imagination; and without such personal morality in the sense of desiring to act ethically, there can be no public morality oriented toward the common good or the rule of law based on human rights.

Keywords:

public morality, personal morality, legal rights and duties, civic education, moral education

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> "It is often suggested that there should be lessons in 'citizenship' at school, that is, I suppose, lessons in public morality. I deeply doubt the utility of such lessons. Instead I believe we must start at the beginning, and help children to discover that there is such a thing as private morality, the ethics of conscience and of possible ideals, a system within which they can personally and individually set goals for themselves, and which will help to give significance to their lives." (Warnock 1998, p. 190)

Introduction

Nowadays, the concepts of civic education in public schools are faced with serious dilemmas. The highly problematic experiences of the real social space at the time of the (omni)present domination of neoliberal policies creating the global crises of economic, financial and legal policies, together with the increasing global injustice (i.e. moral crisis), fuel mistrust toward the rule of law. This is something that schools promoting the concepts of civic education find hard to confront. Not only is it very hard for the educational contents employed to impart to children a positive attitude toward the rule of law to compete with the insights into the functioning of these institutions in actual practice. It is also becoming theoretically increasingly relevant to inquire into whether encouraging a positive political culture in the context of the existing democratic social structures really is the primary objective of the education intended to strengthen responsibility in the community. Or would it be more sensible to orientate the educational dimension of school toward a more primary concern –

moral education based on ethical principles that yield insight into the fundamental existentials of humans as rational, emotional, and dialogic beings, and toward the possibility of political engagement that essentially allows for a withdrawal from the existing social space and for a building of new models of communal integration in the world. Since the rationale behind the project of civic education is explicitly questioned also by the renowned English philosopher Mary Warnock, I will take as the starting point of thinking about the main aims of education in schools M. Warnock's views on the relationships between personal morality, public morality and human rights as a legally regulated concept, as well as the social and communal significance of the concepts. I will then proceed with the theory of social domains and the political ideas of H. Arendt to develop further argumentation as the basis for the central thesis: education in the spirit of human rights and moral responsibility toward fellow human beings should be provided in accordance with ethics and emancipatory political ideas. Furthermore, understanding the importance of the existing levers used by the rule of law should be related to anthropological argumentation and the realization of the significance of the interdependence and interrelatedness of individuals in the different models of a just and inclusive community.

The parallel reading of the three selected concepts and the critique of the theses on the need to subordinate oneself to social conventions for autonomous morality to arise as well as on human rights as the new consensual framework of the agreed moral duties call for a brief methodological note. The use of the notions public and private morality, conventionality and sociality, and human rights will be related to the specific horizon of the authors referred to, and will thus differ considerably from the established terminology. Moreover, it is similarly impossible to equate comparatively the meanings of the various concepts used by the authors discussed below. The concepts of public morality (M. Warnock), the domain of conventional demands (Nucci, Turiel, Smetana), and the society which requires the individual's subordination to the established norms and demands (H. Arendt) are impossible to equate in a simplistic manner. But if the criteria for the definition of the notions seem somewhat non-uniform, all the theoreticians share the same general intention: the moral sense incorporating the perception of distress and injustice and the readiness to consider the needs of fellow human beings and the group one belongs form the foundation of prosociality and morality on the basis of which we must start building the methodology of moral and civic education. The

required subordination of the child/adolescent to social norms (making up the nucleus of public morality and the area of conventional rules) as a condition for the development of autonomy and the political consciousness of active citizenship (according to the thesis on the limits which make freedom possible for the child/adolescent) call for a thorough reconsideration. And, secondly, human rights are important for the provision of the greater protection of fundamental moral norms in the public sphere (being founded on ethical assumptions), while their realization is based on the personal morality of the individual, since human rights cannot be established without a trace of altruism and the imaginative abilities to perceive the needs of our fellow human beings and the community where we act.

Mary Warnock's ethical and anthropological ideas

In her late work, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Ethics* (Warnock 1998), M. Warnock takes the classical ideas of Aristotle, Hume, Kant, and some contemporary authors to demonstrate what the origins of human *private morality* are. She does it through her analyses of a number of prominent legal and ethical dilemmas, such as the right to abortion and euthanasia, genetic research, and the rights of mentally disabled children to receive proper education, rather than being merely looked after in order to survive physically (i.e. receiving nothing but care). She believes humans to be such beings who are distinguished for their *moral sense* as a fundamental need of the human nature in spite of selfish interests in self-preservation. Consequently, the development of moral sense is the primary goal of education. The development of moral sense is related to human sympathy as the ability to acknowledge the importance of the needs and expectations of fellow humans and to imagination as the ability to understand others in relation to the human features we share: "… the imaginative conception of the needs and wishes of others besides oneself, the sense of them as important, to which we have given the name of sympathy, which is the source of ethics" (ibid., p. 138).

These are the two existentials that *altruism* is based on as the foundation of personal morality, meaning "… to be prepared to forgo what you might like to do, or to suppress a claim you might like to make for yourself, for the sake of other people" (ibid., p. 134). Although altruistic acts frequently arise out of love or benevolence to other people, the essence of

altruism comes from our being linked to one another by sympathy and an imaginative understanding of fellow human beings. Since humans often find themselves in the conflict of whether to follow their own needs or the needs of other people, the demands recognized through sympathy and imagination acquire the form of the Kantian *duty/command*, not only a moral inclination.

To put it metaphorically, morality arises when people begin to realize that their society as well as humanity as a whole are in the same boat, and that riding the boat is perilous with the possibility of the boat sinking if everyone on board does not cooperate with one another. This is the origin of the readiness for generosity, sharing, and restraining one's own wishes when their fulfillment might put others at risk. In a perilous situation people must share certain values. These are the roots of the ethical. "This is what opens up the possibility of altruism, as each person thinks for himself, about his own relation to the rest." (Ibid., pp. 139–140).

Another very important factor for humans as social beings is the conception of *public morality* on which social legislation and the system of human rights rest. Whereas personal morality is based on a mixture of principles and emotions, resting on the feeling that something needs to be done regardless of the consequences or the questions of public (dis)approval (honor), public morality as the basis of the legal system cannot take into account feelings or motives, although it looks into the issue of the guilty intent of the perpetrator of a criminal offence. Public morality requires foreseeing long-term consequences for everybody in terms of the common good and the ability to explain the meaning of duties in terms of the common good of all citizens.

The strongest public morality arguments originate in the consequentialist logic of utilitarian ethics, following the principle of striving for the greatest benefit for the greatest number of community members. Absolute criteria of morality in the area are frequently weak, encouraging ethically dubious procedures, such as – in the field of medicine – the double effect argument (distinguishing the intention of an action from foreseeing the outcome of the action – easing the suffering of a seriously ill patient, although we are aware that narcotics cause the organism to weaken and shorten the patient's life; ibid., pp. 40–46) or the "slippery

slope" argument (when deciding on ending life support, claiming that life in the permanent vegetative state is not worth keeping; ibid., p. 55).

Although some authors support the thesis that public morality should be rights-based, M. Warnock rejects the argumentation using the example of the Education Act of 1972, which introduced the right of severely disabled children in the UK to education. It demonstrates that laws and the rights related to them are based on pre-existing moral imperatives (to enable all people regardless of handicap to receive education), which also enable critique of the laws. Morality cannot be logically derived from rights, as it is impossible to state that before the Act was introduced the children had no right to education. Before the Act, severely disabled children were thought impossible to educate, so it was thought enough to provide them with a system of basic care (ibid., pp. 90 and 95). Thus, M. Warnock rejects the theory of natural rights and takes human rights to be an important civilizational achievement, being asserted as an instrument of strengthening public morality and protecting humans from individuals or social institutions that are not committed to the fundamental moral sense.

The crucial difference between moral ideals and legal rights with co-dependent duties additionally shows that *morality cannot be founded on the concept of rights*. The difference between moral duty and legal obligation lies in that fact that the classic understanding of (moral) duties includes – in addition to the awareness of fundamental duties – other motives, such as compassion, mercy, and generosity, which cannot be prescribed through legal obligation. Classic (moral) duty, therefore, does not exclude these motives; rather, it presupposes them, since a responsible person is the person who does what is right and tries to be good. Another difference between duty and obligation is that moral ideals always presuppose the reciprocal duty of everybody to defend them. But when somebody refers to legal rights, it means that somebody else has the duty of ensuring that the right be respected. If duties and obligations are related, they are so in a way where, for instance, the right of the patient to medical treatment obliges the health system to extend the right. It certainly does not mean that nobody should have a right without also having a duty, but it is worth noting that, for example, children do have rights without reciprocal legal obligations.

Rights enable us to claim them in the public social space, yet personal morality refers to "the possibility of self-denial or altruism, the thought that others are as important as, or more important than, oneself. … It is my contention that a civil society could not function if it subsisted only on indignation where rights had been infringed, without the occasion for admiration as well for those who, like the Good Samaritan, get out of their way to display altruism. If justice were the only, or even the most fundamental, value, such ideas as compassion, or hatred of cruelty, or shame at dishonesty might wither away." (Ibid., p. 115)

Public morality therefore ensures legality and justice in society, which refers to the concept of citizen rights and duties, but personal morality refers to the internal feeling and interest/motivation for good rather than bad deeds, interest in morality itself, that is, the desire to be good.

To summarize, according to M. Warnock (ibid.) ethics arise when somebody sees that they must postpone the satisfaction of their immediate desires for the benefit of somebody else. The good means both the good for oneself and the good for fellow humans and the community one belongs to. As opposed to ethics, criminal laws as part of the legal regime can only restrain the behavior of those not acting in accordance with the intrinsic moral sense, the general sense of responsibility toward others, based on sympathy. Behind criminal law there are the principles which are the values to be relied on by all members of society. These principles are not only the basis of law, they are also the basis of the sense of personal obligation. However, the principles and obligations are not everything that makes up morality. We can offer others love and admiration for virtues like courage, truthfulness, and amiability, as well as our commitment to moral principles. And the admiration for such virtues and commitments establishes ideals and makes it possible "to think imaginatively about the kind of persons we would like to be" (ibid., p. 140).

Although a great many personal characteristics or dimensions are relevant to morality (e.g. virtues, values, a sense of duty, judgments in accordance with ethical principles), there is no personal morality without a trace of altruism rooted in sympathy and imagination; and without such personal morality in the sense of desiring to act ethically, there can be no public morality oriented toward the common good or the rule of law based on human rights. The object of the

establishment of human rights and their protection through legal prohibitions is a very important civilizational achievement (an upgrade to public morality, so to speak). Emphasizing certain rights (such as the above-mentioned rights of the mentally disabled to education), we effect positive changes in the public's ethical standpoints, but as M. Pavčnik states, "… a legal rule cannot be accepted autonomously if it is not, simultaneously, also positively morally valued. The law without sufficient support of the kind or if it starts losing the support, becomes increasingly coercive and violent." (Pavčnik 1997, p. 233)

Public schools between the goals of moral and civic education

The quotation at the beginning of this article makes it clear that M. Warnock believes the primary aim of education in public schools to be helping to develop private morality, "the ethics of conscience and of possible ideals" and personal goals (Warnock 1998, p. 190). This aim includes developing the language of morals which means general performative judgments, exercising the child's imaginative sympathy by asking how they would feel if someone else ruined their game, learning what is common between oneself and other people, responding to acts with praise or blame, preventing moral relativism and cynicism. But the key, of course, is the development of altruism, imagination, and sympathy (ibid., pp. 174–177 and 186–187) – the sources of morality!

To help children to discover the basics of personal morality, the author believes we should start using the language of ethics unashamedly from the very beginning (without the above-mentioned weak arguments frequently appearing in the area of public morality), let children know that they are involved in ethical alternatives, the classroom must become a microcosm of a democratic society which does not deny the authority of the ethically aware teacher who – in addition to responding to children – teaches largely by example (ibid., pp. 190–191), give high priority to children's imagination with the help of telling stories, not explicit teaching, as "stories present themselves not as mere narrative … but as values, which are permanent, intelligible and above all shared" (ibid., p. 192). Most of all, then, the task of moral education is making children want to be good – without this private wish they cannot be good in the

public sphere. Children need to be taught that "being human, they are subject to temptation, and being human, they can, if they want to, triumph" (ibid., p. 197).

The development of personal morality, which M. Warnock takes to be the main area of school education, can also be approached through another theory. This theory introduces into the area of moral demands the difference between various social domains and shows that moral consciousness is formed by three structurally different areas (moral demands, conventional demands and personal choices), which furthermore require different ethical argumentations as part of educational transmission.

The difference between the moral and the conventional in the light of social domain theory

In recent decades, authors like Turiel (2004), Nucci (2001), and J. Smetana (2011) have been developing the theory of social domains. Its central thesis claims that the area of social demands includes at least three structurally separate areas, that is, the areas of moral demands, conventional demands, and personal expectations. The authors (Turiel 2004, Nucci 2001, Smetana 2011) define moral demands as those which regulate the actions whose consequences have an explicit impact on the dignity and well-being of (fellow) human beings or social groups. Put simply, immoral deeds inflict pain on the victim by infringing their inalienable fundamental rights and create an unfair social environment. Conventional demands relate to the creation of customs within specific social areas, although their transgressions do not lead to directly perceptible harm inflicted on fellow human beings or social groups. The third group is made up of the demands that affect the choice of personal lifestyle, friends, leisure-time activities, etc.

The quoted authors, however, are far from suggesting that the respect for all the demands must be seen as the necessary element of an appropriate moral education, that is, that the child's rebellion against a certain demand is in itself a sign of the child's lack of readiness to acknowledge the legitimate authority of the adult. The latter is thought to be based on the symbolic order of the social environment, with the acknowledgement of the conventions

being a necessary step in the development of autonomy. Numerous research studies in different cultural contexts have demonstrated that children react differently to the demands coming from different social domains in terms of their active understanding of the meaning of the demand. They also quite rightly judge adults' expectations through their own experiences of the acts' consequences. Or, to put it in other words, "children develop an understanding of moral matters from their direct experiences of harm or unfairness, as well as from others' communications highlighting the experience of harm" (Smetana 2011, p. 45). Insisting on the internalization of the demand made by an adult's authority is then neither the only nor the key condition for responsibility- and autonomy-oriented moral development. Explaining the rationale behind the demand, insisting on the fulfillment of certain demands (and sanctioning transgressions), experientially scrutinizing the demand's grounds as well as occasional rebellions and negotiations between the child and adults – only all this together can ensure such an educational environment which will encourage a greater prosocial sensitivity and the ability to judge morally and make moral decisions.

I maintain that as the starting idea to develop a model of moral education we can assume it is necessary to create different structures of responding to the conflicts originating in non-compliance with educational demands or even in rebellion against the explicit expectations of the person providing education.

Moral demands

The moral demands relating to the actions with which the person being educated can directly hurt another person or harm a social group or material environment where they act must be clearly supported by educational measures and transgressions clearly characterized as unacceptable. According to Hoffman (2000), this is the common point of all disciplinary practices, regardless of the subsequent methods of reacting to the child's transgression.

The manners in which actions can be judged and further educational measures justified can, however, vary considerably. As for the typology of educational styles (Baumrind 1966), there are three models of justifying educational demands (*laissez faire education* as the fourth

educational style does not establish an educational demand at all). *Authoritarian demand* refuses the disciplined person any justification for the demand in the sense: Do as I say, because I said so. *Permissive education* faces us with the justification of the type: You've hurt me a lot with this; I didn't expect it from you. In opposition to lay perceptions that in permissive education the child can do whatever they like, this model also includes condemnation of unwanted behavior, which is – as a rule – implicit. The adult does not refer to norms and prohibitions nor do they condemn the deed; rather, they draw the child's attention to their own being hurt. This affects the child as psychological pressure or emotional conditioning in the form of the threat of losing emotional support in the person educating. The *authoritative-assertive* type of educational argumentation is the most widely spread and emphasized by educational methods as appropriate. It condemns the deed, referring back to a pre-established norm and its rational justification: You know we have a rule saying we don't do that, because … The dominant interpretations claim that this type of argumentation clearly presents the child with the contentious nature of the action and emphasizes the justification for the condemnation, referring to the relevant social norm and the assumed moral values or ethical principles.

According to Hoffman (2000) and Turiel (2004), the specific nature of the condemnation of a morally contentious act is that we can employ *inductive logic*, which emphasizes the contentiousness of the deed in relation to its consequences which the transgressor can recognize or foresee in the victim, rather than following the legal justification or a rule supported by the argumentation of one of the ethical theories. By drawing the transgressor's attention to the victim's emotional distress, the *consequentialist argument* acquires the status of empirical evidence that such acts are not morally acceptable. As a rule, it causes reciprocal distress and a feeling of guilt in the transgressor, which stems from the empathic recognition of the pain they have caused. This can lead to the arousal of prosocial emotions (especially compassion) and the wish to act so as to rectify the mistake (Kroflič 2010).

The positive value of the inductive disciplinary procedure is multifaceted. An increasing number of studies demonstrate that the method encourages the development of prosociality in the sense of directing one's attention to the well-being of others, which generally remains absent when referring to rational arguments and the formal status of the transgressed norm. In

addition, there is growing awareness that the development of prosocial emotions – compassion in particular – is a more primary factor of human morality that ethical judgment in accordance with moral values, rules, and principles. According to Levinas, responsibility toward fellow human beings, social and natural environments, as well as one's own well-being and the meaningfulness of action are the primary criteria of moral responsibility. Rational judgment about the ethical justification for an action, originating in the moral values and principles recognized as universal (humans as rational beings must, consequently, take deontological responsibility to act in accordance with the recognized moral norm) is, on the other hand, only secondary (Kroflič 2007). Put simply, responsibility toward fellow humans, related to compassion and moral imagination, develops in human beings before the ability to deploy demanding moral arguments. Furthermore, its development prevents immoral or even criminal action (such as genocidal policies, mass murders, the unjust denial of the importance of specific cultural patterns of the people or social groups whose lifestyle differs from the majority) more certainly than the development of strict moral principles can. This approach to understanding personal morality, as we have seen, is also advocated by M. Warnock.

Personally, I am also convinced that such an approach has an important impact on the development of the child's cognitive competencies to value real-life situations and it reduces the pressure for the child to subject themself to the norms that – regardless of their general validity – are always put in front of the child by adults in the form of demands presupposing the child's submission to our authority. Epistemological self-limitation (when, instead of an explanation, we draw attention to the victim) encourages the child's ability to recognize the consequences of their actions and assess the moral weight of transgressions through them. This encompasses the main advantages of learning from direct real-life experience. Since in enforcing this disciplinary logic there regularly occurs the transgressor's wish to do away with their own distress with the help of the compassionate immersion in the victim's position and with imagination (which makes it possible for them to foresee the positive consequences of the retributive action), we can also speak about the empowerment of the transgressor. They can assess the negative consequences of their action and find a way in which to resolve the conflict through some kind of mediation. To use Aristotle, the child seeks out a manner to take an appropriate action for an appropriate person in an appropriate way to show prosocial

orientation, which is the fundamental manner of encouraging the development of moral virtues (Aristotle 1994).

Conventional demands

If moral decisions and actions, then, are related to physical and psychological violence – as well as to the protection of elementary fairness – conventional rules become related to the regulation of social custom, for instance, clothes, forms of address, behavior, etc. Turiel maintains that the specific attitude to authority is also reflected in the attitude to moral and conventional rules. Conventions are contingent on social rules and authorities within a certain social context and they are grounded in the holders of social power. Moral rules, on the other hand, find their legitimacy in avoiding harm, protecting people's welfare, and ensuring fairness (Turiel 2004, p. 112).

Nucci (2001, pp. 7–8) illustrates the distinction in judging moral and conventional transgressions with the following ethnographic recording of the judgments of a four-year-old girl:

> *Moral transgression*: Did you see what happened? Yes. They were playing and John hit him too hard. Is that something you are supposed to or not supposed to do? Not so hard to hurt. Is there a rule about that? Yes. What is the rule? You're not to hit hard. What if there were no rule about hitting hard, would it be all right to do then? No. Why not? Because he could get hurt and start to cry.
>
> *Conventional transgression*: Did you see what just happened? Yes. They were noisy. Is that something you are supposed to or not supposed to do? Not do. Is there a rule about that? Yes. We have to be quiet. What if there were no rule, would it be all right to do then? Yes. Why? Because there is no rule.

The records show that children as young as four are already capable of judging differently the significance of moral and conventional rules. For the child, the inappropriateness of moral

transgressions is based in the very nature of the action. Even if there was no clear rule about that, such actions would be inappropriate. The inappropriateness of conventional transgressions, however, originates in the authority of the social rule. If the rule was abolished, the action would therefore not be contentious anymore.

This difference has a crucial effect on the child's experience of the meaning of limiting behavior. It should also have an effect on educational argumentation itself. The child experiences moral norms as unconditional, founding their indisputability in a consequentialist way through an insight into the harmful consequences of the action. This has a parallel in the inductive logic of justifying the meaning of moral rules. Conversely, the power of conventional rules depends on the authority of the one imposing them; therefore, their justification should also be given a different basis. When the transgression of rules occurs which does not have any harmful consequences for the victim, we must definitely employ argumentation based on the assumed moral values or principles which call our attention to unwanted situations happening in the long run if certain actions were continued or if everybody acted in that way (Strike and Moss 2003). And if there is no appropriate argument to be found in this argumentation register either, then we are probably facing a rule which is not mandatory in the given context, but which was established by people with greater social power (parents, educators) in order to preserve their view on the appropriate regulation of social relationships.

A specially challenging area of conventional rules is prudential issues (practical wisdom and caution) related to the protection of the child's long-term well-being. These can refer to either actions we deem dangerous to the child's health or personal development (e.g. smoking, experimentation with drugs, riding a motor bike, etc.) or actions damaging to their reputation and social acceptance (e.g. early sexual relations, staying out late, provocative behavior which can lead to slurs or even social ostracizing). Adults use them to protect the child or adolescent, although the negative consequences of the actions only affect the transgressor's well-being. Also, the consequences are often so remote that the transgressor is unlike to be aware of them at the moment of transgression if nobody warns them. Moreover, frequently these are the so-called status-based prohibitions, which only refer to underage persons; the same actions are allowed to adults. Children and adolescents perceive such rules as less

binding than moral ones, and more dependent on the context of a specific situation; hence, they will sooner start resisting them (Tisak and Turiel 1984).

Thus, a number of conventional rules protect individuals or social groups from far-reaching negative consequences, and the tradition of ethical theories has established various arguments for their protection, with the predominance of utilitarian arguments (the principle of the greatest good; Strike and Moss 2003). Yet Charlotte Brontë's (1977) idea that conventionality is not morality – moreover, that the concepts are as diametrically opposed as vice from virtue – warns us of the danger of equalizing the status of moral and conventional rules and conceiving of moral education as a consistent requirement for subordination to conventional rules. That only the latter can establish an autonomous moral consciousness is the dominant assumption of the majority of the cognitive and psychoanalytical stage theories of moral development prevalent in the twentieth century. Here, we should heed the fact that the above-mentioned theories do not establish the difference between moral and conventional rules. In consequence, they require unconditional submission to all social demands (moral, conventional, and status-based) as a necessary stage in moral education encouraging the individual's autonomy (submission to the symbolic Law – although it always faces the child in the form of a concrete social demand – in theoretical psychoanalysis or the transition to the conventional level of moral judgment in Kohlberg). However, as Wringe (2006) writes in his study *Moral Education (Beyond the Teaching of Right and Wrong)*, the conforming behavior achieved through disciplinary sanctions is in itself "an inadequate goal of moral education, even if it doubtless possesses a certain social utility" (Wringe 2006, p. x). This idea should be accompanied by another word of warning. Taking free decisions and the distress related to accepting their consequences is something that the child/adolescent must learn. This is the topic of the next section.

Educational demands and the question of personal choices

The last register of educational demands is intervening in the decisions that the individual perceives as personal choices. These decisions are key to the development of the individual's autonomy, because they bring the possibility of developing a personally active role in making

choices allowing for a sense of individuality (being separated from other persons close to them) and a legitimacy of their personal needs, interests, and aims (Nucci 2001). Children and adolescents in our cultural environment usually take these to be their choice of friends, leisure activities, their appearance, and the right to privacy. Since the sense of individuality and the question of the right to personal choice always relate very closely to being situated in a social space (especially for children whose fulfillment of personal interests greatly depends on adults), the very delimitation of the space of personal choice and conventional demands becomes crucial to a successful educational intervention. If, namely, the child, or particularly the adolescent, is faced with conventional demands regarding issues they perceive as personal choices, conflicts and resistance will arise, typical of the critical periods of identity development (children's stubbornness, teenage rebellion). As seen above, children see conventional demands as context-dependent situations, and they frequently experience the rules legitimating them as unfair. This is especially true of status-based rules, which prevent the child from making certain choices that are available to adults or older adolescents, but frequently also to their peers living in different normative family situations. Why can an elder brother or sister or friend do something I can't? This is a recurrent feeling, related to experiencing the living environment as unfair, which at least occasionally leads to resisting educational demands.

The questions about how far to let the child make free decisions, where to impose clear educational restrictions, and what attitude to adopt in relation to the child's opposition to adults' educational demands have become the central issues of practical and academic pedagogy in the last century.

The acknowledgement that the child has the right to making independent decisions in relation to their own life has a relatively short history. Century after century was characterized by the social determination of life courses and a strong feeling of safety along with a lack of space for free choices (Bauman 2001). The consequence was human longing for autonomy, typical for the time of rising social sciences and humanities. The processes of the modernization of society encouraged making more space for freedom, first for adult men, then for women and children. This raised the first questions about the harmful side effect of the processes. Durkheim (1985) was convinced that restricting boundless human aspirations (egotism) was a

necessary condition for social cohesiveness, otherwise social bonds could start breaking and the state of social anomie would arise. To these analyses, Giddens (1991) added the realization of the negative effects of social anomie on the individual, who begins to lose the sense of ontological safety necessary for a healthy development of the individual's identity. The analyses of the social conditioning of the processes demonstrate that beyond the widening of the space of free choices new forms of the social exploitation of the individual are hidden. The individual's freedom – once the center of their privacy – becomes a publicly declared value and even a demand: to be free and individually responsible for the consequences of bad choices (Beauvois 2000, Salecl 2010). The consequences of the pressures seem to show in the substantial rise in children's, adolescents', and adults' anxieties (Salecl 2004), in parents' distress over not being able to delineate appropriately the border between educational demands and leaving children freedom, which leads to the therapeutization of education and paranoid parenting (Furedi 2001), and in the creation of the culture of narcissism (Lasch 1979), which is only a more precise diagnosis of the social anomie beginning to arise in the early twentieth century.

In the mid-twentieth century we thus find ourselves in a schizophrenic situation regarding the education of children. On the one hand, there are appeals for a greater participation of children in the sense of free choices and, on the other hand, there is the Kantian view on the development of the child, claiming that in order to tame their wildness and develop the potential for autonomy the child must previously submit unconditionally to the demands of the adult. The latter view became the starting idea of the stage theories of child development. Parental benevolent leaving space for free decisions (or space for personal choices) is also characterized as pathological, which is supposed to be supported by plentiful empirical evidence: of the child's amorality before they are capable of abstract moral judgment and of the child's narcissistic orientation in early childhood, which can turn to a typical personality trait of an adult if the child is not subjected to the demand to submit to the symbolic Father's Law early and consistently enough (Žižek 1987).

The research studies casting a shadow of a doubt on this school of thought (dominating the worlds of academia and educational handbooks, originating the critique of permissive education) derive from the examination of childhood images and a comprehensive

ethnographic observation of the child's reactions in family and institutional environments. Underpinning the model of consistent discipline, preparing the child for the state of autonomy (freedom), is the image of the child as a vulnerable being of special needs (Kroflič 2011); what is more, a being subjected to the tyranny of their own egotistical interests. The image of the vulnerable being reinforces the enlightenment image of children as emotionally dependent as well as mentally and socially incompetent, surrounded by many a danger. Therefore, only increased control, appropriate care, and education will make them human beings in the full sense of the word.

This image can be contested and space for a healthier attitude to children's and adolescents' rebellion made only if we are prepared to consider more recent findings on the early existence of prosocial motives in children and their natural competencies to realize the irrefutable validity of fundamental moral demands. In the times of Kant and Freud, moral panic was spread by statements about the child's wildness and the subjection to the pleasure principle which would solidify in a permanent personality trait if not subjected to unconditional discipline. Nonetheless, only insights into the child's prosocial orientation and their clear perception of the irrefutability of moral norms (which does not rest solely on the vanishing adult authority) makes it possible for educational theory to look for a balanced development of educational demands between the moral, the conventional, and the area of personal choices and to reduce the fear of the child's rebellion against the will of the adult and of the child's doubt as to the legitimacy of the adult's demands. According to Nucci (2008), the youth's rebellion must be understood as an essential dimension of moral development at the individual level and moral advancement at the social level.

The pedagogic potential of social domain theory

The theory of social domains is relevant to understanding moral education in a variety of ways. If we are to establish a convincing educational argumentation on the basis of a strong ethical foundation, educational demands must necessarily be differentiated into those with immediate moral consequences (moral demands) and the conventional demands which relate to the meaningful regulation of institutional rules in the name of the members' long-term

benefit. The most convincing ethical argumentation concerning moral norms for the child is consequentialist inductive argumentation. The establishment of conventional demands, however, requires a more complex argumentation regarding different ethical principles (the Golden Rule of ethics and the principle of equal respect, the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number of people involved in conflict, the principle of preserving/developing meaningful relationships, the principle of protecting the community, and the principle of character growth (Strike and Moss 2003, pp. 3–5)).

Another finding refers to the conclusion that if we are to avoid moral relativism, we must establish the respect for moral norms (as defined by social domain theory) as the ultimate demand. The enforcement of conventional demands, on the other hand, is a matter of negotiation between children and adults. At the level of planning the educational conception of public schools, this means that schools must enforce certain rules as a necessary framework of their functioning. The framework needs to be explained over and over again, but it also needs to be protected consistently through the system of responding to educational transgressions set up in advance. The majority of school rules, relating to co-existence in the institution, must be established through democratic negotiation within class and school communities (Kroflič et al. 2009).

The third warning (to be elaborated on in the following section) refers to the conclusion that the child's rebellion against conventional demands must be seen as their exercising moral autonomy and entering the sphere of politically engaged action.

Associating these findings with the dialogic nature of the self-limiting authority (Kroflič 2010a), the latter appears in the area of all the above-mentioned social domains: in the domain of moral demands in the form of the adult's epistemological self-limitation – the adult, by mere drawing the child's attention to the harmful consequences of their action, generally triggers the child's prosocial response; in the domain of conventional demands in the form of the appeal for democratic negotiation on the basis of a strong ethical argumentation; in the intermediate domain of conventional demands and personal choices it appears as the insight into the positive dimension of children's and adolescents' rebellion, which does not signify rejecting adult authority, but rather – as Gogala wrote in the 1930s – the appeal of the young

who want to "… penetrate to objectivity in a direct manner and through their own mental activity" (Gogala 1931, p. 115).

Political action as a possibility to withdraw from society in the theory of H. Arendt

The authors of social domain theory limit their research to the issue of developing private morality. To return to the area of public morality, law, and the social sphere, I will therefore refer to Hannah Arendt's political philosophy.

In her most influential work, *The Human Condition*, H. Arendt (1958) distinguishes between authentic human existence (i.e. meaningful existence) and social existence "where human beings are after nothing exclusively human" (Kovačič 2012, p. 66). Political action, however, is among the most important activities constituting the human world and existence. It does not mean acting in accordance with conformist social demands, but rather antagonistic opposition to the submission to social norms; it means "… a practical rejection of social conformity" (ibid., p. 81).

According to H. Arendt, political and creative action requires withdrawal from the limitations of social conventions and entering the world(liness) as a space of human existence. *The Human Condition* defines the world as plural and agreed on the basis of equality (not sameness, typical of social production). It requires an agent who is willing to resist the demands for assimilation into social reality. Or, to put it slightly differently, political engagement is a fundamental human commitment, because – in addition to creative work, critical reflection and creating the world of memories formed into narrative – the area of political action is a necessary element of the human world.

In such a critical state of the phenomena of society and the social, it is hard to imagine for the pedagogical concepts of "the liberating subordination" and "the self-regulating behavior" to have a crucial effect on the construction of the meaningful existence of the individual in the world in the light of adapting to the conditions of social existence (namely, according to H. Arendt, the world is formed by the realm of the permanent products of creation, home, the

public, and historical memory). Firstly, because education itself must be understood either as part of a more or less totalitarian ideological reproduction of social meanings or as a web of relationships through which the child/adolescent actively enters the human world. Secondly, because it is difficult to imagine that the action of strengthening the existing conventional meanings could lead to "the transcendental" – to creating the meaningful world of personal and shared meanings beyond the demand for submission to social conventionality.

Perhaps another concept by H. Arendt could help – the thesis that in totalitarian states the individual can only achieve social equality through the suppression of their difference (i.e. personal identity), which was especially obvious in the failed attempt of the assimilation of Jews in Europe in the nineteenth century. Conditioning emancipation by assimilation is the area that is the most difficult to consider through the concept of distributive justice. As a consequence, the idea of positive recognition has gained importance (Fraser and Honneth 2003).

The concept of positive recognition is crucial to the realization of the educational approaches in the spirit of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. The *Convention* is based on the idea of the balance among three sets of the child's rights to protection, care, and participation. However, the first (the right to protection) and the third (the right to participation) are in certain tension, which can only be resolved by accepting the image of the capable child and by strengthening their competencies to make independent decisions. If not, integrating the child in democratic decision-making would be simply irresponsible: "It is important to consider that both the extremes – on the one hand, the paternalistic limitation of the child's freedom and, on the other hand, the liberal encouragement of the child to make free choices without the support of traditional 'social stabilizers' (the family, friends, school, church) – can limit or even harm the child's optimal development." (Kroflič 2012, p. 112)

Strengthening the child's competencies to make independent decisions cannot be limited to the teaching of public morality in the sense of learning about the democratic mechanisms of protecting human rights and children's rights; rather, the child must be integrated into the processes of decision-making, which requires from the educator to deepen the child's moral feelings and judgments (personal morality) and the responsibility for the consequences of

their decisions (political responsibility). Put in the spirit of H. Arendt's political philosophy, following the ontology of human existence in the world requires the defense of ontological engagement beyond conventionality. And, according to Bahtin (1991) and Matusov (2009), ontological engagement is one of the fundamental elements of dialogic pedagogy.

Conclusion

The presented theories by M. Warnock, H. Arendt, and the theory of social domains are a good basis for the consideration of the conditions of a successful integration of the child and adolescent into wider social communities. The theories, namely, elucidate both the issue of the conditions under which the individual develops the moral self-image and the issue of how to think about the community which ensures the optimal development of the human potential of its members.

In the present contribution, the development of the individual's moral consciousness has been confronted with the question about how the issue of human rights and their foundation in public morality translates into the conception of personal morality. According to M. Warnock, the development of the latter should be the primary goal of education in public preschools and schools. It has been seen that in early periods the child develops prosocial orientation and moral consciousness on the basis of consequentialist (inductive) argumentation. The condition for the development of prosociality and morality is the social space offering a number of possibilities for interpersonal relationships, practicing moral decision-making, and negotiating conventional demands. It remains open how to encourage a more profound justification for personal morality while avoiding founding the origins of morality on world views, which lay preschools and school cannot uphold. I would defend such orientation on the basis that inductive consequentialist argumentation does not include deductively conceived elements, which are the foundation of various world-view justifications for morality. The latter underlie both the beliefs regarding the religious origin of fundamental moral values and principles as well as the conviction regarding the existence of the universal moral criteria of the world ethos.

I have also demonstrated that we must be aware of the importance of distinguishing between moral and conventional norms as well as of the importance of accepting the rules of living in a community both in regard to ultimate moral demands and agreed conventions. The differentiation is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid moral relativism and preserve the notion of school as a democratic institution, actively integrating students in the processes of democratic negotiation. Furthermore, this also signifies the meaningfulness of the affirmation of the double-stage model of the educational conception, which is established in advance as far as defending basic moral norms is concerned, whereas the establishment of the conventional rules of co-existence represents the area of democratic negotiation in the context of class and school communities. The problem that remains unresolved in such a proposal is ensuring obligatory and keen presence of students during instruction. The presence has long-term positive effects on the development of children, but students frequently do not perceive it as an obligation, that is why absence or uncooperativeness during instruction is not seen as a necessary condition for the fulfillment of school obligations. Within the proposed model, the problem can only be resolved by teachers' convincing reference to the ethical principle of the protection of character growth (Strike and Moss 2003).

The proposal of establishing school as a democratic community touches upon the conception of the community in which the presented conception of moral and civic education can be developed as effectively as possible. Put in the spirit of H. Arendt's political theory, to conceive communitarian ethics between the concepts of sociality and worldliness. H. Arendt defines the model of the community which encourages all the elements of human existence as plural and agreed on the basis of the idea of equality. This corresponds to the new liberal conception of a democratic community that celebrates every individual's difference and the diversity of every social reality in the name of inclusive (Lesar 2009) and multicultural values (Ermenc Skubic 2007) as well as dialogic ethics and democratic policies (Moss 2008). The principles of mutual adjustment and the creation of communal values on the basis of dialogic communication have been stated by a number of theoreticians who have been reflecting on the strategic conditions for the development of public schools and also those trying to think about school as a community in the context of attitudes toward marginalized social groups – whether they are immigrants or people with special needs.

Education in public educational institutions should therefore not be understood primarily as an activity of forming public morality, teaching about human rights or "at least" preserving the conventional. On the contrary, education must address the question about personal existence in the shared world. The supporters of social domain theory demonstrate convincingly that the personal sense of the moral in children is formed very early on the basis of their orientation toward avoiding pain, protecting human well-being, and ensuring fairness. M. Warnock supports the findings with Hume's concepts of sympathy and imagination, which allow for the child or adolescent to recognize the needs and expectations of fellow human beings and their social environment, to follow the Aristotelian view of the good life, and for altruistic motives to emerge. Such an orientation is supported by the educational environment which accepts that "children develop an understanding of moral matters from their direct experiences … as well as from others' communications highlighting the experience of harm" (Smetana 2011, p. 45).

For the paradigm of school as a social space and social institution encouraging the individual's competencies for active and responsible citizenship to establish itself appropriately, we should not bypass the classic findings by Dewey (1974) about school as a form of social life. In addition to H. Arendt's political philosophy, Dewey's conclusions advise us to see positive educational experience as the prototype of political action either in defense of fundamental human rights or as a demand to abolish an unjust social rule.

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