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Sand and Sea – Unstable Foundations for Education

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Abstract

This paper discusses the question of the so-called permissive education. The main point of reference is a short article written by Mara Wolynski (an American journalist). In her article, Wolynski describes her school nicknamed "Sand and Sea". The school is founded on the principle of Rousseau and Dewey's ideas, i.e. it is content-neutral, without any curriculum, with students who are constantly engaged in the quest after self-realization and authenticity. Such schools, however, end up in personal tragedies because their graduates completely fail as adults. When they arrive at universities, they have no idea how to cope with systematic tuition. Permissive schools do not provide any integral or synthetic approach to education. Excited about the progressive, individual, and original aspect of education, they abandon their curricula. Thus their graduates are totally unprepared to build any systematic and coherent knowledge.

Key words: *content-neutral, Dewey, education, Rousseau, self-realization, student*

Abstrakt

Przedmiotem artykułu jest kwestia tzw. edukacji permisywnej. Głównym punktem odniesienia jest tutaj krótki tekst napisany przez Marę Wolynski, amerykańską dziennikarkę. W swoim artykule Wolynski nazywa szkołę, do której uczęszczała, „Piaszek i Morze”. Szkoła ta funkcjonuje na gruncie idei Rousseau i Deweya. Chodzi tu o nauczanie neutralnych treści, bez programu, natomiast uczniowie koncentrują się na poszukiwaniu realizacji siebie samych i autentyczności. Takie szkoły jednakże kończą się osobistymi tragediami, ponieważ ich absolwenci ponoszą całkowitą porażkę w życiu dorosłym. Kiedy pojawiają się na uniwersytetach, zupełnie nie mają pojęcia, jak radzić sobie w warunkach systemowego nauczania. Takie permisywne szkoły nie dostarczają swoim uczniom żadnego integralnego czy syntetycznego podejścia do edu-

kacji. Ekscytacja progresywnym, indywidualnym i oryginalnym aspektem edukacji, prowadzi do odrzucenia programu nauczania. Tym sposobem absolwenci są zupełnie nieprzygotowani do budowania wiedzy jako całościowego i spójnego systemu.

Słowa kluczowe: *neutralna treść, Dewey, edukacji, Rousseau, samo-realizacja, uczeń*

Introduction

Content-neutral education is a myth.

The essence of education naturally consists in a certain process in which a person advances from ignorance to knowledge, and from incomplete to more profound knowledge. The term "knowledge" is crucial here and it is set in opposition to information, for a mere collection of factual data does not make knowledge yet. Robert L. Ebel puts it clearly in his article: "Knowledge [...] is not synonymous with information. Knowledge is built out of information by thinking" (Ebel, 1974, p. 76). Knowledge is a structured system that combines dispersed elements into a coherent and logical whole, and as such, is a vital part of education. Ebel stresses that in the process of reading and listening, being parts of education, "a person" must integrate his experience "into the structure of his knowledge [...]" (Ebel, 1974, p. 76). Education however is not only knowledge. It is also a process of maturity, not only of becoming someone more knowledgeable, but also of becoming a more mature and complete person; it is the process in which the agent (resp. the student) not only learns something new about the world in order to comprehend and transform it into a better place in which to live, but also to evaluate respective information. Let it suffice to note that the word "education" is derived from the Latin "ex-ducare," which means "to guide sb. beyond the state of immaturity." Thomas S. Eliot has put it rightly when he reflected on the reduced sense of education in the West. In his excellent essay he wrote:

"Education has come to mean education of the mind only; and an education which is only of the mind-of the mind in its restricted modern sense-can lead to scholarship, to efficiency, to worldly achievement and to power, but not to wisdom" (Eliot, 1982, p. 142).

In this process of education we are taking part in a historical course (a specific time span) of disentanglement and clarification of formerly complex and puzzling issues. Thus we first acquire a concrete stage of knowledge, that is, we get acquainted with the accumulated amount of knowledge up to the moment of our existence, and then, armed with appropriate methods and procedures, we attempt to come up with new interpretations and theories. If such is the case, we need to approach the process of education as integrated persons, capable of analyzing and synthesizing the given facts, in order to prepare ourselves to face the ongoing process of knowledge and absorb new data in the future when our primary education has finished. Otherwise, if it were not so, we would resemble someone who is trying, for instance, to apply Newtonian physics to quantum phenomena, or would be completely incapable of assessing the Reformation. We would resemble a person of the past who by some miraculous trick comes to live in another epoch, with his head imbued with outworn ideas and outdated customs. The process of learning is never neutral, therefore we need to know which course to take and how to avoid the dire straits of misconceptions, falsehoods, pseudofacts, and misinterpretations. When not immunized with the respective weaponry we may easily fall prey to various propagandists and manipulators, let alone be prepared to live in civil society.

Taking into account these two aspects of education, knowledge and evaluation, we rightfully expect genuine education to satisfy certain essential preconditions. It must not only provide students with respective facts, teach them how to discriminate descriptions from comments, and how to evaluate the events under consideration, but it is equally important to endow them with the ability to tell falsehood from truth.

The title of this paper refers to Mara Wolynski's¹ article about her "education." It is only by way of a hyperbole that she decided to call it education. She herself chose the phrase "Sand and Sea" with which to call her school. It was a school purposefully without pain, without fear, without discipline, and without any curriculum; indeed a school without a school, being rather an opportunity for various events to take place. Why Sand and Sea? Allow me to suggest my own interpretation. Sand is indefinite, its grains inertly fall down under the force of gravity; they can easily be relocated and dispersed with strong gusts of wind. Likewise the sea is indefinite. Water takes the shape of the vessel it is poured in. Grains of sand symbolize eternal pilgrims without homes, eternal itinerants without roots who are ready to settle down where-

¹In the 1970s, Mara Wolynski was a free-lance writer for *Newsweek*, *Vogue*, and *Made-moiselle*.

ver they are blown to. Dry sand leaves no traces when blown away; nor does water leave any tracks when dried up by the sun. Henceforth there is something ephemeral in both sand and sea, and such was Mara's education. It provided no safeguards against daily trials, and instantly disappeared when tried by the world and by the demands of the day.

The So-Called Subjects

It is interesting to note that Mara, when writing about her school curriculum, puts the school subjects in inverted commas. Therefore science, for that matter, is "science." Here teachers, so it seems, sought to teach young people from the very start that there are no well-defined concepts, that the world of experience and theory is vague; anything can denote science, and any attempts to define it are either futile or identical to oppression. It is true that the problems we define and place under the category of "science" may be, and very often are, difficult. Its methodology being frequently questionable. To say however that science is always "science" is to claim that there is no science at all. Instead, we are surrounded by an incoherent mass of phenomena out of which we are free to create whatever combination we wish, but certainly not science. Lost amidst this rich plethora of options, the student is therefore forced to create. He is the Faust and Prometheus of society, although he has no knowledge of what society is, nor is he aware of what his relationship to society is. Consequently, he does not know what is good for society. Teachers have decided to provide him with an unstructured mass of loosely connected messages, perhaps in the hope that he or she will come up with something extraordinary, something unexpected, and something uniquely original. Now how can one satisfy such expectations, assuming that they can be satisfied at all, if they have no idea of what they are looking for? Creation is the watchword, the magic charm of education; and we are made to believe that creation, in itself, is the safeguard of progress. Obviously, in this approach we take it for granted that individual creation alone is beneficial for the creator himself and for society, or we do not assume anything if we reduce the quest for truth to self-realization, authenticity, and originality (cf. Snyders, 1973, p. 18-19).

Be Creative or Perish

How can we create without evaluation, since even in literature, which seems to be the embodiment of creativity, certain rules must be obeyed?

Don't we organize contests for writers? Aren't there Nobel prizes for writers and poets? This means that we do make a judgment between good and bad literature (irrespective of the many controversial and ideological decisions hovering over the Nobel prize in literature). Some authors are called penny-a-liners, others have responded to artistic tastes. In other words, there are rules that must be followed. Our common intuition however suggests to us that the connotation of the word "creative" is indeed positive. Therefore what is wrong with being creative? The problem begins when creative becomes coequal with productive. Then to be creative simply means to be productive, i.e. whatever you produce is good, as long as it is authentically yours. In other words, produce yourself, express yourself, and manifest yourself. Bring your inner self out. The essence of creation is that it provides a vision of a certain purpose. For instance, we seek to find the truth of something. In production however we are intent on producing a certain number of products of some kind. Literature produces words.

How can we be creative without a sound knowledge that imposes a certain organizing structure on the collection of facts? Creativity is indeed manifested by a new quality that can come out of our reflection, but we arrive at this new quality by following the well-tried paths of rationality and logical thinking. Then, at some stage, formerly unpredictable, a new solution appears. But creation can hardly be trained, for it is in the area of human freedom. So the only prerequisite is to provide a free space in which the agent, intellectually and morally prepared, searches after various solutions. And yet Mara was encouraged to be creative no matter what. Indeed, it was a god-like activity: *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing, here: out of the depth of one's personality). She writes:

"We spent great amounts of time being creative because we had been told by our incurably optimistic mentors that the way to be happy in life was to create. Thus, we didn't learn to read until we were in the third grade because early reading was thought to discourage creative spontaneity. The one thing they taught us very well was to hate intellectuality and anything connected with it. Accordingly, we were forced to be creative for nine years" (Wolynski, 1980, p. 130).

Does it not sound paradoxical or rather ironic, that Mara writes "we were forced to be creative?" Intuitively we understand that coercion and creativity rarely go hand in hand, unless we have to invent something at the moment of emergency, when our existence is in danger. But in such cases

it is not creation for creation's sake that is sought, but rather life. Sometimes we may indeed be forced to think out something to save our lives, but then we would hardly call it "coercion." The appropriate argumentation here would be the same as when we say: "I am hungry, so I must eat something." In Mara's case it was conditioning rather than education. Her schoolmates were not taught to read because for their mentors, allegedly, reading seemed a mechanistic and replicable activity. The school's ideal was to keep its students amused and relieve them from boredom at any cost.

Boredom – the Worst Enemy

Naturally, if one were to define school, the first thing that comes to mind is that school helps students pass from ignorance to knowledge. But it was not the case with Mara's school, for she never learned why the acquisition of knowledge was worthwhile at all. The worst enemy in her school was not ignorance, but boredom. She confesses:

"We had certain hours allotted to various subjects but we were free to dismiss anything that bored us. In fact, it was school policy that we were forbidden to be bored or miserable or made to compete with one another. There were no tests and no hard times. When I was bored with math, I was excused and allowed to write short stories in the library (Wolynski, 1980, p. 130)."²

Students can overcome ignorance or not, but primarily, they must experience teaching as entertainment. With this even entertainment should not be pre-planned, that is given a structured, i.e. "oppressive," form. Rather, it is supposed to be a spontaneous activity that emerges from the agent himself. Now if competition was eliminated, as we read in Mara's description,

²A former Polish minister of education came up with a bizarre idea. She asked her students what items they would like to have on their reading list. This is indeed ridiculous, unless one thinks that it is as worthwhile to read comics as it is to read masterpieces of literature. Such a situation reminds me of a scene from the well-known film *Amadeus*. The emperor was asked whether he liked Mozart's composition, as there were many critics. Naturally, the emperor had no idea whether he liked it or not, or in general how to evaluate a musical composition. He was embarrassed, but after a moment he muttered: "Well, there are ... too many notes." The aforementioned minister most probably is in favour of the so-called democratic schools. A democratic school, however, is a contradiction in itself because in what kind of democracy can you learn from not learning? Democracy, if it is supposed to be meaningful, needs civic education, and civic education needs values. If we are to make rational choices, and such is the essence of any democracy, we need to learn how to make choices. And choices are either good or bad, otherwise there is no point in making any choices. We need to learn the art of elimination.

those who did work to learn something were immediately brought down to a level with those who remained resistant to knowledge; those who did want to be more diligent received no incentive and became discouraged. Thus no value was attached to learning. It was made value-neutral.

Now let us imagine how such a non-existing system can affect certain procedures, and let us assume that we are looking for a medicine that fights cancer. We need to possess not a vague mass of messages about the medical discipline, but a well-defined and well-structured medical knowledge. Another point is that we need perseverance. So many scientists before us have tried to bring relief to desperate cancer patients, but have failed; we need to learn patience and forbearance. We also need to be convinced that it is worth working on behalf of humanity. Briefly speaking, what we need is not "science" but science, not "perseverance" but perseverance, not "the good of humanity" but the good of humanity. The question whether such ends can be attained when your teachers only pretend to be teachers, seems purely rhetorical.

The teacher does not have to pretend that he is omniscient in order to evaluate, and that was the alleged drawback against which this apparently non-evaluative approach was taken. And he does not need to eliminate the appearance of omniscience by eliminating his subject, pretending that he is just an actor playing his role, or rather, an opportunity for the development of the assumed talents in his students. To show that I am not omniscient I do not need to ridicule my subject, to hide its well-defined contours and pretend that there are none. Briefly speaking, in order to show that I am not omniscient (resp. oppressive) I do not have to prove that I am non-existent. What I do need is simply humility, which becomes even more enhanced when my students can see how committed I am to what from without may appear only to be a hopeless investigation. Science is first and foremost a disinterested quest for truth, and only secondarily can it be understood as a business enterprise. Therefore, as we know in practice, scientists are usually followed by engineers and not the other way round.

In their approach to historical matters, in Mara's school students were encouraged to take part in role-taking games adjusted to various epochs, rearranging historical events. But the children never learned what these epochs consisted in and in what way, for instance, the Middle Ages differed from the Renaissance. They did not have to worry about historical exactness based on evidence because "creation" was topmost on the scale of importance.

Inhabitants of the Waste Land Confront Reality

Having in mind this chaotic supply of topics, for we can hardly call it education, we should not wonder that the graduates of Sand and Sea school, when confronted with the demands of university education, failed. They were neither prepared for further education, nor for life with its unexpected surprises. Something within them had learned a very hard lesson. Mara tells us:

"When we finally graduated from Canaan, however, all the happy little children fell down the hill. We felt a profound sense of abandonment. So did our parents. After all that tuition money, let alone the loving freedom, their children faced high school with all the glorious prospect of the poorest slum-school kids. And so it came to be. No matter what school we went to, we were the underachievers and the culturally disadvantaged. For some of us, real life was too much-one of my oldest friends from Sand and Sea killed himself [...]" (Wolynski, 1980, p. 130).

Where have these spontaneous students lost the promised creativity and success? Artificially relieved from the tensions of educational mores, they ended up wrecks once that artificiality was removed. What is interesting, and could have easily been predicted, is that education in Sand and Sea school did not bring about a profusion of creativity, but rather a tragic inadequacy to cope with educational requirements at higher levels and a tragic inadequacy, let us add, in coping with the problems of real life. At the same time we can provide an abundance of examples of those who have gone through a very strict and disciplined course of education, and then managed to be creative or break up with the conventions they were taught at schools. We need discipline in order to combine the varieties of our experience into meaningful wholes, which is the essence of knowledge. If we are taught to be non-judgmental, we naturally abstain from making judgments. Consequently, we come to a loss in the real milieu where judgments are preconditions of survival.

Under the conditions of permissive education students had lost their orientation, their vital fulcrum on which to ground decisions. Accustomed to sheer creation, they were shocked to have found that even creation should be purposeful, not a mere emanation of one's self.

Permissive Education and its Consequences-Relativism

It is interesting to note that Allan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind* bears a telling subtitle: "How Higher Education Has Failed De-

mocracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students." The Declaration of Independence proclaimed self-evident truths: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These truths were self-evident, i.e. they could not be undermined, nor needed any proof or justification. Such is the character of any solid background-one takes it for granted without trying to provide arguments on its behalf. Today, as it seems, writes the author in his pessimistic diagnosis, young people stand firmly on behalf of relativism and equality. The two values formulate: "the modern replacement for the inalienable natural rights that used to be the traditional American grounds for a free society". (Bloom, 1987, p. 25). The self-evident truths from the Declaration spoke about inalienable rights. Anyone who should rise up in defense of these rights would immediately be coined a fundamentalist.

Now relativism appears to be the ground for openness "and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating [...]". (Bloom, 1987, p. 26). The like of Sand and Sea graduates know no judgments and accept no judgments. The only option they accept is openness-an abysmal penetration into ever new experiments: with one's self and with the others. To be involved in a never-ending chain of experimentation-such is the goal of whatever intellectual endeavor. Keep the options open and abstain from evaluation, such is the contemporary motto. Bloom concludes, "Openness-and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings-is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger". (Bloom, 1987, p. 26).

The dream of a relativist is ultimately not to eliminate those who are right or those who are wrong, for fear that they might become radical and give rise to conflict, but to eliminate right and wrong generally. Otherwise he might still feel some remorse when deciding or doing something. The end-result is that nobody can say "you are right" or "you are wrong" because there is no right or wrong to which you could reasonably refer. In this mission, the relativist's worst enemies are witnesses. I hope that in all probability it is the witness in the first place whom I am entitled to call the right-bearer. The witness has seen something with his own eyes, or has heard something with his own ears. Let us call him a dangerous daydreamer and an idealist who easily harbors illusions. Karl Marx regarded daydreamers and utopian idealists as the most dangerous people because they stand in the way of a classless society governed by reason in its journey towards ultimate equality amongst people.

The capacity of discriminating right from wrong never comes without some effort on our part, without some disciplined exertion.

Expressivism-Rousseau's Heritage

I think that this shift from truth-orientation towards self-orientation, self-realization, and authenticity goes back to Rousseau and Wordsworth, and then was continued by Dewey. European romanticism and American pragmatism were amalgamated in Dewey's educational philosophy. Rousseau and Wordsworth emphasized that each child is a unique individual (expressivism) and, "has an inborn, instinctive tendency to follow its own proper development". (Hirsch, 1988, p. 118). Consequently, schools should cease to shape integral human beings and should focus upon the needs of the child and society. The child thus became a client of the school.

Expressivism is a radical form of individualism. Rousseau claimed that human nature is inherently good, and the main purpose of human life is to provide opportunities for the emergence of this good and true nature. Thus instead of searching after the truth of reality, we should concentrate on the truth hidden in human individuality. We are all truth-bearers with our individual views of the world. Charles Taylor defines expressivism as "the conceptual armoury in which Romanticism arose and conquered European culture and sensibility [...]," hence we "must open ourselves up to the élan of nature within" and to find, "voice within ourselves [...]". (Taylor, 1989, p. 368, 370, 371 and ff.). We can find some parallel lines with this kind of expressivism (individualism) and the radical forms of liberty's manifestation as described by Plato in his *Republic*. We read in this epochal work that unstinted freedom easily finds its ways to soak into the state. Then unprincipled leaders are extolled and:

"law-abiding citizens [...] insulted as nonentities who hug their chains"; "rulers [...] behave like subjects and subjects [...] like rulers"; unlimited freedom permeates the home with its "infection of anarchy." The outcome being anarchy, "The parent falls into the habit of behaving like the child, and the child like the parent: the father is afraid of his sons, and they show no fear or respect for their parents, in order to assert their freedom. [...] To descend to smaller matters, the schoolmaster timidly flatters his pupils, and the pupils make light of their masters as well as of their attendants. Generally speaking, the young copy their elders, argue with them, and will not do as they are told; while the old, anxious not to be thought disagreeable tyrants, imitate the young and condescend to enter into their jokes and amusements". (Plato, 1961, p. 68-69).

And Plato's conclusion is indeed striking; too much freedom brings about not what one might expect, the enlarged space of individual activity, but its opposition, "excessive subjection, in the state or in the individual; which means that the culmination of liberty in democracy is precisely what prepares the way for the cruellest extreme of servitude under a despot". (Plato, 1961, p. 69). Thus we have come down the slope, from an apparently unlimited space of free action to a real confinement of subjection.

Expressivism found its advocate in John Stuart Mill with his emphasis on human originality that should have no barriers up to the point of extravagance. Mill saw the advent of mass society and feared that the individual would be lost amidst the oncoming work of mechanization. Therefore although the philosopher himself bore the air of an aristocrat who would look down on the common man, he ventured vulgar extravagance in the hope that the spirit of individuality might be rescued.

Against Deceptive Education-Taking Education Seriously

As Daniel Bell rightly observes, expressivism is, "the same anti-intellectualism which regards experience alone as truth, rather than disciplined study." And, like in Rousseau's *Emile*, the individual does not search for, "knowledge, or an education, but for an identity, the identity of lost innocence, the identity of the naïf". (Bell, 1973, p. 422).

Expressivism confuses knowledge with experience, whereas:

"knowledge is the selective ordering-and reordering-of experience through relevant concepts. Reality is not a bounded world, 'out there,' to be imprinted on the mind as from a mirror, or a flux of experience to be sampled for its novelties according to one's inclination (or its relevance for 'me'), but a set of meanings organized by mind, in terms of categories, which establishes the relations between facts and infers conclusions". (Bell, 1973, p. 422).

Daniel Bell formulates knowledge as composed of, "a reliance on judgment – the making of necessary distinctions and the creation of standards which allow one to sort out the meretricious from the good, the pretentious from the enduring. Knowledge is a product of the self-conscious and renewable comparison and judging of cultural objects and ideas in order to say that something is better than something else (or more complex, or more beautiful, or whatever the standard one seeks to apply), and that something is truer. Inevitably, therefore, knowledge is a form of authority, and educa-

tion is the process of refining the nature of authoritative judgments. This is the classic, and enduring rationale of education." (Bell, 1973, p. 422-423).

Interestingly enough, the development of a non-judgmental attitude does not make one a freer member of contemporary society. Here a good example is a Canadian film entitled "Mr Lahzar" in which the teacher who takes his role seriously is reproached by "non-judgmental parents," – "You are here to teach our children, not to raise them." But how can education be reduced to a mythical neutral process of teaching, devoid of raising? How can we isolate the natural interpersonal relationship as education undoubtedly is from raising? Is it possible to establish an ideal educational environment that is not laden with values? How can we arrive at a milieu in which no person knows what the other person is for or against?

It is true, and we have to agree with Bell, that each education has its grave sins, one of them being technocracy, but from that fact that there are many individual ways:

"in which people can gain information and have experiences, there is a need for the self-conscious understanding of the processes of conceptualization as the means of organizing one's information in order to gain coherent perspectives on one's experience." (Bell, 1973, p. 423).

We have to discriminate, however, between the struggle against the grip of technocracy that fetters individuality, an attempt that is rightly criticized, and a total dismantling of a well-organized society. Radical solutions need at least a serious consideration. Indeed, we are not faced with an organization or no organization at all.

William James writes about forming a habit that is translated into a strong character. As a result, we perform certain acts automatically without unnecessary deliberation. Strong character produces in us a certain readiness. He criticizes Rousseau, whom he calls: "the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed." (James, 1977, p. 156).³ In like manner we have come very close to the Aristotelian concept of virtue. James calls it "hortatory ethics," (James, 1977, p. 157) a metaphorical phrase that seeks to emphasize the fact that we have to cultivate ourselves

³James's criticism of imbibing a literary world and thus developing an artificial character, a liking for fictitious personages, reminds us of John Henry Newman's criticism of developing an aesthetic bias. In this bias one is easily moved by emotions, but completely unable to make decisions in real life.

as we cultivate gardens. What we need is to go against ourselves in order to practice self-denial and discipline. This would be entirely against the logic of the Sand and Sea School in which children were encouraged to indulge in their passing and transitory whims. The supposedly positive result was to develop individuality and originality, but paradoxically, individuality and originality, if anything, need to be concentrated around stable selves if they are not to dilute in the vast oceans of meaningless varieties or open options. Now if individuals passively give in to them, the outcome is all too obvious: we have unsteady human beings who are forever beginning something and never completing anything.

The aforementioned habit is nothing else but the classical concept of virtue. Aristotle listed three kinds of virtue: ethical, dianoethical, and poetic. As being habits, they are acquired capacities of acting according to one's sense of duty, often contrary to the affectitious side of our personality. Duty is dictated by reason, but this call of duty is never pure; other, inferior, aspects of our physical nature interfere. A virtuous person is such that in spite of this intrusive interference he is capable of following the call of duty.

The most important thing is that we need to develop "the power of judging," the capacity that is then built up in our personality (James, 1977, p. 158). To be judgmental is necessary and at the same time the most difficult ability to obtain because it often goes against the main grain of dominating culture, which is to stay non-judgmental. Being non-judgmental is the principal ingredient of political correctness.

And at universities, at least this is what I observe in Poland, we provide diplomas to our student-clients. We no longer teach, we are not asked for opinions, which would be natural, assuming that a teacher has more experience than his or her student. Students do not look to their professors. Rather, they adopt the "live-and-let-live" attitude.

Jonathan Kozol describes the American system of schooling:

"In most cases, what we do in public schools in the United States today is not to suppress but to buy out the revolutionary instincts of our children. We offer them 'independent research,' 'individualized learning,' 'open-structured education,' 'non-directive class-discussions.' Each child, in the standard code-word of the fashion, learns 'at his own pace.' Teachers are present not as educators but as 'resource-people.' The children 'do their own thing.' Everybody 'tells it like it is' and tells other people 'where it's at' It is all fashionable, fun and 'innovative' ... It is intelligently marketed and publicized. It is remarkably well-packaged". (Kozol, 1977, p. 206).

It is true that we cannot force anyone to learn something and that in fact "knowledge has to be built by the knower himself [...]," but it is equally wrong to claim that we "should abandon prescribed curricula [...]." Teachers provide an opportunity, but this opportunity must be "motivated, guided, and assisted by expert instruction" (Ebel, 1974, p. 76, 78). Otherwise their students feel at a loss because they cannot make a clear and consistent picture of what they are learning. Ebel therefore claims that if the school abandons a well-defined curriculum, it undermines its very function, since "a school to model its instructional program after the kind of free learning pupils do on their own out of school is to abandon most of its special value as a school, more of its very reason for existence". (Ebel, 1974, p. 78). Speaking somewhat metaphorically, such a school is committing suicide.

Jonathan Kozol puts it excellently when he says that children cannot be prepared to confront the challenges of their life in an unjust school. What is an unjust school? Kozol answers, "A school which constitutes an island of self-etherized and of self-serving privilege within a land of pain is not a just school, whatever the games the school board authorizes, whatever the innovative slogans it may ply" (Kozol, 1977, p. 207). Such a school simply deceives children because it creates a false environment for them. First and foremost, children are falsely encouraged to view the world as an infinite collection of open options. Whatever they choose it proves their authenticity. Classrooms are neutral and teachers are "non-directive," and they seek to produce non-judgmental people in the hope that such creatures will make a better world, will be more tolerant, and restore peace to turbulent mankind.

The dominating attitude seems to be formulated as follows; go wherever you wish, do whatever you choose, and all this with a belief that we are authentic. The false assumption is that we are living in a void of unbiased space, that whatever we wish or do is automatically truly ours, and that it can thereby be accepted as long as we stick to what we have thus wished or chosen. Such a belief is all the more surprising if we consider the general conclusion we find in philosophical and sociological studies, namely that rational deliberation as the foundation of democratic values has considerably corroded or has simply become an illusion. Rousseauian thinking keeps recurring and reappearing. Open-structured classrooms, non-directive teachers, and neutral education become part and parcel to the same illusion. Kozol rightly observes that to advocate a neutral education, "in a time like this and in a land like ours [i.e. America – J.K.], is less than honest, and less than 'neutral' too, if we already recognize too well the presence of a uniform body of controlled and managed stimuli and viewpoints." This claim is ungrounded because it takes for granted that

the neutral classroom "depends upon the prior existence of neutral field, or at least a neutral pocket of unmanipulated and unmanaged intellection". And he concludes: "To believe in this [...] is to believe in children who have lived their lives within a sweet and unploughed meadow". (Kozol, 1977, p. 209). Indeed such are those who have lived in a romantic vision of innocence.

On the whole I agree with Kozol, but have to remark that this otherwise correct argument against the existence of such hazy beings as "neutral classrooms" and "non-directive teachers" or content-neutral education is absurd not only "in a time like this and in a land like ours," but it is absurd in any time and in any land. Assuming, obviously, that we have real human beings and real geopolitical places in our minds, not some conceived ideal beings or communist utopias.

To conclude, the author calls it "wishful thinking" or "amiable deception." They are founded by the myth that, "lies beneath the notion of the open-structured classroom." This myth consists in the, "the imagined 'authenticity,' the 'spontaneity,' and the 'autonomy' of the child's intellectual initiatives". (Kozol, 1977, p. 209). Why should anyone assume that a child, when left on his or her own, chooses freely or authentically? Freedom and authenticity are naturally identified in such a claim. And this is a tacit assumption, following one's belief that human nature is good from the start, innocent and unspoiled. It is not spoiled by any intrusions on the part of biases, misconceptions, or interests, things so commonly found amongst the population of the adults. Why do the ideologists of general openness and non-directiveness seem to have forgotten about this? It may also happen that they never ask questions. If they do not, we have to.

The world surrounding us is not a structure of open-ended options. Our choices do matter; some are better, some worse.

Therefore Kozol rightly observes, "In the long run there is, and can be, no such thing as an unbiased education or a neutral teacher". (Kozol, 1977, p. 210). There is always a pre-selection of matters to discuss in the classroom, the teacher presents from a certain angle, not from the view of nowhere, he refers his students to some books, and not to others etc. We may presume that his selection is not contaminated with any bad will, but choose he must. Why should we presume that a child's choice is pure and devoid of any hidden motives that may not be his own, not imputed by others, inculcated by peers, inducted by the media? Instead of pretending that there is an unbiased view, would it not be better to give the students respective equipment of rational choice and selection? Such can be learnt only by way of appropriate methodological training, structural awareness, and discipline.

The teacher is presupposed in what he teaches. He is somehow related to the contents under consideration and cannot be "anesthetized" or "sedated," as Kozol writes, because, "he does not teach *nothing*: he teaches *something*" (Kozol, 1977, p. 211). He is, naturally, to this *something* somehow related. Therefore, concludes Kozol, "a teacher cannot, no matter what he does or does not do, maintain a neutral posture in the eyes of children. It is just not possible for us to disaffiliate entirely from the blood and the stench of the times in which we live". (Kozol, 1977, p. 211).

Education is not conditioning, as we condition animals in some experiments to see if they react to certain stimuli. We have become accustomed to thinking about human beings as programmable machines since Descartes and La Mettrie (cf. Booth, 1977, p. 241). In this view, they are like programmable devices rather than human beings, so it suffices to apply respective programs (methods) in order to obtain expected results. Even in the above method in Sand and Sea, which apparently is no method at all, there is a method, there is a tacit presupposition. The latter being the fact that by doing nothing the students will by themselves arrive at appropriate ends. This resembles conditioning. It is contrary to the Aristotelian belief in human beings as individual and social beings. In this view, human beings need society to obtain their inherent ends. They are supposed to grow into ordered and well-organized beings rather than loose individuals (Nisbet, 1988, p. 84 and ff.). If we want to fulfill the results of education, and I understand them to be, first and foremost, responsible agents who can adjust themselves to the demands of their daily life, we must provide students with some methodical frameworks for their own conceptions.

We need the power of choice, elimination, and discrimination. In order to be a mature adult we need to learn the structure of things, we need to know the norms and principles by which we may be prepared to evaluate reality. It is naive to think that in the void of values young people will, by themselves, arrive at appropriate evaluation. The quest of authenticity is elusive. If there is no power of discrimination, one can hardly speak about authenticity in general. More often than not, the so-called "authentic" individual assumes some ready-made and trite stereotypes and sooner assumes someone else's views before they arrive at their own.

Conclusion

In order to develop into mature personalities we need an education that contains well-defined frameworks, principles, and authorities. We need to be told that our choices do matter, that some of them are better and others

worse. Not tell a man that the most important goal is authenticity, because it is next to impossible to discriminate authentic and non-authentic choices. The quest for authenticity is a way to nowhere, and at best it ends up in frustration, at worst in complete despair. Human beings, doomed to their immanence without any chance to look out of themselves, will never attain such ends. We are not programmable machines, but in a sense we are "programmable," that is, we cannot live without patterns and examples to follow, modify, or reject. We need to be told that good should be pursued and evil avoid, and, first and foremost, that good and evil do exist. Chipping away at all authorities does not extend the scope of personal liberty, rather it undermines and erodes the guidelines one needs to guide one throughout one's life. This invites a rapid slide into barren relativism.

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