Understanding Institutionalized Education

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Towards a Different Philosophy of the School

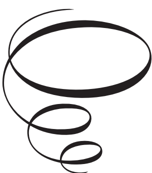
By

Roland Reichenbach

Translated by

Lyn Shepard

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



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PREFACE

This book should be viewed as a sort of *plaidoyer* or *plea for a normal institution*. The French word "*plaidoyer"* is borrowed from legal terminology and means the closing argument of the defense or prosecution before a court of law. But, in communications, "to plea" simply means to speak out on behalf of something–or to find something good worth mentioning about it. In this sense, a plea for something normal appears to be unnecessary, because something "normal" means "familiar", "customary", and "conventional" (yet also "common" and "ignoble"). The school is a normal institution in our degree of latitude; elsewhere it still has the status of the unusual. Also customary are critics of the schools and skeptical questions about the pedagogical meaning of schools. The plea refers to the school as an institution. An institution is an "installation" or an "establishment": it's not a lending establishment or an insane asylum. Actually it isn't a reformatory or corrective center, and it isn't a prison in any case. It's rather a *training* institution. At the same time, however, the school is an integration center (socialization and integration agency), training establishment (qualification authority), screening agency (selection and allocation institute), as well as an economic center and administrative establishment, an autonomous and independent agency (see Oblinger 1975)–and this may seem banal, but it's often forgotten in the context of pedagogical debates and discussions–a coercive institution (Fürstenau 1972).

The coercive character of the school and scholarly training has grown to an enormous extent. It is coercion of a social nature. While the mandatory school period has increased drastically during the last 100 years, the obligatory school of today is "simply" termed a precursor of higher education and training institutions of an increasingly larger population group. One even speaks of "*mass higher education*". Hence universities and technical colleges today have become comparably accessible for very many people.

Accordingly, the *alma mater* has gained a notable potential to host masses. As a nourishing mother superior, she at first attends to her flock as if all were equal. Mass know-how transfer is democratic. Ever more want to be

nourished with training and knowledge, and the "General Higher Education" requirement (see more below) is on the road to its realization. "In 1900 there were (…) about a half million students on Earth–far fewer than one percent of the corresponding age cohort. In the year 2000 about 100 million students matriculated–making about 20% of them the corresponding age cohort" (see Meyer and Schofer 2005, p. 84), whereby the growth has occurred especially during the last four decades of the 20th century." (*ibid.*) This increase represents a global phenomenon and took place in large part independently (!) of the economic development level of the nations involved (p. 85). According to Trow (1970/2006, cited in Kreckel 2008), one speaks of *elite higher education* if a participation rate lies below 15% of an age cohort. Within mentioning, some education scientists still based their reflections on the so-called "idea of the university" that has been long outdated. During the days of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) there were about 5,000 students in all of Prussia, and financing of universities from public funds was not an issue. Until 1960, less than 15% of an age cohort did go to college. From 1960 until about 1995 one speaks of *mass higher education* as the participation rate of up to 50%. If this rate even surpasses 75%, one speaks of a "General Higher Education" requirement (Kreckel 2008, p. 3). Such figures already apply for the Scandinavian countries, Poland, Australia, and New Zealand, though Russia and the USA still hover at about 64%. Germany and Switzerland, for example, still lag far below this point, but the development trend is clear. Expansion of higher education follows "a global pattern in principle, not national ones" (Meyer and Schofer 2005, p. 88): National education systems are subject to global models today (p. 91). In the informative and maybe even alarming words of Meyer and Schofers: "Nationalistic principles and the glorification of national exceptions lost their attractiveness after they largely caused two world wars and a world economic crisis." (p. 91).

However, this higher education push should not allow us to forget that the far better possibility to register at a university has remained relative. Nonetheless, something else remains relative: children of public officials in Germany were clearly able to show the greatest increase in opportunity between 1969 and 2000. It led that of children of self-employed and employees, while the children of laborers could only show very slight evidence of such growth. (Wernicke 2009, p. 80). Thus one must also speak of the Matthew effect here. Thus the apparent democratizing of training ("mass education") in no way reduces the socioeconomic differences but may in fact even contribute to their growth.

What does this development have to do with mandatory schooling as dealt with in what follows? This development increases pressure on the mandatory school and promotes critical discussion on the pros and cons. School represents only *junior college* for ever more people: the goal is access in and affiliation with high education and training (secondary and tertiary levels). Among other things, this leads to many young people or even most of them sitting in lecture halls during remarkably many *years of their lives* and therefore lose the sense of classroom activity and learning. Exacerbating the situation even more, pupils reach puberty at an ever earlier age–a comparably dramatic development. Hence they want to be treated (and should be) as young adults. On the other hand, most of them will probably remain dependent on their parents for many years in economic, legal, social, and other terms such as space. While childhood has been shortened, youth and adolescence as well as post-adolescence have expanded. So young people sit in their classrooms, learn many things (though their meaning escapes them entirely), and grasp only one school subject–as Sloterdijk recently put it with intended exaggeration: namely the school diploma (Sloterdijk 2009, p. 684). The intelligence of these people lies largely neglected, remaining socially untouched. Not all take this easily. This crisis in the meaning of classroom learning may also be supported in my opinion by a seemingly liberal but far-reaching stance of their parents and teaching instructors who seem to admit freely to their children and pupils that they themselves didn't like school particularly and know how inhumanly boring it can be–how useless what they learned finally turned out to be–and that for this reason will be forgotten as soon as it has been questioned–one had hardly been questioned or tested. The correlated "pedagogical" mentality can seemingly be reduced to three essential dimensions or content items that appear to be directed at the young people in the following bits of advice:

(i) Please gain your school diploma (although you haven't learned the meaning of the classroom lesson contents)!
(ii) Don't take drugs (except, if you must, soft drugs, but never too many)!
(iii) Have a condom on hand (because you don't want to have your life spoiled already by a child)!

But otherwise…? It's *your* life! You can do anything *you* want with it!

This stance doesn't need to be criticized, since it could actually be viewed as "liberal", expresses a certain laid-back reaction toward the mastery of knowledge and its institutional relay. This attitude can hardly be of service

to the school institutions and their actors–teachers and pupils. It more than tends to subvert social recognition of the school as an institution. Yet the *emancipation* against pedagogical institutions and authorities is obviously an ambivalent achievement, though also a modern one and hardly a phenomenon that can be undone (see Reichenbach 2011).

Another socially fundamental and usually unintended function of the school is that of *preservation*: Millions of children and young people are *cared for spatially* during certain precisely defined times. This enables order and certain freedoms for all those (even if not really all of them) who don't sit in the classroom. If all the teaching staffs of a nation, a confederation, or even only a larger city would, say, go on strike for two or three weeks, all would soon notice what the school's preservation function actually means for modern society–and how it performs (even if nothing at all would be learned in the school itself).

In short, many efforts are made in and for the school and things are performed. Yet the few dimensions sketched here also show that we have to deal with a contradictory institution–*i.e.,* one in open societies that is confronted with contradictory expectations and demands. Therefore, the school is both a *normal* and also a *contradictory* institution. The following remarks deal with the *pedagogical* meaning and the (real or imagined) *crisis of purpose* posed by this situation in which such strong and contradictory feelings as fear and boredom coexist every day.

The dictum that we must not learn for life (unfortunately) but for the school is a known and mostly affirmative expression by the Roman philosopher Seneca, tutor for the Emperor Nero, turned 180 degrees ("We don't learn for life but for the school" appears in *Epistulaem morales ad Lucilium* XVII 106 12 of the Latin original as "*Non vitae, sed scholae discimus*", see Seneca 2001). The turned-around version "We don't learn for the school but for life" (or should learn) has a clearly more sympathetic outlook at the outset. The following formulations, however, should express that "learning *for the school*" is and can be just as pedagogically meaningful and important. The rhetorically effective opposition of "school" and "life" is also very widespread even today, but it's alarming in my opinion. The fact that the so-called "proximity to life" has even been elevated to the level of the didactic principle may be even more alarming. And that the argument "life versus school" must assume knowledge of what so-called "life" is, wherein the main motivation consists seems the most alarming. Anyone who constructs opposites between school and life does not appear to hold school very highly. Yet school is a structural

element of modern life, not its precursor. It is not a necessary evil or a means of suppression and injustice–and it's not a place of private enterprise and self-interest. Life in modern society and the school are intrinsically connected with one another, so a politically or pedagogically motivated opposition of "school" and "life" appears to suggest an information deficit.

1

ON THE READING–AND FIVE THESES

Beside the introduction and closing comments, the book contains five chapters. These do not necessarily form a sequential order and can thus be read easily as excerpts too. Each chapter is classed as a thesis or group of theses that concerns the pedagogical purpose of the school in one way or another. This is in no way linked to a requirement for completeness. The school is an “eternal” topic. Like each institution, each central idea, or each constituent concept of modern societies, the meaning and purpose of the school, its condition, and its need for significant improvement are disputable. That is normal. Argument belongs to the democratic ethos of modern societies. Obviously it must be fair and nonviolent. No verdict is final. No opinion can waive the absolute demand for truth without justified dispute. Those who believe knowing the truth about the school don’t know the school. This doesn’t mean that every sense and purpose of the school is open for free discussion by everyone–or that all opinions should be recognized as of equal value. “Disputable” does not mean “spongy”, but subject to dispute; one can and should argue over differences with total coherency.

The author has no hope that the following theses or thesis groups will result in general agreement. It would be unjustified to expect that. The motive of this book and the related theses in it rather lies in inspiring *different* thoughts on the purpose of schools than may have happened previously. Incomplete societies are indeed incomplete in any sense. In any case, so are their subsystems and the educational system itself. Imperfection may and should be criticized. A widespread prejudice claims that criticism should be “constructive”. Whatever might be meant by such a challenge always being “constructive” is pointless. The critic’s central criterion is not whether or not it is constructive but if it applies or not. Yet its germainess may be debatable. In any event, those who criticize are not bound to offer alternatives to what they criticize. To demand this is another prejudice–one lacking careful consideration. Only because no better and more credible alternative to the plan criticized can be presented

does not mean that the criticism is less justified or totally unjustified. Lack of an alternative is no argument against the legitimacy of criticism. That's why democracy was not an ideal solution for Aristotle. But it always ranked as the better option among the imperfect forms of state. He deemed only bad forms of a state as "realistic", *i.e.,* in touch with reality. Similarly he could comport himself with that problematic institution, the school, within democratic societies. One would not be able to find agreement on how it had to operate and how it could be run in a better or even ideal form. Ideal notions, on the other hand, are in no sense unimportant. They rather serve important regulatory functions and make necessary criticisms of reality (or what is perceived as such) possible.

1.1 The theses for the five chapters

1. The school is only a pedagogical institution with a caveat: it is marked by social powers that partly contradict the pedagogical ethos without being able to terminate the contradictions. Part of the school's pedagogical meaning includes promotion of the sense of community and–still more fundamental–civility.
2. The central actors of the school are teachers with an articulate pedagogical identity articulate. While "professional skills" are prerequisites for the teaching profession, the core of teaching is a personal matter. Two creeping developments tend to undercut social recognition of the school as an institution and hence the person teaching as well: "purposeless" learning and "vanishing of the individual." These tendencies can be viewed as side effects of two affirmations: that (1) the learner deserves more credit than the teacher (and should), and (2) one needs to concentrate less on content than on skills mastered.
3. The school's educational task is unclear and can or should remain unclear. In other words, if the school has an educational task, what it consists of remains in dispute. The deep insecurity on the part of parents and the school must be endured. Education is not technology. At least in the German-speaking sector, education reduced by behavior modification will normally be viewed more than a bit skeptically. This skepticism is understandable, but it obviously solves no problems.
4. The school has a vital significance for democratic societies. It serves democratic education and training. Yet the school itself is neither *polis* nor *embryonic society* ("small-scale society"). A *polis*

exists only among “free equals”, and society viewed as a “large-scale” entity is barely reflected in a small-scale school setting.

5. School and teaching are a locale of tactics and strategy, not merely of authentic relationships. The silent introduction in the ethos of trading and deception belongs to the secret teaching plan of modern schools. Those who only disparage this as disgusting misconstrue the civilizing dimension of the school and thus the meaning of the trade-off as well as illusion for civilized society.

Note: Naturally some passages of what is performed here had already been presented elsewhere within oral presentations and in written articles. In my opinion, repetition and self-citation are unavoidable and also lack the character of plagiarism, as sometimes assumed. I have tried to indicate the areas where I fall back on comments written earlier.

2

INTRODUCTION: SCHOOL–A WEAKENED INSTITUTION?

The answer “yes and no” is generally not entirely wrong for most complex questions. Has it become more difficult in comparison with earlier times to be teachers and pupils? Reasons can be offered in a simplistic manner which allows one to view the public schools as a partly problematic institution or an institution with problems in certain regards. One of the contemporary school’s problems can be seen in its loss of authority (see Blais, Gauchet, and Ottavi 2008; Gauchet 2002; Revault d’Allonnes 2005). The school has lost its *aura*. Ziehe and Stubenrauch determined in their still very readable “Plädoyer für ungewöhnliches Lernen” (plea for unusual learning) (Ziehe and Stubenrauch 1982): The “aura” of the enigma–its uniqueness as the fountain of knowledge, education, and the culture that has been passed on to us–has vanished. Teachers must increasingly depend on themselves, “because some essential ‘free resources’” from which they had profited earlier have been weakened and even severely weakened–according to Ziehe and Stubenrauch–regardless of how professional or dilettantish the teachers are and how weak or less knowledgeable they may have been and how pedagogically reflective or naïve they were.

The first of these “free resources” was one of education’s canons (Ziehe and Stubenrauch 1982, p. 130): the canon embodied the unquestioned authority of cultural know-how which the school represents as a near monopoly. The second “free resource” reflects the traditional *relationship of generations*: precisely due to its potential for conflict, the relationship constituted the valued gauge of dissent and negotiation. The third ‘free resource’ was the obviousness and proximity of *self-discipline* (p. 131). The notion that learning should be “fun” or occurs effortlessly and “naturally” is as a new and fallacious idea in terms of institutional linkage. The school was always rather related to an ethos of strenuous effort and exercise. “This scholarly, symbolic order”, wrote Helsper *et al.* (2007), “was embedded in an overarching social horizon of interpretation. It could

draw on cultural assets and borrow from obvious and binding experiences. This aura of the school as a unique educational center is eroding." (p. 41) The teacher's authority as a professional ´last word' has become vulnerable and in need of legitimacy." (p. 64) Moreover, this is provided by the (i) "decanonizing" of knowledge and the educational legacy through the (ii) pluralizing of lifestyles and forms of life (*i.e.*, making rules, norms, and values relative) and a reinforced "duty to justify" as well as, finally (iii) questioning the teacher in a didactic/methodic and pedagogical sense enabled and reinforced by new and self-guided paths to acquire know-how and cultural skills (*ibid*).

When teachers themselves no longer see the school as representative of culture and the symbolic systems, the problem of meaning in regard to learning at school becomes obvious. Raising the question "What is the school good for?" a common answer is "for learning". Yet why is learning necessary? The reflexive answer insists that learning is needed for life. Lutz Koch (2002) has argued that the school is indeed for learning, but learning is for the need of the school: "We learn for the school" (p. 11). This really looks like a "traffic circle". Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to say that we don't need to learn for life but for the school. As mentioned in the preface remarks, the story of the well-known ironic Seneca quote is normally repeated incorrectly. Incorrectly cited, one quotes Seneca as: "We don't learn for the school but for living." Yet properly quoted, Seneca said: "We don't learn for life but for the school." But why, as Koch asks, are pupils here? Koch's answer: they are present for the school–not the other way around! (p. 16) After so many counterintuitive comments, Koch sums up his case:

> "I have insisted that: School is here for learning, because it not defined in any other way. Secondly, I have maintained that we do not learn for life but for the school, School is not the life's subject but rather the school leaves its impression on life. Therefore, the school does not serve society. It is not a service agency and does not function as a client or as customer-oriented. It is not here for society, but society must care for the school, the way people care for their own health. Society performs a service for itself when it cares for the school. Thus it correlates that the pupil is there for the school, the school guarantees the inventory of knowledge, and each individual is a 'user of knowledge at the same time as he is a 'vessel' of knowledge." (Koch 2002, p. 20f)

Knowledge is not only and not primarily preserved in the library, in books, databanks, and the Internet or in the school but, above all, in the minds of the teaching staff of all schools and at all training levels of all types that

convey it further to their pupils. And they partly pass it on later to in one form or another. Minds are the vessels of knowledge, and knowledge is preserved in them, lent for a certain time or indefinitely. For their part, pupils are kept in the school, usually for precisely defined periods. Though they have the duty to be there, they also have the right to be there. In being there, they allow the school's existence. No school survives without pupils, just as no children exist without parents. The school is not here for society but rather–as Koch sees it–for society to care for the school; "It is a constituent for society" (p. 13).

For this reason, at least for French pedagogues, the school represents the authority of culture. Thus Marcel Gauchet, counter-intuitively as Lutz Koch explains the authority of culture. His theories–summarized by Philippe Foray (2007)–state: (i) Authority is always present; (ii) education is here, because authority exists. That is, the issue of authority leads to the education question. (iii) Culture is wrapping around us, imposed upon us, something we have neither chosen voluntarily nor from which we can escape. Speaking charitably, the authority for culture for Gauchet–typically French!–the authority of *language* (see Foray 2007, pp. 623-625). According to Gauchet, human beings must be educated, because they live in a culture–especially a lingual culture. Gauchet wrote in 1985 on the topic of learning to read: "Learning to read means not only to familiarize oneself with useful written signs but also to become part of a world fully equipped long before we entered it. Its overall context can even be found at the furthest corner. It means meeting a binding order, the last briefing offered before meeting others and determining one's own standpoint in developing its form little by little in working on the expression of human experience starting from the lowest level. Here it's really totally in order to speak of *culture*" (quoted and translated by Foray *loc. cit.*, p. 624).

Everyone must bow to the ground-rules of language. The symbolic exerts a power from which humanity cannot escape. *Learning the symbolic and submitting oneself to its power is the school's raison d'être.* Symbols represent the "world community", as Hannah Arendt put it: The school promotes the meaning of community and sharing. Or it should promote this meaning. (see Chapter 1) Pupils aren't individual customers. Those who want to strengthen pedagogic identity have to call to mind the position of the school as a representative of culture and its constituent meaning for modern society. The contemporary market-oriented orchestrating of the school is a failure from a pedagogic standpoint in both the medium- and long-term sense.

The school appears to be a weakened institution and its teaching staff has suffered a loss of esteem from this perspective accordingly. At the same time, a shift to pedagogy can be identified, and it has taken place in nearly all sectors of life. Three sorts of "agogues" or "agogies" deserve a skeptical glance within the modern portent–the *demagogues*, the *mystagogues,* and the *pedagogues*. They share a common leadership and designing task as "agogues". The demagogues guide or entice the public, the mystagogues lead into the realm of mystery, and the pedagogues guide, teach, and educate children and youth. In any case, that's the way they imagine the path ahead. They also have a unified notion of the crisis they believe they face. It's right to discredit the demagogues. One hardly recalls who the mystagogues are or were. And due to their self-doubts, the pedagogues partly maneuver themselves into the crisis. Thus one doesn't always hold them in high esteem. The authority of the pedagogues and pedagogy is a shaky matter. At times they come across as ridiculous and can collapse unexpectedly. Thus one needs to summon a certain "courage for *this* ridiculousness" in order to cope with the friendly disdain aimed at pedagogues–sometimes subtly, sometimes head-on. Interestingly, this "disdain" also comes from some educational scientists who prefer not to be associated with the pedagogues. The world of pedagogy seems embarrassing to them (similar to the little sister of a youth who wishes to appear like an adult, even if he may not be entirely ready to abandon the children's room). An anthology called *Über die Verachtung der Pädagogik* (Ricken 2007) suggests in its title that the pedagogues' symbol–typically optimism, idealism, dilettantism, and perhaps a pleasant life or a desirable portion of one–might lead to scolding teachers in general, which anyone can do in principle. Yet this ambivalent symbolic image of the pedagogue has been the object of little research. That said, "disdain" is too severe a word, too dramatic, and it causes self-pity. Don't complaining pedagogues have an unpleasant effect? Actually whining and complaining–as any child, parents, and teachers all know–can also be strategically important tools. Indeed, they're obviously more than instruments.

A good 20 years ago an article by Elmar Tenorth appeared under the title "Laute Klage, stiller Sieg. Über die Unaufhaltsamkeit der Pädagogik in der Moderne" (1992) (or "Loud protest, silent victory: on the relentless nature of pedagogues in modernity"). Pedagogues love to complain, but they have secretly grown "successful" with or without whining. Schelsky warned as early as 1961 in his book *Anpassung und Widerstand* (1961, p. 162) about the danger of "pedagogy": the "unlimited expansion of the pedagogical demand. Schelsky sharply criticized the idea of declaring

even adults to be “animal *educandum”* (*ibid*.) obligating them to undergo “continuing education*”* (!), even working within organizations. We don’t know what Schelsky would say about the situation today, but one assumes his pleasure would be contained within reasonable limits.

One seems to have become used to each phase of life and nearly every slice of life being subjected to pedagogy. That’s why pedagogy has emerged for adults–and one for the aging (by the way, this one can be justified). Yet one is also offered pedagogy for dying (whereby one may ask what the death pedagogue may have to pass on to the dying on this topic). And there is naturally a prenatal pedagogy too. We don’t know if a post-mortality pedagogy exists, but we hope not. (Once around the race track should somehow suffice.) Yet it wouldn’t amaze us. Not only all phases of life but nearly all spheres of life are submitted to pedagogical scrutiny. The list includes (and with good reasons once more) a leisure pedagogy, a family pedagogy, a peace pedagogy, a sexual pedagogy, a body pedagogy, a sports pedagogy, a media pedagogy, a theater pedagogy, a music pedagogy, a zoo pedagogy, etc. One can hardly overlook these so-called hyphen pedagogies. It’s a “success”, for certain, but it comes with a cost.

While submission to pedagogy has reached almost all phases and spheres of life, lifting the limits of pedagogy’s claims was only achieved at the price of weakening pedagogical thought. If pedagogy has something to tell everyone, it–*quasi*-paradoxically–no longer has very much to say. Indeed it is the normative core of pedagogical thought that is also offensive to many education scientists. Yet without morality (in the broadest sense) there is no pedagogy to practice. Without explicit, reflected, and criticized images of the good and proper, education scientists at least cannot perform what pedagogues active in practice may be justified in expecting of them–if pedagogy delivers only limited action skills, it mist still provide relevant orientation and interpreting know-how.

Behind this extension of limits (which at latest has become visible with the discourse on *lifelong learning* and is dominated today in the omnipresent discussion within education and training institutions on skills, though it stands on mucky theoretical ground), there may be concern hidden and not admitted angst no longer knowing where the social excursion is heading. Basil Bernstein indeed touched an infected nerve of this era when he wrote a few years ago: “I think what we are now experiencing is a moral panic masked by pedagogy–a deep panic in our society that does not know what *it* is and where it is going. And that is a period of pedagogical panic. It’s

the first time that pedagogical panic masks or veils moral panic." (Bernstein [2000, 379f.], translation into German by Sertl 2004, p. 26).

Those who no longer know or believe not to know where the trip will take us (or what is worthy about the trip), no longer feel themselves qualified to show the younger ones what "it" is, though this "it" can mean a great deal–all the world. Some colleagues today are recollecting the basic pedagogical operation to demonstrate (Meyer 2003, Prange 2005) how weak pedagogical rationality is obviously still represented in pedagogic heads as well.

Indeed, the reasons for this "shortcoming" are also of a cultural and historic nature and must not only be lamented. We have to thank the 1970s boom of educational science and the political *Zeitgeist* (and this is not meant ironically), for they led to theories of communications and socialization–above all theories of psychological and sociological origin–entering the field of pedagogical theory. This deals with theories whose representatives saw themselves obligated to the ethos of *symmetrical communication*, the relative idea of *freedom from domination* and the right of *authentic expression*. In this politicized setting of educational theory and pedagogical discourse, it no longer seems attractive to take the asymmetry of educational relationships that was traditionally always understood as necessary while at the same time being restricted by time and situation–as a serious constraint of pedagogical thinking and acting. The structurally conservative moment of education (namely the *cultural preservation* moment) was veiled so-to-speak in political correctness. Yet there were already opposing votes that, first, actually understood something about politics and, second, were free enough to figure out and write about other education, even "without the borders" of the era. In my opinion, Hannah Arendt (1994) among others was in the vanguard. Therefore, it is hardly astounding today how little scientific pedagogues have to say about the "homeland terms"–above all concerning education and training. One could almost say only a tad more than those interested among the laity. On the other hand, they're obviously competent on many topics closely linked to education and training issues.

The lack of structural candor in the pedagogical discussion provides the background for these statements. It obviously showcases the asymmetries and differences between teaching and learning, old and young, the experienced and the inexperienced, educated and uneducated, mature and immature–and thus to the problem that must be concealed. We have become used to describing and understanding asymmetric and

complementary relationships in symmetric terms: “equally entitled”, “collaborative”, “jointly”, “prepared to discuss”, “open”, “reaching out to someone“, “mutually consenting”–and that’s all to the good. Yet it’s also interesting to experience what these notions mean in specific terms, when unequals come to a “joint” decision. Is something “decided *jointly*” if supervisors “seek a discussion” with subordinates described as “coworkers”, and the father says to his daughter: “We must talk about something together…”. While the nurse uses the “We” in greeting a patient in bed (“How are we feeling today?”), it serves as a rather routine cliché–one well-meant but not really fitting the situation. The “pedagogical ‘We’” is just as routine, well-meant but also hardly apt. It’s not always easy to recognize.

Thus we face a paradox: *the case of a pedagogically insecured school in an increasingly pedagogized society*. To that extent, the school has become *both* weaker *and* stronger in recent decades. Formulated more precisely, what has become stronger from a social standpoint (the impact of pedagogy on the world and the life of all humanity) has weakened the identity of pedagogy–especially embodied by the pedagogical identity of teachers. Formulated rather as an overstatement, “we” all know that school and education are extremely important (for individuals as well as society), yet “we” obviously know even less about what makes the school and education so important.

Evaluating this situation *pessimistically* seems inappropriate to me. To view this *optimistically,* though, seems even more inappropriate. To view the situation as a *tragic* constellation may formulate it too bombastically. Maybe the situation must simply be tolerated with a certain *irony* (rather in the sense of Socratic irony as a vulgar play on words).

3

LEARNING AS A TEAM

Thesis: The school is only a pedagogical institution in a restricted sense: it is shaped by social pressures that may contradict the ethos of pedagogy, since the ethos lacks the power to dispel the contradictions. The pedagogical sense of the school includes promoting the sense of community and–even more fundamentally–civility itself.

This chapter restates fundamental deliberations on the sense of schooling from a *pedagogical* standpoint. It raises the question of which meaning (beside organizational purposes) can be seen in teamwork learning. The plurality factor that a group of children or youths are taught in the classroom together is of great social and pedagogical importance (as should also be expressed in the following subsections): Not solely individual children and youths but typically groups of children or young people are being taught collectively and thus spend a fair amount of time with each other.

First of all, it is appropriate to consider *terminology of interest* in regard to conditions enabling social development and education when dealing with general human development (not general education). After all, Tomasello`s 2009 concept of *shared intentions* emphasizes the importance of seemingly simple social practices. For example: (i) speaking with each other, (ii) going on a walk together, or (iii) even informing an interactive partner who obviously has not yet noticed something (not only intellectual background hints that the partner is unaware that his argument might be incoherent, including input, *e.g.*, a red ball is there or that I know who has hidden the red ball). These explanations occur based on concepts of *civility*, *team spirit,* and even *shared intentions.* The background thesis defines the school as the preferred place at which implicit and sometimes even explicit knowledge and know-how related to these concepts is learned and put into practice. If a fitting thesis can also be formulated, Hannah Arendt would be an obvious source to quote. After her Kant

lecture, she wrote: “One always judges a member of society by his social sensitivity, his sense of community” (Arendt 1998, p. 100)[1].

People can develop preparedness in nonviolent debate that indeed develops morally relevant skills but is viewed less convincingly in terms of competence but understood rather as preparedness or even virtue. Psychologically one prefers to speak of dispositions or motives. But it could be that one loses sight of the ethical point involving voluntary personal effort (and not that of a personality) to approach a subjectively recognized ideal.[2] Such ways to prepare oneself, which are beyond comprehension in skills theory, must be implied to attain the corresponding abilities. These include:

- (i) Preparedness to bow to rational argument and even to make use of it,
- (ii) Preparedness to correct oneself in a variety of ways,
- (iii) Preparedness to judge matters in their context, among other things, if they concern ethical issues, or also
- (iv) Preparedness to recognize or take seriously the viewpoints, desires, and needs of others[3].

Those who can educate themselves in this sense have achieved the state of morality. The pedagogy of Immanuel Kant (1984/1803) has defined four graduated stages of education: (i) disciplining, (ii) cultivating, (iii) civilizing, and (iv) moralizing[4]. Kant, who had been accused of an extremely rigorous moral version knew that the fourth stage (moralizing)

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[1] By the way, we learn from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Criticism of pure reasoning) that the power of judgment is a very special talent that one cannot *teach* but only exercise. Nor can lack of judgment be replaced by any school. (Kant 1998; KrV, B 172)

[2] Yet given the focus on human will, one creates new problems once more–such as terminology and ethical concerns above all (see Hartmann already in 1962[4]).

[3] Those who develop such self-preparedness seem to be okay, so to say. Since such people apparently educate themselves and can change themselves “for the better“, they must not (and should not) have education forced upon them. In any case, they are equipped to stride across the space allotted to pedagogy attacks unharmed. This is worth considering, because this space is actually virtual above all but expanding in length, arguably to reach about half the universe as long as life continues. This begins already with prenatal pedagogy and may not even stop when reaching death pedagogy, as it is uncertain if a *post-mortem* pedagogy will step in at this point.

[4] Before disciplinary steps occur during early childhood education, “attendance” normally takes place.

lacked social reality. At best, the civilizing level–*i.e.*, of proper manners between people who don't know one another–can be expected. Social contact is also to be viewed as an esthetic relationship and expression of urban civility. It's the highest form of social contact for which Kant himself represented a classic example (see Manthey 2005). This is mentioned because the *educational disdain of social manners*–and (viewed pedagogically) their underestimated importance for moral education and development of human beings–has influenced the thought and theory of moral development one-sidedly.

If one can label Kant as a man of the Enlightenment–and one had to be very misinformed to dispute this–it could be misleading to understand the difference between custom and morality or convention and morality in apparent Enlightenment tradition as if morality would surmount customs and mere convention. Naturally the positions of moral realism and moral idealism hide behind this well-plowed topical complex. Seen from the latter viewpoint, the moral realist capitulates, say, before the normative power of the factual. Accepting the same as the highest measure is also questionable. Hence one can wonder along with Vittorio Hösle (1997), for instance, which factual visions of morality might have taken root in Europe and perhaps far beyond it to date if Hitler and the Nazi regime had had atomic bombs at their disposal and would most likely have deployed them? The idealist, on the other hand, subjects transcendence of morality and truth to social conscience. Yet this noble motive looks rather naïve to many who believe themselves to have both feet planted on the ground.

It's an old debate… The outlook of Christian Thomasius (born in 1655, died in 1728, as Kant was only a four-year-old and little involved with categorizing morality and its imperative role) may be sympathetic in regard to the difference that had developed between morality and custom. Indeed his proposal solves no problem but he tones down the dichotomy of morality and custom. For, according to Thomasius, custom fails to foster real goodness but brings about *moderate* goodness instead. It fails to prevent wickedness on a grand scale but only evil at the *mid*-level. Amidst the banalities of so-called everyday routine–which aren't identified that way by mistake–we then have to contend above all with moderate wickedness. But we also usually encounter only moderate goodness and

hardly experience perfect goodness.[5] That's why proper everyday behavior has such a special meaning.

If such behavior cannot always be learned in the best way within our hardtack existence, it is still preferably at *school,* where good behavior is demanded, promoted, and can (and must) be practiced. The most civilized societies have assumed civilized behavior by their members. The school is one of the most important places where social behavior expressed as civility in a coordinated and general (*i.e.*, collective manner) is learned and intensified.

3.1 Civility[6]

Civility is not morality but its *precursor* and *prerequisite* (Fumat 2000, p. 107). It's a statement of fact–a fundamental recognition *that others exist who are potentially interacting partners as well as human beings with differing connections and possibilities*. Civility doesn't present any political agenda either. But the contact network of inter-subjective relationships that it creates can function as the basis of political life (*ibid.*). But civility does not mean community spirit nor does it *set it as its goal:* Individuals meet, go their own way, monitor each other and their meetings (for example, with polite but empty phrases that can be learned and prescribed). Regardless of individual desires, they create a *commonwealth* in our world in this setting. It's a *preemptive order* without which law and institutions would be unthinkable.

For this reason, the loss of civility and propriety, as it is at times diagnosed (*e.g.*, Peyrat 2005), is deplored with good reason. Knowledge of courtesy may mainly be of an implied or latent nature, but it manifests itself explicitly or openly when fundamental norms of good manners–at least in the short term–are abused. "The manner in which we react when unquestioned basic assumptions of mutual respect are violated," as

[5] I believe for this reason that one can agree with Harry Frankfurt as he wrote a few years ago: "We must take moral positions seriously. That hardly needs mentioning. However, I think that the relevance which morality requires in leading our lives tends to be overestimated. Morality is less relevant for shaping our preferences and orienting our behavior. It gives us less information on issues that we appreciate and on how we ought to live than one normally assumes. Moreover, it's not seen as having as much authority as one believes. Even if it has important input to offer, it isn't necessarily the last word." (Frankfurt 2005, p. 10)
[6] See Reichenbach (2008)

formulated by Alheit (2000, p. 11), "shows how deep a civilized habit is anchored in our view of the world." This finding recalls Goffman and his outlook that "conventions" of courtesy are simply perceived as semi-contingent and almost superfluous, but lapses in observing them cause alarming effects. One knows the notion that no security can be offered without civility–no morality, no law, and no policy. Yet this knowledge belongs to the ignored and misunderstood norms taken for granted *today*–among others things in the realm of pedagogical theory.

While the category of civility recurs (perhaps not in first place) in the discourse on education and democracy dominated by skills theory, the category of courtesy is at least as arbitrary and peripheral in the same context. Perhaps we don't like to notice it either, since it presumes conservatism or close-mindedness. Both terms are related in fact, and their history is multifaceted (see Elwitz 1973). As in the 18th century, egalitarian ideals began to "arise," the courtly frames of reference "at which the corporative differentiated social ethic and etiquette peered" (Vec 2004, p. 98) were increasingly suspect. Instead they were interested in morality, law, and the "loss of good manners" (Schneiders 1985) could appear quite acceptable. Not only the common origin of morality, law, and custom but the existing linkage between custom and morality as well as the function of custom as a pillar of morality could be ignored in an enthusiastically anticipatory fashion.

It is surely exaggerated to formulate it as Milos Vec has: "The century of enlightenment left no trace of memory behind." (Vec 2004, p. 98) Yet "civility" in connection with Norbert Elias' often quoted studies on the "Process of Civilization" (1969) can be understood as a special form of moderation and self-control that come into use for their part in fostering nonviolent behavior between human beings. (Alheit 2000, p. 12). To this extent, "civility" could or should be attractive in moral pedagogy and psychology, while interpersonal "behavior" is judged dismissively as "merely" conventional. This applies, although such behavior serves a comfortable life as it lacks the fundamental meaning of law and morality.

Propriety–latin: *decorum* (Vec 2004, p. 75)–concerns a category of norms "that can find potential use within any sphere of human life" (p. 76), though its sources may be diffused. (p. 79). Law shares this function with custom, *in serving social peace within the world as we perceive it* (p. 83). Basing himself on Christian Thomasius' theory and literature, Vec analyzed the reason why customs (decorum or propriety–terms which can be used interchangeably at this point) no longer retain the same

importance today. Custom's aura would not command the honor accorded to law and morality: "Commandments to love they neighbor or not to kill have an entirely different pathos than the convention of a specific form of address" (Vec 2004, p. 91). Decorum also appears less attractive from an intellectual or theoretical standpoint. However, the decorum theory can be regarded as a pre-modern theory of social norms (p. 96). Thomasius recognized that decorum means norm and norm fulfillment at the same time. Therefore, it "takes on a stabilizing form for national and social order" (p. 94). On the other hand, customs change[7]. Sometimes it occurs with ambivalence. Richard Sennett (1986) analyzed how the public of 18th-century Europe was guided by social conventions determining the human behavior of the era. These conventions seem stiff by today's yardstick. Being judged as constrictive or artificial, they enabled people to take distance from the world of emotions (intimacy), in which world citizenry and courtesy were demanded (Sennett 1986, pp. 71-171). According to Sennett, the clear definition of *public roles* (pp. 92-121) led in no way to mere stiffness alone. It also enabled foreigners–including those of unequal status–to take a role in public discussion without problems in a social–and "proper"–manner without feeling themselves called upon after a certain time without (as Lasch put it) "to reveal their deepest feelings" (p. 45). The strict separation of the public and private spheres failed to form opposition. Rather, the "forms of public and private expression" were "(...) like two atoms of a molecule. In public, one faced the problem of the social order in which one created symbols; in the private sphere, one came face to face with the problem of caring for children in which one fell back on transcendental principles. The impulses that dominated the public were will and an artful device; on the other hand, the private sphere was determined by an impulse to remove and rule out all artificial factors. The public sphere was 'creation', the private `condition' of humanity" (Sennett 1986, pp. 133f.). The balance between the two spheres has been sustained with a quality that we would describe today as "impersonal". "Individual character" has been regulatory for

[7] At the same time, however, it was already insightful for Thomasius that customs change, thus limiting their stability and, as a result, customs is dynamically effective: "The differentiated corporative customs from Thomasius' standpoint are nothing more than the ephemeral manifestations of a changing society" (Vec 2004, p. 94). Even imitating the customs of privileged status caused "the citizen not to strive for strict behavioral equality with fellow human beings but rather for the stature of a higher standing person. In this sense, social distinction has become an incentive for innovation." (p. 95).