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# **Educational Authority and Manipulation<sup>1</sup>**

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## *Abstract*

Even though a culture which rejects objective values cannot justify educational authority, it cannot function without it. Consequently, it tends to resorts to hidden forms of authority which are more manipulative than overt authority. Covert forms of authority subject people to normalizing judgment to detect signs of deviancy while getting them involved in discourses and practices that produce new desires suitable for the frictionless functioning of society. Epistemic authority tends to deteriorate to "regimes of truth" that control beliefs through power politics.

Education involves children in practices that are regarded as valuable. It assumes that some practices are preferable to others and that students ought to be guided to the valued alternatives. This means that some choices are made for children instead of just letting them act on their preferences. In that sense education presupposes authority, both deontic and epistemic. Deontic authority is concerned with the authority to give orders, epistemic authority is concerned with competence. Teachers need deontic authority to coordinate the pedagogical situation. In addition, teachers need to be epistemic authorities: they ought to master the subject matter and the pedagogical knowledge needed for teaching.

The crucial question is whether such an educational authority can be justified. That is, whether there are valuable practices and genuine knowledge, whether their value or validity can be established, and whether there are ways of coordinating social activity to reach the valued goals. To use authority for the benefit of the student presupposes a conception of what is really good for her. If the good is something completely subjective, something relative to individual choice, the exercise of authority is an attempt to mould students according to the preferences of those in authority. Ultimately it does not make a difference whether it is the interests of the "I" (the individual teacher) or the "we" (the group she represents or society) which determines the nature of the manipulation. In the absence of objective values, the exercise of educational authority tends to become manipulative.

The argument of this paper begins by focusing on some fundamental reasons for the necessity of authority for complex practices like education. It then proceeds to discuss whether educational authority can be justified. I argue that an adequate

justification presupposes objective values. The attempt to educate in value subjectivist and relativist frameworks involves a cognitive dissonance which has undesirable consequences for the practice.

Even though the terminology of objective values is repulsive to many modern thinkers, it is not possible to avoid thinking in terms of the good life, or to replace such talk by the idea of disengaged freedom together with the meta-ethics of the fact/value dichotomy. Even those who in theory assume that values are subjective and independent of the order of nature, in practice cannot avoid relying on notions like the virtues and the good life.

The aim here is not to try and justify that there are objective values because that would go much beyond the scope of the article. I have argued elsewhere that we have good reason to believe in objective values although we cannot justify them conclusively. The aim of this paper is merely to show that without a notion of objective values we cannot justify authority and that this has undesirable consequences for educational practice.

I analyze these undesirable consequences with the help of theories by Alasdair MacIntyre, Erich Fromm and Michel Foucault. MacIntyre argues that value subjectivism abolishes the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative relationships. Fromm suggests that an attempt to avoid overt authority leads to anonymous authority which tends to be manipulative. Foucault points out that normalization is an effective but hidden form of power widely used in education. Hidden power creates new desires in addition to controlling existing ones. These theories provide partial support for the argument of this paper although their authors don't share the exact conception of value objectivism that is assumed here.

My main argument proceeds as follows:

(1) Even though a culture which rejects objective values cannot justify educational authority, it cannot function without it.

(2) Without objective norms governing human relationships there are no criteria for legitimate ways of influencing other people. If legitimate and illegitimate forms of influence cannot be distinguished, genuine forms of education cannot be differentiated from such distortions of it like manipulation and indoctrination.

(3) The rejection of a framework of objective values makes it impossible to justify authority. Insofar as educational authority cannot be justified, and the complicated forms of cooperation required in educational institutions are not possible without authority, it becomes necessary to resort to hidden forms of

influence which tend to be more manipulative than open authority.

(4) Hidden control takes various forms both with respect to deontic and epistemic authority. With regard to deontic authority, we have two developments: (a) the prevalence of the techniques of control are based on extensive surveillance and normalizing judgment, and (b) modern forms of power cease intending to restrict the expression of desires, because such prohibitions become difficult to justify outside of a framework of objective values. Rather, they now intend to get people involved in appropriate forms of discourse and practice in order to produce new desires suitable for the frictionless functioning of society. Effective power now produces a new type of an individual who is easily manipulated and adjustable.

(5) A culture which professes epistemological relativism with its inherent bent towards various forms of irrationalism faces a special problem of controlling beliefs. If there are no genuine norms governing the inquiry for truth and knowledge, and truth itself is a product of power, genuine forms of teaching cannot be distinguished from indoctrination and manipulation, because the prevalent forms of "knowledge" and "truth" would be products of established power interests and would serve their ends. Even if we assume that there are genuine epistemological criteria, we may still be sceptical about real life manifestations of epistemic authority because of the underdetermined nature of rational inquiry.

(6) The use of hidden forms of authority is worse than open authority because the former tends to be more manipulative than the latter. Legitimate forms of educational authority promote the emotional, moral and intellectual development of the student in the context of pre-given values.

### *1. Why do educational practices need authority?*

My first claim is that the proper functioning of educational institutions presupposes both deontic and epistemic authority. An epistemic authority has the character of a witness, as differentiated from deontic authority who has the character of a leader.<sup>2</sup> Someone is an epistemic authority for me in a certain field when her endorsement of a view in that field enhances the probability I subscribe to it.<sup>3</sup> Deontic authority is concerned with prescriptions for coordinated action towards a goal.

The need for educational authority arises from two sources: (a) the temporary deficiency of the child to care for herself and (b) the forms of cooperation needed by institutional action, which presuppose agreement on the goals to be sought in common and the concrete steps to be taken to reach those goals.

I shall first focus on the need for authority arising from deficiency. Consider

a child of seven years. She needs authoritative guidance if she is to survive, and especially to flourish and realize her potential as a human being capable of creativity and independent thinking. The role of authority here is substitutional: it takes the place of a capacity which the child potentially has and will acquire with maturity. Furthermore, the function of authority is to seek the good of the child, not the interests of the exerciser of authority. This presupposes knowledge of the good on the basis of which one must seek to remove the deficiency by nurture and education.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this special need for authority arising from temporary deficiency, educational institutions need authority simply because they involve complicated forms of human cooperation. Authority has two ineradicable functions in a community: (a) to ensure common or united action, (b) to decide what specifically are the goals to be sought for in common.<sup>5</sup> Every community needs authority to unify its action. Since the common good can be pursued by various means, consensus is not a sufficient method of producing united action. Even if the community consisted merely of enlightened and well-intentioned people, it would still need authority, because the good may be attained in diverse ways. But it is not only the choice of means which makes authority necessary for a community. An essential function of authority is the specification of the ends of common life and action. The good to be sought through common means must be decided in concrete terms: this road to be built, these educational skills to be sought.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible for a small group of people performing simple tasks to function successfully without a person in authority. For example, two people may move furniture just by mutual agreement, without any authority. But any amount of complexity in the task or increase in the number of people involved makes authority necessary. If we need, for example, four people to move a piece of furniture and there are several exits that could be used equally well, then someone has to make the relevant decisions and coordinate the operation.<sup>7</sup> Even a small community practicing government by majority vote usually requires an executive, however minimal, to give effect to its decisions. Even if a small group succeeded in effectively governing itself by direct democracy and managed its affairs without a distinct group of governing personnel, it would still need authority in the sense that "that in which the common good resides must be expressed by a rule of action binding on all".<sup>8</sup>

The forms of cooperation needed for the proper functioning of a school class are too complicated to operate without a person in authority. In such a situation it is not immediately clear to all the participants what they are supposed to do in order to

reach educational objectives in cooperation with others.<sup>9</sup>

The acceptance of a social authority always implies a value judgment like: "It is good or expedient to accept the authority of this person in this particular field." The justification of authority should establish that there is a good to be reached, and that it can be reached only by the help of the authority.<sup>10</sup>

It might be suggested that it is sufficient for people simply to want something and to show that the authority serves their goals. This kind of justification might work for authority based on solidarity: a group of people agree on certain goals, and the offices of authority are established as means for reaching those goals. Applied to education, this would assume that those children who agree on the goals of education accept the authority of the teacher as facilitating the cooperative effort to reach those goals. The problem is to reach such an agreement with seven-year-olds without resorting to compulsion or manipulation.

The issue is more problematic with regard to authority based on sanctions, as in compulsory education, for example. A particular child might not agree with the goals of education, but she is forced to participate. The question is whether such a sanction-based authority is necessarily manipulative. It seems that it is not possible to avoid the charge of manipulation unless there is something objectively valuable to be achieved by such a restriction of freedom. Within a value perspective which regards certain freedoms as more valuable than others, it is possible to argue for the restriction as the precondition of other more valuable freedoms. Authority obviously limits the freedom of the participants in the field in which it is exercised. But authority may be a precondition of freedom in another field. An example: police authority requires us all to drive on the right side of the road. This authority restricts our freedom to drive on the left side. At the same time, however, it is a precondition of our freedom to drive to Chicago or Toronto, since without traffic rules roads would be so chaotic and dangerous that we might not make it there.<sup>11</sup> Compulsory education restricts the freedom of the child to act on her preferences. At the same time it is a precondition of her freedom to engage in various cultural pursuits, insofar as it is the precondition of her learning the appropriate skills and sensibilities. Education enables the students to become knowers and participators in valuable practices. Educational authority can be justified by reference to the fact that without it certain valued goals could not be achieved.

## *2. The justification of educational authority*

The child needs guidance to mature both in her capacity to know and in her capacity to act. The crucial question with regard to deontic authority is: on what

basis can a teacher tell a student to perform a certain action that the student does not want to do, or to prohibit an action that the student wants to do? When the teacher tells Johnny not to hit Susie, she can justify her prohibition either by claiming (a) that it is ultimately good for Johnny himself to develop a habit of treating other people with respect and consideration, or (b) that Susie has the right to be protected against assault or (c) the teacher can simply express her negative attitude towards that kind of behavior and back it up with the negative attitude of other members of society who don't want anybody beating up their children. These three alternatives provide different justificational bases: (a) educational authority is exercised for the good of the one being educated (which presupposes a conception of the good which is not completely determined by individual or communal preferences), or (b) educational authority is exercised to protect the legitimate human rights of those involved (which presupposes an objective notion of rights and responsibilities), or (c) educational authority is exercised to impose society's preferences on students. The first two alternatives are similar in supposing a framework of objective values and norms. In the third alternative the teacher simply appeals to what she personally or what the society, the "we" collectively want, and demands the students to conform. In that alternative the individual or collective preferences are not backed by arguments about what is good and right in a more objective sense.

In the framework of objective values the teacher can in principle justify her prescriptions by appealing to an order of the good as the basis of the educational goals. She can claim that her prescriptions aim to develop the students in habits and virtues that ultimately make their lives worth living. Outside of such a framework she tries to mould the students according to the preferences of those who have power over the educational institution in question.

A similar situation emerges with regard to epistemic authority. The effort to teach students to accept certain beliefs can be justified by reference to truth, if there are nonarbitrary criteria which justify the beliefs in question. Within the framework of such criteria students can be taught to mature in their ability to discriminate between true and false beliefs. If it is assumed that no such valid criteria exist, the effort to get students to acquire certain beliefs lacks adequate justification.

Students can be legitimately influenced by offering them reasons which they may assess on their own. This assumes that students are developed as critical thinkers able to assess the various influences to which they are subjected. The student cannot learn to assess the reasons presented to her without developing critical capacities, and we cannot conceive of critical thinking in this sense without nonarbitrary criteria for evaluation and judgment. The critical challenge to accepted

views is meaningless without the presupposition of truth. Built into the very idea of critical thinking are the values of impartiality, consistency, clarity, truth and fairness. In the absence of such critical standards, the critical assessment of reasons lacks an adequate foundation. Education would otherwise involve the uncritical effort to mould students to prevalent views on knowledge, justice and social order.

The effort to develop certain intellectual capacities in students can be justified either by reference to their usefulness in discerning truth and falsity or by reference to the needs and preferences of society. In the former alternative, certain intellectual virtues are fostered because they enable the student to mature into a person who is capable of discerning the difference between truth and falsity. In the latter alternative, certain intellectual capacities are developed because they are needed by society as seen by those exercising power in the educational institution in question.

Let us suppose that an educational institution promotes "critical thinking". The very idea of critical thinking presupposes that there are objective criteria for assessing the validity of claims: consistency, fair consideration of relevant facts, the acceptance of propositions only on the basis of adequate argumentative ground, etc. In the absence of such criteria, there can only be a pretension of "critical thinking", insofar as the standards employed by such thinking are arbitrary creations of the intellectual culture dominant in the institution or society in question. By creating an illusion of "critical thinking" they may want, for example, to control students by hiding the manipulative nature of education. In the latter case the very effort to teach "critical thinking" becomes dishonest.

### *3. The need for objective values*

The central argument in this paper is that the justification of educational authority presupposes objective values which provide nonarbitrary criteria for evaluation and judgment. Objective theories of value claim that a valuable life consists in the possession of certain character traits, the development and exercise of certain capacities, and the possession of certain relationships to others and the world, and that the value of these things is not determined solely by the amount of pleasure they produce or of their being the object of desire.<sup>12</sup> Without this assumption we cannot make the conceptual distinction between dispositions valued by the individual or society and valuable dispositions. This distinction is important, however, as a basis for rationally justifying educational requirements.

Built into the very idea of education is a set of valuable dispositions (beliefs, knowledges, skills, habits, traits etc.) to be fostered. The recognition of their value assumes objective criteria that can be known; otherwise education cannot be

distinguished from mere influence or manipulation. For educational authority to be justified, the dispositions fostered by education must be valuable according to a set of criteria that are not dependent on individual or collective opinions or preferences.

There are two main examples of subjectivist approaches. Hedonism claims that the value of a thing is decided by whether it produces pleasure or pain. Desire-satisfaction theories claim that value consists in the satisfaction of one's desires and that disvalue consists in their frustration. Hedonism can be argued against by pointing out that there are disreputable (e.g. sadistic) pleasures. An independent notion of goodness is needed to evaluate various pleasures. The desire-satisfaction theories can be argued against by pointing out their explanatory failure. We desire certain things because we think them valuable. But according to the desire-satisfaction theory it is the other way round: things are valuable because we desire them. The second problem with the desire-satisfaction theory is that a person can satisfy her dominant desire without her life thereby acquiring great value even in her own estimation. This description applies to alcoholics, drug addicts, criminals, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Subjective theories of value might be preferred because of their simplicity. Even though people differ in what they find pleasurable or what they desire, they largely agree in preferring the pleasurable to the painful and the satisfaction of their desires to their frustration. Objective theories are more complex as they distinguish the valuable from the desired and the merely pleasurable. It is this very complexity of objective theories of value, however, that makes them more useful in educational discourse. They distinguish the question of valuable dispositions from the one about what is desired or what merely brings pleasure. Objective theories explain the way we make value judgments when we classify our desires as worthy or unworthy, noble or base, etc.

The assumption of objectivism about values is connected to that of moral realism. The latter is usually characterized as a view according to which moral truth transcends epistemic recognition conditions. The truth or falsity of a particular moral proposition is not dependent on our capacity to demonstrate its truth or falsity.<sup>14</sup> To this might be added that moral truth transcends motivational acceptance conditions as well. The truth conditions of moral statements are thus independent of subjective stances. The meaning of the morally good and the right can be explicated without reference to what moral agents approve of, or desire, or commit themselves to.<sup>15</sup>

Together these views amount to the conviction that there is an independent matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, goodness, or rightness. The opposite viewpoint, which

might be termed "relativism", denies that such a matrix exists, while it insists that any notion of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness we might employ in deciding between competing claims must in the final analysis be seen as itself relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, set of preferences, form of life, society or culture.<sup>16</sup>

Public education must in practice reflect the values prevalent in society. But the prevalence of values is no guarantee for their validity or truth. Therefore, prevalent valuations are not beyond criticism but are subject to continuous critical scrutiny. The process of discovering the right conception of the good life requires an open dialogue between various value perspectives. Such a dialogue is in principle unending, because participants in the dialogue have only finite knowledge.

Even though objective values can be known, all our conceptions about them are fallible. That is why educational authority ought not to be centralized but must be divided between the family, the school, other educational institutions and the state. Even though there are objective values, it does not imply that the objectively good life would be the same for everyone in all respects. There may be great individual differences between various individuals in what is the best life for each. That is why the exercise of educational authority ought to be adjusted to the special inclinations of each individual. Only some fundamental elements of the good life are common to all.<sup>17</sup>

The core of the modern predicament is that our culture has lost a sense of objective values. This works in two dimensions. Epistemological scepticism challenges the existence of genuine criteria for truth and knowledge. Moral scepticism undermines our confidence in objective moral values.

A culture which is dominated by value subjectivism and relativism faces the following problem: in the absence of critical standards which claim objective validity educational authority would involve the uncritical effort to mould individuals to prevalent views on knowledge, goodness and rightness.

In this context I shall use Alasdair MacIntyre's argument that value subjectivism undermines the moral protection and dignity due to persons.<sup>18</sup> Although MacIntyre fails to employ an independent and substantive notion of goodness and rightness, and links all virtues to practices, he explicitly rejects value subjectivism.

MacIntyre points out that if human choices are regarded as constitutive of values, all value judgments and especially moral judgments are merely expressions of preferences, attitudes, and feelings, and attempts to influence others with similar sentiments. Insofar as moral judgments are regarded merely as expressions of

feeling and attitude, they are not true or false, and it is not possible to secure agreement about moral judgments on rational grounds. Agreement may only be secured by influencing the emotions and attitudes of others.<sup>19</sup> There are, then, no objective norms for how human beings should be treated. This poses a problem for social interaction.

Charles Taylor comes close to MacIntyre's position here. If human choices become the ultimate source of values, a perspective emerges which threatens with a loss of meaning. The inner logic of this perspective ultimately trivializes the human predicament and "yields a flattened world, in which there aren't any meaningful choices because there aren't any crucial issues."<sup>20</sup> The idea of self-determination, elevated above all values, destroys its own meaning.

If human choices are regarded as the ultimate source of values, they lose all significance. This widens the scope for the domination of instrumental reason and technological control. Human choices are significant only within a background of objective criteria which are valid anterior to choice. Within such a background some things can be argued to be more worthwhile than others. Without a framework of objective values choices do not make sense because nothing is important.<sup>21</sup>

#### *4. The need for social control*

Without a framework of objective values communities have to resort to manipulation in order to maintain social order. A society inhabited by "criterionless selves" is threatened by anarchy. The need for social order emphasizes the need for managerial effectiveness and therapeutic skill as ways of adapting individuals into harmonious cooperation. It is the manager's task to manipulate criterionless selves to function effectively to reach organizational goals. It is the therapist's job to transform maladjusted individuals into well-adjusted ones. The teacher in her role as social authority is supposed to combine these two functions.<sup>22</sup>

Neither the manager nor the therapist is concerned with ultimate ends, the good life, since value commitments are regarded as ultimately subjective or arbitrary. Their task is limited to the realm of measurable effectiveness. But even though they do not claim to know how one should live, they are engaged in moulding and transforming human beings in ways conducive to the orderly functioning of society. These roles are assessed completely in terms of their effectiveness because the value subjectivist assumptions make it impossible to evaluate authority in terms of the good.<sup>23</sup>

Since a cultural setting which professes ultimate scepticism about values

produces criterionless individuals, it has to effectively control and mould them in order to maintain the social order. This creates the polar antithesis between managerial effectiveness and criterionless freedom. In order to secure harmonious cooperation, the manager has to manipulate individuals (with the help of a therapist, if needed) because there are no criteria determining the legitimate exercise of her authority. Without objective values that determine the normative framework of human interaction, the various ways of influencing other people cannot be evaluated by nonarbitrary criteria.<sup>24</sup>

Even though people in such a culture may pay lip service to the distinction between authority and power - in that authority serves the ends that a community of individuals agrees on - they cannot really justify such a distinction. These ends or values that are supposedly being served by authority rest on choices whose justification is purely subjective. They possess no inherent truth that could offer resistance to authority. They are merely functionalized motives moving the actions, mere means of acting. Therefore, they cannot escape service to power because their immediacy and lack of reality makes them prime objects of manipulation.<sup>25</sup>

The only way an authority can appeal to rational criteria to justify itself in such a context is to appeal to its own effectiveness. Authority then reduces to successful power. Even though ultimate ends are regarded as subjective, the need to control behavior and suppress conflict in order to facilitate the effective functioning of organizations makes managerial power necessary.<sup>26</sup>

The moral beliefs embodied in the characters of the manager and therapist do not enjoy universal assent in modern culture. On the contrary, they are focal points of disagreement. But precisely by being objects of persistent attacks, they define a basic moral dilemma of the emotivist culture: how to manipulate the criterionless individuals so that their freedom does not lead to anarchy.<sup>27</sup>

##### *5. The inability to distinguish manipulative and nonmanipulative relationships*

From the perspective of value subjectivism, human relationships become a confrontation of wills where everyone is looking for ways of influencing others to resonate with their sentiments. Although the broad outlines of such a framework can be characterized in general terms, the details depend on the particular social framework. Such a milieu has been characterized, for example, by the metaphor of consumption, of being "a consumer of persons" and "a person consumed".<sup>28</sup> This metaphor characterizes a form of social interaction in which people try to produce in others behavior in accordance with their wishes, using other people as means. The social world becomes a confrontation of wills where everyone is merely searching

for her own satisfaction.<sup>29</sup>

This characteristic feature of value subjectivism comes out clearly when compared with the moral objectivist view that morally enlightened human relationships are characterized by never treating human beings as mere means but always as ends. Human beings are supposed to be influenced only by offering them reasons whose validity they can assess for themselves. This implies unwillingness to influence a person except by reasons which she herself can regard as valid. Acceptable reasons appeal to criteria whose validity each person can assess independently.<sup>30</sup>

A culture cannot function without treating some fundamental values as if they were objective. Criterionless freedom leads to the disintegration of the social fabric. Although value subjectivist presuppositions will have an effect on social reality, its account of moral agency cannot really be worked out in practice in its full implications. Any human society has in some significant sense to presuppose an order of the good that is given prior to human choices.<sup>31</sup>

Even though value subjectivist presuppositions may not be capable of full social embodiment, they create a cultural framework where manipulative relationships cannot be distinguished from nonmanipulative ones. The behaviour of others cannot be influenced by reasons whose validity they may assess on their own, since there presumably are no objective criteria for value judgments. Consequently, the psychological effectiveness of the methods used becomes the relevant criterion. To treat another person as a means for reaching one's goals is to influence her by any and all available methods that seem effective. Deliberation upon moral issues is not based on objective criteria but on psychological considerations about how to effectively and efficiently influence people.<sup>32</sup>

This problem of value subjectivist culture reflects on educational practices. It becomes impossible to distinguish genuine education from its distortions like manipulation and indoctrination. This explains the attraction of the ideal of complete equality in education, where the adult does not guide the child but simply provides conditions for satisfying the child's own natural curiosity and desire for knowledge. Many radical writers, basing their views on epistemological relativism, argue that educational authority is used to transmit ideologically tainted views in the name of knowledge. Only a completely equal relationship supposedly avoids indoctrination, since all exercise of authority is a form of manipulation.<sup>33</sup>

My argument is, however, that a teacher need not choose between arbitrary power and complete renunciation of authority. Legitimate forms of educational authority are practical preconditions for effective learning. The teacher may use her

authority to promote the maturation of those being educated.

#### 6. *Overt and anonymous authority*

The renunciation of overt authority leads to the exercise of anonymous power with its tendency towards manipulation. The reason seems to be that without some kind of authority social functioning is not possible except in very simple types of cooperation. Since authority cannot be justified outside of a framework of objective values, it becomes problematic to exercise it openly. The attempt to function without overt authority while maintaining the effort toward cooperative learning leads to the need to resort to covert forms of authority which tend to be manipulative simply because they are concealed.

One of the ideals of certain forms of progressive education is to replace authority with freedom, to teach children without the use of authority merely by appealing to their curiosity and spontaneous needs and to make the child interested in the world around her. The ideal of educational freedom is valuable, but as Erich Fromm points out, it is difficult in practice to avoid its perversion. To renounce overt authority leads often in practice to the use of "anonymous authority".<sup>34</sup>

Overt authority is exercised without disguise, directly. Anonymous authority hides itself, pretends that no authority is exercised, as if everything was done with the consent of the individual. The teacher of the past said to John: "You must do this. If you don't, you will be punished." Today's teacher says: "I am sure you'll like to do this." In the latter case the sanction isn't anything outward and visible. The sanction involves conveying the feeling that the student is not adjusted, that she is not normal. Overt power uses concrete sanctions, anonymous power employs psychical manipulation.

Fromm thinks that the change from overt to hidden authority was determined by the need to produce people who feel free and independent, but who can be easily influenced, who cooperate smoothly and are willing to do what is expected of them. Modern organizations need people who may be guided without overt force. In order to achieve this, they have to be systematically manipulated with the fear of abnormality and deviation and of being excluded. They are afraid of being counted among the abnormal and they try to avoid it by conforming. In this case the exercise of power has not disappeared. It hasn't even lost anything of its influence. Instead it has changed from overt force which uses external punishments into hidden coercion which tries to influence emotions and imagination. Through hidden manipulation the child acquires an illusion that everything happens from her free will. The child never becomes conscious of the ways in which her consent is

obtained. Emotional mechanisms are built into her which make her vulnerable to manipulation.

Michel Foucault's work can be used to develop this argument further. Foucault thinks that hidden forms of authority are preferred to overt authority because of their greater effectiveness. One way to exercise anonymous authority is to use the concept of normality to distinguish desirable from undesirable behaviour. The emphasis on normalization is characteristic of modern forms of educational power because it can convey implicit demands under the cover of scientific neutrality.

Foucault's approach needs modification. The only reason for employing hidden forms of power in the educational context is not its greater effectiveness as Foucault supposes. Another important reason is the prevalence of relativism: since educational authority cannot be justified, the natural tendency is to avoid exercising it. But as its exercise cannot be avoided, various forms of anonymous power take its place. That is why normalization becomes important as a method of exercising authority unnoticed, under cover of therapy. If the objectivity of values were acknowledged, it would be possible to exercise authority openly and justify it with reasons that appeal to rational deliberation.

Modern techniques of control in education do not primarily employ the categories of right and wrong but those of the normal and the abnormal. They try to reduce deviation and to produce healthy and "normal" behaviour. Those who transgress the rules are regarded as cases, which are treated to become healthy. As Foucault puts it: "The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of standardized education."<sup>35</sup>

The concept of a deviant is defined against the background of social scientific and psychological theories about normal human development. Deviancy is an abnormal character type whose development can in principle be given a causal explanation. All deviant behaviour is regarded as similar in nature and functioning on the same continuum. Any abnormality might be a sign that the person is a potential delinquent. Teachers, therapists, social workers, psychologists and others trained in the social sciences are regarded as experts in detecting the first signs of deviancy and preventing it from developing into serious abnormality.

The fact that modern educational institutions use less visible forms of authority does not mean that they have ceased to control students. They have shifted the emphasis from the moral categories of the permitted and the forbidden to the ideology of "normalization". The discipline exercised by experts in schools, social centers, etc. is regarded as justified by the need to treat symptoms of deviancy. They

are not thought of as exercising authority in the traditional sense; rather they are thought of as observing the students for signs of deviancy and engaging in preventive treatment.

If the softer forms of influence characteristic of modern power are concealed because of relativist inhibitions, they easily become forms of manipulation by techniques of internalization: the person is controlled by the manipulation of her own feelings. She is manipulated to feel abnormal if she fails to please her teachers. The power that intends to produce "a new person" by soft forms of influence is potentially more manipulative than the power that seeks openly to establish normative guidelines based on the distinction between right and wrong. The latter form of power can be subjected to criticism while the former often escapes it.

### *7. The moulding of human desires*

Since it is problematic to justify authority in a culture which does not believe in objective values, it becomes more difficult to coordinate institutional activity by rules and prohibitions binding on all. Therefore, modern forms of power do not control people mainly through external rules and prohibitions, but their aim is to mould human desires, to create a new kind of a person that can be easily manipulated and guided to promote the frictionless functioning of society.

Foucault emphasizes that the effects of power are not mainly negative in the sense of restraining, limiting or restricting. Rather, power in its modern forms is productive of new beliefs, wishes, and attitudes. Desires are moulded by getting people involved in practices and forms of discourse and in verbalizing their experiences in appropriate terms.<sup>36</sup>

The traditional approach was to restrict human behavior through prohibitions and commands. The emphasis has shifted to expressing feelings, discussing one's experiences in detail, discovering oneself, and authentic existence. It seems as if human beings have finally become liberated from earlier prohibitions which artificially restricted them.

Foucault regards this view, however, as an illusion. Power in its modern forms controls people by projecting new images and by involving people in current forms of discourse in order to get people to internalize the behavioral norms propounded by modern social sciences. People don't need to be controlled externally, because they are monitored from inside, by their own self-reflection. Since they regard fulfillment and authenticity as essential marks of a good life, they acquire a compelling desire to clarify and express their deepest emotions and desires. For this they need the help of experts to discuss and to make intimate

confessions. This makes it possible to control their deepest thoughts and feelings.<sup>37</sup>

A person seeking liberation thinks that the crucial issue is to escape from censorship and repression. In actuality, however, she may be controlled by images which determine her self-image and mould her into a new type of person. Power doesn't work only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression. It is able to produce effects at the level of desire - and also at the level of knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

Such productive forms of hidden authority are problematic in educational contexts because they bypass rational reflection and exercise their influence unnoticed. They hide educational intentions and fail to treat those being educated as persons who can understand and reflect upon what is happening to them. The production of desires in children should ideally happen through education in values. Once the influence is open, it can become the focus of reflection and critical appraisal.

### *Conclusion*

The above analysis tries to show that the assumption of objective values and of genuine truth is needed to justify educational authority and to exercise it openly. At the same time the framework of objective criteria enables us to be critical about the real-life manifestations of authority. This makes it possible to eliminate forms of hidden control that tend to be more manipulative than open authority.

The moral requirement of treating students as ends rather than as means is based on the insight that students are not plastic "material" to be re-moulded at will. Human development is not promoted through an effort to form or adapt an individual according to the interests of those exercising authority, but to promote the normative disclosure of her potential. To be able to talk meaningfully about normative disclosure, one has to assume pre-given norms that guide the process of disclosure.

Power and control are not something inherently evil. They acquire positive pedagogical meaning when they are understood as the capacity possessed by the competent educator to transform the nature of certain situations into educational situations. Since individuality is constituted, for example, by volition and fantasy, the educator's use of formative power should promote the development of their potential. Of cardinal importance for the educational enterprise, the formative intervention of the educator is related to the transformation of educational situations in ways that open up valuable possibilities.

## Notes

1. I benefited greatly from comments by the two anonymous reviewers of *Paideusis*.
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3. J. M. Bochenski, *Was ist Autorität? Einführung in die Logik der Autorität* (Freiburg - Basel - Wien: Verlag Herder KG Freiburg in Breisgau, 1974), p. 59.
4. Frederick Crosson, "Simon on authority," *Cross Currents*, Fall 1981, pp. 346-348.
5. Simon, *A General Theory of Authority*.
6. Crosson, "Simon on Authority," p. 347.
7. Bochenski, *Was ist Autorität?*, p. 115-116.
8. Simon, *A General Theory of Authority*, p. 55.
9. Bochenski, *Was ist Autorität?*, p. 115-116.
10. Ibid.
11. Bochenski, *Was ist Autorität?*, p. 109.
12. David O. Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 10.
13. Ibid., p. 224 ff.
14. Cf. P. Foot, "Moral Realism and Moral Dilemma," *The Journal of Philosophy* 80, 1983, p. 397.
15. Cf. David Zimmerman, "Moral Realism and Explanatory Necessity," in *Morality, Reason and Truth, New Essays on the Foundation of Ethics*, ed. by David Copp and David Zimmerman (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & allanheld, 1985), p. 79-80.
16. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 8.
17. Cf. Amy Gutman, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 22-28.
18. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 6-35.
19. Ibid., p. 12.
20. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 37.
21. Ibid., p. 5, 37.
22. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 26 ff.
23. Ibid., p. 30 ff.
24. Ibid.
25. Philip Rieff, *Fellow Teachers / of Culture and Its Second Death* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 22.
26. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 26.
27. Ibid., p. 30-31.
28. William H. Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 181-182.

29. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 24-25.
30. Ibid., p. 22-23.
31. Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue, " in *After MacIntyre, Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. by John Horton and Susan Mendus (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).
32. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 23-24.
33. Cf. Alven Neiman, "Education, Power, and the Authority of Knowledge," *Teachers College Record* 88 (1), p. 72-73, and other works referred to there.
34. Erich Fromm, "Introduction," in A.S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York, 1964), p. ix-x.
35. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 184.
36. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
37. Ibid.
38. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Press, 1980), p. 59.

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