EDUCATING TO FRATERNITY

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Quick review of the state of places of the “crisis of education”**

Cp. Hannah ARENDT in *The Crisis of culture*, 1954.

**§** In the “New World” the human beings have renounced to transmitting tradition. Thus a unique moral point of reference disappears. Everybody is invited to invent his/her own values, avoiding giving lessons to others.

At the end of the sixties imposing norms, habits of order, prudence, recognition etc. could even pass as a form of violence.

**§** Since then adults do no more exercise their authority for fear of abusing an arbitrary power. The gap between the adult and the child is becoming indistinct.

**§** The children oscillate between the baby tyrant and the premature adult. A lot of adults oscillate between authoritarian nervous twitching and demagogic laxity.

Thus it is important to come back to some fundamental elements concerning education:

**§** The child is, first of all, always a child king. For it the world only exists through its proper subjectivity. The exterior world doesn’t exist.

*Cp. the works by PIAGET on intellectual egocentrism.*

The child must learn about the exterior world and alterity. The other one first of all only exists in order to satisfy the wishes of the child. It thinks that its wish “is the law” and doesn’t sustain that it could be impeded.

It must discover step by step that the world resists it and doesn’t completely depend on it. It must listen to the resistance of beings and things.

**§** Education must therefore be an education to ABANDONMENT, an apprenticeship of renunciation to omnipotence, even violence, the foundation of an order where a kind of fraternity could appear.

*Cp. Marcel MAUSS, in “Essai sur le don”:*

*“To begin with, it was first necessary to put down the lances. Thus the clan, the tribe, the peoples have got to know – and thus tomorrow, in our so-called civilized world the classes, the nations, and also the individuals must get to know – to oppose one another without massacring one another and to confront one another without sacrificing one to the other.”*

Learning to enter into relationships with others is fundamental. Recognizing them as similar and different, as the consciousness of the other escapes me radically.

**§** Education must cause being born to the LAW. The law, rules, because there is no human group without law.

For the interdict authorizes.

For *obedience to the law one has prescribed oneself is freedom (ROUSSEAU, Du Contrat Social).*

It is not easy to understand that one can be wrong against oneself and one’s proper interests.

**§** Education must cause being born to CULTURE: a whole of symbolic representations of the world as *Claude LEVI-STRAUSS* calls to mind *(quoted by Marcel MAUSS in “Sociology and Anthropology”):*

*“Every culture can be considered a whole of symbolic systems of first grade among which are placed language, marriage rules, economic relationships, art, science, religion. All those systems envisage expressing certain aspects of physical and social reality and still more, the relations which those two types of reality maintain with each other and which the symbolic systems themselves maintain with each other”.*

That is a question of a whole of “products of the thought”, of works constituting our cultural heritage and which the school has to transmit.

Therefore school is, according to a word by Hannah ARENDT, always “conservative”.

Culture offers means to distance oneself from the world, to think the world by means of intelligible symbolic systems, not to be glued in the real, reduced to consuming.

**§** Education must finally cause being born to POLITICS: learning the difference between private sphere and public sphere and construing the founding notions of citizenship: civility, civic attitude, citizenship. Liberty, equality, fraternity. Laicity.

We must find again what is fundamental in education:

- BINDING: The child must be integrated in the society which welcomes it, must master its customs and languages.

- UNBINDING: So that this integration is no subjection, the child must be able to discover other universes, to establish its distances, to have access to critical thinking.

- REBINDING: Education must allow every subject to bind him/herself to others recognizing their common humanity.

**Part one**

**Elements of vocabulary**

1. **Civility** concerns the elementary rules of life in society. The term means the same as sociability.
2. **Civic attitude (“civisme”)** is situated between civility and citizenship.

It means knowing oneself as a participant of a collection which is not only a summing up of individualities, where the relationships of force have given room to relationships regulated by right.

It also means registering oneself into a continuum and recognizing that one benefits from the heritage of preceding generations. That implies a duty of reciprocity towards the following generations.

That aspect is related to civility.

But a civic attitude must also look out together with citizenship, in the sense that it presupposes that one is interested in public affairs and that one participates in decisions concerning common affairs. It is indispensable in democracy, where every citizen is a player.

The civic attitude is behaviour – respect of the rules of everyday life.

(cp. René REMOND*, “Guide républicain”*)

1. The **citizen** is a judicial-political concept.

The citizen is no concrete individual, that’s a subject of the right. By that right he/she has civil rights at his/her disposal (he/she enjoys individual rights: freedom of conscience and expression, of cult, freedom of coming and going, of being treated by the judiciary according to a law equal for all …) and political rights: participating in political life, being candidate for functions …

On the other hand he/she has reciprocal duties. He/She can legitimately claim from the state respect for his/her rights, because the state legitimately claims the respect for certain duties from the citizen.

Moreover, in our political regime the citizen is also holder of a part of the political sovereignty and thus of the source of political legitimacy.

Citizenship organises a society all whose members are judicially and politically equal, whatever their origins and their characteristics. It rests on the idea of the equal dignity of all human beings.

(cp. Dominique SCHNAPPER, “*Guide républicain”)*

If therefore the civic attitude is the fact of living one’s citizenship, it is not enough to base it simply on the teaching of rights and duties. At school the lessons on the values of the Republic are not enough to make pupils live them: It is necessary to aspire towards learning by experience, making as much as possible the experience of liberty, equality, fraternity.

1. **Liberty**, which is the essential notion around which the Human Rights are organised, can be dealt with starting from it concrete manifestations.
2. **Equality,** which presupposes that one understands the difference between facts and right. E. g. the factual differences in the classroom (girls-boys, tall-small, strong-weak, fashionably dressed or not …) will not be able to hinder the equality of rights.
3. **Fraternity**, the third term in the motto of the Republic, is so little talked about in connection with the two others. Perhaps because it rests first of all on creeds and on religion in the circumstances. We are brothers because we are sons of God, before we are brothers because we are sons of the Nation.

Let’s note down that the Constitution speaks about **solidarity**.

In a first approach one can say that solidarity is enacted between persons having common interests: the members of a family, a political party, the citizens of a nation (cp. for ex. the drought tax is a possible illustration for it).

Fraternity is first of all a sentiment. It most often manifests itself in difficult situations (the fraternity of the trenches in 1914-18), but also in moments of joy: great commemorations, World War victory in 1998 … What I don’t know, thus appears near to me and participating in a common activity.

**Those two notions, often mixed up, can be thought in a relation of cause and consequence. Fraternity thus appears as a principle, solidarity as the action arising from it.**

The major obstacle which the teacher is confronted with, when he puts his pupils into the situation of construing those notions, is the familiar use made of them: Liberty is without limits, equality is reduced to mathematical equality, solidarity and fraternity are, as mentioned, mixed up, the law is restrictive.

That use is often the one of the surroundings of the pupil, hence it’s in their interest not only to construe the notions (knowledge), but also to use them in life in the class (experience), so that the second meaning is substituted for the first representation.

Here we are in the field of civil and moral instruction or education.

**Part two**

**Daring again to teach morale at school (cp. Hervé CAUDRON, ed. by Hachette Education)**

1. **Return or decline of morale?**

Today one watches the rehabilitation of certain values, such as effort, discipline, responsibility. At least in the intellectual discourse morale is omnipresent, while at the end of the sixties one worshipped refusing constraints, traditions, hierarchies. Morale seemed condemned. It was reproached as legitimizing a twofold renunciation: to the pleasure of living without constraints and to the necessity of fighting against social injustices, by justifying resignation in front of the established order.

In any case the new reference to morale in the discourse doesn’t necessarily lead as far as to a restoration of norms valid in the sixties. The evolution of our society is deeply marked by a strong individualist current, which consists of claiming the extension of the rights of the individual.

The individual, without being isolated (he/she belongs to a family, exercises a professional activity …), feels less and less bound to a community giving him/her reasons for keeping to the rules it proclaims.

That follows the nature of our society, at the same time democratic and liberal. It claims the same rights for all. And it gives priority to everybody’s right to decide over his/her private life rather than participate in the working out of a common good.

*Cp. TOCQUEVILLE studying the functioning of democracy in America in the 19th ct. and showing how the preference for individual rights is a menace to public life.*

A first individualist current in the 18th ct. thinks that it is no more God nor the traditions who/which should decide over what is good or bad, but the human being him/herself. Morale appeals to the reason which is in each of us as a “light” sufficing for enlightening us.

The second individualist revolution in the middle of the 20th ct. observes the notion of duty being weakened, the absolute character of moral obligation, to the advantage of the norms of individual well-being. Hence the cult of the present, of youth, of consuming. And the tolerance conceived as laisser-faire and not as interest in the other in his/her difference.

But individualism doesn’t put an end to morale (cp. for ex. the importance of charitable associations).

Our relation to moral values has simply changed.

1. **The refusal of a morale of sacrifice,** of self-denial, of abnegation, attitudes which, pushed to extremes, can be suspect on the moral level and less virtuous than it could seem.

Cp. BERGSON on the two sources of morale: “closed” morale, a system of rules assuring the cohesion of a group / “open” morale, which sometimes envisages contesting the norms in power.

The “true morale” in that meaning mocks morale (PASCAL).

1. **What are the consequences for teaching morale?**

- articulating autonomy and socialisation.

- avoiding the moralising attitude. Cp. the frequent presentation of great values in the form of prohibitions (do not cheat, do not betray etc.). Those phrases suspect above all meanness behind the apparent disinterestedness.

- refusing to dominate the consciences, without omitting the responsibility to decide about what is good or bad because of one’s creed. The school of the Republic can only envisage a laic teaching of morale.

- combining morale and the right, without confusing them.

The right regulates the functioning of society (administrative, financial, commercial right …), imposing the respect for its decisions. Otherwise there are sanctions. The right therefore doesn’t work without force, that is to say public force at the service of all.

Morale extends the right. Not everything that is legal, conforming to the established right, is legitimate as well. The moral point of view scrutinizes the hearts instead of being content with the acts. But in that field there is no other sanction than our conscience or the regard of the others.

Let’s add that it is important to measure the possibilities of the development of moral and civic judgment in the child and the adolescent, before aiming clearly at educating to fraternity and solidarity.

**Part three**

**Lawrence KOHLBERG’s theory on the development of moral judgment**

Passing from judgment to the act is in fact no automatism. It is therefore advisable to differentiate them well, even if judging is an activity. But such a theory is already interesting in the field of education to the degree that research has been able to show a “good correlation” between the two.

In order to bring to light the stages of the development of moral judgment, Kohlberg used moral dilemmas: hypothetical situations whose issue puts a moral problem of choice between two contradictory possibilities.

*Cp*. *the dilemma of Heinz*:

*Heinz’ wife is seriously ill. She will die if she doesn’t take medicine X. That one is beyond the means and Heinz cannot pay it. Nevertheless he goes to the pharmacist’s and asks him for it, even on credit. The pharmacist refuses. What should Heinz do? Let his wife die or steal the medicine?*

The moral dilemma distinguishes *having to* and *being able to*. One doesn’t ask the child what it *would do,* but what it *would have to do* under such circumstances*.* The teacher has not got the power to act on the behaviour of the child (for ex. an abused child would ideally hand in a complaint, but we know that in reality it will not do that because it is afraid of being separated from the abusing parent).

Concerning the contents of moral reasoning, Kohlberg establishes three levels and six stages of development:

1. PRECONVENTIONAL LEVEL

1st stage (1/5 years): The subject rests enclosed in his/her egocentrism. The action he/she envisages is motivated by the worry of avoiding punishment.

*Let her die, otherwise the policemen will send him to prison / steal, otherwise God would punish him for letting his wife die.*

2nd stage (5/10 years): utilitarian relativism still connected with egocentrism. The good act is the one that brings profit. He/She is motivated by the wish for reward.

*Let her die. He will be able to find some other wife / steal. He wants that his wife can still make him something to eat.*

1. CONVENTIONAL LEVEL

3rd stage (10/13 years): the good boy, the gentle girl. The subject searches for the approval of the surroundings.

*His colleagues will not accept him as a thief /they would not accept his lack of regard for his wife.*

4th stage (15/20 years): law and order. What is important is conformity to the social rules. The subject “does his/her duty” according to the established order, it’s a fault to break it.

*Stealing is forbidden by the law / failure to give assistance is punished by the law.*

1. POST-CONVENTIONAL LEVEL

The moral value lies in conformity to abstractly and autonomously defined rules, without taking persons or social milieus into account.

5th stage (20/25 years): One relies on the social contract valid in the society and aiming at the well-being of the greatest number, even if it gets into conflict with the rules of a group.

*The right to property is at the basis of democratic legislations / health is necessary for well-being.*

6th stage (30/35 years): The subject reaches a state of conscience founded on universal moral principles, valid for whole humanity, of justice, equality, reciprocity, respect for the person and his/her life. He/She is capable of leaving his/her centre in order to put him/herself in the viewpoint of the other.

*The right to property is a universal principle / the right to life is a universal principle.*

The sequence of development is **invariable**, even if **socio-cultural factors can accelerate, stop or inflect the movement.**

The majority of the adult population generally acts according to the motives of the conventional level (3rd and 4th stages).

A low percentage arrive at the post-conventional level: 20 to 25%, among them only 5 to 10% at the 6th stage.

The **exchange** of moral justifications can make an individual proceed by one stage, but not by two stages. The impact on moral reasoning by regular discussions on dilemmas or by the debate with philosophical intentions is remarkable.

That observation corroborates VYGOTSKI’s and can for him be explained by the “proximity zone of development”.

Another pedagogical consequence: Invoking the Declaration of Human Rights against racism (stages 5 and 6) is therefore little effective with a small child. With him/her it is better to make empathy work (affective dimension), the model and conformity to the expectation of the surroundings (stage 3) or to the law (stage 4).

The period of **11-16 years** is a period of **accelerated moral development**.

CONCLUSION: One can expect to find an obstacle in the psychology of the child, because of its heteronomous and egocentric attitude, which makes it difficult to construe fraternity and solidarity.

**Part four**

**Educating to fraternity and solidarity at school**

The two notions, as we said, are often mixed up.

Solidarity can be understood in two ways:

- solidarity as reciprocal dependence, when the parties in a whole are bound together. That factual solidarity can be of the “mechanic” or the “organic” type, when it is founded on differentiation and complementarity of functions (thus with living beings and in analogy in the organisation of social life, with its division of labour).

Whether we want it or not, we can only live collectively. The others are still within us when we think of detaching us from them. Robinson on his island remains materially and morally attached to the civilisation which made of him a human being.

Cp. Michel TOURNIER, *“Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique” (Friday and the limbo of the Pacific)*.

- solidarity as a moral value, denotes an obligation to help and appeals to our capacity of acting in a disinterested way, without the least calculation.

It’s about cooperating when taking into account that you have a common interest or about bringing help to those who need it (for ex. the handicapped persons), without thinking of reciprocity or common interest.

In the two cases there is a common point: the refusal of egotistic isolation everybody for himself. Morally, we cannot be uninterested in the others when they need us.

- solidarity as a principle of democratic life

Cp. the Republican motto and its three principles forming a unity.

No real **liberty** without equality or fraternity. Without equality of rights and duties and without the will to reciprocal help, liberty is related to the facility for the “strong” to oppress the “weak”.

If we are deprived of liberty and isolated, everybody living just for him/herself, **equality** condemns all the world to the same material and moral misery.

1)**Fraternity** demands liberty and equality, which recognizes for the other the same dignity as for me. **It is extended in solidarity in action**, by means of the social rights: Each member of society must be able to satisfy his/her essential needs – nourishment, lodging, health, education, culture.

Cp. MASLOW’s pyramid: at its basis the physical needs, then the needs of security.

If one cannot provide those goods oneself, the state intervenes. It provides education and health gratuitously (in that field one contributes according to one’s means and one receives according to one’s needs) or it grants allowances. That is a question of redistributing the money the state finds in its taxes.

It would be good to **make these mechanisms of solidarity at work in our society readable**. We are aware that 57% of the national riches are deducted and redistributed. But that transfer has become unreadable, so that the richest ones think that they pay and it “doesn’t lead anywhere” and the poorest say “one doesn’t do anything for me”.

There happens a destruction of the sentiment of solidarity, against which civic instruction must fight.

**2) Making fraternity live within school**

Giving pupils occasions of taking part in fraternal activities: song, dance, football etc. …, what is called **extracurricular** in a little misunderstanding way and offers possibilities of being part of a “band”, of owing something to oneself.

Cp. the importance of that in England or the United States.

In the **pedagogical field**, developing the sense for reciprocity and equality in favour of a common project, while in France often collaboration between pupils makes afraid of fraud.

Reflecting on catastrophes to which the absence of fraternity, violence, has often been able to lead in history.

In general passing through **knowledge,** as culture humanises.

Passing through examples which embody fraternity. Historic examples, such as the Just ones during World War II.

But also teaching by example. Living professional ethics by which the pupils benefit: fighting against the increase of inequalities at school, not making evaluation an instrument of power …

Combining pedagogics of laicity and fraternity. School is a neutral area, but those who attend it have creeds. So there must be universal rules and capacities of negotiating (cp. the question of veiled mothers accompanying school trips).

Cooperating without ulterior motives with parents, who often only come to school to hear their children, even their ways of life, criticised.

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Translated from French by Wolfgang Rank